

I will take you on a journey along gay liberation and old and new feminist and queer theory. You'll get acquainted with some queer saints. At the end you are to have gained insight in some aspects of contemporary trans* life, the constructedness of gender and sex and understand the importance of trans* depathologisation. I hope to be talking for around two hours and then have some time for questions. And of course we'll have a break somewhere to be able to refresh your minds a bit. I hope you will enjoy my queer intervention.

I am going to introduce you to the **Quiltbag**. It is rather large. Imagine a quilt and a bag made thereof. However I am not going to talk about bags and quilts so much as about some letters of this most eloquent abbreviation of things LGBT, queer etc. How much I would love to also talk about the erasure of bisexuality (By virtue of the concept of the cis hetero/homo binary) I won't manage. I have some pretty sour words for lesbian and gay, but I won't have time enough to give more than an occasional sneer. The Q and the T will get their share and at least implicitly the I also. The A of Asexual or Agnostic, I'm sorry they'll have to wait.

About me: I am vreer which roughly translates as mixer, mixture. A used to be a mermaid but lost my tail when I came on the land and since then I am a Sirenu, a gender neutral merm. I write my name in lower case (just like bell hooks does) because "vreer" is both a persona name and a genus indication, a genre. And for some even a gender.

My work is gender education, human rights education with regard to gender. And trans and intersex rights advocacy and education. Both local and international. Since short there is a rel intersex run advocacy network in the Netherlands that wants to engage with government etc. Great! Since I am not intersex.

To introduce people with queer theory and trans queer practice one needs to start a little bit before queer theory (coined in 1991 by Teresa de Lauretis and left by her in 1994 after concluding the term got too depoliticized in her opinion; queer got gendered and a tool for a trade, f.e. the publishing industry – nowadays even gay and lesbian count as queer.

We'll start with two heroes from the queer pre-history. I want to introduce you to Monique **Wittig**, (1935-2003) philosopher of **the Straight Mind**, coiner of the phrase "The heterosexual contract", and to Mario **Mieli** of **Homosexuality and Liberation**, who reclaimed polymorphous perverse and has a nice idea by "transexual" and who liberates gay from strict homosexuality. I will talk about performativity, about **pharmaco-pornography** and **pharma-power**. I will talk about the constructedness of it all and what that means. Although a next time I may talk less about the high

level and try to make you really grasp and feel what this constructedness means. I'll about some **human rights** concepts that have a significance for trans* and inter* people and connect you with what I consider to be probably the most important issue in trans* rights struggle these days: the de-pathologisation of gender diversity.

I best get going and start with a couple of definitions so you know what I'm talking about. Since this lecture is about transgender or better about gender identity and gender expression, you need to know what that is. But then you also need to know what is gender.

On gender:

Sandra Harding 1996: "Gender is a property of individuals, social structures and symbolic systems".

So, you are gendered, belong to one or more gender categories—whether legally recognized or not. Next, gender is a social structure: society is gendered and not neurally gendered, there are power relations in play. In western society the white middle class male with a job is the master and the rest is subordinated. On the bottom of the power pyramid you will find black and indigenous (first nation) persons with a working class background and a deviant gender expression.

Gender identity and expression

Gender identity then is a persons's deeply felt conviction of being one gender or another, regardless of what culture tells them and regardless of what their body would be telling them. To already look forward to the end of our class: and you have the absolute human right to have that feeling recognized. It is in human rights treaties like the ICCPR, it is reframed in the Yogyakarta Principles on Human Rights and LGBTI issues. It concerns the right to recognition before the law, in your identity and this is an absolute right.

Feminism

Feminism is not just for women, on the contrary. And without feminism you cannot understand queer theory. Also: with only feminism you won't get there either. I think this is still very important, still holds true, also in 2013.

Gender categories are constructed: 1970/1980s feminism saw gender as a social construction based on a material-biological base: sex difference. Used to justify social inequality. As in the following quotes show their own way. I will introduce you to other feminists, you may probably not be

familiar with, but who play a significant role in feminist history.

The elaboration of poststructural theory and the critical investigation of the biology of difference raised questions about the role of biology as a discourse that *created* sex difference rather than being the material base for it.

So the basis for standard Second Wave feminism got deconstructed. That left many with a problem, since they were not ready to state that sex/gender are constructed, It's fine that characteristics are constructed, but the thing itself.... We need to wait for Saint Judith to make this quite clear. And I have a hunch that the presence of TERFs is a consequence of non acceptance of this deconstruction.

Monique Wittig, *La pensée straight*

I am going to start with Monique Wittig. The great grand mother of European second wave feminism, Simone de Beauvoir, author *The Second Sex*, I will skip. Gotta start somewhere, isn't it?

So: who was Wittig? Monique Wittig was more or less the founder of French feminist movement, MLF (*Mouvement pour la Liberation des Femmes*) and her first novel "*L'opoponax*" (1964) got her instantly famous and her second novel *Les guerillères* (1969) was a revolutionary and controversial book for lesbian and feminist thought. From the moment her work was translated into English she earned world fame. Founder of *Les gouines Rouges*, the red dykes, in 1971, she moved to the US with her partner, Sande Zeig in 1976. There she worked on most of her gender theory.

In her world famous essay "The straight mind" she separates lesbians from women. Women only exist because of men. Woman is not a biological entity, woman is a position in a hierarchy. Lesbians are not women because they reject the dependence on a man, are not defined by the presence of a man. Heterosexual society, then with its psychoanalytic tendency, can not satisfy the need for communication among lesbians, feminists and gay men. It is a political question, there is no sickness or pathology, they have an enemy. Society is heterosexual, straight and leaves no real place for Others. To quote:

"There is nothing abstract about the power that sciences and theories have, to act materially and actually upon our bodies and our minds, even if the discourse that produces it is abstract. It is one of the forms of domination, its very expression, as Marx said. I would say, rather, one of its exercises. All of the oppressed know this power and have had to deal with it. It is the one which says: you do not have the right to speech because your discourse is not scientific and not theoretical, you are on the wrong level of analysis, you are confusing

discourse and reality, your discourse is naive, you misunderstand this or that science."

Her famous quote on lesbians not being women:

"It would be incorrect to say that lesbians associate, make love, live with women. for "woman" has meaning only in heterosexual systems of thought and heterosexual economic systems. Lesbians are not women."

So science is straight science, morals are straight morals and that is wrong, that goes wrong.

Wittig was a materialist, hating the idea of "woman" and inherent femininity. she was absolutely opposed to *l'écriture féminine* by Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray, which was contemporaneous french feminist philosophy, influenced by psycho-analysis which she distrusted.

As not all feminists are white (thank God or whoever) you must also know these two women:

Anzaldua's La Frontera (mestiza)

Gloria Anzaldúa (1942-2004) wrote inspiring stories from her perspective as a queer chicana woman, about *mestizaje*, the mixture. She wrote from her aztec, mexican. chicana background, in multiple languages and gave voice to the lived experiences of chicana/tejana women living in multiple worlds: the US, mexican culture and aztec heritage. Living in the physical borderland between the US and Mexico, near the Texan US Southwest border, Anzaldúa writes "the psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact, borderlands are present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory." And I would add different and unequal genders to that. More and more I see parallels, not only in the US, between the regimes that govern how to deal with border transgressions. Trayvon Martin's story could have been the story of a TPoC. The mental border police denies both black young men and trans women of color (black, hispanic, and most indigenous) the freedom of movement.

Anzaldúa is not easily describable from a western academic point of view because a lot of her work is poetry and stories. Anzaldúa writes:

"the switching of "codes" in this book from English to Castilian Spanish to the North Mexican dialect to Tex-Mex to a sprinkling of Nahuatl to a mixture of all of these, reflects my language, a new language - the language of the borderlands. There, at the junctures of

cultures, languages cross-pollinate and are revitalized; they die and they are born.”

And I like that actually, this escaping cross-pollinating language.

Audre Lorde (1934-1992)

Of great importance for critical work with liberation struggle is Audre Lorde's quote “The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house”. Something I would call a truism. Real change is very difficult from the inside. It is very easy to get blinded by the light and to drown in the sea of details.

Lorde is known for her poetry and her speeches. A Dutch group of black and migrant women named themselves Zami, after Lorde's book “Zami, a different spelling of my name”. Several of her speeches are collected in the book with the also well known title “Sister Outsider”. I don't know so much of Audre Lorde (yet) alas, so I cannot tell much more about her. We all have our limitations.

Mario Mieli (1952-1983)

Now we leave female feminist country for a while and we enter male territory, although male? Our next guest would possibly deny that. The next stop in history is with Italian communist queen Mario Mieli.

Mieli was a gay theorist and activist. And a communist. A lot of what I am going to tell you has to do with radical politics, with words you have learnt to be filthy: socialism, communism. I already declare here that I am not a liberal, in a European nor an American sense. I do not believe the rational choice theory to be a correct representation of how the world works.

Actually Mieli was not so much gay as more a queen, *una folle*. He wrote in his "Homosexuality and liberation" of 1977, that everybody has the opportunity to become gay, homosexual. Using Freud's polymorphous perverse primal state of being (infants and toddlers are) he tells everybody has this possibility but we learnt to repress it in patriarchal capitalism. He was not without critique on homosexuals either. They were far too compliant with default masculine behaviour.

Another thing is that he coined "transexual" in a different meaning: a gay man can love a woman, also sexually, and probably better than a straight man because the transexual, the gay man who accepted his own femininity, knows what a woman wants. This may sound cheesy nowadays and maybe even suspect, but thinking from the idea that it takes one to know one, thoroughly, in a categorical sense this may make some sense. Although not so explicitly, for Mieli a trans person, a transsexual, is someone so feminine that he changes also physically into the woman he also is – vice versa for trans men, but they were rather invisible then. Practically he refers to Harry

Benjamin, author of *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, the trans* bible from where most stories are taken by trans people going for medical treatment (or med. assistance if you want). And Benjamin bases in Freud and Stoller (who is also infamous for his support to John Money, the man behind "John/Joan" and much intersex problems).

Politically speaking, he based in vanguard communism, old school Italian communism based in Marx' *Grundrisse* more than in Marx' Capital. Capital is a spontaneous mechanism, an 'automatic monster' to which all ideology is subordinate. He definitely was wishing for a total revolution, but he did not theorize how his queer communism *avant la lettre* would transform the vanguard and the influence needed for broad basis for the revolution. After all: a tiny minority can only spark the revolt, but you need bearers, traditionally the working class, as the revolutionary subject. So just like probably in the Middle East at the moment, by lack of organized and even slightly unified resistance, it will be difficult to transform the state into a more friendly institution and the anarchists that want to abolish the state and replace it with workers control and autonomy aren't strong enough either. Alas.

The advantage of persons like Mieli, and me - though I don't pretend to be such a theoretician - is that we live the revolution we want, we transform our lives to how we think the future humans should look. In Mieli's case that is to embrace femininity and convert all males into more feminine looking. living persons. In my case it is living *la vida loca*, as the wind blows, blows my gender; being seemingly unrooted, a cyborg, only truthful to friends and the revolution.

Foucault (1928-1984)

The next stop will have to be **Michel Foucault**, Mr. Discourse. Communist queerness dies for some time, with Mieli who committed suicide in 1983 at the age of 31. As in general political life communism more or less loses its momentum by the many schisms (as Dutch protestant churches, the communists break into Stalinist, reformist, Maoist, Hoxha, Ho Chi Minh and other currents). Then finally something interesting comes from French philosophy. Michel Foucault starts to look in to totally different ways of approaching knowledge and power. He sees disciplinary regimes everywhere: in the psychiatric hospital, in prison, and also with sexuality. It is all about how discourses (the collective of words and acts) act upon a body. Contrary to popular (scientific) belief sexuality is not just repressed, it is not that we don't talk about it or that talking about it is discouraged. You are discouraged to talk about it in certain ways. S&M is discouraged, non marital sex and protected sex is and talking about it is discouraged.

Foucault was quite queer. He had a sexual preference for men, didn't object to his own

masculinity or maleness, but he always refused to say if he was gay or not. That was a bad strategy, he said. It made humans into “confession animals” a term that of course hints to catholic practice of confession. Confessing makes one vulnerable or power practices, for discursive manipulations. Better not tell about who you are and what you do. That gets into stories leading to repressive and to – and that was new – “positive” constructive practices. Foucault was very distrusting of the possibilities of resistance, a reason why he is being accused of having a closed vision. Wittig didn't think you could resist either and placed the lesbian outside of the systems.

This strategy is refuted by Beatriz Preciado who in their *Queer Multitudes* says that a strategy of multiplication, of many many stories of difference may break the political regime of heterosexuality also. And one can refuse heterosexuality, the body is not a passive matter to be written upon by biopolitical regimes.

Gender is not the effect of a closed power system, nor an idea that acts on passive matter, but it is the name of a collection of sexpolitical devices (from medicine to pornographic representation, through family institutions) that will be the object of reappropriation by sexual minorities. Preciado revalues the faggot, the dyke, the people living with AIDS, Act Up strategies. So the queer multitudes are not a separate category next to gay, lesbian and straight (bisexual could be read very radical also) but as identity strategies of resistance. They resist naturalized identities, resist the ideology of medicine etc.

Judith Butler.

I guess that all of you at least have heard of Judith Butler, Saint Judith of Queer studies. From 1993 she upset the whole feminist and queer world by using an originally linguistic perspective to deconstruct gender more thoroughly than anyone before had done. She started to look at drag as amplification and "copy" of real world femininity. She uses the term "performativity". Which is not the same as performance. Performativity means that something becomes real, becomes true, by performing it over and over. However it not a faultless copying. As always in copying - think of the game of whispering a word to someone and at the end it comes back totally boggled up . People have their own interpretations, make deliberate changes to the script, forget part of their script, fail to understand the director... "*nous ne sommes que des photocopies dont l'original a été détruit*" We are copies without original. Butler hooks into Foucault because some bodies matter more than others, some scripts are legit others are not. That is where the title of her 1997 book "Bodies that matter" comes from. That works by repressing certain scripts and behaviours and deliberately stimulating, plugging others. That works surely where it concerns gender and sexuality. And with

consumption also: marketing based on personal preferences, 'life style' stimulates you to buy this, not that.

Butler is also very important, maybe more even, in that she very clearly explains how sex always has been gender. Where it was generally accepted that gender is constructed discursively (Foucault!), Butler states the sex does not equal the raw matter. There is no pre-gender. There is no material sex with meaning (this is the trick!), preceding meaning. You cannot think "Sex" as matter and gender as form. Sex is also linguistic, discursive. Bodies are constructed as if they would form the material basis for gender. They are as constructed as gender in that sense. So what you have "down there" - whatever it is, it has always been constructed and it is not nature as I will explain soon. Even biology and medicine, two sciences looking into the raw bodily material aren't free from a biased and constructed, performative view on the material they work with. This also applies to even more exact sciences as physics and astronomy: who is it that is behind the telescope or the microscope? Imagery and description become material.

"If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all". (Butler, Bodies that matter, 1999)

So: goodbye 2nd wave feminist construction of sex as different from gender. Goodbye TERFs , goodbye Janice Raymond. You are not only haters and as misogynist as the patriarchy you say you fight, you are also plain wrong. If you haven't changed your thinking on this yet, you are on the wrong side of history, on the wrong side of the fight for equality. Raymond became infamous because of her saying that trans women are "male to female surgically constructed lesbians"

The importance of this move, this explanation is very material. In the discrimination it entices, but also very much a physical reality very many intersex people go through. And trans people who are required to change their body. Social construction is very material in its effects.

Donna Haraway (*1944)

Pictured here not as the cyborg but as the dog lover and companion species author Haraway got famous as re-signifier of the cyborg. The "cyborg" as infidel socialist feminist for a new perspective. Haraway writes mostly about feminism and technoscience. She is an astute viewer and

analyst of technoscience as it develops. And always from a sound feminist perspective. That nowadays also extends to domestic animals. She became famous through her article “A manifesto for cyborgs: science, technology and socialist feminism in the 1980s” that first appeared in Socialist Review and later became part of her book “Simians, Cyborgs and Women”.

Haraway is important because of her sharp analysis although she hardly writes about trans* or queer. But she writes down very well what is the effect of scientific discourse and practice on women and how women get excluded in science. The cyborg is her trope for a dissident biotechno creature that takes a hybrid and dissident life. A figure of resistance. Haraway’s cyborg does not support separation of nature/culture, rationality/emotion, male/female, objectivity/subjectivity, machine/human.

Haraway is very critical of Nature. As according to Judith Butler Sex has always already been Gender, to Haraway Nature has always already been Culture also. Our image of Nature's nature ics as constructed. To quote Haraway's “A Game of Cat's Cradle: Science Studies, Feminist Theory, Cultural Studies”

“Nature is a commonplace, a topos. It is the imploded, densely packed location or the simultaneously ethnospecific, cultural, political and scientific conversations about what the allowable structures of action and the possible plots in the sacred secular dramas of technoscience—as well as in the analysis of technoscience—might be.”

“If technoscience is, among other things, a practice of materializing refigurations of what counts as nature, a practice of turning tropes into worlds, then how we figure technoscience makes an immense difference.”

“Queering what counts as nature is my categorical imperative. Queering specific normalized categories is not for the easy frisson of transgression, but for the hope for livable worlds. (..) The point is not just to read the webs of knowledge production; the point is to reconfigure what counts as knowledge in the interests of reconstituting the generative forces of embodiment.”

She is involved in technoscience because technoscience determines for a large part how the world works and how we see it. And therefor also how gender works.

Beto the Blessed, or Beto Preciado

The problem with linearity is that theory nor life develop in a linear way. As with physical travel or

the WWW, from each node you arrive the message is "from here you can take multiple directions". I will indulge in making you further acquainted with Beto the Blessed.

Preciado is a Spanish philosopher writing in Spanish and French, deliberately not in English as the majority language anyway in science production. Her first book, the *Contrasexual Manifesto* (available in Spanish, French and German) is about the construction of desire, of the phallus and the dildo. A phallus is only a flesh dildo, they say (they, as he/she/whatever in feminist, queer speak). They further write on the history, the construction of orgasm. Indeed, also orgasms are not just a question of physical reaction. Nor is your fantasy autonomous.

Preciado gives an insight in the history and the discursive construction of what technologies and what practices were made legit and which were made illegitimate. More interesting at least now, is her view on the influence of pharma industry on the making of our bodies, not only discursively but pharmaceutically, physically. Those of you who use the pill as a contraceptive device have a different and already artificial body contrary to those of you who don't. Those of you who would experiment with Cialis or Viagra would also have a different body than those do not. You will work differently with your bodies. Analyzing this is queer science. Analyzing what changes are stimulated, what politics lie behind it, whose politics it is and what opposition there is, what resistance, what uses are made of these technologist, these devices, that is queer science.

Sandy Stone: The "empire" strikes back

Next stop on this voyage is Allucquere Rosanne Stone, aka Sandy Stone, the TERF slayer. With only one big stop more on the road we are now nearing the end of our voyage into queer and trans theory.

Stone started out as a music engineer at Olivia records, a women only record company in the 19770s but was then discovered to be a trans woman and the radical lesbian feminist church of Janice Raymond outed her and ousted her. After Raymond published her book "The transsexual Empire", Stone wrote this transgender manifest called *The "Empire" strikes back: a post-transsexual manifesto in reply*. What she dubbed "post-transsexual" would now be called "transgender". Everything in those days was called post-something.

An essential paragraph (well, as far as essential means anything these days) is the following.

"Here on the gender borders at the close of the twentieth century, with the faltering of phallographic hegemony and the bumptious appearance of heteroglossic origin accounts, we

find the epistemologies of white male medical practice, the rage of radical feminist theories and the chaos of lived gendered experience meeting on the battlefield of the transsexual body: a hotly contested site of cultural inscription, a meaning machine for the production of ideal type. Representation at its most magical, the transsexual body is perfected memory, inscribed with the "true" story of Adam and Eve as the ontological account of irreducible difference, an essential biography which is part of nature. A story which culture tells itself, the transsexual body is a tactile politics of reproduction constituted through textual violence. The clinic is a technology of inscription. “

So the trouble with trans* still is that you are not allowed to exist as a differently gendered/sexed person, under penalty of violence or murder. Because hardly anywhere trans people are protected by the law which leads to impunity and more violence (laws keep people from doing the Wrong things).

Which leads to the following status of trans life Trans in the world:

- Situation worldwide: since 2008 more than 1200 trans people have been murdered. Mostly killed, maimed and murdered in the most atrocious ways. Very recently in the US Mainland a man was caught with the corpse of a trans woman, and with an axe. In US colony Puerto Rico also several trans and gay murders of the most cruel kind have taken place. And alas the cruelty is more default than it is exception. Only in a small part of the world legal gender recognition is available on the basis of having the wrong gender identity in your papers and thus in your life.
- Situation US: How trans life is in the US you have read in Injustice at every turn. That report was required reading. Black and first nation trans people face very negative life expectations and if you fall outside of the gender binary, as gender non conforming person, your chances on a decent life are slim also. Pull in class aspects and education, health care insurance and you get the picture. Things are advancing, but still with institutionalized genderism and racism, things move on very unequally.
- Situation in the Council of Europe (E49): very changeable. Uneven movement. Under the “leadership” of Russia several of its neighbors countries move away from equality. FYROM allows aggression against the LGBT centre. Hungary is moving away from any constitutional protection that is not beneficial for the mainstream and has been warned

severely by the Human Rights Commissioner. Also when entry into the EU has been fixed, several countries back away from their promises of equal treatment. And the Council and the EU have adequate means to combat this. Because there is not enough political will.

- Hot issues in general are: discrimination, hate crime, LGR/LFR, access to general health care and trans specific health care and quality of trans specific health care. In Europe some 30% of the interviewed trans persons say to have experienced discrimination in health care, from weird looks to outright refusal of treatment by doctors. And then the quality of trans health care many times isn't good either.

Transpathologization

All this brings us finally to the apex of this lecture, the reason why I told all these things about Wittig, Mieli, Haraway, Foucault, Preciado, Stone. I conclude with an issue in the trans* and intersex struggle for rights that has very much to do with how sex and gender is produced. As Sandy Stone indicates, trans bodies are to disappear, they are not legitimate. Living as something else than a man in a body classified as male, is dissidence. Any regulation that enters into function that gives us our human rights, our right to recognition before the law that we have anyway thanks to the ICCPR, that gives us anti-discrimination legislation, is a victory over the medical-psychiatric model of dysphoria, incongruity.

On the global level trans* activists are now trying to get the terms straight in the International Classification of Diseases of the WHO. We will have to battle fierce and ferocious opposition of mostly religious and sometimes secular groups with a lot of money and a lot of power. Not only the Roman Catholic Church, the Pentecostals and the Mormons also play their part in the game. And it is all about fear for autonomous bodies, for losing their power over women who decide for themselves if and how to reproduce. And when looking at reasons for intersex infant mutilations reasons of fear of homosexuality are given. Girls whose genitalia look too much like a mini penis are changed without regard for their identity because it seems these girls are more prone to become lesbians.

In Europe also the regional trans organisation TGEU is involved in talks with the European Commission (the EU government) on how to deal with depathologisation. There are positive developments: the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (49 countries and mostly a human rights body) and also the European Parliament have called on the WHO to depathologise trans* identities. It all has to do with being normal – or not, and if that is valued very much.

The previous step, changing of the DSM, normative psychiatric manual from the US but internationally in use, has been lost. Because of the capitalist neoliberal model of operation of private insurance companies that care more about profit than about people, there is too much sorrow of losing our rights to financed access to health care. As if there were already a loophole-less ACA everywhere for ages. People will need access to trans specific healthcare because society around us is so fucked up that trans people suffer from much anxiety and depression because of being discriminated, not recognized, let alone celebrated. Not we are crazy, society needs to change. Transphobia is the illness, trans recognition the cure.

If some time is left I have a nice queer end video for you ... About a very queer being .. the Fagette