CHAPTER 2

Hellish Evil, Heavenly Love: A Long-Term History of Same-Sex Sexuality and Religion in the Netherlands

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According to international surveys, attitudes toward homosexuality (and bisexuality) are more favorable in the Netherlands than they are in all other (European) countries except Iceland (Kuyper 2018). Differences between western European countries are slight, however, and steadily

This work was supported by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) (grant number 327-25-004). It is part of the research project “Contested Privates: The Oppositional Pairing of Religion and Homosexuality in Contemporary Public Discourse in the Netherlands.” One of the papers on which it is based (“Sodom Across the Atlantic: A Comparison of American and Dutch Histories”) was presented at the 2017 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, in a book panel on Heather R. White’s *Reforming Sodom: Protestants and the Rise of Gay Rights* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015). I thank Heather White as well as Gert Hekma, Theo van der Meer, Mariecke van den Berg, Marco Derks, Ruud Ganzevoort, Anne-Marie Korte, and Srdjan Sremac for their valuable comments on this and related papers.

The original version of this chapter was revised: In this chapter, the typesetting errors have been corrected. The correction to this chapter is available at https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-56326-4_16

decreasing. What makes the Netherlands a remarkable case is that negative attitudes diminished so early. In 1981, when 39% of Swedish, 45% of (West) German, 47% of British, 48% of Icelandic, 52% of French or Belgian, and even 61% of Irish respondents agreed that homosexuality was “never justified,” merely 25% of Dutch respondents did so (Kuyper et al. 2013, 17).

Both in scholarly discussions and in everyday conversations, the relative absence of (overt, measurable) “homonegativity” in present-day Dutch society is often attributed either to secularization or to an allegedly national, time-tested tradition of “tolerance,” for example with respect to sex work, recreational drugs, and—at the time of the Dutch Republic—religious dissent. Neither of these two standard explanations is entirely convincing. In terms of religious affiliation, attendance, or beliefs, the Netherlands is not the most secularized country in present-day Europe. And whereas the Republic often tolerated religious minorities, it repressed “wrong lovers.”

In this chapter, I will show how Dutch perceptions of, policies on, and attitudes toward same-sex sexuality changed over time and what part religious institutions, figures, concepts, or idioms have played in this. A long-term history such as this cannot but be incomplete; I will discuss a limited number of landmark events, publications, or trends, and only partly on the basis of my own findings. Bisexuality and pedophilia will not be discussed separately; the expression “same-sex sexuality” merely serves as a reminder that “homosexuality,” “gay,” “lesbian,” “LGBTIQ,” etc. are historical, culturally contingent constructions that tend to be anachronistic when referring to practices, desires, or identities in the even not so distant past.

THE WILL TO KNOW

In the country now known as the Netherlands—as in other European countries—sex between males was commonly referred to as “sodomy” until the late nineteenth century (Van der Meer 1997, 2007a; cf. De

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Vrijer 1932). This biblical name implied a warning of the devastating, collective consequences of committing or permitting certain acts—but which ones, exactly? (Van der Meer 1997, 30). Conceptual clarity was hard to find because sodomy was considered the *crimen nefandum*: an “unmentionable,” “unspeakable” transgression. Any public discussion of it might lead the innocent into temptation.

Consequently, despite its seriousness, “sodomy” was but rarely persecuted. The first European executed on these charges was a knife maker in Ghent who was burned on the pile in 1292 (Goodich 1979, 85). But the number of trials and executions in the Low Countries was much smaller than in Southern Europe, and convicts were usually not burned but strangled or drowned—a form of execution suited for females, but also for keeping things from the public eye (Van der Meer 1997). In the Dutch Republic—where Calvinism was the dominant religion—sodomy was believed to be rare. This vice was deemed typical of “Italians,” “Saracens,” and “Turks,”—that is, of Catholics and Muslims, who indulged in luxury. The independence war of the Northern Low Countries against “Spain” and “Rome” in 1568–1648 was even equated to the exodus of Lot and his kin from the depraved cities of the plain (Van der Meer 1995).

The silence on sodomy was broken in January 1730, when the sexton of the Utrecht Dom Tower reported having seen two men committing sodomy in a room below his quarters. One of them was arrested and produced a whole list of accomplices, some of whom were men of high social standing. A cascade of arrests, trials, and executions followed, discovering an urban subculture—with meeting places, signs, and a slang of its own—that transgressed geographic and class boundaries. In July, the authorities decided that henceforth sodomites should always be executed in public, their corpses be exposed, and verdicts be advertised in order to deter others. Within three years, at least one hundred Dutch sodomites were executed—more than during the preceding four centuries (Van der Meer 1995).

These years saw a sudden eruption of writing on sodomy: newspaper articles (see Fig. 2.1), verdicts, pamphlets, poems, prints, and books, including treatises by ministers of religion. The most notorious monograph is *Helsche boosheyt of grouwelijke zonde van sodomie* (Hellish evil or gruesome sin of sodomy), written by the Rev. Henricus Carolinus van Byler, Reformed pastor of a village where the local nobleman had twenty-two male inhabitants—aged fifteen to forty—strangled, hanged,

Fig. 2.1 Number of texts mentioning *sodom** or *zodom** in a sample of Dutch newspapers (Delpher, October 13, 2019), 1620–1869, per year

and burned.¹ As Dutch historian Theo van der Meer (1997, 100–1, 157) has shown, however, Van Byler’s book was published only after the trials had started, and besides moral condemnations it offered an impressive amount of information on sodomy—a summary of international theological, juridical, historical, and ethnographic scholarship.

This publication, as well as some others, testify to “the will to know” (Foucault 1976) about sodomy and other “dumb vices.” Explaining it from alien influences such as Catholic or Muslim *luxuria* had become less convincing, now that it had also been found among hard-working peasants—and even Reformed pastors. In several pamphlets, the Rev. Emanuel Valk refuted rumors about having pawed a manservant, but he refused to “purge” himself of the offense in court, as ordered by the Reformed Church. In 1732, he was arrested, interrogated, and—after one day in jail—hanged himself (Van der Meer 1997, 102). This did not save him or his widow from public humiliation: his dead body was dragged through the streets of his former parish and thrown into the sea. And yet, he was not completely silenced. According to a contemporaneous pamphlet Valk had told his interrogators that sodomy should not be punished because

¹All translations in this chapter are my own.

other laws in Leviticus were not being enforced either. Other stories, too, suggest that some pastors denied the sinfulness of same-sex love. In 1748, the Rev. Georgius Minheer was said to have made a pass at a young man by referring to David and Jonathan. Five years later, the Rev. Andreas Klink allegedly claimed his liking for men was congenital, resulting from the “great appetite and desire” his mother had felt for her spouse when the latter was absent during her pregnancy (Van der Meer 1997, 314–17). Even if these stories are “unhistorical,” they are historically significant, indicating the emergence of a new discourse in which same-sex lovers were no longer entirely “dumb.”

DECRIMINALIZATION

In 1795, French armies invaded the Dutch Republic and toppled its *ancien régime*. This “Batavian Revolution” was applauded by many Jews, Catholics, and Protestant dissenters—who now gained full citizenship—as well as by (other) proponents of the Dutch Enlightenment (Schama 1981) such as Elizabeth Wolff-Bekker and Agatha Deken. After the death of the former’s husband—a well-to-do Reformed pastor—the two childless women lived together and coauthored several highly acclaimed epistolary novels, in which they often ridiculed religious orthodoxy while also criticizing freethinking. Some of their enemies suggested that there was a “Sapphic” or “romantic” dimension to their friendship, but Betje and Aagje themselves spoke of one another as “soul mates”—a concept previously used for describing believers’ intimate relationship with God (Everard 1994, 75).

In the 1790s, the Amsterdam judiciary brought to light some very different intimacies between women, most of who belonged to the urban underclass. In these relations, lust and passion were unmistakable: eyewitnesses reported caressing, kissing, groping, pawing, bumping, fingering, licking, and even usage of an obscure, oblong, strapped-on instrument (Van der Meer 1984, 137–47). None of these diversions had been brought to justice before, but women who fancied them had been known for decades, said their neighbors, and had an informal leader who was called their “Reverend” (Everard 1994, 169–77).

In 1810, the country was annexed by the French Empire, and one year later the Napoleonic *Code pénal* came into force here. It recognized only two sex offenses: encouraging “lewdness” with minors and offenses against “decency” (Tielman 1982, 63; Hekma 2004, 40). On the basis of

the latter rule, many men would be prosecuted—a much higher number than the sodomites of old—but sex in private between consenting, adult same-sex partners was no longer a criminal offense. This decriminalization occurred a bit later than in France and the Southern Low Countries (present-day Belgium and Luxembourg; 1791–92), but earlier than in Spain (1822), and much earlier than in other European countries such as Denmark and Iceland (1930), Sweden (1944), England (1967), East and West Germany (1968–1969), Scotland (1980), and Russia (1993)—not to mention the United States (Waldijk 2013).

After the Netherlands regained independence in 1813, the *Code pénal* remained in place, and the 1886 Dutch Criminal Code that eventually replaced it did not criminalize same-sex sexuality either—only forced sex, sex in public, and sex with minors. Such a decriminalization of sex, writes Gert Hekma (2004, 42), was something the American sexologist Alfred Kinsey could only dream of in 1948.

RECRIMINALIZATION, AND EMANCIPATION

The Enlightened view that sex was a private matter had been bolstered by the Netherlands' 1848 velvet revolution, which gave the country a new, democratic constitution and ushered in the decades-long dominance of liberals, both in politics and within the Netherlands Reformed Church (NRC). The latter had lost its former status as public church but remained the country's largest, despite the secession of some dissatisfied Calvinists in 1834. But the 1848 constitution also led to the emancipation of Catholics and to an internal democratization of the NRC, from which "neo-Calvinists" in particular benefitted. From the 1870s onwards, both orthodox Protestants and Catholics challenged the hegemony of liberalism by establishing their own schools, political parties, media, and a gamut of other civil society organizations—a process known as "pillarization" (*verzuiling*; Lijphart 1989). Under the leadership of Abraham Kuyper—doctor of theology, minister of religion, editor-in-chief of an orthodox Protestant newspaper, and founder of an orthodox Protestant political party and university—large numbers of neo-Calvinists seceded from the NRC in 1886. They merged with some of the 1834 Secessionists into the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN), which became the country's second largest Protestant denomination.

In 1901–1905, Kuyper headed the country's first confessional cabinet: a coalition of orthodox Protestants and Catholics. In 1911, they raised

the legal age of consent for homosexual contact to twenty-one instead of sixteen years. This discriminatory legislative provision, Section 248-bis of the Criminal Code, was inspired by the idea that homosexuality was transferred through “seduction.” It formed part of a whole raft of morality laws which also outlawed brothels, abortion, and the distribution or display of pornography and contraceptives (Koenders 1996). On its grounds, around five thousand men and a few women—some of them barely twenty-one—would be prosecuted, and around twenty-eight hundred were convicted. Numerous repeat offenders bought their freedom by submitting to castration (Van der Meer and Hekma 2011). This legal provision also led to indirect repression by soliciting blackmail and giving the police a pretext to monitor the places where birds of this feather flocked together.

On the other hand, “248-bis” unintentionally galvanized emancipation. In 1912, the aristocratic lawyer Jacob Schorer and two physicians established the first homosexual advocacy organization outside Germany—initially as a Dutch chapter of Magnus Hirschfeld’s Scientific Humanitarian Committee (*Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee*, WhK, est. 1897; see Brunotte, in this volume). Despite, and partly even thanks to, the severe criticism it received from Catholic organizations and periodicals, the Dutch Committee (NWHK) broke the silence on same-sex sexuality. It sent members of parliament, judges, doctors, and university students its annual report—twenty thousand copies in 1939—or educational brochures such as “What everyone should know about Uranism” (Schorer 1912; cf. Van der Meer and Hekma 2011).

“GOD KNOWS”

In 1864, the German lawyer Karl Heinrich Ulrichs had coined “Uranism” and “Uranian” (*Urning*; adjective: *urnisch*). Unlike “homosexuality”—launched by the Hungarian writer Károly Mária Kertbeny, alias Benkert, five years later—these expressions had religious connotations. They referred to an epithet of Aphrodite, highlighting her role as goddess of heavenly love. The notion that same-sex attraction was—at least—equal to the earthly, “common” love represented by Aphrodite Pandemos appealed to some Dutchmen too (Van der Meer 2007b, 20).

When the editor of a Dutch medical journal (Donkersloot 1870) called Ulrichs “nothing more or less than a pederast,” an anonymous physician replied—in a letter, published thirteen years later—that he was just like

Ulrichs, “a Uranian, not a pederast, as little as thou art; Uranian am I, that is: a human being with a man’s body and a woman’s soul. ... Uranism happens to exist and has always existed among mankind; we Uranians happen to exist. Why? I don’t know. God knows, who created all, including us” (quoted in Donkersloot 1883). While “Uranism” alluded to a pre-Christian pantheon, it apparently also allowed for inscribing same-sex sexuality into monotheism.

The oldest known Dutch text mentioning “homosexual/ity” is the 1872 translation of a German book on “European Court Scandals,” in which the author suggests that the medieval French king Charles the Simple “lived for homosexual pleasure” (*Europeesche Hofschandalen* 1872, 28). According to *the* Dutch expert (Hekma 2004, 56), the expression was not used again until twenty years later in a medical book review (Van Renterghem 1892). However, I recently found an earlier and more public text from 1886. It is an essay in the *Java-Bode*—the leading newspaper in the Netherlands East Indies—about life and death in Deli, a Dutch protectorate in northeast Sumatra, where plantations employed thousands of “coolies,” including many Chinese. The author² describes the appalling working and living conditions of these migrant workers: hard work, corporal punishment, overpopulated houses, muddy roads, unhealthy food, lack of safe drinking water, but no lack of alcohol, opium, or diseases. Unlike hospitals on Java, he writes, Deli hospitals not only see many cases of beriberi or marsh fever but also

ailments resulting from practices of which the apostle Paul already warned the Romans. Indeed, the immorality among the Chinese is almost incredible. Here, homosexuality is not—as with Western nations—an incidental, singular fact but a permanent condition.

Contrary to what the reference to a biblical text (Romans 1:26) may suggest, the author was not a sexual conservative: to “reduce, if not exterminate this evil” he proposed allowing brothels, “which one can call safety valves of public morality” (“Delische pennekrassen” 1886). What is remarkable about this second usage of *homosexualiteit* in Dutch print is the geographic and social “liminality” to which it refers: poor, unhealthy,

²Probably Samuel Kalff, a Dutch journalist and man of letters, who also published “pen scratches” about his travels through Europe and other parts of the Dutch Indies (cf. Zuiderweg 2017, 30–40).

foreign, and probably “pagan” semislaves in a region far removed not only from the Netherlands, but also from Batavia (present-day Jakarta), home of the *Java-Bode*. In this periphery of “civilization,” this utterly uninviting context—where the absence of women was felt not only by sex-starved “coolies”—the new expression was made known to “lay” Dutch readers. Not before long, it moved closer to the center, eventually becoming a household term.

The Dutch Indies were also the scene of the adventures narrated by a twenty-five-year old naval officer, published in a psychiatric journal in 1893. In this autobiography, he gives a detailed account—partly in Latin—of the sex he had with dozens of indigenous and European males.³ But it ends with a love letter from his boyfriend, who promises that he will always wear the ring “dear Aart” has given him and “pray for your wellbeing and health to the Almighty Father, in whose hands is everyone’s life, so also our life” (quoted in Spaink 1893, 164).

The first Dutch public figure to openly defend the naturalness of same-sex sexuality was the nonreligious Jewish doctor, criminal anthropologist, and novelist Arnold Aletrino. In an 1897 review he argued that Uranism occurred in otherwise perfectly normal and healthy individuals. When he repeated this at a 1901 international conference in Amsterdam, he was met with fierce criticism from colleagues—notably Cesare Lombroso—and prime minister Kuyper, who fumed that the sin of Sodom was being propagated (Van der Lee 2016). In an open letter, another Dutch physician and sexologist wrote that “by carefully studying Holy Scripture” he had come to the conclusion “that ‘the sins of Sodom’ have absolutely nothing to do with Uranism” but only with violation of “the rules of hospitality” and the use of “sex acts” as part of pagan rituals (Von Römer 1904, 174). Aletrino, too, wrote that “the religious ceremonies for Baal involved homosexual sex acts” and added that “Jesus probably had his eye on Uranists, when he (Matthew 19:12) spoke: ‘For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb. ... Who is able to receive it, let him receive it’” (Aletrino 1908, 208). The fact that a powerful statesman and learned Doctor of Theology like Kuyper could be publicly “catechized” by a secular Jewish physician indicates the extent to

³In 1938–1939, more than two hundred European men as well as hundreds of *katjangs* (street boys) would be arrested on charges on homosexual lewdness in the Dutch Indies (Koenders 1996, 306–13).

which sexuality had become a matter of medical expertise. But the discursive space opened up by “sexology” was also used by writers who were slightly out of step with scientific progress.

In 1904, the socialist teacher, poet, and journalist Jacob (Israël) de Haan published *Pijpelijntjes*, which is often called the first homosexual Dutch novel. It describes the passionate, rather kinky but not unhappy relationship between two male students and is dedicated to Aletrino, who—far from pleased—bought up nearly all copies and had them destroyed. De Haan lost his job, went to law school, earned a Ph.D., returned to Judaism, but continued to write homoerotic poetry (Fontijn 2015). Amsterdam’s *Homomonument*, completed in 1987, is inscribed with one of his verses: “such a singular longing for friendship.” It is taken from his poem “To a Young Fisherman,” which alludes to the Song of Songs but also to the story about the woman who anointed Jesus’ feet (Luke 7:47). Years earlier, De Haan (1985) even published five sultry poems about Jesus on the cross. Both sexually and religiously ambiguous, his life and works resist sexual, religious, or national appropriation (Dudink 2015).

Better suited to early twentieth-century “Uranian” emancipation was Marie Jacobus Johannes Exler’s novel *Levensleed: een boek voor ouders* (Life’s suffering: A book for parents). It was published in 1911 with a foreword by Hirschfeld and soon translated into German. Like Schorer and Von Römer, Exler—who had dropped out of seminary and medical school—became a Dutch correspondent of WhK and cofounder of the Dutch chapter, but after his debut novel he only published on other interests, such as kabbala, pyramids, and chicken farming.

A truly prolific writer and activist was “mr. G. Helpman,” who criticized the 1911 sexual morality bill in several brochures. Already in 1904 he had translated *Der Uranier vor Kirche und Schrift* (The Uranian as seen by church and scripture), in which the Swiss, orthodox Reformed pastor Caspar Wirz argued that the Bible does not condemn sincere same-sex love. In an afterword, Helpman added biblical, theological, and practical arguments.

God will surely judge in accordance with the pronouncements of His Word ... but *nothing* indicates that He will then ask: did the one whom you loved belong to the same sex or another sex according to his (her) genitals? All the less because He himself created in the first human couple a range of intermediate beings. (Helpman 1904, 65)

A Catholic senator called his publications “filthy” and said this “mr.”—the Dutch equivalent of LLM—was not a lawyer but “the pseudonym of a pederast.” He was partly right: “Helpman” was the Rev. Hubert Jan Schouten—an early retired, Reformed pastor (and son of the orthodox pastor who founded Amsterdam’s “Biblical Museum”). Under his own name, he had published numerous warnings against Catholicism—among other reasons because of the clergy’s sexual immorality. Hence, the Catholic justice minister had more than one reason to rejoice when this vocal opponent of his bill was himself accused of having “seduced” a minor (Snijders and Van Delden 2011).

The ways in which these six or—if we also count the anonymous “Uranian”—seven Dutchmen wrote about religion and same-sex sexuality cannot easily be subsumed under a general heading. What many present-day readers will find already remarkable is that they wrote about religion at all, instead of keeping their eyes on the enlightened highway Hirschfeld had indicated: *per scientiam ad justitiam*. But in early twentieth-century Dutch society, it was hard to ignore religion, and some seem to have appreciated the moral, symbolic, spiritual power of religious idioms.

“GREAT SIN, BUT HUMAN, ALL TOO HUMAN”

While Catholic and orthodox Protestant opinion leaders, periodicals, and organizations were the most vocal opponents of NWHK, others were no less critical of it. In 1923, a liberal Protestant professor of theology—a member of the latitudinarian “Remonstrant Brotherhood”—published a book in which he refuted the claims of Ulrichs, Hirschfeld, and their followers: “homosexuality is contagious” (Groenewegen 1923, 162). This did not prevent him from using the NWHK’s extensive library in Schorer’s home and interviewing homosexuals (Koenders 1996, 182).

That same year, “Wilma”—a Pietist Protestant author—published a novel titled *God’s gevangene* (God’s prisoner). It recounts the vicissitudes of a young man who gradually realizes that he is “different” and—when others find out—becomes an outcast. Through trials and tribulations, he comes to accept his sexual orientation, not as a curse or sign of divine reprobation—which could have been an obvious conclusion in orthodox Calvinist thought—nor as a whim of fate or twist of nature, but as a cross he has to bear. “Maybe God makes some people so terribly lonesome because He can show them, better than others, who He is” (Wilma 1923, 132; cf. Van der Heiden 1992). This notion of sexual orientation

as an extraordinary calling or revelation sets *Gods gevangene* apart from Exler's *Levensleed* as well as from two other novels on noble Uranians, written by another NWHK member (Joosse 1985).

In the course of the 1930s, Catholic experts—notwithstanding their fierce condemnations of NWHK's "pernicious propaganda"—tacitly adopted expressions such as "Uranism" and "homosexuality," which focused on an inward (psychological) disposition instead of outward behavior (Oosterhuis 1992, 43–45). In 1939 the Roman Catholic Medical Association held a conference on homosexuality, at which physicians and theologians agreed that one should differentiate between "pseudo-homosexuality"—as found in puberty, in prostitution, or in homosocial settings such as the army, not to mention monasteries—and "genuine homosexuality." Referring to the latter, a Catholic psychiatrist said,

There is hardly any other category of people who have such a hard time of it in sexual matters. They, too, are driven by love, in which higher and lower elements are mixed. ... They know that public opinion, justice, the law of nature, and the Church demand that they abstain from the lower expressions. But trying to comply, they are not helped by an inner feeling that that to which they are inclined is repulsive. ... To them, this is at most what normal sexual acts are to a normal person: great sin, but human, all too human. (De Vries 1939, 53)

According to him, the lifelong sexual abstinence required of homosexuals was a heavier burden than clerical celibacy, because it was involuntary and not supported by "supernatural motives."

That same year, a compilation of thirty-five anonymous autobiographies titled *The Homosexuals* (*De homoseksuelen*) was published. Edited by Benno Stokvis—a Jewish, communist lawyer, politician, and man of letters—this book is an internationally unique document (Van Lieshout 1988). At a time when homosexual men and women were all but completely invisible, it made them heard, more or less in their own words. Eleven of the twenty-six men and three of the nine women reported a religious upbringing. For two of them, this had impeded self-acceptance (Stokvis 1939, 69, 165) but several others had never felt guilty. "Nature happens to manifest itself in different forms," one man wrote, "and everything makes part of 'Creation!'" (Stokvis 1939, 116) Another man decried "pharisaic hypocrisy and cold-heartedness" in the Church but

started off by quoting Psalm 139:13–15 (“For you created my inmost being”), and a young woman wrote, “Since I know what I really am, my faith in Christ has been a strong support to me” (Stokvis 1939, 137–38, 163). Unlike many present-day autobiographical accounts of LGBT persons, these “testimonies” do not suggest that religion is any more hostile to same-sex sexuality than other societal institutions.

“MENTAL REHABILITATION”

On May 10, 1940, Nazi Germany invaded the Netherlands. Less than three months later, any form of sex between males was made a criminal offense. At least 160 men were convicted, which usually meant that they were sent to prison, not to a concentration camp. Unlike their German peers, Dutch homosexuals were not systematically persecuted. Their social position during the war years hardly differed from the way it had been prior to May 1940. Neither did it fundamentally change after the country’s liberation. In fact, more prosecutions were instigated in the late 1940s than before the War (Koenders 1996; Van der Meer and Hekma 2011).

NWHK had been discontinued immediately after the German invasion, but a new organization was founded on December 7, 1946. The Center for Culture and Leisure (*Cultuur- en Ontspanningscentrum*, COC) brought together the useful with the pleasurable and men with women (Warmerdam and Koenders 1987). COC received less opposition than NWHK had, maybe because it phrased its advocacy in terms of “mental rehabilitation” or “resettlement” (*geestelijke reclassering*) and “public mental health” (*geestelijke volksgezondheid*)—a body of thought embraced by all “pillars” in the 1950s and 60s (Westhoff 1996; De Goei 2001). In 1951, COC hosted the first International Congress for Sexual Equality, which ended with sending a telegram to the United Nations. According to COC chairman “Bob Angelo”—the nonreligious Jewish, left-wing actor Niek Engelschman—discrimination of homosexuals was a form of racial discrimination. The third conference, in 1953, also took place in Amsterdam, and was attended by prominent Dutch academics as well as representatives of mental health and religious organizations. Even the Dutch bishops sent a delegation of psychiatrists and psychologists (Warmerdam and Koenders 1987, 267–75).

COC frequently invited experts to give or attend lectures. One of them was the prominent sexologist C. van Emde Boas, who had written a “medical-psychological” dissertation on Shakespeare’s sonnets. COC republished the chapter in which Van Emde Boas discussed the phenomenon nowadays known as “homophobia.” According to him, the strong aversion many people felt toward same-sex sexuality was not functional for the preservation of the human species—like abhorrence of feces, pus, or corpses—but the result of an arbitrary cultural-religious taboo, which had become so deeply rooted as a result of the triumph of Christianity (Van Emde Boas 1951). While the author—a nonreligious Jew—meant to emphasize that homophobia was as irrational and harmful as antisemitism or racism, one could also conclude that religion was the root of this evil.

PASTORS AND THE HOMOSEXUAL NEIGHBOR

Although Dutch sexual morals were hardly more permissive after the war than they had been, many people joined the Netherlands Association for Sexual Reform (est. 1946), which circumvented the legal ban on selling contraceptives. Catholics and orthodox Protestants raised a hue and cry, but in its 1951 report on matrimony, the synod of the NRC stated that it was “completely contrary to the Scriptures” to regard sex as a sin. Extramarital intercourse should be avoided, but masturbation was not a hanging matter. Moreover, there was nothing wrong with contraception, because the main function of sex was not reproduction but expression of love. With this report, the NRC profiled itself against the Roman Catholic Church, which outnumbered it since the 1920s (Bos 2005).

Popes Pius XI and XII had repeatedly called Dutch Catholics exemplary. Their church attendance was unusually high, as were birth rates, the number of vocations, and the number of Catholic civil society organizations, which kept the faithful on the straight and narrow and gave them collective political power. But Catholic intellectuals felt that “pillarization” had resulted in religious fossilization and cautiously pleaded for change (Coleman 1978).

The tide turned in 1958 with the election of Pope John XXIII, who called for *aggiornamento* and appointed progressive bishops. Within a few years, the Dutch Province of the Roman Catholic Church became by far the most progressive in Europe, if not in the world. In his very first television talk on March 21, 1963, one of the new bishops stated

that only the spouses themselves could decide how many children they wanted and when. In that same year the contraceptive pill—packaged by nuns in an enclosed order—was launched on the Dutch market. The 1966 *New Catechism*, commissioned and authorized by the Dutch bishops, also initially suggested that the Second Vatican Council had allowed the use of contraceptives.

The dense infrastructure of Catholic organization, which had been designed to shield the flock from the siren song of modernity, turned into a motorway for the dissemination of progressive ideas (Coleman 1978), also on sexuality. Traditional morality was now tested against the new norm of mental health (Westhoff 1996), while asceticism was replaced by authenticity, “the regime of self-actualization” (Tonkens 1999).

In 1958, Catholic priests and psychiatrists opened a help center for homosexuals in Amsterdam, which then had Europe’s most vibrant gay scene (Oosterhuis 1992). In 1961, they published a booklet that cautiously called for acceptance. Protestants published a similar pocket book, titled *De homoseksuele naaste* (The homosexual neighbor), which even included an anonymous contribution of one such neighbor. In another chapter, already published in a neo-Calvinist periodical in 1958, a pastor of the RCN argued that the Bible only condemns same-sex pederasty, prostitution, and other sexual abuses associated with pagan worship.

This interpretation was neither new—witness what Wirz, “Helpman,” Von Römer, and Alterino wrote half a century earlier—nor originally Dutch, but benefitted from Dutch Bible translations. Whereas the 1611 King James Version rendered the Hebrew word *qedash/im* (in Deut. 23:17; 1 Kings 14:24, 15:12, 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7) as “Sodomite/s,” its Dutch equivalent, the 1637 *Statenvertaling*, spoke of *schant-jonger/s*: “boy/s of disgrace,” or catamite/s. In this, it also markedly differed from the Vulgate, which read *effeminati* in Kings, but somewhat resembled Luther’s translation: *Hurer*, “fornicators.” The 1912 *Leidsche vertaling*—by Professor Abraham Kuenen and other liberal Protestant biblical scholars—rendered the Hebrew expression more literally as *gewijden*, “hallowed ones” or “dedicated ones.” Similarly, the Dutch Bible Society’s (NBG) 1951 translation—used by most Protestants until 2004—read *aan ontucht gewijden*, “those dedicated to lewdness.” Also with respect to Paul’s expressions *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*—some of the wrongdoers who will not enter the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9–10; cf. 1 Tim. 1:10)—the NBG translation followed the *Leidsche* by speaking

of *schandjongens* and *knapenschenders*, “boys of disgrace” and “abusers of boys” or “boy molesters,” which evoked prostitution and pederasty. *Knapenschenders* was very similar to the German word Luther had chosen (*Knabenschender/n*) but quite different from the expression used in the *Statenvertaling*: *die by mannen ligghen* (those who lie with men) (cf. Lev. 18:22). In sum, whereas in English the Bible became more explicit about homosexuality after World War II (White 2015a, 1–14), the opposite was true in Dutch.

“DO NOT JUDGE, BUT *BE* OUTRAGED”

The aforementioned Catholic and Protestant booklets found a large readership and went through several reprints. Other media may have played an even more important role. In his radio series on marriage and sexuality, the leading Catholic psychiatrist Dr. Cees Trimbos held four talks on homosexuality, which COC published as a brochure (Trimbos 1961). Also in 1961, the mainline Reformed (NRC) radio pastor Alje Klammer discussed homosexuality in one of his monthly talks, titled *Doodzwijgen of liefhebben?* This roughly translates as “Hushing up or loving?” but *doodzwijgen* is a transitive verb that literally means “not talking about somebody or something as if they were dead”—or even “*so that they die.*” After explaining how homosexual men and women were made outcasts, Klammer said,

When I think of the Bible now, I think of Matthew 25—of the question Jesus will ask at His Second Coming: “*I was a homosexual, and ye hushed Me up [to death]; ye refused to acknowledge Me.*” ... If you despise homosexuals, you despise the love of God, you deny the suffering of Jesus Christ. ... And if you yourself are homosexual, let me very briefly tell you this afternoon: God wants you to live as a free human being. Do not let yourself be burdened by a yoke of slavery. Do not judge, but *be* outraged. Even if your own parents, your friends, your church have rejected you; even if they hush you up [to death], God accepts you the way you are. Don’t be deceived into believing the Bible is against you. ... Thank God for the love that you, as a homosexual, can and may experience.

Whereas Trimbos’s radio causeries had been broadcasted late at night (at 10:40 p.m.), Klammer’s was aired at 5:45 p.m. “I’m glad to talk to you at a time at which young people can also listen,” he said at the end, “for they

in particular must know how people hush [others] up [to death] and how God speaks and acts in a liberating way.”

Klamer’s radio talk unleashed an avalanche of letters and phone calls. Together with the Rev. Rein Brussaard (RCN) and Father Joop Gottschalk MSF he started get-together groups for homosexuals and their relatives, which mushroomed into an extensive network (Klamer 1968; Posthumus 2004). Moreover, the three clergymen established a Pastoral Task Force [on] Homophilia, which was soon recognized by the Catholic and Protestant National Bureaus of Mental Health as well as the national Council of Churches. Dozens of Catholic and mainline Protestant clergymen joined, adopting the pastoral approach aimed at (self-)acceptance.

Pastoral care for “homophiles” fitted in well with the new role many clergymen saw for themselves as counselors (Bos 2005). Modest and apolitical as their advocacy may seem to “post-Stonewall” standards, it contributed much to the social acceptance of homosexual men and women. At a time when the latter were hardly visible and their organizations barely had a voice, pastors stood up for them by not only listening to them in the privacy of their parlors but also making them heard. Whereas “visibility” is nowadays commonly regarded as the magic bullet of emancipation (White 2015a), it was rather “audibility” that made the difference in the 1960s and much of the 1970s. The bottom line of Klamer’s talk even bears striking similarities to a well-known slogan of late twentieth-century queer activists, “silence=death.”

INCORPORATION

In 1964, COC adopted a more explicit name, “Dutch Association for Homophiles,” and Benno Premse, chairman since 1962, appeared on national television. COC replaced its periodical with a magazine, *Dialoog*, that also reached out to heterosexuals. One of the editors was the novelist and poet Gerard [van het] Reve (1923–2006). His coming out in 1963 had coincided with a religious turn. Raised an atheist, Van het Reve converted to Catholicism—old-school *Roman* Catholicism, with all its devotional camp, pomp, and circumstance. He was baptized in June 1966, shortly after having been charged with blasphemy because of a text in the very first issue of *Dialoog*.

If God ever lets Himself be captured again in Living Matter, He will return as a Donkey, capable at most of formulating a few syllables, disowned, maligned, and whacked, but I will understand Him and directly go to bed with Him, but I will swathe His sweet little hooves, so as not to get too many scratches, when he thrashes while coming. (Van het Reve 1965)

Brussaard and Gottschalk protested, concerned that this offensive text would harm the budding acceptance of homophiles. In response, Van het Reve added a little extra by calling Jesus bisexual and prophesying that the divine donkey would give these two shepherds “an enormous kick in the pants.” Having read this, an ultraconservative Calvinist senator called for prosecution, which led to a highly publicized trial. Instead of referring to the literary, fictional character of his writings, Van het Reve claimed having expressed a sincerely religious view—thereby hitting the Achilles’ heel of the 1932 blasphemy ban. In 1968, the Supreme Court of the Netherlands acquitted him of all charges; one year later he was awarded the state prize for Dutch literature. The “Donkey Trial”—a *lieu de mémoire* of the Dutch sixties—made acceptance of homosexuality an emblem of modernity in the Netherlands. Modernity, then, did not preclude religion. Dutch Catholics—unlike the ultraorthodox Protestants who had started the trial and disproving their alleged cultural backwardness—had shown themselves every bit as modern as secular Dutch citizens. Van het Reve embodied both homosexual and Catholic emancipation, the two of which went hand in hand in these years (cf. Bos 2015).

As for homosexuality—or “homophilia,” as progressives then called it—word was out. Since around 1960, the percentage of newspaper articles mentioning same-sex love had steadily increased. In 1969, it suddenly peaked (see Fig. 2.2), probably because of a demonstration by young “homophile” activists on January 21—the first of its kind in Europe.⁴ Just like NWHK had done before the war, they called for repealing the aforementioned Section 248-bis of the Criminal Code, which set a higher age of consent for homosexuality. In 1971—sixty years after this section had become law—this finally happened. Henceforth, criminal law would no longer discriminate between homosexuality and heterosexuality. Another two years later COC was incorporated, which made

⁴See the blog of the activists’ leader, Joke Swiebel in *Notches* of April 2, 2019: <http://notchesblog.com/2019/04/02/joke-zwiebel-a-lifetime-of-dutch-gay-activism>.

Fig. 2.2 Number of articles mentioning *homofi** or *homose** per 100 articles mentioning a particle (*de*, *het* or *een*) in a sample of Dutch newspapers (Delpher, July 14, 2019) c.q. in a Calvinist newspaper (RD; Digibron, July 14, 2019), 1950/1971–1994

it eligible for government subsidies in these, the heydays of the Dutch welfare state (Swiebel 2019). The authorities' recognition, financially and otherwise, partly explains why COC grew into the world's oldest LGBT-association. Whereas many of its sister organizations in other Western countries were ousted after the "gay lib" revolution of the 1970s or during the HIV/AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 90s (Duyvendak 1996), the younger, queerer groups that sprang up in the Netherlands from time to time were no match for COC (Davidson 2015).

HOMOSEXUALITY AS A CONFESSIONAL ISSUE

Much like the Roman Catholic Church, be it slightly later, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) took a progressive turn. In 1972, their synod authorized a report on homosexuality that called same-sex love relationships "essentially equivalent" to marriage. "We know more than Paul did," said the main author, Professor Gerard Rothuizen. By subscribing to these views, the RCN "passed" their bigger sister, the

NRC, which traditionally encompassed both liberal Protestants and ultra-orthodox Calvinists (Mader 1993). The confessional diversity of the RCN, by contrast, had even decreased as a result of a schism in 1944, which gave birth to the “RCN Liberated.”

Contrary to what their name may suggest, these “Liberated” Reformed churches were more conservative than the RCN. In 1973, Professor Jochem Douma published a highly influential booklet, in which he strictly differentiated between sexual acts and sexual attraction. For the latter phenomena he consistently used the expression *homofilie*.⁵ While he firmly stated “that God does not want homosexual intercourse,” he emphasized that true believers, too, could be *homofiel* (Douma 1973, 83–88), thereby distancing himself both from mainline Protestants and from self-styled “born again” believers who claimed homosexuality could and should be cured (Bos 2019). Not before long, “homophiles” and their relatives made themselves heard in these and other orthodox Reformed churches, kicking off a slow but steady emancipation process (Bos 2010). When fundamentalist Protestants published a Dutch translation of the Nashville Statement in January 2019, the vast majority of neo-Calvinists, and also many Calvinists, distanced themselves from it (Appelman and Ganzevoort 2019).⁶

⁵Whereas in English, “homophilia” and “homophile/s” became hopelessly outdated after “Stonewall,” *homofi** was more often used than *homose** in Dutch newspapers from 1969 until 1978. Despite the fact that COC preferred *homoseksualiteit*—witness the new name it adopted in 1971—many journalists seem to have thought that *homofilie* and *homofiel/e/n* were the polite, politically correct expressions to use. But the style guide of the leading left-wing newspaper, published in 1997, advises against using them because they “have acquired evangelical overtones.” The expression “gay” (untranslated) became fashionable in the mid-1980s, and unlike the English original it indicates depoliticization, reflecting the success of *Gay Krant*—a Dutch, commercial, somewhat right-wing news magazine started in 1980.

⁶As Fig. 2.2 shows, the Calvinist, ‘experiential Reformed’ *Reformatorisch Dagblad* (RD), established in 1971, often paid more attention to homosexuality than the average Dutch newspaper. This is partly due to the fact that RD is a very serious newspaper, that hardly discusses ‘worldly’, ‘trivial’ pursuits like sport, pop music, cinema or tv. Note-worthy, though, is the sudden increase in 1982—probably in response to the first draft of an Equal Treatment Act.

“EITHER GAY, OR A CHRISTIAN”

While COC survived the “gay lib” revolution, it did not remain unchanged. In 1971, Benno Premsele and other board members quietly gave up their seats to a younger, more activist generation, most of whom were students in the social sciences or social workers. In a 1969 pamphlet titled “Farewell to a mother-fixation” (Branderhorst et al. 1969) some of them had rebuked COC’s reliance on a mental health discourse. Homosexuality, they argued, was not a private trouble but a public issue (cf. Mills 1959) that called for social critique. In 1972, therefore, COC once again changed its official name, this time to the Dutch Association for the Integration of Homosexuality. The end goal of the gay and lesbian movement, many said, should be its own dissolution. This ideological focus on changing societal structures and the concomitant rejection of identity politics—which seemed as parochial as pillarization (cf. Duyvendak 1994)—may actually have impeded political mobilization. While a growing number of North American and western European cities were the scene of annual “pride parades,” Dutch gays and lesbians did not march—at least, not for their own cause—until the late 1970s.

Their first sizeable demonstration took place on June 25, 1977. Around one thousand women and men marched “against the American witch hunt of homosexuals”—that is, against the political campaign led by US evangelical Anita Bryant for repealing equal treatment legislation. Apparently, the American religious right also galvanized *Dutch* lesbian and gay activism (cf. Fetner 2008). Three weeks earlier, Dutch activists had already placed an advertisement in the *Miami Herald*, undersigned by several professors and members of government, the mayors of Amsterdam and Utrecht, around twenty members of parliament—from left-wing and secular right-wing parties—and Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish clergy. Moral superiority and patriotic pride—a touch of sexual nationalism—were not foreign to the text:

We, in the land of Anne Frank, know what discrimination and prejudice can lead to. In the Netherlands, we have been living for many years with legislation which in no way limits a person’s rights or liberties because they may be homosexual. ... Yet our children in Holland have experienced no harmful effects from our tolerant position on homosexuality. Tolerance for people of differing backgrounds is a mark of civilization.

In order to raise funds for a second ad in *Time Magazine*,⁷ a benefit night was held, presented by *the* Dutch TV host (Mies Bouwman), in the country's most prestigious hall (the Amsterdam Concertgebouw). At this "Miami Nightmare," a choice of celebrities performed, fulminating against Bryant but also against domestic enemies such as CDA, the Christian Democratic party—"that bucket full of slime at the center of Dutch politics," as a former member of parliament called it. CDA was a recent merger of the Catholic party—which had lost almost half its seats within ten years—and two Protestant parties. It profiled itself by calling for a "moral revival" and recognition of the nuclear family as "the cornerstone of society." Many gay and lesbian activists took offense at this, but CDA's "family values" did not imply a condemnation of same-sex love.⁸

The second gay and lesbian mass demonstration was also a protest against a religious leader. In 1970, the Vatican—alarmed by the radically progressive turn of Dutch Catholics—had appointed the conservative Dr. Ad Simonis bishop of Rotterdam. Soon after that, it made the outright reactionary Dr. Jo Gijsen bishop of Roermond. Like Simonis, Gijsen faced fierce opposition from clergy as well as laity (Coleman 1978). In 1979, he stated that Communion should be refused to "practicing homophiles." To many, this came as a shock: since the "donkey trial" it had been generally believed that the Roman Catholic Church—unlike the fundamentalist Protestants who had tried to nail Van het Reve—accepted gays and lesbians.

On Holy Saturday—rebaptized as "Pink Saturday"—thousands marched through the streets of Roermond, with slogans like "Gijsen, bugger off!" (*Gijsen, flikker op!*). Beside "faggots" (*flikkers*) and "dykes" (*potten*) parents, church groups, and even a friar—wearing a habit—also participated, and among the signatories of a petition were around three hundred pastors. Two bishops had already distanced themselves

⁷In January 1978, the second ad—undersigned by, among others, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Günter Grass, Alberto Moravia, Felipe Gonzalez, Sir John Gilegud, Dorothee Sölle and the Dutch rabbi Awraham Soetendorp—appeared in *Time Magazine*.

⁸At the turn of the millennium, CDA had the highest number of openly homosexual members of parliament, and in 2006 it gave the country its first openly gay minister (Joop Wijn), soon followed by two others (Gerda Verburg in 2007 and Jan Kees de Jager in 2010).

from Gijsen, as had the (Catholic, Christian Democratic) prime minister. But singer-songwriter Robert Long—the country’s proudest, boldest self-styled faggot—wrote that gays and lesbians should realize they could “never, I repeat NEVER be members of a club that has denied and repressed sexuality throughout the ages.” The header of this letter in the country’s leading left-wing newspaper read, “Either gay or a Christian” (Long 1979).

In 1978—after Bryant but well before Gijsen—an antireligious mood had already arisen in COC and other, “queerer” groups. In the early 1980s, some COC members even complained about “hatred against Christians.” This was all the more remarkable because in the Netherlands, anticlericalism has traditionally been weak (Martin 1978). To some extent, this antireligious mood was a reaction against the global return of “strong religion” (Almond et al. 2003) exemplified by the US Religious Right, Pope John Paul II, and the Iranian Revolution—each of which turned against homosexuality. In the Netherlands, too—be it much more moderately—proponents of LGB emancipation were confronted with militant, conservative Christians, who raised their voices against outlawing discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. The political struggle over this issue—which I will further discuss later—made some LGB activists allergic to anything that reeked of religion.

But it is remarkable that activists also turned against religious groups that strongly *supported* their cause. In 1978, COC already discontinued its cooperation with the Pastoral Task Force. Rightly so, an activist commented, for “church structures and gay emancipation exclude each other.” This even held for American “gay churches,” he wrote; “What’s worse? The comparison with dogs’ lavatories and pussycat cemeteries forces itself upon us, all the more because within this movement one finds—usually retired—reverends who perform one gay marriage after the other” (Van Rheenen 1979, 11; cf. Bos 2017). Apparently, some activists also turned against “gay friendly” religious leaders, because the latter’s support was seen as patronizing—a millstone around the neck of a self-respecting, autonomous social movement striving for “liberation.”

EQUAL RITES BEFORE THE LAW

In its very first meeting in 1965, the Pastoral Task Force had discussed the possibility of blessing same-sex unions (Westhoff 1996, 431). It did so again in 1970, after Harry Thomas—a twenty-three-year old bookkeeper and founder of the Dutch Homophiles' Party—had announced that he and his lover would have their relationship solemnized in a Roman Catholic church. Bernard Cardinal Alfrink, archbishop of Utrecht, was invited and asked the Task Force's advice. Interestingly, its lay, gay members were much more critical of Thomas's plan than the clergymen. COC and other LGB organizations even outright condemned sanctifying monogamy. Already in 1969, a prominent lesbian student activist had said, "It's bad that among many gays you still find this craving for Steady Partnership. It's an imitation of marriage." Marriage should not be made more inclusive but less important by stripping it of societal privileges. The Task Force also advised against Thomas's plan—which later turned out to be a hoax—but mainly for strategic reasons: public "weddings" could provoke hostile reactions. However, same-sex relationships were "entitled to equivalent recognition," and therefore pastors should facilitate *private* celebrations. In the 1970s and 1980s these seem to have frequently taken place. In 1986 the Remonstrant Brotherhood even decided—as the first religious denomination in Europe—to officially allow the blessing of same-sex relationships (Bos 2017).

That same year, the Christian Democratic think tank pleaded for the public, legal recognition of nonmarital relationships. LGB activists and other progressives laughed it off, suggesting that CDA wanted to force gays and lesbians into the straightjacket of matrimony. But soon after that began "the extremely gradual and almost perversely nuanced (but highly successful) process of legislative recognition of same-sex partnership in the Netherlands" (Waldijk 2001, 441; cf. Van der Burg 2005). It was completed in December 2000, when the Senate—without the votes of faith-based parties—approved a bill that opened up marriage to same-sex couples. At present, this decision is often considered the pinnacle of LGB emancipation, but at the time, many Dutch citizens deemed it superfluous, given that same-sex couples could have their partnership "registered" since 1991. Whereas "registration" had no legal status whatsoever, it did have great symbolic value. It usually took place in the so-called "wedding room" of town hall and included virtually the same rituals as a regular civil marriage ceremony—notably a personalized speech

by a civil servant, if not by a sworn marriage registrar (cf. Derks 2017). Well before marriage equality became Dutch law, same-sex couples had gained access to equal *rites* (Bos 2017). The dominant narrative that the opening up of marriage to same-sex couples was a secular achievement shows a lack of historical awareness (cf. White 2015b). In 2000, when Parliament discussed marriage equality, Christian Democrats seem to have forgotten that they had been among the first to “propose.” Likewise, when it turned against “reluctant” marriage registrars in 2007–2014 (Derks 2017), COC seems to have forgotten that it had long opposed marriage.

GIVEN VERSUS CHOICE

What is more, few seem to remember the aforementioned political struggle over equal treatment legislation (*Algemene wet gelijke behandeling*), which lasted even longer (1977–1994) than the one over legalizing abortion (1970–1981). Confessional parties feared that Christian schools, for example, would be forced to employ gay or lesbian teachers. Eventually, a compromise was found by distinguishing between “the mere fact” of homosexual “orientation” and an openly gay or lesbian lifestyle (Mellink 2014). Referring to the former, the legislative text spoke of *gerichtheid*, which literally means “orientation,” but in everyday discourse another word was used, *geaardheid*, which can also be translated as “disposition,” “make-up,” “inclination,” “proclivity,” or “nature”—pertaining to many things, such as religion, for example, other than sex. In the course of the 1960s and early 1970s, this noun and the adjective *geaard/e* had gone out of fashion, but they came back with a vengeance in the late 1970s. Meanwhile, their connotations changed. Before 1969, *geaard** had been used much more often in conjunction with *kerk** (church*, ecclesiast*), *religi**, or its synonym *godsdiens** than with *sex**, *seks**, *homose**, or *homofi**, but after 1977 the tables turned (see Fig. 2.3). At present, *geaardheid* is virtually a synonym of sexual orientation, implicating it is “a given” like race (cf. Dudink 2011) instead of “a matter of choice”—like religion is, or at least should be, according to many “modern” (Dutch) citizens (Van den Berg et al. 2014).

Fig. 2.3 Number of articles mentioning *religi**, *godsdienst** or *kerk** c.q. *sex**, *seks**, *homose** or *homofi** per 100 articles mentioning *geaard** (excl. articles mentioning both) in a sample of Dutch newspapers (Delpher, November 2, 1900–1994)

STILL OTHERS

As we saw, quite a few early advocates of homosexual emancipation were Jewish—Aletrino, De Haan, Stokvis, Van Emde Boas, Engelschman, and Premsele—though all but De Haan were secular or, more precisely, postreligious. As Fig. 2.4 shows, this did not go unnoticed by nazified Dutch newspapers during World War II: articles that mentioned homosexuality or homosexuals very often also referred to Jews, Jewry, or Judaism—which was surely not meant as a recommendation. After 1945, some proponents of homosexual emancipation—for example, Engelschman and Premsele—drew a comparison between the societal positions of these two groups. Both Jews and homosexuals, they argued, suffered prejudice, discrimination, or even persecution. For example, in his 1961 radio talk, the aforementioned Klammer recounted how social ostracism had driven homosexual men and women to suicide.

Fig. 2.4 Number of articles mentioning *jood**, *joden** or *antisem** per 100 mentioning *homofi** or *homose** and vice versa (%), left) and the discursive association between these terms (χ^2/n , right) in a sample of Dutch newspapers (Delpher, December 21, 2019)

That's how people hush up one another [to death]. ... How is this possible, you ask? How was this possible, a German boy asked his father, that so many millions of Jews were murdered? Didn't you protest against it, then? No, the father said, and by the way: *Wir haben es nicht gewusst*. We didn't know all the things that were done to the Jews. The son thinks: You guys didn't want to know either. You've hushed up millions of fellow countrymen, Jewish countrymen [, to death].

From 1979 onwards, many gay and lesbian activists emphasized that homophobia was like antisemitism by donning pink triangles—the emblem that (German) homosexuals had been forced to wear in the Nazi concentration camps. That same year, Jewish gays and lesbians founded an association named “Sjalhomo”—because of the antireligious mood in COC, among other things. A Christian taskforce on religion and homosexuality remained part of COC but was met with opposition.

The “discursive association”⁹ between gays and Jews—or homosexuality and Jewry, Judaism—became particularly strong in the early 1980s, which saw the rise of far-right political parties. Since the late 1960s, a third group had been added to the equation: “guest workers,” alias “foreign workers.” Many of these men came from Muslim-majority countries, but instead of their religious or cultural identity, their socioeconomic and legal situation was emphasized in public discourse. In many newspaper articles from the 1970s and 80s they were mentioned in one breath with homosexual men and women as companions in societal misfortune. This trope, too, gained plausibility after the rise of far-right organizations that were almost as homophobic as they were racist (Bos 2016).

But from the late 1970s onwards, “Muslims”—as they were now often perceived—and “gays” appeared to be odd bedfellows. The hanging of wrong lovers in Khomeini’s Iran, for example, left little room for the age-old Orientalist view—a wet dream for some, a nightmare for others—that Muslim societies were more sexually permissive than Western ones. Dutch public debate on “Islam and homosexuality” erupted in the summer of 1986 (see Fig. 2.5), when the members of a Surinamese Dutch mosque organization in a quiet province town protested against the municipality’s decision to house the local COC chapter in a room next to theirs. Their protest—phrased in strongly homophobic terms—elicited all the

⁹The “discursive association” between two expressions (x and y) can be brought to light by comparing the actually observed number of texts mentioning both (o) to the number one would expect (e), assuming that expression x (e.g., homosexual* or gay) occurs exactly as often—percentage-wise—in texts that *do* mention expression y (e.g., jew* or judai*) and in those that *do not*. For example, if 20% of all texts mention x, and 30% mention y, the expected amount of texts mentioning both x and y is 6% of the total number. The difference between o and e is then squared—so that it does not matter *which* number is higher or lower, while it matters all the more *how much* they differ—and divided through e. This measure (chi-square alias χ^2) is commonly used to determine whether there is a statistically significant relation between two variables (e.g., x = male/female and y = smoking/nonsmoking), which is the case when χ^2 is above a set norm value. In analyzing texts, such a test is useless, because expressions are culturally interrelated in intricate ways. “Gay” and “Jew,” for example, both refer to humans and can therefore be expected to occur more often in one and the same text than “gay” and “asteroid”—but exactly *how much* more often? I use this measure (χ^2) not as a statistical test but as a heuristic tool for *historical* inquiry, assuming that a substantial, sudden increase or decrease of χ^2 may indicate a meaningful, *culturally* significant discursive change—which can only be assessed, however, by actually reading texts. In order to eliminate the distorting influence of temporal changes in sample size—for example, because a newspaper is discontinued—I divide χ^2 by the total number of texts (χ^2/n).

Fig. 2.5 Number of articles mentioning *islam**, *moham** or *moslim** per 100 mentioning *homofi** or *homose** and vice versa (% , left) and the discursive association between these terms (χ^2/n , right) in a sample of Dutch newspapers (Delpher, December 21, 2019)

more public indignation because LGB activists had repeatedly expressed their solidarity with ethnic and religious minorities. But an editor of the country's largest—secular, right-wing populist—daily complained that believers were being forced to accept homosexuality (Bos 2016). The late 1980s and the 1990s saw several similar episodes of public upheaval, all of which would be overshadowed, however—and are now largely forgotten, also among scholars—by the “the El-Moumni affair” in May 2001, named after the Moroccan-Dutch imam who made public statements on homosexuality that many Dutch citizens deemed homophobic and backward (Hekma 2002; cf. Hekma and Duyvendak 2011).¹⁰

Critical scholars have meticulously analyzed twenty-first-century public discourse on homosexuality and Islam and shown how it has been instrumentalized by nationalist, nativist, culturalist politicians and media (see, among others, Puar 2007; Butler 2008; Mepschen et al. 2010; Dudink 2011, 2016; Jivray and De Jong 2011; Bracke 2012; El-Tayeb 2012;

¹⁰The sudden increase of the “discursive association” between Islam and homosexuality in 1994 (see Fig. 2.5) has to do with the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, where the assertion of “reproductive rights” and pleas for “sexual health” were met with opposition from Muslim authorities as well as the Vatican.

and Mepschen's chapter in the present volume). Yet by focusing on "framing," "scapegoating," or "othering" they underestimate the agency of those they believe to be victims of all this. Paradoxically, the "dramatization" of this public issue (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988; Gusfield 1984) was made possible by foreign-born imams (cf. Cherribi 1999) and ethnic-minority gays and lesbians, both of whom arrived on the scene in the 1990s. Some of the experiences the latter related and their hesitations about "coming out" were taken as evidence of a "clash of cultures"—grist to the mill of "human interest" journalism and popular fiction on which some politicians capitalized. The "queer Muslim" was a cultural character (Van den Berg et al. 2014; cf. Jordan 2011) whose features seemed familiar, resembling those of gay and lesbian Christians, who had been portrayed since the 1960s. What was new about this character was that it represented two social categories that had stood shoulder to shoulder in the progressive political rhetoric of the 1970s and 80s, but—unlike gays and Jews—had hardly ever been publicly embodied by one and the same person (Bos 2016).

CONCLUSION

In the country now known as the Netherlands, "the unmentionable vice" was long attributed to ethnic and religious outsiders, notably Mediterranean "Papists" and Muslims. Likewise, the expression "homosexuality" was initially used with reference to social groups far removed from bourgeois readership: opulent medieval French kings or penniless Chinese workers in the godforsaken outskirts of an empire. Today, by contrast, acceptance of homosexuality is deemed a core value of "Dutch culture" or "Western civilization" that newcomers are required to embrace.

Same-sex sexuality has come a long way. The home it has found in the Netherlands is arguably safer, more comfortable, and more accessible to lovers of different likings than used to be the case here—or still is in many other countries—but it fails to remind the residents where they come from. Cultural amnesia has led many to believe that "sexual diversity" requires the defeat of institutionalized religion. This underestimates the lasting influence of other societal institutions—notably gender norms—and does no justice to the contributions some religious figures have made to the social acceptance of homosexuality. Even with other religious officials all too often making life impossible for "wrong lovers," the latter

have sometimes derived a sense of dignity, meaning, and belonging from their faith—and occasionally even means of resistance.

The episodes presented in this chapter do not corroborate the popular narrative of an “eternal warfare” of religious institutions with (same-sex) sexuality, but testify to discontinuity. Temporal breaches in discursive associations can more easily be brought to light by means of quantitative content analysis of text databases—which is not to say that historians should count *instead* of (closely) read.

Some of the most salient (discursive) breaches took place in the 1970s. In the early years of that decade, homosexuality was (again) decriminalized, COC was incorporated, and Protestant denominations began to officially discuss homosexuality, with some accommodating same-sex lovers and others explicitly condemning same-sex sex—but often not homosexual orientation. As a result, homosexuality—which had mainly been a pastoral concern in the 1960s—became a doctrinal issue (cf. MacCulloch 2003), one that defined a denomination’s or believer’s position on a scale ranging from fundamentalist (or “Bible believing”) to latitudinarian (or “modern”) Christianity. In later decades, this scale was transposed into one that ranged from religious to secular and was used for measuring the distance between the established—“enlightened” Dutch citizens or Westerners at large—and outsiders.

Something else that changed in the early 1970s was COC. In January 1971, one month before making place for a younger generation, its board protested against the Vatican’s nomination of Simonis as bishop of Rotterdam. In a press release, it called his views on homosexuality outdated and added that its five Roman Catholic members—five out of eight—hoped he would turn down his nomination. It is doubtful whether all these five were dutiful churchgoers, but it is remarkable that they “came out” as being church members. In recent years, too, COC has repeatedly commented on pronouncements and decisions by bishops and popes (Derks 2018) but—to my knowledge—without ever suggesting that the majority of its board belonged to the Mother Church.

Whereas there has been a homosexual advocacy organization in the Netherlands ever since 1946—if not since 1912—it was only in the late 1970s that the country saw the rise of a gay and lesbian *movement* with no qualms about “identity politics.” For its mobilization, religion—or, more precisely, religious intolerance of homosexuality—proved to be a suitable theme. Religion was not the safest subject matter. But neither was it all too divisive, because the vast majority of Dutch Christians loathed Bryant

and Gijsen. Not before long, however, activists turned against institutionalized religion in general—which can only partly be explained as a response to the explicit antigayness of religious fundamentalists (cf. Fetner 2008).

In present-day critical scholarship, the popular depiction of Islam as a threat to sexual diversity is usually attributed to the political right, but there is reason to believe that it is partly rooted in the antireligious mood of the—then overwhelmingly left-wing—gay and lesbian movement of the late 1970s and 1980s. That said, COC became more hospitable to folks of faith in the course of the 1990s, when it dawned upon gay and lesbian activists how much religion meant not only to the “rear guard” of elderly, provincial “homophiles” but also to many young, urban queers of color.

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