

Panel H: Re-thinking Gender: Male/female Dynamics of Sex and Power (Signe Arnfred/Elina Oinas)

Session 1: Sex, Same-Sex and Queer Politics in Africa

Elina Oinas, University of Turku (Finland): Rights and Traditions, Dogs and Pigs

The paper examines different arguments used by different parties involved in the heated debate about the so called homosexuality bill in Uganda. How are the frontlines drawn in this debate? How to make sense of them? What are the different discursive constructs of "Africa", "Africanness", rights and culture that are exploited in these rhetorics? Both local actors, media interest and international campaigns will be examined. The interests of the paper go beyond the theme of sexualities, as the paper examines uses of tradition, colonialism, sovereignty, donor rule and democracy in this uniquely specific yet generally surprisingly revealing debate.

Thomas Strong, University of Ireland, Maynooth: Translation as Domination/Translating Domination: Problems in the Grammar and Vocabulary of Same-Sex Intimacies

Contemporary analysis of sexuality in Africa and elsewhere often problematizes the uncritical 'export' of notions such as 'homosexuality,' 'gay,' and even 'same-sex' to non-European contexts where the conceptual framing of genders and identities may be rooted in premises quite different from those that characterize Euro-American discourses of 'sexuality.' Analysis and description may linger on questions of terminology or vocabulary, exposing ways in which identity terms (such as 'homosexual' or 'gay') carry connotations linked to the biopolitical order(ing) of modernity. Drawing on these critiques, this paper seeks to put them into action, by shifting discussion from the 'terms' or 'vocabularies' people use to describe themselves and others to those notions meant to capture particular kinds or qualities of social relation, in particular 'domination' or 'subordination.' Attention to the premises underlying people's own understanding of their social marginalization or inclusion should inform discussion of the 'rights' of sexual minorities in Africa and elsewhere. The paper is based on new work by Hoard, Gaudio, Epprecht, Englund and others.

Henriette Gunkel, University of Fort Hare (South Africa): Queer African Politics – Reflecting on possible academic interventions in post-colonial homophobia on the African continent.

In recent years the concept of homophobia has been increasingly theorized from a postcolonial perspective, defining not only the act of violence itself but also the understanding of homophobia as a discursive formation that 'reveals its own form of violence'. This theoretical debate is also reflected in activist's responses to (certain) 'globalized solidarity': in 2007, for example, an open letter signed by African LGBTI Human Rights Defenders was addressed to Peter Tatchell and his London-based organization Outrage! in which their involvements in Nigerian politics around sexuality were criticized as 'exploitative and harmful for local activists'. The response to Tatchell's 'neo-colonialism' and 'blatant disrespect' needs to be seen in an international context of sexual politics. In Europe, for example, most representations around gay politics that concern the African continent – even South Africa – centre on hate crime, particularly against black lesbians. This is problematic for various reasons; one reason is that it feeds into what Jasbir Puar calls the 'geopolitical mapping of homophobia', which is the projection of homophobia onto spaces other than the West.

So how can we then engage, within a meaningful scholarship, with Uganda's proposed tightening of its anti-gay laws which already make homosexuality punishable by life imprisonment; or with the blatant homophobia in Malawi and Kenya for that matter? In this paper I want to approach the question of why gay rights are as highly contested as they are in the process of constituting

decolonized subjectivities in the African context – while promoting a politics that not only contests dominant heteronormative, but also homonormative assumptions and institutions.

Christian Groes-Green, University of Copenhagen (DK): Young men’s sexual performance in the changing gender landscape of Maputo, Mozambique. Men’s potency, women’s pleasure?

Based on findings from ethnographic fieldwork among secondary school youth in Maputo I discuss whether young men’s emphasis on being ‘bom picos’ (good lovers) in relationships to girlfriends is a sign that gender relations are changing. I show how socio-economic, cultural and political changes in Maputo shape young men’s sexuality both in relation to other classes of men and in response to female partners’ demands. The emerging ‘bom pico’ ideal can be understood in the light of growing socio-economic inequalities that change poor young men’s roles and as an effect of the introduction of sexual education in secondary schools which give impetus to women’s demands in the sexual field. In order to compete with more affluent peers who perform the hegemonic provider role poor young men resort to the role of lovers and rely on ‘sexual capital’ in the absence of economic capital. Values such as mutual respect and pleasure, love and monogamy poses an alternative to hegemonic masculinities and predatory sexualities among youth and indicate that we should stay open to ‘positive’ features of male sexual practices in Africa.

Session 2: Discourses and Narratives of Men and Women in Development Aid

Lene Bull Christiansen, Roskilde University (DK): The White Man’s Burden: Celebrity narratives in Danish development aid.

This paper will explore how in Danish development aid awareness campaigns, have become a stage on which male celebrities can act out the characteristics associated with the so-called ‘new man’, while at the same time reiterating colonialist imaginings of ‘The White Man’s Burden’.

Since 2000, conditionalities attached to Danida funding of NGO driven development aid placed an added emphasis on ‘popular support’ of NGO’s. This has affected a movement in awareness campaigns over the last 10 years, away from ‘information’ towards an emotionally driven modality of ‘witnessing’. Central to this shift has been the ‘celebrity as moderator’; a narrative strategy in which ‘problems and solutions’ are mediated on a personalised level, through the eyes of the celebrity narrator, who bares witness to ‘devastating suffering’ and ‘wonderful transformations’. TV-documentaries, talk-show appearances and news-stories are the preferred formats through which narratives of ‘celebrity witnessing aid’ is portrayed. This preferably with the celebrity narrator having himself ‘experienced’ the actual and emotional journey of witnessing healing or transformation in ‘the third world’ affected by Danish development aid.

Celebrity or so-called ‘star power’ connotes to idealised forms of masculinity and femininity, and celebrities thus form important cultural signposts for movements in the construction of gendered norms. Nordic gender researchers have pointed out shifts in gendered norms towards the ‘new man’, endowed with an idealisation of care giving, sensitivity and emotional openness; attributes traditionally disassociated with masculinity. This paper explores the ways in which the aid narratives of ‘witnessing’ provides a venue for displaying these new masculine characteristics, while at the same time reinforcing classical north-south narratives of ‘white men saving black women from black men’.

Signe Arnfred, Roskilde University (DK): Women as poor and oppressed – or active and enterprising? Conceptions of women in development aid

Two seemingly very different standard images of 3rd world women are currently presented in Western media in contexts of development assistance of various kinds.

There is first the image of the 'poor oppressed woman needing salvation', most frequently invoked in contexts of the 'War on Terror'. Part of the legitimation for this war is exactly that valiant Western men should rush to the rescue of poor oppressed Muslim women, saving them from their own culture and their own men. As put by Gayatri Spivak: "White men saving brown women from brown men."

At the same time there is also the other image of the 'active enterprising woman', the image which graces World Bank and Danida brochures on 'Gender Equality', for instance in the context of the struggle for Millenium Development Goal no 3 (on Gender Equality). The matching stereotype of 3rd world men is in this context the stupid, lazy men, who go drinking while the active, enterprising women are the responsible ones, doing all the work.

Based on post-colonial feminist analysis and my own readings of World Bank and Danida material the paper will discuss these two standard images of 3rd world women, showing how they derive from Western gender perceptions, rooted in gender thinking of different times. Both of these images, and the Western gender thinking on which they are based, have been strongly contested by 3rd world/post-colonial gender scholars, criticising the universalizing implications of white Western feminism. The paper will discuss the post-colonial feminist critique while also pointing to different conceptualizations of women and gender – conceptualizations which might be better geared to analysis of 3rd world realities, possibly also contributing to new understandings of gender in the West.