



Heroes and Invaders: gay and lesbian pride parades and the public/private distinction in New Zealand media accounts

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ABSTRACT *Public space is constructed as heterosexual space in at least two senses. First, heterosexuality in public is regarded as unproblematic, whereas lesbian and gay identities are policed by subtle or overt means. Second, heterosexuality is not obviously marked in public. In this article these positions are used as a starting point to investigate the complexities of the relationships between heterosexuality, homosexuality and the public and private spheres. Much of the discussion takes as its basis the media coverage of New Zealand's lesbian and gay pride parades. Recent heterosexist discourse in New Zealand implies that gay men and lesbians are leaving the private sphere and are forcing a politicisation of both the public sphere and the metaphorical space of the private, heterosexual mind. A discursive inversion occurs whereby the homosexual subject becomes powerful and tyrannous, and the heterosexual is coerced and oppressed. Crucial to such discourse is a mobilisation of the conservative tendencies of liberalism, and an attendant denial of the privileged position granted to heterosexuality.*

The abject provokes fear and loathing because it exposes the border between self and other as constituted and fragile and threatens to dissolve the subject by dissolving the border. (Young, 1990, p. 144)

Introduction

It has been argued in the geographical literature that public space—and specifically urban space—can be understood as heterosexual space (Valentine, 1993, 1996; Duncan, 1996; Myslik, 1996; Namaste, 1996; Binnie, 1997; Johnston, 1997). When urban spaces are heterosexualised it is expected that those present will be heterosexual rather than lesbian or gay. The heterosexualisation of urban space occurs through processes both subtle and overt, including self-policing by lesbians and gay men, their physical exclusion from particular spaces, the manifestation of moral disapproval, and the threat or use of violence. While heterosexuality is omnipresent, homosexual identities 'in public' are often regarded as having escaped from their rightful place—the private sphere, the home, the closet.

In this article I examine the relationships between heterosexuality, homosexuality, publicity and privacy as they are played out in recent New Zealand media discourse,

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with an emphasis on the coverage of gay and lesbian pride parades. I take as my starting point the literature that examines how the heterosexualisation of space occurs through the positioning of heterosexuality as a universal, taken-for-granted norm and homosexuality as a specific, out-of-place Other. I then argue that an increasing number of media texts in New Zealand suggest that lesbians and gay men have left the 'private' sphere to intrude into or invade the 'public' space of the city street and, in turn, the 'private' space of the minds of heterosexuals. Such discourses employ liberal concepts and distinctions in ways that cement the normative status of heterosexuality and the subordination and othering of homosexuality [1].

Media Texts, Discourse and Social Control

Media texts construct and reproduce discourse on the social order, often in ways that are aligned with relations of domination in a given society. They do this by privileging dominant accounts of the world as commonsensical and reinforcing distinctions between 'norm' and 'deviance' (Ericson *et al.*, 1987; Hartley, 1992). Fejes & Petrich (1993) argue that in general there has been a change over time from overwhelmingly negative media portrayals of lesbians and gay men to a wider variety of representations. They suggest, however, that lesbian and gay identities are contained through the erection and maintenance of boundaries of acceptability and through controls on the representations that are permitted and those that are prohibited.

Even in a small country like New Zealand there is a very large number of media outlets, and therefore I have been selective in deciding which media to examine. The texts used in this article are taken from several of New Zealand's major metropolitan dailies that also enjoy substantial rural and provincial readership (*Evening Post*, *Dominion*, *New Zealand Herald*), a number of high-circulation monthly or weekly general readership magazines (*North and South*, *Metro*, *Listener*), the major television networks, and the nationwide state radio station (*National Radio*). I have read all copies of the *Evening Post*, *North and South* and *Listener* between 1993 and 1997 and have scrutinised the other sources during periods of particular controversy.

Media coverage of pride parades forms the basis for this article. Typically, in any given newspaper, coverage of these controversies involves a series of news items, one or more editorials and opinion columns, and a series of letters to the editor. Magazines may select the issue for a feature story and/or include letters to the editor. Television or radio broadcasts may also feature news items or commentary.

I focus on those discourses about homosexuality which are complicit in the reproduction of heterosexism; therefore those texts which contain such discourses are prominent within my project. This is not to say that I omitted an examination of oppositional or anti-heterosexist discourse. However, while mainstream New Zealand media do sometimes report lesbian or gay lives and events as examples of social 'diversity' or to demonstrate changes to laws, their inclusion of oppositional discourse is usually limited to the occasional opinion column or letter to the editor. Radical politics—including critiques of heterosexuality—are not visible or permitted. Increasingly, liberalism is the standard discursive position within New Zealand, even for those taking conservative political stands.

Homosexuality, Publicity, Privacy and the Struggle over Meaning

In recent years a wide range of literature has examined the ways in which dualisms of 'public' and 'private' operate with respect to homosexuality. This has included academic writings on sexuality (Valentine, 1993, 1996; Bell, 1995; Bell & Valentine, 1995; Duncan, 1996; Myslik, 1996; Namaste, 1996; Brown, 1997; Johnston, 1997), as well as more 'popular' non-fiction writing (Signorile, 1994). Geographical writers who examine exclusion, transgression and resistance more generally also mention the ways in which gay men and lesbians are positioned within public/private dualisms (Sibley, 1995; Cresswell, 1996), as do feminist political theorists for whom gender relations constitute a primary focus (Young, 1990; Fraser, 1992, 1995; Frazer & Lacey, 1993; Thornton, 1995).

Most, if not all, of these writers take the distinctions between 'public' and 'private' to be multiple and socially constructed, rather than singular, unitary and *a priori* (Fraser, 1992, p. 131). In other words, no physical or institutional space is 'public' or 'private' outside of the social relations and geographical contexts that constitute it as such. The boundaries between these spheres vary and shift depending on their particular contexts and are open to contestation and struggle. Despite their contingency, however, the notions of separable 'public' and 'private' spheres and spaces [2] come to have somewhat material existences, as people bestow meaning on them and behave and believe accordingly (Woodhead, 1995, p. 236). People act toward them as if they were 'real' [3].

The notion that social subjects should exist in particular relationships to public and private spheres has a long history. A public/private dualism is central to the liberal tradition of thought, although the dualism itself predates liberalism (Thornton, 1995, p. 3) [4]. In the liberal dualism, the public represents a 'rational' and 'political' world of work and decision-making, whereas the private is identified with the family, intimacy and emotion, and is said to represent a haven from the pressures and state intervention of 'the public sphere' (Frazer, 1996). As a result, 'the private sphere' is said to be devoid of politics (Frazer & Lacey, 1993, p. 7; Brown, 1997, p. 8). Within the liberal tradition, the public citizen has been constructed as bourgeois and male, and, more recently, heterosexual (Brown, 1997, p. 8). This bourgeois, male public ideal is somewhat exclusionary, and women and gay men are expected to remain within a private sphere (Young, 1990; Phillips, 1991; Fraser, 1992; Duncan, 1996) [5]. Such relegation may even be portrayed positively when the expectation of privacy is constructed as the 'right' to privacy, as Signorile (1994) argues in the context of the 'outing' of famous personalities.

The idea that homosexuality is only tolerable if it remains in private retains a significant presence in contemporary popular discourse. An intolerable breach of boundary is perceived to occur if lesbians and gay men attempt to occupy public spheres and spaces (Padgug, 1992; Richardson, 1996). One anti-gay protester, Julian Batchelor from an evangelical Christian group known as 'Operation Jerusalem', argued for this position thus:

[H]omosexuals have a right to do whatever they like within the bounds of their own privacy. But I'd say that when their homosexual behaviour comes out into a public place and infringes on the world, then it's not acceptable. (Batchelor, cited in Legat, 1994)

At the same time, heterosexuality's omnipresence 'in public' is not recognised, leading to claims that heterosexuality is not publicly 'flaunted' (Valentine, 1993; Myslik, 1996). Heterosexuality is naturalised and universalised such that it is invisible in public space, despite heterosexual practices in fact being dominant and omnipresent (Duncan, 1996). This is not to say that anything occurring between men and women in public is

automatically considered to be unproblematic: a heterosexual couple engaging in sexual intercourse in the foyer of the public library would widely be seen as behaving inappropriately. The boundaries of permissibility are set in different places for homosexuality than for heterosexuality, however. Heterosexual expressions of affection are commonplace on the front pages of newspapers, but such same-sex expressions are very rare indeed! Where sexual behaviour between heterosexuals is considered 'inappropriate' it is regarded as merely inappropriate sexual behaviour, rather than inappropriate *heterosexual* behaviour.

Heterosexuality is invisibly visible. Heterosexuality is visible in that it is (often) all there is, yet it is also invisible in that it is not recognised *as* heterosexuality. Another way of expressing this point is to suggest that heterosexuality is unmarked within the social and spatial order, whereas homosexuality is marked. Young (1990) suggests that such a relation of unmarked/marked is common to the relationship of dominant to subordinate [6].

Some recent New Zealand media discourse suggests that lesbians and gay men threaten to move beyond an occupation of public space towards an invasion of the most private space possible: the heterosexual mind. This invasion is said to involve the forcible implantation of radical notions about homosexuality into this mind, and subsequent 'thought policing' to ensure that challenges to an ostensibly insurgent homosexuality are not voiced by heterosexuals. While discourse about the 'promotion' of homosexuality relies on the erasure of the specificity and visibility of heterosexuality, discourse about lesbian and gay 'thought control' of the heterosexual mind relies on the denial of domination under institutionalised heterosexuality [7].

In such an argument about invasion, the mind is understood to have a material, spatial quality. Kirby (1996) argues that Freud and his followers perceived the psyche and the mind as 'spaces' or 'territories'. In this view, subjectivity is understood as a space or series of spaces that are occupied by various aspects of the self. In that the mind can be understood as a collectively-imaginable space, it is open to being territorialised, invaded or altered by outside influences—in this case, it is argued, by the lesbian or gay man who has escaped from his or her private closet into public spheres and spaces where he or she garners the power and influence to coerce heterosexuals.

In the later sections of this article, I explore the more recent forms of New Zealand media discourse on the ostensible invasion of heterosexual privacy by lesbians and gay men. First, I will provide a context for this discourse by considering homosexuality and public/private distinctions with regard to two New Zealand lesbian and gay pride parades. I will consider how public spaces are constructed as the legitimate realm of powerful groups which are open to invasion by those who do not belong there. This sets the scene for my discussion of the struggle over the ordering of a range of physical and metaphorical spaces.

Hero and Devotion Parades

A great slew of publicity informs us that the annual Devotion festival is on again. Sigh. Can it really be that time of year already? I suspect that Wellington's homosexual community enjoys this orgy of self-promotion so much they've secretly decided to hold it every few weeks. It seems only about that long since the last one. (du Fresne, 1995)

Every year the cities of Auckland and Wellington host lesbian and gay pride festivals [8], each of which involves a street parade, a dance party and numerous other cultural events. In Wellington, the dance party has been the main event of the Devotion festival, although there is a daytime street parade. In Auckland's Hero festival, the after-dark street parade is the most well-known event and the most commented-upon. Each year since the Hero Parade's inauguration the news media has been full of comment from those who oppose the parade.

The authors of the texts that oppose lesbian and gay presence in public space argue in familiar terms about homosexuality being 'flaunted' or 'promoted' by the parades. It is suggested that to parade down a city street is to engage in 'exhibitionism', or to be an 'in-your-face homosexualist' (du Fresne, 1995; Hall, 1996; Roger, 1997). *Evening Post* deputy editor Karl du Fresne (1997) suggests that the Hero Parade is a 'public celebration of homosexuality', which 'glamourise[s] a lifestyle which, at its most excessive, is grotesque, sleazy and not infrequently injurious to the health'. He refers to the Devotion festival as an 'orgy of self-promotion' (du Fresne, 1995).

Les Mills, the former conservative [9] Mayor of Auckland, has suggested that in parading down a public street in the Hero Parade, the city's lesbian and gay communities are involved in the promotion of homosexuality. In a letter to the New Zealand AIDS Foundation, written after \$5000 of city council money had been granted to help stage the parade, he stated, 'I am not prepared to personally encourage homosexuality or support the promotion of a homosexual lifestyle as an individual or by the Auckland City Council from city rates' (Legat, 1994, p. 91).

These kinds of arguments offer further evidence for the familiar discussions about the ways in which homosexuality is deemed to be 'out of place' in the public space of the street (Cresswell, 1996). Such arguments reinforce the denial of the specificity of heterosexuality as they render invisible the ways in which heterosexuality is enacted in public spaces.

One parade opponent, Auckland City Councillor Phil Raffills, wanted to draw a clear boundary between public and private and to limit the parade to a private space. He suggested that the parade should be staged at a city racecourse, with paid entry, so nobody would come across it by accident while going about their daily business (Television New Zealand [TVNZ], 1998). On the one hand, such a position takes the liberal public/private distinction to its rigidly demarcated extreme; on the other hand, it stands in opposition to bourgeois liberal ideals of public space as an arena of participation and as a place where 'one always risks encounter with those who are different' (Young, 1990, p. 240). For Raffills, the boundary of the public lies at the point where no one need encounter those who are different, because those others are removed to a space upon which one could not unknowingly stumble [10]. According to this opponent, 'public' space is a space where those like him would only encounter individuals similar to themselves.

In 1996 the parade was moved from Auckland's main street to Ponsonby Road. This street is located within Auckland's 'gay ghetto', and has been referred to as New Zealand's 'gayest street' (Gearing, 1997, p. 27). Johnston (1997) has argued that the shifting of the parade from Auckland's main street to Ponsonby Road in 1996 represented a shift from public space to the private space of the ghetto, and Bell & Valentine (1995) suggest that parading through a 'gay ghetto' is not challenging and confrontational to heteronormative culture. Those who oppose the Hero parade see it as an unacceptable form of homosexual activity. From their perspective, the street is a place where challenges to the heteronormativity of public space do not belong, whether the street be

in a 'gay ghetto' or in a more conservative part of town; parading in Ponsonby Road is regarded by opponents as unacceptable homosexual publicity, not a form of privacy [11]. The concepts 'public' and 'private' evidently have little room to stretch and give here. If one is in a street—any street—one is 'in public.'

In an important sense it is the common invisibility of homosexuality in public space and the removal of lesbian and gay subjectivities from that space, with the unmarked omnipresence of heterosexuality, which creates the parades' *raison d'être* in the first place. Parades such as Hero and Devotion give the public visibility which homosexuality lacks, and the parades are often supported in such terms (Gearing, 1997). As one gay writer of a letter to the editor writes in support of Devotion, '[w]ith 364 heterosexual days in the year [name of parade opponent] need not fear one gay day' (Young, 1995, p. 6). While a parade involves a concentration of performed gay and lesbian identities within the space of one city street on one day, this event is a response to the systematic debarring of the performance of these identities from more diffuse, everyday public settings. Whereas the omnipresence of heterosexuality ensures heterosexuals have no need to parade, lesbians' and gay men's parading in solidarity with each other is one way to challenge the heterosexualised nature of public space in relative safety.

There is a tradition of parades by members of minority groups who seek to challenge dominant meanings of public space. Ryan (1989, p. 153) notes that in the USA in the nineteenth century, St Patrick's Day parades paved the way for other parades in which 'distinctive groups imprinted their identity on the public mind', including blacks, suffragists and working-class people. Parades are meant to challenge these groups' invisibility and to assert that public spaces do not only belong to those in positions of power. Accordingly, these parades have at times been viewed with animosity. The St Patrick's Day parade was opposed by some, with the *New York Times* stating in 1873 that 'It is difficult in the extreme for the American mind to understand' (Ryan, 1989, p. 146). Cohen (1982, p. 24) notes that white opposition grew as the Notting Hill carnival in London became increasingly staged by West Indian people and where it developed political critique, such as portrayals of West Indian youth imprisonment (see also Jackson, 1988, p. 216). Such a parade was 'out of place' as it represented a too overt publicising of political expression by a group who should 'know their place'. In a contemporary New Zealand example, du Fresne (1995) contrasts 'responsible' minorities with 'homosexual activists' who:

are not content, like other minority groups in society, to get on quietly with their lives. They parade in the streets and clamour to be seen more on TV and in the movies.

Some opponents of Auckland's Hero Parade have attempted to highlight what they see as the 'deviancy' of homosexuality by equating the partial nudity in the parade with homosexuality itself. In such discourse nudity, obscenity and homosexuality are conflated, so that nudity comes to signify not only the parade, but also homosexuality more generally. In the press coverage of the parade, objections to lesbians and gay men marching down the street 'promoting their lifestyle' sat side by side with complaints about 'men that [*sic*] had G-strings on and not much else, and bare-topped women' (Rudman, 1994; Speden, 1994a, 1994b). In protests against the parade, signs reading 'No Public Nudity' were juxtaposed to those reading 'Homosexuality is a Thing God Hates' and 'The Silent Majority Say No' (Legat, 1994; Rudman, 1994). One letter-writer to the *Evening Post* combined opposition to 'explicit sex' in public, a 'public display of deviancy', and suggestions of homosexuality as a mental 'disorder':

we do not have to participate or view their deviant activities and behaviour on our city streets. Surely there is enough explicit sex exposed to us daily on our television screens ... Do we have parades of the handicapped? Mentally unstable? Criminally insane? Exploiting their frailties for all the public to view? ... we do have understanding for those of us who 'walk another road', but a public display of their deviancy is not the answer. (Barrett, 1997)

Despite the opponents' eagerness to draw these links between homosexuality and public nudity/sexuality, sexualised bodies are an integral part of the tradition of Carnival, and they are not specific to Hero or to homosexuality [12]. Hero is clearly situated within the tradition of Carnival, with its marchers in G-strings carrying large pink pom-poms, or participants dressed in elaborate costumes with enormous wigs and gigantic feather headdresses. One year, the anti-parade Mayor of Auckland was portrayed as a large pig being whipped by elves, invoking the carnivalesque tradition in which patterns of social status are temporarily symbolically reversed, and where 'the sacred is (briefly) profaned' (Jackson, 1988, p. 215). The symbolic nature of the parade is missed by one newspaper columnist, who imputes carnivalesque performances as a permanent stain on the character of otherwise 'respectable' members of the community:

'How would you react to your doctor, lawyer, accountant or dentist on a Monday morning when on Saturday night you spotted him mincing and prancing down Ponsonby Rd dressed as a butterfly or fairy?' (Roger, 1998).[13]

The parody of conservative discourse represented by a placard reading 'we recruit' was similarly read literally rather than ironically. Auckland City Councillor Phil Raffills argued that AIDS memorial floats in the Hero Parade were a cover for the 'homosexual community' to 'recruit' new people; 'there was a parade I think two years ago, when one of the placards read "we recruit", now to me, that is deliberately provocative', he argued (TVNZ, 1997). Raffills read the slogan literally, understanding it as evidence of a concerted attempt to destabilise a heterosexuality that he seeks to defend [14].

Liberalism and Shifting Public Discourse

These arguments put forward by the parades' opponents make direct appeals to the public/private distinction within liberal thought. They argue that homosexuality is and should be private, whereas one's daily business in the street is public. It is worth revisiting the point at which this dualism has tended to break down, that is, where private consensual sexual activity is seen to merit state interference and ban. In the USA the most famous case is that of *Bowers v Hardwick* in which anti-sodomy laws were upheld. In that case the liberal ideal of privacy did not protect the men who were arrested for consensual sex in their home.

It would be useful to address this point in the New Zealand context. In 1986, the Homosexual Law Reform Bill, which decriminalised male-male sex, was passed in Parliament. The bill was hotly opposed on the grounds that the state should prohibit ostensibly 'amoral', 'unnatural' and 'unhealthy' forms of sexual acts even when conducted in private (Ryan, 1988). Sexual relations between women, however, have never been illegal in New Zealand. This is because conservative groups who seek state interference in the 'privacy' of the bedroom have often had difficulty conceptualising a lesbian sexuality without a penis (Frye, 1983, p. 157). For example, one such group in New Zealand argued that 'lesbians are not naturally equipped to indulge in such acts but must

adopt artificial means to stimulate their sex drives' (Society for the Promotion of Community Standards, 1985, p. 2).

How could it be that some of those opposing Hero and Devotion in the 1990s restricted their arguments to the grounds that homosexuality should remain in private but also lobbied in 1985 for the state to patrol private bedrooms?[15] I suggest that the answer lies in the ways that liberal thought and rhetoric are deployed *strategically* during a period of shifting forms of heterosexist discourse within a changing social climate [16]. In 1985, rhetorics of gay inferiority, disease or even sinfulness were perceived by their deployers to be somewhat acceptable to the general populace. By the 1990s, however, the deployment of a liberal frame of reference was increasingly necessary for those who sought to defend the hegemony of heterosexuality [17]. Straightforward arguments about the inferiority of any social groups, including lesbians and gay men, were becoming more unacceptable, and so a liberal rhetoric was pressed into service in the interests of conservatism (see Young, 1990, p. 124 on this in an international context). Indeed, Julian Batchelor of 'Operation Jerusalem' recommended those opposed to the Hero parade to write 'non-Christian' letters to the city council in protest because they would appear more credible than 'Christian ones' (Rudman, 1994). This shift in rhetoric does not mean that those who oppose the pride parades actually believe that the state should remain outside of the gay or lesbian bedroom. Rather the shift in their discourse was driven by necessity. Liberal social change has rendered explicitly anti-gay interventionism unacceptable.

The liberal concept of tolerance also comes into play here. Liberal thought includes an injunction against intolerance and instead promotes value pluralism, in which a range of views and states of being are to be respected (Mendus, 1989). By adopting the argument that lesbians and gay men should confine themselves to private spheres, those who oppose homosexuality claim the mantle of tolerance for themselves. They are tolerant because they tolerate lesbians and gay men as long as said persons remain in private where their marked sexual identities 'belong'. Because heterosexuality is unmarked as sexual, heterosexuals and heterosexual performances are legitimated as occupiers of the public sphere [18].

In this way the opponents of 'public' homosexuality are able to place themselves squarely within a liberal frame of reference, as the tolerant upholders of the public/private distinction. In a distinct contrast, they suggest that lesbians and gay men who foist their sexuality on others in public are the bearers of intolerance. This argument lies at the heart of the discourse of invasion, in which the public homosexual subject colonises the private metaphorical space of the heterosexual mind.

Homosexuality, Intolerance and Invasion

A number of recent New Zealand media texts employ the figure of the lesbian or gay man who moves from the private closet, through the space of the public street, and on to invade, coerce or police the minds of heterosexuals. In this way, the homosexual subject is portrayed as intolerant, illiberal and therefore dangerous. Homosexuality is considered to threaten the collapse of a cherished liberal ideal: the private space of the heterosexual individual's mind. Once this boundary of the private is breached, individualism itself is under threat.

A key aspect of this discursive position is the denial of the ways in which heterosexuality as an institution weighs on the minds, bodies and actions of those it subordinates. Indeed, as an unmarked and naturalised form of dominance, heterosexuality is claimed

to stand outside of circuits of power. Those who defend heterosexuality as an institution 'claim to say the truth in an apolitical field', as if their pronouncements could 'escape the political in this moment of history' (Wittig, 1992, p. 25). Heterosexuality is seen to be devoid of politics, embroiled in no relations of dominance and subordination, and to effect no form of coercion.

In contrast, because homosexuality is the marked, subordinate term, it is constructed as political. One interviewee quoted in a youth magazine argued that:

'being in a gay relationship—you feel really self-conscious in public. You want to hold hands, you want to touch each other, but you can't. You just know it's an incredibly political act'. ('Paul', cited in Braunias, 1990, p. 52)

This state of affairs, in which heterosexuality is aligned with the politically neutral and homosexuality is aligned with the political, is extended in some texts such that lesbians and gay men are seen to represent a form of insidious politicisation of the private realm of the heterosexual mind. Elshtain's (1982/83) work exemplifies this formula in an academic context. Elshtain argues that the sanctity of the private mind is at threat from an insurgent gay radicalism, and this claim follows similar claims made by her about radical feminism (Elshtain, 1981). Despite recognising that boundaries between public and private spheres are contingent upon time and social location, she argues that a distinction between public and private needs to be maintained, lest privacy as a haven from the rigours of public life be eroded. However, she suggests (1982/83, p. 253) that the politicisation wrought by gay liberation threatens the total collapsing together of the public and the private, the personal and the political, and that this threatens the sanctity of the private mind. Such a politics represents 'a terrible engine of social control' and 'the reign of absolute terror' (Elshtain, 1982/83, p. 253).

In this position, the heterosexual individual's very innermost, possessive self and mind are under siege from invasion and policing by the homosexual Other. Such invasion threatens the conception of the 'possessive individual' that lies at the heart of liberalism. According to possessive individualism, the life and thoughts of individuals belong to those individuals who shall rule them as they see fit; individuals own their thoughts, at which they are said to arrive autonomously and as a result of 'independent and rational reflection' (Lukes, 1973, p. 52). The rights of the possessive individual are not to be impinged upon by others or by the community. Ostensible gay and lesbian invasion upon this terrain, therefore, represents intolerance and illiberalism.

Political Correctness

The term 'political correctness' (PC) is a pivot within discourses of lesbian and gay invasion, as it is supposedly political correctness which allows this invasion to occur. While the term political correctness has myriad meanings, it is often used in ways which serve to marginalise lesbian and gay subjectivities, while simultaneously constructing them as tyrannical and oppressive of a normative heterosexuality (Sanderson, 1995). Weir (1995) argues that as a signifier, political correctness is often discursively equated to signifiers of tyranny and totalitarianism such as Nazism, Stalinism, communism, thought policing, social engineering, fundamentalism and puritanism. These signifiers resonate with the theme of 'homosexuality as communism' that has appeared at various times (Darsey, 1981; Signorile, 1994).

In some New Zealand texts, lesbian and gay identities are constructed as the archetypal politically correct identities. In one magazine article the journalist refers to

singer k.d. lang as ‘the first lesbian feminist, vegetarian superstar ... a walking, talking, politically correct cliché (heard the one about the lesbian feminist vegetarian ...?)’ (MacDonald, 1994). In an *Evening Post* editorial titled ‘Political Correctness’, this archetype was ‘a rugby-playing, Chinese-speaking Maori lesbian with a limp’ (*Evening Post*, 1994). In a newspaper column the archetype became ‘a documentary about a dyslexic Seventh Day Adventist Samoan lesbian with three kids’ (du Fresne, 1994). Writing a letter to *North and South* magazine, McRae (1993) suggested that there is a ‘human PC scale’ at the top of which are gays, about whom nothing derogatory is ever allowed to be written in the media! Writing to the *New Zealand Herald*, Daly (1997) clearly linked the *Hero Parade*, lesbian and gay identities, and political correctness:

I congratulate the Mayor of Auckland, Les Mills, for his opposition to ratepayers having to give money to the homosexual and sex perversion parade. It is refreshing to have a political leader who won’t bow down to this level of politically correct nonsense.

Elshtain’s comments about politicisation tie in to this discourse about homosexuality and political correctness. Political correctness enforced by lesbians and gay men is said to coerce those heterosexuals who seek to uphold a traditional, heteronormative order. According to the logic of such discourse, this is achieved by forcing homosexuality onto heterosexuals or by policing their thoughts in order that particular (radical) positions about homosexuality are accepted and become unquestioned. Political correctness, then, breaches the sanctity of the private mind of those heterosexuals [19].

The idea that political correctness involves the forcing of homosexual identities onto heterosexuals is exemplified by a broadcast on the libertarian radio station *Radio Liberty* (1995) in which an anonymous commentator parodied an imaginary member of ‘the Women’s Liberation Movement’. It was stated that the Movement wanted to see ‘heterosexuality stamped out’ and ‘everybody to be as paranoid and miserable as we are’. The commentator then stated that in the Movement’s ‘perfect world men would be killed out’. Here the spectre of an invasive, conquering lesbian feminism is invoked. The politicised (politically correct?) lesbian is seen as a threat to the sanctity of the privacy of the heterosexual mind such that the heterosexual (implicitly woman) may have a (presumably) lesbian identity forced upon her.

In further examples, politically correct lesbians and gay men are seen to attempt the thought policing of heterosexual subjects. The struggle over the use of signifiers like ‘homophobia’ and ‘bigotry’ is illustrative of this. Having positioned homosexuals as territorialising public spaces in his opinion piece about Wellington’s Devotion festival, du Fresne defies ostensible homosexual tyranny to speak out against use of the term ‘homophobe’:

Like the similar epithets ‘racist’ and ‘sexist’, this [term homophobe] is hurled at anyone who dares challenge political correctness. Sadly, many otherwise intelligent people are terrified of having these labels pinned to them and hence allow the commissars of political correctness to go unchallenged. I’m not terrified of being labelled a homophobe. (du Fresne, 1995)

Here the activists and their accomplices are constructed as all-powerful, as they delimit acceptable knowledge about sexuality by forcing heterosexuals to self-censor because they are terrified of being labelled a homophobe. In a related argument, gay activists are said to hijack words like ‘gay’ and ‘hero’ from their proper usages so that language is ‘stolen’ from the heterosexuals who are their rightful owners. One writer of a letter to the editor argues that the word ‘hero’ should be reserved for the ‘[y]oung, clean-faced youth ...

dressed in ... khaki, air force blue and navy blue' who 'fought for [their] country' (Burne, 1997).

Another letter-writer is more specific about an illiberal, intolerant and invasive homosexuality. She or he argues that one who fails to 'worship HEROic parades ... is at once declared homophobic' by those who won't 'stop dictating. That's the part that really stinks, the arrogant, dictatorial, finger-wagging Thou Shalt bit' (Hall, 1996). Hall writes that lesbian or gay occupiers of public space are 'destabilised mindNazi[s]' who are busy 'ordering me what to think about them, or anything else'. This constitutes an affront to 'a basically moderate and non-extreme society' (Hall, 1996). Here the lesbian or gay 'exhibitionist' in public space becomes an illiberal mindNazi who polices the thoughts of the innocent heterosexual.

A similar pattern is repeated in the comments made by the presenter of a *National Radio* magazine programme (Edwards, 1998). Edwards argued that nowadays 'gays' are embarking on a 'witch-hunt' to silence and label as 'homophobic' those who disagree with 'any aspect of gay culture', including particular floats or behaviours in the Hero Parade. Edwards suggested that calling someone 'homophobic' is equivalent to abusive statements that posit the inferiority of gay men and lesbians. Here again, homosexuals are seen to force an inappropriate sexuality into the public sphere and subsequently seek to exercise control over the thoughts of those heterosexuals who criticise the transgression. Edwards's statements serve to deny the reality of a society in which it is *heterosexuality* that is privileged. Taken in this context, a few pro-Hero letters sent by lesbians and gay men to magazines and newspapers could hardly be evidence of an inversion of power relations such that heterosexuals are routinely tyrannised by insurgent lesbians and gay men. Such an argument seeks to return homosexuality to the private sphere. The institutional dominance of heterosexuality is erased through processes of normalisation, while homosexuality is constructed as a form of uppity sexuality which must remain private.

Conclusion: from private perversion to public tyranny

The scorn and ridicule the gay activists once bitterly complained of themselves they now deal out to others ... Of course all this is consistent with the tyranny of the minority, one of the great curses of the late 20th century, whereby small groups of people play on the conscience of much larger groups of people (du Fresne, 1997).

Arguments about homosexuality as tyrannous and invasive exemplify the problems with ways in which distinctions between public and private are constructed and reinforced within liberal thought. The private sphere is that place where homosexuality is said to belong, yet public heterosexuality *per se* is not problematised. This occurs because homosexuality is marked out as specific and visible, whereas heterosexuality is positioned as unmarked and taken for granted. In addition, heterosexuality's sexual specificity is rendered invisible, whereas homosexuality is identified with sexuality—and in liberalism, sexuality belongs in private. An upholding of the liberal public/private distinction, then, often operates to privilege heterosexuality (Kitzinger, 1987; Smith, 1994; Duncan, 1996). This liberal privileging of dominance may not seem surprising, given the other ways in which liberalism has been used to advance conservative agendas, notably in the area of economic policy (Arblaster, 1996, p. 171). The refusal of liberalism to acknowledge the

systematic nature of domination (Frazer, 1996, p. 124) has resulted in its supporting that domination.

Gay and lesbian pride parades attempt to problematise the relationships between homosexuality, heterosexuality, public and private. They can be seen as forms of resistance, as attempts to reconfigure the public space of the street as a gay and lesbian space (cf. Bell & Valentine, 1995, p. 17; Brown, 1997, p. 61). However, such reconfigurations are momentary, and as some have argued, these may result in 'one gay day' out of 365. Indeed, the parades are necessary precisely because of the ways in which public spaces are heterosexualised and performances of lesbians and gay men are excluded.

Those who oppose such reconfigurings of public space utilise the conservative potentials of liberalism in an attempt to remove homosexuality from view. To insist on the privacy of sexuality appears more acceptable in a liberal democracy than to demand the prohibition of homosexuality itself, although such an insistence relies on the erasure of the ways in which heterosexuality is also a form of sexuality, and a public one at that. Liberalism and a more traditional form of conservatism operate together here in ways that support the dominance of heterosexuality and the subordination of lesbian and gay subjectivities.

Claims that lesbian and gay efforts to challenge the heterosexed nature of space can in some way be seen as attempts to police or tyrannise heterosexuality are hard to sustain. It is difficult to see that a newly oppressed and marginalised heterosexual minority feels 'obliged to bow, in the name of political correctness, to [the] strident minority trying to impose its will on society' (Auger, 1994). On the most fundamental level, there are clearly still many who support the naturalising of heterosexuality and the deviantising of homosexuality, so anti-Hero protestors are hardly sitting out on a limb. On another level, it is overdrawn to regard the conservative heterosexual's discomfort with Hero or with the occasional outspoken lesbian or gay activist as being in some way equivalent to the battery of subtle and overt ways in which lesbian and gay subjectivities are disciplined, contained and even prohibited. When homosexuality is regarded as politicised, politicising and politically correct, the institutional and dominant status of heterosexuality is denied. While pride parades constitute a form of resistance to heteronormativity and perhaps an attempt to seek to temporarily transform the heterosexualised nature of space, they hardly succeed in overthrowing heterosexuality's hold.

There is a certain irony to the claims in this form of heterosexist discourse. Although focusing on the ostensible colonising tyranny of lesbians and gay men, such discourse expresses anxieties over the status of the heterosexualised basis of society itself. A perceived threat to the heterosexual mind, then, is a perceived threat not only to the minds of (conservative) heterosexuals but also to the foundational status of heterosexuality more generally. To borrow a phrase from Butler (1991, p. 23), the concern is that heterosexuality may 'come undone'. In such an unlikely event, the constructed and contingent character of ostensibly natural, neutral public/private distinctions would be revealed. The lesbian or gay pride participant threatens to dissolve borders between public and private and thence heterosexual subjectivity and heterosexuality itself.

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NOTES

- [1] In broad terms, discourse refers to systems of linked signs through which meanings are created and reproduced (Purvis & Hunt, 1993). Discourse can be used in a more specific sense, to refer to particular ways of representing and articulating meaning through language and texts. Certain articulations may display commonalities and correlations in their terms, categories, beliefs and stances toward the social world (Scott, 1988, Lemke, 1995).
- [2] Duncan (1996) distinguishes between public or private 'spaces' and 'spheres'. Space implies a landscape, such as a city street, whereas sphere suggests social life in the more general sense of cultural and political institutions such as family or paid work. However, space and sphere may coincide (a protest in a city square engages public sphere and space, for example), and there also exist ambiguous examples—is television a sphere or a space?
- [3] In a famous formulation of this idea, sociologist W. I. Thomas stated that '[i]f men [*sic*], define situations as real, they are real in their consequences' (cited Collins & Makowsky, 1984, p. 189). Materialist feminist writing offers a similar perspective on the categories 'male' and 'female': although these are socially constructed categories, they have deep significance for those positioned within them (Jackson, 1992; Wittig, 1992).
- [4] Henceforth I use the term liberalism broadly. I recognise that there are many sometimes competing strands within the liberal tradition (Frazer & Lacey, 1993, p. 42). However, a distinction between public and private, as well as the founding notion of the autonomous, sovereign individual are common to the tradition. For further discussion of the antecedents and tensions between different strands of liberal thought, see Adams (1998), Arblaster (1984), Sandel (1984) and Williams (1997).
- [5] To say that homosexuality is confined to the private sphere is not to say that the private is necessarily a haven for lesbians and gay men. The US Supreme Court in *Bowers v Hardwick* upheld a Georgia decision which deemed illegal male–male consensual sex 'in private'. In such a case the liberal notion of privacy as immunity from state interference disappears (Fraser, 1992, p. 142n; Thornton, 1995, p. 9; Brown, 1997, p. 121). I will return to this point.
- [6] Further discussion of the concept of marking with respect to gender relations can be found in MacKinnon (1983) and Wittig (1992). MacKinnon (1983, p. 639), for example, argues that the logic of male domination is rendered universal as '[i]ts point of view is the standard for point-of-viewlessness, its particularity the meaning of universality'.
- [7] I do not mean to suggest that all who are heterosexual have identical minds or attitudes toward homosexuality. Rather, the 'heterosexual mind' is a metaphor which describes a trope or figure within the logics of the aforementioned discourses, that of the heterosexual who is supposedly at risk of invasion.
- [8] Terminology is a problem here. The term 'gay pride parades' has a wide currency. However, such a term implies the inclusion of, while simultaneously erasing, lesbians. An alternative would be 'queer pride parades', to emphasise the inclusion of those who identify as bisexual or transgender. However, public opposition to the parades tends to focus on gay men, lesbians or 'homosexuals'. For these reasons I use the term 'gay and lesbian pride parades'.
- [9] Mills was the leader of the Citizens' and Ratepayers' (C & R) ticket on the Auckland City Council. C & R councillors have tended to be (although are not exclusively) socially conservative and economically conservative or even neo-liberal, supportive of large, established city businesses.
- [10] In a limited sense there is a parallel here with the situation of homeless people. Mitchell (1997) writes of US attempts to 'cleans[e] the streets' of the homeless who carry out 'private' activities in 'public' and therefore threaten the 'proper' meanings of public space. However, the parallel breaks down because while capitalism seeks the annihilation of the homelessness and destitution it has itself created, capitalism courts gay men (and lesbians to a lesser extent) because of their allegedly high disposable incomes (Gluckman & Reed, 1993; Brickell, 1998).
- [11] My disagreement with Johnston raises the question of how to spatialise concepts like public and private. What does it mean to write, as Johnston does, of relatively more or less 'private' versions of 'public' space? In a sense we have here a layering of locations for the terms private and public. A partial answer may be that we need always be mindful of how actual people are linking or contrasting publicity and privacy in specific situations. In this example, Ponsonby Road is constructed as 'public' rather than 'private'.
- [12] There are two strands within the writing on Carnival (Burke, 1978; Cohen, 1982; Jackson, 1988; 1989; Cresswell, 1996). According to the first, Carnival is a means of harmlessly venting pent-up social tensions

and allowing the social order to go unchanged. According to the second, Carnival is intensely political and contestatory and engenders possibilities for resistance and opposition; 'like rioting and war, the continuation of politics by other means' (Jackson 1988, p. 226). Some writers argue that in practice, both strands have some applicability (e.g. Cohen, 1982, p. 24). Clearly, the struggles for and against Hero are deeply political, as they are struggles over the ownership, definition and use of urban space, as well as over sexuality in all its forms.

- [13] This concern with deviantised performances of gender and sexuality undermining respectability is repeated in other texts. These texts utilise what Smith (1992) has termed the distinction between 'dangerous' and 'responsible' homosexuality. For example, one correspondent to *North and South* magazine stated that the 'Hero Parade is a put-down of hundreds of responsible and respected New Zealand citizens who happen to be homosexual and who do not deserve to be demeaned and burlesqued in this way' (Rae, 1997).
- [14] This begs the question of the efficacy of language or imagery which engages parody in an attempt to destabilise dominant social arrangements. As Bordo (1992, p. 173) points out in her critique of Butler (1990), people can miss the challenge issued by parody or subversion, as they accommodate the challenge 'to fit their prevailing organisation of reality'.
- [15] Auckland's prominent and wealthy Hay family was a case in point. Property developer Keith Hay was instrumental in opposing the Homosexual Law Reform Bill, and his son David Hay, until 1998 Deputy Mayor of Auckland, was a chief opponent of the Hero Parade on the grounds of privacy.
- [16] For a more in-depth analysis of shifting forms of public opinion and heterosexist discourse in New Zealand, see Brickell (1999).
- [17] In 1993 a bill which outlawed discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation was passed, and it attracted considerably less public opposition than the 1986 Homosexual Law Reform Bill. Katherine O'Regan, the government minister who oversaw the 1993 Bill and supported the 1986 Bill, has noted that there was a considerable reduction in overtly anti-homosexual mail sent to MPs over the intervening period (personal communication).
- [18] Such a position highlights the relation of dominance and subordination which underpins the concept of tolerance, in which a distinction is made between a powerful 'we' who tolerate something with which we do not fully agree, and a tolerable, less than agreeable 'them' who are on the receiving end of the tolerators' benevolence (Altman, 1993, p. 59). Tolerance implies 'putting up with', and only the dominant have the privilege of being able to put up with those in less powerful positions. To speak of the subordinate tolerating the dominant is an impossibility as they have no choice in the matter (Mendus, 1989).
- [19] There are similarities here with rhetorics surrounding feminism and sexual harassment. Fraser (1995, p. 307) discusses how those of an anti-feminist persuasion have 'refined a rhetoric of opposition that paints harassment complainants as enforcers of "political correctness", authoritarian prudes interfering with men's rights for free speech'. In this example and the discourses of lesbian and gay invasion, the ostensibly 'private' sphere of heterosexuality is seen to be at risk from illiberal forces.

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