

The “Gay” and Psychopathology: Interrogating the Sexual Theories of Homophobes

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Abstract

This article seeks to explain and interrogate the sexual theories of homophobes observable on the African continent. I begin by exploring a possible explanation for the emergence and maintenance of certain homophobic sexual theories; Donald Moss’s arguments regarding the identification or disidentification economy will serve as a possible theoretical starting point. I then investigate three possible sexual theories of homophobes when mentally preoccupied with “the gay man.” Finally, I return to economies of identification as both a colonial perpetuation (in the form of adopting homophobic sexual theories) and as decolonial opportunity (in the form of conflictual identifications). I argue that homophobia and the constituent sexual theories could ideally be dissolved (among other settings) in educational spaces. In these educational spaces, I argue, the homophobe could be identifying with the “non-homophobic” pedagogue, which could bring about the dissolution of homophobia if the identification with the educator is strong enough.

Keywords: homophobia; identification; sexual theories; coloniality; decoloniality

Introduction

What are you? This question seems to signify the default mental preoccupation of a person that is confronted with anything that is different. Soon after asking this question, when confronted with difference, the person will (in all possibility) attempt to conjure up answers or find these answers elsewhere in the surrounding environment. The kind



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of answers that are fabricated in response to the question posed is of particular interest for what is to follow.¹

If someone with a particular dislike or hate for individuals who identify as “gay,” attempts to answer the afore-asked question, what would their answers look like? In this article, I attempt to excavate the concocted sexual theories of the homophobe when confronted (particularly in the case of mental preoccupation) with the object they dread and hate the most: “the gay.” The sexual theories of homophobes that I explore in this article are characterised by the curiosity (on the part of the homophobe) regarding the sexual life of the “gay man.” The article consists of three interrelated themes. I begin by exploring a theoretical explanation for the emergence of homophobic sexual theories. I argue that Donald Moss’s psychoanalytic work on the economy of identification and disidentification can explain the emergence of sexual theories of homophobes. The second theme explores three possible fabricated sexual theories of homophobes when preoccupied with “the gay (man).” I derive these homophobic theories from studies done on the African continent. In so doing, any inferences made in the article (about the content of homophobic sexual theories) are particularly aimed at explaining homophobia in the African context. Each sexual theory (in order of appearance) seems to inform the next theory. Firstly, I consider a homophobic theory that is characterised by the erogenous zone most associated with “the gay man” and his imagined sexual activity. I argue that the zone of homophobic preoccupation is the “gay” anal-rectal region as an erogenous zone. Secondly, I investigate the predominant sexual activity that the homophobe associates with “the gay man”; what will be considered here is the sexual theory of homophobes regarding “gay” sexual activity. I consider an intersection between *sodomy* and *paedophilia* to be the predominant sexual activity of homophobic mental preoccupation. Lastly, I seek to explore the relation between “gay” anality and the possibility of “the gay man” being associated with sexual immorality, pathology and psychopathology. I take these sexual theories of homophobes as responses to the original question: “What are you?”

The third theme of the paper seeks to interrogate the original question to, in a dialogical manner, resist the sexual theories of homophobes. I show that a contradiction and struggle between identifications (of an individual) could provide the ideal opportunity for a process that seeks to dissolve homophobia. I wish to employ the pedagogue to provide an opportunity for such a struggle to occur by questioning the original question.

1 This question is posed by Gayle Salamon in “Justification and Queer Method, or Leaving Philosophy” (2009). Salamon (2009, 228–230) argues that this question is always asked when any person or discipline is confronted with that which is different or “queer.” She cites an instance where this question is posed to Burgess and consequently explores the difficulties and implications surrounding the question asked: “As Burgess’s musing shows, the philosophical impulse is not always a gentle one; the philosophical mode can be a style of evisceration, or a way of disseminating aggressivity or cruelty, either with good intentions or ill, or with no intentions at all. These interrogations—whether hostile or benign, whether friendly or erotic or dangerous—involve a justification of body or identity or the relation between those, a making congruent of those, making them conform to what is expected” (Salamon 2009, 228).

I argue that by questioning the very motive for the original question, a kind of dismantling of homophobic rhetoric and identifications with homophobic groups is made possible; questioning the original question could provide occasion for the re-evaluation, and ultimately the dissolution, of homophobic sexual theories and stereotypes.

Donald Moss: The Economy of Identification and Disidentification

Before I can explore any homophobic sexual theories, it is important first to consider the manner in which these sexual theories come about. Donald Moss (2000, 1316) argues that misogyny, homophobia and racism are all a product of group prejudices, hatreds and discriminations; that “within the sphere of these hatreds” an individual does not hate or discriminate in isolation, but as a “white person, a straight person, a man.” Here I would like to add the notion that within African contexts, homophobes also seem to discriminate in the name of being “African” and “Christian.” A person does not hate on their own but as part of a group. The group-hatred held by and internalised by an individual is an example of a form of hatred made manifest in the “first person plural” voice (Moss 2000, 1316). Prejudices, discriminations and hatreds are directed “taxonomically downward,” signifying the moment of disidentification of a person with a group which is hierarchically/taxonomically beneath the group which that individual seeks to, and ultimately does, identify with (Moss 2000, 1316). The construction of human hierarchies is related to an archaic attitude of knowledge production. Individuals consider themselves to have a “wisdom of the ancients” which is inscribed “into systems of belief, structures of knowledge linked to a taxonomy, an organizing notion that the human world is, at bedrock, made up of hierarchically arranged groups” (Moss 2000, 1316). It is this perceived “ancient wisdom” which constitutes a kind of disposition of discrimination associated with homophobes, racists and sexists. In addition, this “wisdom” allows for individuals to conceive of group hierarchies in the human world. In summation, the discriminatory disposition and the co-existence of a conception of humanity as grouped hierarchically allow for the emergence of various prejudices, discriminations and hatreds. Importantly, these prejudices, discriminations and hatreds of groups are considered allocations of the hierarchically superior identity a person wishes to embrace (or even adopt). This summative exploration of Moss’s argument may prove lacking; i.e. a more thorough consideration of Moss’s argument may be necessary. Moss argues that there is a particular scheme which explains the establishment of hatreds and/or prejudices. In his concluding remarks, Moss (2000, 1333) shows that the denouncement of the object’s opacity, making the object transparent and then “identify[ing] with its tormentors” is the manner in which hatreds and prejudices are constructed and maintained. I shall attempt to show, in some depth, each of the three steps implicated in the construction and maintenance of certain prejudices and hatreds.

The first step in need of elaboration is the denouncement of the object’s opacity. By “opacity,” Moss (2000, 1325) is referring to the complex and “particular qualities” of

the object in question. Moss (2000, 1324–1325), in accordance with Bion’s argument² on group activity, argues that in cases of homophobia, misogyny and racism, the targeted objects are transparent in nature. In other words, the targeted objects are explained and understood by means of certain “basic assumptions” (Moss 2000, 1324–1325). It is understood amongst the members of a group that these basic assumptions cannot be questioned by individuals; these basic assumptions suppress any individual “thought or experience” (Moss 2000, 1324). The prejudices and hatreds of a group do not allow for individual reflection on the targeted object. If the individual wants membership of the group, that individual must adopt the basic assumptions held by the group. Moss illustrates this point in the following statement: “Participation in the assumptions, no matter how indirectly, coincides with membership in the group” (Moss 2000, 1324). The group already possesses a set of basic assumptions, assumptions that provide the individual with presupposed knowledge of the targeted object. According to Moss, this set of basic assumptions of the targeted object renders the individual’s “experience” of the object unnecessary (Moss 2000, 1324). The basic assumptions held by a group transform the object, from being opaque and complex to being transparent. In this way, the first and second steps of Moss’s scheme of hatred-construction are at this stage completed. If the individual renounces thought and reflection (which allows for individual and independent consideration of the object) and adopts the basic assumptions of a given group pertaining to a targeted object, then that individual has essentially disidentified with the group to which the targeted object belongs. The individual disidentifies with a hierarchically lower-down (or “inferior”) group in the taxonomy of group “importance” and “significance.” The disidentification with an object of a particular group is only one aspect of the construction of hatreds and prejudice/hate-based group lines.

The second half of the object economy explicated by Moss is the process of identification with a group that is hierarchically higher-up in the taxonomy of groups. Just as the individual disidentifies downward, in terms of the taxonomy of groups, they also identify “upward” (Moss 2000, 1316). What drives an individual to seek out identification with a specific group? To be sure, Moss (2000, 1316) shows that hatreds and prejudices are “partial expression[s]” of the desire of an individual to form part of a group, in solidarity. What grounds a person’s identification with a specific group are like-minded perspectives, beliefs and worldviews (Moss 2000, 1316). This explanation seems to lack some depth regarding the nature of identification. What exactly constitutes “like-mindedness” that drives identification with others in a particular group? What brings like-minded people together?

2 Moss adduces aspects of Bion’s argument from *Experiences in Groups* (1959), particularly those aspects of Bion’s argument which address the conflict between individual thought and the group’s beliefs. Moss argues that “Bion is particularly interested in the ways that membership in groups, though essential, necessarily exposes us to forces that oppose individual thought and experience” (Moss 2000, 1324).

Unsurprisingly, as a theorist of identification, Freud may provide an answer to these questions. Freud (1921, 65) argues that identification can occur upon the occasion of any “new perception” of a “common quality” which individuals share with one-another; it is important to note, however, that the individual identified with must not be considered an object of the libido. This means that any encounter with another person, possessing a quality or attribute in common with the individual in question, can provide occasion for identification. This conception of a common quality seems to better explain the “like-mindedness” Moss was leaning towards. Freud (1921, 66) goes on to argue that the “more important this common quality [or ‘like-mindedness’ for Moss] is, the more successful may this partial identification become, and it may thus represent the beginning of a new tie.” So, the importance of the common quality will determine the success and potential intensity of an individual’s identification with another person. Importantly, Freud uses the linear model of identification between two people, just described, as an integral part of a group’s functioning. The “mutual tie” between individuals in a group is founded on an identification that is constituted by an “emotional common quality” (Moss 2000, 1324). So, the *emotional common quality* that can be assumed in Moss’s (2000, 1316) case is a kind of shared belief, perspective, worldview or premise of prejudice/hatred, e.g. in the case of homophobia, there could exist a belief that gays and lesbians commit “contagious transgressions,” or that gay men are trying to recruit heterosexual men into their “regiment of homosexuals” (Bersani 1996, 27). The “emotional common quality” (or like-mindedness) of hatred for, or prejudice against, the “gay man” is of particular interest in light of the upcoming explorations. It is Moss’s work on the identificatory economy that paves the way for an explanation of the emergence of the sexual theories of homophobes.

Moss’s work on the economy of identification and disidentification seems to explain how “first person singular” wishes and desires can be transformed into “first person plural” prejudices, hatreds and discriminatory beliefs. Moss explains the economy of identification and disidentification as a product of the need to escape a predicament that was originally so enigmatic and confusing:

In the hoped-for escape, private horizontal yearning would be obliterated, to be replaced by affiliated vertical hating. Instead of privately wanting our original objects, we would instead publicly renounce them. “I want” would turn into “we hate.” Our original aims and objects could be reconfigured and displaced, focused now on the pursuit of fellowship and union. (Moss 2000, 1333)

So, for Moss, the identification and disidentification process is indicative of a kind of defence against enigmatic (or even unwanted) individual wishes. Prejudices, discriminations and hatreds emerge (by way of identificatory economies) as a defence against unwanted personal wishes. The sexual theories of homophobes could follow the same developmental pattern characterised by identificatory economies. In other words, when Moss speaks of “homophobia” as a product of the economy of identification and disidentification, it is possible to argue that any prejudicial belief, perspective or even theory aimed at the “gay man” is also a product of this very same economy. It could be

the case that homophobic sexual theories emerge or are internalised/adopted (through an interplay between identification and disidentification) as a defence against personal wishes and desires which involve “the gay man.” Any initial homoerotic aims and same-sex object-choices are “reconfigured” and “displaced”; what emerges from these reconfigurations and displacements are the sexual theories of homophobes.

Three Sexual Theories of Homophobes

The foregoing arguments seem to situate the emergence of homophobia and, by extension, the homophobic sexual theories in the psychological life of the homophobe. The aim of the upcoming passages is to explore three sexual theories of homophobes that could be the product of identificatory economies. The kind of sexual theories I will be exploring are not in any way factual, but rather attest to the distorted ideational fabrications of homophobes regarding “the gay man.” When mentally preoccupied with “the gay man” I argue that the homophobe fabricates three possible answers (taken to be “sexual theories”) to the original question (“what are you?”). The three homophobic sexual theories explored below are by no means the only theories concocted by homophobes. The sexual theories explored in this article merely signify a small portion of ideas that feed into homophobic rhetoric. My choice of sexual theories is motivated by what I consider the “backbone” of homophobic rhetoric on the African continent; I take the three homophobic sexual theories discussed in this article as the possible “pillars” of homophobia in the African context. The first “pillar” of homophobia is characterised by the erogenous zone predominantly associated with “the gay man” when the homophobe is preoccupied with “him.”

In relation to “the gay man,” (almost) everything takes place on the anal-rectal level

Unlike Fanon’s description of the Negrophobe’s equation of the black man with the biological, “the gay man” is associated with the non-biological. Fanon shows the stereotypical and prejudicial mentality of the Negrophobe to be characterised by insatiable promiscuity, potency and phenomenal reproductive powers:

As for the Negroes, they have tremendous sexual powers. What do you expect, with all the freedom they have in their jungles! They copulate at all times and in all places. They are really genital. They have so many children that they cannot even count them. Be careful, or they will flood us with little mulattoes ... For the sexual potency of the Negro is hallucinating. That is indeed the word: This potency *must* be hallucinating. (Fanon 2017, 133)

There is a particular point that is of interest in the above quotation: the black man’s apparently magnificent reproductive capacities. The black man is “endowed” with almost supernatural powers of reproduction; this can be observed by the hyperbolic manner in which Fanon addresses the sexual theory of reproduction concocted by the Negrophobe. These attributed powers do not extend to “the gay man” as in the case of the black man. The homophobe does not think of “the gay man” as an entity capable of

reproduction. In actual fact, quite the opposite is true. In “A Critical Appraisal of Heterosexism in Zambia” (2018) Julius Kapembwa (2018, 255) argues that one of the most noteworthy fabricated beliefs of homophobes is that homosexuality is a threat to the “divine command” of the Judeo-Christian God. In the book of Genesis, God commanded humankind to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 9: 7). According to Kapembwa (2018, 255), homophobic rhetoric on the African continent is inspired by the idea that “to have more humans is better than less, let alone no humans at all.” The homophobe considers homosexuality to be a threat to this divine legacy because all homoerotic acts are non-reproductive (Kapembwa 2018, 255–256). So, for the homophobe, homoeroticism in the form of anal intercourse would signify coition without fruition. The reason I place emphasis on the anal-rectal zone (as the zone at which the homophobe’s imagination is fixed) is because of the possible close relation between anal intercourse and vaginal intercourse.

It is possible that the “straight man,” whose predominant sexual aim is perhaps vaginal intercourse, is in his mental preoccupation with “the gay man,” drawing an analogy between vaginal and anal-rectal intercourse. In this way, the homophobe is ascribing anal intercourse to “the gay man” as the predominant sexual aim. In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* Freud (1905, 15) shows the opposite regarding the sexual aim of the “invert”:

The sexual role played by the mucous membrane of the anus is by no means limited to the intercourse between men; there is nothing about this preference that makes it characteristic of inverted feeling. On the contrary, it seems that *pedicatio* [anal intercourse] with a man owes its significance to an analogy with a similar act performed with the woman ...

The “homophobic, straight” man could be drawing this very same analogy between vaginal and anal intercourse. So, if an analogy can be drawn between vaginal and anal-rectal intercourse, then it cannot be too far-fetched to claim that a related analogy can be drawn between the two organs at which these respective sexual acts occur. It is possible that when the homophobe is mentally preoccupied with “the gay man,” he visualises the act of “*pedicatio*” taking place at the anal-rectal zone of that “gay man.”

Although an analogy is drawn between the female sexual organ and “the gay man’s” anal-rectal zone, there is still one core difference (particularly in the psychical life of the homophobe): the anal-rectal zone is non-reproductive, the female sexual organ is. In this case, the female sexual organ is fertile and is associated with reproduction and assisting in the divine legacy of “populating the earth.” Conservative and fundamentalist readings of the Bible (and those that adopt such readings) will show that the female sexual organ is associated with soil that must be fertilised by the male “seed” (Kapembwa 2018, 252); this seems to be the natural sexual course. If this is part of homophobic rhetoric in Africa, as Kapembwa suggests, then the opposite is true of the analogous organ identified as the anal-rectal zone. For the homophobe, the anal-rectal zone is a site at which intercourse takes place, but the work of intercourse is futile and

the anal-rectal zone barren. However, this erogenous zone is only barren when considering the “divine legacy” of reproduction. Some homophobes consider the anal-rectal zone to be one of great potential for the accumulation of wealth and power.

In “Post-Colonial Histories of Sexuality: The Political Invention of a Libidinal African Straight” (2012) Basile Ndjio (2012, 617) argues that in Cameroon, homophobic rhetoric is characterised by what is termed *pouvoir sodomiseur* (sodomite power) and *anusocratie* (power of the anus). Ndjio argues the following with regards to the corrupt regime of Biya in Cameroon:

... the recent disciplinary deployment of sexuality by the Cameroon state as well as its ongoing anti-gay rhetoric can be seen as a tepid reaction to the popular belief that Biya’s regime has institutionalized a “politics of the perverse,” which involves not only the sexual exploitation of powerless and underprivileged youths, but also the transformation of their bodies into a space of desire and fantasies for the ruling classes. (Ndjio 2012, 617)

Cameroonian homophobic rhetoric characterises the anal-rectal zone as a site of two kinds of evil: corrupt political regimes with economic exploitation at its heart, and sexual perversity that exploits “underprivileged” and “powerless” young people. So, according to Ndjio (2012, 617), the anal-rectal zone is the site of exploitation (of the youth) in politico-economic and sexually perverse terms. Sodomy (as an act signifying politico-economic power and sexual perversity) is the means through which sexually perverse, economic and political aims can be achieved; importantly, these aims are directed at the youth of Cameroon in an almost pederastal way. It is the intersection between sodomy and pederasty/paedophilia that I wish to explore considering the second sexual theory of homophobes.

Whoever says paedophilic sodomy says “gay man”

McEwen (2018, 144–145) argues that the “pro-family” rhetoric of the United States, which includes evident anti-homosexuality sentiments, made its way into African countries and ultimately formed part of the political milieu and sexual ethos of these countries. In the United States, a great deal of homophobic rhetoric includes the attribution of paedophilia to the sexuality of “the gay man.” Homophobia in the United States oftentimes forcibly solders paedophilia and homosexuality together. The anti-homosexual activism of the famous Steve Baldwin serves as a prime example of the arranged marriage between paedophilia and homosexuality. Baldwin (2001–2002, 267) sees homosexuality as a threat to “Western civilisation” and argues that “the gay man” aims to dismantle the civilised world by targeting children:

It is difficult to convey the dark side of the homosexual culture without appearing harsh. However, it is time to acknowledge that homosexual behavior threatens the foundation of Western civilization, the nuclear family. An unmistakable manifestation of the attack on the family unit is the homosexual community’s efforts to target children both for their

own sexual pleasure and to enlarge the homosexual movement. (Baldwin 2001–2002, 267)

Baldwin is here referring to the homophobic rhetoric that posits a kind of “gay agenda” in the United States that targets children as preferred sexual objects and political instruments. So, according to Baldwin (2001–2002, 268) “the gay man” is a politico-sexual agent that will disrupt and dissolve the “virtues” of the nuclear family and the civilised world by recruiting children:

Unfortunately, the truth is stranger than fiction. Research confirms that homosexuals molest children at a rate vastly higher than heterosexuals, and the mainstream homosexual culture commonly promotes sex with children. Homosexual leaders repeatedly argue for the freedom to engage in consensual sex with children, and blind surveys reveal a shockingly high number of homosexuals admit to sexual contact with minors. Indeed, the homosexual community is driving the worldwide campaign to lower the legal age of consent. (Baldwin 2001–2002, 267)

Speaking of “homosexual leaders” and a “gay agenda” as if there is a grand conspiracy against civilisation, the public and the sexual dignity of children is not exclusive to homophobic rhetoric in the United States. As mentioned earlier, homophobic rhetoric from the United States has become an import to Africa. To return to homophobic rhetoric in Cameroon, Ndjio (2012, 616) argues that Biya’s regime attacked and denounced “for compelling underprivileged youths to ‘earn their living by the sweat of their buttocks,’ a popular refrain in local newspapers.” The conspiracy surrounding Biya’s regime attests to the homophobic belief that there is a “gay agenda” in Cameroon; the corrupt regime apparently promotes sexual acts between youths and those in power. It is at the “buttocks” or the anal-rectal zone that political and economic power is enacted upon the youth through sodomy or the “wrecking of their backside” (Ndjio 2012, 616). So, sodomy and paedophilia are here brought together and embodied in the sexuality of “the gay man.” Cameroon is not the only country in Africa where homophobic rhetoric equates the sexuality of “the gay man” with paedophilic sodomy. In “Culture versus Homosexuality: Can a Right ‘From’ Culture be Claimed in Ugandan Courts?” Namwase (2017, 77) shows that homophobic rhetoric in Uganda also includes the “absurd and scientifically unproven” idea that “homosexuals are paedophiles.” Namwase also points to a source of homophobic rhetoric that is of particular interest. In the “Rolling Stone,” a Ugandan newspaper, “homosexuals” were accused of forming part of a “gay agenda” which actively seeks out the recruitment of children:

On the front page, the paper claims that the homosexual community aims to “recruit 1,000,000 children by 2012,” and that parents “face heart-breaks [sic] as homos raids schools.” Inside, a headline reads: “Hang them; They are after our kids!!” The article lists personal details of those named, including their addresses. There are also photographs of about a dozen people listed in the story. (Rice 2010)

This newspaper seems to speak directly to the atmosphere in Uganda regarding homosexuality. “The gays” are, according to the homophobic rhetoric in Uganda, going to recruit children and so doing will corrupt the youth of Uganda. It also seems as if the “Rolling Stone” is, on behalf of the public, declaring a “war on homosexuality.” This war is made possible by the newspaper’s inclusion of names, physical addresses and photographs of notorious “homosexuals” (Rice 2010). The homophobic sexual theory fabricated in Uganda (particularly in the newspaper cited) is once again aimed at “the gays” as paedophiles, and “the gay man” as paedophilic sodomite. In South Africa, such a homophobic sexual theory also exists within certain contexts, particularly where fundamentalist Christian beliefs are involved. An example is the preaching of Reverend Bougardt (see Peterson 2018). Bougardt claims that homosexuality and paedophilia are inextricably intertwined:

“Why should we be tolerant of their criminal lifestyle? Ninety-nine percent of paedophiles stem from homosexuality. I’m saying so because it is proven that 99% of the paedophiles have a homosexual background. They are blaming their previous lifestyle on what happened. Go and read up on it.” (Peterson 2018)

He goes further to claim that the drought in Cape Town is caused by tolerance towards homosexuality and the paedophilic sodomy that characterises this mode of sexuality (Peterson 2018). Paedophilic sodomy is ascribed a supernatural significance and value; this is also seen in the homophobic rhetoric in Cameroon where sodomy is an act of power-enactment. It is almost as if “the gay man” is endowed with the ability to punish an entire city or community of people by simply being what they are. Through their “sexual immorality,” so the homophobe seems to argue, “the gay man” is magical.³ The “sexual immorality” of “the gay man” is indicative of a kind of symbolic significance attributed to “the gay” by the homophobe.

“The gay man” is a symbol of sexual immorality, pathology and psychopathology

In the foregoing explorations, I have attempted to explore “gay” anality as a central phenomenon that mentally preoccupies the homophobe. The anal-rectal zone is a site of reproductive barrenness, power-enactment and paedophilic sodomy. This erogenous zone also seems to be implicated as the site of sexual immorality and physical and psychical dirtiness. In Zimbabwe, homosexuality (no doubt including sodomite activities) is equated with the “immoral” as far as this mode of sexuality is a threat to humankind (and its relation to God). In “The ‘Politics’ of Sexual Identities in Zimbabwe: A Social Work Perspective?” Mabvurira et al. (2012, 222) argue that Christian rhetoric in Zimbabwe surrounding homosexuality makes “reference of stories like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah during the days of Lot because of sexual immorality.” The story of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the eyes of the homophobe, is an example of what happens when homosexuality is tolerated. As in the case of Bougardt’s

3 Bougardt’s claim (see Peterson 2018) that “the gays” are responsible for the drought in Cape Town seems to be comparable to the kind of magical thinking Freud describes in *Totem and Taboo* (1913). See pages 93–94.

homophobic beliefs, it seems that God is at war with “the gay man”; the homophobe is convinced that there is a holy war against sexual immorality (in the form of “gayness” or same-sex sexual activity). In homophobic rhetoric, “the gay man” becomes a symbol of sexual immorality. The identification with a group of Christians, inspired by homophobic readings of the Bible, leads to a feeling of “fellowship and union” (Moss 2000, 1333); the individual identifying with the group takes up his role as agent of God’s holy war against homosexuality. It is possible that this holy war, from the homophobe’s perspective, is aimed at the site of sodomy, the original sin of Sodom (the anal-rectal zone). Identification with any group that is characterised by homophobic rhetoric comes with the adoption, and internalisation, of that group’s sexual theories and role expectations.

Homophobic sexual theories are clearly of a great variety (the content of which probably depends on the kind of groups an individual identifies with). In homophobic rhetoric and sexual theories, “the gay man” can also symbolise a great number of things. Besides “the gay man” as a symbol of sexual immorality in homophobic rhetoric, I argue that he can also symbolise physical dirtiness (pathology) and psychical dirtiness (psychopathology). Kapembwa (2018, 254) argues that in the case of the former, homophobic rhetoric often relates homosexuality with a higher incidence of HIV-infection. In Zambia, MSMs are accused of spreading HIV when they, in turn, have sex with women (Kapembwa 2018, 254). The argument put forth by homophobes is that once MSMs have sex with women, they not only run the risk of infecting the women but also the children that emerge as a product of heterosexual coition (Kapembwa 2018, 254). Homosexuality becomes symbolic of physical dirtiness or pathology because homoerotic acts are associated with the rapid spread of HIV. “The gay” is dirty on more than just the physical level when seen through the lens of homophobia. Kapembwa (2018, 249) also argues that “homosexuals are sometimes charged with insanity or being emotionally disordered. Some say no one in their right mind would want to have sex with a member of their own sex.” So, “the gay” is often related to psychological “disturbances.” Furthermore, Kapembwa contends, if “homosexuals” do have a higher incidence of mental illness such as “anxiety” and “depression,” it is not because of an inherent predisposition towards such illnesses; rather, he relates the higher incidence of mental illness to stigma and discrimination (Kapembwa 2018, 249). The fact remains that homophobes consider a possible correlation between sexual orientation and incidence of mental illness as a sign that “the gay” is “mentally sick.” In this way, “the gay man” becomes a symbol of psychopathology. Taken together, “the gay man” seems to be a symbol of moral, physical and psychical illness.

This homophobic sexual theory and the others discussed in this article seem to be the product of a naïve and blind identification with a group of persons, leading to the adoption and internalisation of that group’s values. If I am “a real man,” I internalise homophobic beliefs that exclude anyone that is not the same as I am; this includes those individuals that do not have sex with women like “real men.” If I am a Christian (that identifies with a group of persons that hold homophobic sentiments), then I am at war

with “the gay man” because he offends God. It is indeed possible to provide more examples from the foregoing explorations; however, I believe these two will suffice for the purposes of the argument. It is important to note that homophobic sexual theories seem to arise through an economy of identification and disidentification. There is, however, another noteworthy characteristic of identifications. The individual’s identifications are not directed at a single group at one point in time; i.e. an individual does not identify with only one group at once.

Identification: Colonial Perpetuation and Decolonial Opportunity

There is no doubt that homophobia and colonialism are historically contemporaneous phenomena. I have already considered the fact that homophobic rhetoric has made its way across the Atlantic Ocean from the United States and has nestled into African contexts; this transatlantic import of homophobia can be said to be a form of neo-colonialism. The import of homophobic rhetoric did not, however, begin with American evangelical discourse. Marc Epprecht shows the relationship between homophobia and colonialism in “The ‘Unsayings’ of Indigenous Homosexualities in Zimbabwe: Mapping a Blindspot in an African Masculinity” (1998). Epprecht (1998, 645) argues that the “appearance of scientific respectability gleaned from a wealth of dubious studies ... helped to make “The Homosexual” (as a type) common knowledge by the end of the nineteenth century. That knowledge tended to serve Europe’s larger imperial interests.”⁴ Homophobia emerged alongside the colonial enterprise and its “imperial interests.” This means that a lot of homophobic rhetoric remains on the African continent as remnants of colonialism. This, in turn, means that homophobic groups on the continent are further evidence that colonialism is “alive and well” in Africa. These homophobic groups and their sexual theories are just waiting to recruit new individuals through identification. However, this readiness to recruit is met with a complication. As mentioned earlier, the individual (most often) does not simply identify with one group. It would be more accurate to say that the individual identifies with various groups at once. A person can identify with group x and their values and beliefs, while simultaneously identifying with group y and their sentiments. Sometimes it is not even various groups that an individual identifies with, but rather an assortment of different individuals and groups.

When the individual identifies with various groups and individuals, it is entirely possible that oftentimes certain identifications are at odds with one-another; it is possible that identifications are conflicting. In *The Ego and the Id* Freud (1923, 30–31) argues that it is indeed possible for identifications to contradict each other:

4 Foucault already made a similar point in *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. I, (1976). Foucault (1976, 101) shows the integration of “homosexuality” into nineteenth-century discourse: “There is no question that the appearance in nineteenth-century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty, and ‘psychical hermaphroditism’ made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of ‘perversity.’”

Although it is a digression from our aim, we cannot avoid giving our attention for a moment longer to the ego's object-identifications. If they obtain the upper hand and become too numerous, unduly powerful and incompatible with one another, a pathological outcome will not be far off. It may come to a disruption of the ego in consequence of the different identifications becoming cut off from one another by resistances; perhaps the secret of the cases of what is described as "multiple personality" is that the different identifications seize hold of consciousness in turn. Even when things do not go so far as this, there remains the question of conflicts between the various identifications into which the ego comes apart, conflicts which cannot after all be described as entirely pathological. (Freud 1923, 30–31)

Identifications (in a single person) can resist each other and cause the ego to shatter. If the individual identifies with one group and their sentiments, which contradict the identification of the individual with another group, a conflict arises. It is the event of contradicting identifications that provides the theorist or scholar with the opportunity to envision a decoloniality of discourse and rhetoric with homosexuality as content. When identifications begin to contradict each other, the time is ripe for the dismantling of homophobic sentiments. There are certain spaces where identifications are made possible, meet each other and ultimately resist each other. I consider educational spaces⁵ to be prime examples where multiple contradicting identifications exist in the case of a single teacher, scholar, lecturer, student or learner. The individual's identification with a homophobic group of persons, while simultaneously displaying an identification with a teacher, scholar, professor, tutor or lecturer (as an authority figure), provides an opportunity for a struggle of identifications. When this struggle occurs, it is the task of the pedagogue to provide opportunity for homophobia and homophobic rhetoric to dissolve. This opportunity is made possible by the pedagogue's restoration of the opacity of the "hated" object. In the educational space, in other words, the pedagogue suspends the transparency with which the homophobe views the object of disidentification; the pedagogue reintroduces the lost nuances and complexities of the "hated" object which the homophobe discarded. The reintroduction of the object's opacity to the working awareness of the homophobe is the moment of emergence for the struggle of identifications. Taking advantage of this moment of struggle between identifications means that the pedagogue is taking up the task of myth-dispeller. Importantly, by reintroducing the opacity of the "hated" object, the pedagogue is undermining the very economy of identification and disidentification which characterises homophobia. If the object is not rendered transparent, the entire economy and the resultant homophobic sexual theories dissolve. I believe that if the circumstances are favourable, the opacity of the object is restored, and the identification

5 The vague and loose employment of this concept is intentional. Although I am aware that certain socio-economic arenas and specific regional groups of people are in particular and urgent need of the kind of "reformative" identificatory economy I argue for in this article, homophobia and its effects are too widespread. Limiting the application of proposed resistance against homophobia and homophobic groups to specific contexts would simply ignore the almost ubiquitous making of homophobia.

with the pedagogue is strong enough, the individual's identification with homophobic groups can be cut off.

In other words, I am calling for the pedagogue's questioning of the original question ("what are you?"). Essentially, the pedagogue is asking "why are you asking that?" Once the pedagogue asks this question, the individual may follow suit. If the individual's identification with the pedagogue is strong enough, they will question their motives for asking the original question. This kind of pedagogue-directed identification is, importantly, not defined by hierarchies or taxonomies, but rather by the non-homophobic (and thus non-hierarchical) sentiments of the pedagogue. In other words, I am referring to the construction of an emotional common quality shared between pedagogue and pupil/student that is not only tolerant but also accepting. In turn, the individual will also question the homophobic sexual theories (as response to the original question) they have adopted and internalised (as a result of their earlier identifications). It is possible that after identifications with homophobic groups have been cut off that a kind of inversion is probable. It is possible that if the identification with the pedagogue is strong enough and the identification with the homophobic group is cut off, that the homophobic individual can actually disidentify with this (homophobic) group.

This possible disidentification with the homophobic group is, however, somewhat problematic. It is possible that the individual (previously homophobic in his/her sentiments) could render another object transparent. Perhaps this individual could initiate another form of discrimination (by way of an economy of identification and disidentification)—a kind of homophobia-phobia. It is difficult to envision this as a desired outcome; replacing one form of hatred or prejudice with another is indefensible. Establishing a strong identification with the non-homophobic pedagogue and taking up the task of re-establishing the "hated" object as opaque is, at least for the purposes of dissolving homophobia and its constituent sexual theories, a more constructive and tenable approach. In essence, the identification with the pedagogue, of any status, and severing ties with homophobic groups signify a successful identificatory economy as decoloniality. The conception of decoloniality employed here is limited in the sense that it is exclusively concerned with the dissolution of, and critical engagement with, certain homophobic remnants of colonial and neo-colonial involvement on the continent. The almost "reformative" identificatory economy is a way of dissolving the homophobic sentiments, beliefs and attitudes that have, at least to a significant degree, emerged and flourished on the African continent through colonial and neo-colonial channels. There is no guarantee that the dissolution of homophobia (by way of the proposed identificatory economy) will negate, undermine or even address other dimensions of colonial and neo-colonial influence.

Conclusion

Identification is both a tool of colonialism and a phenomenon of promise. I have in this article tried to provide an account of identificatory economy that explains the emergence of homophobia and homophobic rhetoric as colonial remnants. I sought to, even if

merely by way of implication, explore what would happen if “the Negro” is supplanted by “the gay” in relation to psychopathology. By appealing to Donald Moss’s psychoanalytic work (supplemented with Freud’s theorisations of identification) on homophobia, racism and sexism, I have attempted to account for the conditions that are necessary for homophobia as a form of hate and discrimination to exist and persist. Moss’s psychoanalytic work provides an entry point for the analysis of homophobia. Similar to Fanon’s (2017, 3–4) belief in terms of Negrophobia, I also believe that “a psychoanalytic interpretation” of homophobia “can lay bare the anomalies of affect that are responsible for the structure of the complex.” In addition to Moss’s theorisations, I have further shown that the sexual theories of homophobes are a product of an economy of identification and disidentification. I have considered three homophobic sexual theories, each serving as a kind of precursor to the preceding one. I have argued that when the homophobe is preoccupied with “the gay man” the following sexual theories could emerge: “in relation to ‘the gay man,’ (almost) everything takes place on the anal-rectal level”; “Whoever says paedophilic sodomy says ‘gay man’”; “the ‘gay man’ is a symbol of sexual immorality, pathology and psychopathology.” Following the explorations of these three homophobic sexual theories, I have argued that even though these theories are the product of identifications, they are fragile in the wake of a struggle of identifications (or conflicts between identifications). I have tried to show how such a struggle of identifications can provide an opportunity for an identificatory economy as decoloniality. It is the pedagogue that provides this opportunity, and if the identification with the pedagogue is strong enough, homophobia could be dissolved. Identification is both the threat and the opportunity for change when it comes to homophobia. By questioning the original question (“what are you?”) the pedagogue is setting in motion a process that could, under the right conditions, dispel myths about the notorious “gay man.” It is in educational spaces that the legacy of colonialism can be challenged and hopefully, it is in these very spaces that its dissolution becomes imaginable. I have tried to show that a decoloniality of homophobic discourse and rhetoric is possible through a strategic play of identificatory economies.

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