

# Rethinking European (Homo)Sexual Modernity

18-20 March 2010, Antwerp (Belgium)

A three-day conference organized by the Department of History of the University of Antwerp in collaboration with the Yale Research Initiative on the History of Sexualities

Historical analyses of same-sex eroticism have been dominated by Foucauldian and other Eurocentric conceptions of sexual modernity. Not only has this produced epistemological and methodological gaps, but the approach has rendered a narrative of Europe as homogenous and exceptional. Most histories have also failed to draw upon post-colonialist understandings of how European sexual modernity was not a monomorphous project but one developed in multiple settings within Europe and in relation with the rest of the world. Our conference explores how looking at relational encounters may help us to overcome monolithic histories of same-sex eroticisms in Europe.

We seek to “provincialize” Europe by taking account of postcolonial theories on how Europe’s modernity emerged through encounters with other regions of the world, and we especially wish to encourage work that disaggregates both theoretical and analytical concepts of “Europe” itself. Most sexual histories of “Europe” have assumed an essential connection between rapid changes in urban life and the emergence of modern sexual identities. In fact, they are really about the northwestern metropolis (London, Paris, Berlin,...); we wish both to expand the range of spatial settings explored and, especially, to look beyond the metropolitan perspective. The aim is to reflect on how it would change our histories to focus as much on other sites, and to both recognize and critically scrutinize the differences and relations among various local circumstances, cultural scenes, textual communities and individual experiences. Similarly, how would our master narratives of the history of same-sex eroticisms need to be rethought if we developed alternative histories that do not start from a priori assumptions on the relative importance of top down or bottom up processes, but instead focus on complex, historically specific and geographically located forms of the cross-pollination of discourses? In order to reconsider the “conventional” story of sexual modernity, new and unexplored historical sources need to be unearthed, but also “traditional” texts could be reexamined.

We invite proposals for papers that reframe the history of same-sex eroticisms in Europe by engaging with these questions and methodologies. We welcome theoretically and empirically rich work that explores the circulation of bodies, practices, knowledges, and cultural representations; colonial encounters, migration, and tourism; and issues of sexual mixity and hybridization, amongst others. We encourage work that, rather than being strictly comparative, analyzes the construction of European sexual modernities as a relational process by examining encounters (often unequal) among and between

subjects, institutions, discourses, and hegemonies. We welcome submissions from historians, anthropologists, postcolonial theorists, and scholars in related disciplines.

The heart of the conference will consist of a series of moderated closed working sessions at which participants discuss one another's pre-circulated papers. Although presenters may make introductory remarks, most time will be devoted to discussion--not a reading--of the papers. Our hope is that this format will produce a very focused, sustained, and productive conversation.

Confirmed speakers include Rudi Bleys (Independent scholar, Antwerp), George Chauncey (Yale University), Dan Healey (Swansea University).

Confirmed participants include Nick Matte (University of Toronto), Jyoti Puri (Simmons College), Christelle Taraud (Paris programs of Columbia University and New York University), Kaat Wils (University of Leuven), Henk de Smaele (University of Antwerp) and Wannes Dupont (University of Antwerp).

**This call solicits proposals for papers for the closed sessions.** Proposals should consist of (1) a 750-word précis of the paper, which clearly indicates how it speaks to the conference theme, and (2) a 1 page c.v. Proposals and inquiries can be made via e-mail to Wannes Dupont at [wannes.dupont@ua.ac.be](mailto:wannes.dupont@ua.ac.be); they should be submitted as e-mail attachments **by July 1 2009.**

Presenters are expected to submit the complete 20-25 (double-spaced) page paper by February 18 2010. We intend to produce an edited collection based on revised versions of the papers.

The conference is being organized by the Center for Political History and the Center for Urban History of the University of Antwerp in collaboration with the Yale Research Initiative on the History of Sexualities.

More information is available on the conference [website](#).