

I would like to start with an inspiring quote from one very important member of the battle of non-heterosexual emancipation, Benno Premela:

“ When you belong to a discriminated group, you get to endure a lot. But because of that, you are being forced to cogitate things in life and you’re not able to let your life pass from the crib to the grave. ”

Queering the Archive has made me think about non-heterosexuality in our society. I initially felt this subject should be discussed as little as possible. As a queer, I think my sexual orientation says about me as a person as much as my blonde hair or big nose: nothing but shallow personal details and therefore useless to talk about. In my opinion, talking about the whole matter was indeed a sign that it still was not ‘normal’. Only after I began doing research for Queering the Archive and read about the people who stood up for the emancipation of non-heterosexuals, found out about infamous events that put non-heterosexuals into the spotlight and took note of the far-reaching discrimination of non-heterosexuals through the ages, only then I realized it was for me as a non-heterosexual a subject I couldn’t keep my mouth shut about. I wanted to share the knowledge I gained and have conversations about the whole subject. In 2016, our emancipation battle isn’t over yet. Queering the Archive shows us which obstacles we still have to overcome and at the same time, it helps us to fight our battle of equality.

When an archive wants to queer its collections, problems very soon occur. Within the City Archives, it is clear which documents could be marked as queer. However, disclosure of these documents isn't always possible. The Personal Data Protection Act, *Wet bescherming persoonsgegevens* in Dutch, could forbid publication of certain documents, as the documents contain information about the suspected sexual orientation of the people mentioned in the documents. This means that the Archives of the Assessment of Moral Behaviour of Municipality Staff period 1942 – 1959 cannot be disclosed. Between ex-prostitutes, women abusers and people with a disgraceful political past are also some homosexuals. It is unknown if these people are still alive and therefore against the law to disclose the archive. Luckily we don't think of homosexuality as crime anymore, but apparently still as something one should be ashamed of.

The Personal Data Protection Act protects the privacy of civilians. Section 16 reads:

The processing of personal data relating to a person's religion or belief, race, political affinity, health, sex life and trade union membership is prohibited, subject to the provisions of this Division. The same applies to personal data concerning criminal law matters and personal data on unlawful or objectionable conduct in connection with a prohibition imposed in response to such conduct.

It is remarkable that the following section 17 till section 22, all kinds of exceptions to the act are mentioned for the processing of data relating to one's religion, race, political affinity, health and trade union membership. The processing of data relating to someone's sexual life is the only matter that's forbidden without any exception. Sexual life, which includes being non-heterosexual, is something that has to be private. In other words, talking about it is not-done. Merely in section 23 part 2 a general exception is mentioned. It says:

2. The prohibition on processing personal data referred to in Section 16 for scientific research or statistics does not apply in so far as:

- a. the research serves a public interest;
- b. the processing is necessary for the research or statistics concerned;
- c. it proves impossible or would involve a disproportionate effort to request express consent, and

This is the one I especially have severe problems with:

- d. safeguards have been put in place for the processing such that the data subject's privacy is not disproportionately compromised.

It confirms that revealing someone's sexual orientation could severely damage someone's personal privacy. As an openly gay young man this hurts me personally. Not because I think the law is discriminating, but because what it says is true. If we want to cure this error, we would have to finally really normalize non-heterosexuality.

Non-heterosexuality is still a controversial subject. In 1964, Benno Permsela was the first person to openly confirm his homosexuality on the Dutch national television. Everyone spoke about it and the subject came into the spotlight. Other gay men weren't too happy with this sudden attention. They weren't completely out and felt the openness about the subject as a threat. Fifty years later, his trend still exists. On the one side there is the double standard in a part of our society. Gays are allowed to be out, as long as they act 'normal' and do not draw the attention too much. On the other hand there are non-heterosexual who say they, well happen to not be a heterosexual, but really act normal anyway. The stereotypical view of a homosexual as a kind of Kim Kardashian in male form is still alive within society. Proof of this is the convulsive self description of some gay men as 'straight acting'. As if they say, 'I might be into men, but I'm sure as hell not gay.' This stereotype is also outlined by the one-sided image that people have of events like the Gay Pride. But also because on television, gays are still depicted as loud and mean replica's of Cinderella's ugly stepmother and the idea that the gay party culture always is an extravagant happening where everything is possible and everything is allowed. Not to mention the stereotypical images of the other non-heterosexual groups.

When I was confronted with my own homosexuality during puberty, I tried to put it away as much as I could. I now have no idea why, but profiling myself as a homosexual felt impossible back then. Finally I realized lying to myself wasn't going to work and eventually I came out on 21 May 2014. Against my expectations, very little changed. I'm still single, for instance. But what did change, is that I now dare to be myself. The fact that I was afraid to come out for so long says a lot about emancipation of non-heterosexuals. The fact that coming out still is a thing says a lot about it too, by the way. Why I'm saying this is because I'm very aware that sexual orientation still is a taboo. As long as it's not normal, people will be ashamed of it. Now that the social debate on emancipation of non-heterosexuals is numbed and the next step in the battle of equality is rather unclear, I wonder how we are going to face the future.

The emancipation of non-heterosexuals should achieve equal treatment of heterosexual and non-heterosexual within our society. We take the treatment of heterosexuals as the norm and non-heterosexuals demand to be treated the same way. Events like the Gay Pride stimulated awareness within the society. Education in schools introduces the subject in an early stadium and contributes to gaining knowledge about non-heterosexuality. Eventually, non-conformist non-heterosexuality should fit into the new norm, because only then we can say the emancipation has succeeded. Put into simple words, the image should be created that non-heterosexuals are just ordinary people.

In my opinion, Queering the Archives plays an important part in the process of standardisation of non-heterosexuality. It helps getting rid of stereotypes and creates a deeper form of awareness. It goes beyond the so gratefully created awareness, caused by the Gay Pride. It is about awareness on an intellectual level. Queering the Archive offers the possibility to educate yourself about the history of emancipation movements, to find non-heterosexuals in unexpected places and to get to know about courageous people who didn't let themselves being put away by society and fought for their rights as humans. I was able to enjoy this experience by the research I have done for this project. And really, it was an eye opener. I realized what has been done for me to be able to be who I am. I realized I have to thank my freedom to people who dared to put themselves into vulnerable positions and sometimes had to pay a high price for it. Like I said before, I now believe it is a subject we should keep bringing up and keep the conversation about non-heterosexuality going. We came a very, very long way, but still have a bumpy road ahead of us.

By Queering the Archives one comes to the simple conclusion that all the queers in a archive are above all humans, who all tried to succeed in their lives in their own ways. It gives you a view behind the label queer. Maybe it sound slightly old fashioned or idealistic, but Queering the Archives contributes to the fraternization between heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals. In that way, we work together to a standardization of non-heterosexuality, so we don't need to organize a Queering the Archive in the future anymore. And maybe even get rid of the labels heterosexual and non-heterosexual. Thank you for your attention.