

# 3 Amsterdam

*Gert Hekma*

## Introduction

Amsterdam's gay world came into full blossom in the 1960s. The city afforded an example of tolerance and of pleasure for people all around the world. During the Golden Age of the seventeenth century the city was already famous for religious toleration when other religions were permitted alongside the Dutch Reformed Church. Many dissidents from other parts of Europe sought refuge in the city. By the eighteenth century Amsterdam was considered a center for the distribution of pornography, especially libertine writings in French. That tradition continued to the present for kiddy and bestial porn that elsewhere in the Western world is more strictly controlled. This reputation of tolerance is not always well deserved. During the eighteenth century the Dutch Republic, including Amsterdam, was the location of the largest persecutions of sodomy of the age with at least 800 men persecuted and 200 capital punishments. Even in the 1990s a majority of the urban population and of the municipal authorities would like to see an end to Amsterdam's reputation as a place where sex and drugs are easily available. The city government enforced stricter rules on activities that denote hedonism outside the bounds of the capitalist marketplace (van Naerssen 1987).

## Prehistory

The earliest settlement of the site of Amsterdam dated from around 1225. Dams were required to hold back heavy flooding of the River Amstel which threatened the 'terp' or artificial mound on the bank where houses were built. By 1275 Amsterdam became a city and the settlement grew from one of landowners and fish dealers to a center for commerce. The beginnings of the city coincided with rising persecution of sodomy in Europe. The first recorded burnings of sodomites in the Flemish Netherlands took place in Ghent at the end of the thirteenth century. Around 1500 Amsterdam accommodated about 5,000 inhabitants. It was a center of Catholicism with many cloisters. In 1578 the city converted from Catholicism to Calvinism, some time after other Dutch cities. After the occupation of Portugal by Spain in 1580, the fall of Antwerp in 1585 and the repeal of

the Edict of Nantes in France in 1685 large numbers of Portuguese Jews, Flemish Protestants and French Huguenots found refuge in the city. Most of them were wealthy or skillful exiles. By 1700 Amsterdam had an cosmopolitan population of some 200,000 including Germans and Jews, Norwegians and Armenians among many others. The city was the financial and commercial center of the world. Its sea connections made it the prime trading center of the globe. The East and West Indies Companies (founded in 1602 and 1621) made Amsterdam their home. During the eighteenth century the city gradually lost its pre-eminent position to Paris and London although it remained a financial center. Industries and markets declined and, while the rich continued to enjoy prosperity, it derived from their property rather than from trade or industry. The lower classes bore the burden of Amsterdam's commercial and industrial decay.

After Amsterdam joined the Calvinist insurrection against Catholic Spain in 1578 it became the principal city in the Dutch Republic of seven relatively autonomous provinces that forged its political identity during the eighty-year war against Spain (1568–1648). The city itself belonged to the province of Holland, by far the richest part of the country. Because of the intricate but weak organization of the Republic and because of the city's wealth and power, Amsterdam was very independent in its policies. The functions of the Republic, based in The Hague, were mainly restricted to foreign and military affairs. The city was a world to itself and has remained so. In 1806 it became the capital of the Kingdom of Holland under King Louis, brother to Napoleon. Nowadays Amsterdam is the capital as well as the financial and cultural center of the Netherlands while The Hague has remained the seat of government. As the saying goes, money is earned in Rotterdam, divided in The Hague and spoilt in Amsterdam.

### The secret world of sodomy

The first recorded execution by fire for sodomy in the northern part of the Netherlands concerned two men in Egmont, not far from Amsterdam on Holland's coast, in 1321 (Noordam 1995: 22–4). The first known court case in Amsterdam for 'crimine pessimo,' probably sodomy, was in 1534 and involved a priest and a Franciscan monk, but the sentence is not known (Boomgaard 1992: 276). During the seventeenth century there were some convictions in 1632 and 1641 of women who married or had sex with one another. The latter concerned Hendrikje van der Schuur who had served as a soldier and had a passionate relation with a woman named Trijntje. The case attracted attention because the Amsterdam physician Nicolaas Tulp discussed their case in his *Observationes* (1641). He attributed the masculine sexuality of Hendrikje to her large clitoris.

An Italian was banned from the city in 1648 for bugging little girls and possibly also a boy; he was later punished for the same crime in Utrecht and The Hague. Persecution of men for sodomy remained rare in Amsterdam until the great persecutions of 1730–1. One legal treatise mentioned two men who were executed in Amsterdam in 1686 while in 1726 Pierre Pelaxi was sentenced to

thirty-five years of solitary confinement. The first notorious cases dealt not with sodomites but with those who tried to blackmail them. In 1664 the court sentenced a blackmailer to flogging, branding and banishment from the city. Two other men received a similar punishment in 1689 while a third man was hanged. Another blackmailer was convicted in 1715. Their presence in the judicial records suggests that at least since the 1660s there was a twilight world of sodomites in the Dutch Republic (Van der Meer 1995).

In other places convictions were more common, especially in much smaller Rotterdam, where in the same period fifteen men were convicted for sodomy or 'tentamina sodomitica' of whom six received the death sentence. From the thirteenth century until 1730 some 100 convictions for sodomy have been recorded for the northern Netherlands. Most of these were for anal intercourse between men. About fifty men were executed for this crime. Very few cases of bestiality or heterosexual anal intercourse are known (Noordam 1995). It is possible that more cases will be identified in archives in future research; it is equally possible that judicial records have not survived. The suggestion that sodomy trial records were deliberately destroyed seems in general not to have been the case in the Netherlands because of the number that have survived and because legal treatises rarely specified such a requirement of records of the 'crimen nefandum' (the crime that should not be discussed).

If convictions for sodomy in Amsterdam before 1730 were so few the question can be asked whether the activity was rare. It appears that same-sex sexual acts were not as general in the Netherlands as in fifteenth-century Florence described by Rocke (1996) where such pleasures were part and parcel of male sociability. However research has been concentrated on judicial records and there is a lack of historical inquiries into the fields of art, literature and private life. A thorough investigation of Dutch art, from Maerten van Heemskereck and Hendrick Goltzius to Rembrandt van Rijn, Johannes Vermeer, Jan Steen and many others who painted mythology as daily life would provide more information on same-sex desires. Goltzius made drawings of heroic figures, van Heemskereck is famous for his *Lord of Sorrows* which serves as Leo Steinberg's (1983) main example of a Christ with pronounced genitals, while Rembrandt depicted a Ganymede and a masturbation scene. One of Vermeer's portraits may be of a male-to-female transvestite. Etchings of Sodom and sodomy were widespread from the start of printing culture and many tracts that appeared in the wake of the sodomy persecutions of the 1730s were illustrated (Schenk 1982).

Sources from private life and literature might also yield a harvest of information but in the present state of research we can only offer some hypotheses. Obviously official attitudes and those of the public at large were quite negative, especially when cases of sodomy became public. Sodomites themselves felt guilty about acts that were considered the epitome of sin, although since it should not be named perhaps many individuals did not know what was meant. A group of young orphans who had anal intercourse with each other continued to do so after one of them suggested sodomy was not what they did sexually but meant the cutting off of penises. Men arrested for sodomy in the village of Faan who



Figure 3.1 'Justice glorified by the discovery and punishment of rising sin'. The drawing represents the unveiling of the underworld of sodomites, below left, by Justice, in the middle. Some men run off to escape Justice. Above right, the fire that extinguished the city of Sodom. Below right, four women who represent the sins of folly [frolic], avarice, lewdness and voluptuousness. Above left, the angel of revenge with the bible text 'men abandoning the use of women'. From 1730. Source: Reprinted from: *Jahrbuch fuer sexuelle Zwischenstufen* 8 (1907).

might have heard their clergyman inveighing against sodomy seem to have made no connection with their own behavior.

Research in the archives of the Amsterdam Reformed Church revealed that Church Councils discussed sexual sins quite frequently, especially in remonstrating with the faithful for frequenting prostitutes, but sodomy was never mentioned (Roodenburg 1990). In provincial meetings the topic came up not in Holland but in the northern district of Drenthe. Dutch Calvinists were little exercised about sodomy until 1730 and even after that date the state was much more active in combating it than the Reformed Church.

What about homoeroticism that was not sodomitical? Clearly men lived in homosocial worlds in their workplaces, aboard ships, in army camps, and close friendships were highly valued. Lower-class men of all ages often slept together because of lack of space and money. In homes, hostels and on ships they shared beds with nephews, uncles, apprentices, friends or strangers whom they perhaps never saw again after a night of secret delights. However there is a dearth of factual evidence about those practices.

Amsterdam was, relatively speaking, little affected by the 1730 persecutions. The authorities in Utrecht accidentally uncovered a small network of sodomites. After they arrested Zacharias Wilsma, a soldier and hustler who had sexual relations with rich and poor men all over the Republic the prosecution became nation-

wide. Of ninety-four death penalties for sodomy during the period 1730-2 six were pronounced in Amsterdam. Thirty men were sentenced in their absence. They probably escaped because rumors of the persecutions reached Amsterdam before arrests took place. The authorities started the prosecution after they had asked the learned advice of three jurists on the lawfulness of arresting an individual on the basis of a single denunciation by an accomplice, and whether social class made a difference. On the first point the answer was negative and on the second positive. An allegation of a suspect had to be confirmed by other evidence certainly if he was of a higher social class.

The court was prudent. The first man accused of sodomy was a merchant who on 19 May 1730 firmly denied Wilsma's denunciations against him and he was released on bail. Five days later he had left his home for an unknown destination. The second man, lower class, also denied all allegations even when put to the torture and confronted by Wilsma, who was cooperating with the authorities. He finally confessed with two others only about a month later; all three were executed on the 24 of June. A fifth accused, a footman named Maurits Schuurinck had confessed immediately and was executed with them. He said he had been introduced to sodomy by Jurriaan Bakbandt, the inn-keeper of the Serpent, which was the main meeting place of sodomites in Amsterdam. Bakbandt had already fled the city but his wife was arrested and banished from the city. The inn seems to have had two rooms where sodomites gathered in a semi-public arena. Bakbandt never permitted his wife to serve the clients in those rooms, doing so himself (Van der Meer 1984, 1995; Boon 1997).

One of the convicted men implicated another thirty-eight men four days before his execution but the Amsterdam court slowed down its proceedings. In September a fifth execution occurred; in 1731 an accused man committed suicide while in prison. The extent of the Amsterdam sodomitical subculture was small for a city of 200,000 inhabitants. There was another inn beside the Serpent where sodomites foregathered. They met in public spaces like privies, the walls of the city and the ground floor of the City Hall on the Dam Square (at present the Royal Palace). Ironically this was the very place where sodomites were imprisoned after arrest, where they were judged and finally executed on a wooden scaffold built in front of the first floor of the edifice.

All the executed men in Amsterdam were lower class. This was a clear trend towards a class-based justice. Although many patricians and aristocrats were implicated by their footmen none of them were arrested. Some went into exile although the principal noble of the province of Utrecht, in spite of many accusations, was not even indicted. Another 'Utrechtenaar' (since these persecutions, synonymous with sodomite) Jan van Lennep, a prebendary (bought title of honor) from a merchant family, was the highest placed sodomite to face the death penalty. William III, stadtholder of the Republic and King of Britain, was in 1730 already twenty-eight years dead. His fame as a male lover of Count Bentinck and Lord Keppel certainly lingered on much longer but was never evoked in the 1730s.

More prosecutions of sodomy in eighteenth-century Amsterdam: in 1741



Figure 3.2 A print representing 1. a meeting of sodomites, 2. who abandon their wives, 3. are arrested, 4. in prison 5. hung and burnt, and 6. drowned in a barrel. The last scene shows the scaffold placed in cases of corporal punishment before the Amsterdam City Hall, now the Royal Palace. Sodomites met for pleasure on the ground floor of the same building. From 1730.

Source: Reprinted from: *Jahrbuch fuer sexuelle Zwischenstufen* 8 (1907).

three orphans were sentenced to long prison terms; in 1743 another two received the death penalty. In 1762 the man who was the city executioner for many years, and who may have tortured imprisoned sodomites, was banished on grounds of sodomy. He told the court about the cruising at the City Hall and the authorities decided to install lamps there to prevent such activities. Subsequently they organized entrapments in well-known meeting places. The policies changed in enlightened times from reactive to active, from punishing to preventing.

Another wave of persecutions hit the city in 1764–5 with eight death penalties and sixty-four men exiled from the city. It began with the arrest of a soldier for theft who, condemned to death, confessed before his hanging 'to relieve his conscience' his 'terrible sins of sodomy, active as well as passive' with a variety of partners. The court proceeded cautiously. The soldier was hanged two weeks later for his theft and not strangled as was common in sodomy cases. The judges wanted to avoid giving the alarm as had happened in 1730 when suspected sodomites got away. Notwithstanding their caution, few Amsterdam men were arrested and sentenced.

In 1776 a more widespread network of sodomites originating from Amsterdam was revealed. Two individuals accused of fraud had in their luggage letters of an unmistakably sodomitical nature. The two men did not confess anal intercourse and received long prison sentences but not death. However their love letters led to persecutions throughout the Dutch Republic. Hermanus Klock, leader of the Amsterdam soapboilers guild, had written one of the letters. He

confessed to mutual masturbation but no more than that, but, more embarrassingly to the city elite, he implicated a reigning patrician of Amsterdam, George Clifford. The authorities now sought to hush up the case, did not prosecute Clifford and exiled Klock. Other men had been sentenced to long prison terms for the same activities and the blatantly class-biased judgments were unpopular with the population. When warrants calling for the arrest of fugitive sodomites were posted they were painted black by unknown members of the public, probably as a gesture of protest.

The type of meeting places of sodomites revealed by the eighteenth-century trials continued to exist. Public toilets until the 1970s were favored cruising grounds. In the eighteenth-century these toilets were wooden structures under the city's many bridges. They offered an early-warning system of new arrivals since most lower-class people walked with wooden clogs so an individual descending the stairs was easily audible to persons in the latrines. In the mid nineteenth century street-level urinals were installed and these were heavily frequented by men wanting sex with other men. They had soon to be redesigned to make homosexual activity impossible but however clever the new design may have been, the new model has been employed by gay men until the 1970s. After the walls were pulled down, the parks that came in their place were another venue for same-sex encounters.

Inns and bars were a salient feature first of the sodomitical underworld and later of the gay upperworld. The inns mentioned in 1730 were not exclusively sodomitical. About bars mentioned in later court proceedings no details are given. Two bars in the Egelantierstraat (Jordaan) are designated in 1764 as places where 'lolders' (sodomites) congregated and in the 1790s the Rondeel on the Heiligeweg is mentioned several times. Sodomites met also at private homes. Both in 1809 and 1881 houses were raided and 'wrong lovers' arrested. Nothing is known about bars or inns for most of the nineteenth century. At the end of the century a list of bordellos made by a reform society mentions half a dozen bars and houses as sodomitical meeting places.

The question has often been debated if these men who had sex with other men had a sense of homosexual identity. The historians Noordam (1995) and Van der Meer (1995) assume, following Trumbach, that such an identity existed since the late seventeenth century. Further questions arise from that assumption: what did that identity involve, how did it affect sodomites and their surroundings, and what place did the identity hold in the cultural context? A subculture of sodomites was developing in Amsterdam from the late seventeenth century. As a reaction to their persecution some sodomites started to defend their inclinations and to claim in the mid-eighteenth century that their desires were innate. These whispers became outspoken only in 1883 when the first self-conscious homosexual was published. The development of a homosexual identity should be seen as a process of stages where other same-sex practices existed concurrent with this identity such as romantic friendship, boy-love or males seeking sex with adult males in homosocial arrangements or on the streets. My view of the Dutch situation is that most men who had sex with other men did not self-consciously

embrace a homosexual identity until the 1950s. Most homosexual acts till that time were perpetrated by men who sought sexual pleasure and did not care much about the gender of their partner (compare Everard 1994 and Van de Pol 1996 for female sexuality).

### Modern times

In 1795 Dutch radicals, with the backing of French troops, chased out the patriots and the Stadtholder of the Oranges who held power in the Republic and founded the revolutionary Batavian Republic. After many political perturbations in 1806 Napoleon made his brother Louis King of Holland and, in 1810, included the kingdom in his empire. In 1813 the Netherlands again became independent, after Napoleon's Russian defeats. After the Congress of Vienna Belgium and the former Republic were united in the Kingdom of the Netherlands until 1830 when the two parts became separate kingdoms.

After the revolutionary changes of 1795 the persecutions of sodomy surprisingly increased. More men were arrested and also some women. The range of sexual acts considered criminal was extended. The 'tentamina sodomitica' included touching another male intimately. On the other hand the punishments were less severe. The net result was that little progress was made under the new regime. In Amsterdam two of the leading police chiefs seem to have been at odds, one being eager to prosecute sodomy while the other was alleged to be a sodomite in several cases. After the first officer left his position the persecutions abated but did not stop altogether.

Legal opinion about sodomy was evolving somewhat. In 1777 a lawyer close to the Stadtholder, Abraham Perrenot, wrote in the spirit of the Enlightenment a tract which called for prevention rather than harsh punishments of sodomy. He still expressed vehement repulsion for sodomites. In 1795 G.J. Gales, another lawyer, discussed whether the sin of sodomy should be decriminalized because of the separation of church and state in the Batavian Republic. His conclusion was that sodomy should remain a crime because the law was introduced by the state.

New criminal law proposals of the Batavian Republic did not propose to decriminalize sodomy although capital punishment was now reserved only for cases when it occurred under conditions of force, seduction or misuse of authority. These proposals were not enacted in law. When Holland was incorporated into Napoleon's Empire the French *Code Pénal* was introduced in 1811. This law had no provisions against sodomy, only against public indecency. After the defeat of the French the law remained in force and was replaced only in 1886. Some Dutch legal officials in the Kingdom of the Netherlands like the long-serving Minister of Justice C.F. van Maanen had wanted to reintroduce the crime of sodomy to the law. The 1840s saw a lively discussion among lawyers mostly in favor of recriminalizing sodomy. However, in 1880, the majority in parliament supported the idea of privacy and resisted the insertion of articles against sodomy. To prevent seduction of youngsters the legal age of consent was raised initially to 14, but after a case of homosexual seduction of somewhat

older youths came to the public attention it was finally raised to 16 years of age in the law that replaced the *Code Pénal* in 1886.

The nineteenth century was a liberal age in the Netherlands but towards the end of the century, other political groups, especially Protestant and Catholic, gained in force. They made moral and sexual issues prominent in politics and campaigned for a stricter sex law that was discussed and accepted in parliament in 1911. This law outlawed same-sex acts between adults and minors under 21 years, as well as public exposure of pornography and contraceptives, abortion and pimping. This new sex law was the outcome of a long struggle focused mainly on medical regulation of prostitution. The ill-assorted coalition of Christian fundamentalists, feminists, progressive liberals and socialists that, for a variety of reasons, supported the struggle against prostitution, extended its field of interest in 1898 to other sexual topics like male homosexuality and pornography which were both widely held in disregard.

The political struggle around prostitution was a result of its medical regulation. Since Napoleon introduced this measure to police prostitutes more effectively, regulation had spread over Europe. The nineteenth century was the age of progress. Physicians believed in and struggled for a stronger medical hold in the state. They had deeply socialized medicine by introducing a specialization called 'medical police' or, more neutrally, 'public hygiene', that broadened the field of medical interest towards social issues such as the quality of food, labor circumstances, housing conditions, public festivities. The lewd and drunken behavior of the lower classes was curtailed and more healthy alternatives of sport and music were propagated.

Prostitutes were given a weekly medical inspection. Christians opposed this regulation because it legalized vice, feminists because it degraded women, socialists because capitalists could in that way legally and with impunity abuse working-class women. As the medical control was not effective even physicians started to oppose it. In the end this struggle was successful and most Dutch cities abrogated the regulation and forbade bordellos. After this victory abolitionists found other targets in the struggle against pornography, homosexuality, abortion, child abuse and other forms of immorality (de Vries 1997).

Amsterdam had never had medical regulation although an unofficial system existed. At the end of the century the city council appointed a committee to research the social conditions of prostitution. Its conclusions were straightforward. Bordellos were not so much used by young and unmarried men for whom they were intended but by older married men. Those men were less interested in normal copulation than in 'counternatural' sex. Among the prostitutes tribadism was common. Instead of damming dangerous desires of youngsters prostitution promoted perversions among everyone. The regulatory system was put into question and never recovered from this final blow. In its stead free clinics for the treatment of venereal diseases were introduced.



## Wrong lovers

Discussion of prostitution made homosexuality visible. A strongly voiced opinion among doctors was the argument that if the state forbade prostitution worse vices would become general, like masturbation or seeking sexual relations with others of the same sex. One strong supporter of the system had been a naval surgeon and he confirmed that thousands of men succumbed to these vices in the absence of women. His Christian opponents sustained the possibility of chastity and found a captain of the merchant marine who said that sailors could live chastely during their long sailing trips. The discussion on prostitution brought homosexuality into the limelight of public discussion. Books and pamphlets on prostitution frequently had chapters devoted to same-sex behavior by men and women.

A new kind of yellow press with strong socialist or left-wing antecedents started around 1890. These journals railed against capitalism, the church and the aristocracy, whose main faults were of course sexual. *The Red Devil* attacked men of higher classes and of religious ranks for all kinds of social and sexual misbehavior. *The Amsterdam Lantern* edited by Abraham Cornelisse did so fervently. It opened its first issue in 1897 with a verbal assault on a sodomitical meeting place and produced a pamphlet against this bar of George Hermans. In the few copies of the journal that have survived, gay bashing is a regular feature. Cornelisse not only cried out in his paper against sodomites but went so far as to smash the windows of Hermans' bar. He was arrested and sentenced for this. He produced at least one more pamphlet against pederasts who were said to interfere with young patients in the city hospital.

His articles offer an interesting insight on the gay bars of those times. Hermans was a strong supporter of the royal family whose portraits decorated his bar. This infuriated the anti-royalist Cornelisse. Flowers, an uncommon feature of bars in those days, added to the atmosphere. Hermans was more than a bartender since his denouncer claimed he was a quack purporting to cure venereal diseases. He was also said to place young men for work as man-servants or as nurses in psychiatric asylums. This employment service gave him ample opportunity to give free rein to his debauched desires.

Similar information is not available on the other places that catered to sodomites. Those on the list of bordellos probably did not offer rent boys. One man who figured on the list was arrested for public indecency and apparently had pictures of nude males in his home. Perhaps the pictures were of male whores for inspection by potential clients, but it seems more likely that the man sold or collected male pornography. Probably the meetings places changed regularly because of harassments by the police, annoyed neighbors or Cornelisse and his like.

The main meeting places were not bars and bordellos, however, but parks, public toilets and streets. Judicial archives give abundant material on those places as public indecencies persecuted in Dutch courts generally concerned men involved in same-sex activities. The number of arrested men grew rapidly as Table 3.1 shows:

1. Vondelpark
2. Wateringplantsoen
3. J. D. Meyerplein
4. diverse plaatsen langs het V. waar zich een 'zwemschool' en de afvaart van stoomboten richting Zaandam, Pomerend etc. bevonden
5. Nieuwe Brugsteeg 4 (koffyhuys en logement)
6. Prins Hendrikkade 57
7. Spuistraat 287
8. Singel 438
9. Egelantiersgracht 142
10. Nassaukade 114
11. bierhuis Wesseling, Utrechtstraat 137
12. bierhuis Spits, Kerkstraat 212
13. bierkelder Catacombe Marnixstraat 398
14. restaurant N.Z. Kapelsteeg 10
15. café hock Molsteeg/N.Z. Voorburgwal
16. bierhuis George Hermans, Smaksteeg (bij Nieuwendijk)
17. Monthaansteeg (verzamelplaats sodomieten)

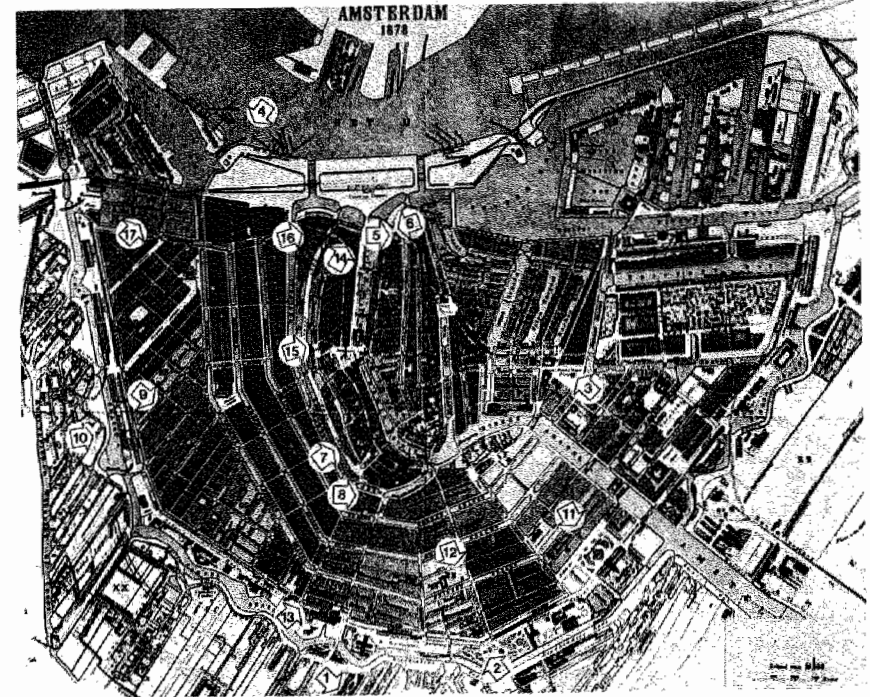


Figure 3.3 Map of Amsterdam, indicating the meeting places of 'wrong lovers' in the late nineteenth century, numbers 1–4 cruising places; 5–10 houses mentioned on a bordello list as sodomitical locations; 11–17 bars that operated around the turn of the century at some stage as meeting places for sodomites.

Source: From *Spiegel Historiael* 17: 10 (October 1982).

Table 3.1 Number of arrests and convictions for homosexual acts in the Amsterdam district (public indecency and seduction of minors)

Year	Arrests	Convictions
1830–9	12	10
1840–9	8	7
1850–9	14	7
1860–9	27	12
1870–9	51	27
1880–9	73	23
1890–9	97	48
1900–9	187	87

Source: From Hekma (1987).

Note: Most cases concern Amsterdam city; during the two last decades one and five of the arrested men respectively were sent to a psychiatric asylum without a conviction.

An obvious explanation for the rapid rise in numbers of arrests is the growth of the Amsterdam police force from 56 to 686 men between 1838 and 1878. The less effective system of night watchmen had been abolished. There were more prisons, asylums and public toilets; there were more efforts to discipline social behavior but also more possibilities to escape control.

Convicted men had practiced consensual sex in all kinds of places: in horse carriages, trains, hospitals, swimming pools, on boats, markets, in bars, bedrooms, the poorhouse and, most often, in parks and public toilets. Sometimes the police took a long time to arrest their victims. Two men who had once been observed kissing on a street corner were followed for a fortnight before they were caught having sex in the same public place. In another instance two men spent an hour and a half in an old-style public toilet under a bridge where they were fucking each other. A woman vendor of eggs and pickles testified that one of the pair had bought two eggs from her before going down to the toilet where he was joined by his partner a little later. She said the couple had been in that toilet before, and remained there until the night watch took up their post at 9:30 p.m. Their arrest was the work of a man who had staked out the toilet for hours. A volunteer constable in the Vondelpark was very zealous and made several

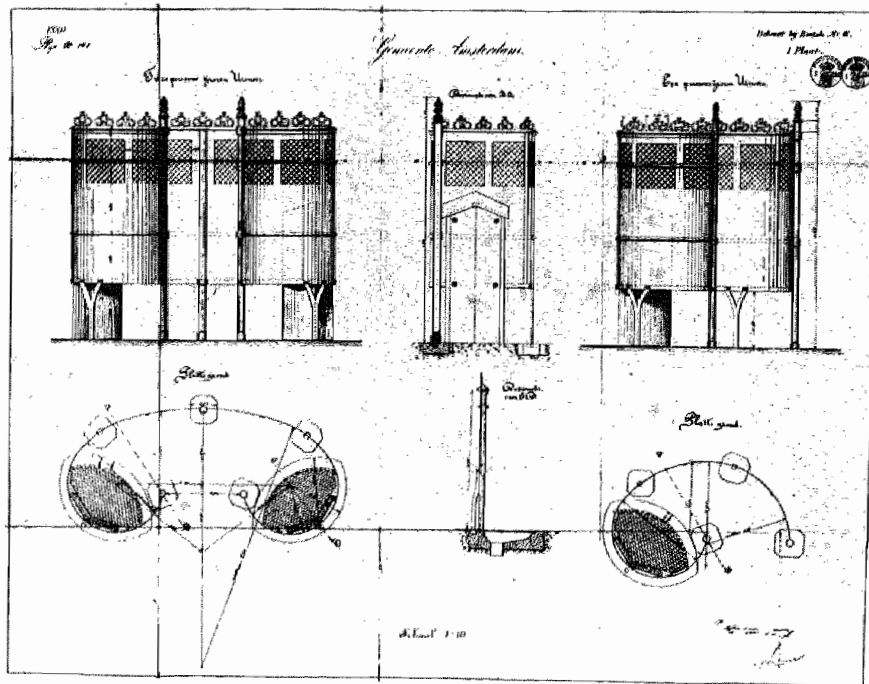


Figure 3.4 Public toilet, specifically designed to prevent homosexual acts in the 1880s and still present in contemporary Amsterdam. The two pissholes are spatially segregated to prevent indecent gazing, and the underside of the walls is open to make it possible for police officers to see from the outside what is happening inside.

Source: *Genoete Archief Amsterdam*.

arrests there of men engaged in sexual acts. Some other citizens of Amsterdam were less vigilant, like the cabman who drove around while two men had sex in his carriage, until the policeman who had ascertained their behavior arrested them.

The arrested men were nearly without exception from the lower classes. Of course they had less access to private space for sexual activity than the well to do. The handful of upper middle-class men arrested for public indecencies took effective measures to escape condemnation by employing a lawyer to defend them or by appealing against an unfavorable sentence. They could also leave the country before the trial because there was no preventive imprisonment once the charge of public indecency had been laid.

The convicted men were of all ages, the youngest in Amsterdam being 15 years old. Convictions for having sex with boys were rare before 1886 when the new law set the age of consent at 16. Between 1886 and 1909 there were twenty-four convictions for this crime, whereas in the preceding period of 1830 to 1885 only five men were convicted of having forcible sexual relations with boys in that age group. In fact force was rarely an element in the cases researched, including those in the Haarlem Military Court which is astonishing because (sexual) violence was until recently widespread in the army.

Charges of public indecencies raised the question in court of what was to be considered public. In general, wards in hospitals, army barracks and places clearly visible from a public place were considered to be public. If men had sex in a bedroom without closing the curtains their activities could become a public indecency. A court in Appingedam near the German frontier acquitted two men who had sex behind a hedge, which meant they were not seen by the witness but heard. However the court ruled that the sounds of their love-making did not make their behavior public. A lawyer published a comment in a journal in which he argued that their acts should have been punished since the garden did not belong to either man. The 1886 law countered such problems by adding the proviso that there was public indecency if other persons were involuntary witnesses to such acts. Dutch law-makers never went as far as the British who regarded all sexual situations in which more than two persons were present as public indecencies.

### Medical theories, emancipatory efforts

In the late nineteenth century, psychiatrists and uranians started to discuss the bio-medical aspects of homosexuality. The first author was the psychiatrist N.B. Donkersloot, editor of the weekly *Geneeskundige Courant* (Medical Journal). In 1852 he summarized J.L. Casper's findings on the signs of sodomy, but did not mention Casper's suggestion that pederasty might be innate. In a review of K.H. Ulrichs' work on uranism he concluded that it was better to talk the topic to death than to condemn its devotees to death. He did not succeed in banishing the topic into silence as an anonymous colleague wrote him a long letter in which he defended his desires. Donkersloot published this letter as the first

Dutch case study of man who wrote 'I am a uranian, not a pederast.' This fascinating first gay autobiography in Dutch was the apotheosis of a long article of Donkersloot on the 'Clinical-forensic significance of the perverse sexual drive' which appeared in several installments in 1883, the first major article on the topic in Dutch.

This first uranian claimed that there were 50,000 uranians like him in the Netherlands, with male genitals, body-hair, voice, build and habitus but female from the inside. From his earliest days he desired men and abhorred women. For him, having sex with uranians and dionings (heterosexual men) was natural, while sex with women was counternatural. His sexual activity was not anal as he was not a pederast, and neither, he went on, were 199 of each 200 of his ilk. This man claimed to be a well respected doctor who wanted to speak out about uranism like the courageous Ulrichs because he believed that already in the same century uranism would be accepted on an equal footing with dionism.

More ambivalent was the second apology for uranians by Schoondermark who spoke as if he held a professorate and a doctorate but who had neither. He had been a medical student and a collaborator on the *Geneeskundige Courant*. He made his living by writing tracts on medical subjects from dentistry and hygiene to sexology and birth control. Most of his very many works were simply translations of foreign books under his own name. In 1894 he published a small book *Van de verkeerde richting* (Of the wrong direction) which was mainly a translation of Norbert Grabowski's *Die verkehrte Geschlechtsempfindung* (1894). It ended with an emotional appeal: 'one should have strong compassion with, not contempt for homosexuals.' Later he would translate Nicolo Barucco's work on *Neurasthenia sexualis* (1901) which had a much more negative tone. Schoondermark did this work probably for financial rather than emotional reasons as he was not homosexual himself. Notwithstanding his active publishing he twice went bankrupt and was denounced in the *Geneeskundige Courant* as a quack.

Schoondermark's books appeared with Amsterdam-based publishers such as Van Klaveren, Moransard and Graauw who started to produce erotic and sexological books with great success in the late 1880s. Van Klaveren published the first full-length book on homosexuality, the aforementioned *Van de verkeerde richting*. After 1894 many other original and translated works would appear like Ambroise Tardieu's *Misdrijven tegen de zeden* (1896), Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Leerboek der zielsziekten van het geslachtsleven* (1896), Edward Carpenter's *De homogene liefde* (1896), Magnus Hirschfeld's *Sappho en Socrates* (1902) and Havelock Ellis's *Het contraire geslachtsgevoel* (1901). It was a popular genre. Many translations were compilations of the originals, fabricated to satisfy the sexual curiosity of the public. Van Klaveren sold these books in series, for example the 'People's library for sexual life.' This sexological literature promulgated for the first time in Dutch history quite positive ideas of sexual variations. It offered models for homosexual and other sexual identities and stimulated their development. In a court case it was used against a man arrested for public indecencies that he had spoken approvingly about Schoondermark's work to his tobacconist.

The two main Dutch authors in the field were Arnold Aletrino and Lucien

S.A.M. von Römer. They were both medical doctors living in Amsterdam, Aletrino teaching criminal anthropology and Römer becoming a highly regarded collaborator of Hirschfeld and a productive contributor to his *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*. Aletrino was already famous as a realist author of somber novels about nurses when he published in 1897 his first article on uranism. It was a long and positive review of Marc-André Raffalovich's *Uranisme et unisexualité* (1896) whose thesis of the masculine and chaste uranian he supported. In his later publications he was more inclined to Hirschfeld's ideas on 'sexual intermediaries.' In 1901 Aletrino provoked a scandal when he defended the rights of uranians at the fifth conference of Criminal Anthropology in Amsterdam, facing an audience of staunch opponents, among them the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso. In 1904 the Calvinist Dutch Prime Minister attacked both Aletrino and the University of Amsterdam for teaching the sins of Sodom. Both Aletrino and Römer belonged to the Dutch section of Hirschfeld's 'Wissenschaftlich-humanitäre Komitee' (NWHK) founded in 1912 in The Hague.

Römer held already the post of 'Obmann' (leader) in the German WHK. He wrote major essays on the persecution of sodomites in the eighteenth century, on androgyny and on the nature of homosexuality for the *Jahrbuch*. He carried out the first Dutch sex survey with 308 male student respondents in which he found that 2 per cent admitted homosexual and a further 4 per cent bisexual feelings. A total of 21 per cent reported sex with other males during puberty and 85 per cent had masturbated. He later helped Hirschfeld carry out a similar inquiry in Germany. In a lecture for the Christian-Socialist organization 'Rein-Leven' (Pure Life) he defended not only the natural essence of homosexuality but also the right to gay sex within a loving relationship. Nobody else endorsed this position, not even Aletrino, who held the opinion that uranians should remain chaste. Römer took up polemical positions against professors of the Medical Faculty. This would have influenced his supervisor, professor of psychiatry Cees Winkler, to reject his dissertation. Official grounds were that the manuscript was written in German, contained lewd pictures of naked men and included genealogies of sexual perversions in royal families. Although he never got his degree, some of the material was published in his work 'The uranian family' which was published in both Dutch and German editions (1905 and 1906 respectively). Römer became a member of the NWHK but after the rejection of his outstanding work on homosexuality he withdrew from that area of investigation. He emigrated to the Dutch East Indies where he worked as a medical practitioner, married a woman and had two sons.

Aletrino, also a married man, helped his friend Jacob Israël de Haan to come to terms with homosexual feelings. The year 1904 saw the publication by De Haan of the first gay novel in Dutch, *Pijpelijntjes*. The title is derived from the then new Amsterdam neighborhood, De Pijp. The novel is a quite explicit description of the sadistic relationship between two students who lived in that district, who occasionally fought and who had other lovers on the side. The two principal characters had the nicknames of Sam and Joop - names also known to many as the nicknames of Aletrino and De Haan. In doing this, De Haan



implied a homosexual relationship with his friend, although Aletrino always maintained that writers like Hirschfeld or himself who wrote on uranism were not necessarily themselves homosexual. The novel caused a major scandal. However Aletrino and De Haan's fiancée together bought up all the copies of the book soon after it was printed. De Haan was fired from his job as a journalist at the Socialist daily newspaper as well as losing his post as a schoolteacher. The furor underlined how ferocious was the opposition to homosexuality in the Netherlands in the decade before World War I.

The novel described two men sharing a room in a boarding house and having lovers' spats. At the same time they are portrayed going into the city looking for sexual partners. Joop pursued working-class boys aged 13 years and over who were ready to share sexual pleasures for a drink or for some money. The novel contained graphic scenes of everyday life in De Pijp. De Haan's second novel *Pathologieën* published in 1908 portrayed a sadomasochistic relationship between a student and his cruel lover who was a painter. It contained sex scenes that were quite explicit by the standards of the times. The Flemish writer George Eekhoud wrote a complimentary introduction. This novel did not provoke the same scandal as the first. Later De Haan became famous for his pederast and Jewish poetry. After the Great War he emigrated to Palestine as a Zionist but then joined forces with the Anti-Zionist Jews, defended their case in London and was murdered by Zionists in 1924. A line in Dutch from one of his poems 'Such a boundless desire for friendship' decorates the Homomonument in Amsterdam.

De Haan was not alone in his choice of topic. The Amsterdam-based artistic circle of the 'Eighties' whose leader was the poet Willem Kloos and whose main paragons were Baudelaire, Verlaine and Huysmans had done so earlier. Kloos was a passionate person and a drunkard who fell in love with a succession of artistic friends for whom he wrote thinly veiled love poetry. Albert Verwey, himself a poet and later a professor of literary history, responded with a famous cycle 'Of the love named friendship.' Lodewijk van Deyssel, another member of this group, published in 1889 a novel on boarding school life *De kleine republiek* (The little republic). The main character falls in love with another boy, has sex with him and is subsequently sent away. The story followed quite closely Van Deyssel's own experiences in the elite Catholic school of Rolduc. The male circle once staged a tribunal that had to decide on the lesbianism of two female artists on the margins of their clique who had rejected the advances of a male member. The judges, advised by Aletrino, acquitted the two women who for sure had an intimate relationship.

Before the sex law of 1911 was enacted, parliament had discussed the declining sexual morality of the nation on several occasions. The rise of pornography and apologies for uranians awakened the rage of several Christian politicians but they had to face some opposition. A lawyer of aristocratic descent, squire Jacob Anton Schorer, and H.J. Schouten, who was from a family of clergymen and used the pseudonym of G. Helpman, wrote several leaflets against the impending sex laws. Their voice was heard but had too little weight in a parliament dominated by Christian parties. Article 248bis, that forbade sexual

relations between adults and minors under 21 years, was accepted after extensive discussion. The law remained in force till 1971 and has been used in about 5,000 cases against homosexual men and in forty-eight cases against lesbians. Half of the cases resulted in a sentence, most often a prison term.

Schorer founded the first homosexual rights' movement in the Netherlands in 1912. Schorer had been an Obmann in the German WHK, like Von Römer. The NWHK was, till the Great War, a chapter of the German organization and from the beginning of the war, in which the Netherlands remained neutral, an independent group. Although Aletrino, Von Römer and the gay novelists M.J.J. Exler and J.H. François were nominal members of this group, Schorer shouldered most of the work alone. He published a Dutch version of the WHK leaflet 'Wat iedereen behoort te weten omtrent uranisme' (1912) that included a petition against article 248bis. This was abundantly signed by luminaries of Dutch culture and left-wing parties. He edited annual reports for the NWHK in 1915–20 and 1933–40, established a major gay library, helped homosexual men and brought them into contact with each other. In the years between the wars he was the main spokesperson of the homosexual movement.

The two other members of the NWHK, Exler and François, both wrote gay novels. François' two novels had The Hague as a background, *Anders* (1918, Different) and *Het Masker* (1922, The Mask). Exler wrote *Levensleed* (1911, Life's Grief) on the homosexual awakening of an Amsterdam young man who was lectured by his brother on the theories of Hirschfeld (who contributed the preface). The youngster committed suicide when he learned of the agonies of the not so gay life of uranians. Several other mediocre gay novels and some more interesting books of poetry were published but they never described Amsterdam (Hekma 1987; Van Lieshout and Hafkamp 1988).

### From twilight to floodlight

The homosexual movement was based in The Hague which was also the site of the major gay scandals in those years: a police raid on a male bordello visited by men from the upper classes in 1919 and the arrest because of article 248bis of the chief treasurer of the government Mr L.A. Ries in 1936. The subculture in both The Hague and Amsterdam was of the same small size. Apart from some bars, circles of friends who met in private homes formed a mainstay of gay life. For same-sex contacts men chiefly depended on a public circuit of toilets and parks. At least forty of these all over the city were sites of gay activity till the 1960s. The Vondelpark, toilets on the Rembrandtplein and under the Mint Tower, on the square in front of the Central Station, around the Rijksmuseum, and also news centers in the Kalverstraat where one could read the latest newspapers and rub up against other clients attracted men. Both male and female prostitutes were found on Kalverstraat (Duyves 1992).

Bars and houses were irregularly raided by the police. In 1922 the bar of a certain Krakebeen (crack-leg) on the Singel was raided and, in 1932, the Empire in the Nes near Dam Square. This was the most long-standing homosexual bar

of the period between the wars, in existence from 1911 to 1935 with some intervals. A group of homosexual men had produced from this bar the first gay journal *Wij* (We) and intended to found a 'Dutch Society for Human Rights' following earlier German examples. Just a week before the founding meeting the police raided the bar and arrested sixty-one persons. Because no one had committed a legal offense the arrests had few immediate consequences. But the journal and the society evaporated as many men felt threatened by this kind of harassment.

The Amsterdam vice squad, founded in 1931, soon numbered twenty-five officers who regularly visited bars where they expected to find depravity. As soon as the police officers saw too many homosexuals or lesbians, they obliged bar-owners to remove them. Managers always protested their earnest intention to be rid of such customers although the police did not believe their sincerity. One subversive gay barman asked once why he should not allow homosexuals in his bar. This made him only more suspect in the eyes of the police officers who then kept track of all his activities. The policemen faced two problems. They could not determine who was homosexual and there were no legal provisions against the existence of a gay bar. But they could always withdraw drinking or music licenses or simply harass the pub by raiding it to make the owners bend to their wishes. Based on arrests and other information, the Amsterdam vice squad had in the late 1930s a list of about 4,800 homosexuals, an amazing 1.7 per cent of Amsterdam males over 18 years of age (Koenders 1996; Tielman 1982).

Before World War II there were several homosexual bars that mostly existed for short periods of time. Some of them were quite successful like the Empire or the Volendam better known as 'Aunt Annie' in the Watersteeg. Those caf  s took preventive measures against unwanted visitors like officers of the vice-squad. Often they had a doorman who warned the public in the bar with a signal that 'owls' (straights) or 'Russians' (officers) were entering. This signal could be a electric bell or a light bulb. Those measures were only necessary in the more homosexual places while mixed bars did not need them. Especially in the red light district there existed pubs tended by lesbians, often former prostitutes, for a public of whores, sailors, johns and fairies. The most famous example was Bet van Beeren's 't Mandje (The Basket) on the Zeedijk that opened in 1927 and closed fifty years later. It got its gay reputation because the gin-drinking, cigar-smoking and motorbike-driving dyke Bet allowed same-sex couples to dance on the Queen's birthday, an occasion for festive transgressions (van Kooten Niekerk and Wijmer 1985).

The bars that existed before 1940 were replaced during the war by others. Amazingly, given the Nazi persecution of homosexuals in Germany, several caf  s started up during the war: the Rigo and the Thorbecke near the Rembrandtplein and the Monico or 'Blonde Saar' in the red light district that opened in 1941. This last bar still exists and is nowadays the bar with the longest uninterrupted tradition, with Blonde Saar still the owner in 1998. During the war it was raided by the police at least once and also denounced in a Nazi weekly as a meeting place of the weaklings of society that should have been

exterminated long since. Notwithstanding the introduction of the harsher German legislation regarding 'unnatural lewdness' in the Netherlands there was less persecution of homosexuals than before the war because the police had other priorities.

Until the 1950s the red light district was an ideal cruising area for homosexual men and lesbian women. Straight men came there for sex and prostitutes made themselves available. But the men did not always succeed in bedding a woman because of lack of money or drunkenness. These lonely, horny men were easy prey for '*nichten*' (queens) hunting for sex with 'normal' men whom they called '*tule*.' In exchange for a bed, a drink, a dinner or a guilder *tules* were often willing to fuck queens. Effeminate homosexuals were the passive sex partners of masculine, active 'heterosexuals.' Cruising *tules* posed dangers but offered great pleasures for '*nichten*.' Of course not everybody lived the idea of being '*nicht*' to the point of being a caricature of the feminine male but it was commonplace in shaping a social structure of desires. The sexual pattern closely reflected the relation between whore and john, although the financial exchange went mostly in the opposite direction. The ideal place for such contacts was of course a place where all groups mixed and not an exclusively gay bar. Gay and lesbian sexual life was integrated with straight sexual life in a way that has become unthinkable in contemporary queer communities.

The sexual ideal of homosexuals was often a 'normal' man and their object choice was reflected in medical theories on homosexuality that emphasized that sexual desire needed opposites of male and female to get going. Thus the feminine homosexual needed a masculine heterosexual, although some experts like Von R  mer had the feeling that homosexual men could also ignite in passion for each other. The same was true for lesbians where dykes fell in love with femmes. Both *tules* and femmes were of course unfaithful to their homosexual lovers as they always returned to their 'real' passion. Dykes and queens had a homosexual identity, while their partners did not. Of course, some lesbian femmes and homosexual *tules* will have used the charms of 'normalcy' to seduce same-sex partners.

This system of opposites floundered after World War II. There were four changes that went hand in hand. In the first place, *tules* had more options to get straight sex because they had more money and because virginity became less important for girls due to the easy availability and the quality of contraceptive methods. Second, gay men redefined their gender identity and could be masculine as well as feminine. A new leather culture even stressed the virility of its habitu  s. This was closely related to the third change: that gay men no longer looked for sex among 'normal' men, but mostly among themselves. Their relational model was no longer a copy of transactions in prostitution but aspired to the marriage-model. Steady friendships ('*vaste vriendschap*') became the ideal, with interchangeable sexual positions no longer fixed along lines of gender opposition. To find such friends one went to a gay bar or dance-hall where no heterosexuals would be welcome nor would they dare to go there. The fourth change was the development of an exclusively gay subculture that replaced the older mixed places like the urinals and the pubs of the red light district.

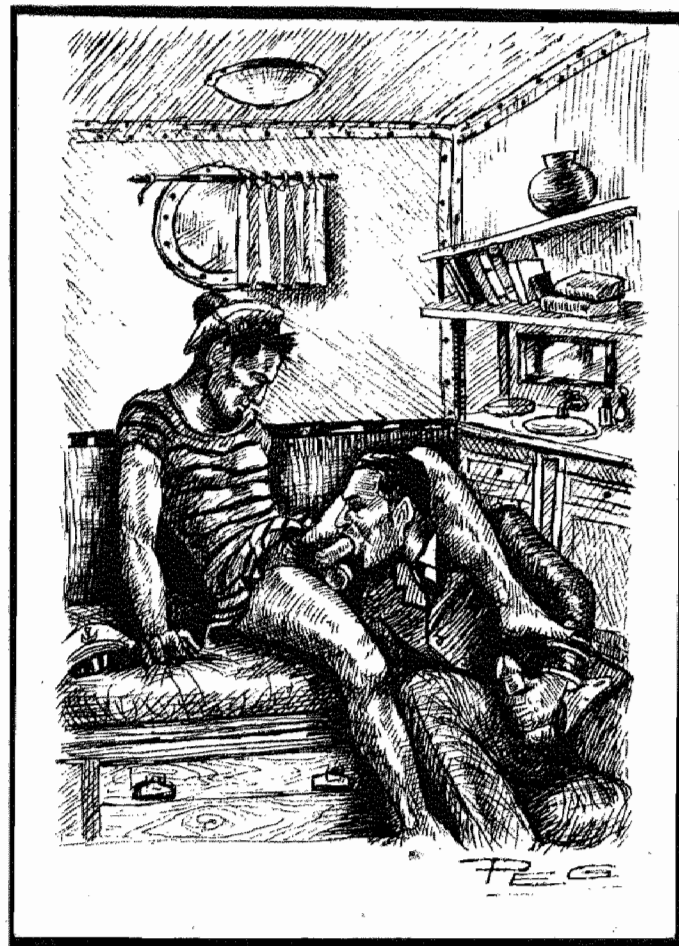


Figure 3.5 American drawing by 'Peg', seized by Dutch police. The image represents very nicely the unequal relation between 'tule' and 'nicht', trade and queen, the queen serving both the sailor and himself.

Source: Gert Hekma collection.

Only in the 1950s did Amsterdam become a gay capital. It offered bars with male prostitutes for the affluent. In 1952 the first leather bar, forerunner of the still famous Argos, started in a hotel. Two large dance-halls established Amsterdam's reputation beyond doubt. The gay movement COC (Center for Culture and Recreation) that was founded on 7 December 1946 in Amsterdam had organized lectures and weekly parties from the beginning. In 1952 it opened its first dance-hall, the DOK, on the Singel near the flower market, and also near the place on this canal where male hustlers offered their services. It was four times as large as the normal bar in Amsterdam. Being one of the very few dance-halls with a night license it could stay open during the week until 2 and at the weekend until 4. The financial administrator of the local COC succeeded in



Figure 3.6 The first leathermen on Amsterdam's streets, c. 1955.

Source: Collectie Hartland, Nederlands Foto Archief, Rotterdam.

getting the license in his name in 1955 and the COC was forced to find another place. It opened in 1955 'De Schakel' (The Link) just off the Leidseplein. Both dance-halls were hugely successful and because homosexuals visited both places the Leidsestraat that connected them became in the late hours a major cruising street known as 'rue de Vaseline.' Soon, the Kerkstraat, halfway in between, also acquired its gay bars and, another innovation, gay hotels. In 1962 the first sauna 'The Athletic' opened.

The police developed in the 1950s the policy that queens could be better left among themselves in their bars and dance-halls than on the streets cruising normal men and boys and creating nuisances for the public. Bars were left alone but public toilets were controlled more strictly. The police patrolled toilets about twice a week and picked up often more than 100 men each year for public indecencies. The range of their anti-gay activities was broadened in 1955 when the city council of Amsterdam, following the example of other cities and on the request of the police, introduced a regulation that forbade men to be in urinals



Figure 3.7 Party in the dancing DOK, c.1955. The presence of a person in Dutch army uniform is remarkable. Very few pictures have been made in gay venues with the obvious aim of protecting the anonymity of clients.

Source: Collection Album Amsterdam.

more than 5 minutes. It was already forbidden to solicit for sexual purposes in public. This article was primarily aimed against prostitutes but was also used against homosexual cruising. The year 1955 marked a change in the anti-gay policies in the city. Before, all homosexual meeting places had been repressed but from 1955 on semi-public locations like bars and dance-halls were left alone, while public indecencies were more strictly combated. This hampered the sexual border traffic between gay and straight men. A separate gay world came into existence that now started to integrate on a political level. The homosexual movement, the COC, became a major force in this battle (Hekma 1992).

Before the war the NWHK had been bearing the flag of homosexual emancipation with little success and in 1932 there was the ill-fated effort to start a gay magazine and movement that was raided away. But in 1940 some courageous men started a new monthly *Levensrecht* (Right to Life). Its publication was interrupted after the German invasion of the Netherlands. After the war the same men started their journal again and the COC that began as 'Shakespeare-club.' The monthly soon got the new name *Vriendschap*. The movement was based in the ground-floor apartment at the Keizersgracht of its chairperson Bob Angelo, pseudonym of Nico Engelschman. It collaborated with the Amsterdam vice squad which was ready to grant licenses for lectures and parties. Earnest discussions with clergymen and psychiatrists of all denominations led to a growing acceptance of homosexuals. Opinions of highly regarded mental health-specialists in the polarized Dutch environment did indeed change. Catholic and Calvinist psychiatrists and clergymen who had in some cases compared homosexuality

with 'dunge' (shit) and irresponsibility in the early 1950s a decade later began to accept homosexuals as normal human beings whose steady friendships were an important contribution to their social well-being (Oosterhuis 1992). The COC was also the initiator of the 'International Committee for Sexual Equality,' the first postwar worldwide homosexual association. Its main activity was organizing conferences, the first in Amsterdam in 1951.

Engelschman had always worked behind the scenes using a pseudonym. Under the new chair Benno Premsele the COC went public and from 1965 on published a novel journal *Dialoog* (between homo- and heterosexuals clearly). Premsele made the first 'out' television appearance in 1964. Although the COC made much money from bar revenues it was disapproving of the subculture till the late 1970s, as, instead of helping homosexuals to integrate, it only strengthened the distinct queeny habits that were the object of social opprobrium. The COC wanted integration at the cost of a normalization of homosexuals and lesbians. Although the COC had earlier endorsed Hirschfeld's theories of a third sex, from the 1960s it argued for the normal homosexual who was no different from others apart from his sexual preference (Warmerdam and Koenders 1987).

Also, thanks to the continuous scandals provoked by the novelist Gerard Reve, social integration succeeded quite well. Reve, from a communist family, joined the Catholic Church in the late 1960s but not after many scandals, the most famous being the so-called donkey case. Reve published in the *Dialoog* a letter in which he described his relation to God. He himself fucked, as an expression of his divine love, the Lord who had taken the mundane form of a donkey. A right-wing Calvinist member of parliament took offense and requested a formal prosecution on grounds of blasphemy. All three times that the case went to court were major media events. Ultimately the case was reviewed by the Supreme Court of the Netherlands and, in the end, Reve was acquitted because the text was considered to be his private expression of religion and so could not be blasphemous.

Reve's novels were openly homosexual and expressed his favorite sexual scheme, the so-called 'revism': he himself being the adoring helper of a beloved young man who tortured an adolescent. This sadomasochistic triangle that is nearly always a fantasy scene ending up in (mutual) masturbation is repeated over and over in Reve's novels from the 1960s on. Other themes are his alcoholism, his hatred of communism and the working class, and his love for Catholicism, especially for the Madonna. In 1968 Reve won the major Dutch literary prize. To celebrate this prize, a kind of festive mock marriage of Reve with his lover 'Tiger' was celebrated in a Catholic church and broadcast on television. Early on in his career a Catholic minister had refused him a literary grant because of a masturbation scene in one of his novels. Sweet was Reve's revenge when he became in the 1970s the lover of this minister's son, the painter Joseph Cals (Hekma 1989).

In the 1960s Amsterdam became one of the magic cities of the sexual revolution. In 1967 the chair of the Dutch Society for Sexual Reformation (NVSH), Mary Zeldenrust-Noordanus, set a series of goals for sexual politics. Among them were the decriminalization of abortion, pornography, prostitution, homosexuality,



and the legalization of contraceptives and divorce. The NVSH was at that moment a mass movement with 200,000 members, many of whom had become adherents because of the fact that the NVSH was allowed to distribute contraceptives. Amazingly most points the NVSH's program had been realized ten years later. In 1971 homosexuality was decriminalized and in 1973 gays and lesbians were allowed into the army while the COC won legal status. COC and NVSH joined forces in the 1960s to propagate civil sexual liberties and helped establish in 1967 an institute that offered help to gays and lesbians, the Schorer Foundation (Hekma 1990a).

To the left of the COC other gay and lesbian movements began, first of all homosexual students' action groups like the AJAH in Amsterdam. They danced in straight discos with same-sex couples and organized 'integrated parties' specifically for homosexual minors who were not allowed to enter gay dance-halls. They staged the first demonstrations, in 1969 in The Hague, against anti-homosexual legislation and, in 1971, at the official 4 May commemoration of the dead of World War II for the inclusion of the homosexual victims of the Nazis. In the 1960s the general feeling had been that homosexuals should learn to accept themselves, while the student groups were more political and requested that society should also change and make integration of homosexuality possible.

### **A new vibrant gay world**

The AJAH disappeared into the COC in the early 1970s inducing a name change from Dutch Society of Homophiles (since 1964) to Dutch Society for the Integration of Homosexuality in 1971. Separatist groups would contest this policy of integration from 1973 on. 'Paarse (purple) September,' the first independent lesbian group in Holland, criticized the homophobia of feminism and the sexism of homosexual movements. In 1977, its successor Lesbian Nation came up with the first demonstration copied from the New York Christopher Street Day Parade. From 1975 radical faggot groups inspired by French activist Guy Hocquenghem began to criticize the COC for its normalizing policy asking the question what difference homosexuality made and answering that it made not only a difference in bed. These groups defended and practiced gay pleasures from gender-fuck and sadomasochism to pedophilia. They paved the way for separate gay and lesbian organizations within political parties, trade unions, health institutes and education. The COC, which had always wanted to be the mother-church and representative of all homosexuals, lost its central position. The Gay Krant took its place as the unofficial mouthpiece of the gay movement.

The development of gay groups in different institutions meant a major breakthrough, especially in politics. In 1978 the first openly gay member was elected to the city council. He resisted with some success the destruction of gay cruising places and with more success police raids on those places. He came up with the idea of the Homomonument (Koenders 1987). Amsterdam was the first city to have a report on the state and aims of gay and lesbian emancipation. This has now become a permanent part of city politics and the responsibility of one of

the city's aldermen. Many more gay and lesbian council members have come out of the closet or were elected. Their number was in 1998 around the 10 per cent that is also the number of gays in the male population according to the city's only sex survey.

The gay and lesbian movement has seen many successes in the 1980s and 1990s. The growing acceptance of homosexuality has materialized in the development of local and national programs to combat discrimination, an anti-discrimination law, parliamentary support for same-sex marriages, inclusion of gays and lesbians in the ranks of army and police, subventions for gay and lesbian initiatives, support for gay and lesbian street parties on Queen's Day and around Amsterdam Pride during the first weekend of August and on other occasions. These successes are at the same time sapping the foundations of the movement because it has no attractive aims left. Many gays and lesbians and even more straight people have the feeling that homosexual emancipation is entering its end-phase because its goals have been reached. Often, people say emancipation may be needed among disadvantaged groups in far-away countries or among Christian and Muslim fundamentalist groups but no longer in Amsterdam, city of sexual tolerance.

Meanwhile the gay world of Amsterdam has only expanded further. Halfway through the 1960s the city authorities responded angrily to reports that plane-loads of gay men came from England and Germany to Amsterdam and considered restraining the expansion of the gay world. But the sexual revolution overtook them and this world only swelled further. Liberation might mean to the COC that gays should dissolve into a tolerant society, for gay men it offered the possibility to embrace the gay world and to find there sexual partners and lovers. The on-going growth of the gay world and the increasing acceptance of homosexuality made Amsterdam into a very attractive city for gay men from everywhere.

When AIDS hit the world, Amsterdam had the distinct advantage that the epidemic struck the city with a certain delay, that gay health groups were active, and that health and gay authorities made a cooperative effort to combat the disease and prevent its spread. Measures were not repressive and no discos or saunas were closed but it was hoped that information would induce gay men to change their sexual behavior. This strategy was as elsewhere largely effective. A clear mistake was that gay campaigns tried to dissuade men from anal sex rather than promoting the use of condoms. AIDS has struck Amsterdam harshly. Half of all Dutch cases have been reported from the city although it harbors some 5 per cent of the country's population. Health care was offered to all patients often under conditions of social security, and a buddy system was set up immediately. Notwithstanding all measures, AIDS became a disaster for the gay world as many of its outstanding figures died of the disease, especially those from the leather scene and cultural life.

Since the start of the AIDS epidemic the size of the gay world has remained more or less stable. The leather bars that opened in the late 1970s in the vicinity of the famous Argos and the red light district did not disappear although many of their clients died. The leather parties that started in the 1970s withered away



before AIDS but were taken up again in the 1990s as kinky parties were held in abandoned warehouses, attracting gay men in their thousands for wild dancing and sleazy sex. The old dance-hall of the COC closed in the 1970s and the DOK in the 1980s but other discos replaced them. Great fame has been bestowed upon Trut, Roxy and It, the trendy discos of the 1990s for their outrageous parties of drag extravaganza and other niceties.

Nowadays the city hosts at least 150 different gay and lesbian institutions: bars, discos, restaurants, hotels, health centers, book shops, sports clubs, archives, gay and lesbian studies, sex cinemas, shops for leather, rubber and underwear. Clubs have been founded for dancing, s/m, safe sex, 'horsemen and knights,' the affluent, for men interested in gardens, sailing, literature or old cars. Anglo-Saxons, Arabs, Surinamese and Turks have their own special events. Travel, legal, medical and many other services are offered to a gay public. Two or three free monthlies are available in the bar scene. The city is a vibrant spot for gays also because many 'general' public places have become highly homosexualized.

Since the late 1970s, other cities in Europe have seen a similar expansion and opening up of the gay scene that Amsterdam had experienced earlier. The progress Amsterdam had made in the 1960s can nowadays also be witnessed in other major European cities. The number and sometimes also the quality of gay institutions is higher nowadays in Paris, London or Berlin. The advantages the center of Amsterdam still has are its compact urban structure, its architectural beauty and its cosmopolitan, tolerant and easy-going atmosphere that has no equivalent elsewhere.

Around 1985, instead of raiding gay cruising places, the police began protecting them. Important incentives were the fag- and dyke-bashing at the national gay and lesbian demonstration in Amersfoort in 1982, and the murder of a gay man at a urinal in Amsterdam in 1985. Amersfoort was a watershed as both the gay and lesbian movement and the authorities started to develop policies to combat or prevent discrimination and violence. After Amersfoort self-defense groups were founded that developed into gay and lesbian sports organizations such as Tiggertje (small tiger) in Amsterdam. After the murder of a married and closeted gay man at a pissoir the mayor of Amsterdam came to the COC to express his outrage. Since that time, the Amsterdam police have, with some ups and downs, enacted a pro-gay and lesbian policy protecting gay meeting places and encouraging gays and lesbians to join the police force.

But not all violence was combated in the same spirit. During the 1980s two men were killed each year in the twilight world of male prostitution. The police always defined these murders as cases of robbery although their homophobic content was quite clear because of the excessive violence used. Neither the police nor the gay and lesbian movement paid much attention to these regular killings of mostly older gay men by hustlers who were highly unsure of their sexual preference and behavior. While in straight prostitution clients sometimes murder whores, in the gay scene hustlers murder their patrons, indicating the lack of self-consciousness regarding homosexuality in Holland both among hustlers and clients (van Gemert 1994).

Queer were the demands the police made for the Europride held in Amsterdam in 1995. This largest gay and lesbian demonstration ever in the Netherlands with about 50,000 participants was ordered by the police not to show sexual acts or representations of such acts, particularly forbidding images of pedophilia and bestiality. This outrageously formulated demand showed the police's lack of familiarity with gays and lesbians, and the persistence of theories of perversion which equate all sexual variations.

In recent years the Amsterdam vice squad has staged several raids on sex shops because of the alleged presence of kiddy porn and has succeeded, after active campaigning, in broadening the definition of forbidden material and raising the penalties. Erotic postcards that were for a long time a major tourist trap were removed from the streets on the orders of the police and mayor, using an outdated criminal provision against 'offensive images,' because they feared for the reputation of the city. Both gay and straight bordellos and hustler bars have been raided because of the alleged presence of illegal prostitutes while 'violent' transgender hustlers from Latin America working for a 'straight' clientele were removed by the police with unnecessary harshness. City officials showed little enthusiasm for the evident economic input of gay tourism in their city, instead deploring the negative reputation of Amsterdam as being a city of sex and drugs.

Most straightforward discrimination may have disappeared, but acceptance is no more than skin-deep. General culture, in Amsterdam as elsewhere, is heterosexual, with few visible signs of homosexuality. Expectations of someone's sexual preference will always be in a heterosexual, rarely homosexual direction. Explicit manifestations of gays and lesbians are always frowned upon and so the main question with regard to the Gay Games in Amsterdam in 1998 was whether it was not unnecessary to have such an event. Few people would dare to ask such a question about similar events for Chinese, Turks or Jews. Gay and lesbian groups are deemed to be past it, left without essential goals in contemporary society. The most clear example of this unsatisfactory situation is the difficulty young men and women who are on the verge of coming out face in finding safe places for homosexual pleasure and information because Amsterdam and the Netherlands are generally speaking still a straight ghetto. An amazing half of male adolescents say in surveys without hesitation that they disapprove of gay sex.

Since the sexual revolution gay men have developed a rich culture of erotic and social pleasures. Their culture has remained marginal, however, because straights and lesbians on the other hand have not succeeded in putting into practice the expectations of the sexual revolution. The main changes in the straight world between 1965 and 1995 are the development from monogamy to serial monogamy and the rise of self-stimulation. No free-floating sexual culture emerged like that developed among gay men. A sexual breakthrough has failed among straights and lesbians. The most significant reasons for this in my view derive from the differentiation of male and female sexuality in culture and education which inhibits easy sexual communication between men and women. The pressure to combine sex and love thwarts both loving and sexual relations,

as does the idea that sexuality belongs to nature and needs little cultivation, or the belief in sexual privacy while repudiating the public forms of sexuality like the coming out of gays and lesbians. These views still hinder the emergence of a rich and free sexual culture in Amsterdam and block the development of erotic pleasures beyond homo- and heterosexuality. Amsterdam has long been a vestige of the 1960s but it seems to refuse to become a vibrant herald of the next millennium.