SENTIMENTAL EFFUSIONS OF GENITAL CONTACT IN UPPER AMAZONIA

In Northwest Amazonia, as in Melanesia (see Herdt 19821), initiation, more than marriage, 2 is the central "passage from the asexual world of childhood to the sexual world of adults" (S. Hugh-Jones 1979: 110), as well as from family to society. According to Stephen Hugh-Jones (1979: 110),

From an outsider's point of view, one of the most noticeable manifestations of this is the incidence of joking sexual play among initiated but unmarried men. . . Missionaries working in the Pira-parana are frequently shocked by the apparent homosexual behavior of Indian men. However, the Barasana distinguish between this playful sexual activity and serious male homosexuality. This play, rather than coming from a frustration of 'normal' desire, is itself seen as being normal behavior between 'brothers-in-law' and expressed their close, affectionate, and supportive relationship

1 Gilbert Herdt also called my attention to the Hugh-Jones books; Wayne Dyues to Gregor's.
2 C. Hugh-Jones (1979: 160) did not consider marriage a significant event in the typical life-cycle, because, "Marriage was described as an event in another domain -- that of kinship and inter-group relations [the classic Lévi-Strauss position]. Although there is a sense in which marriage is obviously a life-cycle event, it is not ritualized like birth, menstruation, Yurpary rites and death. The physiological possibility of a new generation has already been ritually recognized in initiation."
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(emphasis on the rhetoric of explaining the observations away added).

He further avers, "Such play does not entail sexual satisfaction," although he does not explain how he concluded that. Lévi-Strauss, who had reported "reciprocal sexual services" by classificatory "brothers-in-law" among the Nambikwara in 1943 (:407; also see 1948:95-6) suggested (in a personal communication cited by Hugh-Jones) that "it appears to provide unmarried men with an outlet for sentimental effusions. "Lévi-Strauss (1974:313) also remarked, "It remains an open question whether the partners achieve complete satisfaction or restrict themselves to sentimental demonstrations, accompanied by caresses, similar to the demonstrations and caresses characteristic of conjugal relationships." Reading this "clarification", I wonder whether it is Lévi-Strauss who defines homosexuality out of the possibility of "complete satisfaction" and also whether "conjugal relationships" exclude ejaculations. Although maintaining that "the brother is acting as a temporary substitute" for his sister (314), he admits, "On reaching adulthood, the brothers-in-law continue to express their feelings quite openly" (314).

Hugh-Jones (1979:110) reports, "A young man will often lie in a hammock with his 'brother-in-law,' nuzzling him, fondling his
penis, and talking quietly, often about sexual exploits with women.\textsuperscript{3}

One is left wondering if fondled penises on occasion produce effusions more tangible than "sentimental", as they have been reported to do elsewhere in the world, and especially among young men who have little sexual experience, few approved sexual outlets, are "given over to personal display" and to talking about real or fantasized sexual exploits.

Similarly, one wonders how Altaschuler (1964:231) is so sure that young Cayapa boys he saw wrapped around each other on the floor or sharing hammocks confined themselves to homoeroticism in contrast to homosexuality when not observed by him.\textsuperscript{4}

Murphy (1955: 82-3) challenged Lévi-Strauss's interpretation of Buell Quain's fieldnotes on the Trumai Indians, maintaining that liaisons could not be predicted along the lines of marriage rules; indeed, that a boy might seduce his own father. The boys made the advances to the men in general. In contrast, among the Yanomamo, "Some of the teen-age

\textsuperscript{3} C. Hugh-Jones (1979: 160) similarly noted, "Boys approaching initiation are sometimes involved in homosexual teasing which takes place in hammocks in public: this play is most common between initiated but unmarried youths from separate exogamous groups." This suggests marriage is more important than her statement quoted in note 2 indicates.

\textsuperscript{4} His credibility is further reduced by the argument based on Bieber that there could not be the "innovation" of homosexual intercourse, because homosexual behavior is based on feelings of inadequacy, and those who feel inadequate cannot innovate.
males have homosexual affairs with each other; [there too] the females of their own age are usually married" (Chagnon 1977: 76; corroborated by Johannes 1972: 55). In his 1967 dissertation, Chagnon wrote, "Most unmarried young men having homosexual realities with each other but no stigma attached to these behavior. In fact, most of these bachelors joked about it and simulated copulation with each other in public" (pp. 62-3, note contrast of some/most). Alves da Silva (1962: 181) reported public mutual masturbation by boys, although officially, homosexuality only occurs in the puberty rites for boys (p. 380).

Nimuenadju and Lowie (1938) reported formalized, intense, but apparently non-sexual friendships among another Gê tribe, the Ramko'kamekra. Wagley's 1939 salvage anthropology of the Tapirape, a Southern Amazon tribe with a Tupi-Guarani rather than Gê language were therefore likely pushed from the coast rather than being traditionally jungle dwellers prior to 1500, included reports of males in the past who had allowed themselves to be used in anal intercourse by other men. They were treated as favorites by the men, who took them along on hunting trips. There were no men alive in 1939-40 with such a reputation [there were only 187 Tapirape people alive by then]. Kamairaho gave me the names of five men whom he had known during his
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lifetime or about whom his father had told him "had holes." Some of these men were married to women, he said, but at night in the takana [men's house] they allowed other men to "eat them" (have anal intercourse). His father told him of one man who took a woman's name and did women's work... Older men had said that the "man-woman" had died because she was pregnant. "Her stomach was swollen but there was no womb to allow the child to be born." None of my informants had ever heard of a woman who had taken the male role or who preferred sex with another female (Wagley 1977: 160).

Even during the lifetime of Kamairaho's father, there were not very many Tapirape, so five is a considerable number to be known to be sexually receptive. There is nothing to indicate that these five were younger or judged to be less masculine than their partners; married men, of course, were judged fully adult, in any case. I do not know of any reports of Gê tribes with a "man-woman." The acceptance of male sexual receptivity without such a role among the Tapirape is as notable as the memory of a the gender crosser.

Gregor (1985) added a muddled account of conceptions of homosexuality as (1) inconceivable, (2) situational, and (3) forgotten for the Mehinaku of the Xingu River. The evidence for inconceivable is the lack of a "term for the
role of homosexual." As usual with such assertions, Gregor's is not accompanied by explanation of what role it was he attempted to elicit by what means. "Situational", the second line of defense (whether Gregor's or Mehinakus') is that young men from other villages "consorted with the white man [because] they wanted gifts. They had no sexual interest in him whatsoever. Admittedly, they were foolish to have participated, but no man really desires homosexual relations" (60). This rationalization (and its possible shaping by acculturative pressures) is passed on without comment by a Freudian ethnographer! What he comments on in relating a myth about a man who got pregnant from having sex with his friend is the lack of elaboration in the tale. Gregor concludes his muddled account of Mehinaku conceptions by relating

one historical instance. . . of a Mehinaku who, though uninfluenced by perverted [one does not know if this is supposed to be the Mehinaku view or is Gregor's own] outsiders, stepped beyond the boundaries of the masculine role. Tenejumine, "Slightly a Woman", as this person is referred to today, died more than forty-five years ago. . . grew up to assume the dress and role of a woman. . . [and] all agree that he formed special relationships with a few of the men that resembled those of lovers. The men, it is said, would get into the same hammock
as Slightly a Woman and "pretend" to engage in sex play. (61)

To preserve tribal honor, Tenejumine's partners are attributed the same rationalization used now: they only wanted presents. Gregor is struck that memories of Tenejumine are not clearer, though Tenejumine was two generations removed from Gregor's informants, who were not even descended from him.

In an earlier, less Freudian ethnography, Gregor (1977: 254) had written, "The villagers tolerate sexual deviance. Girls who experiment in lesbian affairs or men who participate in homosexual encounters are regarded as extremely foolish, but no one would directly interfere," and more calmly discussed the "mutability of gender" in Mehinaku myth and ritual.

Soares de Souza (1851 [1587]: 316) asserted the Tupinamba were "addicted to sodomy and do not consider it a shame... In the bush some offer themselves to all who want them."

In the upper Amazon, Tessman (1930:361) found, that

While there are no homosexuals with masculine tendencies, there are some with extreme effeminacy. My informants knew of two such instances. One of them wears woman's clothing... [The other] wears man's clothing, but likes to do all the work that is generally done by women. He asked one member of our expedition to address him with a
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woman's name and not with his masculine name. He lives with a settler and prostitutes himself as the passive patner to the settler's workers. He pays his lovers. He never practices active sexual intercourse.

Paul Fejos' (1948:106-7) ethnography of a Uitoto-speaking tribe, included a description of a Yagua dandy. Either this description or personal communications led Ford and Beach (1951) to code Witoto as a tolerant-to-homosexuality culture. There is also a stray reference in Holmberg (1950: 169) to a man-woman among the Siriono of Eastern Bolivia. Among the depopulated Wachipaeri, Lyon (1984: 258) reported one enduring homosexual relationship.

A more extended description of widespread homosexual play and of fairly-enduring but "open" relationships is provided by Sorenson (1984: 184-8). He says, "Young men sit around enticingly sedate and formal in all their finery, or form troupes of panpipe-playing dancers" (185). Occasional sex is regarded as expectable behavior among friends; one is marked as nonfriendly --enemy -- if he does not join, especially in the youth "age group" (roughly 15 - 35). . . Homosexual activity is limited neither to within an "age group" nor to unmarried men (1984). Moreover, inter-village homosexuality is encouraged and some "best friends" relationships develop. That the "best friend" is
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more likely later to marry a sister of his "best friend" is implied in Sorenson's report (189).

At peripheries of what is considered "Amazonia" there are reports that do not attempt to argue away the sexual components of gender variance (see also the discussion of Araucanian shamans in this volume). Kirchoff (1948:486) reported homosexual relations to have been very common and publicly condoned among tribes north of the Orinoco River. Wilbert (1972) reported that among the Warao, who live in the Orinoco delta, male transvestites sometimes lived in union with other men. Among the tribes of north-central Venezuela, Hernández de Alba (1948:478) reported "sexual inverts" who "wore their hair shoulder length, were sodomists, practiced transvestism, avoided going to war, and carried on traditional tasks of women, such as spinning and weaving." Hill et al. (1956:29) reported one 40ish Warao transvestite who did women's work and another man "married" to three men younger than he. A Warao lexeme for the transvestite role, tiraguina, was reported by Turrado Moreno (1945: 296).

Far to the south, Métraux (1948:: 324) used the term "Berdache" for such behavior, including explicit sexualization of the role, among a tribe of the Chaco. He reported, "Berdaches were very common among the Mbayá. They dressed and spoke like women, pretended to menstruate and engaged in feminine activities. They were regarded as the prostitutes of the village."
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Male homosexuality among the Cagaba Kogi of Colombia was reported by Bolinder (1925: 114) and Reichel-Dolmatoff (1951: 290). The men of the neighboring Goajiro had (have?) a considerable reputation as lovers of men, including some cross-dressing men doing women’s work (Bolinder 1925:114, 1957:61; Armosrong and Métraux 1948: 379).

Some of the denials that homosexual behavior among "my people" is "really homosexuality" say more about the observer than the observed. In other cases (Werner 1984: 130-1; and to some degree Gregor 1984), denials of what can be observed come from natives. In such cases, it is difficult to know whether the concern that imputations of accepting homosexuality will stigmatize their tribe are the result of Western acculturation or more venerable cultural concerns.

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MISTAKING FANTASY FOR ETHNOGRAPHY¹
by Stephen O. Murray

Informal communication among experts usually ensures that dubious work is ignored. So long as suspect results are not built upon nor enshrined as established knowledge, experts feel no need to pillory it in public (Barnes 1972: 287; Murray 1980). "Ignoring what is regarded as non-science is standard operating procedure in all scientific disciplines. Only when suspect work is taken seriously by some scientists is a need for public discussion felt," as Murray (1979:191) observed of another case of purported ethnography (see de Mille 1976, 1980).

Tobias Schneebaum's (1969) account of homosexuality and cannibalism in which he said he participated during 1956 among a heretofore undiscovered Amazonian tribe presents another case in which the informal professional dismissal of specialists need to be made explicit, since psychologists and sociologists in search of vivid examples have mistaken it for ethnography. Schneebaum provided the major example of culture-wide homosexual preference -- "in which all the men in an entire tribe maintain an ongoing predominant homosexuality" -- in Tripp's (1975: 64) widely-diffused (and for the most part

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sensible) book, was taken as exemplary by Mehan and Wood (1975: 27-31),2 and used by Dover (1978:100) as authentic ethnographic evidence.

Schneebaum himself was careful to note, "There will be no pretense of objectivity here" (1969: 17), adding to the paperback edition a further disclaimer, "This book is not an attempt at an anthropological account of a tribe" (1970: viii), and reiterated the subjectivity of his writing (1979, 1980).

Anthropologists concerned with Amazonia did not take Keep the River on Your Right seriously. It was not reviewed in The American Anthropologist and has not been cited by anthropologists as a valid report of an Amazonian culture or typical behavior within an existing human group. An expert on Amazonia, Napoleon Chagnon, unequivocally stated, "What he described in this work can only be taken as a highly fictionalized account, a gross and inappropriate villification" (1969: 12). Since this judgment was registered in the 1969 Book Review Digest, it was readily available to anyone made suspicious enough by the unusualness of what Schneebaum described (or by the ripeness of his prose) to check whether the book was taken

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2 That both of what are regarded as exemplary ethnographies by the explicators of the "reality" of ethnomethodology are fiction fits perfectly with "Agnes" duping Garfinkel in the original Studies in Ethnomethodology (1967), could not be bothered by mere facts to revise his chapter; Stoller 1968, on the other hand, frankly admitted his earlier misdiagnosis).

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seriously. T.R. Moore, an anthropologist who studied the same tribe with which Schneebaum stayed, reported

*Keep the River on Your Right* is neither an ethnological study nor an accurate factual account, as Schneebaum himself makes clear. . . . There is no evidence for Amarakaeri cannibalism. . . . The character Schneebaum calls "Manolo" and reports beheaded and probably cannibalized [in 1956] was living in Ayacucho in the early 1960s. The sleeping arrangements and homosexual practices Schneebaum describes are not part of the Amarakaeri tradition (quoted in de Mille 1980: 74).

Travelers' reports predating scientific study of a culture cannot be ignored, but such reports must not be accepted uncritically -- especially when they include explicit disclaimers such as Schneebaum made, are wholly at variance with what is known about neighboring cultures, and are embedded in what seems to be wish fulfillment.

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