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LIBERATION AT LEVENES?
THE BRAVE NEW (RIGHT) WORLD OF THE 'GAY CONSUMER'¹

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'I haven't struggled for 20 years to become a market'
(Jenkin, 1996:15).

Introduction

The 1990s in New Zealand, and indeed elsewhere, are characterised by the omnipresence in the collective imagination of the free market. During the last fourteen years the free market has been reified and deified to become the totem of our age. It has become a benchmark against which, and for which, all social action is to be considered. In her discussion of unpaid work, Anne Else argues that 'it's as if our whole economy and society is being reflected in a trick mirror. It blows up "the market" until it fills the entire frame, crowding out everything else' (Else, 1996: 104). In this paper I want to reflect upon the ways in which discourses of 'the market' are employed in the representation of lesbian and gay identities in public discourses. How are lesbian and gay identities spoken about in ways which reflect and support the language and the ideology of 'the market'? Perhaps more importantly, what constraints do particular usages of market language place on lesbian and gay subjectivities, and how can deployment of market discourse operate as a means of social control over these subjectivities?

What could be termed 'gay market' discourse has been gaining prominence in the last five years. In this discourse, gay men are constructed as 'consumers' in a 'gay target market', while lesbians are included in this 'gay market' in highly partial and ambivalent ways which subsume lesbian identities under a gay male standard. The homosexual consumer subject is said to constitute a member of a 'niche market' and an 'evolving market potential', and as such we are said to represent 'a great marketing opportunity' (Allan, 1994: 20; Coventry, 1993: 51; *NZ Herald*, 1994: 1/5; Nudd, 1992: 25). As consumer subjects, gay men (and lesbians to some degree) are seen to be worth 'targeting' by businesses seeking to expand their profits. Nudd's article in marketing journal *Ad/Media*, entitled 'Profit vs prejudice: why it pays to target gays', exemplifies this approach:

[a]dvertising agencies who neglect targeting products at the gay community are ignoring one of the most affluent, sophisticated and untapped markets in the country ... gays typically have more

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discretionary dollars to spend on themselves than straights; they are the only lifestyle group with discretionary spending power through their income life; and ... they have a greater willingness to spend that money on their lifestyles (Nudd, 1992: 24).

The discourse of the 'gay market' can be seen as an interweaving of two semi-autonomous projects. The first is the New Right discourse of 'the market', in which citizens are reconstructed as atomised consumers who compete on a level playing field to maximise their own self-interest. The second is the project of specific marketers, who seek to define and exploit 'target markets' in the attempt to increase profits. Each of these projects reinforces the other. Marketing projects utilise the New Right's notion of the atomised consumer, reduce the social subject to an economic subject, uphold the affluent male as a norm, and marginalise those deemed to be economically 'unviable'. In turn, marketers produce discourse which privileges these ideological underpinnings of the New Right. When these marketers are employed as 'expert knowers' in media texts their discourse is presented as commonsensical and hence assists in the reproduction of the hegemony of 'the market'.

I will argue that the narrow constructions of lesbian and gay subjectivities which emerge from within this market discourse do not represent the diversity and actual lived experiences of many lesbians and gay men, and nor do they offer us a route to liberation. Rather, the construction of the notion of the 'gay market' can be seen as one disciplinary strategy among others which function in the service of heterosexism.

Gluckman and Reed (1993: 18) point out that in becoming consumers in market discourse, gay men and lesbians are reduced to mere economic beings, 'valued as consumers rather than human beings'. While arguably all subjects are reduced to individual economic units within market discourse, it is my contention that this discourse is used in quite particular ways as a means of social control over lesbian and gay subjectivities specifically.

Invasion or Responsibility? Imaginary Figures

'Gay market' discourse interweaves notions of tolerance, acceptability, assimilation, a distinction between public and private, and the diffusing of threat. Within the discursive logic of the construct of 'the gay market', the offering of a liberal tolerance to gay men and lesbians by 'mainstream' heterosexual society is contingent upon an ability to consume. It fixes the gay or lesbian 'consumer' at the 'responsible' pole of a dualism of responsible versus dangerous homosexuality. However, in order for gay men and lesbians to become 'responsible', the only representations which can be permitted are those in which we are desexualised and depoliticised. As subjects we are passive in all except our consumption of goods and services.

It is my contention that the themes of assimilation, threat and acceptability are played out in many heterosexist media accounts of homosexuality, which often include either of two imaginary archetypal figures. The first is that of the gay man or lesbian who threatens to infiltrate or invade the heterosexual (although ostensibly neutral) social order. Here the lesbian or gay man's sexual difference is seen as the origin of a tyrannical campaign of subversion. The second imaginary figure is that of the lesbian or gay man who, as a privatised, assimilable subject is content to calmly 'know' his or her place and not 'rock the boat'. This distinction has been labelled by Smith, writing in the British context, as one between 'dangerous gayness' and 'the responsible homosexual' (Smith, 1992: 202-206).

The language of the dangerous/responsible opposition is one of liberal tolerance, although more traditional conservative ideas of gay and lesbian inferiority are never far from the surface. The dangerous, invader figure is said to 'flaunt' his or her sexuality, removing it from the private sphere to 'force' it in public on others who, it is said, would be 'tolerant', 'understanding' and 'accepting' were they not provoked by having it 'shoved down their throats'. The 'responsible' figure, on the other hand, is really 'the same as everybody else', recognises that sexuality is a 'private' matter of concern to him or her alone, and diligently goes about his or her own business without telling everybody about their sexual 'proclivities' or their 'alternative lifestyle'.

Perhaps the most memorable and clearly-stated media construction of the imaginary dangerous, invader figure is the case of the supposed 'lesbian conspiracy' to replace Mike Moore with Helen Clark as leader of the Labour Party in 1993 (Kilroy, 1993: 2). Lesbian feminism in particular was a target, as the news media abounded with reports of 'husbandless women', 'the sisterhood', and 'the sisters (in cahoots with sympathetic brothers)' (Edwards, 1993: 1; *Dominion*, 1993a: 6). This image was reinforced by the naming of then party president Maryan Street as a 'self-proclaimed lesbian', allowing her to be positioned in relation to the 'conspiracy' (*Dominion*, 1993b: 1).

Echoes of this image of lesbian takeover have reverberated around media coverage of the Labour Party since. A poor opinion poll showing for Labour in 1995 was accompanied by comments by National MP John Banks, who stated that the polling reflected the fact that 'the party is now run by "radical feminists, homosexuals, chardonnay socialists and lesbians"' (cited Scherer, 1995: 1).

In contrast, the 'gay consumer' may come to exemplify the 'responsible' homosexual subject in a society in which discourses of 'the market' are becoming commonplace and come to define social life. As a 'consumer', the homosexual subject is said to have plenty of money, and is therefore able to be partially and contingently incorporated into the liberal capitalist order. As I will illustrate, it is the affluent gay man who is eligible for partial

incorporation in this way, as gay men without high 'disposable incomes', and lesbians are excluded.

The Homosexual Subject as Consumer

The texts in which the homosexual subject becomes a consumer redefine the nature of gay and lesbian subjectivity. The term 'gay community', for example, comes to mean a collection of consumers, and the texts which promote the idea of the 'gay market' often contain an awkward transposition of the notions of 'community' and 'market'. Nudd (1992: 24), for example, states that those who 'neglect targeting products at the gay community are ignoring one of the most affluent, sophisticated and untapped markets in the country'. Similarly, in newspaper articles which deal with the prospect of attracting gay men and lesbians from Sydney to holiday in New Zealand, what is in one article 'the homosexual community in Australia' becomes in the other 'the lucrative Sydney gay and lesbian travel market' (*NZ Herald*, 1994: 1/5; Black, 1994: 1/3; see also Benn, 1994: 5).

In all cases the signifier 'community' within the term 'lesbian and gay community' becomes emptied of all meaning other than as a synonym of the term 'market'. The members of this 'community' become a series of market individuals, able to be 'targeted' by capital. For Aldridge (1997: 17), the 'gay community' expresses itself through events such as Auckland's Hero Festival, and in being sponsored by corporates this 'community' is identifiable as 'a lucrative niche market'. In the discourse of these articles, as in the discourse of market individualism, 'community' becomes 'market' and the social subject becomes an economic subject.

In his *Ad/Media* article, Kevin Nudd attempts a definition of this *homo economicus*:

There are homosexuals in every walk of life, it's true, but there is also a significant proportion who live a gay lifestyle — who have distinct behaviour patterns, distinct demographic features and distinct spending habits (Nudd, 1992: 26).

Here Nudd uses the term 'gay lifestyle', a definable form of culture and consumption attributable to some homosexuals. I wonder about those of us who identify as homosexual but not with the 'gay lifestyle' to which Nudd alludes. Do we live a 'heterosexual lifestyle', or do we inhabit a strange, liminal space? In any case, Nudd's 'lifestyle' is one defined by the 'distinct spending habits' to which he refers in interestingly behavioural terms. Here 'lifestyle' is defined entirely in terms of consumption. In Nudd's text 'homosexuals' are objectified as sexual Others. He repeats the stance whereby the intrepid investigator (often a journalist, but here a marketer) enters the 'twilight world' of the homosexual to reveal its truth to the world 'outside'

(Atmore, 1992).

The market metaphor completely replaces the social subject in this quote from James Allan. As I mentioned earlier, gay and lesbian political movements are couched in market terms:

The battle lines are drawn. On one side there is the gay and lesbian market ready to support advertisers who respect it. The opposing team is comprised of, at one extreme, religious gay bashers who wish to deny gays and lesbians their human rights and, on the other, a silent majority who, in research polls, support gay rights but who are too embarrassed or intimidated ... to disagree with those who argue (Allan, 1992:33).

The first point to note is that gay and lesbian political movements have become a market force. There are three groups in this equation - 'religious gay bashers', a 'silent majority', and the 'gay and lesbian market'. Gay men and lesbians are presumably not in this instance either religious gay bashers or members of a supposed silent majority, and so all must be consumers in a market - no other subject position is made available.

Second, in this opposition the market is constructed as a site of liberation for lesbians and gay men, who are in turn happy to quietly consume lest provoked. The market becomes a site of equality, as it contrasts with the bigotry which is assumed to characterise the non-market sphere. If provoked, the gay men and lesbians quietly grazing on the fruits of the market will rally to the support of their corporate allies, and assert their right to be left alone on their level playing field.

Consumer Subjectivity

It does need to be noted that James Allan, the writer of this and other 'gay market' texts, is himself a gay man (du Chateau, 1991). Clearly it is possible for those of us who are the objects of these market discourses to be the producers of such discourses. In a manner reminiscent of Foucault's 'reverse discourse', we may utilise the terms and language of these discourses in an attempt to gain legitimacy, and hence escape stigmatisation (Foucault, 1990: 101). It is also likely that some lesbians' and gay men's self-insertion into market discourse concurs with their own self-definition, or indeed perceptions of self-interest. This is perhaps more likely in the case of those who are affluent and fit the profile of the 'gay consumer'. For example, Wellington group Gay Association of Professionals (GAP) argues that

Gay [sic] and lesbians, in particular, have a well-recognized spending power ... we have an unemployment rate of only 1%. This means we have an economic power ... we are people who happen to work for a buck and also happen to be other than straight ... GAP is not about

promoting fashionable, radical extremism ... We are not dominated by a crippling sense of oppression, we are proud professional men and women (GAP, 1996: 1-8).

GAP distances itself from an (albeit undefined) 'radical' critique of the social and economic order. The values held by GAP's executive are those which are congruent with market discourse:

there are many of our members who hold prominent positions who provide positive and valuable contributions to our wonderful city. They espouse values of personal direction, self-motivation and development, integrity, and achievement (Grandi and Moore, 1996: 14).

Notable in both the GAP and 'gay market' discourses is a denial of class difference within the categories 'gay and lesbian'. Hennessy (1995: 143) points out that 'gay market' discourse works to consolidate 'an imaginary, class-specific gay subjectivity for both straight and gay audiences'. She refers to this subjectivity as the 'bourgeois (homosexual/queer) imaginary' (Hennessy, 1995: 176). This imaginary keeps invisible the substantial numbers of gay men and lesbians who are caught up in the oppressive class relations of capitalism by being poorly paid or unemployed. The ways in which class intersects with sexual identities is placed beyond examination as this bourgeois imaginary is produced and reproduced (Field, 1995; Hennessy, 1995).

In addition to the denial of class difference, 'gay market' discourse elides lesbian experience while claiming to include it through use of the phrase 'gay and lesbian consumer'. While offering the semantic inclusion of lesbians, those using 'gay market' discourse do not usually include or recognise lesbian existence in any meaningful way.

In many texts which discuss the supposed income and spending patterns of 'gay and lesbian consumers', it is unclear at any given point whether gay men, lesbians, or both, are being referred to. Nudd (1992: 24) argues that 85% of Australian 'gay people' earn more than the national average salary; a 60 *Minutes* television documentary suggests that thirty percent of 'them' earn over \$40,000 per annum and that 'there's only one percent unemployment' (TVNZ, 1996). One article written by Allan is introduced as being about 'gay and lesbian consumers', yet the 'survey research' which he cites refers solely to gay men, and in an over-generalised way:

gay men tend to have a much greater pride in their appearance. They go out to dinner and entertain a lot more than the national average. They know how to have a good time and how to spend money (Allan, 1992: 31).

In his introduction to the segment of the 60 *Minutes* television documentary which examines income, interviewer Cameron Bennett refers to 'the gay and lesbian community' (TVNZ, 1996). However, the 'marketing executive' interviewed by Bennett uses the term 'the gay community' in her reference to actual income and employment figures. It is not clear whether the lesbians present in Bennett's introduction have been incorporated into the 'gay' of the marketing executive's 'gay community', or whether they have dropped out of the income equation at the last minute. I suggest that the latter is the more likely, for two reasons. Firstly, the transition from 'gay and lesbian' to 'gay' has as an effect the construction of lesbians as part of a monolithic, economically privileged group of homosexual consumers. Lesbians can then be located as consumers within the texts in much the same way as gay men. This serves to elide the reality of the disparities between men's and women's incomes, perhaps in an attempt to render these unproblematic (cf. Clarke, 1991: 182).²

The statistics which purport to demonstrate the higher disposable incomes of 'the gay community' are gathered from surveys in glossy lifestyle magazines which are sold to those generally gay men who have high disposable incomes. These statistics are then compared with census data for the 'general population' to obtain a picture of income levels which is of course distorted.³

As the vacillation within the media texts between the terms 'the gay market' and 'the gay and lesbian market' indicates, the term 'gay' purports to speak for lesbians, while in fact eliding their lived experience and constructing 'gay' as 'male'. This is also made clear where lesbians are specifically referred to. Reid (1994: 2/1), for example, writes of the spending 'power' of the 'gay community', yet later acknowledges that lesbians (as all women) earn less than men. Initially the lesbian is apparently included, yet is later specifically excluded from the portrait of the affluent 'gay community'. The net effect of these manoeuvres is the production of a simultaneous inclusion and exclusion

² In 1991 in New Zealand, women's average ordinary time wage earnings were 81% of those of men. In every employment sector in 1991 women's median incomes were substantially lower than those of men (Statistics New Zealand, 1993: 112-113).

³ See Badgett (1997: 65-71); Gluckman and Reed (1993: 17); and Vaid (1995: 249-256) for a more detailed criticism of this form of comparison. Gluckman and Reed (1993) and Vaid (1995) discuss how gay men and lesbians perpetuating this approach collude (perhaps unwittingly) with right-wing approaches which argue that 'gay' wealth means that insistence of gay and lesbian oppression is false. Vaid (1995: 251) explains that in the United States, income figures from a 'gay market research firm' were incorporated into the widely-distributed video of the Traditional Values Coalition, *Gay Rights/Special Rights*. Similar conservative claims have been made in New Zealand, especially in submissions to the Parliamentary Select Committee concerned with the Human Rights Act 1993 (e.g. Lion of Judah Ministries, 1993).

of lesbians; the lesbian is simultaneously assumed to constitute part of the 'gay community/market' and is yet excluded from it.⁴

Limits of Acceptability

I argued earlier that the figure of the responsible 'gay consumer' functions as one pole of a dualism, the opposite pole of which is the figure of the 'dangerous' politicised, invader homosexual subject. As can be expected with such a dualism, structured as it is within a heterosexist social order, the 'responsible' pole has strict limits placed on it. Through 'gay market' discourse, these limits guard against potentially dissident behaviours, desires, politics and representations.

Gay and lesbian subjectivity are rendered matters of private consumption rather than public political change (Gluckman and Reed, 1993: 18). Identities are domesticated; the public activist, who could be identified with the invader figure, is erased and replaced with the private consumer. The gay man or lesbian as consumer is able to be assimilated into liberalism's private sphere, as an individual subject floating free of organisation and solidarity as gay or lesbian. All possible ties between sexuality and politics are severed, and sexual identity is conflated with consumption (Clarke, 1991: 194). 'Lesbian' and 'gay' then become not categories of those who are marked out, and live, within particular regimes of domination and subordination, but labels for a supposedly identifiable collection of consumers. Sexual identities are (re)construed as a matter of atomised, individual consumers tied into market relationships.

An undercurrent of gay and lesbian marginality runs through the language used in these media texts. Homosexual subjects are marked out as Other in the way they are counterposed to 'the mainstream' or 'the average person' (Aldridge, 1997: 17; Allan, 1992: 30; Coventry, 1993: 51; TVNZ, 1996). In one article this idea of other-than-average is taken a step further, as one media director interviewed defers from the unanimity of the idea of the gay market to state that it may be 'economically unfeasible to isolate every fringe group in society' (Nudd, 1992: 25; cf Benn, 1994: 5). I wonder what is worse: being reduced to a consumer subject, or being considered part of an 'economically unfeasible fringe group'?

Allan's article in the *Listener* highlights even more clearly the inferiorisation of gay men and lesbians which underlies 'gay market' discourse:

⁴ Clarke's (1991) article discusses specific marketing initiatives aimed at lesbians-as-consumers in the North American context, yet the New Zealand media material is directed at gay men and adds 'and lesbian' in the manner discussed here.

Tough economic times have encouraged business people to think the once unthinkable - how to target gay and lesbian consumers. Gays and lesbians, once little known minorities of despised outcasts, are the newest target markets for advertising (Allan, 1992: 30).

Use of the phrases 'once unthinkable' and 'despised outcasts' clearly belies a trace of lesbian and gay inferiority, of something about the unpleasantness about targeting gay men and lesbians - now consumers. The fact of gay men and lesbians becoming a 'target market' however, apparently goes some way to make their inferiority able to be overlooked. Allan's use of the word 'once' implies that the new 'consumer' homosexuals are now granted some increased level of social 'acceptance' by virtue of their consumer status.

A similar ambivalence is at work in Nudd's (1992: 24) article title 'Profit vs prejudice: Why it pays to target gays'. Of profit or prejudice, the latter can be overcome, however distasteful this may be, to permit accrual of the former. This point recurs yet again in the *60 Minutes* formulation 'it's a financial rather than a moral issue' (TVNZ, 1996). Lesbian and gay subjectivity constitute a 'moral issue', but this is able to be downplayed because of the possibility for financial benefit. For the CEO of corporate giant Lion Nathan, 'gays' have no value or meaning as social subjects outside of the market:

10 years ago directors would probably not have known what a gay was, nor approved of giving them a job. It is all part of a move to the changed realities of a changed marketplace and customer base (Myers, cited Aldridge, 1997: 17).

As I have mentioned before, and can be seen here, this very cautious liberal tolerance is highly contingent upon gay men's and lesbians' acts of consumption. The rationale for this precarious tolerance rests upon gay men and lesbians occupying the position of compliant consumer, yet the trace of inferiority remains (Gluckman and Reed, 1993: 18). Because 'gay consumers' represent the 'responsible' homosexual, they are expunged of the capacity for same-sex affection and certainly sexual desire. The confluence of the trace of inferiority, a highly contingent tolerance, and the erasure of same-sex desire, can be seen in the following statement made by the marketing manager of the New Zealand Tourism Board:

Like in any advertising, your target market has to relate to the communication, but it won't be two men kissing. It will be tastefully done and it will be done by the placement of the ads (in homosexual media) [Black's note] rather than the content which will target them (cited Black, 1994: 1/3).

In this example, a strong distinction is drawn between public culture and a

more private 'homosexual media'. Same-sex desire is rendered doubly invisible in this homophobic strategy. Firstly, the placement of an advertisement aimed at gay male couples in public media is disallowed, with the implication that this would involve an unacceptable overtness of that which should remain hidden in the private sphere. Secondly, the possibility of same-sex kissing in an advertisement, for example, is considered dis-'tasteful', and inappropriate for an advertising strategy - despite heterosexual kissing now being commonplace in advertising. Any representations of homosexuality in advertising clearly need to be acceptable to a conservative, middle class, heterosexual audience, lest the assimilatory nature of the gay market/consumer metaphor be threatened (Clarke, 1991: 193).

In one newspaper article, titled 'Gay tourist campaign raises fears of Aids', a panic is created at a Queenstown-Lakes District Council meeting that 'homosexuals' coming to holiday in New Zealand will bear disease and social decay (*NZ Herald*, 1994: 1/5). One district councillor quoted in the article argues that the Tourist Board proposal 'conjures up ideas of Aids' and therefore compromises New Zealand's 'clean, green image' (*NZ Herald*, 1994: 1/5). The link between homosexuality, AIDS and pollution (of both the body politic and the natural environment) is made clear here.

However, the symbol of the respectable market consumer is employed in an attempt to neutralise the image of the out-of-control disease-spreading homosexual. In its symbolic neutralisation, the news article mentioned above quotes an 'Auckland-based homosexual rights activist'. The 'activist' argues that '[a]ttitudes will change - people are realising that gays and lesbians are actually ordinary, nice, wealthy people' (*NZ Herald*, 1994: 1/5). He is quoted as arguing that '[t]he homosexual community was a vast untapped market and he applauded the Tourism board [sic] for being so farsighted' (*NZ Herald*, 1994: 1/5).

In this excerpt, a liberal 'acceptance' of 'gays and lesbians' is contingent upon the proof of our wealth and ordinariness. Those lesbians and gay men who are not wealthy are elided as social subjects, either placed outside the category 'gay' or 'lesbian', or rendered invisible as 'gays and lesbians are ... wealthy' is intended to be read as 'all gays and lesbians'.

Advertisers wish to capitalise on the supposed 'gay market', yet seek at the same time to define which representations of homosexuality are and which are not acceptable to their audiences. As far as one airline is concerned, 'the pink dollar is an important, wealthy, niche market, there for the taking ... but we are still very sensitive to the feelings of the wider community' (Aldridge, 1997: 17). The marketing manager of another airline goes still further, and states that 'support has been discreet and an understanding gay community does not expect the company to "come out" openly' (Aldridge, 1997: 17). The word 'discreet' here is presumably defined in a similar way to the 'tasteful' of the

Tourism Board manager cited above. In an interesting semantic reversal, the 'gay community' is expected to be 'understanding' of the reluctance of an airline to 'come out' in 'support'. Again, the 'gay community' is expected to be grateful for being targeted without being publicly acknowledged, and the ability to define which representations of homosexuality are acceptable rest with the advertisers and marketers.

Conclusion

While I have been critical of the intersection of New Right discourse and marketing projects, I do not mean to insinuate that lesbians and gay men exist outside of capitalist relations in a way that has simply been co-opted for economic ends. There is no essence of lesbian and gay identities that floats free of capitalism that we should (or could) embrace if we wished to resist 'gay market' discourse and the attendant construction of the 'gay consumer'. D'Emilio (1983) argues that the growth of capitalism was a necessary precursor to, and formative factor in, the development of lesbian and gay identities. He argues that a move to industrial capitalism facilitated same-sex relationships by breaking down the economic dependence of individuals on the extended nuclear family. In any case, it does seem clear that in reproducing our senses of gay or lesbian identities through (for example) bars, literature, theatre and film, our identities are continually intertwined with capitalist relations (Altman, 1982).

However, to concede this point is not to detract from the argument that there is a quite clear set of links between the narrative which posits gay men (and lesbians to a degree) as consumers in a 'gay market', and a heterosexist containment of homosexuality. In 'gay market' discourse, homosexual identities are commodified as a fetishised version of identity, a centre of consumption, to be inserted into the capitalist market. I have explained how the position of the 'responsible' homosexual is offered to those who demand no more than the right to consume, and who accept that equality is guaranteed by the (supposed) level playing field of the free market.

The boundaries between what constitutes 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' representations of homosexuality are determined by advertisers, within a framework where heterosexuality is normative and homosexuality remains somewhat marginalised and deviant. The limits imposed upon the 'gay consumer', the expunging of affection or desire, the reinforcement of the positioning of mainstream/other, and the erasure of a politics critical of market capitalism or heteronormativity, highlight the contingency and precariousness of the liberalism which underpins the discourse. Central to this strategy of containment is the construction of a monolithic gay and lesbian identity that is not differentiated by income, gender, or any other axis of social inequality. Those who do not fit the portrait are erased from view; within discourses of the 'gay market', they do not exist.

Despite the continual use of the phrase 'gay or lesbian consumer', a closer reading of the texts which utilise this phrase shows the consumer to be the affluent gay man. Lesbian identities are generally either subsumed under gay male identities or are rendered invisible. While limited forms of gay male identity are offered a degree of recognition as they are constituted as 'a market', the situation of lesbians remains somewhat more ambiguous. As I have pointed out, lesbians are often constructed as invader/dangerous homosexuals, a situation which is likely to be connected with their real and imagined relationships with feminism. Given this identification of lesbians with the 'dangerous' pole of the 'responsible/dangerous homosexual' dualism, and give the contingency of acceptance upon consumption, lesbians seem less likely or able than affluent gay men to be 'made acceptable' through 'gay market' discourse.

To grant legitimacy to the position whereby gay men and lesbians become 'consumers' in a 'market' is to reproduce an approach where the identities 'gay' and 'lesbian' as manifest in free market discourses, have a membership which is tightly bounded in terms of gender and class. Rather than opening up spaces within the social structure for diversity, or permitting a more trenchant critique of heterosexuality, gender and class as structures of unequal power, the market approach reduces the diversity of lesbian and gay lives to an economic rationalist standard.

What are we to do when, as here, we gain recognition not as gay men or lesbians, but as 'brand-loyal' consumers with 'high disposable incomes' (Allan, 1994; Nudd, 1992)? I am reminded of the t-shirt worn by gay protagonist Mark in the US film 'World and Time Enough' which reads 'I am not a target market'. Perhaps we should put our t-shirts on and really conspire to take over the Labour Party.

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