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From 'saving women' to 'saving gays': Rescue narratives and their dis/continuities

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Abstract

This article traces not only some of the borrowings but also the differences between feminist and gay politics in the context of the post-1989 'multicultural debate' and the hegemony of civilizational politics. This investigation is empirically grounded in one national context, that is, the Dutch case, which is exemplary when it comes to bringing politics of gender and sexuality to bear on national and cultural identity politics. The article recapitulates some insights on how feminist politics can get entangled with (neo)colonial and (neo)imperialist politics and traces these connections in a Dutch context. It goes on to review some of the forms homonationalism and homonostalgia take in the Netherlands. And it concludes with a discussion of the resemblances and differences between the 'saving women' and 'saving gays' narratives that inform civilizational modes of feminist and gay politics.

Keywords

Civilizational politics, homonationalism, multicultural debate, rescue narratives, saving gays, saving women, The Netherlands

Strange bedfellows

Like many protagonists of post-1989 civilizational discourse, the Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn did not fail to make regular references to feminism in his public speech and writings. In a controversial interview, titled 'Islam is a Backward Culture', in one of the leading Dutch newspapers in February 2002, he is quoted as saying:

> I want a very strong emancipation policy for Islamic women in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. In particular the highly-educated Turkish and Moroccan girls get a sound thrashing from me. They leave their sisters in the lurch. Take an example from our feminists in the seventies.

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> My mother, who came from a posh milieu, became emancipated because of those women. I expect the same from those Muslim girls, instead of putting on a headscarf as some kind of protest. Take it off and make sure your sisters do not have only one right of existence: the kitchen.[1]

The basic assumption of Fortuyn's statement holds that 'Islamic women' in the Netherlands are in dire need of emancipation, yet at the same time, he felt he could not entirely ignore (as others did) a generation of young, well-educated and vocal Muslim women who at the time had begun raising their voices in the Dutch national debate and questioned, both in words and deeds, the dominant assumptions about Muslim woman and emancipation. Fortuyn explicitly addressed them, yet he did so through infantilizing them, both by referring to them as 'girls' as well as positioning them as in need of 'a sound thrashing'. He framed them as rebellious teenagers playing around (with headscarves, among other things) while not quite understanding the implications of their behaviour, let alone the ways in which they let their mothers down – which Fortuyn and others apparently understood all too well. Through attributing them to a teenage-like naiveté, Fortuyn dismissed the voices, perspectives and struggles of a new generation born out of Dutch multicultural society, accusing them of confusing rebellion with an actual cause. This cause, still according to Fortuyn, is women's emancipation, and even feminism.

Thus, feminism gets framed, within the context of a public debate about Islam in the Netherlands, in a particular way. First, it is affirmed as an intrinsic part of the history of Dutch society and culture. Moreover, it is contained in time and space: The emphasis on 'the seventies' not only serves to anchor feminism within Dutch history but can also equally be read as a way of keeping feminism, at least time-wise, at a safe distance. There is, in other words, a suggestion that the feminist struggle was important at that time but is largely 'over and done with' today, and thus, feminism is framed through a linear understanding of time in which the current time is understood as a 'post-feminist' one. Furthermore, through the figure of his mother, Fortuyn gives feminism an 'everyday' quality, which both aids to underscore the point of feminism as part of a national heritage as well as dilutes a more radical feminist legacy through drawing the attention not to the protagonists of the feminist struggle but 'the everyday woman', the mother, whose life was effectively changed because of feminism, while not being at the forefront of the struggle nor even considering herself a feminist (for a more elaborate analysis, see Bracke, 2011).

Fortuyn's invocations of women's emancipation and feminism triggered feminist responses and notably an editorial column in the 2002 May issue of the Dutch feminist monthly *Opzij* engaged with his claims (Dresselhuys, 2002b). In 'Pim & the women', as the piece was called, the chief editor of the magazine, Ciska Dresselhuys, discussed Fortuyn's record of women's emancipation and feminism. Pointing to what she considered a set of contradictions – being a 'staunch defender of women's emancipation, especially when it comes to Muslim women' on the one hand and his regular sexist remarks on the other hand – Dresselhuys characterized Fortuyn as 'a chapter in itself', thereby adding yet another layer to the portrayal of this political figure in 'exceptional' terms. This portrayal then serves as the backdrop for situating Fortuyn as an ally of the feminist cause in the Netherlands. It should be noted that this issue of *Opzij* was the last one before the 2002 national elections, and hence, Dresselhuys'

decision to dedicate her editorial column to clarify to her feminist readership why Fortuyn could be a political ally is quite a strong political statement in itself.

Dresselhuys fleshed out a possible feminist alliance with Fortuyn through quoting the very same passage from the infamous interview mentioned above and subsequently concluding that Fortuyn made a lot of sense, albeit not without some reservations. First, his vision was not matched, Dresselhuys deplored, with concrete measures in his political programme. Second, she commented on the very low score of Fortuyn's party in *Opzij*'s review of party programmes from the entire political spectrum through the lens of women's emancipation and feminism. This low score was due to the fact that 'he solely focuses on the emancipation of allochthonous women and says nothing about for instance childcare, domestic violence and the combination of work and care'. Dresselhuys' formulation is problematic in many respects: Besides relying on the (widespread) term 'allochthonous',[2] the wording suggests that childcare, domestic violence and the combination of work and care are not issues for women from ethnic and religious minorities, who in first instance should deal with forms of discrimination supposedly related to 'culture and religion'. Such a distinction deeply reflects civilizational thinking, in which women's emancipation 'in general' is disconnected from an understanding of specific 'cultural and religious issues' that hinder emancipation for some ('other') women. This economy distinguishing 'the general' from 'the specific' operates as an effective way of othering. Dresselhuys' vision differed from Fortuyn's through her ongoing concern with women's emancipation 'in general' (in contrast to his symbolic reference to it and his post-feminist teleology), yet they aligned in the absolute priority granted to the emancipation of Muslim women, which elsewhere Dresselhuys affirms as the 'third wave' of Dutch feminism (Dresselhuys, 2002a). This problematic understanding and prioritization of the 'cultural or religious' discrimination of women effectively constituted the first ground for the proposed alliance. Dresselhuys found a second ground for alliance in Fortuyn's concern about gay emancipation:

> That Fortuyn is so focused on the emancipation of allochthonous women has everything to do with the fact that, according to him, the acceptance of homosexuality in any given society goes hand in hand with an equal treatment of women. A truism.

Thus, she coupled women's emancipation to gay emancipation, echoing one of the claims Fortuyn repeatedly made, that is, that he did not want 'to do women's and gay liberation all over again'. The performative character of such a claim effectively positions women's and gay emancipation as an intrinsic part of Dutch society and culture suggests that these social movements are effortlessly aligned, asserts that these struggles have come to completion in a Dutch context and signals that the fruits of these struggles are now in need of 'defense' against migrants and Muslims.

In sum, the alliance suggested by Dresselhuys is grounded in a particular understanding of the articulation of gender and sexual politics with 'cultural and religious' issues. The 'conversation' between these two figures – albeit mediated through the mainstream and feminist press – is perhaps not the first of its kind in post-1989 Netherlands but does represent a very public moment in which the relation between gender and sexual politics, on the one hand, and civilizational understandings of 'culture and religion', on the other hand, is elaborated. It also illustrates how gender and sexual politics provide a fruitful ground

for the development of civilizational politics. Both Dresselhuys and Fortuyn were well-established figures in their fields. Dresselhuys is a long-standing feminist whose feminism is recognized as white, middle-class and liberal (see Lutz, 2002) and, with respect to multiculturalism, subscribes to the widespread argument most notably developed by Susan Moller Okin (1999), namely, that 'multiculturalism is bad for women'.[3] Fortuyn on his side became one of the most conspicuous figures in the political history of the Netherlands. Much has been written about his 'exceptional' politics, character and style (e.g. Pels, 2003; Van der Veer, 2006), but relevant for this article is the combination of his civilizational political agenda and his outspoken gay identity. His 'in your face' gayness indeed proved by no means incidental or insignificant for his political program of framing Islam as a 'backward culture', calling for an immigration stop of Muslims and 'defending' Dutch culture, norms and values, notably against Islam.

This article takes the conversation and suggested alliance between these two figures and what they stand for as a point of departure. I use this proposed alliance to explore some of the ways in which women's and gay emancipation are situated in the context of the post-1989 'multicultural debate' in the Netherlands. More specifically, I seek to trace not only some of the borrowings but also the differences between feminist and gay politics in relation to the new civilizational politics. This discussion is empirically grounded through focusing on one national context, that is, the Dutch case. I do so for two reasons. Given that the realities of European 'multicultural debates' and civilizational discourse, as well as those of gender and sexual politics, are multiple, it is important, I believe, to carefully situate these kinds of investigations as the particularities and differences matter. Yet it is also clear that many of the points developed here have a broader resonance for 'multicultural debates' all over Europe and that there's a need to develop a transnational understanding of the borrowings and differences between these contexts – a larger project that falls beyond the scope of this article. Moreover, the Dutch case is exemplary when it comes to incorporating gender and sexuality politics into national and cultural identity politics and indeed has become 'a popular model' in this respect (see also De Leeuw and Van Wichelen, 2012; Jivraj and De Jong, 2011). The article is structured as follows. In the first part, I recapitulate some insights on how feminist politics can get entangled with (neo)colonial and (neo)imperialist politics and trace them specifically in a Dutch context. The second part reviews some of the forms homonationalism (Puar, 2007) takes in a Dutch context. The third and conclusive part of the article then discusses the resemblances and differences between the 'saving women' and 'saving gays' narratives that inform civilizational modes of feminist and gay politics.

So what's exactly so strange? Remembering feminist colonial histories

'Sometimes people, including feminists, have strange allies', Dresselhuys concludes. Her acknowledgement of why an alliance with Fortuyn could not be taken for granted enabled her to frame such reasons in a larger perspective that *does* render an alliance with Fortuyn intelligible and sensible. Yet inadvertently, it also sets up the argument in such a way as to affirm the alliance's 'strangeness'. In other words, alongside an argument for the necessity of this 'strange' alliance, the readers are equally expected or made to see this alliance as 'strange' in the first place. Let's, however, look more carefully at the suggestion of an

unfamiliar alignment of a feminist and a nationalist or civilizational political agenda: *Why* would such an alliance be strange or unexpected?

One can, in fact, easily argue that Dresselhuys' vision on the priorities and politics of feminism today represents a contemporary recasting of a historical influential script and, therefore, is all but strange, yet very familiar. The entanglement of women's emancipation discourses and movements with national, colonial and imperial projects has been sharply analyzed, notably by feminist post-colonial thinkers. In her seminal essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', Gayatri Spivak (1988) unfolds how a 'white men saving brown women from brown men' rescue script was central to the operation of British colonialism. Leila Ahmed (1992) on her side elaborates how, as the British colonial authorities in Egypt relied on the rhetoric of women's emancipation for their colonial missions, Western feminism came to serve as a 'handmaiden' to colonialism in the process. Women's emancipation and feminism, in brief, have been part of political and epistemic imperial projects through their mobilization as a rationale for 'civilizing missions' that relied on the elaboration of rescue narratives.

In a Dutch context, this historical script has been traced and fleshed out by Maria Grever and Berteke Waaldijk's investigations into the burgeoning women's movement in the Netherlands of the 19th century. The origins of the Dutch women's movement need to be situated in a context of nation-state formation, the rise of nationalism and the high days of Dutch colonialism. This did not set the Netherlands apart: Late 19th-century women's struggle in Europe indeed built on visions of racial superiority and national pride that were an intrinsic part of European imperialism (Burton, 1994). The predominant notions of femininity that articulated within the 19th-century Dutch women's movement did not transcend or subvert colonial relations, as Grever and Waaldijk (1998) show; they were, in other words, circumscribed by colonial relationships.[4] Thus, the vindication of the rights of (white, 'civilized') women, Grever and Waaldijk argue, relied upon an implicit and explicit 'othering' of a range of women whose 'otherness' precisely served to establish the 'civilized' subject of the new women's movement. The spectrum of 'other women' included most notably the colonized woman, the prostitute and the working-class woman, which reflects how both 'domestic' and international (imperial) dimensions were intertwined in the process of establishing the 'proper' subject of the women's movement. In a sense, these 'other women' could be considered the 'objects' of the new women's movement since the dominant narrative that was spun about them, and provided a common ground for their othering, was one of 'salvation' by their sisters: In one way or another, these 'poor women' needed to be saved and notably through being 'civilized'. Grever and Waaldijk's analysis substantiates how established hierarchies of 'race', sexuality and class were indeed part and parcel of the making of the Dutch women's movement, as well as how the othering of certain women operated – notably through the narratives, and practices, of rescue.[5]

In this historical light, Dresselhuys' call for an alliance between a feminist and a right-wing nationalist agenda construed around the fate of Muslim women is indeed all but new or unexpected. Such an alliance relies on a call for 'solidarity with Muslim sisters', which in turn relies on the following arguments: First of all, the 'Muslim sisters' are in need of help, and second, many of the 'usual suspects' (feminists, leftists) are 'letting their Muslim sisters down'. The first argument is a well-rehearsed one, with a long colonial past and a neo-colonial present (see Mohanty, 1988); it provides the basis for the rescue narratives. As Baukje Prins (2000) shows, the mobilization and representation of migrant

and Muslim women within the contemporary public debate in the Netherlands is framed by two assumptions: that Muslim women per definition are victims of 'their culture' and that they have an interest in adopting 'Western values' and integrating into Dutch society – on the dominant terms – to end their victimization. And these are the key ingredients of the 'rescue women' script.

The second argument could be rephrased as 'rescue is not coming where it should come from' and serves to reshuffle the political landscape: it therefore could come from 'unexpected places'. Moreover, the argument is embedded within a new political rhetoric, which Prins (2000) has called 'new realism', which claims a direct and unmediated access to the 'harsh truth' of 'the multicultural drama', in contrast to the ideologically marked 'politically correct' views on the matter. Fortuyn made the genre his hallmark, and Dresselhuys' call for a feminist alliance with Fortuyn is marked by new realist rhetoric, as it dismisses a part of the feminist movement and the left as 'too politically correct' and 'too relativist' to deal with the problems Muslim women face and positions right-wing politicians such as Fortuyn as those who will *really* do something about their fate.

Dresselhuys was not alone in her feminist efforts to reinvigorate a rescue script in relation to Muslim women. Another high-profile feminist and public figure joined her efforts: Ayaan Hirsi Ali. As several authors have noted, those feminist voices advocating civilizational agendas have come to include – albeit often precariously[6] – a handful of (Muslim) women of colour whose discourse finds a place within the dominant terms of debate. 'The exceptional Muslim', as Jin Haritaworn et al. (2008) call this figure, operates in tandem with the figure of the Muslim victim devoid of agency and in fact makes no sense outside of an imperialist frame. Yet the figure does significantly complicate the story, rendering the symbolic construction, as Marc De Leeuw and Sonja Van Wichelen (2005) put it, even more complicated with a layer of 'brown woman saving brown women from brown men'.

Not unlike Fortuyn, Hirsi Ali played a significant and dramatic role on the Dutch political scene. Born in Somalia, she obtained political asylum in the Netherlands in 1992. After graduating in political science, she first worked at the scientific institute of the centre-left labour party (*Partij van de Arbeid* (PvdA)) and subsequently embarked upon a political career with the right-wing liberal party (*Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (VVD)) – a political transition mentored by Dresselhuys. She got elected into Dutch Parliament in 2003. As De Leeuw and Van Wichelen (2005) argue in their insightful article about 'the phenomenon of Ayaan', the effectiveness of her political figure relied on a complex articulation of 'mediated selves', both 'mediated as other' and the mediated self as 'one of us'. The 'mediated as other' Hirsi Ali represented, succinctly put, the female exotic other, the insider expert and the victim of Islam. Besides performing and being framed through Oriental stereotypes and fantasies, the insider with 'authentic' knowledge secures a place of enunciation that is protected from critique. As the mediated self as 'one of us', she represented the liberated apostate, the committed activist and the political whistle-blower. The recognition notably occurs in relation to Hirsi Ali's narrative of liberation from religion that is familiar to a Dutch sense of self through her (new realist) emphasis on 'really doing something about women's emancipation' and through her disillusionment with the left as she worked for the labour party and gradually became disenchanted with their ways of dealing with 'multiculturalism'. The apparent logic that evolves out of these mediated selves, De Leeuw and Van Wichelen (2005) argue, is one marked by the linearity of moving

from an 'ultimate other' to 'one of us'. At the same time, the power and complexity of her political figure derive from the fact that these different layers continue to operate simultaneously.

Hirsi Ali was perhaps more explicit than Fortuyn and Dresselhuys in relying on the rhetoric and imaginary of 'rescuing (Muslim) women', which she indeed made her hallmark. The symbolic construction of 'a brown woman saving brown women' rendered the politics of saving even more effective, De Leeuw and Van Wichelen (2005) argue. The symbolic and epistemic violence of this rescue script was made painfully visible in an episode of the television news programme NOVA in October 2004, when Hirsi Ali was invited in the studio to talk about her film *Submission* together with a number of Muslim women who at the time resided in shelters escaping domestic violence (for a full account of the episode, see De Leeuw and Van Wichelen, 2005). The encounter with the women she supposedly wanted to 'save' was by all means a non-encounter: As the women expressed their disagreement with Hirsi Ali and went on to explain how her discourse was damaging to the realities they live in and the conditions they had to deal with, Hirsi Ali demonstrated her inability to hear what they were saying. When one of the women, in total frustration with the way in which her words remained unheard and dismissed, left the studio, Hirsi Ali's only comment was 'okay, goodbye then'. She was, as De Leeuw and Van Wichelen (2005) put it, unable to account for the stories of the women she claimed to be a spokesperson for. More sarcastically one could say that it didn't even matter that the empirical referent left the room, the discourse simply went on.

Dresselhuys and Hirsi Ali, and the feminism they embody, did not hegemonize the field of feminist organizing and thought in the Netherlands. Other important feminist voices continued to be articulated and made themselves heard, not in the least self-organizations of women of colour and of Muslim women (such as ZAMI or al-Nisa) or the well-established public voice of an icon of second wave feminism and politician for the Socialist Party Anja Meulenbelt. Moreover, academic feminism in the Netherlands has played a critical role in unpacking the 'multiculturalism/Islam is bad for women' framework running through the more popular arguments (see Botman et al., 2001; Braidotti and Wekker, 1996; De Leeuw and Van Wichelen, 2005; Midden, 2010; Prins, 2000; Saharso, 2000). The hegemony of a 'rescue Muslim women' narrative, however, became tangible in different ways. Gradually women's emancipation and feminism were reframed within the public debate and encapsulated within mainstream political discourses, where they became a crucial marker for civilizational politics and an easy tool to criticize or dismiss 'multicultural society' and Islam. The impact of this reframing is notably felt in the way in which dissenting feminist voices most often seem to find themselves in a default position of having to defend themselves – for being 'too politically correct' or 'disconnected from what is really going on', or 'not daring to face the facts as they are'.

Moreover, one could argue that the rescue narrative was institutionalized. This is exemplified by the speech of minister De Geus, responsible for women's emancipation at the time, on the occasion of International Women's Day in 2003. De Geus officially declared that women's emancipation in the Netherlands was in fact an achieved matter. At least for 'autochthonous' women, he was quick to qualify, because a *real* problem of emancipation remained the case for 'allochthonous' women. Such a vision on emancipation radically reorganized women's emancipation policies (including ending the allocation of funding

and other very material matters) and indeed consolidated the civilizational division of the realm of women's emancipation into 'emancipation *tout court*' and 'emancipation related to cultural and religious issues', with the latter prioritized as the *real* problem. De Geus' declaration resonated with the earlier public statements by both Fortuyn and Dresselhuys on the matter; only he sided with the 'post-feminist' version of it, just like Fortuyn.

As a result, in this civilizational logic, women's emancipation became central to the definition of *who belongs to the Dutch nation and who does not*. Fortuyn, moreover, with his usual flair, took things a step further. While the quote in the introduction deals with women's emancipation and feminism, in the flow of the entire newspaper article, the quoted fragment follows immediately, in the same breath, after an argument in favour of the strict surveillance of mosques and Islamic associations ('We need to know precisely what is said in all those associations and mosques'). Thus 'women's emancipation' is effectively positioned as a part of a wider arsenal of tools to *surveil and control* Islam in Dutch society.

From rescuing women to rescuing gays

The ways in which a 'rescue women' script has come to mark the public debate, as well as restructure feminism in the context of local 'multicultural' debates, are of course profoundly related to reconfigurations in the realm of geopolitics (De Leeuw and Van Wichelen, 2012). If during the 1990s, we witnessed the geopolitical landscape being framed according to the logic of 'the clash of civilizations' to which gender and sexual politics matter in crucial ways, the importance of gender and sexual politics was even more pushed to the forefront in relation to the war on terror (Butler, 2009; Cooke, 2002; Hirschkind and Mahmood, 2002; Hunt and Rygiel, 2006; Kuntsman and Miyake, 2008; Mahmood, 2008; Puar, 2007; Puar and Rai, 2002). One of the most consistent themes in the war on terror, as many commentators have noted, is the contention that this war is waged in order to protect women's rights and in particular to liberate Muslim and Arab women from the yoke of their misogynist cultural backgrounds and religious traditions. The war on terror has been construed, waged and legitimized on gendered and indeed sexualized terrain (Hunt and Rygiel, 2006) with gender and sexuality producing both the hypervisible icons as well as the ghosts that haunt the war machinery (Puar and Rai, 2002).

In this context, many have observed (Butler, 2009; Duggan, 2003; Haritaworn et al., 2008; Kuntsman, 2008; Puar, 2007; Puar and Rai, 2002) a new kind of public attention and reference to gay rights, which on the one hand is part and parcel of what Lisa Duggan (2003) has called the 'new homonormativity', and which is simultaneously articulated with contemporary racist and imperialist politics. Homonormativity, as Duggan (2003: 50) argues, is a form of neo-liberal sexual politics that 'does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption'. Homonormativity pertains to, among other things, gay aspirations towards acceptance within the existing political, economic and kinship systems and arrangements; politics based on certain (humanist and exclusive) notions of identity and teleological models of time and progress and 'gay globalization', which has generated what Massad (2007) dismissively calls 'the Gay Internationale'. These different elements are increasingly articulated with national agendas and 'civilizational'

politics. Thus, in a European context, we can observe various ways in which homosexuality is played out in national debates about national identity, 'multicultural society' and Islam, while in a wider geopolitical realm, it emerges as a marker of the 'civilized West'. Moreover, the incorporation of 'gay emancipation' within an understanding of what constitutes the cultural identity of a nation on the one hand and of 'Western civilization' on the other hand to some extent relies on, and provides fertile soil for, the elaboration of 'rescue gays' narratives in ways that bring to mind the previously discussed 'rescue women' scripts. In order to trace continuities and discontinuities between these rescue narratives, I discuss this national attention to homosexuality once more in a Dutch context.

The new articulations between (homo)sexual politics and nationalist and civilizational politics have been accounted for in different ways. In her timely book *Terrorist Assemblages. Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Jasbir Puar (2007) proposes to look at the matter in terms of the emergence of 'convivial relations' between non-normative sexualities and the nation and coins the term 'homonationalism' to do so. The notion of homonationalism figures in a theoretical horizon of critique of liberal rights discourse, and it attends to the contingence between the national recognition and inclusion of certain gay lives on the one hand, and the segregation and disqualification of racial-sexual others from the national imaginary on the other hand. Puar's analysis of homonationalism is largely located in a US context (albeit from a transnational perspective), where she elaborates the notion of homonationalism along three imbricated lines, that is, an understanding of the national self in terms of 'sexual exceptionalism', the normativities of queer identities and the ascendancy of white privilege. Jin Haritaworn et al. (2008), writing in the context of the European debates on national identity and 'multiculturalism', and more specifically the United Kingdom and Germany, rely on a notion of gay imperialism and trace how the 'gay Muslim victim' figures in these debates, in tandem with the neo-imperialist figure of the white gay activist (carrying 'the white man's burden' of gay liberation). And in the Dutch context, to which I now return, Gloria Wekker (2009) writes of homonostalgia, relying on Rosaldo's understanding of imperial nostalgia (Rosaldo, 1993), a sentiment that makes racial domination, and specifically white supremacy, seem innocent. The nostalgic sentiment in this case takes the shape of a longing for a time when gay liberation could, allegedly, be taken for granted, that is, before it was under threat by Islam. Such a time, of course, never existed as such, yet it is precisely called into being through the nostalgic longing and subsequently functions as a standard against which contemporary homophobia is assessed. It is through such an operation of nostalgic memory that the presence of Muslim populations within Europe, and the racist responses triggered by this presence, has the performative effect of rendering homosexuality part of the national 'norms and values' in a way it never was before. This nostalgia, in other words, reworks memory (and national history) in a way that makes racism and white supremacy seem innocent or even absent (Wekker, 2009).

The 'sexual exceptionalism' of Dutch national identity, reflected in the particular ways in which gender and sexuality are debated and regulated, provides a fertile ground for homonationalism in the Netherlands. The most notable instance in this respect is perhaps the civic integration test, which became effective first in 2006 for those seeking to migrate to the Netherlands and subsequently also for certain categories of migrants already living in the country. The law postulates the obligation to integrate, which is evaluated through a test measuring whether the candidate has enough knowledge of the Dutch language and

Dutch society, history, habits, norms and values.[7] The test itself is currently not publicly available, but an understanding of what is expected from those who seek to become citizens can be approached through either the video that those seeking to migrate can watch in preparation for the test or the alleged representative example of the test made publicly available by the independent Dutch public service broadcaster NTR on their website.[8] In both cases, homosexuality figures as something that migrants should tolerate or at least 'pretend not to mind' if they are to live in the Netherlands (De Leeuw and Van Wichelen, 2012).

The civic integration test, however, doesn't stand alone when it comes to national laws, regulations and policies that have come to reframe homosexuality in problematic ways. A national policy document laying out the agenda for gay and lesbian emancipation policies for 2008–2011, titled 'Gewoon homo zijn' ('Just Being Gay'), equally bears homonationalist traces (for an elaborate analysis of the report see Wekker, 2009, and Jivraj and De Jong, 2011). Two crucial arguments are emphasized in the introduction and subsequently structure the text. First, the report states that 'not all is well' in the Netherlands regarding homosexuality, and this is qualified as follows: Homophobia persists in particular among ethnic minorities and in (orthodox) religious environments. While this way of setting up the question of structural discrimination seems a mirror image of what Minister De Geus did in his above-mentioned speech, that is, declaring women's emancipation to be fully achieved in the Netherlands 'except' for 'allochthonous' women, the conclusion in both cases boils down to reframing 'the problem' in cultural and religious terms and attaching it to ethnic and religious minorities. Second, the document identifies two topics of special interest for Dutch gay emancipation policy in the years to come: a strong policy on attacking violence and discrimination against homosexuals on the one hand and more attention to diversity (and specifically 'dialogue') on the other hand. Against the background of a prior assertion of where the violence and discrimination is to be found (ethnic minorities and religious environments), the former can be situated as part of a securitarian ('zero tolerance') logic and its articulation with the latter – the logic of diversity and dialogue – increasingly seems to characterize contemporary neo-liberal governmentalities (see notably Amir-Moazami, 2011, on dialogue as a practice of governmentality in a German context and see Wekker, 2009, and Jivraj and De Jong, 2011, for an analysis of how the report frames 'dialogue').

Last but not least, the question of political asylum on the grounds of sexual orientation also begs to be discussed in this context. The Netherlands was a forerunner in this respect, with a ruling by the Council of State in 1981 that recognized persecution on the basis of sexual orientation as a legitimate ground for political asylum (Jansen, 2006). The matter is an intricate one, whose complications fall beyond the scope of this article yet suffice here to note two observations. First, the Dutch situation provides an interesting case as the asylum regulation, unlike similar ones in other countries, came about in a different (i.e. pre-1989) geopolitical horizon than the current one. It would be useful to understand possible shifts in the 30-year time-span of this regulation, notably in terms of how (and how often) it is used and mobilized, the rationale attached to the ruling (e.g. a possible shift from a more political rationale to a cultural/religious one), how gay asylum seekers are framed and positioned in the current public debates, and how the ruling relates to the elaboration and consolidation of new 'rescue gays' narratives. Second, as Murat Aydemir (in press) argues, the ways in which the figure of the asylum seeker operates in the recent years, in the public debate as well as within lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) movements, reflects

a new mapping in which queer Muslims are welcomed on the basis of their assumed sexual individuality, while Dutch-Islamic immigrants, who have been living in the country for three generations, are rejected on the basis of their 'culture'. In this liberal orientalist mode, as Aydemir characterizes it, affiliation and repudiation at home and abroad are redistributed and the domains of sexuality and culture are parcelled out in new ways.

These governmental practices did not come into being in a vacuum but relate to both the public debate on the matter, which notably unfolds through 'affairs' about homosexuality and Islam spun out in the media (see Mepschen, 2008), as well as to the particular political imaginaries and claims of the Dutch LGBT movement, and the notions of a gay life and gay emancipation they entail (see Aydemir, in press; El-Tayeb, 2012; Jivraj and De Jong, 2011; Wekker, 2009).

While this is far from a comprehensive cartography of the rise of homonationalism in the Netherlands, it does give a sense of how rescue narratives operate in relation to gay subjectivities throughout the different layers of homonationalism, homonostalgia and gay imperialism that traverse Dutch policies, public debates and LGBT movements in ways that definitely resonate with contemporary 'rescue women' narratives in the Netherlands. 'Rescue brown gays' (both 'allochthonous' gays as well as those in the global south) has now joined 'rescue brown women' as a matter of concern high on the civilizational agendas, one could argue. At the same time, however, these 'rescue gays' and 'rescue women' narratives operate differently (or with different emphases) in at least two ways.

A first difference pertains to the *subject of rescue*. It seems that not only 'brown gays' are in need of rescue, as rescue narratives in relation to gay subjects have also come to focus prominently on majoritarian Dutch – read white – gays who are in need of rescue from (the homophobia of) minoritarian Muslims/migrants – read Moroccan boys (Aydemir, in press). The homoemancipation policy report as well as the civic integration test express an outspoken engagement of the Dutch government to 'come to the rescue' of Dutch gays who feel threatened by 'brown men', and these government measures do so both on a symbolic level, in which the Dutch state becomes the patron of Dutch gay life, and through concrete measures with very material consequences. While 'rescue white women from brown men' narratives have historically played a crucial part in the formations of modern racist affective and material economies, and indeed continues to do so, in the contemporary Dutch debate, this version of the 'rescue women' narrative seems less present than its new gay equivalent.

A second difference in how these rescue narratives are played out concerns the question of *consciousness* of the 'brown women and gays' in need of rescue and, relatedly, how those subjects in need of rescue are directly addressed. Rescue women' narratives strongly rely on an understanding of 'false consciousness', as the discourse of both Hirsi Ali and Dresselhuys exemplify. Brown women need to shed off their damaging cultural and religious attachments in order for them to be emancipated, and if it's not brown men hindering them to do so, then it might be their own 'false consciousness'. With respect to 'brown gays', this reference to 'false consciousness' is much less elaborated or explicit, yet at the same time, questions of subjectivity and consciousness are collapsed into a specific understanding of 'coming out'. 'Coming out', understood in a particular way that is belaboured notably in the Dutch LGBT movement, is indeed part and parcel of how 'other' gays will be saved (see El-Tayeb, 2012; Jivraj and De Jong, 2011; Wekker, 2009).

By way of conclusion: resonances and differences

While the crucial shifts and new articulations within both women's and gay emancipation politics in a post-1989 context in the Netherlands deserve a more elaborate discussion on their own, this brief account aimed at rendering various resonances between both kinds of politics tangible. A public conversation between figures like Dresselhuys and Fortuyn provided the point of departure for an investigation into new affinities between feminist and sexual politics on the one hand and civilizational and islamophobic politics on the other hand. This investigation elucidated the particular ways in which gender and sexual politics get rearticulated through the prism of 'cultural and religious issues', as well as the centrality of rescue narratives in this process. While rescue narratives play a prominent role, both historically and contemporary, in relation to the politics of the women's movement, their operation can also be traced within contemporary LGBT politics. This article provided a first attempt of exploring not only the resonances between these rescue narratives but also the particularities of how rescue narratives are played out differently in the politics of women's and gay emancipation. By way of conclusion, I engage the question whether contemporary homonationalist and gay imperialist tendencies within LGBT politics are simply a repetition of older colonial and Orientalist dynamics that have marked the women's movement from its beginnings. Or put differently, I want to look for those contingencies that account for structural differences within the resonances and borrowings.

A first dimension to take into account are the different histories, memories and genealogies of the women's movement on the one hand and the LGBT movement on the other hand. In this regard, one could argue that the enlisting of homosexuality in civilizational discourses is a relatively new phenomenon in comparison with the civilizational enlisting of feminism and women's rights activism that was part and parcel of historical European colonialism. While the vindication of women's rights was establishing itself as a social movement during the high days of 19th-century European colonialism and had to position itself in relation to the civilizational politics of the time, there was indeed no equivalent of an LGBT movement. This longer history of feminism as a social movement implies a history of 'feminism as a handmaiden of colonialism' (Ahmed, 1992), but it equally encompasses a longer history of resistance against this kind of colonial feminist politics and the development of critical (anti-colonial, post-colonial, decolonizing) feminisms. Merely recognizing, and subsequently resisting, the dynamics of 'white men saving brown women from brown men' and (white) women's complicity with those 'rescue narratives' in a general sense might be easier from a critical feminist genealogy, which has become part of a feminist legacy worldwide, also in the West. In the case of the LGBT movement, its history as an organized social movement is a far more recent one, and while conflicts of racism have been part and parcel of the movement from the very start, the contemporary imperial and civilizational context seems, to a large extent, a rather new factor to deal with for the movement as such, in particular when it is based in the West.

A second element in this respect is the significant shift of the position of homosexuality in a context of civilizational politics. The above-mentioned difference does not mean to suggest that discourses on homosexuality were absent from 19th- and 20th-century European colonial discourse. As several scholars have argued (e.g. Aldrich, 2003, Massad, 2007), the connections between homosexuality and historical European imperialism were in fact very dense – from the colonial fantasies of homosexuality in the colonized lands, and indeed

particularly in 'the Orient', to the attraction of the life of a colonist on those men (and to a lesser extent women) who did not fit the family and sexual moral constraints of European (Victorian) societies. In a typical double bind, the fantasies of homosexuality in the colonized lands figured on the one hand as part of an economy of the 'erotization of domination' (McClintock, 1995), while at the same time also served to emphasize the 'uncivilized' nature of the colonies. A point in case are the colonial narratives about the harem (Lewis, 1996; Yeğenoğlu, 1998): While triggering all kinds of fascinations and sexual fantasies, not in the least that of female homosexuality (albeit usually for a male gaze), they were mobilized to prove the lesser civilization of the colonized lands and were met with Victorian disapproval and disgust. In other words, the articulation between homosexuality and civilization has significantly changed between the time of historical European colonialism and imperialism, and contemporary Western neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism. More precisely, homosexuality has switched sides in the familiar dichotomy: from a sign of uncivilization, homosexuality or at least the 'tolerance' or 'acceptance' of (certain modes of) it, has become a marker of civilization (Massad, 2007; Puar and Rai, 2002).

A final dimension that needs more exploration is the way in which gender and sexual politics both relate differently to questions of religion and secularism, which in their turn are crucial elements in the ongoing elaboration of civilizational discourse and indeed the production of 'secular liberal society'. While there is a long history of considering religion and in particular established religious institutions as crucial structural hindrances to women's emancipation, the feminist political and intellectual heritage also includes various kinds of feminist, women-centred and patriarchy-criticizing theologies and spiritualities. And while in a post-1989 context, the framing of women's emancipation and feminism as incompatible with religious traditions has been reasserted, and in particular in relation to Islam, such assertions have equally fuelled elaborate critiques of 'the modern secular self' versus 'the religious other' dichotomy. In the last decades, many scholars and activists attended to the various ways in which the vindication of women's rights and women's emancipation can rely on existing religious traditions, as well as the ways in which secular (and notably *laique*) politics and visions can work against women's rights. When it comes to homosexuality and the way it figures within contemporary civilizational discourses, however, the secular versus religious dichotomy seems more resistant to deconstruction and indeed seems to be consolidated. This, to say the least, points to a tight knot between secularism and hegemonic conceptions of gay identity and gay rights; a knot that seems to be even tighter than the one between secularism and women's rights and that is in need of a more critical examination than hitherto has been the case.

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Notes

1. 'De Islam is een achterlijke cultuur', *De Volkskrant*, 9 February 2002. (All translations in this article are mine, unless indicated otherwise.) Fortuyn was forced to leave the political party *Leefbaar Nederland* because of this interview, as the party found Fortuyn's statement about article 1 of the Dutch constitution (the principle of anti-discrimination) unacceptable: He declared

that the article should be abolished if it hindered him from saying that Islamic culture was backward or if it allowed a Muslim to call him 'less than a pig' because of his homosexuality. Fortuyn subsequently established his own party *Lijst Pim Fortuyn*.

2. For a critical discussion of the widespread and institutionalized, yet problematic, terms 'allochthonous' (*allochtoon* – not from here) and 'autochthonous' (*autochtoon* – from here), see Botman et al. (2001).
3. Dresselhuys made waves in the public debate when she announced, in her 2001 International Women's Day speech, that *Opzij* would never hire a journalist who dons the headscarf. She subsequently explained her decision in terms of a 'rescue women' rationale (see *Opzij*, April 2001).
4. A prominent illustration is found in the travel letters of one of the most well-known Dutch suffragettes, Aletta Jacobs. Analyses of these documents by Ena Jansen (1998) and Mineke Bosch (1999) detail Jacob's compliance with Dutch national rhetoric and colonial practice of her time.
5. Grever and Waaldijk (1998) point to an important difference in relation the origins of US and British feminism: the abolitionist movement crucially informed first wave feminism in the Anglo-Saxon contexts. Despite the Dutch involvement in slavery, there was little abolitionist struggle in the Dutch context, and hence, the burgeoning feminist movement was not informed by it.
6. In the case of Hirsi Ali, the realization that she had lied during her asylum procedure resulted in a fall from grace and loss of sympathy from many of the Dutch liberals who used to support her. It prompted a parliamentary debate on the legitimacy of her Dutch citizenship and pushed her to move to the US.
7. The actual test was commissioned by the Ministry to a private company specialized in making tests (counting also the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education among its 'clients' and having achieved a position as a 'market leader' with regard to 'measuring integration'), thus exemplifying the 'integration industry' as Schinkel (2008) discusses it.
8. http://educatie.ntr.nl/nationaleinburgeringtest/

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