

THE EVIL SEX OF OTHERS. ON THE MEANING OF SEXUALITY IN AUTHORITARIAN THINKING

*El sexo perverso de los otros. Sobre el significado
de la sexualidad en el pensamiento autoritario*

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ABSTRACT

This article is based on the analysis of Telegram messages in right-wing channels and groups in Saxony, Germany, which were collected as part of online monitoring at the Else Frenkel-Brunswik Institute. The data shows present and ambivalent reference to the sexuality of “others”, especially queer and homosexual people. Here, sexual fantasies form a key point of reference as a threat in the form of deviant sexuality. They are shown to be a strongly persecuted and persecutory topic. As part of the Authoritarian Personality, excessive interest in the sexuality of others is interpreted as a sign of the suppression of one’s own sexual drives, which are in danger of slipping out of one’s control. The psychological defense mechanism of projective identification comes into play here. Drawing on the considerations of critical theory and psychoanalytic social psychology, we use an empirical evaluation of right-wing online messages to investigate the significance that sexuality plays in authoritarian thinking. We also analyze the potential and limitations of these theoretical approaches for the analysis of current authoritarian phenomena.

Keywords: sexuality, authoritarianism, right-wing ideology, anti-feminism, Critical Theory, social psychology, psychoanalysis.

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RESUMEN

Este artículo se basa en el análisis de mensajes de Telegram en canales y grupos de derechas de Sajonia (Alemania), recogidos en el marco del seguimiento en línea del Instituto Else Frenkel-Brunswik. Los datos muestran una referencia presente y ambivalente a la sexualidad de los “otros”, especialmente de las personas queer y homosexuales. Aquí, las fantasías sexuales constituyen un punto de referencia clave como amenaza en forma de sexualidad desviada. Se muestran como un tema fuertemente perseguido y persecutorio. Como parte de la Personalidad Autoritaria, el interés excesivo por la sexualidad de los demás se interpreta como un signo de la supresión de las propias pulsiones sexuales, que corren el peligro de escapar al control de uno mismo. Aquí entra en juego el mecanismo de defensa psicológico de la identificación proyectiva. Basándonos en las consideraciones de la teoría crítica y la psicología social psicoanalítica, utilizamos una evaluación empírica de los mensajes en línea de la derecha para investigar la importancia que la sexualidad desempeña en el pensamiento autoritario. También analizamos el potencial y las limitaciones de estos enfoques teóricos para el análisis de los fenómenos autoritarios actuales.

Palabras clave: sexualidad, autoritarismo, ideología de derechas, antifeminismo, Teoría Crítica, psicología social, psicoanálisis.

“In an unfree society, sexual freedom is hardly any more conceivable than any other form of freedom” (Adorno, 1963/2005: 73).

1 INTRODUCTION

“Early sexualization traumatizes our children and legitimizes child abuse by trans people” - this narrative is becoming increasingly common in German online right-wing discourse on gender and sexuality. The German far-right party AfD is campaigning with the slogan: “Hands off our children! Ban gender propaganda and other perversions immediately!” (transl. SW). Modernization of sex education and raising awareness of gender and sexual diversity in school contexts are used as opportunities to propagate threatening scenarios and images of the enemy (Niendorf & Wetzel 2023). At the center of this is a recurring figure that we can call the “queer pedophile”. This figure is the imaginary result of projecting an evil sexuality - “evil” because, firstly, it is not heteronormative and, secondly, it is violent. In this

article, we will use this figure to trace the significance of the sexual for authoritarian attitudes. To do so, we will draw on authoritarianism research from Critical Theory and central ideas of psychoanalytic social psychology.

The relevance of gender and sexuality for current authoritarian tendencies is clearly evident in mobilizations against feminism and “gender” and is mirrored by the increased interest in the analysis of gender concepts within authoritarianism research. For many years, discussions of gender and sexuality played a rather subordinate role in this field; however, this has changed recently due to the reception of anti-feminist analyses in gender and right-wing extremism research (e.g. Lang & Peters 2018, Blum 2019, Berg 2019, Dietze & Roth 2020, Höcker et al. 2020, Henniger & Birsl 2021, Scheele et al. 2022, Möser 2022, Álvarez-Benavides & Aguilar 2024) and the survey of anti-feminist attitudes as part of the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study (LAS) begun in 2020 (Höcker et al. 2020; Kalkstein et al. 2022). The LAS shows the widespread prevalence of anti-feminist attitudes (2020: 19%, 2022: 25%) and their clear correlations with far-right, anti-Semitic and authoritarian positions (Höcker et al. 2020; Kalkstein et al. 2022). Antifeminism is understood here as a countermovement to feminist emancipation efforts and as a bridging ideology that links positions from the supposed center of society with far-right attitudes.

Social psychological research into authoritarianism is now increasingly examining the affective appeal of these ideologies. Reference is made to the adherence to a supposedly natural gender order that provides identity and stability, as well as the defense against difference and ambivalence. However, an in-depth theoretical and empirical analysis of the psychological function of this gender order is still largely lacking – also because the sexual is often left out of the considerations (important exceptions are, for example, Pohl 2003; Radonić 2020; Umrath 2020; Winter 2022a). However, the examination of sexuality was extremely important for the beginnings of authoritarianism research. In the following, we will reconstruct an outline of this older research and link it to current approaches in psychoanalytic social psychological gender research.

As a result of these considerations, we understand the gender and sexuality order as an institutionalized form of psychological mechanisms of defense against conflicts and ambivalences. In the right-wing discourses on gender and sexuality, the repressed reappears in an altered form and is eliminated from the self by means of pathological projection – as the evil sexuality of others. Empirically, we find the

rejected content in a combination of two opposing imaginations of sexuality, which we were able to work out from the analysis of online discourses: violent and queer sexuality.

2 GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN AUTHORITARIANISM RESEARCH

Critical Theory and the Freudo-Marxist contexts that preceded it boast a long tradition of discussing the connection between orders of gender and sexuality and authoritarian attitudes. The insights of psychoanalysis were drawn upon and proved productive for a historical-materialist analysis of sexual morality and its significance for the implementation of the bourgeois-capitalist social formation (Umrath 2020: 38).

The communist psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich was one of the first to analyze the connection between authoritarian drive repression and fascist ideology in his *Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933/1970). With a view into the sexual economy of society, he draws up a three-layered scheme of personality: He does not follow Sigmund Freud's emphasis on the restrictive character of genital heterosexuality (cf. Freud 1930: 463ff.), but postulates the repression of natural sexuality as the "deep biological core of the person", which is heterosexual, genital, and orgasm-oriented (1st layer). This repression leads to substitute satisfactions, "cruel, sadistic, lascivious, rapacious and envious impulses" (2nd layer) (Reich 1933/1970: 11), which in turn are frowned upon and kept unconscious by a superficial politeness and sophistication (3rd layer). Fascist propaganda appeals to the second layer and allows its rebellious expression. As a first draft of what would later become a cornerstone of authoritarianism research under the name Authoritarian Personality, Reich describes a "character armor" (Reich 1946: 196) against the fear of "natural sexuality" (ibid., 25). This armor makes one susceptible to the seductive power of fascist propaganda, which legitimizes it and concretizes it with regard to its objects.

Erich Fromm takes up Wilhelm Reich's ideas and further develops the concept of the fascist character armor into the "authoritarian character" - a term that, to our knowledge, he first used in a published text in 1936 (Fromm 1936: 248; cf. Fromm 1941: 166f.). Fromm replaces Reich's concept of sexuality with a theory of biophilic human needs for self-preservation and attachment (cf. Fromm 1941: 32f.). In doing so, he abandons the concept of drives and now postulates basic needs as an anthropological basis. His train of thought, however, remains similar to Reich's:

People who cannot realize their needs in historically specific repressive family forms could develop a sado-masochistic authoritarian character that seeks attachment in submission (cf. *ibid.*: 30) and freedom in rebellion against supposedly usurping authorities (Fromm 1941: 192). Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse took up the ideas of Reich and Fromm but did not neglect the bodily aspect of sexuality or define its essence. Similarly, they rehabilitated the infantile partial drives dismissed by Reich (Horkheimer 1936/1988: 20f.; Marcuse 1938/ 2004: 261ff.). It is not a remnant of nature that resists its oppression, but the seed of contradiction is planted in the contradictions of socialization itself – different forms of interaction and pleasure are learned in childhood than those that apply in adulthood. Mature Sexuality is subjected to the performance principle, the primacy of genitality, and the reproductive function (Marcuse 1955/1979: 40). Infantile forms of satisfaction, which are no longer appropriate for the adult autonomous subject, are transformed, sublimated, or tabooed as perversions (Marcuse 1955/1979: 45). The adaptation of sexuality leads to a general “desexualization” of the body: The libido is concentrated in the genitals and the rest of the body is thus freed for use as an instrument of labor (*ibid.*: 52f.).

The prototype of the bourgeois subject, as described by Horkheimer and Adorno in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* – the “identical, purpose-directed, masculine character of human beings” – implies the subjugation of sexuality, which is placed at the service of a self that is dominated by instrumental reason (Horkheimer & Adorno 1944/2002: 26). “Femininity” becomes a symbol of sexuality, which, because it is both tempting and threatening, must be controlled (Horkheimer & Adorno 1944/2002: 83). The “masculine” violence directed against “feminine” and sexually non-conformist objects of projection is the echo of the violence carried out on itself (Adorno 1951/2003: 51; Umrath 2019: 141).

The interplay of domination over oneself and others is also the central subject of the study *The Authoritarian Personality*, which was conducted by Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel Levinson, and Nevitt Sanford while in exile in the United States in the 1940s. The Fascism Scale (F-Scale) developed in the study – a questionnaire for the indirect measurement of anti-democratic tendencies – contains 9 variables, including the variable “sex”, which they define as “Exaggerated concern with sexual ‘goings-on’” (Adorno et al. 1950: 228). It is measured with four items:

“Homosexuality is a particularly rotten form of delinquency and ought to be severely punished.”

“No matter how they act on the surface, men are interested in women for only one reason.”

“The sexual orgies of the old Greeks and Romans are nursery school stuff compared to some of the goings-on in this country today, even in circles where people might least expect it.”

“Sex crimes, such as rape and attacks on children, deserve more than mere imprisonment; such criminals ought to be publicly whipped.” (Adorno et al. 1950: 240)

The items are aimed at an authority-bound form of sexuality that seeks pleasure in punishing others for transgressing the sexual norm.

Else-Frenkel-Brunswik in particular empirically examined the connection between sexuality and gender perceptions, authoritarianism, and anti-Semitism in the interview material of the study. She differentiated between high scorers and low scorers based on their approval ratings on the F scale and found widespread prevalence of *pseudo-masculinity* and *pseudo-femininity* among high scorers, i.e. ideas about one's own gender that are rigid and stereotypically deny all traits of one's own identity that are associated with the opposite sex (Frenkel-Brunswik 1950: 422). The associated ideas of sexuality also lack individuality and a depiction of real relationships (ibid.: 404). Sexual impulses appear to be separated from the rest of the personality and are subject to strict moral judgment. At the same time, such people sometimes express highly raw and unsocialized impulses (ibid.: 396). Especially among male high scorers, Frenkel-Brunswik finds split ambivalences: a separation of sexuality and emotion and a mixture of superficial admiration and underlying resentment towards the opposite sex (ibid.: 399). She attributes this to disappointments experienced in the first love relationships with parents but also sees it as a reaction to a cultural change in values relating to sexuality, which is accompanied by insecurities (ibid.: 393).

The sexual discourses and norms that achieve hegemony change over the course of history. In the *Studies on authority and the family* (Horkheimer et al. 1936), Franz Borkenau (pseudonym: Fritz Jungmann) analyzes an increasingly practical breakdown of the chastity morality within the first decades of the 20th century, which had characterized the 19th century. The youth movement even foreshadowed the National Socialist de-eroticized morality of camaraderie (c.f. Borkenau 1936/

1987; Winter 2014). After 1945, the changes in the sexual morality continued to be addressed within the framework of Critical Theory (Umrath 2020: 42). After the re-traditionalization of the gender and sexuality order in the post-war period with its prude nature, its emphasis on marriage (femininity and masculinity should marry harmoniously to form a whole), and its campaigns against *Schmutz und Schund* (“dirt and filth”) (cf. Herzog 2005), Adorno and Marcuse diagnosed an ostensible emancipation in the tendencies toward liberalization within the *Sexwelle* (“sex wave”) at the beginning of the 1960s.¹ The sexual taboos had not fallen – they had only changed their form (Adorno, 1963/2005: 76). In concrete terms, this can be seen in the continuing contempt for prostitutes and homosexuals and the enduring notion of an asexual childhood.² With regard to the enforcement of sexual morality, Adorno describes a climate in which the subterranean violence of prohibitions is mixed with the lie that prohibitions have been overridden. The persecution and revenge of the repressed becomes all the more vehement, “the more eroded repressive ideas have become, the more cruelly they are enforced” (Adorno 1963/2005: 76).

“If in his attempt to describe what is specifically sexual Freud emphasized the element of indecency and this means what is offensive to society then on the one hand, this element has disappeared, and on the other hand only now is it truly loathed, rejected. This reveals nothing less than a desexualization of sexuality itself” (Adorno 1963/2005: 73).

In the 1970s and 80s, authoritarianism research separated from sexuality research and approaches based on social learning-, attachment-, narcissism- and recognition-theory were introduced (cf. e.g. Altemeyer 1981; Decker et al. 2018; Eichler 2019; Hopf 2000; Oesterreich 2000). Furthermore, authoritarianism research was desexualized, and drive theory was almost completely forgotten. This paradigm shift was justified by the “wrong reversal of the authoritarian personality” (Böckelmann 1987) in the context of social change towards an individualized consumer society that was apparently no longer based on prohibitions and the associated development of the “new type of [narcissistic] socialization” in place of the

¹ However, their texts were written before the emancipation movements in the late 1960s and so sexual liberalization is not discussed as a success of concrete struggles by activists (Umrath 2020, p. 43).

² “The universal and well-founded sense of guilt of the adult world cannot, as its counter-image and refuge, escape what they call the innocence of children, and to defend it they will use any means” (Adorno 1963/2005: 80).

neurotic one (Ziehe 1975). This type no longer suffers from sexual norms. Rather, they suffer from the stimulation and disappointment of narcissistic self-reference. Current studies in authoritarianism research also follow this paradigm (cf. Amlinger & Nachtwey 2022, cf. on early criticism: Trescher 1981).

In our studies, however, we by no means observe a disappearance of sexuality norms and resentments, but rather – in line with Adorno’s observations in the 1960s – their obscuration behind the liberal ideology of sexual diversity, through to the desire to get rid of the sexual altogether. In our opinion, the analyses of sexuality from early authoritarianism research still contain valuable starting points for understanding current authoritarian references to sexuality. Their analyses of sexual morality lead us to the affective dimension, which is at work in authoritarian references to sexuality: to the desire for punishment, to aggression and violence, and to the persecution of deviance and otherness. The imagination of the other is related to one’s own repression. What is the current state of sexual morality? How can we understand the figure of the “queer pedophile” as an expression of this? What is the relationship between queer and violent sexuality in this fantasy? Early critical theory offers approaches, but we need gender-theoretical and social psychological expansions to deal with sexual violence and LGBTIQ hostility.

3 CONNECTIONS AND ADDITIONS

In order to sharpen the approaches of older authoritarianism research for our questions, they must be linked with current gender and sexuality research that is (queer) feminist and critical of masculinity.

Fundamental to this is a preoccupation with the subjective effects of male domination – with the inner dynamics of the “identical, purposeful, masculine character of man”. In *Feindbild Frau. Männliche Sexualität, Gewalt und die Abwehr des Weiblichen* (“Woman as enemy. Male sexuality, violence and the defense of the feminine” 2004), social psychologist and masculinity researcher Rolf Pohl has worked out how the gender hierarchy suggests a specifically violent, male approach to the ambivalences of sexuality. In terms of drive theory, he argues that, on the one hand, the drive aims for unity without differentiation and, on the other hand, is dependent on the different external world for its satisfaction. Pohl calls this the “*Sexualitätsdilemma*” (“dilemma of sexuality”) (Pohl 2004: 178). The result of this dilemma is an ambivalent attitude towards this dependence on the other:

“All object relations [...] have the character of deep ambivalence, because they ‘disturb’ the tranquility of the drive from the outset and thus inevitably generate certain compulsions in the field of tension between attachment and detachment. Every attachment to objects [...] is accompanied by an affective counter-tendency, with hostility up to and including hatred, in which the willingness to dissolve this attachment is expressed.” (Pohl 2004: 203, transl. S.W.).

This hostility becomes even more decisive the more autonomy is emphasized and dependence is denied. Early childhood experiences are recategorized in light of symbolic gender difference (cf. Fast, 1991): Experiences of autonomy and desires for autonomy are now coded masculine and desires for fusion and comfort feminine. The dilemma of sexuality that applies to all subjects thus becomes a specific *Männlichkeitsdilemma* (“dilemma of masculinity”) (Pohl 2004: 14): Dependency is split off under the sign of masculinity and is projectively identified with women and femininity. What is lost in this process is subsequently pursued and in a more or less subtly domineering manner is re-appropriated in the form of female objects. In this way, an illusion of independence and omnipotence is created in which one’s own need for help and dependence can remain denied (Pohl 2004: 178). The early psychological defense mechanisms of splitting and projection thus form the basis for processing the gender difference and for projective constructs of the enemy (Pohl 2004: 271). The strategy associated with the male crooked cure for the sexuality dilemma is the attempt to “gain power over the other” (Benjamin 1995: 260, transl. S.W.) and thus unconsciously also over one’s own disagreeable parts.

The dilemma of sexuality becomes thus gendered: Men and women must respectively make different desires and identifications unconscious. Normative heterosexuality and bourgeois marriage promises to reunite the opposites. In this way, the conflicts and ambivalences of sexuality are silenced in the heterosexual gender order. The movements within the dilemma, the desire for the other, the ambiguous and doubtful, and the queer are concealed by the gender order, but not magicked away. The heterosexual gender order is a “pseudo-solution”, a “crooked cure” that seemingly eliminates the ambivalences of sexuality (cf. Brunner 2019: 25; Winter 2022b: 51).

Drawing on Stavros Mentzos’ theory of interpersonal and institutionalized mechanisms of defense (Mentzos, 1976/2016), the gender and sexuality order can be understood as such an institutionalized mechanism of defense (Mentzos 1976/

2016: 87; Winter 2022a: 353). Individual mechanisms of defense are stabilized through institutionalized patterns of action and relationships. Institutions offer automatic routines and orientation, but also a “quick relief from neurotic tensions, fears and conflicts” (Mentzos 1976/2016: 80). When certain social institutions lose their significance, this does not remain without consequences for psychosocial defenses. When the institutionalized “ego support” disappears, the search for a replacement can lead to insecurities, crisis phenomena, and even psychological disorders (Mentzos 1976/2016: 86f.). The gradual loss of importance of marriage and presence of questioning patriarchal gender roles is currently leading to such an erosion.

At present, the gender order is increasingly being questioned and the unconscious effect of its stabilizing function is crumbling. The feminist, lesbian and gay movement called the heterosexual norm into question. This dynamic continues with a more flexible relationship between production and consumption, reflected in the flexibilization of identities and lifestyles. At least in some milieus, this has led to the development of new family forms and a more flexible approach to sexuality, gender, and relationships. The sexologist Volkmar Sigusch speaks of a “neosexual revolution” (Sigusch 1998) that accompanied post-Fordism (Sigusch 2005: 7).³ If we follow Mentzos, this necessitates new and “different forms of neurotic processing and leads to the uncovering of previously hidden defects and disorders” (Mentzos 1976/2016: 88). New mechanisms of defense grow quickly whereas old ones become obsolete. Sexual morality has evolved in the leading mainstream of public discourse into a “*egoistic consensual morality*” (Sigusch 1998: 1222), which, according to the model of a contract, considers everything and only that which has been consciously and consensually agreed upon by partners to be good. According to Sigusch, this shows the ongoing rationalization of sexuality, motivated by the desire for sexuality free of conflict. The male domination immanent to the crooked cure of the dilemma of sexuality is thus seemingly overcome, and violence in sexuality is once again contained. But the contradictions of sexuality remain. This is also reflected in the way society deals with infantile sexuality. The tabooing of child sexuality remains powerful and paradoxically goes hand in hand with the sexualization and fetishization of the child’s body. Children are dressed in sexy clothes like little adults or have to cover their genitals to protect them from the

³ Sigusch (1998) describes the result of the neosexual revolution as “self-sex” – a sexual form that stands for self-discipline and self-optimization.

pedosexual gaze (Becker & König 2016: 114). At the same time, a tendency that Adorno described in the 1960s – the “erotic ideal has become infantilized” (Adorno 1963/2005: 81) – is growing ever stronger. As Becker points out, the taboo of infantile sexuality is perhaps invoked so fiercely because it has become shaky (Becker & König, 2016: 114).

And now, as right-wing alternative and parallel to the neosexual progression, an aroused resentment is brought into position against deviations from the fragile gender and sexuality order. Resentment functions as a “secondary crooked cure of the gender-constituting one”, where the conflicts that had previously been pacified but not eliminated by gender dualism find new expression (Winter 2022b: 66).

4 AUTHORITARIAN PHANTASMS OF EVIL SEXUALITY

Our analysis of this “secondary crooked cure” is based on a content analysis of right-wing online discourse on anti-feminism and trans hostility as part of the online monitoring at the Else Frenkel-Brunswik Institute. This monitoring covers a broad sample of right-wing populist to extremist and conspiracy ideology Telegram groups and channels with a connection to Saxony. Our evaluation refers to messages on the topics of gender and sexuality in the period from May 1, 2022 - July 7, 2023. Initial results have already been published in a digital report (Niendorf & Wetzel, 2023). In order to open up the psychodynamic level of the discourses on gender and sexuality, we analyzed the material in a depth hermeneutic interpretation group. Depth hermeneutics, as a psychoanalytically inspired method (Lorenzer 1973; Bereswill et al. 2010; Rothe et al. 2022), focuses on the relationship between thematization and de-thematization, on the latent meanings of what is said and the conflicts that appear (Löchel 1997). For the depth hermeneutic analysis, in addition to the Telegram messages, we also drew on a speech by Dr. Rolf Weigand, an AfD member of the Saxon state parliament, on sex education and *Frühsexualisierung* (“early sexualization”) in schools. Weigand gave this speech in the Saxon state parliament in June 2023; it was posted on Facebook by the Saxon AfD parliamentary group and generated a response of almost 1,500 comments. Central motifs from the Telegram messages culminate in Weigand’s speech and are thus brought into the parliamentary arena.

At the center of our material analysis are two enemy-building processes that are directed against both queer and violent sexuality. Phantasms of evil sexuality,

which are condensed in the figure of the “queer pedophile”, play a key role here. We will trace this process on the basis of three central ideas: privacy of sexuality, childhood innocence, and early sexualization. Finally, we will describe the resulting imaginary, horrific figure of the “queer pedophile” as a projection driven by resentment.

4.1 Privacy of sexuality

Central to our analysis is an ambiguity that can be observed in the Telegram groups when talking about sexuality – the strong presence of the topic and the simultaneous desire to deemphasize it. On the one hand, there are complaints that “the sexualization of society [...] is destroying people and freedom”,⁴ while on the other hand, the debates are full of sexual fantasies, which – described as threats – play an important role. For example, there are ideas of young people “licking themselves” in front of the school playground (Weigand 2023), of “hardcore sex” that pedophiles have with children, of someone being “fucked really dry in the queer ass”⁵ or the idea that “early sexualization” turns young people into “sex slaves” (Niendorf & Wetzel 2023: 16). With these aggressively threatening sexual fantasies, talking about sexuality has a clearly pleasurable character.

The messages articulate the demand that sexuality belongs in the private sphere, in the domestic, family context and, if at all, should only be discussed and negotiated there. A person’s sexuality and private life should not be anyone else’s business and should not become a public “object of contemplation”⁶. The alleged growing shamelessness in society must be countered with “boundaries of shame” – a term that is constantly repeated in AfD representative Weigand’s speech (Weigand 2023). As a father as well as a representative of the people, Weigand said, it was his duty to respect and observe “boundaries of shame”, especially for children (ibid). The land outside of Germany’s borders is foreign, where foreign-made lust tinged with shame is lurking. Children and their own people are associatively linked to form a unit worthy of protection that demands border protection. At the same time, threatening sexual fantasies are displayed very directly, including the fantasy of crossing boundaries.

⁴ Channel *Patriot Channel* (31.07.2022): <https://t.me/oho11/29699> (31.08.2024).

⁵ Channel *LUTZiges - Pegida-Unterstützer* (12.06.2022).
<https://t.me/lutzbachmann/18471> (19.09.2024).

⁶ Channel *Dr. Rolf Weigand* (08.06.2022). <https://t.me/rolfweigand/446> (19.09.2024).

On the one hand, sexuality is tabooed, concealed, and only allowed to take place behind closed doors and in private. It is associated with the feeling of being shameful and transgressive. At the same time, the threatening scenarios make it possible to talk about sexuality, including the desire to aggressively cross boundaries. Fear, lust and aggression are mixed here. The establishment and defense of the “boundary of shame” is an attempt to draw a clear line between what is allowed and what is not, between good and bad sexuality. It marks the boundary around the taboo and is intended to offer protection and safety from contact with a lust, of which one should be ashamed.

Shame develops over the course of socialization at the “boundary between self and other” (Tiedemann 2013: 11), and its meaning is conveyed to children by adults. The feeling of shame is condensed in the experience of being the “object of the other’s gaze” – this is precisely addressed when sexuality is not supposed to become an object on display (cf. King 2019: 84ff.). Shame thus ensures “the conformity of the individual to society”. Through shame, individuals learn to give up or conceal desires that do not conform to societal norms. They become unconscious and appear to the subject as alien (c.f. Schorn 1998: 54). This dynamic is part of the boundary of shame negotiated here: Parts of one’s own desires are alienated, appearing in a disguised manner in the form of threatening sexual fantasies, which in turn are warded off by the boundary of shame.

4.2 Childhood innocence

The alleged concern for children is the starting point and point of refuge in the phantasms of evil sexuality. Through the public thematization of sexuality, through “early sexualization, child marriage, and a thousand genders”, children are “robbed of their childhood”⁷. The aim of the “queer agenda” is “the deconstruction of childhood innocence”⁸. Two dichotomous assumptions are thus made: both childhood and sexuality as well as innocence and sexuality are mutually exclusive. According to this, children have no sexuality of their own. Rather, they are sexualized by adults and thus their innocence is damaged. The fact that sexuality makes one guilty is reminiscent of the Christian idea of a generally sinful sexuality and

⁷ Channel *ElternStehenAuf PIRNA* (07.04.2023).
<https://t.me/elternstehenaufPIRNA/26265> (19.09.2024).

⁸ Channel *Thomas Dietz – MdB Erzgebirge* (18.04.2023).
<https://t.me/thomasdietz/3204> (19.09.2024).

refers to the affective significance of guilt in relation to sexuality. Weigand's speech is tantamount to a letter of indulgence, which can be co-signed with an approving comment on the video.

Any form of childlike sexuality other than that which is imported from outside and corrupts innocence is denied in the discourse excerpt we examined. The idea of childish asexuality corresponds to an asexually formulated relationship between children and adults. In contrast, psychoanalysis assumes that a child's sexual drive develops precisely in the relationship with adult caregivers through an interactional process in physical care, including the exchange of caresses (Freud 1905: 124; Laplanche 1970 :3). The sexual meaning of these interactions lies – in contrast to sexual abuse – at the level of (unconscious) fantasies and “enigmatic messages” [rätselhafte Botschaften] (transl. S.W.) (Laplanche 1970). Sexuality in the parent-child relationship can nevertheless lead to superego conflicts and irritations, accompanied by feelings of fear, shame and guilt (Buchholz 1987: 224). The desire to desexualize the relationship is obvious (Römer 2021: 88.). However, mechanism of defense help the discomfort to escape language and without symbolization there is no possibility of psychological integration (Angelides 2003; Römer 2021: 89). Split off in this way, the sexual must remain in the position of evil and dangerous. The conflicts and insecurities in dealing with children and sexuality are thus rendered unconscious, as are the wishes for help that might be needed in the sexual education of children.

When it is said that “the innocence of our offspring” is “the last bastion of our civilization”,⁹ this is also about securing boundaries. The bastion is a fortification against the enemies who want to destroy civilization. One is attacked and must defend oneself as well as children's boundaries of shame. The attackers are guilty. Military associations are expressed in the interpretation group in that children's bodies are presented as armor. This in turn is reminiscent of Reich's character armor (1933) or the body armor described by Klaus Theweleit (1977/2019) in his analysis of fascist male fantasies. Any permeability must be avoided. At the same time, childhood becomes a place of longing where one had not yet made themselves guilty. Protecting this place becomes the reparation for one's own guilt. The pure, innocent child symbolizes irretrievable redemption from the conflicts of sexuality

⁹ Channel Thomas Dietz – MdB Erzgebirge (18.04.2023).
<https://t.me/thomasdietz/3204> (19.09.2024).

and subjectivity. Maximilian Römer also noted this in his examination of right-wing populist discourses on sexuality:

“With regard to the prevailing sexual morality, it can be stated that childhood asexuality functions as a placeholder for a final refuge freed from any structure of drive and desire” (Römer 2021: 84).

To invoke innocence as a characteristic of one’s own civilization in the same country as the perpetrators of Auschwitz is as absurd as it is obvious against the backdrop of the need to ward off guilt. When the “gender/queer ideology” is referred to as a “breach of civilization”,¹⁰ an associative relativization of the Shoah takes place. On a latent level, it becomes clear that the protection of the border serves to relieve guilt; it is also a protection against a confrontation with one’s own evil associated with averted shame and guilt.

4.3 Early sexualization as an attack

The AfD slogan “Hands off our children”¹¹ is directed against the attackers on the other side of the border who are waging a “war [...] against our children”¹² by their *Frühsexualisierung* (“early sexualization”). The right-wing battle cry of “early sexualization” serves as a container for the threats that sexuality can pose. Various descriptions of violence can be found in threatening scenarios: attacks, assaults, traumatization, war, and even war of extermination. At stake is the “protective space for children”, as Weigand puts it (Weigand 2023). A military language dominates: LGBTIQ is described as a weapon of war, “gender and queer ideology” as a “declaration of war”.¹³ The target of the supposed attack is identified as the traditional heterosexual family, combined with the concern that children could suffer “damage”¹⁴ and become gay, queer, and trans. The attack is being launched by the “gender, queer or transgender ideology”¹⁵ and is being enforced by the government. Behind

¹⁰ Channel *Thomas Dietz – MdB Erzgebirge* (20.05.2023).

<https://t.me/thomasdietz/3330> (19.09.2024).

¹¹ Post from Rene Dierkes (AfD, MdL) (10.05.2023).

<https://x.com/ReneDierkesAfD/status/1656295374120681474> (19.09.2024).

¹² Channel *Freiheitsboten_Markkleeberg* (13.10.2022).

https://t.me/Freiheitsboten_Markkleeberg/8440 (19.09.2024).

¹³ Channel *Thomas Dietz – MdB Erzgebirge* (20.05.2023).

<https://t.me/thomasdietz/3330> (19.09.2024).

¹⁴ Channel *Markneukirchen* (22.08.2022). <https://t.me/markneukirchen/9472> (19.09.2024).

¹⁵ Channel *Thomas Dietz – MdB Erzgebirge* (20.05.2023).

<https://t.me/thomasdietz/3330> (19.09.2024).

this, however, are primarily international institutions such as the EU, the WEF, the UN, and the “globalists”.¹⁶ The threat thus takes on global and conspiratorial proportions. This belief in a gender conspiracy is underpinned by anti-Semitic images and connotations (Stögner 2017: 155f.; Fedders 2018).

The alleged conspirators use sex education in kindergartens and schools as an instrument in their war against children. This is where queer ideology is spread and at the same time queer people are given access to children with whom they can have sex. This is also the culmination of the conspiracy narrative: The legitimization of child abuse is identified as the actual goal of sex education. Because early sexualization is a “pattern of pedophiles”¹⁷, they are the enemies “who rule the world”¹⁸. The “war against our children” is thus declared to be the “pedophile war”, the final battle “between good and evil”.¹⁹ Pedophilia, as “the last taboo [...] of Western societies”, threatens to fall upon us.²⁰

The fantasies of sexuality and violence described above come to a head in the image of the “queer pedophile” as the enemy. In this context, transgender is described as “pure evil”.²¹ The term *Kinderschänder* (“child abuser”) also emerges, which was already central to the militant “child protection movement” of National Socialism and has once again seen a high mobilization potential in far-right circles in Germany, particularly since the end of the 1990s (Wielowiejski & Rahn 2015). In *The Homosexualization of Pedophilia*, Stephen Angelides analyses comparable developments in Australia, where the notion of the ‘child molester’ was homosexualized by right-wing campaigns from the 1980s onwards. Sexual violence against children – the most blatant violation of consensual as well as marital morality – no longer had to be located in the realm of normal, heterosexual masculinity (Angelides 2009). Currently, we can observe something similar for transsexuality.

In the image of the “queer pedophile” enemy, evil sexuality has found a container and the diffuse threat emanating from sexuality becomes concrete and is com-

¹⁶ Channel *Bad Düben – Wir stehen auf!* (12.04.2023).

<https://t.me/BadDuebenWirStehenAuf/5481> (19.09.2024).

¹⁷ Channel *Bewegung Zwickau – Diskurs* (12.05.2023). https://t.me/bewegung_zwickau/48269 (19.09.2024).

¹⁸ Channel *Bad Döbeln wehrt sich – Wir vernetzen den Widerstand!* (23.06.2023).

<https://t.me/doebelnWehrtsich/21660> (19.09.2024).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Channel *Thomas Dietz – MdB Erzgebirge* (18.04.2023) <https://t.me/thomasdietz/3204> (19.09.2024).

²¹ Channel *Buergerbewegung Leipzig 2021* (31.05.2021).

<https://t.me/BuergerbewegungLeipzig2021Chat/39630> (19.09.2024).

barable. Aggression and negative affects associated with sexuality become a desire for punishment that has a legitimate goal in the form of the enemy image: From punishment through locking them away, abandoning them in the desert, or beating them into a coma – “word must get around for generations about what happened to them”.²² Fantasies of violence are the counterpart to the sexual fantasies against which they are fighting.

5 CONCLUSION

With our focus on early Critical Theory, we were able to investigate the connection between bourgeois sexuality orders and authoritarian orientations. The control of sexuality has historically shifted to the subject itself and is unconsciously acted out in the control of the female and the queer. This can escalate and the autonomous subject can turn into a member of the authoritarian masses. Its authority-bound form of sexuality then seeks pleasure in controlling and punishing others for transgressing the sexual norm.

The linking of these approaches to current gender and sexuality research and central ideas of psychoanalytic social psychology leads us to the question of how the relationship between queer and violent sexuality develops in authoritarian thinking. Ambivalence is split into the poles of male and female, self and other, violence and vulnerability. The heteronormative gender order acts as a mechanism of defense (Mentzos 1976/2016).

How is the current erosion of the heteronormative gender order processed in the right-wing discourse excerpts examined?

On one hand, the “defects and disturbances” (Mentzos 1976/2016: 88) in the heteronormative gender and sexuality order, which become visible with the erosion of institutionalized defensive functions, are the transgression of boundaries in queer fantasies and forms of desire. On the other hand, there is the potential for violence that leads to femicide and sexual violence directed against women, especially in heterosexual partnerships, and against non-heterosexual and non-binary people. Both queerness and violence are part of this order – its dark sides – which are increasingly coming to light, stimulated by feminist struggles, social debates, and liberalization. The imagination of the “innocent child” as a product

²² Channel *Freie Sachsen* (27.07.2023): Transman instead of Sandman: children's channel adds “Mr. Ingeborg” to its program. <http://t.me/freiesachsen> (19.09.2024).

of the heterosexual relationship is an attempt to save this gender and sexuality order. The child must testify that one is not guilty. This fantasy offers an imaginary place that is free of all sexuality and the associated affects of fear, shame, and guilt – affects that can be triggered by childhood sexuality in particular. The mechanism of defense splitting and projection provide “character armor” (Reich 1946: 196) against the fear of sexuality.

Parts of the self that oppose this imaginary reassurance are alienated and appear disguised in the form of threatening fantasies. These are projected onto an evil aggressor, the “queer pedophile”. This figure combines imaginations of a sexuality beyond the heterosexual norm with sexual violence. It thus unites two opposing forces that tug at the heteronormative gender order as a skewed healing process, namely, the tendency of dialectics related to the sexuality dilemma to transcend gender boundaries and the simultaneous intensification of patriarchal reconciliation to sexual violence.

Just as Adorno described in the 1960s that repressive ideas become all the more cruelly the more eroded they become (Adorno 1963/2005: 76), this also applies to the current situation. The increased social recognition of sexual diversity is accompanied by aggressive desires to draw boundaries, punishment, and violence. What Sophinette Becker called a “sexualizing sexual defense” in an interview with Julia König in the Journal *Freie Assoziation* (“Free Association”) is not only evident on the extreme right. In right-wing authoritarian discourses, a problem from the center of society is shifted into an arena full of fascination and excitement, in which the “queer pedophile” tries to transgress the pure child’s boundary of shame, which is defended by the German hero, who is filled with legitimate lust for punishment. But in reality, it is not the ‘other’. Sexual violence against children is an exacerbated expression of masculine violence. It most often takes place in family contexts, and even outside the family, only in rare cases are the perpetrators pedosexuals. Instead of confronting these parts of ‘normal’ masculinity, the image of an enemy is constructed that can be pursued mercilessly.

The current sexual consensus morality is an attempt to prevent sexual violence, and sexual liberalization continues to advance and is becoming a model of social progress. But how free can sexuality be in a hierarchical society? And what does free sexuality even mean when sexuality, at least from a psychoanalytic perspective, refers precisely to dependence on the other? Maybe the unfulfilled societal promise

of a liberation of sexuality becomes more and more an authoritarian desire for liberation from sexuality.

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