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## **The Recurring Movements of 'Free Love'**

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## Introduction

When I was appointed assistant professor of women's studies at the University of Amsterdam more than 20 years ago, I needed to develop a research project. As an active socialist and feminist, I was often astonished at the practice of maintaining private households by most families. This led me to investigate alternative arrangements that had been developed for families in the course of history. Studying these alternatives, I discovered that the number of persons or groups that formulated and implemented alternatives for family life is overwhelming. How can one study all these ideas and practices? The theoretical ideas or concepts of three very different theorists helped me develop my ideas about a history of alternatives for family life (including housekeeping and sexuality).

One of these theorists is the American social scientist Benjamin Zablocki (1980), who distinguishes various utopian (or communitarian) periods in history. People have always dreamt about a better world, but these dreams have been more common in some periods than in others. I also learned from Zablocki to distinguish between revolutionary and communitarian or utopian movements. The most important difference is their strategy: utopian movements look for common values and try to live up to them, they aim at an enjoyable life in the *here and now*; revolutionary movements repudiate direct implementation of their ideals, because they prefer to believe that the entire system has to be completely overthrown before the ideals can be lived. When both strategies are used, e.g. in some anarchist groups or the contemporary squatters, these movements usually split up. It is not surprising that alternative ideas about sexuality have for the most part been worked out by utopians, not by revolutionary movements.

Because I was interested in feminism as well, I wanted to know the feminist links to utopian movements. The English social scientist Olive Banks (1981) distinguishes three (and not two as usual) feminist intellectual traditions, which was an 'eye-opener' for me. First, there is a feminist theory of differentiation that places 'female' values ahead of equality with men. This tradition, with its roots in evangelical thought and associated with Romanticism, was especially important after 1900. It emphasized that in sexual behavior women should be the model for men: men have to learn to control their sexual needs as women have done. A second theoretical feminist tradition emphasizes the potential for equality between the sexes and attributes differences solely to external factors. Rooted in the rationality of the Enlightenment, this feminist tradition has been continued in the political liberalism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this tradition very little is said about sexuality, because it is seen as a private question. In addition to these two, Banks distinguishes a third socialist-feminist tradition founded in utopian socialism. The socialist-feminist tradition differs from both preceding ones in that it tries to formulate alternatives for family life in a radical way by going beyond various dualities (feeling-reason, private-public, female-male). In this way, as the English political scientist Diane Coole (1988) analyzed, the utopian socialists signaled a genuine renewal in western political thinking. Later in this paper I discuss the ideas of the utopian socialists further; here it is important to understand that only a minority of the feminist movement has been very active in formulating alternative ideas about sexuality.

Another eye-opener was provided by Karl Kautsky (1895) in his analysis of the communistic movements in the Middle Ages, where he noted: 'Again and again applied communism was linked to the abolition of family structure whereby, apart from some exceptions, not polygamy, but not-marrying was chosen, because

public opinion condemned other solutions too much.' Kautsky's remark (and analyses of heretical groups by others) indicate that in their protests against the hypocritical practices of the day, many groups formulated alternative ideas about sexuality. These can take two different directions: free sexual relations between people are either considered as good and liberating, or sexual passions are seen as something people must learn to master. In this paper I will provide some examples of these different, often opposite expressions of protest.

After setting forth an overview of the relationship between socialism, sexuality, and free love, I will show that people can comprehend different things under 'free love' (from extramarital heterosexual relationships to various expressions of sexual needs), but their ideas are based on the same critique of society. In the first paragraph I will briefly analyze the utopian periods before 1800. In the second I concentrate on the utopian socialists (1825-1850), because they marked a change in the utopian tradition and because they were very radical about sexuality. The third paragraph deals with the utopian period around 1900, and the fourth with the sixties (1965-1975). This also includes some contemporary examples of the relationship between social protest and sexuality. The paper concludes with some remarks about what kinds of socialism accept new ideas about sexuality (and the scientific opinions these ideas are based on) and some examples of the difficulties people have had in trying to realize their ideas about sexuality in the here and now.

### **1. Ideas and practices of 'free love' before 1800**

According to Zablocki the first utopian practices were initiated by the Essenes and Jesus. The Essenes, in their protest against Roman domination, retreated to the mountains to live their own communal and ascetic way of life. Jesus protested against the hypocritical way of life of his contemporaries, envisioning a society that emphasized communal life as opposed to egoistic individualism. He preached brotherhood between men and women. In the first Christian communities men and women were bound by these ideas. They emphasized solidarity and equality between rich and poor and between men and women through communal sharing of all goods.

The next utopian period was the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which witnessed the emergence of groups that sought to realize the utopianism of the first Christian communities. Attacking the hypocrisy of the often debauched life of the clergy, heretical groups such as the Cathars, Waldenses, Apostle brothers, Beguines and Beguines, Lollards, and Hussites abolished or lived outside family structures. In their protest they wanted to practice principles of equality in the here and now: 'Their religion wasn't based on the number of confirmations discussed, but on an ideal of personal behavior' (Lasch, 1965, p.4). Arguing that no one was to be the property of another, many of them practiced celibacy. But using the same arguments, sometimes they chose the other path of protest: free sexual relations between 'brothers and sisters', like the community of 'the Brothers and Sisters of the Free Spirit'. In all these heretical groups women played an important role. Duby believed the most important reason heresy failed was because contemporaries saw it as a dangerous feminist movement (Duby, 1981, p.127).

In the third utopian period, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, discontent with society and the role of the church brought forth not just reformation and

humanism, but also utopian movements and, for the first time, utopian designs (Thomas More's *Utopia* (1517), Bacon's *The New Atlantis* (1621), Campanella's *Sun City* (1620)).<sup>1</sup> Many religious communities again emerged that used the first Christian communities as their model (the commune around the preacher Thomas Munzer, the Anabaptists, Labadists, Levellers, Quakers, Shakers, and Hershutters). Some of them practiced celibacy (the Shakers), some free sexual relations (some Anabaptist groups), but most of these groups allowed their members a minimal family life within the community. The heretical utopian movements and the utopian designs of the humanistic theorists were not related, but their ideals were more or less the same: a community where everything was shared, housework was carried out collectively (by the women), and private property abolished. They all politicized the relationship between the sexes and created alternatives for the family.

Interestingly, socialists, communists, anarchists and utopian studies scientists each consider the first Christian communities and the heretical groups as their own 'roots' (Quack, Max Beer and Kolakowski called them socialistic, Kautsky and Henriëtte Roland Holst saw these communities as communistic. Rexroth called them anarchistic or libertarian, and Piet Thoenes and Tod and Wheeler considered them utopian).

## 2. The sexual ideas and practices of the utopian socialists (1825-1850)

This fourth utopian period was the first time the utopians (Saint-Simon, the Saint-Simonians and Fourier in France, and Owen and the Owenists in England) thought that their utopian theories could be put into practice. The utopian socialists, like the preceding utopians and utopian movements, attacked private property and prevailing family arrangements. Unlike the preceding utopians, the utopian socialists recognized that their ideals would change in the historical process: they no longer proposed static designs for some remote future. In this way they marked a change in utopian tradition: utopias are dependent on their historical context.<sup>2</sup>

Typical for the utopian socialist period is the explicit attack on 'the' Enlightenment and the (violence of the) French Revolution and their emphasis on the uncertainty of science. It was the utopian socialists who coined the terms *socialism* and *social science*, notions that were largely synonymous until 1850 (Clayes, 1986). They differed from the previous utopians too by emphasizing the *difference between people*: their aim was not equality, but to improve relationships between all people (Poldervaart, 1993; Moors, 1999). To do this, all unique individual differences had to be expressed. Love, sexual pleasure, and feelings became central, and they gave as much priority to the relational changes between the sexes as the ones between the classes. By challenging the polarity and hierarchy

<sup>1</sup> Utopianism is distinguished in: utopian designs/theories, utopian movements, and utopian studies. See Sargent, 1994. As I will show in this paper, the designs/theories and movements need not coincide: many utopian movements began without a clear ideal picture. And before 1800 (and after 1970), many written utopias did not aspire to be implemented. Before 1800 it was not because the idea of changing society by your own actions did not exist (that came into being in the eighteenth century); after 1970 it was not because many new utopias focussed on experiments on minds, showing it is possible to think about society in a different way (also linked to the insight that it is impossible to write a utopia for all humankind).

<sup>2</sup> herefore, from utopian socialism onwards, utopianism has an open opinion of history, while for Marx and Engels history is determined. Marx and Engels stated: 'communism was not an ideal to which reality has to conform, but the real movement which abolishes the present situation' (*Die deutsche Ideologie*, in MEW 3, p.35). For the differences between utopian socialism and Marxism, see Poldervaart, 1995c.

between the classes and sexes, these socialists tried to combine reason with a rehabilitation of feelings and the flesh. Because of their criticism of all dichotomies (feeling-reason, housewife-breadwinner, male-female), it is not surprising that their movements attracted many women.

Charles Fourier was the most far-reaching in his sexual ideas. To overcome all forms of suppression, he argued, it was necessary to see the interconnectedness of economic and emotional-sexual suppression and also to grasp the restrictiveness and hypocrisy of marriage. In his *Le Nouveau Monde Amoureux* (written around 1818, but not published before 1967 by Simone Debout) Fourier worked out how the most varied erotic passions could be satisfied while at the same time enhancing social integration. A first prerequisite for the birth of the new amorous world was, according to Fourier, acceptance of the fact that sexual needs differed enormously. In Fourier's utopia, all sexual expression would be permitted so long as people were not abused. But he excluded children up to the age of fifteen-and-a-half, claiming that children had no sexual desire at all, only the passions for friendship and ambition. A second prerequisite for the new amorous world was a radical change in the position of women. It was necessary to recognize that women had the same sexual needs as men: 'Woman is not a subject of lust, but an active participant' (Debout, p.cxi). The third prerequisite formulated by Fourier was the sexual minimum. This minimum would transform amorous relationships by ridding them of any sort of constraint or need. Only after the fear of sexual deprivation had disappeared would men and women be free to develop their full sexual potential. However, in the Fourierist movement, started late 1831, Fourier's ideas about the abolition of the family were increasingly forsaken. People were attracted mainly by Fourier's ideas on economic relations.

The Saint-Simonian movement arose after the death of Henri Saint-Simon (1825); his disciples wanted to elaborate his ideas about abolishing the right of inheritance, non identical equality between people and emotionalized relationships to prevent social disintegration. Apart from publishing a monthly journal, the Saint-Simonians (the most important of them was Enfantin) gathered to discuss such issues as love, property and the law of inheritance. Because these issues were intertwined with the family, they also hotly debated related subjects, e.g., sexuality and male-female relationships. Given the division of society into families, domestic love ranked above love for one's fellow beings; property was passed on within the family, leading to the perpetuation of inequality by birth. From 1827 until about 1832, weekly meetings organized by the Saint-Simonians drew hundreds of interested young men, and from 1829 women as well, constituting a highly significant social movement. Manuel and Manuel state (1979, p. 616) about this movement:

Saint-Simonism remained one of the most potent emotional and intellectual influences in nineteenth-century society, inchoate, diffuse, but always there, penetrating the most improbable places.... Piercing insights into the nature of love and sexuality.... now have a greater appeal than [their] economic doctrines which have become rather commonplace.

In their first lecture series the Saint-Simonians criticized the ideas of scientific truth and discussed the oppression of women, criticizing paternalism and misogyny (Saint-Simonians, 1929). A second lecture series dealt with the 'rehabilitation of

the flesh'. The Saint-Simonians criticized the Christian church for its condemnation of all that is of the flesh and all that is material. Both the spirit and the flesh are an expression of God's love and they justify the desire to be happy here on earth and to enjoy oneself. Initially all Saint-Simonians seemed to agree with this rehabilitation, but in 1831, when Enfantin presented 'the erotic challenge' as a positive feminine quality, a quality men had to learn too, this caused a schism in the movement. Enfantin called upon the women to organize to formulate their own ideas. With the Saint-Simonian men who stayed (most of those who left went to the new Fourierist movement), he organized public discussions for men in Paris and elsewhere in France in which men recognized that being caring and sensitive were qualities that every individual should strive for. These public 'consciousness-raising sessions' frequently turned on the subject of love, and the government regarded the movement as an assault on public morality. In early 1831 the police, with help of the army, closed the Saint-Simonian centres.

Some months before, the Saint-Simonian women had founded their own organizations and publication, *La Femme Libre* (August 1832-spring 1834). The editors were all working-class women and called themselves 'we women of the people', but they explicitly addressed their newspaper to all women. They vehemently criticized the status of the housewife and the dominance of the family. The paper provided a platform for an impassioned discussion about the importance of sexuality. 'We shall love without hypocrisy and laugh about prejudices', they stated (Poldervaart, 1993, pp.162-165). Some women who were active in the journal were known to have tried to practice their ideas of free love in the here and now. Claire Demar pleaded passionately for passionate love, against fidelity, for the abolition of fatherhood, and for social motherhood instead of biological motherhood. But her ideas and the fact that she lived together with her younger lover were too radical for the Saint-Simonian women, which led to her increasing isolation within the movement. Pauline Roland planned to be a mother without having to marry and was proud of that. She had four children, all of whom bore her name and for whom she had sole responsibility. All went well until there was major unemployment in the 1830s; then Roland had to humiliate herself by begging food for her and her children from wealthy Saint-Simonian men.

In the end, economic independence became more prominent in the publication than sexual liberation. In February 1834, when the government passed a bill forbidding all opposition organizations, the editor Suzanne was compelled to shut down the paper. Yet some former *Femme Libre* women regrouped after the February revolution of 1848 around the daily (!) *Voix des Femmes* (March-June 1848). This paper had to close after the Paris June uprising. Although many of the ideals of *La Femme Libre* and *Voix des Femmes* were for the most part the same (sex considered as more important than class, the right to public life and work, collectivizing of housework), in *Voix des Femmes* the discussions about sexuality had disappeared. The 'free woman' no longer was the erotic woman demanding her right to pleasure, but the woman who was the equal of the man. When in 1849 Pauline Roland and Jeanne Deroin (both before active in *Voix des Femmes*) started to organize a national, mixed sex labour organization, their male comrades demanded that they give up their new women's journal, and they did.

For a very long time socialism was severed from feminism in France; in both movements discussions on sexuality were not introduced before the sixties of the

following century (Poldervaart, 1993, pp.172-203).<sup>3</sup> In the United States many utopian communities came into existence, especially between 1840-1850. Equality between men and women was a hotly discussed topic in all these communities. As the famous researcher and visitor of many communes, Nordhoff (1875 (1), p. 412) stated: 'I think it a great point gained for success to give the women equal rights in every respect with the men'. But as far as I know sexuality was not such an important subject, with the exception of the Oneida community. Of all the nineteenth century utopian experiments in the United States, Oneida was the most enduring and the most successful, but also the most attacked for its 'unnatural' (according to Nordhof, p.388) sexual practices. The granddaughter of the leader of Oneida, Constance Noyes (1979 (1), pp.265-267), wrote:

In the popular mind they [the members of Oneida] were stigmatized as Free Lovers. This they denied widely. They called their social system *Bible Communism of Complex Marriage*, and hold freedom to love only within their own community, subject to Free Criticism and Male Continence.... The *Bible Argument* lays the scriptural foundation for the practice of Complex Marriage. "In the kingdom of heaven, the institution of marriage which assigns the exclusive possession of one women to one man, does not exist (Matt. 22:23-30). In the kingdom of heaven, the intimate union of life and interests, which is the world is limited to pairs, extends through the whole body of believers; i.e. complex marriages takes the place of simple (John 17;21).... The new commandment is that we love one another, and that not by pairs, as in the world, but en masse."

But these sexual practices caused many negative reactions, in the outside world, as well as among a minority within the community. In 1879 a larger upwelling of hostility against sexual deviation and internal tensions caused the Oneida community to give up their ideas of complex marriage (Foster, 1991, p.117-118). It had practiced complex marriage from 1848 through 1879.

### **3. The fifth utopian period: around 1900**

After utopian socialism died around 1850, the next utopian period (from around 1890 until 1920) coincided with what is called 'the first feminist wave'. Utopian ideas and practices were found not only in Britain and the United States, but also for example in Germany and Holland. And again, as the first socialists had criticized Enlightenment thinking, in this period there was a 'revolt against positivism' (H. Stuart Hughes, 1964). It was a time when the subjectivity of the researcher was rediscovered, and renewed emphasis was placed on passion and inspiration as part of the scientific terrain. Very remarkable is that in France, the cradle of utopian thinking, around 1900 alternatives to family life or and sexuality were hardly discussed. It is the French paradox (Boxer, 1981).

Most of the contributions to this workshop deal with persons or groups writing and/or active in this utopian period. Yet we must remember that these 'utopian' theorists or activists, writing and practicing alternative sexual ideals, were a minority in the socialism and feminism of those days. All kinds of utopian ideas had to compete with the emerging, and soon dominant, Marxist and social-democratic

<sup>3</sup> Although the Owenist movement of this period also attacked family life, the discussions about sexuality were not as compassionate as in French utopian socialism. For this utopian socialist movement in Britain, see Poldervaart, 1980, pp.25-29; 49-50; Robert Owen, 1813 (1); William Thompson, 1825 (1); Barbara Taylor, 1983.

movements. And, like the first socialists of the previous utopian period, very few of the persons or groups who tried to practice their ideals of a new society in the here and now wanted to call themselves utopians. More about this in the conclusion; here I emphasize the similarities between the utopian socialists of the period 1825-1850 and the contributions to this workshop dealing with the utopian period around 1900. Characteristic of the sexual ideas and practices of this period was:

- All theorists or activists wanted to live their ideas about sexuality in the here and now, especially the women.
- All were related in some way to socialism and/or anarchism, so they had some connection or involvement with the labour movement.
- All emphasized that the sexual question was a political question.
- In their criticism of society, most of these sexual theorists or activists wanted the right to have sexual pleasure. The *Reiner Leven* movement in Belgium and the *Rein Leven* movement in Holland (see the contribution by Denise De Weerdt) are examples of another way of criticizing society by emphasizing moral restraint.
- In this period a new argument was brought forward: physical health, linked to eugenic ideas. The utopians of the previous utopian period only spoke about spiritual health
- 'Free love' for most of the activists around 1900 meant not marrying; not, as was the case with Fourier and most of the Saint-Simonians, to abolish family life and authoritarian relationships. Were Carpenter, Ellis, and Brown the only sexual radicals of this period?

In this interesting utopian period, not only did utopian designs again appear (Bellamy, Morris, Charlotte Perkins Gilman), but many socialist groups that differentiated themselves from Marxism also advanced a range of views strongly resembling those of the first socialists. Some of these are mentioned in the other contributions of this workshop. I would like to add some examples.

In England the South-African writer and sexual utopian Olive Schreiner participated in the *Men and Women's Club*, a famous freethinkers' discussion club founded in London in 1885. Their aim was an 'emancipated femaleness' and a 'moral maleness'. The members described socialism (as did Saint-Simon and the Owenist Thompson) as the search for a new morality, but moral maleness was scarcely a discussion point. The female members were furious about this because they believed one of the first demands to change society is 'a mental revolution in men' (Bland, p. 45). In 1889 the club split because of the different ideas between the male and female members. Schreiner had already left the club because she was disappointed in the attitudes of the men. She criticized marriage and social conventions. The sexual need she considered as a crucial power, and she pleaded for the right to labour and love, for men and women (Berkman, p. 49). Later, before she left Britain for South Africa, she joined *The Fellowship of the New Life* of Edward Carpenter.

A German example is the *Verband Fortschrittlicher Frauenvereine* (League of Progressive Women's Associations), which existed from 1891 through 1919. The League, founded by Lily Braun (who was briefly a member of the Socialist Party) and Minna Cauer, challenged the double moral standard for men and women, called for a boycott of marriage and pleaded for the enjoyment of sexuality.

Members attacked the Socialist Party for its conventional thinking. Because the labour movement didn't pay any attention to them, the League also aimed to organize 'unprotected' working class women like female home workers, shop assistants, domestic servants, and prostitutes. They organized child care and taught contraception. The League also supported the right to abortion and the abolition of criminal penalties against homosexuality (Poldervaart, 1993, pp.215-218; Gerhard, 1990; Meyer, 1987). So, unlike the German *Sexualreformbewegung* (see Nelles), the German Women's League explicitly pleaded for the sexual liberation of women. But the labour movement either attacked the League, saying they were utopians, or ignored it. After the anti-socialist laws were passed, when one of the women of the League fled to London, she was not welcomed by the German socialist refugees because they considered that teaching contraception to working women was a 'bourgeois' activity (Gerhard, 1990).

An interesting American example is Greenwich Village feminism, which existed in New York from 1910 through 1920 (Poldervaart, 1995b). The theoretical inspiration for this group came from Charlotte Perkins Gilman, but the Villagers (a large number of women and a smaller number of men) wanted to go much further than Gilman's ideas about sexuality. The group tried to live their ideals in 'the Village' in a pleasurable way (Cott, 1887, p.295, note 36). To them, feminism was a challenge to all aspects of sexual relations. In those days there was a distinction between women's emancipation, fighting for equal rights, and feminism, which wanted to expand those rights through the struggle against all prescribed sex roles. Besides, the feminists linked their struggle to socialism, which they thought was inevitable in America. Also, the Village men called themselves feminists and advocated self-realization, and pleasure in the here and now.<sup>4</sup> Although some of them had a working class background, all were well educated, but their inspiration came from the behavior of the (mostly anarchist) immigrant female workers from the period 1905-1915 (Cott, pp.23-29). In addition to pragmatic changes, these feminists wanted to create *a new moral*, a moral that was not moralistic but that would encourage people to give up their fixed identity, playing with sexual roles, tasks, and of course with sexuality (Sochen 1972, p. 141). The Villagers had their own internationally famous journal, *The Masses*, their own theater group, and many discussion clubs frequented by people such as Emma Goldman, the socialist leader Hillquit, John Reed, and Margaret Sanger. They were also influenced by the theories of Carpenter, Ellis, and Schreiner. The 'free women' of the Village often took the initiative in sexual matters, for example, whispering to a man: 'God, what a lover you would be', or writing in their poetry: 'After I had kissed his mouth' (Buhle, p.262). The Village was also a place for lesbian relationships. But in the United States following the Russian revolution, the idea of a 'red danger' was associated with free love and offending against good manners. Communists and the women's emancipation movement were the first to adjust themselves to a puritanical family life, which led to the disappearance of the feminist-socialist ideals about free love after 1920.

<sup>4</sup> Although the men called themselves feminists and supported the women in all ways, this did not mean feminism was the same for both. A feminist Village man, Floyd Dell, wrote in 1926: 'The difference between the masculine and feminine idealists of the period is now apparent. We were content with what was happening to woman because what we wanted was something for ourselves - a Glorious Playfellow. But they wanted something different - something for themselves. We thought they would be content with the joy of struggle. But they needed the joy of achievement' (in: Sochen, p.129).

Although there were no movements related to utopian socialist ideals in France around 1900, there was one exception: Madeleine Pelletier. Pelletier, despite her working class background, became one of the first female physicians in France. She was sympathetic to socialism and feminism, but in turn-of-the-century France these two movements were unrelated: the socialists were divided between Marxists and anarchists, and the French women's movement only wanted to fight for equal rights. In 1908 when Pelletier pleaded for street actions in her feminist group 'Solidarité', the feminists considered this as 'unfeminine' and asked her to leave. She did. She was an important party member of the Socialist party, as well as a member of the Second International, but left the party in 1910 because of its anti-feminist attitude. For a short time she was associated with the anarchist party of Hervé, but concluded that this party too believed the ideal women stayed at home. In 1908 she set up her own journal, *La Suffragiste*, which existed until 1919. In this journal she wrote about the right of women to their own bodies, the right to enjoy sex, to have an abortion, and to learn about contraception; she advocated child care and collective housework facilities and abolition of the family. But especially in France, with its low birth-rate and the inviolability of the private-public distinction, and therefore of family life, everyone thought her ideas anathema. Her entire life she helped poor women with abortion; in 1939 she was arrested for this, and she died the same year in prison (Boxer, 1981; Mitchell, 1989).

As a final example of utopian ideas and practices around 1900 I will deal with some Dutch utopian experiments and the few discussions about sexuality that had taken place in Holland at that time. Utopian practices were expressed in the 'colony' movement. The aim of these colonies was 'to undermine capitalism from the inside'. The most famous Dutch utopian and 'colonist' of this period is Frederic van Eeden, but he did not talk or write about sexuality. The colonies of the International Brotherhood however were associated with the 'Rein Leven' movement (see Denise de Weerdt). Interestingly, the leaders of this Christian-anarchist group, and Margaretha Meyboom from the Westerbro colony too, emphasized that 'female' values should also be taught to men, as the Saint-Simonians had done (Poldervaart, 1995 b). The dominant elements in the socialist and anarchist movements, however, were against the colonies: putting into practice these ideals in the here and now would undermine the class struggle. In the anarchist journal *The Free Socialist* many interesting articles were published about feminism and free love, but in an anthology of articles from this journal, *Een vijf-en-twintigjarige veldtocht tegen het kapitalisme, 1879-1904 (een bloemlezing uit 25 jaargangen "Recht voor Allen" en "Vrije Socialist", opgedragen aan het Nederlandsch proletariaat, Amsterdam 1904)*, the compiler of these volumes, Dutch anarchist leader F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, omitted all the articles about the women's question and sexuality.

Some of those in the Dutch 'bourgeois' women's movement were active in the struggle against the 'double moral standard', prostitution, and unmarried mothers, and a very few in the Neo-Malthusian League. But the dominant idea behind these activities was that it was the men who had sexual needs and that it was the task of women to control these needs from their position of moral superiority (see also Everard, 1984, p.165). These feminists did not speak about sexual freedom or about female sexual desires. But we must understand how difficult it was to talk and write about sexuality in those days in Holland. For example, the feminists

active in the Neo-Malthusian League (Maria Rutgers-Hoitsema, Aletta Jacobs, and Martina Kramers) called their journal '*Het Gelukkig Huisgezin*' (the happy family), yet they were accused of wanting to abolish the family (Smit, p.75). As in Germany and France, all three feminists were very involved with the working class (their journal aimed to teach methods of contraception), but they were considered 'bourgeois' by the socialists. Although from 1850 until 1880 the free thinkers in Holland were active in discussions about sexuality (Poldervaart, 1995 b), and although in 1912 Maria Rutgers-Hoitsema had contact with the much more radical *Internationale Vereinigung für Mutterschutz und Sexualreform* (Everard, p.163) and signed the call for fair treatment for homosexuals, in general, during this period Holland was a conservative country in sexual matters.

#### **4. The sixties (1965-1975): the last utopian period**

It is no accident that this period again saw a surge in feminism, which was called the second wave. As Linda Gordon observed, the women's movement usually arises when other movements have created a favourable climate for criticizing society (Gordon, 1980). It is also no coincidence that in this period positivism is also attacked in the critique of value-free science (Poldervaart, 1993; *ibid.*, 1995c). Sparked by anti-authoritarian protests and ideas about the sexual revolution expressed by the student and commune movements, the women's movement can be considered both a successor and critic of these movements. The main idea of the 1960s was that the liberation of sexuality would lead to the emancipation of the individual, and eventually to a total change of society (Van Ussel, 1969). Feminists, however, criticized this idea because, unlike previous utopians, the male student leaders and commune members ignored the unequal position of men and women. But feminists agreed with the attack on family life and on the separation between the private and the public; they wanted to extend it to relations between the sexes, however.

Although an enormous number of commune movements arose in these years in the western world, only a few 'traditional' utopias were written (by Paul and Percival Goodman, 1957; Aldous Huxley, 1962; Shulamith Firestone, 1970). In this period, however, new types of utopias appeared. Sometimes these were called 'feminist science fiction' because, from 1965 onwards, substantially more female writers wrote in this genre, writers who changed science fiction by focussing on the effects different societies had on individuals and the relations between people. They were much less interested in the technological apparatus. These new utopias marked a second change in utopianism. The first was the utopian-socialist period (1825-1850), when for the first time it was acknowledged that utopias are historically defined. Indirectly, however, the utopians saw their ideals as appropriate for everybody at that time. In the new utopias, this universal validity is questioned, and a single future societal model for everybody is rejected. The notion of one perfect alternative is considered impossible and the new utopians (such as Ursula LeGuin, Joanna Russ, Marge Piercy, Samuel Delany) explored diverse future possibilities, also showing the possible restrictions of these futures.

Around 1970 a number of leaders of the student movement converted to Marxism, which led to the end of all discussions about family alternatives and sexuality. It is remarkable that these new Marxists attacked the adherents of the commune and sexual liberation movements with the same words as Marx and Engels had

criticized utopian socialism: 'they [the utopians/sixtiers] wish to attain their ends by peaceful means and by small experiments' (Marx and Engels, 1848; Regtien and Boehmer 1970). Some Dutch new Marxists even went further and accused the anarchist Roel van Duyn of being a fascist because he did not put the class struggle first (Verhoeyen and Van Loones, 1972). When the women's movement became prominent in this period, most of the feminists also became Marxist oriented. But they tried to expand Marxism to include feminist themes such as the family, reproduction and human relations (see for example Meulenbelt 1976). With the slogan 'the personal is political' they criticized Marxism and Liberalism. But feminists of the seventies did not attack the universal validity of 'we women', and it can be argued that in attacking the maleness of the sexual revolution, they became a kind of puritan movement, presupposing that all women only like soft 'vanilla sex'. In the eighties, however, in the women's movement the differences between women were recognized, and from then on there was a growing awareness that women also differ in their sexual needs. A more positive attitude to sexuality was able to emerge, which was combined with a loosening of the ties to Marxism.

Today socialism is no longer a popular concept. Although many political scientists, left political party members and left journalists complain about the a-political youth, there is still a great deal of ferment - only the media are not interested in reporting on it. Especially during the mid-nineties there were several movements, some with international contacts via the Internet (Poldervaart, 2000 b). To give some examples: there were the squatter and punk movements; several environmental and animal liberation groups, and the 'riot-grrls'. What linked all these movements and groups was their Do-it-Yourself strategy and their anti-capitalist attitude. The youth involved in these groups all live according to ecological, vegetarian ideals, often in temporary or permanent communities, and sexism is an important discussion point. For only some of these groups, however, is sexuality an important point. Social critique again takes two opposed paths. One example is the punk movement, in which a world-wide stream is connected with the 'straight edge philosophy': 'Straight edge was a reaction to the nihilism of the punk scene of the late seventies and was directed against mainstream society in which you are nothing when you don't behave like an adult, that means drinking, smoking, fucking' (Schafraad, 2000). The most important reason for living straight edge is to be more conscious of your own deeds. The opposite idea of sexuality can be found in Zegg, an ecological community in Germany, in which the members experiment with many types of sexual relations in their special 'Blue House'. When I visited this community (in 1999), on the wall was the slogan: 'The whole biosphere starts to rejoice when the people on this planet enter a new stage of love and loyalty, not any longer bound to conditions.' Not surprisingly the members know Fourier's work very well.

### **Concluding remarks**

In this historical overview of the relationship between socialism and sexuality, I showed that alternative ideas about family life and sexuality emerged in special times. With these alternative ideals, the people who wrote about sexuality or implemented these ideals protested against society. The protests against the hypocritical behavior of their contemporaries took the form of two opposed strate-

gies: control of sexual behavior or free sexual relations. Although sometimes 'free love' only implied not marrying, this, too, is a social protest.

Like Zablocki, I call these special times 'utopian periods', although I know that very few people think of themselves as utopians. The aversion to utopianism started with the utopian socialists. Fourier, Saint-Simon, and the Owenist Thompson considered themselves social scientists; they saw utopians as dreamers; as scientists, they believed they provided concrete direction for how society should change. It was Marx and Engels who called the first socialists 'utopian socialists' to differentiate themselves from the others. The most important difference between the first socialists and Marxism is strategy: the first socialists (like all heretical movements before them) tried to create common ideals and values and tried to live according to those values, while Marxists and all other revolutionary movements reject such a goal because the common enemy must be overcome before you can think of ideals and how to bring them into practice. They believe that thinking about the good life in the here and now only undermines the class struggle. When Marxism became the dominant ideology for most socialist parties and the labour movement after 1880, utopianism became a term of abuse. From then on those in the dominant socialist and labour movements were not supposed to think about alternatives to family life and sexuality. But there are always exceptions, like the Belgian socialist Hendrik De Man, with his article from 1920: 'The country in which the Woman is a Human Being' and the Dutch social-democratic couple Wibaut-Berdenis van Berlekom who in 1932 wrote *Wordend huwelijk* (Developing Marriage). But they remained exceptions (Verbruggen, 1999). Anarchism has often tried to combine both strategies: to be a revolutionary and a utopian movement at the same time; it looks on the state and capitalism as enemies and tries to realize its ideals in the here and now. But often these two different strategies could not be reconciled. The result is that alternatives to family life and sexuality, with a few exceptions, can only be found in the non-Marxist and non-social-democratic socialist movements, and in parts of the anarchist movement.

In the attempt to theorize or bring into practice alternate ideas of family life and sexuality, it is important to recognize that it is not possible to control everything in a rational way. That is why Fourier, Saint-Simon, the Saint-Simonians, and the Owenists criticized Enlightenment thinking with its ideas of rationality, autonomous individuals, and the division of private and public. In the following utopian periods, around 1900 and in the sixties, the same critiques of rationalism and positivist science re-emerged. It is similar to the analysis by Eileen Phillips (1983, p.26): 'The problem remains of how to develop a continuum from the rational ordering of a socialist economy, which overcomes the excesses and chaos of the market and provides democratic control, to rationalist sexual politics when sex and the erotic appear to thrive on irrationalism, on excess and chaos and lack of control.' Thus the difference between liberalism, Marxism, and social-democracy on the one hand and utopian thinking (= *the expression of the desire for another way of being and living together*, Poldervaart, 1993, p.48), on the other, also relates to different ideas about science. Liberals, Marxists, and social-democrats have always defended positivism, stating that it is only 'the' reality and scientifically proven 'facts' that count. But, as we all know, the 'facts' of sexuality are difficult to measure.

After 1850 the labour movement as an institution was not associated with sexuality or free love, because it was dominated by Marxist or social-democratic leaders. At the same time, many male and female workers have tried to experiment with other ways of living together and with free sexual relationships. For the most part, however, the utopian experiments succeeded for only a short time because society was adamantly against sexual experimentation and because women were not economically self-sufficient.

The people or groups mentioned in this paper encountered the following difficulties:

- Fourier was so strongly attacked for his sexual ideals that he did not dare publish his *Le nouveau monde amoureux* (it was published 150 years later).
- The Saint-Simonians were attacked by the police and the army and had to close their centres; later their leader Enfantin was sent to prison; Pauline Roland, the consciously unmarried Saint-Simonian mother, gave up her ideas when she did not have enough food for her children.
- The American utopian community Oneida had to give up its 'Complex Marriage' practices because of external threats.
- In America the 'red danger' ideas in 1920 compelled the Greenwich Village feminists to give up their experimental lives of pleasure.
- Lily Braun was expelled from the German Socialist Party (in 1903) by Clara Zetkin because of her utopian ideals and ideas about sexuality.
- Madeleine Pelletier experienced many difficulties from the socialists, anarchists, and the feminists of her time. She was sent to prison because she helped poor women with abortions and she died there.
- In the beginning of the sixties men considered women who did not want to sleep with them as unemancipated. This led to a kind of puritan attitude in the feminist movement of the seventies, which could only change when feminists recognized that all women have not the same sexual needs and when men have learned to take account of women's wishes.
- The contemporary German community Zegg encountered much opposition from its surroundings and the popular media because of the sexual experimentation.

Today protest groups have changed the concept of socialism to anti-capitalism, but even now society does not accept sexual experimentation. Yet I am sure a protest against neo-liberalism and capitalism will again emerge (or perhaps it has already started), and in these protests sexual alternatives will also be formulated.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> In this paper I do not deal with homosexuality and socialism. For this (mainly non)relationship, see Anne Ganzevoort (1999).

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