



Home-o: Being at Home with Reflections on Hetero-Homosexual Identity

Joshua Nash

To cite this article: Joshua Nash (2017) Home-o: Being at Home with Reflections on Hetero-Homosexual Identity, *Journal of Bisexuality*, 17:1, 30-38, DOI: [10.1080/15299716.2016.1220341](https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2016.1220341)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2016.1220341>



Published online: 24 Aug 2016.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 40



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)

Home-o: Being at Home with Reflections on Hetero-Homosexual Identity

Joshua Nash

University of New England, Armidale, NSW Australia

ABSTRACT

This article presents a creative interpretation of interaction between hetero- and homosexual worlds. The metaphor of home is used to transfer different meanings and experiences of hetero-homosexuality into private and personal takes on bisexuality and being heteroflexible. Self-knowledge is implicitly equated with awareness of one's sexuality.

KEYWORDS

creative writing; bisexuality; heteroflexibility; plural sexuality; sexual identity

How can heterosexual male experiences and musings be used to interpret the state of being under the bisexual umbrella? Is being bicurious really a state of bisexuality or simply a transient and possibly mobile sexual condition? Can a creative interpretation of hetero-homosexual contact offer anything to theoretical understandings of a diversity of sexual experiences and makeups within the exploratory sexual world of middle-class men in their late twenties? Although the present deliberation will go far from conclusively answering any of these questions, the experimental writing and its force of expression is offered as a means to reconcile certain elements of male sexuality within the realm of a perception of late modern male sexual identity.

There is a mass of literature to consult relating bisexuality, hetero-bicuriousity, and sexual identity theory and its role within plural sexuality. Here I restrict my review to that which is conducive to inventive formulation, injecting the personal into the writing of what can be considered investigational (bi)sexual and hetero-homosexual involvement. Barker's (2006) short and punchy statements about why we should at all study the emplacement of bisexual studies go some way to forming the intellectual repository as to the wherefore of dipping into bisexual identities. Here it is really the 'beyond' of Barker's 'bisexuality and beyond' that seizes and begins the apparent need to 'resist the binary' (e.g., Bowes-Catton, 2007) when pointing toward bisexual identities. Is bicuriousity actually anything clearly demarcated or something less menacing, nothing really to worry about, a more transient and just an overly volatile setting open to unpredictability, erraticism, and change?

CONTACT Joshua Nash  joshua.nash@une.edu.au  Discipline of Linguistics, School of Behavioural, Cognitive and Social Sciences, University of New England, Armidale NSW 2351 Australia.

© 2017 Taylor & Francis Group, LLC

Bridges' (2014) 'a very "gay" straight' would have us believe in fuzzy boundaries and layers of complexity which may be crossed, with the results depending entirely on reasoning, emotion, and even total loss of sexual compass. Within this ambit, Allison and Risman's (2014) 'hooking up' or sexual activity outside relationships is brought to bear on the hetero- and homosexual playing field, together in the real world and distinct in the character privy arena.

I intend my short treatise to add incrementally to this theoretical backdrop. The setting is entirely city-based: Copenhagen, Denmark, early winter 2002. The topic: the impermanence of urban relationships in two males' late twenties. The hetero is the author, the chased, Australian. The other, the chaser, the homo¹, from the Caribbean. We are both outsiders in this dark and wintery land.

The beginning of being homeward bound

So there he stood. By the door, the one at the front of my home. Looking tall, gay, handsome. I couldn't and still cannot fathom it. His name, a pseudonym, is Felix Ferdinand, and he said he loves me. I am shocked though not surprised in the least. He tempted me. I saw and felt an intention from his side that I know I have felt for my preference, the female, the softer ones, those with whom I have been before. In the eyes. The movement of the body. His body. The sigh. You know, the dropping of the breath when you know it counts. The eyes of several others have done the same. But this time he is shy. He made a pass, but we never went through with anything. I like girls. I keep telling him so. I like girls. He doesn't want to believe me. He keeps trying. We continue our discussion. I like girls.

I have two homes. One is my work and the other my home. I have started to refer to the latter as my home-o, or hom-e-o, because of the homo who is often home with me. I spend much time at both homes. One gives money whereas the other gives rest and realization and occasionally a gay man to visit. This is what my piece is all about.

The singularity and plurality of my home and my homos.² There is more to this than sex. Why? It's because the sex will never happen. I will never go with him. What is this 'go'? Is it just sex or something much deeper? Is 'to go with him' doing what I am now doing? I will be seeing Felix on Tuesday night. We'll observe pictures at an exhibition. We're meeting at a gallery. Felix's 'him,' the soon to be ex-husband, will apparently be there. He (Felix) doesn't really want to be with him (the soon to be ex), but they still live together and are married. He's French. There is some Romance language-based connection in all of this. An undercurrent of an unknown inspiration toward something involving my emerging bicuriosity. I really don't want to break up anyone's marriage.

Maybe I'd work in the Copenhagen gay scene. Would I prefer to be liked in the hetero scene, if there even exists such a stage? A woman that picks me out and says 'it's you I want.' Maybe I'd be scared if it happened right now. No, I want to be raped. But not by him. Mentally he's already done it. This I wasn't scared of. It's the

other element I query. The physical. The emotions are nothing to be scared of. I've felt that in another homo, the Australian one. Still, my only real home-o is here with my connections and the things I know and understand so well in my home. It could well be interaction and 'sex between straight white men,' in the true sense of being not gay (Ward, 2015) if you ask me. For all I care. But it's not, there's something else occurring.

The girls are the ones who make me flutter inside. But I have been tempted in the other direction. As in, I am right now. He tempts and I back off. This is more my style. Curious but not serious. I could take some chances, but I think they might scare me. I'd be scared off, into something I never knew, will never know, and perhaps was never destined to know. I am only thinking of the sex. There can't be anything else, because the else is a lead into that. You know, the inevitable. It's bound to happen. The gay man's brain I know. It's like like attracting like or the opposite sides of a pole. There is that air of the heart beating at least. Home is where the heart is. I may have found mine. A home with a homo. The evolving home-o. Whether she, he, or I are sure is still to be ascertained. I know the feeling now, though. For me it's about touchy feely. That 'oooh' feeling once she said. I've become overwhelmed again. Five minutes ago a colleague told me on the phone, "*Du er lige ved at blive en mand*" (you are about to become a man). This meant a lot to me. Looking for the definition of a man has been a big part of my spiritual and sexual quest. And I asked many in this regard about what they thought it meant to be manlike, sexually mature, to possess prowess. I am not sure if this has anything to do with home-o. It's the homo I am at home with, a part of and the Self inside. The book I am at home with. The publishing of something not to be described in words but done so to produce something. A description of a home base. An underlay. An underlying sensuality and sexuality entitled only to those who are tracking such a thing. I've been told I am a candidate. It is somehow showing. Like the boys. The gay Australian thinks I am getting more than he is at present. I don't want them. But then I do. I'll make a move on him one day. He'll just have to wait and see. Am I moving from the typical 'strong and silent' heterosexual (Sender, 2006) through metrosexuality and bicurious to another new moniker to me, the "heteroflexible" (Hubbard, 2008)?

This place where I live is my current home. The city, yeah, I've written about it all before. I also ring the Caribbean homo. It's strange that he doesn't feel at home here, yet he still persists in being and living so. I know the limitations of being here: time, love, a citizen of here I'll never be. The guys are still looked at, and I, too, feel their eyes. Just leading them on. I just know that if I kissed him it wouldn't stop there. Or just sleeping in his bed holding hands. My hands go sweaty and clammy at the thought(s). They do say curiosity killed the cat, so this keeps me back. Makes me write about the boys and not feel them. Have them in my dreams and not in my bed. Imagination and not my pillow. Being with a girl is like running down a hill. Being with a man like running up.

I have seen two lesbian pairs in the last 2 days. I thought of home-o and what it may mean. Where Felix and I might be a pretty boy crossover, they could be a pretty girl something-or-other. I doubt they would like me. Being quite feminine and all. They might eat me for dinner. But what is it they do? How is it they love? I 'can' love a man, I think, I am feeling it, but it has little to do with sex or being intimate. I am realizing how important this time is: for opening up, meeting the right people, staring, and leading guys on. Sometimes I think it should be two hetero guys together, not a duo of one and the other. Two heteroflexibles maybe. A monotomy among a dichotomy. Is it a hetero identity plus a descript sexual adventuring beyond the boundaries of my 'straightness' (Albury, 2015)?

Two heteroflexibles could lie in bed and say the same things rather than thinking that the other is thinking differently. I've seen some of these guys. They might even be my friends. To sleep in the same bed together. The process and how it is we get there. Is it through intimacy or a selfish confidence in the s/Self? Sleeping with as many as you can? There's no one knocking on my door tonight, and I'm glad. I think I'd maybe even deny them. That tiredness inside and a wanting of being alone. And its difference from not being lonely. Warm smiles and keeping him preciously inside.

I'm home inside where the warmth is snug and the ideals of casual sex meeting a romantic nonsexual encounter with a gay male (cf. Reay, 2014) seem so much more likely than anything 'hetero-' (other, different).

Absence, developing, trying

Felix has been absent from my life of late. It was Tuesday (this is October 2002) we last saw each other. He was late, but it wasn't raining. The leaves were falling off the trees. They still are. He can sing. I know. It is a part of the whole show. The hetero among several gay boys. One in Denmark, the other one written to in Australia. I am the meat in the sandwich. They seem to believe I taste good. I was in Sweden yesterday and thought of how Swedish guys must be. Probably harder for me to talk to them and they'd use names like Göran and Olaf. Plus that song I wrote about them in 1998 with the line: 'Conservatism, high drinking age, safe cars, and men called Sven.' The people on the other side of The Sound, Øresund, the body of water between Denmark and Sweden. The bridge, that connection. There's no place like home. Returning to my quarters somehow scares me and makes me feel alienated. It's like I have lived too long within hetero-quartered domains. In his absence, I feel a development, some change. Sexual flexibility.

I know it's just a stage. I'll get over it. Being on his side of the fence. Talking, thinking, and writing camp when deep down I am everything but. Everything but the boy. Everything but the sex with which I am trying to tackle and understand, a type of heteronormativity-cum-sexual secrecy (Cassar, 2015). The safe domicile, sometimes together, sometimes apart. The Scandinavian lighting makes an important contribution to my home. The lamps from this part of the world are for use in

this part of the world. I have taken photos in my apartment. It's where I reside. One couldn't see the bed, however. And besides, I'm the only guy who's slept there. More than one girl has sat there, but I dare not write about them in my current company. The boys in the home are what matter. In my heart and at a distance. The desire to travel seems not to go away. I think of the transformative power of the mobility I experience and its sexualized means. Hetero-metro-flexible.

He tried again last night. It was just the same, but this time a little more forcefully executed. I was not impressed, but I didn't flinch. There was something there on my side, but I cannot understand what this was other than sexual frustration. Force might not ever work. Us interrupting each other while talking made me think this was not the right consciousness to be in. Two lines going parallel. Not meeting. So how could we even meet physically? I may want one thing and he could possibly give it to me.

But he wants something that I cannot or do not want to offer. Here home-o (also said like 'cameo') has come to a painful reality. So I may still think and ask of friendship and its place among feelings of sex (his side) and noncomplacency (my side). To quote De La Soul, *Stakes is High* (Mercer et al., 1996), "Welcome to reality, see times is hard."

We danced to house music and I did feel something for him. I think I even wanted to flirt. Oh no, what am I thinking? Am I becoming gay from this writing? I have written camp many times to other gay friends, but this is something novel, unmapped. An even testing of myself to see whether I, too, will fall for the trap I myself have placed before myself. Myself and himself. You, the reader, hearing my thoughts about the same sex while not having sex with anyone. I am thinking to give up and let it flow.

That amazing feeling can and will be had again (with a woman), but it is the patience that needs to wait. I mean, the patience that will help me wait.

The world knows what I want and it isn't a man, any man, however saucy he may be, however strong he may appear. I may want to admire him at a distance, but he'll never sleep in my bed. Not for any money or any pain or even sensuality. This relationship is making me want to open up to something I have found deep within myself. And it is real, hetero and based in the home. Inside is where the happiness is.

Metrovert het(e)rovert extrovert, *Xtro*. The underground (metro) of the city of Copenhagen has recently been opened, I am more or less hetero, and *Xtro* was a horror flick from the 1980s. I will go to the underground in the near future, but to expend energy and the money for such a purpose eludes my intellect. Anyway, back to the story. The homo hasn't been in my home-o for some time now. But I like his company and his absence, too. Especially that of last meeting. A cozy café, an understanding, a speaking. Some fluency in communication. Dark nights getting cold.

(I feel like using the word 'complacency' here. Done.) He is looking for an external Paris, but it is inside him the real Paris exists. Copenhagen is the Paris of the

north. I will write about this. Perhaps in a song for one of the boys. Somehow he deserves it. A blending of homes, life, and sexual preferences. Maybe I'm already over my head. With the man, the one with whom I spend nights after short days. We make music in the life we are now leading and of which we are becoming a part. He's a homo, and our home-o is becoming something much more than real. He's more than a friend. Yes, the invitation to create a new world, our home, our campness in conversation and existence and accepting things as they are. The honesty and a giving of much more than one receives. And the current realization being a manifestation of the Greek basis for the root *homo-*. All this side knows is that one meaning is 'same.' It's a worry. Not a life, the life, the music or the home. No, the worry is that the guy is becoming a part of this discourse. He was the inspiration, oh yes: a mode and means of behavior, the male in the dark, the come-ons and our meetings after work. He's mentally and intellectually fulfilled my needs of the last 2 months. And the sexual? Well, he has tried and I took a step back. More than once and both times in my home. My home soil with the dim lights on and the candles slowly burning down. There was a smell of incense in the room and the autumn shadow had already come. Cold rain. There also must have been dinner at some stage and the smell of spices in the air. It all led to his action and my withdrawal. And with this time it was real as the action was there and it was not just a matter of fantasy and belief. He wanted to find out what it is about. My being and even my soul.

Am I becoming a 'feminised male' (cf. Craine & Aitken, 2004)? Can you keep a secret? The boy is in the home again. I hear music of my distant other gay friends and think of the colors fading, the arrows through my heart, and the twentysomething fan club established for and around the tabernacle of the boys at home.

The depth of relationships with the man can be so much more fulfilling. Even knowing where the gaps are and being able to fill them in a/the proper way.

It's him I sit with in Copenhagen's cafés while the girls look on not knowing what quantity they're observing. They think we're already taken, and thus they flirt but still look on with the occasional interested glance. Somehow my attention is drawn away though I should be looking in their direction. It's because the science he studies and lives and the way his mind works are apparently more than I'll find in the realm of such a situation and place. Ok, the dim candles glow and the smell of perfume, alcohol, and cigarettes permeate an atmosphere I've seen so many times before. Girls with dead foxes around their necks pose an offer that I often-times find so hard to read, although the opportunity to read between the lines in 'abnormal situations' is more beneficial for these eyes. Denmark can restrict. I will soon be gone. I doubt he ever wants to go back to the Caribbean.

Judging from the cold outside it could be Paris or Berlin, but the heart here is where my home is. And the gayness makes for gaiety deep inside. There is a true warmth there and a spontaneity. No calendars, no 'I've got no time'—it's either 'I've got time' so we then meet or 'I've got no time—we'll meet tomorrow'. Assurance, guarantees, we'll definitely meet soon. His past mate is moving away again

soon. The ex-husband. This side will also move and not be there for him. The distant city sleeping and knowing what he's thinking will make it all worthwhile. When I leave, we will together be occupants in my backpack and my heart. They don't need physical space, merely a wish and a desire for being together with me, my home, my posse, my idea(l)s, my pen, my paper, my life as music, my life as art and as building. The breeze is stiffening and almost all the leaves are gone. My upper lip is becoming softer instead of harder, and living is becoming milder and directed in the right direction.

The homos moving about in my life are a justified condition/conclusion of this softening. They're giving me more than I can give them right now. Still present is the smell of incense and spices. At home waiting for the homo. Again, that hetero feeling.

Change, progression, summary

I was at home with a girl. A Norwegian on Christianshavn. There was the thought of whether she wanted me. The way she looked into my eyes told a story. Her bed looked comfortable though expectations can be dangerous things. There was some contact, but my tiredness killed anything in the end. Asleep in her bed might have made some difference, but this was never to be. She made me feel hetero once more. I never stayed and went home to my home-o. And I never saw her again. Many people have told me I am too intense.

My home here is clean, the floor white, space, a feeling of leaving and a missing of the country I am still in. When I next travel, this is where I'll be missing/I'll be missing, nowhere else (Nash & Gorman-Murray, 2014). Always the people, always the sun. The people, the guy, the nakedness, the reason to be, things are not becoming any easier. It's dangerous to establish things that cannot be finished, leaving a heart in a place one will not see for up to 6 months. I soon leave for the subcontinent, a place of much concealed homosexuality (e.g., Vanita, 2002). It begins to hurt now as the days are nearly not days and the cold has more than crept in. The appreciation has to come, is still to come.

It's all coming closer to home. He's looking for the homerun, and it seems the batter's up in this home. But I cannot explicate more than any reader might be able to take. It's hurting me so much. Inside and out. I don't know what's come of me. A home and a homo at this place, topos, scene, and time. It's like the *Blair Witch Project*—it ends before we know what happens. But the real story has been told. I'm at home with a homo.

Applying Flanders, Dobinson, and Logie's (2015) phrase "I'm never really my full self" of women's perceptions of their mental health to my own querying of the heteronormality-cum-heteronormativity of my own sexuality in general and the diversity of autoexperience and identity application, it appears the equation home + homo = home-o is appropriate to liken a specific recollection of being at home, being at peace, with hetero-homosexual identity. The 'home' is key: it is a

location and locator of normativity, a place which creates norms, sexually and thought wise.

Here the home and the safe space in interaction with a person becoming a friend and eventual lover and even coresearcher meld to establish the home expanse as a fruitful geography for hetero-homo-normativity (cf. Hubbard, 2008). It is possible that questioning the lived reality of bicuriosity and the apparently benign and private engagement in hetero-homo acts of a bisexuality reaching for a more developed plurisexuality, particularly in the domain of home can reveal much of how modern sexual intersection might occur. Heteroflexibility and homoflexibility now appear as two more settled possibilities within and under the bisexual umbrella.

Acknowledgment

I express my gratitude to the two gay men—‘Felix’ and ‘the gay Australian’—whose presence was integral to the writing of this piece.

Notes

1. As regards the use of the noun ‘homo,’ I am aware of the historical stigma around the term and its use. I do not in any way use ‘homo’ in a derogatory sense. On the contrary, I use it throughout almost as a ‘homely’ and ‘home-based’ term of endearment, as a way to bridge gaps between the sexualities I discuss. ‘My homo’ can almost be equated with ‘my dear.’ In addition, the word play involving ‘homo’ and the title of this piece ‘Home-o’ (pronounceable as ‘home-o’ and ‘hom-e-o’) partially necessitates the inclusion and use of ‘homo’ to make sense of the sexual and home focused context of the piece.
2. It is essential to explain the use of the singular and the plural: homo and homos. Although I am writing about interaction with one particular gay man and how my heterosexuality has been challenged and questioned greatly by our interaction, the original unpublished piece ‘Home-o’ written in Copenhagen, Denmark in October 2002 was presented primarily as a letter-cum-diary-cum-journal to a male gay friend and artistic collaborator in Australia. In this sense, I often move freely between the singular and plural and speaking to ‘my homo’ or ‘my homos.’

Notes on contributor

Joshua Nash is a linguist and an environmentalist. His research intersects ethnography, the anthropology of religion, architecture, pilgrimage studies, and language documentation. He has conducted linguistic fieldwork on Norfolk Island, Pitcairn Island, and Kangaroo Island, environmental and ethnographic fieldwork in Vrindavan, India, and architectural research in out-back Australia. He is a postdoctoral research fellow in linguistics at the University of New England, Armidale.

References

- Albury, K. (2015). Identity plus? Bi-curiosity, sexual adventurism and the boundaries of ‘straight’ sexual practices and identities. *Sexualities*, 18(5/6), 649–664.
- Allison, R., & Risman, B. J. (2014). “It goes hand in hand with the parties”: Race, class, and residence in college student negotiations of hooking up. *Sociological Perspectives*, 57(1), 102–123.
- Barker, M. (2006). Why I study ... Bisexuality and beyond. *The Psychologist*, 19(1), 33–34.

- Bowes-Catton, H. (2007). Resisting the binary: Discourses of identity and diversity in bisexual politics 1988-1996. *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review*, 8(1), 58-70.
- Bridges, T. (2014). A very "gay" straight? Hybrid masculinities, sexual aesthetics, and the changing relationship between masculinity and homophobia. *Gender & Society*, 28(1), 58-82.
- Cassar, J. (2015). Sex and secrecies: An exploration of students' conceptualizations of heteronormativity. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 12(4), 419-435.
- Craine, J., & Aitken, S. (2004). Street fighting: Placing the crisis of masculinity in David Fincher's *Fight Club*. *Geojournal*, 59, 289-296.
- Flanders, C. E., Dobinson, C., & Logie, C. (2015). "I'm never really my full self": Young bisexual women's perceptions of their mental health. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 15(4), 454-480.
- Hubbard, P. (2008). Here, There, Everywhere: The Ubiquitous Geographies of Heteronormativity. *Geography Compass*, 2/3(2008), 640-658.
- Mercer, K., Jolicoeur, D., Mason, V., & Yancey, J. (1996). Stakes Is High [Recorded by De La Soul]. On *Stakes Is High* [CD]. New York, NY: Tommy Boy Records.
- Nash, C. J., & Gorman-Murray, A. (2014). LGBT neighbourhoods and 'new mobilities': Towards understanding transformations in sexual and gendered urban landscapes. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 38(3), 756-772.
- Reay, B. (2014). Promiscuous intimacies: Rethinking the history of American casual sex. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 27(1), 1-24.
- Sender, K. (2006). Queens for a day: Queer eye for the straight guy and the neoliberal project. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 23, 131-151.
- Vanita, R. (2002). *Queering India: Same-sex love and eroticism in Indian culture and society*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ward, J. (2015). *Not gay: Sex between straight white men*. New York, NY: New York University Press.