

Wekker, G. (2006). *The Politics of Passion: Women's Sexual Culture in the Afro-Surinamese Diaspora*. New York: Colombia University Press.

Although I grew up, academically speaking, in anthropology and gender studies at Utrecht University with Gloria Wekker as one of my most inspiring critical teachers and graduated in 2010, I never made it to reading her book *The Politics of Passion*, published in 2006. It was only after I finished my PhD research on religion, the secular, women's emancipation, and activism at Ghent University in 2014, that I bought the book and finally started reading it. In March 2015 I was asked by the Dutch *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies* to contribute to a special issue on sexuality and social movements. So far, I was used to research women's organisations and interview feminist activists of various religious and ethnic backgrounds. Extending my experience to LGBTQI organisations of ethnic minorities was a welcome new challenge. I took it up together with a Dutch colleague Rahil Roodsaz, who interviewed an organisation in Amsterdam, while I interviewed one in Brussels. Both organisations catered for the needs of LGBTQI's belonging to ethnic-cultural minorities. It was the idea of emancipation at the intersection of sexual and ethnic-cultural diversity that prompted me to read *The Politics of Passion*. I started reading, and did not stop until I soon finished the book.

Wekker's goal is to contribute to contemporary ethnography of what is called *mati work*, a term that refers to working-class Afro-Surinamese women's sexual lives and practices. The book is an admirable example of writing thick descriptions of women's sexual lives. Wekker takes these descriptions as a starting point to critically reflect on academic theories and dominant public understandings of female (homo)sexuality, globalization, and the modernity/tradition opposition. Moreover, the author is always present in the text. Throughout the book, she reflects on the way in which she developed her research, her own role in the settings she studied, and her changing understandings of *mati work*, *winti* religion, and continuities and transformations of women's lives in a diaspora context. As Wekker puts it, her central aim in writing is to address issues of power. She points out that power is negotiated in romantic relationships and sexual cultures, – "there is a politics to passion" (p. 67). The author employs a perspective that enables her to reveal the functioning of power not only in public, national, and global arenas but also in the private sphere, that is, in the building of kinship networks and sexual subjectivities. The result is a complex ethnographic narrative that criticizes power inequalities based on nationality, social class, gender, and sexuality in the Afro-Surinamese diaspora. At the same time, Wekker romanticizes neither *mati work* as a sexual culture nor the experiences of women who are part of it. Instead, she emphasizes that *mati work* provides an interesting starting point to open up discussions and rethink the assumptions held by

many Western academic researchers and LGBTQI movements about the "nature" of sexuality.

It is for these reasons that *The Politics of Passion* inspires me in my current thinking and writing on LGBTQI movements of colour in West-European contexts. It helps me to approach the stories and activities of organisations and individual actors as discourses that are affected by national and regional policy-making and public debates about LGBTQI rights and inclusion; transnational and diaspora settings; and dominant understandings within local ethnic-cultural minorities about sexuality. It helps me to see that sexual cultures are constructed within this multilayered context, and to look at the politics of these constructions, or in other words, the negotiation of power relationships within sexual cultures and their position in society at large. In short, *The Politics of Passion* inspires me to pursue my own passionate politics, as I aim to describe and understand dominant and minority constructions of gender and sexuality, and reveal the interplay of both.

NELLA VAN DEN BRANDT



Firestone, S. (1970). *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*. New York, NY: William Morrow.

With *The Dialectic of Sex* Shulamith Firestone wanted to change the world. The book, written in only a couple of months, is a condensed and angry project that aims to convince its readers to abolish the family unit and install new forms of collective living. Firestone launches many ideas, some of which, such as her interest in cybernetics, have proven prescient. In the book's opening pages she urges the new feminist movement of the late 1960s not to forget about the history of feminism. She dedicates her book to Simone de Beauvoir "who endured" and offers her interpretation of the history of American feminism. The book, a controversial classic of feminist theory, was published in the same year as Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* and galvanized feminist thought in the early 1970s. Its publication, however, also coincided with the dissolution of the feminist communities as Firestone had co-established them (e.g. the New York Radical Women, the Redstockings, and the New York Radical Feminists).

Firestone died in 2012, after years of struggling with schizophrenia. Newspapers and magazines worldwide published obituaries, highlighting the fervor of her feminist commitment and her tragic life story. Her death, however, appears to have triggered only a modest renewed academic interest in her work. Although some articles