



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

**“No one else will and may do that for us but ourselves”: Sister Outsider and black lesbian culture in the Netherlands during the 1980s**

Redegeld, Amber

**Citation**

Redegeld, A. (2024). *“No one else will and may do that for us but ourselves”: Sister Outsider and black lesbian culture in the Netherlands during the 1980s.*

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [License to inclusion and publication of a Bachelor or Master Thesis, 2023](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3784990>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

# **“No one else will and may do that for us but ourselves”**

**Sister Outsider and black lesbian culture in the Netherlands during the 1980s**

Amber Redegeld

S2492474

History: Cities, Migration and Global

Interdependence

Leiden University

MA Thesis

20 EC

18-06-2024

Dr.mult. A.D.J. Shield

Word count: 17244

# Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Historiography.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Methodology.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Identity &amp; culture.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Archival documents &amp; Archives as institutions.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<b>Chapter 1: Ripples in the group pond (1980-1984).....</b>	<b>14</b>
<i>Splinters of the feminist movement: Lesbian feminists and the BMR-movement.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Lesbian identity in the BMR-movement.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Identity and poetry.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<b>Chapter 2: No one else but ourselves (1984-1987 and onwards).....</b>	<b>31</b>
<i>Establishing a black lesbian culture.....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Sister Outsider and lesbian identity.....</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Pulling the cart forward (1987 and onwards).....</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>44</i>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Sources .....</b>	<b>52</b>

## Introduction

*Sister Outsider*, for most outside of the Netherlands, is the title of an essay collection written by self-described black, lesbian, warrior, poet Audre Lorde. However, it's not just the book that carries this name. In 1986, four women in Amsterdam started a group that they named after the essay collection. This black lesbian group was founded by José Maas, Gloria Wekker, Tania Leon, and Tienke Sumter, who were inspired by Lorde. When Tania Leon heard that the poet would be visiting Berlin in 1984, she decided to extend an invitation to Lorde.<sup>1</sup> This was the beginning of a lasting relationship with Lorde for (some of) the women, and marked the formal beginning of the group Sister Outsider. Nevertheless, the group disbanded in 1987 for a multitude of reasons. By this time, José Maas had already left the group. Joice Spies had replaced Maas in the formation sometime earlier. Other than that, the formation had remained the same as in 1984. During the three years in which the group was active, they organised multiple events that centred black, lesbian women. Though the group had originally formed to facilitate Audre Lorde's visit to the Netherlands, they continued to organise events both with and without the author. During this time, the name recognition of Sister Outsider increased, as did the amount of people that attended their events.

The women who formed Sister Outsider had aimed to build a black lesbian community and culture in the Netherlands. Multiple documents in the Sister Outsider archive, which can be found at Atria as part of the personal archive of founding member Tania Leon, discuss this objective. It should be noted that the availability of archival material relating to Sister Outsider remains limited. Documents pertaining to the group can be found in Tania's archive at Atria as part of the IAV (Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging) collection, as well as the National Archive. Leon's archive holds multiple newsletters from the group. The women sent these newsletters to announce their events and plans. The archive also shows lists of addresses, presumably the addresses of those who received their newsletter. One of the first newsletters written by the group, shows the dedication of the women to creating a black, lesbian culture. The newsletter was written in February 1985, in this letter, the group states the following:

---

<sup>1</sup> Mariette Hermans, 'Herrineren Aan Sister Outsider: Zwart En Lesbisch En Strijdbaar', *Lover*, 2002, 16, TS-1093, Collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

However, we will not sit still until then, but want to move forward to discover and shape our own black lesbian culture together with you. No one else will and may do that for us but ourselves.<sup>2</sup>

A similar sentiment can be found in a newsletter letter announcing the end of the formation. There are drafts in the archive that can be traced back to late 1986, but the definitive letter was dated January 3rd 1987:

What we wanted to do with Sister Outsider was to show something of our own black lesbian culture. Now that we have made a start on that, we feel the time has come for us to stop, in the hope that others will continue to pull the cart forward.<sup>3</sup>

In short, Sister Outsider as a group had the intention to establish a black lesbian culture. They were not the only group in the Netherlands that aimed to create a place for queer people of colour. The group SUHO (for Surinamese queer people) was founded in 1980, for example, and at the end of the 1980s Strange Fruit was formed. Even though the history of queer people of colour is a growing field of research in recent years, as discussed in the historiography below, the academic discussion has not yet established what exactly the culture established by Sister Outsider was. This thesis aims to contribute to the growing field of research pertaining to the history of queer people of colour in the Netherlands, by examining the cultural identity of Sister Outsider and black (lesbian) feminism in the Netherlands in the 1980s and the influences on later queer of colour formations.

## Historiography

When it comes to Sister Outsider and the history of the queer of colour movement in the Netherlands in general, there is still a lot of work to be done. Nevertheless, academics across different fields have looked into this particular part of (recent) queer history. In 2022 Ann Marie Wilson, professor of history at Leiden University College, published a paper titled ‘Dutch Women and the Lesbian International’. Wilson examines the ways in which Dutch women were influential in lesbian organising during the 1980s and 90s. Among other things, she discusses the ways in which the Dutch context for lesbians influenced international

---

<sup>2</sup> All translations from Dutch are my own, unless stated otherwise.

Original text: “Wij blijven echter niet stil zitten tot die tijd, maar willen verder gaan om samen met jullie onze eigen zwarte lesbische cultuur te ontdekken en vorm te geven. Niemand anders zal en mag dat voor ons doen dan wijzelf.” Found in: Archive Ruth Naomi (Tania) Leon, inv.nr. 22, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

<sup>3</sup>Original text: “Wat wij met Sister Outsider wilden was iets van ons eigen zwarte lesbische cultuur laten zien. Nu wij daar enigszins een begin mee gemaakt hebben, vinden we het moment gekomen dat wij er een punt achter zetten, in de hoop dat anderen de kar verder zullen gaan trekken.” found in: Tania Leon et al., “‘Lieve Vrouwen’: Final Newsletter from Sister Outsider’, Letter, 3 January 1987, Inv.nr. 23, Archive Ruth Naomi (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

coalitions like ILIS (International Lesbian Information Service). She also examines the conflicts regarding racism that were present and how the presence of Dutch women influenced this. Wilson argues that within the organisation, racism and discussions regarding racism posed as one of the most divisive topics. She compares the efforts of women of colour within ILIS, who organised their own events, to the efforts of queer of colour organisations in the Netherlands. In both contexts, people of colour struggled to get the larger organisations to address racism and consider it as a serious issue. Because of this, they created their own groups, either separately or within the organisations. Wilson states that the Dutch attitudes towards racism and their inability to handle it in the Netherlands also showed in their conduct in ILIS. In short, the Dutch influences within ILIS also played a role in its inability to handle racism. However, there were also Dutch women of colour who were active within the Dutch queer of colour movement, who worked to combat racism within ILIS.<sup>4</sup> Yet, there remains a lot to be said about the efforts of lesbians of colour in the Netherlands. Wilson does mention the existing queer minority groups such as Strange Fruit, but does not elaborate on these groups besides mentioning their need to create their own spaces because of the existing tensions within the Dutch LGBTQ+ community regarding race. In order to fully understand how Dutch women of colour tried to combat racism in ILIS, as well as how the separate organising by queer women of colour within ILIS was similar to what happened in the Netherlands, it is important to also understand how queer women of colour dealt with racism within the Dutch scene and found community with each other. Even though ILIS itself is not part of the scope of this research, this thesis can still contribute to a wider understanding of the history of lesbian movements, including how race and racism related to their understanding of community and activism.

Another important and valuable discussion is the intellectual contribution of the different members of queer of colour organisations such as Sister Outsider. This is touched upon in the chapter 'Strange Fruits: Queer of Colour Intellectual Labor in the Netherlands in the 1980s and 1990s'. In this chapter, Gianmara Colpani and Wigbertson Julian Isenia discuss the intellectual legacy and efforts in knowledge production of Gloria Wekker, founding member of Sister Outsider and emeritus professor social and cultural anthropology, and Andre Reeder, filmmaker and member of the organisation Strange Fruit. Strange Fruit existed from 1989-2003, and was a group for queer youth with a migration background. Colpani and Isenia

---

<sup>4</sup> Ann Marie Wilson, 'Dutch Women and the Lesbian International', *Women's History Review* 31, no. 1 (2 January 2022): 140–44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2021.1954338>.

try to explain the importance of culture for queer people of colour and black feminists by referencing Roderick Ferguson's *Aberrations in Black*. They state that queer people of colour, black lesbians in particular, often used culture as a means to reimagine politics. However, besides the mention of the more literary character that Sister Outsider possessed and the incorporation of *tori* by Strange Fruit, the chapter lacks an in-depth analysis of this cultural identity. Instead, the chapter focuses more on the intellectual labour done by queer of colour activists in the Netherlands during the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>5</sup> Colpani and Isenia's work on the topic remains relevant, and their discussion on the important role culture plays in queer of colour movements can be built upon when looking at the cultural identity developed by Sister Outsiders (and black lesbians in general) in the Netherlands. Their analysis on the (intellectual) work done by Gloria Wekker as a member of Sister Outsider, activist and academic is vital for creating a better understanding in how the activist work by queer people of colour in the Netherlands is part of a larger intellectual legacy.

The experiences of queer people of colour in Europe is often analysed in academic works relating to homonationalism. Though most of this research pertaining to the Netherlands is related to the rise of Pim Fortuyn, as well as the years following his death, multiple scholars have looked to a period before Fortuyn entered the political field. One scholar's work in particular has discussed the history of queer of colour movements in Europe in relation to the development of homonationalism. Fatima El-Tayeb is a Professor of Womens, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and of Ethnicity, Race, and Migration at Yale. In her paper discussing queer Muslims in European cities, El-Tayeb argues that queer of colour groups such as Strange Fruit present queer people of colour with a way to challenge the western norms about coming out and gay identities.<sup>6</sup> In her book *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*, El-Tayeb writes about the identities and activism that developed out of the Othering of those that do not fit into the mould of a European identity. In the second chapter of her book, El-Tayeb focuses specifically on women of colour and feminism. She discusses the diasporic identity of Afro-Europeans and the development of queer and feminist of colour thought in Europe. El-Tayeb states that the community that was born out of women of colour feminism was inspired by the work of Black American

---

<sup>5</sup> Gianmaria Colpani and Julian Isenia Wigbertson, 'Strange Fruits: Queer of Color Intellectual Labor in the Netherlands in the 1980s and 1990s', in *Postcolonial Intellectuals in Europe: Critics, Artists, Movements, and Their Publics*, ed. Sandra Ponzanesi and Adriano José Habed, Frontiers of the Political: Doing International Politics (London ; New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, Ltd, 2018), 217.

<sup>6</sup> Fatima El-Tayeb, "'Gays Who Cannot Properly Be Gay': Queer Muslims in the Neoliberal European City", *European Journal of Women's Studies* 19, no. 1 (February 2012): 86–91, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506811426388>.<https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506811426388>El-Tayeb, 86–91.

activists.<sup>7</sup> Although El-Tayeb mostly focuses on Afro-Germans in this chapter, she also discusses the Dutch context and the development of queer of colour feminism in the Netherlands as well. El-Tayeb looks to statements by Gloria Wekker on Sister Outsider to touch on the relationship between the group and Audre Lorde, and how the group fits in her analysis on the development of queer of colour feminism in Europe.<sup>8</sup> Of all the women who were part of Sister Outsider, Wekker especially has been vocal about how reading Audre Lorde's work helped her come into her own identity and understand her own experiences.

A common thread that can be found in the discussion of queer of colour groups in Europe is the significant role that culture has played in the development of their identities and the role it has continuously played in their activism. In this discussion, culture is often used to describe the ways in which queer of colour formations looked to their own non-western cultural backgrounds and used them to combat notions about LGBTQ+ identities. In addition, it is used to discuss poetry and literature produced and read by queer of colour activists. Colpani and Isenia touch upon different cultural practices of both Sister Outsider and Strange Fruit and how they were fundamental aspects of the groups. They mention that in the case of Sister Outsider, black feminist literature had a significant influence, although they do not discuss this claim in-depth as their work focuses more on the production than the influences.<sup>9</sup> El-Tayeb states something similar in *European Others*, writing that the "low culture" of oral traditions (such as poetry readings) were highly influential to the establishing of women of colour feminism. She describes that these art forms were often part of the activism of women of colour. These oral traditions, such as poetry, either written or spoken, can be considered a form of resistance when examined in the context of women of colour feminism according to El-Tayeb.<sup>10</sup> The importance of culture and identity for queer of colour groups has also been discussed by Chandra Frank, Assistant Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Cincinnati. Frank has stated that women of colour feminism approaches sexuality, desire and kinship in a non-Western way. However, as the paper in which this claim is made focuses more on the history of the organisation Flamboyant and the archival practices of the organisation, this statement is not elaborated on further.<sup>11</sup> The role culture has played in

---

<sup>7</sup> Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 44–46.

<sup>8</sup> El-Tayeb, 63.

<sup>9</sup> Colpani and Wigbertson, 'Strange Fruits', 217.

<sup>10</sup> El-Tayeb, *European Others*, 47.

<sup>11</sup> Chandra Frank, 'Flamboyant: Wildness, Loss, and Possibility in Feminist Organizing in the Netherlands', *Meridians* 22, no. 1 (1 April 2023): 42, <https://doi.org/10.1215/15366936-10220469> Frank, 42.



the development of queer & feminist of colour groups has been touched upon in research. Nevertheless, there is still a lot left to discuss regarding queer of colour identities. The group Sister Outsider has often been mentioned in these discussions, but none of these studies have analysed the group's archive and discussed exactly how significant these were based on the archive itself, which is what this thesis aims to do.

When discussing feminist and queer of colour groups during the 1980s in the Netherlands, it is important to acknowledge the work that has been done on both feminist and queer history during this period. However, a lot of the research that discusses culture and identity focuses solely on white feminist and/or white queer groups. The importance of identity and culture for the formation and organisation of feminist groups in the Netherlands has been thoroughly discussed in Costera Meijer's book about second-wave feminism in the Netherlands: *Het persoonlijke wordt politiek: Feministische bewustwording in Nederland 1965-1980*. One chapter in particular analyses the development of lesbian feminism in the Netherlands. In one chapter specifically, Meijer focuses on how personal identities and differences within the feminist movement influenced lesbian feminism in the Netherlands.<sup>12</sup> However, as the scope of the research in this book is 1965-1980, the development of black feminism and queer of colour groups is left out, as this movement largely started in the 1980s. Meier herself admits that her book has very little to no attention for ethnicity in the women's movement.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, a similar analysis as to what Meijer used to explain the separatism of lesbian feminism can be applied to analysis regarding black and black lesbian identities in the women's movement.

Yet one work on the history of Dutch feminism that does include the activism of feminists of colour is *De vrouw beslist: de tweede feministische golf in Nederland* by Vilan van der Loo, although the section discussing their work is more surface-level. Van der Loo does mention Sister Outsider as one of the few groups that existed for queer women of colour.<sup>14</sup> The book *Daar hoor ik ook bij* focuses solely on the history of the black and migrant women's movement in the Netherlands, although it makes no mention of queer organisations such as Sister Outsider. Instead, the book focuses on the different organisations that existed based on the different backgrounds of the women who were part of these movements.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Irene Costera Meijer, *Het Persoonlijke Wordt Politiek: Feministische Bewustwording in Nederland 1965-1980* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1996), 107–62.

<sup>13</sup> Costera Meijer, 24.

<sup>14</sup> Vilan van de Loo, *De Vrouw Beslist: De Tweede Feministische Golf in Nederland* (Wormer: Inmerc, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> Mieke Goudt and Roline Redmond, *'Daar hoor ik ook bij': de zwarte en migrantenvrouwenbeweging in Nederland* (Leiden: Stichting Burgerschapskunde, Nederlands Centrum voor Politieke Vorming, 1990).

A now germinal Dutch publication that does focus on a wider variety of topics that were part of the black, migrant and refugee women's movement in the Netherlands is *Caleidoscopische Visies*. In 2024 a new edition of the book was published and presented during a panel about the legacies of this anthology and the reasons for its second edition. *Caleidoscopische Visies* was originally published in 2001 and remains one of the few books that discusses the BMR-movement in depth. The new introduction makes one change from the previous edition that is worth mentioning: the authors capitalise BMR to acknowledge the distinction between the different groups that were part of the BMR-movement and to clarify that it is a name. The previous edition, and thus many papers on the movement, do not capitalise the abbreviation.<sup>16</sup> This thesis will use BMR in accordance with the authors of the book. A section of the chapter 'Tot behoud van mijn identiteit' on lesbianism amongst BMR-women is what partially inspired this thesis. Captain and Ghorashi write about lesbian identities amongst women of colour and discussions regarding coming out, and the discussion amongst the BMR-women about lesbian as a western term and discussions on using it as a woman of colour.<sup>17</sup>

In short, there is still a lot to be said about the development of queer and of colour feminism in the Netherlands. An analysis of the development of a black lesbian culture, specifically through a historical lens that focuses on the group Sister Outsider, would be a valuable addition to the existing research on both queer of colour movements as well as the history of feminism in the Netherlands. This thesis aims to contribute to this discussion by creating a better understanding of the history of the lesbian feminist movement, in particular for women of colour in the Netherlands.

## Methodology

The question central to this thesis is: How did the group Sister Outsider create a black lesbian culture in the Netherlands during the 1980s? As stated previously, this thesis aims to contribute to the discussion regarding the importance of culture and identity for queer of colour groups. By focusing on Sister Outsider specifically, a better understanding of the culture behind black lesbian feminism can be developed. This thesis aims to analyse the culture and identity that was developed during this period by the women who were a part of Sister Outsider as well as the women who attended their events. Additionally, this thesis

---

<sup>16</sup> Maayke Botman et al., 'Dansen in de regen: intersectionaliteit in beweging. Inleiding', in *Caleidoscopische visies: De zwarte, migranten- en vluchtelingen vrouwenbeweging in Nederland*, ed. Nancy Jouwe, Maayke Botman, and Gloria Wekker (Amsterdam: Mazirel Pers, 2024), 13.

<sup>17</sup> Esther Captain and Halleh Ghorashi, "'Tot behoud van mijn identiteit.'" Identiteitsvorming binnen de zmv-vrouwenbeweging', in *Caleidoscopische visies: De zwarte, migranten- en vluchtelingen vrouwenbeweging in Nederland*, ed. Nancy Jouwe, Maayke Botman, and Gloria Wekker (Amsterdam: Mazirel Pers, 2024), 327–34.

discusses the influences that shaped the group and their politics. In order to answer the main question, this thesis is divided into two chapters. The first chapter will focus on the influences of Sister Outsider and the historical context in which the group formed. This chapter analyses the culture and texts that influenced Sister Outsider. The second chapter discusses the group itself. This chapter examines the activities the group organised and their connection to culture, as well as state of queer of colour organising after the group disbanded. This thesis is heavily based on analysing documents from archives, especially Tania Leon's archive at Atria, as well as building on existing academic work on identity and culture amongst queer and/or feminist of colour groups. In specific cases, certain publications can be used both as an academic text and a primary source. *Caleidoschopische Visies* is an example of this. The texts, which are over twenty years old, are not only based on thorough research but personal experiences as well. Another example is *White Innocence* by Gloria Wekker. Wekker examines racism in the Netherlands based on the 'cultural archive'. The book also discusses her personal experiences and views in addition to her analysis of Dutch society, including mentions of the group Sister Outsider. All things considered, this thesis is built on a history of queer of colour studies as well as the available archival material pertaining to the group.

### **Identity & culture**

An important theoretical framework for this thesis is based on academic approaches to identity and culture. As already stated previously, many scholars have claimed that feminist and queer of colour groups often used culture as a means to not only express themselves, but also to create a form of resistance and identity. In 2005, Mary Bernstein, professor of sociology at the University of Connecticut, published an overview of the existing research on the topic of identity politics. Bernstein states that when it comes to queer identities, researchers often approached the topic through a postmodernist, post-structuralist or Foucauldian lens. The rise of queer politics is explained by the need to challenge the dominant position the views of white, gay, cis men had within the gay and lesbian movement. Queer politics thus rose out of a need to challenge the norm that had been established over time within the queer community.<sup>18</sup> Within queer politics, people have argued both for and against the usage of identity centred politics. Some wonder whether it truly challenges the existing power structures and if it leaves room for intersecting identities in the first place.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Mary Bernstein, 'Identity Politics', *Annual Review of Sociology* 31, no. 1 (2005): 56, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.29.010202.100054>.

<sup>19</sup> Bernstein, 57.

However, Bernstein also states that in order to be effective within the political sphere, groups need an identity. The establishing of an identity allows for groups to identify those that face similar problems, who is responsible for those problems and who can help them.<sup>20</sup> As this thesis will show, the same can be said for the creation of Sister Outsider and the importance the woman gave to formulating their identity.

The importance of cultural expressions such as poetry in relation to identity-based political movements has also been discussed by Linda Garber, a Professor in Women's & Gender studies at the Santa Clara University. Garber published a book titled *Identity Poetics* in which she discusses the topic in depth. The chapter *The Social Construction of Lesbian Feminism*, in which Garber states that poetry played a vital role in the origin of a lesbian identity and community in both Europe and America, is especially valuable for this thesis.<sup>21</sup> Garber also included a chapter on Audre Lorde. In this chapter, Garber emphasises the importance of intersectional approaches for those who have intersecting identities. She states that the "postmodern" identity politics informed the activism of Lorde and other queer feminists of colour.<sup>22</sup> Garber also reiterates Lorde's belief that poetry can play an important role in political struggles.<sup>23</sup> As this thesis will show, poetry also played a significant role in the group Sister Outsider and their formation of a black lesbian culture. In turn, by creating space for identity formation and cultural expression, the women lay a foundation for criticism of the white (lesbian) feminist movement.

### **Archival documents & Archives as institutions**

This thesis is largely based on analysis of documents from different archives pertaining to the group Sister Outsider and/or the black lesbian identity and experience in the Netherlands. One of the most important archives for this thesis is the IAV (Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging) collection located at Atria in Amsterdam. Atria is a knowledge institute that was established after IAV and another knowledge institute, E-Quality, merged in 2012. The archival collection is still referred to as IAV. The archive of Sister Outsider can be found there, within the personal archive of founding member Tania Léon. In its current state, it exists of only one folder. Chandra Frank wrote about the positionality of the Sister Outsider

---

<sup>20</sup> Bernstein, 59–60.

<sup>21</sup> Linda Garber, *Identity Poetics: Race, Class and the Lesbian-Feminist Roots of Queer Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 10.

<sup>22</sup> Garber, 100.

<sup>23</sup> Linda Garber, 'The Social Construction of Lesbian Feminism', in *Identity Poetics* (Columbia University Press, 2001), 104, <https://doi.org/10.7312/garb11032-002>.

folder in the Atria archive in her paper *Sister Outsider and Audre Lorde in the Netherlands*. She discusses the connection of the archive at Atria and the collection at Spellman College, as well as the personal & transnational relationship between Lorde and European feminists of colour. Spellman College holds a large collection pertaining to Audre Lorde. Frank explains that the IAV collection has been mainly oriented towards white women historically. Frank states that the lack of expertise on the BMR movement influences the accessibility of the material the archival collection hosts.<sup>24</sup> The IAV collection was established in 1935. After mergers, the IAV collection ended up as part of the Atria knowledge institute for emancipation and women's history.<sup>25</sup> However, institutions focused on the experiences and documentation of the lives of women of colour did exist in the Netherlands previously. Flamboyant was one of the first. Tania Leon, among others, helped to establish the meeting centre for black, migrant and refugee women in the Netherlands, which also functioned as both a library and documentation centre.<sup>26</sup> Flamboyant ceased to exist after they lost their funding in the 1990s and the material they possessed was handed over to the VON (Vluchtelingen Organisaties Nederland). The foundation Zami was later created in order to continue the meetings and activities that Flamboyant used to organise.<sup>27</sup> Eventually, after different mergers, (some of the) materials that had been part of the documentation centre of Flamboyant found their way to Atria.

The imbalance of power regarding the existing archival institutions and the queer of colour movement in the Netherlands has been a topic of discussion both within academia and activist circles. In 2019, Naomie Pieter and Wigbertson Julian Isenia created the exhibition 'Nos tei' in response to the 'With Pride' exhibition created by IHLIA in 2018. IHLIA is a heritage organisation for LGBTQIA+ history located in the central library of Amsterdam, although some of the archives that were originally located at IHLIA have been moved to the IISH (International Institute of Social History), also located in Amsterdam. The 'With Pride' exhibition failed to include a comprehensive history of the queer of colour movement and its

---

<sup>24</sup>Chandra Frank, 'Sister Outsider and Audre Lorde in the Netherlands: On Transnational Queer Feminisms and Archival Methodological Practices', *Feminist Review* 121, no. 1 (March 2019): 15–16, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0141778918818753>.<https://doi.org/10.1177/0141778918818753>Frank, 15–16.

<sup>25</sup> 'Geschiedenis Atria collectie | Organisatie', Atria, 6 March 2018, <https://atria.nl/over-atria/organisatie-atr/geschiedenis-atr/collectie>.<https://atria.nl/over-atria/organisatie-atr/geschiedenis-atr/collectie> 'Geschiedenis Atria collectie | Organisatie'.

<sup>26</sup> Andrew DJ Shield, *Immigrants in the Sexual Revolution: Perceptions and Participation in Northwest Europe* (New York, NY: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2017), 151.

<sup>27</sup> Amalia Deekman and Mariette Hermans, 'Heilig vuur. Bezieling en kracht in de organisatievorming van zmv-vrouwenbewegingen in Nederland', in *Caleidoscopische visies: De zwarte, migranten- en vluchtelingen vrouwenbeweging in Nederland*, ed. Nancy Jouwe, Maayke Botman, and Gloria Wekker (Amsterdam: Mazirel Pers, 2024), 201.

history in the Netherlands, even though a member of one of these organisations had been present during the talks about creating the exhibition.<sup>28</sup> However, IHLIA seems to have listened to the concerns. Their latest exhibition, called ‘*Roze Reuzen*’, showcases the activism of 5 key figures from (recent) LGBTQIA+ history. Two out of five are people of colour, who were part of the queer of colour movement in the Netherlands, one of whom is Andre Reeder.<sup>29</sup> Reeder himself had been vocal on the exclusion of queer of colour activists in the original ‘With Pride’ exhibition.<sup>30</sup>

The lack of work relating to the history of the queer of colour movement, as well as the role archives play and have played in both the visibility and accessibility of this history, was the topic of a roundtable in 2019.<sup>31</sup> This roundtable discussion examines the history of queer of colour movements in the Netherlands and the limits of the possibilities of archives in the current landscape. In this roundtable, Andre Reeder is quoted as saying the following when discussing the limits of archiving:

I think the experience with IHLIA shows us as black LGBT people: the only ones who can take care and write our history are ourselves. It is as simple as that.<sup>32</sup>

Reeder's statement shows the lack of trust many queer of colour activists experience with the existing archival institutions like IHLIA. The lack of trust between the activists who were (and are) part of the queer of colour movement has also influenced their willingness to part with their personal archives and make them accessible for research. This in turn means that the material that is not part of the archives can not be considered in studies like this thesis. However, there is still plenty of material that is available in archival collections such as IHLIA and Atria.

---

<sup>28</sup> Emma van Meijeren, ‘De rijke geschiedenis van de zwarte queerbeweging in Nederland’, Vice, 23 July 2019, <https://www.vice.com/nl/article/wjvvjw/de-rijke-geschiedenis-van-de-zwarte-queerbeweging-in-nederland>.<https://www.vice.com/nl/article/wjvvjw/de-rijke-geschiedenis-van-de-zwarte-queerbeweging-in-nederland>Meijeren.

<sup>29</sup> Winq Redactie, ‘Winq presenteert: Roze Reuzen, de podcast!’, 29 March 2024, <https://www.winq.nl/winq-presenteert-roze-reuzen-de-podcast/276682>.<https://www.winq.nl/winq-presenteert-roze-reuzen-de-podcast/276682>.

<sup>30</sup> Meijeren, ‘De rijke geschiedenis van de zwarte queerbeweging in Nederland’.

<sup>31</sup> Gianmaria Colpani, Wigbertson Julian Isenia, and Naomie Pieter, ‘Archiving Queer of Colour Politics in the Netherlands: A Roundtable Conversation’, *Tijdschrift Voor Genderstudies* 22, no. 2 (1 June 2019): 163–82, <https://doi.org/10.5117/TVGN2019.2.004.COLP>.<https://doi.org/10.5117/TVGN2019.2.004.COLP>Colpani, Julian Isenia, and Pieter, 163–82.

<sup>32</sup> Gianmaria Colpani, Wigbertson Julian Isenia, and Naomie Pieter, ‘Archiving Queer of Colour Politics in the Netherlands: A Roundtable Conversation’, *Tijdschrift Voor Genderstudies* 22, no. 2 (1 June 2019): 179, <https://doi.org/10.5117/TVGN2019.2.004.COLP>.

Aside from Leon's archive, which is part of Atria, other archival documents located at Atria are also used in this thesis. This includes Atria's collection of magazines such as *Ashanti*, a magazine for Surinamese women in the Netherlands and the magazine produced by Flamboyant under the same name. Atria also holds Anne Krul's archive. Ann Wilson mentions this archive in her paper, stating that it provides useful materials for analysis on queer people of colour organising.<sup>33</sup> Anne Krul's archive at Atria is especially valuable regarding the years after Sister Outsider disbanded. Materials from this archive are used in the final chapter, when discussing Sister Outsider's legacy.

In addition to the collections present at Atria, this thesis is also based on different materials that can be found at IHLIA. Though the heritage organisation does not hold any particular archive of Sister Outsider or any of its former members, it does possess a large amount of periodicals produced for the queer community in the Netherlands. Most of the periodicals that can be found at IHLIA that are relevant for this thesis can also be found as part of the online database Gale Primary Sources and their collection 'Archives of Sexuality and Gender'. This database holds digitised versions of the periodical *Homologie*. The periodical focused on gay culture. *Homologie* was one of the few publications to also discuss race, ethnicity and racism in the queer community at the time. The relevant material located at IHLIA has been consulted using the Gale database for this thesis. Another archival institution that has been consulted for this thesis is the National Archive in The Hague. The National Archive holds the archive from the Directorate for the Coordination of Emancipation Policy, which was responsible for providing funds to groups like Sister Outsider. In order to receive funds, Sister Outsider had to write to the directorate and provide documents reporting on the activities they organised using the funds. In addition to the letters asking for funding, the folder includes one edition of the feminist magazine *Katijf*, which includes a detailed account of Audre Lorde's first visit to the Netherlands and the events organised by Sister Outsider.

When working with archives and archival material, it is important to be mindful of the existing and historical power structures and acknowledge that a large gap still exists when it comes to both the availability of the material, as well as its accessibility. Additionally, many documents are potentially still with the original owners and are not part of institutional archives, and thus are left out of the research for this thesis. Finally, future research could include oral histories with those key actors mentioned thus far, among others.

---

<sup>33</sup> Wilson, 'Dutch Women and the Lesbian International', 151.

## Chapter 1: Ripples in the group pond (1980-1984)

Sister Outsider is part of a wider history of the women's movement in the Netherlands: the movement of Black, Migrant and Refugee (BMR) women connected women with a migration background that struggled with the absence of intersectional perspectives amongst the white, Dutch feminist movement.<sup>34</sup> Before the BMR-movement began, other feminist groups split off from the larger feminist movement. Different lesbian feminist groups were established because of their discontent regarding both the current feminist and queer landscape. Sister Outsider was not the first lesbian feminist group that was established as an alternative to the movement at large. When Sister Outsider was created, a multitude of both lesbian (feminist) groups and BMR-groups had already been formed (and disbanded). Some of these groups relied on texts by (Afro-)American authors that wrote about oppression. Sister Outsider was no exception. In 'Herinneringen aan Sister Outsider' Gloria Wekker tells the author Mariëtte Hermans that reading the work of Black American women was very influential for the women behind Sister Outsider and their ability to formulate their own experiences.<sup>35</sup> Texts were vital to the development of the group's identity, considering that Sister Outsider has, amongst other things, been described as a literary salon.<sup>36</sup> It becomes clear when looking at the available archival documents and academic texts on the group, that reading both fiction and non-fiction by fellow (lesbian) women of colour had a significant influence on the women behind Sister Outsider. This chapter discusses the influences that helped shape Sister Outsider's identity as a group, as well as the societal context in which the group formed.

### **Splinters of the feminist movement: Lesbian feminists and the BMR-movement**

In the 1970s, different lesbian feminist groups came into existence in the Netherlands. Not only were these lesbian feminists facing problems in the feminist movement, they also experienced issues in the movement for gay emancipation in the Netherlands. This led to lesbian feminists creating their own groups and organisations. There were a multitude of causes for this. Firstly, the COC, the Dutch organisation for gay emancipation, was mostly considered an organisation for men. Many lesbian women struggled with the lack of space for

---

<sup>34</sup> The BMR women's movement is known as the ZMV-vrouwenbeweging (Zwart, Migrant, Vluchteling) movement in Dutch. As this thesis is in English, it will use BMR instead.

<sup>35</sup> Hermans, 'Herinneringen Aan Sister Outsider', 16.

<sup>36</sup> Gloria Wekker, 'Gloria Wekker on behalf of Sister Outsider to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SoZaWe)', Letter, 11 April 1986, Inv.nr. 23, Archive Ruth Noami (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.



women within the COC as an organisation and the events that were held.<sup>37</sup> Secondly, many non-lesbian women did not want to be associated with lesbians, as lesbian women were still seen as “different” and seen in a negative light. As a result, many feminist groups in the Netherlands made very little room for lesbian women within their groups and did not create space to discuss lesbian-specific issues within the movement.<sup>38</sup> That is not to say that lesbian women were not part of the larger and more mainstream feminist groups in the Netherlands. However, many were frustrated with the negativity surrounding lesbianism amongst feminists and the inability to discuss issues specific to lesbian women. This eventually led to lesbian women creating their own organisations in the 1970s, in a similar vein to how BMR-women would start their own movement because of discontentment with the feminist movement at large in the 1980s.

Throughout the years, different lesbian feminist groups would come into existence. One of the first was *Purperen Mien* (Purple Mien), a talking-group that was created after two women placed a personal ad in the magazine *Vrij Nederland* that voiced their frustration with the men-oriented COC. This group would send letters to both feminist groups like the *Dolle Mina* and the COC itself about the absence of lesbian women.<sup>39</sup> Eventually, some women who had been part of *Purperen Mien* formed the lesbian feminist group *Paarse September* (Purple September). The women published their own zine in which they criticised almost every other activist group in both the feminist movement and the movement for gay emancipation. When they later disbanded, the group called for others to continue the work they had started.<sup>40</sup> This is a similar sentiment to what Sister Outsider wrote in their final letter, requesting those who had attended their events to continue shaping black lesbian culture.<sup>41</sup>

Other notable groups were *Groep 7152* and *Lesbian Nation*, amongst others. None, however, were oriented towards the intersection of being a person of colour and a lesbian woman. For most lesbian feminist groups, it is unclear how many women of colour were active members. In the group *Lesbian Nation*, there were only two women of colour. One of the members of *Lesbian Nation*, Pamela Pattynama, has talked about her being one of two women of colour who were a part of the group and the only woman with an Indonesian background. Pattynama felt that issues regarding racism only became clear in hindsight and

---

<sup>37</sup> Costera Meijer, *Het Persoonlijke Wordt Politiek*, 151.

<sup>38</sup> Costera Meijer, 170.

<sup>39</sup> Loo, *De Vrouw Beslist*, 124–25.

<sup>40</sup> Loo, 128–32.

<sup>41</sup> Leon et al., “‘Lieve Vrouwen’: Final Newsletter from Sister Outsider’, 3 January 1987.

that at the time, she did not consider it at all.<sup>42</sup> When reading the literature and archival documents, it becomes clear that although women of colour were not barred from being part of these groups, racism was barely ever part of the discussions. In ‘Naming Ourselves as Black Women in Europe’ Gloria Wekker tells Cassandra Ellerbe-Dueck that she felt that the women’s movement was lonely for the black women present and that it required vigilance amongst those that were present. She noted that herself and Tania Leon were often the only black women present in lesbian feminist circles, and that even then they had to deal with the sexualisation of black women.<sup>43</sup> In her book *White Innocence*, Wekker reflects on the feminist and the queer movement in the Netherlands. Wekker states that although the women’s movement was more readily willing to discuss race, racism was still considered an optional part of the discussion. Racism, however, was not an optional experience for BMR-women. They eventually founded their own organisations, both as feminists and lesbian feminists, where they could focus on not only feminist work, but anti-racist work as well.<sup>44</sup> In short, although (lesbian) women of colour were active within the more mainstream feminist movement, their experiences with racism were often either ignored or the cause for these women to start their own groups.

In 1983, Julia da Lima was at the heart of the conception of the BMR-movement during the Winter University of Nijmegen in 1983. Da Lima voiced the concern that the existence of black women was denied by the women’s movement during her speech and referenced the frustration many women of colour felt. Many BMR-women felt that the movement ignored racism and only discussed issues that white women experienced. Her speech inspired the black women present to organise events to discuss racism and sexism, separately from the program that had already been planned. Da Lima used black as a descriptor for all women who had roots in the former Dutch colonies and who would be described as foreign.<sup>45</sup> She was not the only one to use black in such a way. In the early

---

<sup>42</sup> Noah Littel, ‘Playing the Game of Lesbian Imagination: Radical Lesbian Feminist Organising in the Dutch Lesbian Nation’, *Women’s History Review* 31, no. 1 (2 January 2022): 71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2021.1954335>.

<sup>43</sup> Cassandra Ellerbe-Dueck and Gloria Wekker, ‘Naming Ourselves as Black Women in Europe: An African American–German and Afro-Dutch Conversation’, in *Audre Lorde’s Transnational Legacies*, ed. Stella Bolaki and Sabine Bröck-Sallah (Amherst ; Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015), 63.

<sup>44</sup> Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham London: Duke University Press, 2016), 114.

<sup>45</sup> Loo, *De Vrouw Beslist*, 189. See also: Shield, *Immigrants in the Sexual Revolution*, 150–52.

1980s, black was considered a unifying term for women of colour in the Netherlands. This changed when the decade came to an end, which is when BMR gained popularity.<sup>46</sup>

An important influence for the women of the BMR-movement were texts from feminists of colour from outside the Netherlands, who were voicing their concerns on racism within society at large and within the feminist movement. Black feminists had internationally played a large role in BMR-women's ability to formulate their own identities and explain their experiences. An important development in the discussion around BMR-women's experiences and identities was the coining of the term intersectionality by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, which eventually became *kruispuntdenken* in Dutch. However, before Crenshaw coined the term, many were already formulating their experiences using similar ideas, it was just the word itself that was missing. An important text that is considered a precursor of intersectional theory is *A Black Feminist Statement*, published by the Combahee River Collective in 1977.<sup>47</sup> The American group consisted of Black lesbian feminists who wrote about oppression on race, class, gender and more, and how these forms of oppression were connected. The group addressed the intertwining connection between racial and sexual oppression, and discussed other forms of oppression that were in turn connected.<sup>48</sup> These ideas were impactful on women in the Netherlands who were facing similar issues, especially as this was a period in which women of colour were trying to articulate their own identities and explain what kinds of oppression they faced.<sup>49</sup> This was of course also the case for the women of Sister Outsider. In 'Herinneringen aan Sister Outsider', an article that reflects on the existence of the group, Gloria Wekker tells the author that before Sister Outsider existed, the women were already reading literature by Black American women. She and other black lesbian feminists shared a bibliography that listed black lesbian texts. The authors of the *A Black Feminist Statement* were among the authors listed. When looking for more authors to read and share among the group, Gloria Wekker first came across Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider*.<sup>50</sup> Texts by African-American women were influential to the movement and the

---

<sup>46</sup> Nancy Jouwe, 'Standing at the Crossroads: The Black, Migrant & Refugee Women's Movement in the Netherlands', *Historica* 3 (2016): 4.

<sup>47</sup> Helma Lutz and Gloria Wekker, 'Een hoogvlakte met joude winden. De geschiedenis van het gender- en etniciteitsdenken in Nederland', in *Caleidoscopische visies: De zwarte, migranten- en vluchtelingen vrouwenbeweging in Nederland*, ed. Maayke Botman, Nancy Jouwe, and Gloria Wekker (Amsterdam: Mazirel Pers, 2024), 96–97.

<sup>48</sup> The Combahee River Collective, 'Combahee River Collective: A Black Feminist Statement', *Off Our Backs*, June 1979.

<sup>49</sup> Captain and Ghorashi, "'Tot behoud van mijn identiteit." Identiteitsvorming binnen de zmv-vrouwenbeweging', 315.

<sup>50</sup> Hermans, 'Herinneringen Aan Sister Outsider', 16.

ways in which women who were active in the BMR-movement articulated their own experiences and identities.

There were also some women in the Netherlands who were writing about racism and Dutch feminists' lack of intersectionality during this time. Philomena Essed was one of these authors who wrote about racism in Dutch society. Even before the 'official' beginning of the BMR-movement, Essed wrote critically about the feminist movement. Essed is most known for her book *Alledaags racisme* which was first published in 1984, based on her dissertation. Essed was one of the first in the Netherlands to explore the issues faced by BMR-women in Dutch society and to publish about it. A year prior to Julia da Lima's speech in 1983, a shortened version of one of Essed's texts on racism in the women's movement had been included in the congress bundle for the Winter University.<sup>51</sup> Gloria Wekker also wrote on the issues women of colour faced within Dutch women's studies programs. In 'Praten in het Donker' she states that even though the field was reliant on foreign theories and texts, the programs were selective and excluded discussions on ethnicity. Wekker states that in doing so, women's studies has contributed to the process of *othering* BMR-women.<sup>52</sup> Despite the existing criticisms of the feminist movement, the Winter University of 1983 remains a vital point in time for the beginning of the BMR-movement. It marks the beginning of a period in which BMR-women started to organise more formally. After the Winter University of 1983, a national organisation was formed, and many smaller organisations were established in its wake.<sup>53</sup>

Aside from the struggle with racism in society and the women's movement, the Dutch government also played a role in the birth of the BMR-movement. The government implemented the women and minority project (vem-project) from 1982 to 1990. This policy was meant to encourage organising amongst migrant women. Sister Outsider, like many of the BMR-organisations, relied on government funding for organising their events. Yet, policies that encouraged BMR-organisations were successful to varying degrees. Many organisations were critical of relying on government funding. However, since multiple organisations were not able to continue to exist once the funding ceased, it can be stated that the policies did

---

<sup>51</sup> Troetje Loewenthal, 'Er ontbreekt altijd een stuk van de puzzel. Een inclusief curriculum gewenst', in *Caleidoscopische visies: De zwarte, migranten- en vluchtelingen vrouwenbeweging in Nederland*, ed. Maayke Botman, Nancy Jouwe, and Gloria Wekker (Amsterdam: Mazirel Pers, 2024), 139.

<sup>52</sup> Rosi Braidotti and Gloria Wekker, eds., *Praten in Het Donker: Multiculturalisme En Anti-Racisme in Feministisch Perspectief*, Serie Feminisme in Verandering (Kampen: Kok Agora, 1996), 74–77.

<sup>53</sup> Goudt and Redmond, *Daar hoor ik ook bij*, 62.

positively influence the amount of organisations that existed for BMR-women.<sup>54</sup> The government funding and the lack of intersectional thinking in the feminist movement show that there were a multitude of reasons for the BMR-movement to emerge. The development of different groups within the movement, based on commonalities and shared oppression, is consistent with the sentiments that inspired the movement. Sister Outsider was one such group, forming, amongst other reasons, to create a space for black lesbian women.

### **Lesbian identity in the BMR-movement**

The women who formed Sister Outsider were, of course, not the only black lesbian women in the Netherlands. Within the BMR-movement, discussions about lesbianism ranged from the decision to call oneself a lesbian to the concept of ‘coming out’. However, there were multiple reasons for lesbianism being a more controversial topic in the movement. Firstly, the notion existed that sexual relationships between women were more prevalent amongst black women. At the same time, many believed that lesbianism was not possible amongst women who had a Muslim background.<sup>55</sup> Because of these differences, BMR-women had a variety of experiences and views on lesbianism. Additionally, many queer people of colour, including black lesbians, did not agree with the emphasis on coming out placed by the Dutch queer community.<sup>56</sup> The BMR-movement has played a large role in changing the ideas surrounding the coming out process in the West. One actor was Flamboyant, the meeting and information centre for BMR-women in Amsterdam, which hosted events and discussions about queer experiences and identities for people of colour. The centre would play a significant role in the ability to criticise the western concept of coming out by creating a space where those conversations could take place. The centre would host events that encouraged these discussions, some of which were organised by Sister Outsider.<sup>57</sup>

Sister Outsider was not the first organisation where black queer women could meet. Wekker and Leon themselves had established a talking group for black lesbian women in Amsterdam in 1979. According to themselves, the group was the first (and only) one like it in the Netherlands. The group disbanded after two years of talking, and besides a mention in the document *Overlevers: Een groepsportret van Sister Outsider* there is no mention of this group

---

<sup>54</sup> Deekman and Hermans, ‘Heilig vuur. Bezieling en kracht in de organisatievorming van zmv-vrouwenbewegingen in Nederland’, 174–78.

<sup>55</sup> Captain and Ghorashi, “‘Tot behoud van mijn identiteit.’” Identiteitsvorming binnen de zmv-vrouwenbeweging’, 328.

<sup>56</sup> Mariette Hermans and Gloria Wekker, ‘ZMV-vrouwen. Aïsha is cool, Black Orchid en Kroesje’, in *Lesbo-encyclopedie*, ed. Mirjam Hemker and Linda Huijsmans (Amsterdam: Ambo/Anthos, 2009), 231.

<sup>57</sup> Frank, ‘Flamboyant: Wildness, Loss, and Possibility in Feminist Organizing in the Netherlands’, 43.

in the archives.<sup>58</sup> However, another organisation existed in this period for queer people of colour: in 1980, Lionel Jokhoe and Max Lievendag established the group SUHO, for queer Surinamese people (in the Netherlands). However, SUHO was, like many other queer organisations in the Netherlands at the time, a mostly predominantly male organisation. Still, Surinamese women felt more welcome within SUHO than the COC. Maureen Tardjopawiro reflected on her time with both the COC and SUHO in an interview on bisexuality for the magazine *Ashanti*, a magazine for Surinamese women. In an interview for *Homologie*, Charietje Choenni, an editor for *Ashanti*, discusses the magazine and Surinamese women in the Netherlands. It is worth noting that *Homologie* was one of the few magazines for a queer audience that discussed race and racism. In addition, the magazine sometimes included a section for black women in their reading recommendations, including authors such as Alice Walker and Astrid Roemer.<sup>59</sup> Choenni states that *Ashanti* purposefully included articles that discussed both feminism and homosexuality, as they wanted to reach as many Surinamese women as possible.<sup>60</sup> In the interview, Tardjopawiro stated that she never truly felt at home with the COC, but was much happier now that she has found a place in SUHO.<sup>61</sup> Tardjopawiro would be one of the founders for the women's group in SUHO. In 1981, Tienieke Sumter and Maureen Tardjopawiro wrote an article for *Ashanti* reflecting on the celebration of the first anniversary of SUHO. They note that in comparison to the first SUHO event, there were more women present. Sumter & Tardjopawiro state that a year prior, only three women had been present at the event, while now they estimated that there were 40. With this increased presence of women, Sumter and Tardjopawiro decided to start a women's group within SUHO. During the event, they had already asked around, and many of the women present had responded positively.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, Sumter herself would be one of the founding members of Sister Outsider in 1984. She would also become the head of SUHO.<sup>63</sup> Outside of SUHO another group was established called Oema Soso. The organisation was established in 1983 for black lesbian women and prioritised ethnic solidarity instead of

---

<sup>58</sup> Gloria Wekker and Sister Outsider, 'Overlevers: Groepsportret van Sister Outsider', March 1986, 8, Inv.nr. 23, Archive Ruth Naomi (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

<sup>59</sup> 'Vrolijk's Boekenbulletin', *Homologie*, 1985, 46, Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender.

<sup>60</sup> Lucie Th. Vermij, 'Surinaamse Vrouwen in Nederland', *Homologie*, 1983, 10, Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender.

<sup>61</sup> 'Als Je van Vrouwen En Mannen Houdt', *Ashanti*, 1984, 7, TS-106, Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

<sup>62</sup> Tienieke Sumter and Maureen Tardjopawiro, 'SUHO Vierde Eenjarig Bestaan', *Ashanti*, 1981, 13, TS-106, Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

<sup>63</sup> Julian Isenia Wigbertson, 'SUHO', With Pride, accessed 6 May 2024, <https://withpride.ihlia.nl/story/suho/>.

gender. However, there is little to no archival trace of this organisation existing, apart from a mention in a paper on *mati* culture in the Netherlands by Marie-Jose Janssens and Wilhelmina van Wetering published in 1985.<sup>64</sup> Despite the lack of documentation, this still shows that there were other organisations and places before Sister Outsider was established, even though it is often credited for being the first group for black lesbians. In fact, the women that set up Sister Outsider often played a part in setting up these predecessors.

Aside from groups created for black lesbian women specifically, some BMR-women's organisations also spend time and effort discussing lesbianism. The organisation behind *Ashanti* held a study day about heterosexuality being the norm in society as part of the *Ashanti*-weekend in 1982. An article on the weekend includes an account of the study day. A large part of the day was clearly intended to focus on how women could liberate themselves from the hetero-norm and how this norm influenced their lives. Gender roles, their origin and their effects on the women who partook in the discussion individually and on society at large were discussed. The study day largely focused on how their own upbringing influenced them and had aided in reinforcing gender-roles in society. In addition, they talked about certain close "friendships" the women had had with other women when they were younger. The consensus seems to have been that a relationship with another woman was seen as an impossible feat, because of the persisting ideal that women have relationships with men. As a result, these close female "friendships" dwindle in quantity and closeness.<sup>65</sup> The women continued a discussion on the question if relationships with other women guarantee liberation of the hetero-norm. The women present for the discussion felt that this was not the case, as lesbian women were just as influenced by the norm in their upbringing as non-lesbian women. However, they did feel that it is easier to discuss and challenge this norm in a lesbian relationship.<sup>66</sup>

Another example of events for black lesbians set up by BMR-organisations took place in 1984. During an event for International Women's Day a workshop was organised called 'Black woman and the lesbian identity'. A writer for *Ashanti* was present and wrote an account of the workshop for the magazine. The workshop had 23 participants from different Surinamese backgrounds, and not all of them identified as lesbians. Six of them were, in fact, heterosexual women, and their presence was the cause for some frustration and annoyance for

---

<sup>64</sup> Marie-Jose Janssens and Wilhelmina van Wetering, 'Mati En Lesbiennes: Homoseksualiteit En Etnische Identiteit Bij Creools-Surinaamse Vrouwen in Nederland', *Sociologische Gids* 32 (1985): 413.

<sup>65</sup> 'Studiedag over de Norm van de Heteroseksualiteit', *Ashanti*, 1982, 5, TS-106, Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

<sup>66</sup> 'Studiedag', 6–7.

some of the queer women who were present. The black lesbians present wanted to discuss black lesbian issues with other black lesbians and did not want to educate heterosexual women. After some talking, the heterosexual women left to join another workshop instead.<sup>67</sup> The workshop continued to discuss the term lesbian and what it means to the women present, and whether there were any alternatives in different languages. The participants struggled to find a Malaysian or Indonesian word. They did find multiple words in Sranantongo. One of them, *patu*, being a direct translation of the Dutch *pot*. *Mati* and *kompe* were more “authentically Surinamese”, and described female friendships and relationships common amongst Surinamese women in Suriname. After discussing the terminology, the women moved on to discuss discrimination and other struggles they faced. Many felt that it was important to have a place where they could feel strengthened in their decision to identify as a lesbian.<sup>68</sup> These events and discussions show that being able to openly discuss similar identities and oppression meant a lot to these BMR-women. In addition, it shows that they were mindful of their own (cultural) backgrounds and how these could inform their identity and position in society.

One of the more prevalent discussions amongst black lesbian women was whether lesbianism was a western concept and whether black lesbians should use it as an identity or descriptor. This discussion in turn was also influenced by the personal backgrounds of the women, who turned to their own personal cultural backgrounds to formulate alternative identities.<sup>69</sup> For Afro-Surinamese women, some felt that *mati* was more fitting. Antillean women sometimes preferred the term *kambrada* and some Ghanaian women would prefer *supi*. Most research into these alternative identities relates to the Afro-Surinamese *mati*. Wekker and Hermans write in the *Lesbo-encyclopedia* that this is partially due to the fact that Surinamese women had a longer presence in the Netherlands in comparison to other queer BMR-women and thus had more time to develop their own culture in the Netherlands.<sup>70</sup> The *mati*-culture in Suriname was well-known and considered normal. A *mati* woman had a relationship and children with a man, but when he was absent, she would live with another woman.<sup>71</sup> Wekker herself wrote about *mati* culture in Suriname for her dissertation. When she

---

<sup>67</sup> ‘Amsterdam: Zwarte Vrouwendag’, *Ashanti*, 1984, 11, TS-106, Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

<sup>68</sup> ‘Amsterdam: Zwarte Vrouwendag’, 12.

<sup>69</sup> Captain and Ghorashi, “Tot behoud van mijn identiteit.” *Identiteitsvorming binnen de zmv-vrouwenbeweging*, 329.

<sup>70</sup> Hermans and Wekker, ‘ZMV-vrouwen. Aïsha is cool, Black Orchid en Kroesje’, 231–32.

<sup>71</sup> Vermij, ‘Surinaamse Vrouwen in Nederland’, 10.



returned to her work to publish it, she decided to incorporate an analysis on *mati* culture amongst afro-Surinamese women in the Netherlands as well. Wekker found that different *mati* networks existed in the Netherlands, where mostly afro-Surinamese women would participate in leisure activities and form a support network. Wekker stated that, although most relationships amongst these women were relationships between afro-Surinamese women, some of the *mati* women had relationships with Surinamese women from different Surinamese backgrounds (e.g. Javanese and Hindustani), and very few had relationships with non-Surinamese women.<sup>72</sup> When examining the *mati* identity in a western context, Wekker concludes that using *mati* as an identity label reinforces western notions of categorisation. She states that there are significant differences in examining *mati* culture in a Surinamese setting and a western context. *Mati*, in a Surinamese setting, was not an identity, but a descriptor of behaviour. *Mati* women in Suriname considered themselves to participate in sexual same-sex activities, yet they did not consider *mati* to be a significant identifier, instead separating same-sex behaviour from sexual identities. However, when discussing *mati* in a western setting, the term became more of an identity.<sup>73</sup> In a paper from 1985 on the *mati* identity amongst Surinamese women in the Netherlands, Janssens and Van Wetering concluded that many Surinamese women preferred *mati* as a term over lesbian, even when the women did not ‘properly’ fit the definition of *mati* behaviour.<sup>74</sup>

These studies and the events discussed previously show that it was important for lesbian BMR-women to approach their identities in a way that was mindful of their own cultural background. Even though the word lesbian was used a lot, many also tried to connect this more western way of identification with terms from their own cultural background that may not have been used in a similar way originally, such as *mati*. Evidently, this struggle with identification with non-western terms in a western context intrigued Sister Outsider founder Gloria Wekker, as *mati* culture was the topic of her dissertation and she elaborated on the topic when she (re)published her work in 2006. Even so, the women of Sister Outsider clearly decided that using lesbian as an identifier was right for them. However, some other prominent queer black women did not. Astrid Roemer, born in Suriname, was interviewed in 1984 for *Homologie* after publishing her novel *Over de gekte van een vrouw*. *Homologie* was a Dutch journal oriented towards gay studies. When asked about the fact that the word lesbian is not

---

<sup>72</sup> Gloria Wekker, *The Politics of Passion: Women’s Sexual Culture in the Afro-Surinamese Diaspora*, Between Men--between Women (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 246.

<sup>73</sup> Wekker, 193.

<sup>74</sup> Janssens and Wetering, ‘Mati En Lesbiennes’, 403–12.

once mentioned in her novel, even though its main character clearly is part of a lesbian relationship, Roemer states that she never considered thinking about it that way until after she had published *Over de gekte van een vrouw*. She complains about the constant use of labels, such as black or lesbian. Roemer states that many women in Suriname do not openly discuss their relationships or use a label, they “just do it”.<sup>75</sup> Roemer herself has stated that she preferred not to use the word lesbian due to feeling that using it was restricting. Others felt that using the word lesbian made them visible to others.<sup>76</sup> All things considered, there was not one way to identify as a black queer woman, and the discussion surrounding identification played a significant role for the women who were looking for community with other black queer women. Even though the existing BMR-organisations did create spaces to discuss lesbian identity, the women still went on to create their own spaces, specific to the axis of being both black women and queer.

### **Identity and poetry**

As discussed previously, European feminists of colour were influenced not only by their own experiences, but by international discourse, especially the work of African American activists.<sup>77</sup> For social movements to gain traction, it is important that they are able to formulate a (common) identity. According to Bernstein, being able to form an identity allows movements the ability to establish goals and articulate the problems that they face as a group. Additionally, establishing an identity allows for the normalisation of stigmatised identities in society and questions the existing norm.<sup>78</sup> When looking at the BMR- and lesbian feminist movement in the Netherlands, it becomes clear that the groups becoming aware of how their identities differed has played a large part in their motivations to organise themselves. The lesbian feminists noted that the feminist movement had very little room for lesbian specific issues. In turn, BMR-women noted that the feminist movement largely ignored racism. It is in this creation of social movements and establishing of identities that it is important to look not just at events like workshops or discussions, but also at poetry. According to Linda Garber, poetry has played a vital part in lesbian movements across both the United States and Europe.<sup>79</sup> When discussing the queer of colour movement in the Netherlands, it is important

---

<sup>75</sup> Fineke van der Veen, ‘Astrid Roemer: “Altijd Dat Hokjes-Denken. Hokje Lesbisch, Hokje Zwart.”’, *Homologie*, 1984, 12–13, Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender.

<sup>76</sup> Captain and Ghorashi, “Tot behoud van mijn identiteit.” *Identiteitsvorming binnen de zmv-vrouwenbeweging*, 330.

<sup>77</sup> El-Tayeb, *European Others*, 44–46.

<sup>78</sup> Bernstein, ‘Identity Politics’, 59.

<sup>79</sup> Garber, *Identity Poetics*, 10.

to acknowledge these more artful influences besides the more academic texts that influenced the movement.

As mentioned previously, El-Tayeb's analysis of the usage of oral traditions such as poetry amongst (queer) feminists of colour in (western) Europe describes poetry as a form of activism.<sup>80</sup> She is not the first to connect poetry to the activism of women of colour. Audre Lorde emphasised the importance of poetry as a political tool in her text *Poetry Is Not a Luxury*. Lorde was quite influential for the formation of Sister Outsider, and her views on poetry can be seen reflected in the Sister Outsider archive. *Poetry Is Not a Luxury* was originally a reaction to the decision by *Chrysakus: A Magazine of Female Culture* to cease their publication of poetry.<sup>81</sup> In this text, Lorde wrote the following:

I speak here of poetry as a revelatory distillation of experience, not the sterile word play that, too often, the white fathers distorted the word poetry to mean - in order to cover a desperate wish for imagination without insight.

For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives.<sup>82</sup>

For Lorde, poetry was an accessible first step to action and a way to reach those who had very little time to invest in social movements. Poetry was accessible and less time-consuming.<sup>83</sup> In 'Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference', she wrote:

Of all art forms, poetry is the most economical. It is the one which is the most secret, which requires the least physical labor, the least material, and the one which can be done between shifts, in the hospital pantry, on the subway, and on scraps of surplus paper.<sup>84</sup>

Additionally, poetry allowed for both the reader and the poet to formulate experiences. In turn, poetry helped to become aware of oppressive structures and the power to not only survive living through them, but the power to fight them.<sup>85</sup> Poetry was instrumental in the

---

<sup>80</sup> El-Tayeb, *European Others*, 47.

<sup>81</sup> Garber, *Identity Poetics*, 104.

<sup>82</sup> Audre Lorde, 'Poetry Is Not a Luxury', in *Sister Outsider* (New York: Penguin Books, 2019), 26.

<sup>83</sup> Kaisa Ilmonen, 'Identity Politics Revisited: On Audre Lorde, Intersectionality, and Mobilizing Writing Styles', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 26, no. 1 (February 2019): 14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506817702410>.

<sup>84</sup> Audre Lorde, 'Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference', in *Sister Outsider*, by Audre Lorde (New York: Penguin Books. First published 1984 by Crossing Press (Berkely), 2019), 109.

<sup>85</sup> Lorde, 'Poetry Is Not a Luxury', 27–28.

development of women of colour feminism in (western) Europe. Poetry allowed for the artistic and the political to be combined, and the circulation of work by Black American women such as Audre Lorde helped to establish a political consciousness in women of colour outside the United States.<sup>86</sup>

Lorde's writing was instrumental in the creation of the group Sister Outsider. As stated earlier, the women circulated a reading list consisting of texts by (American) women of colour. Reading the works included in this list, such as *A Black Feminist Statement*, helped the women in the Netherlands to see similar oppressive structures. Not all texts were non-fiction in nature, however, as some were more literary or poetic. One such work is *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* by Audre Lorde. The book was instrumental for the formation of the group. Kaisa Ilmonen writes that Lorde's *Zami* allowed for queer women of colour to find ways to articulate their specific experiences.<sup>87</sup> Gloria Wekker herself has discussed how reading *Zami* affected her personally. In her article for *Katijf*, in which she recounts Lorde's first visit to the Netherlands, Wekker writes how certain passages in the book touched her deeply. She writes about the pages in which Lorde describes her younger self, sitting between her mother's legs to get her hair done. Wekker describes these pages of *Zami* as small but significant, stating that it is a testament to the recognisability for (queer) black women in Lorde's work. In the same article, Wekker writes about how fellow Sister Outsider founder Tania Leon felt that Lorde managed to bring to light the gender roles perpetuated in relationships between black and white lesbians: the expectation that the black woman would fulfil a butch role no matter what.<sup>88</sup> This analysis of butch-femme dynamics and the role race played in lesbian relationships was once again discussed by Gloria Wekker when she discussed Lorde's lasting influence in a discussion with Cassandra Ellerbe-Dueck.<sup>89</sup> Reflecting on their own activism and the influence Audre Lorde had on them as individuals and the movements they were a part of respectively, Ellerbe-Dueck and Wekker claimed that Lorde had a significant part to play. Her work helped them to express themselves and connect across (European) borders.<sup>90</sup> However, it is worth noting that not all founding members of Sister Outsider felt that the emphasis on Lorde and her work was correct. In a letter to the group in which Jose Maas states that she will no longer be a part of the formation, Maas

---

<sup>86</sup> El-Tayeb, *European Others*, 46–47.

<sup>87</sup> Ilmonen, 'Identity Politics Revisited', 12.

<sup>88</sup> Gloria Wekker, 'Audre Lorde, in de Hand van Afrekete', *Katijf*, 1984, 4.

<sup>89</sup> Ellerbe-Dueck and Wekker, 'Naming Ourselves as Black Women in Europe', 58.

<sup>90</sup> Ellerbe-Dueck and Wekker, 68.

writes that she felt Lorde's visit was important, but at the same time she felt that it was "too restricted".<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, Lorde her work left a significant mark on the group and the BMR-movement in general.

Audre Lorde's writing has often been connected to identity politics.<sup>92</sup> Rightfully so, as Lorde herself stressed the importance of identity and how identities connect people. In 1980, Lorde herself wrote 'Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference', in which she states the following:

As a forty-nine-year-old Black lesbian feminist socialist mother of two, including one boy, and a member of an interracial couple, I usually find myself part of some group defined as other, deviant, inferior, or just plain wrong.<sup>93</sup>

Lorde was frequently vocal about her personal identity and experiences in her work, although the descriptors she uses vary from time to time. One reason for which Lorde felt it was important to stress identity, was that it allowed people to vocalise the existing differences between them. Lorde felt that not acknowledging differences aided the inability to articulate how they affected society.<sup>94</sup> Lorde felt that acknowledging differences could empower movements, such as the women's movement, to overcome problems.<sup>95</sup> In her work, Lorde wrote about creating coalitions and working together to fight oppressive systems. However, she was still adamant that differences should be acknowledged.<sup>96</sup> Lorde herself is often credited with being one of the predecessors of intersectionality. Kaisa Ilmonen writes that the ways in which she articulated her own identities and how they influenced her position in society resemble that which would later be called intersectionality, using race, gender and sexuality, amongst other (social) identities to describe her position in society, but also the oppression she faced because of them.<sup>97</sup>

Traces of Lorde's thinking on identity and oppression can be seen in the Sister Outsider archive as well. In a document titled *Overlevers: Een Groepsportret*, the women write:

---

<sup>91</sup> José Maas, 'José Maas to Gloria, Tania and Tienieke', 11 February 1985, Inv.nr. 23, Archive Ruth Naomi (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

<sup>92</sup> Ilmonen, 'Identity Politics Revisited', 10.

<sup>93</sup> Lorde, 'Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference', 107.

<sup>94</sup> Lorde, 108.

<sup>95</sup> Lorde, 111.

<sup>96</sup> Ilmonen, 'Identity Politics Revisited', 11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506817702410> Ilmonen, 11.

<sup>97</sup> Ilmonen, 'Identity Politics Revisited', 10–11.

What we have in common is that we are black and lesbian and militant, but for the rest there are many differences, which sometimes cause small ripples in the group pond, but which are usually also very nice and exciting.<sup>98</sup>

The women frequently emphasise that they are quite different, and that these differences are just as important to acknowledge as the ways in which they are similar. They claim that the differences make the group more interesting and are valuable.<sup>99</sup> In the document *Overlevers*, the women discuss their own personal history with their sexual identity and experiences as immigrants in the Netherlands. Though they do not shy away from their similarities, their differences are just as important to the group. The document *Overlevers* shows how important identity and awareness of the oppressive structures was to the women. In *Overlevers* they discuss not just their own experiences, but the Dutch colonial history and the ways in which traces of this past can be seen reflected in society, especially regarding different migrant groups in the Netherlands.<sup>100</sup> Introducing their own personal (migration) histories, the group writes: “The Dutch history traces its lines into the present, affects women's lives here and now.”<sup>101</sup> The title accompanying this section of the document can be translated to: “We are here, because you were there”, referring to the fact that all the women have a migration background that can be traced back to a former colony of the Netherlands. The previous paragraphs of the document summarise the Dutch colonial history and Dutch colonial rule, condensed to a little over a single page.<sup>102</sup> Although Audre Lorde herself had no hand in the creation of the document, her views on oppression, identity and operating as a collective while acknowledging differences can be seen in the text.

However, when looking at the archives, it becomes clear that the women of Sister Outsider had a slightly different approach than Lorde. In a report of Lorde's visit, which was originally written as a diary entry by Gloria Wekker and later published in *Katijf*, Wekker writes that during an event those in attendance went on to discuss the usage of ‘of colour’ as an identifier. Lorde was an advocate for the usage of ‘of colour’ in the United States as it gives space to acknowledge differences.<sup>103</sup> However, Sister Outsider maintained their usage

---

<sup>98</sup> Original text: “Met elkaar hebben we gemeen dat we zwart en lesbisch en strijdbaar zijn, voor de rest zijn er vooral veel verschillen, die soms voor kleine rimpelingen in de groepsvijver zorgen, maar die meestal ook ontzettend aardig en spannend zijn.”, found in: Wekker and Sister Outsider, ‘Overlevers’, 1.

<sup>99</sup> ‘Sister Outsider’, n.d., Inv.nr. 23, Archive Ruth Naomi (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

<sup>100</sup> Wekker and Sister Outsider, ‘Overlevers’, 7.

<sup>101</sup> Original text: “De Nederlandse geschiedenis trekt zijn lijnen door tot in het heden, beïnvloedt vrouwenlevens hier en nu.” found in: Wekker and Sister Outsider, 3.

<sup>102</sup> Wekker and Sister Outsider, 2–3.

<sup>103</sup> Wekker, ‘Audre Lorde’, 5.

of black as an identifier, even when others started to use BMR. Wekker herself has explained her commitment to using black instead of alternatives as the need to retain the solidarity that comes with using it in a broader sense, regardless of whether this means that mutual differences are ignored or that commonalities with groups that fall outside the definition of black remain unsaid. Wekker specifically said that the movement could not afford to lose this solidarity in a Dutch context.<sup>104</sup> This dichotomy, of remaining to use black in the broadest sense as it was used in the early stages of the BMR movement, while simultaneously echoing Lorde's sentiment that differences need to be acknowledged and are a source of strength, is interesting. It shows that even though the American influences on the BMR-movement, including Sister Outsider, were important and are strongly reflected in the archive, they did not simply copy what was being said and done by Black American feminists. They considered how their work could apply to their own Dutch context and acted accordingly.

Yet, Lorde specifically remained influential to the group Sister Outsider. Another way in which her influence can be seen is how the women who were part of Sister Outsider established international connections and coalitions. The archive has documents from a South African group who were aided by the women and who received advice and support from the Amsterdam-based group. Additionally, Audre Lorde herself was instrumental to the connections formed between Black German & Black Dutch women, who she encouraged to meet and helped to connect.<sup>105</sup> Lorde's work has left a large mark on the BMR-movement, especially in the form of the group Sister Outsider.

## Conclusion

The influences of Sister Outsider were varied. The group was established in a period in which different groups had split off from the feminist movement at large, specifically lesbian feminist groups and the BMR-movement. Across the spectrum, different (feminist) groups were established that focused more on specific groups of women and the oppression they faced because they were not just women, but lesbian women, or BMR-women. Sister Outsider is often classified as part of the BMR-movement, and the group shares many influences with the movement for Black, Migrant and Refugee women. Texts by women of colour, especially Black American women, were vital for BMR-women in the Netherlands in articulating their own struggles with the women's movement, as well as the oppression they faced in society at

---

<sup>104</sup> Captain and Ghorashi, "Tot behoud van mijn identiteit." *Identiteitsvorming binnen de zmv-vrouwenbeweging*, 323.

<sup>105</sup> Ellerbe-Dueck and Wekker, 'Naming Ourselves as Black Women in Europe', 65.

large. Though the group Sister Outsider is described as a black lesbian group, not all BMR-women were comfortable with the term lesbian. Many tried to look at their own cultural background to find alternative terms. One of these was *mati*, which was also researched by Sister Outsider founder Gloria Wekker. In addition, the group Sister Outsider was named after a book of the same name by Audre Lorde. Lorde herself was quite influential to the group. Her ideas on poetry, identity and oppression can be seen reflected in documents produced by the group Sister Outsider, as well as in their actions, which will be discussed more in depth in the following chapter.



## **Chapter 2: No one else but ourselves (1984-1987 and onwards)**

In order to understand how Sister Outsider contributed to creating a black lesbian culture, one needs to know what the group actually did in terms of organising, besides the influences that inspired their thought. In a letter to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SoZaWe) from 1986, Gloria Wekker describes the activities organised by Sister Outsider as the following:

Our activities focus on making visible and promoting black women's culture e.g. and black lesbian culture. We do this i.a. by stimulating black women to write and by organising a literary salon, where they can read from their own work, poetry and prose, make music and tell each other stories.<sup>106</sup>

Most of these activities were held in the Flamboyant centre and were organised about three times a year. These events were central to Sister Outsider's mission: creating a black lesbian culture. This chapter discusses these events and how they contributed to creating a black lesbian culture, as well as examine the groups that sprung up after Sister Outsider officially disbanded in 1987.

### **Establishing a black lesbian culture**

The first events organised by Sister Outsider were the events planned during Audre Lorde's visit to the Netherlands in 1984. As stated previously, the group formed in order to make this visit possible in the first place. In order to facilitate the visit, Gloria Wekker wrote to the emancipation policy coordination directorate on the groups behalf, requesting financial support to facilitate Lorde's visit to the Netherlands. In the letter, Wekker emphasises Lorde's role as part of the black lesbian women's movement. Wekker also claims that they wanted to reach as many women as possible and that different magazines would write about Lorde in the months following her visit.<sup>107</sup> The women would receive funding from the directorate, on the condition that the directorate would receive an overview of the costs and articles that were

---

<sup>106</sup> Original text: "Onze activiteiten richten zich op het zichtbaar maken en bevorderen van zwarte vrouwenkultuur i.h.a. en zwarte lesbische cultuur. We doen dat o.a. door zwarte vrouwen te stimuleren om te schrijven en door het organiseren van een literair salon, waar zij uit eigen werk, poëzie en proza, voor kunnen lezen, muziek maken en elkaar verhalen vertellen." in: Wekker, 'Gloria Wekker on behalf of Sister Outsider to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SoZaWe)', 11 April 1986.

<sup>107</sup> Gloria Wekker, 'Gloria Wekker on behalf of Sister Outsider to Mw. Dekkinga, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SoZaWe)', Letter, 8 June 1984, 496 Sister Outsider te Amsterdam, 1984-1987, Inventory of the archives of the Directorate for Coordination of Emancipation Policy and task predecessors of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and of some committees and project groups, 1968) 1978-1988.

published because of Lorde's visit.<sup>108</sup> The folder pertaining to Sister Outsider in their archive shows that they received at least one magazine that detailed Lorde's visit. A copy of *Katijf*, one of the magazines mentioned by Wekker in her request to the directorate, can be found in the archive. During Lorde's first visit to the Netherlands, Gloria Wekker kept a diary. This was later published in *Katijf* as a personal account of Lorde's visit. This personal account shows that in addition to the planned visits and talks, Lorde and the women of Sister Outsider also had deeply personal conversations about their experiences, racism, feminism and queerness. Lorde was staying with one of them, and reading the report shows that many of these conversations happened in between planned events.<sup>109</sup>

Studying the documents pertaining to this first visit, it becomes clear that literature and poetry were an important facet of activism for the women from the start. The events with Lorde often focused on her writing. The events took place in women's centre Kenau and feminist bookshop Xantippe, as well as one large party in a theatre hall owned by the COC. Multiple events, such as Lorde's book signing in Xantippe, were accompanied by performances by other black women. Those who were to attend the large celebration were also encouraged to bring their own instruments.<sup>110</sup> The closing event of Lorde's visit was another visit to Kenau, where Lorde read from her own poetry. Wekker's reflection on the event shows how intertwined Lorde's poetry and activism were. Wekker writes how the atmosphere changed and became more charged as Lorde progressed. Lorde recited her poem *Power*, amongst other poems. In this poem, Lorde writes about a young Black boy that was shot by a white police officer. When writing about this poem in the article, Wekker describes Lorde as someone who made the unspeakable spoken and describes how her poems managed to not only reflect their own pain, but also unearth societies' painful truths. Lorde did not exclusively read from her work as a poet. She continued the event with a reading of a shortened version of *The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism*, which left the room silent. Lorde concluded the event with reading some of her unpublished work, dedicated to

---

<sup>108</sup> A. Kappeyne van de Coppello and E.J. Mulock Houwer, 'Kappeyne van de Coppello and Mulock Houwer to Gloria Wekker on Behalf of Sister Outsider Regarding Subsidy', Letter, 26 October 1984, 496 Sister Outsider te Amsterdam, 1984-1987, Inventory of the archives of the Directorate for Coordination of Emancipation Policy and task predecessors of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and of some committees and project groups, 1968) 1978-1988.

<sup>109</sup> Wekker, 'Audre Lorde', 4-5.

<sup>110</sup> 'Program from Audre Lorde's Visit to Amsterdam', 1984, Inv.nr. 23, Archive Ruth Noami (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

South African women.<sup>111</sup> The reference by Wekker to Lorde as someone who speaks the unspeakable is reminiscent of what Lorde wrote about poetry herself:

This is poetry as illumination, for it is through poetry that we give name to those ideas which are - until the poem - nameless and formless, about to be birthed, but already felt.<sup>112</sup>

As stated in the previous chapter, poetry was an important asset of black (lesbian) feminism. This notion can be seen in the events organised by Sister Outsider from the very beginning, not in the least because of the presence of Audre Lorde herself. The sentiment that poetry could provide a way to not only express oneself, but also form an act of resistance, might be the reason as to why the women behind Sister Outsider emphasised the creation of a black lesbian culture in their objective. In addition to organising Lorde's visit, the group was partially responsible for making her work available in the Netherlands. At the time of Lorde's first visit to Amsterdam, not all her work was available in the Netherlands.<sup>113</sup> The group played a role in bringing still unavailable work and Dutch translations to the Netherlands through feminist publishing house Sara.<sup>114</sup> The group also received congratulatory messages from other feminist organisations when the books launched in the Netherlands.<sup>115</sup>

The women who formed Sister Outsider waited some time until they announced a new event after Lorde's visit was over. Their events were announced in newsletters, sent to addresses the women had collected over time. However, Lorde's first visit and the events organised as a result of her presence in the Netherlands were also accompanied by advertisements in magazines. The archive holds multiple lists with addresses for invitations by way of these newsletters as well as announcements for the events. In a letter from February 1985 the women stated that they were waking up from hibernation and were not planning to become inactive now that it was confirmed that Lorde herself would not be able to visit in 1985. This is the point at which Sister Outsider's role as a creator and facilitator of black lesbian culture became more apparent, and when it became an active goal for the women who formed the group. This ambition is reiterated throughout different documents in the archive; not only in the letters the group sent out, but in a document that describes the group's

---

<sup>111</sup> Wekker, 'Audre Lorde', 7–8.

<sup>112</sup> Lorde, 'Poetry Is Not a Luxury', 25.

<sup>113</sup> Wekker, 'Audre Lorde', 8.

<sup>114</sup> Wekker and Sister Outsider, 'Overlevers', 8–9.

<sup>115</sup> Lesbisch Archief Leeuwarden, 'Letter of Congratulations Regarding the Publishing of "Zami" to Sister Outsider and Feminist Publishing House Sara', Letter, 14 April 1985, Inv.nr. 23, Archive Ruth Naomi (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

background and mission and other descriptions of the group in separate documents and articles. The first letter from 1985 states the following:

(...) [We] want to move forward to discover and shape our own black lesbian culture together with you. No one else will and may do that for us but ourselves.<sup>116</sup>

This first letter goes on to invite the reader to their first gathering. The gatherings played a vital part in the shaping of this black lesbian culture. When asked about the gatherings for an article about Sister Outsider, Tienieke Sumter stated that they were very important for her personally. She felt that they had played a part in her own self-development. The gatherings left her feeling “glad to be gay” and she felt that the visibility of the women present was almost a statement in and of itself.<sup>117</sup> In short, a large part of what made Sister Outsider so meaningful was that it made black lesbians more visible and provided them with a space to develop their own identity.

The question remains, however, what exactly the group did in order to facilitate this identity-formation for black lesbians. This becomes clear in analysing the letters the group sent out. Their first event after Lorde’s visit was called FAMIRI TORI, described as an event where those in attendance “could tell each other stories, read from their own work, make music, perform plays or mime and whatever anyone wants [to do]”.<sup>118</sup> In the mock-version of this announcement, the event is not yet named. They do question what they would like their event to be called. The document suggests a Surinamese word for “beautiful room” or an African or Dutch word that was specific to the group. None of these made the cut, however, *famiri* meaning family and *tori* meaning stories in Surinamese. ‘Famiri tori’ in turn can be translated to something similar to family stories or family talk.<sup>119</sup> The name is fitting for the events organised by the group, as they clearly centred the art of storytelling in all possible ways. From reading their newsletters, it becomes clear that storytelling and creating art was an important part of forming a black lesbian culture. It is this focus on storytelling and art that call to mind the work of Audre Lorde once again. Like Lorde, the women saw art, specifically storytelling, as an important part of their movement. The reciting and creating of poetry was

---

<sup>116</sup> Tania Leon, Tienieke Sumter, and Gloria Wekker, ‘SISA ! Newsletter from Sister Outsider’, Letter, 8 February 1985, Inv.nr. 23, Archive Ruth Noami (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

<sup>117</sup> Hermans, ‘Herrineren Aan Sister Outsider’, 17.

<sup>118</sup> Leon, Sumter, and Wekker, ‘SISA ! Newsletter from Sister Outsider’, 8 February 1985.

<sup>119</sup> This translation is thanks to my mother, who translated it as ‘familiepraatjes’ in Dutch but also explained *tori* sometimes means gossiping, talking or (telling) stories, depending on the context.

encouraged. As discussed in the previous chapter, poetry was considered one of the more accessible texts that could also function as resistance as well as raising awareness. Before a movement begins, there needs to be an understanding.<sup>120</sup> The women of Sister Outsider understood that in order to facilitate social change, they would need to articulate their experiences and oppression first. This happened in different (art) forms, which were presented during their events. As Fatima El-Tayeb has stated in *European Others*, poetry was an important art form in the feminism of women of colour and allowed them to discuss their oppression.<sup>121</sup>

This first event took place at the home of Tania Leon, and asked for women to contact one of the organisers if they were coming and to bring a small financial contribution for the food and drinks provided at the event. Initially, most meetings took place in Leon's home, as her place was the largest.<sup>122</sup> However, other documents in the archive show that eventually the group moved their gatherings to Flamboyant<sup>123</sup>. The first letter by the group announcing the *famiri tori* is concluded stating that "all women are welcome" in capitalised letters, showing that even though the women were focusing on black lesbian women, they welcomed any woman who wanted to participate. The aim of the organisation remains clear, however, as the goal to discover and develop a black lesbian culture is mentioned and emphasised in the letter itself.<sup>124</sup> This emphasis on black lesbian culture is reiterated in another document that sets out a short history of how Sister Outsider was created and what the group does. The document states the following:

Sister Outsider is explicitly meant for non-Dutch lesbian women. It is fine if Dutch women come to one such party, but "the atmosphere is black".<sup>125</sup>

By reading the different documents, it becomes clear that Sister Outsider was not necessarily an exclusive group for black lesbian women. They accepted the attendance of white women in their events. However, they clearly centred their events and the organisation around the experiences and wishes of black lesbian women; black, in this instance and in accordance with the period, meaning "Surinamese, South-African, Caribbean, Indonesian and much

---

<sup>120</sup> Lorde, 'Poetry Is Not a Luxury', 26.

<sup>121</sup> El-Tayeb, *European Others*, 47.

<sup>122</sup> Hermans, 'Herrineren Aan Sister Outsider', 16.

<sup>123</sup> Tania Leon et al., 'Spring Newsletter from Sister Outsider', Letter, 1986, Inv.nr. 23, Archive Ruth Noami (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

<sup>124</sup> Leon, Sumter, and Wekker, 'SISA ! Newsletter from Sister Outsider', 8 February 1985.

<sup>125</sup> Original text: "Sister Outsider is uitdrukkelijk bedoeld voor niet Nederlandse lesbise vrouwen. Als Nederlandse vrouwen naar zo'n feest komen, is dat prima, maar 'de sfeer is zwart'"., found in: 'Sister Outsider'.

more". The women welcomed differences amongst themselves, stating that these differences made it more interesting.<sup>126</sup> In their own words, the women "[did] not shy away from dialogue with white women."<sup>127</sup>

It does not become apparent in the archive how many white women felt like attending their events. However, one condolence card that was sent to the group when they commemorated Audre Lorde after her passing shows that there were white lesbian women who were influenced by the efforts of Sister Outsider. This card was sent by a woman named Anneke, who signed it as "a white feminist lesbian sister".<sup>128</sup> It shows that the white women who attended events from the group were aware of their positionality. Anneke's card shows that the influence Audre Lorde had on Dutch feminists was not limited to black lesbian women in the Netherlands and that her visit, organised by Sister Outsider, also had an impact on white Dutch lesbian women. However, the women of Sister Outsider still struggled with racism that was prevalent amongst white lesbian women. When discussing the Dutch colonial history and racism in Dutch society with Audre Lorde, Maaïke Meijer and Bernadette van Dijck, Gloria Wekker states the following about her struggles with white women as a black woman herself:

If white women here know black women personally, things really start to happen. However, I am so tired of constantly having to explain myself, and comfort [my] white friends that they are not racist themselves, because that is what they want to hear.<sup>129</sup>

In reading documents about organising events for Sister Outsider, it becomes clear that, although white women were not excluded from entering, they were encouraged to be mindful that Sister Outsider was first and foremost a group for black lesbian women. In *White Innocence*, Gloria Wekker herself writes that the movement for black lesbian organising was influenced by the power imbalances between black and white lesbian women.<sup>130</sup> The women of Sister Outsider were aware of these imbalances and formulated their texts carefully, as to not outwardly exclude white women, but while still making it clear that the events were not

---

<sup>126</sup> 'Sister Outsider'.

<sup>127</sup> Wekker and Sister Outsider, 'Overlevers', 9.

<sup>128</sup> Anneke, 'For Audre Lorde', Condolence card, 1992, Inv.nr. 23, Archive Ruth Noami (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

<sup>129</sup> Original text: "Als witte vrouwen hier zwarte vrouwen persoonlijk kennen begint er echt wat te gebeuren. Maar ik ben er zo moe van mezelf steeds uit te moeten leggen, en witte vriendinnen gerust te stellen dat zij misschien persoonlijk niet racistisch zijn, want dat is wat ze willen horen." found in: Maaïke Meijer and Bernadette van Dijck, 'Zwijgen Zal Ons Niet Beschermen: Gesprek Met Audre Lorde, Zwarte Dichteres En Lesbisch Feministe', *Lover*, 1984, 15.

<sup>130</sup> Wekker, *White Innocence*, 118.

intended for them all the same. When looking at the activities organised by Sister Outsider, the question remains whether white women were interested in attending in the first place, as the emphasis on black lesbian culture rings throughout their letters and announcements.

The events organised by Sister Outsider eventually moved from their own homes to Flamboyant.<sup>131</sup> Yet, culture and creative endeavours remained a central theme in their announcements. When announcing their gathering of April 6th 1986, the group encouraged their guests to present their latest (creative) work such as manuscripts and love songs.<sup>132</sup> Some of the work presented during these events would reach wider audiences. For example, Gloria Wekker recalls that excerpts of the book *Droomhuid* by Joanna Werners were shared during Sister Outsider events before the book was published. *Droomhuid* would go on to become quite influential for black queer women at the time, who saw their own experiences reflected in Werners' work.<sup>133</sup> Werner herself stated she was encouraged to attend a "black women's manifestation" and share her poetry there. The enthusiasm with which her work was received that day encouraged her to continue writing and eventually publish her work.<sup>134</sup> Werner's work is an example of how the culture formed within the spaces of Sister Outsider meetings would find its way to a larger audience. Additionally, the newsletter from spring 1986 shows that aside from sharing art, the women discussed their own activities. A postscript in the newsletter states that Tania, who had travelled to South Africa earlier, would share stories about her travels.<sup>135</sup> Yet, when describing their own group, the women underlined that they were not a support group, describing their activities instead as "literary salons" and the organising of "multicultural parties" where black (lesbian) women could present their own creative work.<sup>136</sup>

In conclusion, the activities the group organised centred around the idea of establishing a black lesbian culture, especially in regard to sharing literary work. This is emphasised in their newsletters and in the descriptions of their events. This culture, as described in their own newsletters and the document *Overlevers*, was mostly centred on oral traditions and storytelling as both art forms and as a means to resist. Similarly to what Lorde

---

<sup>131</sup> Leon et al., 'Spring Newsletter from Sister Outsider', 1986.

<sup>132</sup> Leon et al.

<sup>133</sup> Julian Isenia Wigbertson, 'Joanna Werners', With Pride, accessed 23 May 2024, <https://withpride.ihlia.nl/story/joanna-werners/>. <https://withpride.ihlia.nl/story/joanna-werners/Wigbertson>.

<sup>134</sup> Flora van Houwelingen, 'Wanneer Kom Je Want Ik Ga Bijna... Gesprek Met Joanna Werners, Zwarte Lesbische Feministe. Met Fragmenten Uit Haar Eerste Roman Droomhuid.', *Lust En Gratie*, 1987, 79, De Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren.

<sup>135</sup> Leon et al., 'Spring Newsletter from Sister Outsider', 1986.

<sup>136</sup> Wekker and Sister Outsider, 'Overlevers', 8.

wrote in *Poetry is not a Luxury*, the process of establishing this culture and the space that Sister Outsider provided, presented women with a reflection of what they had already known, but never articulated before. The importance of Sister Outsider as a place to shape a culture can also be seen reflected in their final newsletter, in which once again reiterate that they wanted to show a black lesbian culture, and encourage others to pick up where they left off.<sup>137</sup>

### **Sister Outsider and lesbian identity**

In the spring newsletter from 1986, the women of Sister Outsider's comfort with the usage of lesbian as a term becomes more apparent: not only have they used the word lesbian to describe themselves in the past, they also call themselves "*dotten van potten*".<sup>138</sup> *Potten* is a Dutch slang term for lesbians and is considered a slur, although others have reclaimed the word. However, Sister Outsider's usage of *Potten* was not without discussion. In 1985, José Maas wrote a letter to Gloria, Tania and Tienieke in which she let them know she would no longer be part of the group. Maas had multiple reasons for leaving Sister Outsider. She mentioned that she was "too busy with [her] studies and other (political) black affairs".<sup>139</sup> There had also been some disagreements amongst the women of Sister Outsider about certain "archival documents" such as cassette tapes. In another letter, Maas refutes the accusation that she owns things that should be in the archive of the group.<sup>140</sup> In the archive, the letter is accompanied by a message to Leon from one of the other members calling it "A stupid letter". Additionally, Maas stated in her letter from October that she no longer felt "at home" within Sister Outsider, as the focus on Lorde's visit was limiting in her perspective. She felt that her complaints went unheard. Maas's letter also states that she disagrees with the women on their usage of the term '*zwarte pot*' and was displeased when the description was used by Wekker in her article for the magazine *Katijf* about Lorde's visit and that Maas her criticisms on the term were not mentioned.<sup>141</sup> However, Maas's letter did not stop the women from using *potten* in the description of their own identities, as the group kept using the term in different documents throughout their existence. As discussed in the previous chapter, the usage of the word lesbian in and of itself was not uncontroversial amongst black queer women. Many preferred to approach their queer identities from their own cultural background, such as *mati*. Additionally, the word *pot* carries a negative connotation. That Maas was upset about the

---

<sup>137</sup> Leon et al., "Lieve Vrouwen": Final Newsletter from Sister Outsider', 3 January 1987.

<sup>138</sup> Leon et al., 'Spring Newsletter from Sister Outsider', 1986.

<sup>139</sup> Maas, 'José Maas to Gloria, Tania and Tienieke', 11 February 1985.

<sup>140</sup> Maas.

<sup>141</sup> Maas.



group using the term is not necessarily surprising, but it does shed some light onto the different opinions on terminology and identity in the group.

In 1986, Sister Outsider would invite Audre Lorde to the Netherlands for a final time. The group once again requested funding from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. In the letter, written by Gloria Wekker, the group stresses the importance of a planned weekend-long writing workshop that was going to take place in Lage Vuursche at the Volkshogeschool Venwoude. Besides Lorde, Astrid Roemer and Thea Doelwijt were said to be present in order to facilitate the workshop.<sup>142</sup> However, Lorde's actual visit would end up differently. There are a multitude of possible reasons for this. First and foremost is the difference in required financial assistance. Furthermore, Lorde had also been diagnosed with cancer for the second time at this time and her health was decreasing. A report about Lorde's visit and the organised events sent to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment shows that the weekend-long workshop was instead going to take place in the span of a single day. The actual event started with a panel discussion about "writers from the diaspora" with Astrid Roemer and Audre Lorde, with Gloria Wekker as a host. During this panel, the two discussed whether or not they used the word lesbian to describe themselves and why or why not. Though this was not the only focus point of the panel, there were questions prepared regarding creativity, being part of the "diaspora" and their own heritage.<sup>143</sup> Yet, the focus in the reports is on the discussion on lesbianism as an identity. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the usage of the label lesbian was not uncontroversial amongst black queer women at the time. Roemer was one of the women who preferred to not use the label, describing it as limiting.<sup>144</sup> However, Audre Lorde strongly disagreed. Lorde always advocated for naming oneself, including using lesbian as an identity. A report of the event included in the newsletter of Flamboyant, titled 'Wil de echte lesbienne nu opstaan?' ('Will the real lesbian get up?'), notes that Lorde stated:

I name myself before anyone else does, because if I let the other person name me it is always to my detriment.... The second reason I name myself is that if there is one woman who listens to my words and feels the need to know that it

---

<sup>142</sup> Wekker, 'Gloria Wekker on behalf of Sister Outsider to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SoZaWe)', 11 April 1986.

<sup>143</sup> 'Notes Regarding the Planning of the Black Women's Literature Day', 1986, Inv.nr. 23, Archive Ruth Noami (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

<sup>144</sup> 'Wil de Echte Lesbienne Nu Opstaan?', *Zwarte En Migranten Vrouwen Centrum Flamboyant Nieuwsbrief*, October 1986, 8, TS-106, Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

is possible to call yourself a black lesbian AND survive, I want her to know that I have survived.<sup>145</sup>

Lorde's reasons for naming herself a lesbian boil down to the fact that Lorde felt that she could lead by example. Looking at the archival material left behind by Sister Outsider, it becomes clear that the women who were a part of the group felt like they could do the same. The women not only used the word lesbian to describe their own identities, but *pot* as well. Besides, the women clearly were aiming to create a new consciousness that allowed for the black lesbian identity to flourish. This is presumably why the women emphasised the importance of creating a culture and invited their guests to create their own work. The women who were a part of the group had originally been able to put their own identities into words partially due to the work of Audre Lorde who made the decision to not only be visible, but be vocal, about her black and lesbian identity.

After the panel with Lorde and Roemer, participants could join one of three available workshops: one on poetry by Astrid Roemer, one on translating by Clair Moll and one on political strategies by Tania Leon. The report concludes that the day was inspiring as well as challenging, and describes it as an overall positive experience.<sup>146</sup> In addition to the Literature Day for Black women, as the event was called by Sister Outsider, the women organised a visit to Flamboyant where Lorde spoke to black lesbian women.<sup>147</sup> Lorde even cancelled another academic event in order to be able to attend the meeting with other black women.<sup>148</sup> However, no reports from these events are part of the Sister Outsider archive in its current state. Looking at the newsletters available in the archive, it seems that this visit by Audre Lorde was the final event organised by Sister Outsider as a group. Early drafts of their final newsletter announcing their end are dated at the end of 1986. The actual letter was sent out in early 1987. The group disbanded for a multitude of reasons. Some of the women were busy with their careers and studies, and additionally, one of them was leaving the country. The women write

---

<sup>145</sup> Original text: "Ik benoem mijzelf voordat iemand anders dat doet, want als ik me door de ander laat benoemen is dat altijd in mijn nadeel... De tweede reden waarom ik mezelf benoem is dat als er één vrouw is die naar mijn woorden luistert en de behoefte heeft te weten dat het mogelijk is om jezelf een zwarte lesbienne te noemen én te overleven, wil ik haar laten weten dat ik het heb overleefd." found in: 'Wil de Echte Lesbienne Nu Opstaan?', 9.

<sup>146</sup> 'Verslag Literaire Dag Voor Zwarte Vrouwen', 1986, 496 Sister Outsider te Amsterdam, 1984-1987, 2.15.53 Inventaris van de archieven van de Directie Coördinatie Emancipatiebeleid en taakvoorgangers van het Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid en van enige commissies en projectgroepen, 1978-1988, het Nationaal Archief.

<sup>147</sup> Tienieke Sumter et al., 'Newsletter announcing Audre Lorde's second visit', Letter, 1986, Inv.nr. 23, Archive Ruth Naomi (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

<sup>148</sup> Gloria Wekker, 'Erotiek • Audre Lorde', *Lust En Gratie*, 1993, 33, De Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren.

that Sister Outsider had become something different to the “outside world”. Furthermore, they describe that the group was seen as an organisation that provided aid to black lesbians in need, even though that was never their intention. The women end their final newsletter wishing inspiration to reach the reader, once again emphasising their goal to establish a black lesbian culture.<sup>149</sup> Still, during its existence, Sister Outsider was a space where black lesbian women could find like-minded people and the group shaped the black lesbian identity in the Netherlands, whether by facilitating discussions or sharing art during their events.

### **Pulling the cart forward (1987 and onwards)**

When the 1980s came to a close, multiple queer of colour organisations had ceased to exist. Not only did Sister Outsider disband in 1987, SUHO had ceased to exist a few years prior in 1985, and the landscape of queer of colour organising changed.<sup>150</sup> In 1991, *Homologie* published a letter by Ellin Robles titled ‘Lieve Vriendin’ (‘Dear girlfriend’). In this letter, Robles laments the loss of Sister Outsider and Flamboyant, which had also closed by that time. She states that there are very few spaces for black lesbians since Sister Outsider disbanded. Robles claims that oppression based on sexuality was largely ignored in the activism of the black women who were active in Flamboyant afterwards.<sup>151</sup> Robles concludes her letter stating:

(...) Usually I don't dare admit to myself that the social existence of a black dyke in Amsterdam is desolate.<sup>152</sup>

Yet, at the time of publishing this letter, a new queer of colour organisation had sprung up, and more would follow. Some examples are Black Orchid, Brown Blossom, Gay Cocktail and Strange Fruit.<sup>153</sup> However, not all of these were oriented towards black lesbian women. Still, influences of Sister Outsider can be seen in the archive of the organisations Black Orchid and Strange Fruit, as part of Anne Krul’s archive at Atria. Krul herself had attended events by

---

<sup>149</sup> Leon et al., “‘Lieve Vrouwen’: Final Newsletter from Sister Outsider”, 3 January 1987.

<sup>150</sup> Wigbertson, ‘SUHO’.

<sup>151</sup> Ellin Robles, ‘Lieve Vriendin. Fragment Uit Een Brief’, *Homologie*, 1991, 26–27, Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender.

<sup>152</sup> Original text: “(...) meestal durf ik niet aan mezelf toe te geven dat het sociale bestaan van een zwarte pot in Amsterdam desolaat is.” found in: Ellin Robles, 27.

<sup>153</sup> Captain and Ghorashi, “‘Tot behoud van mijn identiteit.’ Identiteitsvorming binnen de zmv-vrouwenbeweging’, 333–34.

Sister Outsider and was part of both black orchid and Strange Fruit, which is why these groups specifically are interesting when considering the legacy of Sister Outsider.<sup>154</sup>

Black Orchid was the result of a personal advert in the magazine *Opzij* by Lucia Bomberg in 1992. Bomberg encouraged BMR-women to respond. Together with the twelve women who responded to the message, Bomberg would create Black Orchid.<sup>155</sup> Before the organisation was called Black Orchid, it was called ZALV, *Zwarte Autonome Lesbische Vrouwen* (Black Autonomous Lesbian Women).<sup>156</sup> Anne Krul's archive holds a folder with information about Black Orchid in addition to a multitude of meeting notes. It is in this folder that influences from Sister Outsider's attitudes towards organising can be seen. In the description of what the organisation does, there is a multitude of cultural activities listed. Most importantly, the reading of poetry is mentioned, among other activities such as dancing, eating candy and watching films. The folder also states why the group exists and why they do what they do. The folder states the following:

So that each of us  
can shape her own process of emancipation  
on her path  
toward her own 'lesbian' ethnic-cultural sense and identity (...)<sup>157</sup>

About ten years after Sister Outsider announced their first event, a new organisation for queer women of colour stated that they wanted to provide a space where a culture for queer women of colour could be developed. It is in this statement that the influence of Sister Outsider can be seen most clearly.

However, Black Orchid was not just an organisation that provided a space to read poetry and find a cultural identity. The group also emphasises that they provide advice and support, for example regarding documentation or shelter.<sup>158</sup> Though the group shared similarities with Sister Outsider, Black Orchid was still quite different. Black Orchid was more of a support group than a literary salon.<sup>159</sup> Considering that one of the reasons

---

<sup>154</sup> 'Poster Announcing Audre Lorde's Visit to Xantippe with Names and Adresses of Attendees', 1984, Inv.nr. 23, Archive Ruth Naomi (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

<sup>155</sup> Hermans and Wekker, 'ZMV-vrouwen. Aïsha is cool, Black Orchid en Kroesje', 234.

<sup>156</sup> Black Orchid, "'ZALV, Een Definitie'" an Appendix to Minutes of the Fifth Meeting', 4 July 1993, Inv.nr. 21, Archive Anne Krul 1983-1997, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

<sup>157</sup> Original text: "Opdat ieder van ons haar eigen emancipatieproces vorm kan geven op haar weg naar een eigen 'lesbisch' etnisch-cultureel gevoel en identiteit (...)" found in: Black Orchid, 'Information Folder Black Orchid', 1994, Inv.nr. 21, Archive Anne Krul 1983-1997, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

<sup>158</sup> Black Orchid.

<sup>159</sup> Hermans and Wekker, 'ZMV-vrouwen. Aïsha is cool, Black Orchid en Kroesje', 234.

mentioned in the final newsletter is that Sister Outsider was becoming a support group, which it was never meant to be, Black Orchid might have filled a needed gap by providing community care. Yet, it was not meant to last long. Black Orchid would cease to exist in 1995.<sup>160</sup>

Strange Fruit was established in 1989 as part of COC Amsterdam. The group aimed to challenge the white Dutch gay scene and its treatment of people of colour, as well as challenge the attitudes towards queerness in their own ethnic communities.<sup>161</sup> Additionally, the collective challenged the existing sexual education, which often fell short in immigrant communities.<sup>162</sup> Andre Reeder produced multiple films together with Strange Fruit. He produced a film about AIDS called *Aan niets overleden* (No cause of death).<sup>163</sup> In addition to *Aan niets overleden*, Reeder also produced the film *Glad to be gay, toch?* (Glad to be gay, right?) about queer identities and homophobia.<sup>164</sup> When asked about the movies Reeder made, he stated: “Film is a powerful medium”.<sup>165</sup> Reeder's films show once again that artforms can aid in creating dialogue about oppression: in these cases Reeder's work helped facilitate discourse around AIDS and homophobia. Though it is not poetry or literature, as was the case in the literary salons of Sister Outsider, film is an art medium that can fulfil a similar role as to what books did for the women of Sister Outsider. It can present the viewer with the same recognisability the women of Sister Outsider felt when they first read *Zami*. Reeder himself stated that his role as a film-maker was to not only present representation, but also to present a medium from which a community can learn.<sup>166</sup>

Strange Fruit also emphasised cultural identity in their messaging. A welcome folder in Anne Krul's archive describes Strange Fruit and their activities. Amongst their description as a multicultural self-help organisation, different activities are listed; café-nights, a performance group, a group that hosts radio, a women's group, an action group that writes both needed documents and papers about the group, and a personal support group. Many of the activities present the visitor with performances aside from the main program, such as the

---

<sup>160</sup> Hermans and Wekker, 234.

<sup>161</sup> El-Tayeb, “Gays Who Cannot Properly Be Gay”, 86.<https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506811426388>El-Tayeb, 86.

<sup>162</sup> Julian Isenia Wigbertson, ‘Strange Fruit’, With Pride, accessed 23 May 2024, <https://withpride.ihlia.nl/story/strange-fruit/><https://withpride.ihlia.nl/story/strange-fruit/>Wigbertson.

<sup>163</sup> Colpani and Wigbertson, ‘Strange Fruits’, 220–23.

<sup>164</sup> Julian Isenia Wigbertson, ‘André Reeder’, With Pride, accessed 23 May 2024, <https://withpride.ihlia.nl/story/andre-reeder/><https://withpride.ihlia.nl/story/andre-reeder/>Wigbertson.

<sup>165</sup> Colpani and Wigbertson, ‘Strange Fruits’, 222.

<sup>166</sup> Colpani and Wigbertson, 222–23.

café-nights, which also host musical performances, movie-night and lectures.<sup>167</sup> The activities of Strange Fruit were as diverse as the group itself was. In their more cultural activities, the group had both similarities and differences compared to Sister Outsider's approach of culture. Strange Fruit was perhaps less focused on establishing a new culture, and more focused on celebrating their own cultural backgrounds while challenging the dominant culture present in the white queer scene in the Netherlands. Examples of this include the dancing group for Arabic belly dancing and the plans to establish a Black Power singing group that performs "real blues" and "modern rhythms".<sup>168</sup> Yet, Reeder's movies show that the group was also working to create new cultural products, while simultaneously doing activist work. Strange Fruit would eventually leave the COC as tensions between the group and the COC kept increasing. After being an independent organisation for a while, Strange Fruit disbanded in 2003.<sup>169</sup>

## Conclusion

From the very beginning, Sister Outsider set out to create a black lesbian culture and foster an environment that encouraged creativity. The archival documents pertaining to the group reflect this goal, not only in their own statements, but in reports from their events as well. Looking at the archive, it becomes clear that the group's literary beginnings remained a significant part of their identity all the way to the end, with one of their final events being a day filled with workshops pertaining to writing and activism. All things considered, the group's existence shows the practical ways in which culture, especially literature and poetry, were central to the activism of black (queer) women. Additionally, it becomes clear that not only did the women aim to establish a black lesbian culture, they also followed Lorde's example in being vocal about their identities and thus being proof of the existence of black queer women. The women did not fear making others uncomfortable by embracing the more Western ways of describing one's sexual identity, such as using lesbian and *pot*. However, they did not shy away from discussions relating to different identities based on cultural backgrounds and the usage of the term lesbian in the first place. Although Sister Outsider was the first group in the Netherlands to aid the creation of a cultural identity for black lesbians, but it was not the last. The archive shows that cultural identity and expression remained an important part of queer of colour organisations that were established after the group

---

<sup>167</sup> Strange Fruit, 'Welcome-Folder for Strange Fruit', n.d., Inv.nr. 20, Archive Anne Krul 1983-1997, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

<sup>168</sup> Wigbertson, 'Strange Fruit'.

<sup>169</sup> Wigbertson, 'Strange Fruit'.

disbanded. However, later organisations were more oriented towards community support in addition to the building of a cultural identity. Still, Sister Outsider marks a significant development in queer of colour organising in the Netherlands. Not only did the group foster conversations on identity and activism, the women actively worked to shape their identities by providing a space where black queer women could create and share their art, thus helping to establish a black lesbian culture.

## Conclusion

Sister Outsider had originally formed to facilitate a visit by Audre Lorde. The women felt represented in Audre Lorde's writing and appreciated her work not just as a poet but as an activist. Though Lorde was instrumental in the formation of the group, the women continued and set their own goals aside from her visits. Still, her vision on poetry as a source of activism echoes throughout Sister Outsider's own messaging. Sister Outsider aimed to create a black lesbian culture in the Netherlands and emphasised this ambition often. At the time, spaces that centred black lesbian women were few and far between. Sister Outsider formed in a period after the first lesbian feminist groups splintered off from the feminist movement, and during a time where BMR-women started to organise themselves. Sister Outsider created a space for groups whose oppression was largely ignored by the larger feminist movement. In the case of Sister Outsider, both sexuality and racial identity played an important role in their identity formation. Sister Outsider was one of the few spaces that centred and prioritised black lesbian women at this time. The women of Sister Outsider approached their objective of establishing a culture by focusing on art and identity. The group organised literary salons, in addition to hosting discussions and setting up parties. Their newsletters and events show that the women encouraged creative endeavours of other black (lesbian) women. Sister Outsider aided the creation of a black lesbian culture by providing a space that welcomed and fostered creative work while simultaneously centring the black lesbian identity.

When Sister Outsider disbanded, the women asked others to continue the work they started. Formations like Black Orchid and Strange Fruit continued to challenge the norms in white queer communities and continued to use cultural expressions such as poetry as part of their own expression and community-building. Though the women of Sister Outsider were not the first to connect poetry to activism, their work is one of the only examples in the Netherlands, especially during this period. Their approach to culture was influential enough for it to inform the actions of later queer of colour formations. As has been stated previously, art forms, such as poetry, have aided the activism of queer of colour communities. Sister Outsider is no different. The group shows that not only was literature important for their own personal developments and finding their own identities, but it was also just as important to continue that work and be that example for others. The group was vocal about their identities as lesbians and did not shy away from explicitly stating that their group was mostly aimed towards black lesbian women. In this way, the women followed Audre Lorde's example of being a visible black lesbian and helped to establish a black lesbian culture.



In order to better understand the importance of Sister Outsider and the role of culture in queer of colour formations, future studies could address the lack of personal accounts included in this thesis. Future studies could benefit from methods such as oral history to further unearth the realities of the queer of colour experience in the Netherlands. This is one method that this thesis could have benefitted from, as it would expand the understanding of what happened and what kind of performances were given at the events organised by Sister Outsider. Additional studies could also analyse the works published by queer women of colour during this time, such as Joanna Werners and Astrid Roemer, in order to better understand the culture that was produced around the same time that Sister Outsider was active. These studies could examine the role of the existing feminist publishing houses and bookstores in creating a black (lesbian) feminist consciousness, especially as events organised by Sister Outsider focused mostly on literary artforms and the group aided in the translating of Lorde's work. Last but not least, additional research could look at the traces of Sister Outsider and other queer of colour formations at the time in current day queer of colour activism.

Still, this thesis has shown the ways in which Sister Outsider operated in the Netherlands and the movements that informed the actions of the group, as well as the importance of culture for the group. In short, Sister Outsider approached the formation of a black lesbian culture to mean the facilitation of the creation of art and the facilitation of discussions regarding black and queer identities. This was informed by the influence of Audre Lorde, who considered poetry to be a form of activism and a way to bring up topics that people innately understood but had not been able to put into words yet; not in the least because the women of Sister Outsider had experienced this first hand. Poetry and the formulation of identity, both as a lesbian and as a black woman, were central to Sister Outsider and inspired their activities. This thesis has provided an in-depth analysis of the available documents from the group Sister Outsider based on existing research into queer of colour identities and organising. Though others have looked at Sister Outsider's archive, none had yet looked at the contributions of the group to the queer of colour movement in the Netherlands on its own. Others have discussed Sister Outsider and their connection to Audre Lorde, yet the discussion regarding culture and poetry and how Sister Outsider fit in this approach to activism and the queer of colour movement had not been examined in-depth. In analysing the documents in the Sister Outsider archive in Atria and other connected archives and publications, this thesis has shown that Sister Outsider as a group set out to establish a black lesbian culture by providing a space for cultural and literary expressions as well as providing a space for discussions about queer of colour identities.

## Bibliography

- Atria. 'Geschiedenis Atria collectie | Organisatie', 6 March 2018. <https://atria.nl/over-atria/organisatie-atria/geschiedenis-atria-collectie>.
- Bernstein, Mary. 'Identity Politics'. *Annual Review of Sociology* 31, no. 1 (2005): 47–74. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.29.010202.100054>.
- Botman, Maayke, Sarah Bracke, Nancy Jouwe, Nawal Mustafa, and Gloria Wekker. 'Dansen in de regen: intersectionaliteit in beweging. Inleiding'. In *Caleidoscopische visies: De zwarte, migranten- en vluchtelingen vrouwenbeweging in Nederland*, edited by Nancy Jouwe, Maayke Botman, and Gloria Wekker, 13–40. Amsterdam: Mazirel Pers, 2024.
- Braidotti, Rosi, and Gloria Wekker, eds. *Praten in Het Donker: Multiculturalisme En Anti-Racisme in Feministisch Perspectief*. Serie Feminisme in Verandering. Kampen: Kok Agora, 1996.
- Captain, Esther, and Halleh Ghorashi. "'Tot behoud van mijn identiteit." Identiteitsvorming binnen de zmv-vrouwenbeweging'. In *Caleidoscopische visies: De zwarte, migranten- en vluchtelingen vrouwenbeweging in Nederland*, edited by Nancy Jouwe, Maayke Botman, and Gloria Wekker, 295–354. Amsterdam: Mazirel Pers, 2024.
- Colpani, Gianmaria, Wigbertson Julian Isenia, and Naomie Pieter. 'Archiving Queer of Colour Politics in the Netherlands: A Roundtable Conversation'. *Tijdschrift Voor Genderstudies* 22, no. 2 (1 June 2019): 163–82. <https://doi.org/10.5117/TVGN2019.2.004.COLP>.
- Colpani, Gianmaria, and Julian Isenia Wigbertson. 'Strange Fruits: Queer of Color Intellectual Labor in the Netherlands in the 1980s and 1990s'. In *Postcolonial Intellectuals in Europe: Critics, Artists, Movements, and Their Publics*, edited by Sandra Ponzanesi and Adriano José Habed, 213–30. Frontiers of the Political: Doing International Politics. London ; New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, Ltd, 2018.
- Costera Meijer, Irene. *Het Persoonlijke Wordt Politiek: Feministische Bewustwording in Nederland 1965-1980*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1996.
- Deekman, Amalia, and Mariette Hermans. 'Heilig vuur. Bezieling en kracht in de organisatievorming van zmv-vrouwenbewegingen in Nederland'. In *Caleidoscopische visies: De zwarte, migranten- en vluchtelingen vrouwenbeweging in Nederland*, edited by Nancy Jouwe, Maayke Botman, and Gloria Wekker, 167–230. Amsterdam: Mazirel Pers, 2024.

- Ellerbe-Dueck, Cassandra, and Gloria Wekker. 'Naming Ourselves as Black Women in Europe: An African American–German and Afro-Dutch Conversation'. In *Audre Lorde's Transnational Legacies*, edited by Stella Bolaki and Sabine Bröck-Sallah, 55–73. Amherst ; Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015.
- El-Tayeb, Fatima. *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
- . "'Gays Who Cannot Properly Be Gay': Queer Muslims in the Neoliberal European City'. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 19, no. 1 (February 2012): 79–95. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506811426388>.
- Frank, Chandra. 'Flamboyant: Wildness, Loss, and Possibility in Feminist Organizing in the Netherlands'. *Meridians* 22, no. 1 (1 April 2023): 34–57. <https://doi.org/10.1215/15366936-10220469>.
- . 'Sister Outsider and Audre Lorde in the Netherlands: On Transnational Queer Feminisms and Archival Methodological Practices'. *Feminist Review* 121, no. 1 (March 2019): 9–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0141778918818753>.
- Garber, Linda. *Identity Poetics: Race, Class and the Lesbian-Feminist Roots of Queer Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.
- Goudt, Mieke, and Roline Redmond. '*Daar hoor ik ook bij*': *de zwarte en migrantenvrouwenbeweging in Nederland*. Leiden: Stichting Burgerschapskunde, Nederlands Centrum voor Politieke Vorming, 1990.
- Hermans, Mariette. 'Herrineringsen Aan Sister Outsider: Zwart En Lesbisch En Strijdbaar'. *Lover*, 2002. TS-1093. Collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.
- Hermans, Mariette, and Gloria Wekker. 'ZMV-vrouwen. Aïsha is cool, Black Orchid en Kroesje'. In *Lesbo-encyclopedie*, edited by Mirjam Hemker and Linda Huijsmans, 231–44. Amsterdam: Ambo/Anthos, 2009.
- Ilmonen, Kaisa. 'Identity Politics Revisited: On Audre Lorde, Intersectionality, and Mobilizing Writing Styles'. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 26, no. 1 (February 2019): 7–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506817702410>.
- Janssens, Marie-Jose, and Wilhelmina van Wetering. 'Mati En lesbiennes: Homoseksualiteit En Etnische Identiteit Bij Creools-Surinaamse Vrouwen in Nederland'. *Sociologische Gids* 32 (1985): 394–415.
- Jouwe, Nancy. 'Standing at the Crossroads: The Black, Migrant & Refugee Women's Movement in the Netherlands'. *Historica* 3 (2016): 3–8.

- Littel, Noah. 'Playing the Game of Lesbian Imagination: Radical Lesbian Feminist Organising in the Dutch Lesbian Nation'. *Women's History Review* 31, no. 1 (2 January 2022): 68–87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2021.1954335>.
- Loewenthal, Troetje. 'Er ontbreekt altijd een stuk van de puzzel. Een inclusief curriculum gewenst'. In *Caleidoscopische visies: De zwarte, migranten- en vluchtelingen vrouwenbeweging in Nederland*, edited by Maayke Botman, Nancy Jouwe, and Gloria Wekker, 115–66. Amsterdam: Mazirel Pers, 2024.
- Loo, Vilan van de. *De Vrouw Beslist: De Tweede Feministische Golf in Nederland*. Wormer: Inmerc, 2005.
- Lutz, Helma, and Gloria Wekker. 'Een hoogvlakte met joude winden. De geschiedenis van het gender- en etniciteitsdenken in Nederland'. In *Caleidoscopische visies: De zwarte, migranten- en vluchtelingen vrouwenbeweging in Nederland*, edited by Maayke Botman, Nancy Jouwe, and Gloria Wekker, 71–114. Amsterdam: Mazirel Pers, 2024.
- Maas, José. 'José Maas to Gloria, Tania and Tienieke', 11 February 1985. Inv.nr. 23. Archive Ruth Noami (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.
- Meijer, Maaïke, and Bernadette van Dijck. 'Zwijgen Zal Ons Niet Beschermen: Gesprek Met Audre Lorde, Zwarte Dichteres En Lesbisch Feministe'. *Lover*, 1984.
- Meijeren, Emma van. 'De rijke geschiedenis van de zwarte queerbeweging in Nederland'. *Vice*, 23 July 2019. <https://www.vice.com/nl/article/wjvvjw/de-rijke-geschiedenis-van-de-zwarte-queerbeweging-in-nederland>.
- Redactie, Winq. 'Winq presenteert: Roze Reuzen, de podcast!', 29 March 2024. <https://www.winq.nl/winq-presenteert-roze-reuzen-de-podcast/276682>.
- Shield, Andrew DJ. *Immigrants in the Sexual Revolution: Perceptions and Participation in Northwest Europe*. New York, NY: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2017.
- Wekker, Gloria. *The Politics of Passion: Women's Sexual Culture in the Afro-Surinamese Diaspora*. Between Men--between Women. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
- . *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*. Durham London: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Wigbertson, Julian Isenia. 'André Reeder'. With Pride. Accessed 23 May 2024. <https://withpride.ihlia.nl/story/andre-reeder/>.
- . 'Joanna Werners'. With Pride. Accessed 23 May 2024. <https://withpride.ihlia.nl/story/joanna-werners/>.

- . ‘Strange Fruit’. With Pride. Accessed 23 May 2024.  
<https://withpride.ihlia.nl/story/strange-fruit/>.
- . ‘SUHO’. With Pride. Accessed 6 May 2024. <https://withpride.ihlia.nl/story/suho/>.
- Wilson, Ann Marie. ‘Dutch Women and the Lesbian International’. *Women’s History Review* 31, no. 1 (2 January 2022): 126–53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2021.1954338>.

## Sources

- Anneke. Condolence card. 'For Audre Lorde'. Condolence card, 1992. Inv.nr. 23. Archive Ruth Noami (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.
- Ashanti. 'Als Je van Vrouwen En Mannen Houdt'. 1984. TS-106. Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.
- Ashanti. 'Amsterdam: Zwarte Vrouwendag'. 1984. TS-106. Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.
- Ashanti. 'Studiedag over de Norm van de Heteroseksualiteit'. 1982. TS-106. Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.
- Black Orchid. 'Information Folder Black Orchid', 1994. Inv.nr. 21. Archive Anne Krul 1983-1997, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.
- . "'ZALV, Een Definitie" an Appendix to Minutes of the Fifth Meeting', 4 July 1993. Inv.nr. 21. Archive Anne Krul 1983-1997, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.
- Ellin Robles. 'Lieve Vriendin. Fragment Uit Een Brief'. *Homologie*, 1991. Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender.
- Homologie*. 'Vrolijk's Boekenbulletin'. 1985. Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender.
- Houwelingen, Flora van. 'Wanneer Kom Je Want Ik Ga Bijna... Gesprek Met Joanna Werners, Zwarte Lesbische Feministe. Met Fragmenten Uit Haar Eerste Roman Droomhuid.' *Lust En Gratie*, 1987. De Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren.
- Lorde, Audre. 'Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference'. In *Sister Outsider*, by Audre Lorde, 107–16. New York: Penguin Books. First published 1984 by Crossing Press (Berkely), 2019.
- . 'Poetry Is Not a Luxury'. In *Sister Outsider*, 25–28. New York: Penguin Books, 2019.
- Kappeyne van de Coppello, A., and E.J. Mulock Houwer. Letter. 'Kappeyne van de Coppello and Mulock Houwer to Gloria Wekker on Behalf of Sister Outsider Regarding Subsidy'. Letter, 26 October 1984. 496 Sister Outsider te Amsterdam, 1984-1987. Inventory of the archives of the Directorate for Coordination of Emancipation Policy and task predecessors of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and of some committees and project groups, 1968) 1978-1988.

Leon, Tania, Joice Spies, Tienieke Sumter, and Gloria Wekker. Letter. 'Spring Newsletter from Sister Outsider'. Letter, 1986. Inv.nr. 23. Archive Ruth Naomi (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

Leon, Tania, Joice Spies, Tienieke Sumter, and Gloria Wekker. Letter. "'Lieve Vrouwen": Final Newsletter from Sister Outsider'. Letter, 3 January 1987. Inv.nr. 23. Archive Ruth Naomi (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

Leon, Tania, Tienieke Sumter, and Gloria Wekker. Letter. 'SISA ! Newsletter from Sister Outsider'. Letter, 8 February 1985. Inv.nr. 23. Archive Ruth Naomi (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

Lesbisch Archief Leeuwarden. Letter. 'Letter of Congratulations Regarding the Publishing of "Zami" to Sister Outsider and Feminist Publishing House Sara'. Letter, 14 April 1985. Inv.nr. 23. Archive Ruth Naomi (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

'Notes Regarding the Planning of the Black Women's Literature Day', 1986. Inv.nr. 23. Archive Ruth Naomi (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

'Poster Announcing Audre Lorde's Visit to Xantippe with Names and Adresses of Attendees', 1984. Inv.nr. 23. Archive Ruth Naomi (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

'Program from Audre Lorde's Visit to Amsterdam', 1984. Inv.nr. 23. Archive Ruth Naomi (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

'Sister Outsider', n.d. Inv.nr. 23. Archive Ruth Naomi (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

Strange Fruit. 'Welcome-Folder for Strange Fruit', n.d. Inv.nr. 20. Archive Anne Krul 1983-1997, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

Sumter, Tienieke, Joice Spies, Gloria Wekker, and Tania Leon. Letter. 'Newsletter announcing Audre Lorde's second visit'. Letter, 1986. Inv.nr. 23. Archive Ruth Naomi (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

Sumter, Tienieke, and Maureen Tardjopawiro. 'SUHO Vierde Eenjarig Bestaan'. *Ashanti*, 1981. TS-106. Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.

The Combahee River Collective. 'Combahee River Collective: A Black Feminist Statement'. *Off Our Backs*, June 1979.

- Veen, Fineke van der. 'Astrid Roemer: "Altijd Dat Hokjes-Denken. Hokje Lesbisch, Hokje Zwart."' *Homologie*, 1984. Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender.
- Vermij, Lucie Th. 'Surinaamse Vrouwen in Nederland'. *Homologie*, 1983. Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender.
- 'Verslag Literaire Dag Voor Zwarte Vrouwen', 1986. 496 Sister Outsider te Amsterdam, 1984-1987. 2.15.53 Inventaris van de archieven van de Directie Coördinatie Emancipatiebeleid en taakvoorgangers van het Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid en van enige commissies en projectgroepen, 1968) 1978-1988, het Nationaal Archief.
- Wekker, Gloria. 'Audre Lorde, in de Hand van Afrekete'. *Katijf*, 1984.
- . 'Erotiek • Audre Lorde'. *Lust En Gratie*, 1993. De Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren.
- . Letter. 'Gloria Wekker on behalf of Sister Outsider to Mw. Dekkinga, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SoZaWe)'. Letter, 8 June 1984. 496 Sister Outsider te Amsterdam, 1984-1987. Inventory of the archives of the Directorate for Coordination of Emancipation Policy and task predecessors of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and of some committees and project groups, 1968) 1978-1988.
- . Letter. 'Gloria Wekker on behalf of Sister Outsider to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SoZaWe)'. Letter, 11 April 1986. Inv.nr. 23. Archive Ruth Naomi (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.
- Wekker, Gloria and Sister Outsider. 'Overlevers: Groepsportret van Sister Outsider', March 1986. Inv.nr. 23. Archive Ruth Naomi (Tania) Leon, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.
- Zwarte en Migranten Vrouwen Centrum Flamboyant Nieuwsbrief*. 'Wil de Echte Lesbienne Nu Opstaan?' October 1986. TS-106. Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV) in Atria.