

**From Pervert to Compassionate Citizen:  
Sexual Marginalization and Communicative Experiences of Belonging  
A Seattle Case Study**

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**Abstract:**

What communicative experiences are required to transform a group of citizens who have been marginalized as sexual or gender criminals and perverts into citizens who participate in civic discourse that marks a city -- into citizens, in other words, who are no longer outcasts but who can truly be said either to have found or at least be well on their way to creating a sense of belonging within their urban environments, citizens who are assured some degree of sexual and gender justice?

This question is of importance to lesbian, gay, and transgendered citizens throughout the world. Many nations still criminalize or medicalize any dissent from compulsory heterosexual behavior and from culturally traditional gendering. Even when such forced behavior is finally de-criminalized or de-medicalized, those who defy the previous legal or cultural norms still often face discrimination, social exile, and violence -- all of which are communicative experiences that act to exclude them from the civic discourse and from any sense of “belonging” within the city and within any signification particular to a certain locale.

This paper first presents a brief historical review of what occurred in Seattle when a group of citizens became outcasts because of their resistance to compulsory heterosexual behavior, then over the course of a century struggled to reclaim a public role and a sense of belonging within the city’s civic discourse. It then presents an overview of certain communicative experiences that needed to be created to serve as entry points to various facets of the civic discourse within Seattle. The transformation in Seattle of the symbol of the “hospital” -- representative of the civic agreement about caring for one another in illness as well as defining who is ill -- is reviewed at the end as an example of one of the communicative experiences that had to be transformed. The full case study of Seattle is published elsewhere, in the author’s *Gay Seattle: Stories of Exile and Dwelling*.

## **I. The Seattle Case**

### **A. Marginalizing Citizens on the Basis of Sexuality**

In 1893, in the midst of an economic panic, the Washington state legislature decided to correct what may -- or may not -- have been a legal oversight. For the four previous decades, from the 1850s until the 1890s, the territorial and then the state legislatures had been content to limit morals legislation to regulating marriage, adultery, fornication, and the male seduction of women -- in other words, to putting the fine points on how compulsory heterosexuality and procreation should be enforced. But in March 1893, the legislature suddenly decided to effectively add the regulation of same-sex

practices to the list of regulations by passing a sodomy law and attaching to it the most severe penalty of any sex crime: 10 to 14 years of “hard labor in the state penitentiary.” Eventually, the law would be expanded to even prohibit any graphic discussion of sodomy, in effect making it illegal to discuss explicitly what homosexuals “did.”

At first, sodomy was simply defined as “the infamous and detestable crime against nature” and it could be accomplished by “any sexual penetration, however slight.” Eventually, sixteen years later, the legislators got around to more specifically defining the “detestable crime” as any act of oral-genital or anal contact. Though technically the definition applied to heterosexual behaviors as well as same-sex ones, practically the only enforcement that would ever occur in Seattle was against the same-sex variety, in effect making it a law that criminalized a very particular type of citizen. In later decades, for example, when the Seattle police “visited” bars and collected lists of names to be reported to employers as probable criminals or, at least, moral misfits, the only bars that names were collected in were those that attracted individuals believed to be engaging in same-sex sodomy -- not the countless heterosexual “singles” bars which could also have been reasonably assumed be breeding grounds for oral-genital and even anal contact.

At the time that Washington’s sodomy laws were passed, the type of citizen who was to be treated as an outcast if he or she were discovered had not yet developed a name. The label “homosexual” would only gradually come into use during the 20th century as a second arm of enforcing compulsory heterosexual behavior developed: psychiatry’s creation of the new terms “heterosexual” and “homosexual,” and its definition of “homosexuality” as a mental disorder.

(“Heterosexuality” was also initially considered a disorder since its participants were believed to pursue pleasure in sex rather than procreation; however the definition of heterosexuality gradually came to include everyone considered “normal.” See Jonathan Ned Katz’s excellent *Invention of Heterosexuality* for a fuller discussion of the evolution of the psychiatric rhetoric during the early 20th century.)

In Washington state as elsewhere, psychiatry applied some of its most vicious weapons to those who were technically diagnosed as “schizophrenic” or “melancholic” or “unable to adjust heterosexually.” Western State Hospital, located 30 miles south of Seattle, became a virtual laboratory experiment for doctors such as Walter Freeman, who practiced a new form of lobotomy there, jamming what amounted to an ice pick through the patient’s chin, past the tip of the nose into the bony top of the eye socket and on into the brain. Freeman would wiggle the pick so as to slice through the nerve connections between the centers for imagination located in the front of the brain and the centers for emotion in the center of the brain. He called it “smashing the fantasy life” -- an imagination separated from emotion could not be enacted or pursued. “It would appear,” Freeman once wrote, “that homosexuality is of little practical importance after frontal lobotomy.”

In Seattle, one of the most famous cases of a possible lobotomy was that of actress Frances Farmer during the 1940s. Farmer, who often resisted the gender definitions imposed upon her by Hollywood and who may have been lesbian, was incarcerated at Western State Hospital several times coincident with Freeman’s visits. Though no one has ever been able to absolutely confirm that the two met, the notion that Freeman lobotomized Farmer has become one of Seattle’s urban legends and, as such,

has served as a warning to what could happen to women who dressed, or loved, differently from the norm.

As a civic institution and piece of the civic discourse on how to define and care for those who were “ill,” the “hospital” thus became a geographic and architectural symbol of terror for those who resisted compulsory heterosexuality or traditional gender norms.

## **B. The Moral Divide**

Ever since its establishment, Seattle has struggled with its image and its urban identity. The city tended to attract at least three different types of immigrants. Some were pragmatists who simply wanted to set up a respectable middle class, business-oriented community, modeled on Midwestern cities they had left -- another St. Paul or Dubuque, say. Others either deliberately sought a frontier that would be “wide open” to new notions of sex, gender, and drinking, or through their practices helped create it. Among these were the thousands of single and married men who came to the Northwest to clear the forests, sail the ships from San Francisco to Alaska, and build the railroads. They often ended up on Seattle’s downtown mudflat where an angled road known as the “Deadline” (and later as “Skid Road”) marked the urban-identity border between the “respectable” institutions of City Hall, the police station, the courts, and the first university and the “disreputable” institutions of brothels, saloons, and vaudeville theaters.

A third type of immigrant tended to look at the majesty of the Northwest -- the mountains and the waters -- and then set out to create a new utopia. For those who were religiously fueled, that could mean a New Jerusalem. Harbingers of the contemporary signification of Seattle as one of the nation’s most “livable cities,” these were the immigrants who were often the most determined to banish any behavior they considered unbecoming in a new “city on the hill.”

Typical in the rhetoric of these utopian visions of the Northwest was that of Theodore Winthrop, the great-great-great grandson of the first Puritan governor of Massachusetts. He traveled through the region in the 1850s and set an identity in a book that became a local classic, *Canoe and Saddle*. He created descriptions and metaphors of the Northwest that people still sometimes try to use when they explain the “meaning” or “potential” of life here in this corner of the United States. In perhaps his most famous passage, Winthrop wrote: “Our race has never yet come into contact with great mountains as companions of daily life, nor felt that daily development of the finer and more comprehensive senses which these signal facts of nature compel. That is an influence of the future. These Oregon [territory] people, in a climate where being is bliss -- where every breath is a draught of vivid life -- these Oregon people, carrying to a newer and grander New England of the West a full growth of the American Idea ... will elaborate new systems of thought and life.”

Like his great-great-great grandfather, Winthrop believed in a city on a hill to fulfill a Puritan wish now transported from the sullied East to the breathtaking Northwest. As for the voices already in the land, in other passages, Winthrop described the people who actually lived here -- the Indians, the fishermen, the often-scarred loggers -- and he had few kind words. They sweated, they smelled of too much smoke from too many

campfires, they were permanently grunged from the rain. In his story, they needed to be erased from paradise.

It was this rhetoric that eventually inspired the legislative and religious leaders who would eventually pass the sodomy law and its various modifications, who would control the city's health care system and commit Frances Farmer to Western State hospital, and who -- through the personas of such powerful ministers as Presbyterian Mark Matthews -- establish a religious agenda in the city that, on the one hand, included a social gospel outreach to the poor but, on the other, frowned on activities such as sex, drinking, dancing and any dissent from the view that Seattle could, indeed, be the moral capitol of the world.

(Matthews, for example, for a while made Seattle's First Presbyterian Church into the largest Presbyterian church *in the world*; he called the city "the greatest field for Christian work on the continent," condemned saloons as "sin's coffin houses" and said of dancing that it was "only engaged in by the most vicious, the most depraved, the most vulgar and coarsest elements of society." He also said that anyone who disagreed with his vision of the city's progress should be "taken without the walls of the city and there executed.")

In the mid-1960s, the attitude of public officials toward homosexuals was captured in a memo from the mayor to the police chief, who had just written about his concern that homosexuals were becoming too public in creating public gathering spots in Seattle. The mayor wrote:

"The picture you paint is a discouraging and sordid one...It would look like your department is doing everything possible to reach the hangouts of these people. But, as is well recognized, the incidence of this problem is far greater than generally understood; and in most instances, as I understand it, these people create no problem whatever for society or for anyone outside of perhaps their own family circles. Those few, however, who do either engage in illegal activities leading to serious crimes, or who gather in public places to the extent of becoming a nuisance, do create a problem and a real dilemma, as indicated by your report.

"I am a little surprised, however, that any impression should be out that Seattle is soft on, or tolerates, these gathering places. If there is any basis for this and there is anything we could be doing to indicate that we are not tolerant or soft in this area, certainly we should be taking such steps. I would assume that a certain amount of close surveillance, even to the point almost of harassment of the most troublesome and noisome establishments, might have some effect to discourage the inflow of these people to Seattle. "By whatever means--this we must accomplish."

### **C. The Outcasts' Response**

The outcast homosexual citizens of Seattle, like their counterparts throughout America, thus faced a challenge of creating a sense of belonging in this new utopian Northwest --belonging with each other and belonging within Seattle's own civic conversation about who constituted citizens worth hearing. Often, the manner in which they chose to respond seemed a direct counterpoise to what was considered to be morally correct.

If moralists considered the saloons to be evil, then for this emergent minority by the 1930s and 1940s the saloons would become the first and the most basic of their community institutions:

-- If certain kinds of theater offended the moralists, then the outcasts would make their cult heroes out of the most outrageous and theatrical of the entertainers on the mud flat--the men lipsticked and dressed in drag -- and turn a nondescript underground refuge known as the Garden of Allah into a legendary place of gender-switching performances.

-- If sexually expressive dancing offended the moral enforcers, then a dance of sweat and exhibitionism would be a way of constructing a new bond with one another -- and another underground basement would serve as an all-night zone for dancing what could not yet be publicly said.

-- If moralists wanted the talk about certain kinds of sex to be carefully hedged, then being suggestive or bluntly graphic could be used to sift members of the new minority from outsiders. And with the arrival of the AIDS crises, the outsiders' blunt and even graphic language about sex would eventually transform how the city talked about sex.

-- If the respectables did not like the rowdy vaudeville theaters -- particularly one known as the People's Theater, located at Second Avenue and Washington Street on the mudflat -- then the People's space would become the place where the new outcasts found their first community of belonging.

-- And if the citizens who thought they were moral wanted to use the initiative or the referendum to control homosexual behavior, then there would be recurring electoral contests to determine whether the majority would ever respect the minority.

What is most fascinating is that those who became homosexual outcasts in Seattle at the beginning of the century did actually succeed. By the end of the 20th century, the group had not only defined a new identity for itself, but had established its own public role in the city's conversations about law, health care, business, theater, church, and family. After a one-hundred-year struggle--concentrated especially in the final forty years of the twentieth century--homosexuals, who had been so in conflict with notions of progress at the beginning of the 1900s, by the end were part of the civic and moral landscape.

In 1993 -- one hundred years after the passage of the state's sodomy law -- even the governor came to their Pride rally, held, appropriately enough, atop one of Seattle's highest hills and in one of its most respectable neighborhoods.

## **II. A Typology of Communicative Entry Points to Dwelling**

### **A. Arrival**

The philosopher Martin Heidegger once asked, "What is it to dwell?" --in other words, to feel a sense of belonging rather than alienation. In his answer, he suggested that it is a process of communication. Each generation leaves symbols and stories, rooted in time and place. Those in subsequent generations learn to belong by receiving and reinterpreting those stories, as well as by adding their own.

Similarly, the theologian Walter Bruggemann once said when writing of those whose common experience is not race, class, or religion, but living emotionally as

outcasts, “the central problem is not emancipation but rootage, not separation from community but location within it, not isolation from others but placement deliberately between the generation of promise and fulfillment.”

These comments explicitly point to one of two important features of constructing a sense of civic belonging: the sense of participating in a web of urban stories and urban story making. Perhaps less explicitly, they also point to a second feature. Bruggemann’s focus is not simply upon the creation of story, but the relationship of story to land, as indicated in the title of the work from which the quotation is drawn: *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise and Challenge in Biblical Faith*. Similarly, Heidegger is insistent that the stories must be “rooted” not only in time (i.e. historical) but also “rooted...in place” (i.e. geographical or architectural).

I would maintain that it is the combination of these two factors -- historical story making with a specific attachment to place -- that then creates the communication symbols that, on the one hand, construct the civic discourse and that, on the other, must become accessible to any marginalized group.

Christian Norberg-Schulz, a philosopher of architecture, has elaborated upon this connection in several books, but most particularly in *The Concept of Dwelling* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1985). Distinguishing between man-as-wanderer and man-as-settler, he notes generally that “to settle in a landscape means to delimit an area, a place. We stop our wandering and say: *Here!* Then we create an “inside” within the encompassing “outside.” The settlement is therefore a point of *arrival.*”

How does this happen? Obviously, the act of saying “here!” is one of communication derived from a particular sense of the landscape and then reinforced through manmade experiences and architectures. Geographically, the property that distinguishes a natural center, Norberg-Schulz suggests, “is a place where earth and sky are interrelated to form a conspicuous totality.” This can occur where “the earth may rise up towards the sky to form a peak or ridge.” Or, it can happen when “the earth may ‘receive’ the sky by receding to form a basin or valley.” Finally, “the earth may reflect the sky and blend with it. This happens when the ground contains a circumscribed water surface, such as a pond, lake or bay.” Architecturally, the theme of belonging is then carried forward by public buildings, which each create a portion of the civic discourse about who is welcome to dwell and who is not, each forming its own *imago mundi*. “The public building is not an abstract symbol,” he writes, “but partakes in daily life, which it relates to what is timeless and common.” He gives some critical examples, which I used in *Gay Seattle* to structure my inquiry: “In the *church* a general understanding of world and life is made present, in the *city hall* the organization of society, in the *theater* life as it is lived, in the *museum* the memories of mankind, and in the *school* our experience as knowledge and advice.” Because of the role of the health care system, I also added the *hospital* as a symbol of community caring. “When we ‘use’ these institutions,” Norberg Schulz writes, “the world is opened up, and belonging is realized.”

These days, those who arrive in Seattle tend to do so via an interstate highway that cuts north to south. But originally, most of those who arrived entered what would become the city from a westerly direction, moving through Elliott Bay, approaching a large delta formed by the Duwamish River. Behind the delta, three-hundred-foot ridges

rose to meet the sky, each dominated by old-growth evergreen trees that could, themselves, another hundred feet or so the ridge elevations. What would eventually become the heart of the new frontier city was a tiny mudflat lying below one of the ridges. It reached out into the bay like an elbow, with a tidewater pond lying between it and one of the ridges. Seattle, in other words, was blessed with a communicative experience of *arrival* that contained all three of the possibilities that Norberg-Schulz mentions: ridges that rise to meet the sky; a saltwater basin surrounded not only by such ridges but by distant views of the Cascade and Olympic Mountains as well as of even more distant views of towering volcanoes. And, on the mudflat itself, there was the “circumscribed water surface,” the tidewater pond.

Thus, experiences on the mudflat have always been essential to understanding *arrival* in Seattle -- whether those be the experiences of racial groups such as the Asians who came to the city, the working class groups that found their way to the mudflat from the timber and railroad camps of the 19th century or from the effects of the Great Depression of the 20th century, or the sex- and gender-defined groups that assembled as a result of their resistance to traditional norms. In *Gay Seattle: Stories of Exile and Dwelling*, the first communicative experience treated is that of the experience on the mudflat -- and the civic institution that gays and lesbians first sought to access via the mudflat was the “theater”, broadly defined as including not only the “respectable” arts but the lowly and sometimes condemned “theater” of vaudeville, drag, and dance.

## **B. Meeting**

A second communicative experience important to developing a sense of belonging is what Norberg Schulz calls *meeting*. “When we enter the settlement and say ‘here’, a world of possibilities is opened up. Our choice has still to be made, but the world which is here gathered, inspires our desires and asks for a decision...When we have a world, we dwell, in the sense of gaining an individual identity within a complex and often contradictory fellowship. Both aspects are important: fellowship means sharing in spite of diversity, identity means not to succumb to uniformity.... Life is presented in all its multifarious richness.”

The typical architectural expression of such meeting occurs first in the physical layout of the city -- in streets and plazas, streets leading one on to more and more discovery, plazas representing places to pause and talk. The experience also occurs in that most representative institution of meeting, the marketplace, where diverse customers come together to rub shoulders and buy diverse commodities.

Thus, in *Gay Seattle*, it became important to examine ways in which gays and lesbians had formed “streets” and mixed in “plazas,” particularly in Seattle’s case by examining how they had established their “streets” (Broadway, Pike and Pine) within the heart of an older Catholic community’s neighborhood on the city’s Capitol Hill, one of the ridges that rises behind the mudflat. Indeed, I was first led to the entire study by this odd architectural and communicative juxtaposition of Catholic plaza with gay street. (The “Catholic plaza” is best represented by the current design of the Jesuit’s Seattle University, which now lies in what is *both* the center of the Catholic and the gay neighborhood. Just two blocks north of the campus lies the symbolic network of gay streets and gay “plazas,” i.e. parks.) The chapters “On Broadway: Creating Markets and

Parades” and “On Catholic Hill” trace the evolution of this experience of two quite different communities meeting and learning to live together.

### **C. Agreement/Common Explanation**

A third communicative experience of dwelling that Norberg Schulz discusses is that of *agreement* or *common explanation*. “Within the settlement we find buildings which make the common values of the inhabitants manifest. Choices have been made, and on the basis of *agreement*, dwelling has become public.... Thus, we may accept a hypothesis about the general nature of the world, an understanding of a given locality, or a theory about how society ought to be organized.”

Typically the institutions that best represent this experience of *agreement* are *city halls*, for their representation of agreement on the processes of debate *that* society should follow to organize itself; *police stations* for their representation of agreement on implementing that order; hospitals for their symbolization of agreement about how to medically define illnesses and care for those believed to be ill; *churches* for their consensus that human life consists of relationship to more than is visible; and *schools and museums* for the agreement on what advice and knowledge needs to be communicated.

In Seattle, those institutions form important geographic clusters. To the north of the mudflat lies a small knoll that, perhaps not surprisingly, was platted by one of the city’s founders who was a pragmatic immigrant. (The mudflat was instead platted by one of the city’s founders who sought sexual freedom from an unpleasant marriage.) Thus, as gays and lesbians sought to create a sense of belonging, they had to somehow become public participants at city hall and at the police station, both located on the knoll, both having far different internal communicative processes than, say, the theater, the hospital, or the church.

On the ridge above the mudflat, which consisted of three summits eventually named Capitol Hill, Renton Hill and First Hill (the first two collectively known as “Catholic Hill”; the latter known as “Pill Hill” because of its large number of health care facilities), the institutions of agreement that had to be coped with were, obviously, the church and the hospital.

Farther north, on another slope that came to house the city’s University of Washington, the debate that had to be entered was an intellectual one, particularly focused on feminist understandings of social and political power.

### **III. Transforming Seattle: One Example**

The full case study of Seattle is contained in *Gay Seattle: Stories of Exile and Belonging*. For the purposes of this paper, I will explain just a few details of the historical transformation of the one symbol of dwelling, that of the “hospital,” which represented a medical agreement that those who defined gender and sexual norms were mentally ill.

As mentioned above, by the 1930s and 1940s, the “hospital” was a symbol of terror for Seattle’s homosexuals. Regardless of the number of people who were ever actually committed to mental hospitals or placed under the care of psychiatrists, the civic discourse held that all those who dissented from compulsory heterosexuality and engaged in same-sex relations were mentally ill and “perverse.” For this reason, as Seattle’s lesbians and gays began to organize in the 1960s and 1970s, one of their most important

undertakings was to create an alternative health care system. This was done by turning to out-of-state Eriksson Foundation, which supported transgendered peoples. With a small seed grant, Seattle's gays and lesbians established the Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities, at first run by volunteers and social work students from the University of Washington. Other activists established a halfway house agency called Stonewall, to assist gays and lesbians in overcoming the problems of alcohol and drug addiction, depression and self-hatred that were rampant among those who had grown up believing themselves "perverse."

Even as the medical discourse itself began to change in the 1970s, these agencies, or their offspring, continued to play a vital role in the Seattle lesbian and gay community, and continue to do so today.

When AIDS struck the city in the early 1980s, there was a similar response: separate education and prevention groups to assist and set the type of rhetoric needed to combat the spread of the disease. As AIDS progressed, the symbol of "homosexual" itself began to change, partly through the work of these agencies.

Throughout most of the century, Seattle's homosexuals had been presented symbolically in the public mind in various negative ways. To people like Mark Matthews, they had been the city's Unnatural Sex Offenders. For psychiatrists, they evolved into the city's Perverse Citizen and its Mentally Ill Citizen. For city officials of the early 1960s, they were its Promiscuous Citizen, spreading gonorrhea and syphilis. Even after the Stonewall riot of 1969, the best homosexuals could hope for was to become the Minority Citizen deserving of tolerance and civil rights protections.

But with AIDS that seemed to change. For the first time, they became the Compassionate Citizen.

Three types of stories in the city's news media constructed this new symbol.

First, there were the stories about homosexuals caring for one another, supplementing or substituting for traditional family members tending to the sick. Gay men and lesbians created all-night vigils; gay men and lesbians sewed quilts to remember the names of those who died; gay men tended to their lovers and partners.

Heterosexuals did the same, of course, and that was the second line of news stories: the compassion being called forth from other Seattle citizens by those who were dying. Especially as volunteers working with people with AIDS fanned across the city, they began to tell their own stories and it became clear just how deeply people with AIDS were touching the hearts of large numbers of people. In one example in 1987, a volunteer named Jody Becker wrote in the *Seattle Times* of the simple act of taking one man out to eat at a restaurant after he had been released from the hospital. He ordered French toast and doused it in butter and syrup to celebrate. But quickly he became too sick to go out again, and Becker shopped for him, made his dinner, and, as she wrote, listened to his frustrations. His parents had rejected him for being gay, so she became one of his major supports during his final weeks. One day, as he lay on an emergency room gurney, she listened to hours of stories, and then decided to escape to play tennis. She made it as far as the parking lot before turning back. When he saw her, he told her, "Go ahead, kid. You've been here long enough." His parents finally showed on the final weekend. "I tried to unpuzzle the emotions," Becker wrote. "Who was I but some stranger who had so self-consciously elected to say 'I care?'"

The final line of stories was about the strength of people with AIDS themselves. Early on in Seattle, as elsewhere, headlines and news stories had called them “victims” or “sufferers” or “patients”. But as the years went by, and their individual stories began to be told--either while they were living or in the news obituaries telling of their deaths--they began to be portrayed as “battlers” and “heroes.” Typical was a Seattle Post-Intelligencer headline on a story about one man dying in 1987 despite AZT. “A battler is dead of AIDS,” the newspaper reported. The Seattle Times headline for another man who had gone into high schools to warn of the danger of unsafe sex said: “He was committed to letting people know.” Other headlines portrayed the same brave struggle. A priest died of AIDS, but his “calling to the ministry stayed alive.” A gay cartoonist’s legacy was candor “and he always left them laughing.” A gay actor had a “zest for life”. Another was “a music lover who directed Seattle Opera’s growth”; another “a man of energy,” and a third was said to have “brought high energy to theater and music.”

It is certainly not unusual in itself to find laudatory wording in newspaper obituaries. What was unusual was that, for the first time in the city’s history, the men’s homosexuality was being acknowledged even as they were being praised. Partners were being quoted--and recognized as partners. Gay men were being portrayed as mentors offering to their friends and families gifts of insight and wisdom about living and dying that no one--least of all those who in earlier decades would have committed them to prisons or lobotomized them--would ever have imagined.

That change in imagination of who the city’s gay men were would ultimately be the real legacy that those who died left behind. The piece of civic discourse symbolized by the “hospital,” which had been a source of exile had instead been transformed into a symbol of belonging.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Once citizens are exiled because of their sexual or gender behaviors, the exile is usually complete -- unusually so, in fact, compared to most ethnic or racial groups that suffer marginalization. For their very visibility insures that ethnic and racial groups will maintain some presence, or even some segregation, in several of these architectural and communication symbols of place. Even in the most vicious days of desegregation in the South, for example, when African-Americans were certainly exiled from city hall and segregated in other institutions, there still were in fact African-American churches, schools, theaters, marketplaces, and so forth. But the invisibility of a group marginalized by sexual or gender practices (once evidence of those practices is suppressed) insures that the exile is complete: no public presence at city hall, at the theater, in marketplaces, at hospitals, and so forth.

The task, then, becomes one of constructing a communication strategy appropriate for reclaiming a public presence within each individual piece of the civic discourse. And what may work within one segment or symbol of the discourse -- at city hall, for example -- may not work in other segments, such as within the church, or within the medical discourse of the hospital.

In some ways, this may seem very obvious. Yet few social change strategies seem to take account of the fact that within the overall civic discourse of belonging, there are

individual symbols and symbolic geographic “territories” to be claimed. Too often, a strategy and an accompanying rhetoric -- usually a civil rights or legal rhetoric -- may be applied without regard to the social symbol at stake.

Historically, the transformation from exile to belonging never happens all at once. Seattle’s homosexuals did not form themselves or see themselves as a “group ready to take action in history” all at once, nor did they move on every front simultaneously. The most important penetrations into the world of theater -- into the city’s dance, and entertainment, and song life -- came, for example, at different periods than the most important penetrations into the piece of discourse symbolized by city hall. Certainly, the most important struggles were within the primary pieces of the discourse that had constructed the exile: within the legal consensus represented by city hall, within the moral consensus represented by the church, and within the medical treatments represented by the hospitals.

As most of the chapters in *Gay Seattle* demonstrate, as gays and lesbians tried to challenge one after another of the sources of civic belonging, they literally “moved in” to each neighborhood and became an important public presence there. Pure logic may suggest that the entire work of the group forming itself, “coming out” to the city, and demanding to be included in the civic discourse could have been done with only a single “center” -- perhaps the original one on the mudflat. But, historically, that is not what happened. Instead, as the identity changed, as the sense of belonging expanded, there had to be a geographic corollary to create the necessary communicative experience. In the process, gays and lesbians reshaped portions of the urban environment.

Within each major segment of the civic conversation and civic landscape--be it the theater of life, the politics of governance, the meetings of the marketplace, the life of worship represented in the churches, or the compassion hoped for in illness--the presence of lesbians and gays in the city deepened throughout the end of the century.

In the process, in small corners of the city here and there, they managed to transform the landscape from one of compulsory heterosexual and gender norms into one where, as Norberg Schulz says, “men come together to discover the world of the others.”