

SOURCES OF EVERFAIR'S SEXUAL MORES

This essay helped Nisi organize her findings and extrapolations on Everfair's stances nonstandard sexual and romantic practices engaged in throughout the novel. Spoilers contained; it's included here as a reference for those who've read the book.

Everfair's sexual mores present a complicated picture. The main axes I'm concerned with depicting are age, race, and gender preference/identity.

Social strictures and support for romantic and sexual choices along these axes vary over time and are closely tied to the influences of the cultures contributing to the overall community. These can roughly be divided into five categories:

Indigenous

This is the largest category, and contains within it many subcategories because of the different nations included. Attitudes toward gender identification, reproduction, marriage, romantic partnerships, sexual recreation, and so on, are not monolithic. That said, documenting these attitudes isn't easy due to the filtering gaze of colonialist powers, so I've relied on approximations, on anecdotes and attestations of same-sex relationships in neighboring nations. There seems to be plenty of support for the idea that many behaviors frowned on by heteronormative societies were accepted during the period in which the novel occurs.

Racial exogamy is also a complicated issue, especially as, again, viewed from within, the category "indigenous African" is heterogeneous. Marriage outside one's town or ethnicity has been going on for ages before the novel begins, and often has positive rather than negative consequences--for example, in the case of Josina. That her mother's father was white was simply an aspect of his otherness.

Age-disparate marriage is a modern phenomenon on much of the African continent, and while it is accepted, age-disparate non-marital sexual relationships have negative connotations. Fwendi is well aware of this, and while her behavior with Matty defies this norm, the half-hearted secrecy of their liaison is an acknowledgment of it.

U.S.

In *Everfair*, the primary representatives of U.S. culture are African-descended Protestant Christians. They deplore same-sex relationships and are dubious of great disparities in age. They have something of a double standard regarding multiple-partner relationships, extending approval to men engaged in them but not to women. They are much more tolerant of interracial relationships than the U.S. in general during this period. Their main concern is that relationships be conducted within the confines of the sacrament of marriage.

British

Working class and upper class socialists comprise the majority of Everfair's initial group of British settlers. Though the Fabians are ostensibly committed to "free love," that is, to multiple, non-possessive, and non-hierarchical partnerships, this is a purely intellectual stance for most of the British-born Everfairers. In particular, workers subscribe to far more conservative values than they espouse. Wealthier socialists tend to select attitudes and engage in practices that support their personal needs and prejudices. So though reared in a conventional atmosphere, Daisy Albin sees no difficulty in maintaining a polyamorous arrangement with her husband Laurie, his established lover Ellen, and his newer lover Lisette Toutournier. In fact, she enters into a same-sex relationship with Lisette which survives the marriage's dissolution. Even the revelation that Lisette is of mixed racial heritage doesn't deter her from doing so. Daisy rationalizes that it's the problem of "cross-breeding" which is insoluble; this allows her to pursue her love for Lisette while invalidating her son George's love for Martha. Similar yet unacknowledged uneasinesses attend Matty Jamison's involvement with Fwendi, who according to his viewpoint is separated from him by over twenty years in addition to her African heritage.

Other European

Traces of the Belgian and Catholic influences on indigenous populations remain after Leopold sells the large portion of his land bought by the Fabians, and are also carried by refugees escaping the

portion he retains. Toward the end of my novel citizens from other nations immigrate into Everfair, but the effects of their culture on the community as a whole are minimal.

Other Non-European

The Chinese and Bharatese influences on Everfair's sexual mores are notable, but not dramatic. Chinese immigrants were initially all male. They engaged in very little exogamy. Same-sex relationships are therefore tolerated but not seen as the ideal. Many Chinese citizens return to Macao for extended stays, often for the purpose of marriage, not always bringing their wives back with them to Everfair.

Bharatese were introduced to Everfair as soldiers in service of the British Empire. Though they immigrate into British East Africa early in the 19th century, during the novel's time, their advent into Everfair happens mainly at the novel's end, and as a means for adventurous girls and women to escape the marriageless state they endure due to military casualties among men, and the confinement of unfelicitous gender roles. So they act to reinforce the Fabians' more progressive attitudes.

SCATTERED NOTES ON SAME-SEX LOVE IN INDIGENOUS AFRICAN CULTURE

During precolonial times, the "mudoko dako," or effeminate males among the Langi of northern Uganda were treated as women and could marry men. In Buganda, one of the largest traditional kingdoms in Uganda, it was an open secret that Kabaka (king) Mwanga II, who ruled in the latter half of the 19th century, was gay.

The Azande in Sudan and Congo, the Nupe in Nigeria, and the Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi all engaged in same-sex acts for spiritual rearmament – i.e., as a source of fresh power for their territories.

Even today, marriages between women for reproductive, economic, and diplomatic reasons still exist among the Nandi and Kisii of Kenya, the Igbo of Nigeria, the Nuer of Sudan, and the Kuria of Tanzania.

See also <http://76crimes.com/2014/01/30/21-varieties-of-traditional-african-homosexuality/>