

# Open Questions

## Who Was the Sexologist ‘Carl van Bolen’?

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In the 1950s five books on sexology – in a broad sense – were published in German under the name of ‘Carl van Bolen’. However, the man and the author ‘Carl van Bolen’ never existed. Who then wrote the books? My preliminary investigation did not yield an answer. In fact, during my research the mystery only deepened.

*What's in a name ...*

### 1 Introduction

Many years ago, while browsing a Dutch translation of *Erotik des Orients*, I first encountered ‘Carl van Bolen’. I had never seen this seemingly Dutch name before, neither in the Netherlands nor in Flanders or Belgium. I was puzzled. Perhaps, I thought, it was a South-African surname? Despite my curiosity I forgot about ‘Carl van Bolen’. Until a few months ago, that is. While doing research for another article I came across a reference to *Geschichte der Erotik* by ‘Carl van Bolen’. I instantly recalled my earlier bemusement. When I reflected on some oddities and inconsistencies, I became suspicious and intrigued. And then ‘Carl van Bolen’ got me hooked.

### 2 The Question(s)

‘Carl van Bolen’ is mentioned as the author of five books that deal with sexology in a broad sense:

1. *Geschichte der Erotik (The History of the Erotic)* (1950/1951)
2. *Sex-Lexikon – Handbuch des Sexualwissens (Dictionary of Sex – A Handbook of Sexual Knowledge)* (1951) Published later as *Sexual-Lexikon (A Sexual Dictionary)* (1962)
3. *Dr. Kinsey und die Frau – Kinsey und seine Kritiker (Dr. Kinsey and Women – Kinsey and his Critics)* (1954) Published in Germany also as *Erotik des Weibes im Spiegel unserer Zeit (Female Eros in the Mirror of Our Time)* (1962)

4. *Erotik des Orients (The Eros of the Orient)* (1955)

5. *Handschrift und Sexualität (Handwriting and Sexuality)* (co-author Anton Neuber) (1958)

During the 1950s and the 1960s these books, especially *Geschichte der Erotik*, *Sex-Lexikon* and *Erotik des Orients*, were published in several editions in Austria, Switzerland and Germany.[1]

There were also translations of ‘Carl van Bolen’s’ books (1, 2, 4) in Danish, Swedish, and Dutch (published by different publishers in the Netherlands and in Flanders). All in all, ‘Carl van Bolen’ must have been quite profitable for his publishers.[2]

The “Swiss-Israeli-Austrian visual artist, writer, publisher and journalist” Willy Verkauf (1917-1994), whose artist name was ‘André Verlon’,[3] was the original publisher of these works. In his *Situationen. Eine autobiographische Wortcollage (Situations. An Autobiographical Word Collage)* Verkauf confessed:

In order to ease my financial problems I published under the name ‘Books of Life’ a series of popular science books on psychology, psychiatry, suggestion, hypnosis, and sexology. These books were either translated works or books that had been planned and written by the publishing house itself like ‘Geschichte der Erotik’, for which I invented the author ‘Carl van Bolen’.[4]

So, after the initial suspicion we now know that ‘Carl van Bolen’ indeed never existed, that he was invented by Willy Verkauf. Unfortunately, Verkauf did not disclose additionally who did write the ‘Carl van Bolen’ books.

But surely someone must have written these books. Who then wrote the texts that were published under the name of ‘Carl van Bolen’? Who was the author or who were the

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authors who hid under this pseudonym? And why did he or they do that? In other words: who committed this subterfuge and why?

### 3 Clues and Considerations

'Carl van Bolen' himself, Willy Verkauf, and possibly other persons involved, used several ploys of mystification. The first ploy is, of course, the pseudonym that Willy Verkauf, according to his autobiographical *Situationen*, deliberately invented. The name 'Carl van Bolen' at first seems to be Dutch or Flemish (though in the last case it would more likely have been 'Vanbolen'). The first name 'Carl', however, is rather uncommon for a Dutchman. It would more typically be 'Karel' or even 'Karl'. After some simple research it appeared that, in fact, the surname 'Van Bolen' exists neither in the Netherlands nor in Belgium.[5]

In *Sexual-Lexikon* 'Carl van Bolen' wrote an entry 'Pseudonyms':

Pseudonyms; Changes of names in order to disguise authorship are favored in erotic-obscene works. This is done mostly by translating the name into a foreign language (e.g. Verlaine = Pablo de Herlagnès), turning around the sound sequences (e.g. Logau = Golaw), adopting the name of an opponent, a fictitious common name, or a jocular name (for example Richequeue).[6]

Could 'Carl van Bolen' be an anagram? Moreover, could this anagram be a translation of a German surname? Therefore, is 'Carl van Bolen' perhaps both an anagram and a translation:

Bolen = Noble = Edel

Was there a professional or amateur sexologist called 'Edel' or, by extension, 'Edelmann' or 'Edelstein'?[7]

The second ploy is confabulation. In the books that name 'Carl van Bolen' as author we find remarks that seem intended to puzzle and even to tease the reader.

In the preface of *Geschichte der Erotik*, 'Carl van Bolen junior' wrote:

The present work is the so far unpublished manuscript of the South American author and was supplemented after his death by a publication titled *Erotik des Orients* [...] and a publication that dealt with the latest scientific results that were published in the Kinsey Report [...].[8]

So, fictitiously, 'Carl van Bolen' (a) originated from South America, (b) was already dead by the time of publication of his first book in 1951, and (c) had a son with the same name. Indeed, a rather romantic mystification.

In *Sexual-Lexikon* 'Carl van Bolen' wrote – cheekily – an entry 'Carl van Bolen':

Bolen, Carl van; contemporary sexologist, author of *Geschichte der Erotik*, which is based on classical sources of erotic literature and takes into account the latest results of American scientific research (s. Kinsey Report) on contemporary eros („Geschichte d. Erotik“, Verlag Willy Verkauf, Wien 1950).[9]

In the first edition of *Geschichte der Erotik* it says in the front matter:[10]

Transmitted by Dr. Walter Lorenzy

Who was 'Dr. Walter Lorenzy'? Like 'Van Bolen' the surname 'Lorenzy' is slightly strange. It seems to be Hungarian like 'Lorinczy' or, more frequently, 'Lörcinzy'. Searching "Walter Lorenzy" via Google (d.d. 05 June 2012) gives 1,070 hits, all in relation with 'Carl van Bolen'. There is no reason why the publisher Willy Verkauf should have limited the number of his invented authors and collaborators. Therefore, the question is valid: was 'Dr. Walter Lorenzy' another fabrication of Verkauf? The same question may be asked for (a) 'Dr. Hildegard Tschokl-Heinrichs' and (b) 'Dr. H. Dworschak', who allegedly assisted producing *Sex-Lexikon*. [11]

*Handschrift und Sexualität*, book number five and the last title by 'Carl van Bolen' has a co-author: Anton Neuber. Perhaps surprisingly, 'Anton Neuber' is the first person who may have been real. Neuber appears to have published another book in the field of graphology.[12] Neuber's *Handschrift und Sexualität* had been published first in 1950 by Allgemeiner Verlag (St. Gallen). Thus it seems reasonable to assume that the name 'Carl van Bolen' was attached to later editions of *Handschrift und Sexualität* in order to promote sales.

The style and content of the books themselves may provide information about the author or authors. *Geschichte der Erotik* and *Erotik des Orients* are both works with some scholarly merit. The books may have been commercial successes because of the prurient titles and some of the content.[13] However, to dismiss the books – excepting *Handschrift und Sexualität* – as nothing but prurient and only intended to lure the public into buying it, is beyond the point. It seems that 'Carl van Bolen' was genuinely interested in his subject matter. Moreover, the author of these works must have had considerable knowledge of especially the historical and ethnographical aspects of sexology. Therefore it seems reasonable to assume that the author was an academically educated person. Perhaps 'Carl van Bolen' was a doctor – general practitioner or medical specialist – with a broad amateur interest in sexology?

### 4 Possible Answers

If we take Willy Verkauf at his word and accept that the pseudonym 'Carl van Bolen' was indeed his invention, then the question remains: who did write these books? There are at least three basic answers.

Willy Verkauf wrote the 'Carl van Bolen' books. The first and foremost question to be answered should then be: Why would Willy Verkauf use a pseudonym at all? From his biography Verkauf does not seem like the person who would need a pseudonym. Of course, he himself used the pseudonym 'André Verlon'. But Verkauf was not secretive about his pseudonym and his true name. As 'Carl van Bolen' wrote:

We have already seen in the example of 'Reigen' that the author [Arthur Schnitzler] never hesitated to call a spade a spade and vouched with his name for his books. Why then should he have strayed from that course in this case [as the putative author of *Josephine Mutzenbacher – The Life Story of a Viennese Whore, as Told by Herself*]?[14]

The Austrian writer and literary scholar Dr. Konstantin Kaiser argues against the possibility that Willy Verkauf himself wrote the 'Carl van Bolen' books.[15]

There was only one author for all five books by 'Carl van Bolen': single authorship under one pseudonym. The first and foremost question to be answered in this case is why did this person adopt a pseudonym in the first place? Another objection is that the differences in style and content between the books, especially the two earliest books and the last book *Handschrift und Sexualität* are considerable. There were more than one person who wrote the 'Carl van Bolen' books: collective authorship under one pseudonym. There are at least two arguments against a collective pseudonym:

(a) In three books (1, 2, 4) 'Carl van Bolen' used the story of Genesis 39:7-10 to illustrate female lasciviousness and male self-control. However, the author consistently confuses 'Potiphar' with 'Potiphar's wife'. For example in *Geschichte der Erotik* we read:

An insight into the psychology of the Persians allow the Persian versions of the story of 'Joseph and Potiphar', that, after all, had been adopted also by the Quran. The poet Ferdowsi adapted this story too, in which, however, he changed Potiphar into Zuleika, who not only by her bodily charms captivated and seduced Joseph but who also knew how to multiply her influence on the man's virtue.[16]

In *Sexual-Lexikon* we find:

Potiphar; classical seductress of biblical history, tried to persuade the servant Joseph to have sex with her, but he resisted. This theme was often used in the visual arts: Raphael, Tintoretto, Biliverti, Cignani, Rembrandt, Lucas v. Leyden and others more.[17]

And, finally, in *Erotik des Orients* it says slightly more indirectly:

In Jami's poem 'Yusuf and Zulaikha' the active role of the female has been clearly worked out. The topic has a certain kinship with the topic of 'Potiphar and Joseph', [...].[18]

Surprisingly, the author of this error had apparently neither knowledge of the locus classicus nor of the popular song *In der Bar zum Krokodil*, of Comedian Harmonists' fame, in which Potiphar's wife unmistakably plays center stage.[19] An alternative explanation could be that the books were edited by one and the same person who introduced the 'Potiphar' mistake. In fact, the startling 'Potiphar' mistake may be helpful in appointing authorship.[20]

(b) The frequency of the word 'Legende' (English 'legend', 'myth', 'saga'). In all books (1-4) 'Carl van Bolen' employs 'Legende' rather enthusiastically.

## 5 Conclusions and Conjectures

The initial question – Who wrote the 'Carl van Bolen' books? – remains so far unanswered. Even the more basic question – Was there one or were there several authors? – remains open.

Why did Willy Verkauf invent and use the name 'Carl van Bolen' initially for *Geschichte der Erotik* and then again for the later books? Was it because the author of the manuscript did not want to publish it under his or her own name? Was it because the author could not publish it under his or her own name? And, if so, why not?

My three conclusions and conjectures are:

- (1) Books 1 – 4 were written by one and the same author.
- (2) Book 5 was written by Anton Neuber and initially published under Neuber's name only, but 'Carl van Bolen' was attached later as first author for commercial reasons.
- (3) The manuscripts of books 1-4 were not published under the real name of the author because he or she did not want to or could not publish it under his or her real name.

Admittedly, my conjectures are broad speculations and do not answer the questions. And so we will have to repeat the question. Apart from being an intriguing footnote in the history of sexology, who was 'Carl van Bolen'?

## 6 Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Jeff Boruszak, Philadelphia, USA, for his linguistic help.

[1] The later German editions that were published by Heyne Verlag (Munich) – *Geschichte der Erotik, Erotik des Orients, Dr. Kinsey und die Frau* – were edited to a degree, and shortened or extended.

[2] <http://www.worldcat.org/identities/np-bolen,%20carl%20van> Despite obvious mistakes (specifying the languages of the books) and limitations, WorldCat gives a first idea about the commercial successes of 'Carl van Bolen'.

[3] See: [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willy\\_Verkauf](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willy_Verkauf)

[4] Willy Verkauf-Verlon, *Situationen. Eine autobiographische Wortcollage*. Wien: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1983, p. 81:

Um meine Finanznot zu lindern, gab ich unter der Verlagsbezeichnung „Bücher des Lebens“ populär-wissenschaftliche Werke über Psychologie, Psychiatrie, Suggestion, Hypnose und Sexualwissenschaft heraus. Es handelte sich um Übersetzungen oder um vom Verlag selbst entworfene und verfaßte Werke wie „Geschichte der Erotik“, für die ich den Autor „Carl van Bolen“ erfand.

[5] See: [http://www.meertens.knaw.nl/nfb/lijsst\\_namen.php?operator=cn&naam=Van+Bolen](http://www.meertens.knaw.nl/nfb/lijsst_namen.php?operator=cn&naam=Van+Bolen) and <http://www.familienaam.be/>

[6] Carl van Bolen, *Sexual-Lexikon*, Wiesbaden: Reichelt Verlag, n.d. (c. 1962), p. 198:

Pseudonyme; Namensänderungen zur Verschleierung d. Verfasserschaft werden bei erotisch-obszönen Werken bevorzugt. Dies geschieht meist durch Übertragung des Namens in eine Fremde Sprache (z. B. Verlaine = Pablo

- de Herlagnès), Umdrehung d. Lautfolge (z. B. Logau = Golaw), Heranziehung v. Namen d. Gegner, fingierte landläufige Namen oder Scherznamen (z. B. Richequeue).
- [7] There was also a precedent of a seemingly Dutch pseudonym for a German erotic/sexual book. In 1907 *Das goldene Buch der Liebe oder die Renaissance im Geschlechtsleben (The Golden Book of Love or The Renaissance in Sex Life)* (Wien: C.W. Stern's Verlag, 1907) was published. The author was given as 'Dr. L. van der Weck-Erlen'. This pseudonym – part anagram, part foreignization – was, according to Gershon Legman (*The Horn Book*, New York: University Books, 1964, p. 63), used by "gymnasium professor Dr. Josef Weckerle (1858-1921)" (or 'Weckerle, Joseph', *The Horn Book*, p. 564). Others have labelled Weckerle as a 'professor of physical education and a specialist of gymnastics' (David Wallechinsky and Irving Wallace, *The People's Almanac #3*. New York: Morrow, 1981). Maybe there is some confusion here between the German word 'Gymnasium' and 'gymnastics'? In any case, Weckerle was a gymnastics enthusiast: in his *Golden Book* he enumerates and describes 531 different sexual positions.
- [8] Carl van Bolen, *Geschichte der Erotik*. St. Gallen: Allgemeiner Verlag, n. d. (c. 1953), Preface:  
Das vorliegende Werk gibt das bisher unveröffentlichte Manuskript des südamerikanischen Autors wieder und wurde nach dessen Tod durch eine Darstellung der *Erotik des Orients* [...] sowie durch die Berücksichtigung der neuesten Forschungsergebnisse, soweit diese im Kinsey-Report niedergelegt sind, ergänzt [...].
- [9] Carl van Bolen, *Sexual-Lexikon*, Wiesbaden: Reichelt Verlag, n. d. (c. 1962), p. 35:  
Bolen, Carl van; Sexuallforscher der Gegenwart, Verfasser einer auf klassischen Quellen d. erotischen Literatur beruhenden „Geschichte der Erotik“ unter Beiziehung d. letzten Ergebnisse d. amerikan. Forschung (s. Kinsey-Report) über die Erotik d. Gegenwart („Geschichte d. Erotik“, Verlag Willy Verkauf, Wien 1950).
- [10] Carl van Bolen, *Geschichte der Erotik*, Wien: Verlag Willy Verkauf, 1951, p. [6]:  
übertragen von Dr. Walter Lorenzy  
N.b. 'transmitted' ("übertragen"), not 'translated' ("übersetzt"). Compare: "Shaken, not stirred."
- [11] Carl van Bolen, *Sexual-Lexikon*, Wiesbaden: Reichelt Verlag, n. d. (c. 1962), p. 4:  
Nach einem Manuskript von Carl van Bolen zusammengestellt, bearbeitet und ergänzt von Dr. Hildegard Tschokl-Heinrichs, Dr. H. Dworschak u.a. (After a manuscript by Carl van Bolen compiled, edited, and supplemented by Dr. Hildegard Tschokl-Heinrichs, Dr. H. Dworschak, and others)
- [12] Anton Neuber, *Schriftdeutung als Erziehungshilfe. Eine graphologisch-psychologische Untersuchung anhand von Schriftbildern aus der Gegenwart mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von Kinderhandschriften*. Wien: Braumüller Verlag, 1991.
- [13] A note in the front matter of *Erotik des Orients* (5. Auflage 16.-18. Tausend, Wiesbaden: Reichelt Verlag, 1962) like "Dieses Buch wird an Jugendliche unter 18 Jahren nicht abgegeben" ("This book will not be given to youths under the age of 18") may have helped to incite or increase interest too.
- [14] Carl van Bolen, *Geschichte der Erotik*, Wien: Verlag Willy Verkauf, 1951, p. 235:  
Wir haben schon am Beispiel von Schnitzlers "Reigen" gesehen, daß dieser Autor [Arthur Schnitzler] ja nie gezögert hat, die Dinge beim Namen zu nennen und mit seinem Namen für seine Schriften zu stehen. Warum sollte er das [als dem mutmaßlichen Verfasser des *Josefine Mutzenbacher. Die Geschichte einer Wienerischen Dirne. Von ihr selbst erzählt.*] hier unterlassen haben?
- [15] Konstantin Kaiser, e-mail to the author d.d. 12 December 2011. As an alternative solution, Kaiser conjectures that the Swiss high school teacher, translator and literary critic Walter Widmer (1903-1965) is the author or the co-author of the books
- [16] Carl van Bolen, *Geschichte der Erotik*, Wien: Verlag Willy Verkauf, 1951, p. 39:  
Einen Einblick in die Psychologie der Perser geben die persischen Bearbeitungen der Geschichte von "Joseph und Potiphar", die ja auch vom Koran übernommen worden war. So hat der Dichter Firdusi unter anderem diese Geschichte bearbeitet, wobei allerdings aus der Potiphar eine Suleika wurde, die den Joseph nicht einfach durch ihre körperlichen Reize bestrickte und verführte, sondern es auch verstand, ihre Wirkung auf die Tugend des Mannes zu vervielfachen.
- [17] Carl van Bolen, *Sexual-Lexikon*, Wiesbaden: Reichelt Verlag, n. d. (c. 1962), pp.192-93:  
Potiphar; klassische Verführerin der biblischen Geschichte, versuchte d. Diener Joseph zum Beischlaf (s.d.) zu überreden, er jedoch widerstand. Dieses Thema wurde in der bildenden Kunst oftmals dargestellt: Raffael, Tintoretto, Bilverti [sic], Cignani, Rembrandt, Lucas v. Leyden u. a. m.
- [18] Carl van Bolen, *Erotik des Orients*, Teufen (AR): Bücher des Lebens / Wiesbaden: Reichelt-Verlag, 1962, p. 125:  
In Dschamis Dichtung «Jussuf und Suleika» ist die aktive Rolle der Frau sehr klar herausgearbeitet. Der Stoff hat eine gewisse Verwandtschaft mit dem Stoff von "Potiphar und Joseph", [...].
- [19] [http://www.hawe-kuehl.de/texte\\_in\\_der.php](http://www.hawe-kuehl.de/texte_in_der.php)
- [20] Another clue to identifying authorship may be the dating of the manuscript's origin. In *Sexual-Lexikon* (p. 67) we read:  
Ellis, Henry Havelock; (geb. 1859) engl. Sexualpsychologe: "Die krankhaften Geschlechtsempfindungen" (1907), „Geschlecht und Gesellschaft“ (1910-11), „Neue Horizonte für Liebe u. Leben“ (1922) u. a. m. (Ellis, Henry Havelock; (born 1859) English sexual psychologist : [...], and many more.)
- This entry does not give Ellis's date of death. As Havelock Ellis died on 8 July 1939 the manuscript may predate 1939.