“Look over here, look over there, lesbians are everywhere”:

Locating Activist Lesbians in Queer Liberation History

Kelly Phipps

A Thesis

In the Humanities Program

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (Humanities – Arts and Science)

Concordia University

Montréal Québec Canada

November 2019

© Kelly Phipps, 2019

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Kelly Phipps

Entitled: "Look over here, look over there, lesbians are everywhere": Locating Activist Lesbians in Queer Liberation History

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor Of Philosophy (Humanities (Arts & Science))

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final examining committee:

______________________________ Chair
Dr. Daniel Salee

______________________________ External Examiner
Dr. Elspeth Brown

______________________________ External to Program
Dr. Julie Podmore

______________________________ Examiner
Dr. Marc Lafrance

______________________________ Examiner
Dr. Krista G. Lynes

______________________________ Thesis Supervisor
Dr. Rachel Berger

Approved by ______________________________
Dr. Erin Manning, Graduate Program Director

January 15, 2020 ______________________________
Dr. André Roy, Dean
Faculty of Arts and Science

Abstract

“Look over here, look over there, lesbians are everywhere”: Locating Activist Lesbians in Queer Liberation History

Kelly Phipps, PhD
Concordia University, 2019

The Body Politic was a seminal lesbian and gay liberation journal that published monthly between 1971-1987. Produced in Toronto, it became a formative voice in the emergent lesbian and gay liberation movement in English Canada. It is a rich body of knowledge that has been thoroughly excavated to explore the lives and experiences of gay men and erotic masculinity during the period. There is a common misperception that queer women were absent from the journal and the movement more broadly. In this dissertation, I argue that they were far from absent, though certainly absented. The grand narrative of the liberation period posits two polarized groups: a gay movement seeking freedom from state regulation of sexuality versus a women’s movement seeking state protections to secure women’s freedom, with the two camps coming to a head over key issues, including intergenerational sex, SM, pornography, and sex work. This dissertation examines women’s contributions to the journal and the larger *ArQuives*, to reveal a group, whom I term activist lesbians (as opposed to gay liberationists or lesbian feminists), who navigated these seemingly oppositional movements. Throughout, they remained true to the radical liberatory roots of the gay liberation movement *because* they continued to incorporate and push for an intersectional feminist praxis. This dissertation identifies defining moments that are often overlooked in queer history. The analysis grapples with the legacy of *The Body Politic*, questioning the progress of queer liberation.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the following people for your support: my supervisor Rachel Berger; my committee members Krista Lynes and Marc Lafrance, as well as my previous committee member Thomas Waugh; my internal examiner Julie Podmore and external examiner Elspeth Brown; Lucie Handley-Girard, Jade Pichette, and Alan Miller at *The ArQuives*; Matt Carrington, Marianne Pelton, Noah Moss Brender, JJ Levine, and Gillian Rodgerson; my family Alan and Pauline Phipps, Greg Phipps and Jessica Murphy, Don and Shelley Beer; my dog Everly, for keeping things in perspective; my partner Sarah Beer, I could not have done this without you; and finally, Chris Bearchell, and all the other activist lesbians, who risked everything for our collective liberation. This is for you.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Story of a Classified Ad ... 1

Three Decades Later: *Paper Trail* ... 3

Overview of Project ... 7

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Emergence of a Movement ... 12

The Institutionalization of Gay and Lesbian Studies ... 16

Archiving Our Histories ... 19

Chapter 3: Methodology

The Politics of Archives ... 24

What's in an Archive? ... 26

Locating the Researcher ... 31

Research Steps

The Body Politic as Archive ... 35

Quantifying the Data ... 37

Archival Analysis ... 38

Chapter 4: The Rise of Lesbian Identity

Part I: The Rise of a Movement

Political beginnings: *pre-liberation era* ... 44

A defiant subculture: *an ode to (butch) lesbians* ... 49

A new era: *the emergent lesbian and gay liberation movement* ... 51

A new organization: *The Body Politic* ... 55

Part II: Lesbian Politics and Representation

Lesbian politics: *in the pages of The Body Politic* ... 58

Analysis of contributions: *the lesbian afterthought* ... 62

A movement rooted in anti-sexism: *control of our bodies, control of our lives* ... 63

A journal that is male-centred: *few token articles* ... 67

At the intersection of gender and class: *a woman with no time and no money* ... 68

Seeking a unified view of liberation: *sexual expansiveness* ... 71

A view that is male-centred: *end of a political era* ... 72

Part III: Women of the Gay Liberation Movement 68
A unique gendered and sexual politics: *the lavender menace* 73
Making space for lesbian content: *building a movement* 77
The feminist undercurrents of gay liberation: *the feminist 'issue'* 81
Shifting feminist terrain and the rise of lesbian feminism: *we are angry, not gay* 83
The response of activist lesbians: *I'm angry and gay* 85
Reclaiming butch lesbians: *sexual courage* 86
The heterosexual privilege of lesbian feminism: *feminist closetry* 88
Dubious male issues: *no one gives up power willingly* 89
Divided and diversifying: *stand back for the fireworks* 92
Chapter 5: The Rise of the Autonomous Lesbian Movement
Making history: *The Brunswick Four* 97
Part I: Organizing
The rise of lesbian autonomy: *not-so-invisible woman* 99
Conference organizing and lesbian autonomy 101
Lesbian visibility: *Wages Due Lesbians* 103
Lesbian conferences: *I was being politicized* 105
A 'national' organization: *Lesbian Organization of Toronto* 107
Part II: Theorizing
Membership parameters: *the purity yardstick* 110
Notions of universal sisterhood: *systems of oppression are interlocking* 112
The lesbian sex wars: *men loving boys, dividing women* 116
An ongoing debate: *pornography* 120
An ideological gap: *doing our own work* 124
Defending unconventional sexual relationships: *I was fifteen, she was forty-three* 125
Part III: Strategizing
Changing dynamics: *realigning with gay liberation* 128
An inhospitable space for lesbians: *I'm marching for you too* 131
In grave circumstances: *I felt like I had arrived at a tea party* 132
Energy is wavering: *so where is our movement now?* 134
The demise of a movement: *LOOT was supposed to be everyone's home* 134

Chapter 6: Activist Lesbians Foregrounding Coalition Politics
An Archival Treasure: The Super 8 Viewing 143
Part I: The Shifting Socio-Political Climate of the 1980s
The lesbian community organizes: *look over here, look over there* 150
SM in the lesbian community: *what Color Is Your Handkerchief?* 156
The importance of Gayle Rubin: *the feminist equivalent of the Anti-Christ* 162
The pinnacle of the sex wars: *The Barnard Conference* 165
Part II: The politics of liberation
The Toronto bathhouse raids: *No More Shit! Fuck You 52!* 171
Lesbians and gay men unite: *don't worry, there's strength in numbers* 172
Lesbians and feminists divide: *Not a Love Story* 176
The question of censorship: *pornography displays the ugliest sexism of the system* 179
What's the difference? *the sexism of porn and the racism of preference* 183
A collective's decision: *advertising for the XXX Adult Store* 184
A feminist take on censorship: *the state is not neutral* 188
The Bearchell Files: *proud pervert, still feminist* 190
Articulating pro-sex feminism: *renegade voices* 193
Feminist silencing: *one of the strangest experiences I've ever had* 195
Summary: *The outcome of the censorship battles* 197
Forging Ahead: The Legacies of The Body Politic 201
Chapter 7: Testing the Boundaries of *The Body Politic*
Part I: Grappling with sexism in *The Body Politic*
An ode to Chris Bearchell: *if anyone gets arrested, call Chris* 204
The socio-legal climate: *the realization of some of our worst fears* 209
Coalition politics: *dykes and hookers fight back* 211
The Fraser Committee on prostitution: *a good old-fashioned traveling road show* 213
Focusing on sex workers' rights: *Combat Zone* 214
A feminist response: *good girls have more dinners with bad girls* 216
Government response: *feminists have played a peculiar role in these developments* 219
Part II: Grappling with racism in *The Body Politic*
A question of censorship: *White Assed Super Pricks* 223
Intersectional analysis: *the end of sexism, racism and classism is very much the same* 228

Upholding racial preference: *the means of keeping Black people in their place* 232
A collective's decision: *31 words* 234
Chapter 8: Conclusion
Re: a letter of resignation 240

Bibliography 250
Appendix 270

Chapter One

"'no blacks', 'no fats', 'no fems'"

Or

"Black Male Wanted: Handsome, successful, GWM would like young, well built BM for houseboy."

In 1985, a classified ad was submitted to *The Body Politic* that would ignite a divisive debate within the lesbian and gay movement for years to come. The advert read: "Black Male Wanted: Handsome, successful, GWM [Gay White Male] would like young, well built BM [Black Male] for houseboy." At the time, the ad exemplified a central problem that queers of colour and their allies had been expressing for years—the journal served the interests of only one group: white, middle-class, gay men. 31 years later, I would find myself at a daylong symposium celebrating the legacy of the radical journal that helped shape and define the lesbian and gay liberation movement in English Canada. The celebratory tone was cut short as several participants questioned the nature of the celebration—whose liberation had been achieved? In the discussion that ensued, the room rehashed the very same debate. Was racism (and sexism and classism) indicative of an historical moment, or did it continue to permeate a movement?

The Body Politic was a seminal lesbian and gay liberation magazine distributed monthly from 1971 to 1987. It amalgamated a network of sex radicals who variously documented, celebrated, and critiqued the emergent lesbian and gay liberation movement as they formed it. Though the headquarters were based in Toronto, the journal became a formative medium of communication between queer communities across the country and internationally. 5000 copies of the first issue sold, for a quarter each, on street corners, at gay bookstores and bars across the country. Its readership was small, though its legacy is large. With 3,000 subscribers at its peak, a

third of them from outside Canada, it amassed the perspectives of over 2,000 contributors, including 80 regular correspondents from 21 Canadian cities, during its run.[1]

The paper was based on a collective model, which avoided giving a single person control over the publication by requiring two-thirds approval for all content published. Editorial decisions were made by *The Body Politic Editorial Collective* (herein, the collective), which typically comprised a dozen members (though ranged from five to 24 people). Individual collective members were in constant flux, but a core group helped shape the tone of the journal, which was overtly political and largely centred around Toronto gay life. The governing structure of the magazine consisted primarily of cis gay white men, and though Toronto-centric, a lot of formative members came from various places across Canada and the United States. Over time, they established a small group of paid staff and a substantial team of volunteers.

When the 'houseboy' ad was submitted, the volunteer reviewing the classifieds—who happened to be one of the very few people of colour associated with the journal—sought guidance from several collective members about whether it violated *The Body Politic*'s publication policy.[2] As we will see in upcoming chapters, this policy was already a point of contention. It stipulated that classified ads would be censored if they contravened the *Criminal Code of Canada* by specifically excluding a group of people, such as 'no blacks', 'no fats', 'no fems'.[3] The full collective was not due to meet until after the February issue went to press. While the collective members who were consulted expected "some objections" to its publication, they concluded that "the contentious ad wasn't clearly disallowed under the existing policy," and so, "the ad was run

[1] Barbara Forum, "Homosexuality in Canada: Introducing The Body Politic," interview with Hugh Brewster, *CBC Digital Archives*, February 11, 1972, audio, 3:07, https://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/homosexuality-in-canada-introducing-the-body-politic; Arshy Mann, "What was The Body Politic, anyway?" *Xtra*, June 9, 2016, https://www.dailyxtra.com/what-was-the-body-politic-anyway-71206.
[2] David Churchill, "Personal Ad Politics: Race, Sexuality and Power and The Body Politic," *Left History*, 8, no. 2 (2003): 116.
[3] Editorial Collective, "31 Words," *The Body Politic*, no. 113 (April 1985): 29.

as it stood."[4] Over the course of the previous 14 years, thousands of classified ads had been published. And while each fell within the policy parameters, many had similar undercurrents of racism and exclusion. There were over 200 classified ads in the February 1985 issue, but the GWM seeking "BM houseboy" served as a catalyst for an intense debate on racism and sexuality within queer liberation, and the very role of *The Body Politic* in the lesbian and gay community.

Paper Trail: The Legacies of The Body Politic

31 years after the publication of this particular classified ad, I found myself sitting with 100 others in a small lecture hall at the Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies at the University of Toronto, on an unseasonably hot morning in May 2016. We were gathered for a one-day symposium, "Paper Trail: The Legacies of *The Body Politic*"—marking 45 years since the first issue was published in 1971. The day comprised several panels, with 13 speakers, myself included. I was invited by Gillian Rodgerson, a regular contributor to the journal during the 1980s, whom I had met at the "We Demand: History/Sex/Activism in Canada" conference in Vancouver several years prior, and Ed Jackson, one of the journal's founding members. My presentation was the only one to focus on lesbians.

The first session titled, "Opening Letters: Jane Rule and Rick Bébout," was a nostalgic one. For over 15 years, Jane Rule, the beloved author of lesbian-themed novels and essays, and Rick Bébout, a journalist and editor at *The Body Politic* and a key figure in Toronto's gay scene, ruminated about gay life in written correspondence. Rule, writing from her home in a remote community off the coast of British Columbia, and Bébout, from the journal's headquarters downtown Toronto; their intimate exchange chronicles the details of their personal relationships, reflections on major events, controversies, and the inner workings of *The Body Politic.* Having

[4] Ibid.

amassed the letters, professor and literary critic, Marilyn Schuster, presented on the value of this exchange.[5] Documentary filmmaker, Lynne Fernie, showed short clips from her film, "Jane Rule…Writing," in which Rule and Shuster discuss the writing process as well as letters exchanged between Rule and Bébout.[6]

In the following panel, several speakers ruminated, commenting on queer history and culture, the liberating role of *The Body Politic*, and its centrality to the lesbian and gay archive. Until this point, my sense was that the symposium was an opportunity for an older generation to reminisce about the early days of *The Body Politic* and their place in history. The journal, much like the day itself, gave the sense that Toronto was the epicenter of Canadian queer politics. Yet, as the morning progressed, panelists began describing *The Body Politic* as a limited archive, reflective of ongoing absences in the larger Canadian queer narrative. The tone changed dramatically in the early afternoon when interdisciplinary scholar, Rinaldo Walcott, stepped up to the podium to give a talk titled, "Black Queer Life in the ruins of *The Body Politic*." In a powerful and poetic tone, crumpling each page after reading it, Walcott proclaimed, "For Black queers, we live and love in the ruins of the aftermath of *The Body Politic*, not because of it, but in spite of it. The archive of *The Body Politic* reminds me that we are not noticed, not seen, but we are hyper visible nonetheless in queer culture." As the day progressed, it became clear that, for many, the legacy of *The Body Politic* is one of exclusion.

The third panel, "Re-View: Present Uses of the Queer Past" featured several scholars, graduate students, and community activists: Michael Connors Jackman, Lali Mohamed, Cait McKinney, Syrus Marcus Ware, and Brenda Cossman. In all, a third of the panelists addressed

---

[5] This exchange has since been published in *Queer Love Story: The Letters of Jane Rule and Bébout,* ed. Marilyn Schuster (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017).
[6] *Jane Rule…Writing*, directed by Lynne Fernie and Aerlyn Weissman, National Film Board of Canada, 1992. Film.

exclusions—the absence of people of colour, specifically Black and trans folks, Indigenous peoples, and women—from both *The Body Politic* and the broader account of queer histories in Canada. In this way, the version of history celebrated at the symposium was one that overlooked and overshadowed so many queer lives. By the third and final panel of the day, the symposium had turned into a heated discussion. The raucous cheers of a nearby graduation ceremony could only temporarily ease the tension.

Amid the discussion was the 'houseboy' classified ad from 1985. For some, the ad was clearly a matter of the past—an historical record of racism within *The Body Politic*. Others pinpointed the ad as indicative of anti-black racism in the community, as parallels were drawn between the symposium itself and the ad's post-publication meeting 31 years ago.[7] Then, as now, people of colour were left explaining the racialized foundations of the discussion to a room of predominantly white gay men. As some gathered at the symposium to celebrate their sexual liberation, others highlighted the ongoing oppression of 'othered' queers—within the movement, the archive, and the current socio-political climate. The discussion raised broader questions with deep implications: Who has the power to claim history? How are the archives and this symposium interwoven in that history, in that power?

Scholar, artist, and activist, Syrus Marcus Ware, urged the symposium audience to centre the experiences and narratives of Black, Indigenous, and non-white queer and trans people to understand LGBTQ+ history throughout North America. He explained, "By doing so, we gain a different entry point into trans and queer collective timelines of resistance and archives, and we interrupt the way in which these omissions produce a whitewashed canon. The holes in our

[7] This is discussed further in chapter seven. A few days after its publication, a meeting was arranged with representatives of *Lesbians of Colour*, *Zami* (Canadian group for Black and West Indian gays and lesbians), *Gay Asians of Toronto*, and *The Body Politic* collective to discuss the impact of the ad.

archives tell larger stories than the actual content." Later during the same panel, community organizer, Lali Mohamed affirmed, "Queer communities all over this city were cultivating ideas, community spaces, and caring for one another with such tremendous generosity and creativity." He asked poignantly, "Why is Pink Triangle Press missing all of this magic-making happening in the margins? These communities, almost always led by women, were fashioning and imagining new ways of being in this world to make it not only more livable but more just."

My own presentation took place midday, during the second panel, "Trail Blazing: *The Body Politic* in Community," alongside a group of professors, students, and activists, Tim McCaskell, Scott De Groot, Tom Waugh, Rinaldo Walcott, and Robin Metcalfe. Post-symposium, I reflected on the experience: sitting between McCaskell and De Groot at the front of the room, as I nervously stacked the typed pages of my presentation on the table before the panel began, McCaskell leaned in and asked, "What's your talk on?" I replied, "Lesbians and *The Body Politic*!" He paused, and then responded, "Oh, there's not much there—is there?" At the time, I did not think much of his comment; I had already grown accustomed to the assumption that when it comes to lesbian history in Canada, 'there's not much there'. Indeed, much of the research undertaken by Canadian historians and researchers on lesbian histories never makes it into the archives. While I knew that lesbians were not the only absented group within the Canadian queer archive, it was only after Walcott's talk that I rethought McCaskell's comment. The assumption that absence in the archive equates to absence in history speaks to the tenuous (non)existence of anyone outside or beyond the dominant narrative of (queer) history. In this case, *The Body Politic* is in itself an archive. Articles written by and for lesbians fill its pages, and yet the assumption remains that 'there's not much there'. In other words, lesbians "are an absented presence always under erasure."[8] The

[8] Rinaldo Walcott, *Black Like Who? Writing Black Canada* (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2003), 27.

following is an attempt to reclaim not only lesbian histories but the larger queer archive, by excavating these erasures.

Overview

This dissertation is divided into eight chapters that account for lesbian activism within the canon of queer history in English Canada. In the following chapter, I situate and examine the scholarship on lesbian histories within the canon of gay liberation history. In the literature review, I describe the emergence of homosexuality as a scientific and social category, instituted within the realms of sexology, psychiatry, and medicine. By the 1950s, these categorizations were reclaimed by queer people themselves, and soon evolved into a political identity that gave way to the lesbian and gay liberation movement in the early-1970s. The liberation period is marked by an active social movement fighting for emancipation and recognition on many fronts; this forms the basis of my inquiry and is addressed in detail in the coming chapters. For the purposes of the literature review, I focus on the scholarship produced about lesbian history, situated within the developing queer canon.

Chapter three outlines my methodological approach and contribution to this historicization. In the methodology, I describe some of the issues pertaining to archival research that informed my inquiry into hegemonic absences. I use the radical liberation journal, *The Body Politic*, and its offshoot, *The ArQuives*, formerly known as the *Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives*, as entry points to explore feminist and lesbian organizing and activism within the queer movement in English Canada. Lesbian histories are typically explored within the realm of women's organizations and feminist archives, and yet as we will see, this often overlooks the sex-positive narrative that I locate in this project. I have chosen a specifically gay liberation periodical and

archive to consider the erasure, or absenting, of this content in the grand narrative of queer liberation history.

One of the initial aims of *The Body Politic* was to generate a widespread and inclusive cultural and political agenda for the emergent gay liberation movement. While early goals included law reform and human rights protections, the overall focus was on challenging repressive institutions (i.e. the state, the church, marriage) that confined sexuality to heterosexual, monogamous families. By the mid-1970s, however, this radical vision of social transformation was largely replaced by a movement premised on civil rights and equality politics. This shift in activism propelled feminist and lesbian activists to develop theory and politics independently of the gay liberation movement. My analysis of *The Body Politic,* supplemented with archival research at *The ArQuives*, traces these discursive shifts as activist lesbians came to question a movement that failed to meaningfully oppose state regulation of sexuality, gender, and family structure, as well as racial and economic injustice, which so deeply impacted queer women's lives. Within *The Body Politic* there is evidence of a group of lesbians who remained aligned with this early liberatory vision, and it is this history that I trace.

The remaining chapters outline the trajectory of lesbian activism between 1971-1987, and each chapter reads chronologically with thematic overlap. Chapter four begins with the rise of the lesbian and gay movement in North America, with a focus on English Canada, and the role of activist lesbians within it. Beginning with early homophile organizations, the pivotal We Demand March on Parliament Hill, the founding of *The Body Politic* and *The ArQuives*, marked the emergence of a sustained collective movement. Early on, gay men became increasingly focused on civil rights and sexual expansiveness, while activist lesbians remained steadfast in the early potential of the movement. They considered their position within gay and women's liberation and

started organizing independently. Their simultaneous erasure in both the gay and women's liberation movements spurred a unique and intersectional understanding of oppression. Here, we see that throughout the 1970s, activist lesbians remained true to their radical liberatory roots, and this chapter reclaims the importance of their perspectives and actions in our historical understanding of both movements.

Ongoing dismissal within these movements propelled many to call for an autonomous lesbian movement, and this forms the basis of chapter five. We witness the movement's rise and fall during the latter half of the 1970s, and see that activist lesbians continued to grapple with their position within gay and women's liberation movements, as they simultaneously attempted to carve out a unique cultural and political space for themselves. Though short-lived, the autonomous lesbian movement remains absented from dominant historical narratives. Autonomous organizing is often used interchangeably with 'lesbian feminism' as a political ideology and identity, and within queer and feminist archives, becomes the all-encompassing framework through which lesbian activism is represented during this time period. My analysis nuances this history and offers powerful insights into the ideological underpinnings of sexuality, gender, class, and race-based oppression, as activist lesbians developed progressive responses to seemingly contradictory concerns, namely pornography, censorship, age of consent laws, and lesbian sexual expression. That said, the autonomous movement was fraught with tension amongst its constituency, who could not overcome questions of identity, which ultimately led to its demise.

In chapter six, we see how these same questions became widespread social concerns as the political pendulum swung to the conservative Right during the 1980s. An anti-sex sentiment gained prevalence, reinforced by the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and a moral panic over pornography; the urgency of political organizing permeated. During this time, women's

contributions to *The Body Politic* increased significantly, as they continued to negotiate *the* liberatory position on commercial sex, women's sexual behaviour, sexual freedom, and their position within the gay community. These issues came to a head at the infamous Barnard Conference, which signaled a rupture within the feminist movement.

Hostility within the women's movement propelled many activist lesbians to organize within the realm of gay liberation, which they did throughout *The Body Politic*. In the second part of chapter six, I explore how activist lesbians articulated a pro-sex feminist position. Within the context of gay liberation, they negotiated their own parameters of sexual liberation, attune to the prevalence of violence against women, and its manifestation through, especially hetero-, pornography. The collective's decision to publish an advertisement for the retail outlet, Red Hot Video, which sold misogynistic snuff films, was perceived by many as a dismissal of feminist concerns in relation to free sexual expression. Reactions demonstrated how the choice to *not* censor this advertisement caused a rupture among activist lesbians and the gay liberation movement; the former reiterated the initial movement concerns which were intersectional and inclusive, while the latter upheld a singular focus on sexual liberation at all costs. This dialogue about sexism within *The Body Politic* is an overlooked contributing factor leading to the view of the journal as non-representative and irrelevant to the queer community.

In chapter seven, I feature Chris Bearchell, an under-represented Canadian activist. I begin with a critical biography, which positions her as an instrumental counterpoint to the dominant understanding of activism amongst gay liberationist and feminist organizers of the period. Throughout the first half of the 1980s, Bearchell worked to maintain a radical liberatory politics that attempted to coalesce variously subjugated groups and played a crucial role in the emergence of the sex worker rights movement in Toronto. This is both a collective and individual critical

biography; it counters the dominant narrative of 'lesbian feminists versus gay liberationists' by highlighting the work of activist lesbians as a group that were simultaneously pro-sex, anti-censorship, and feminist.

In the second part of this chapter, I focus on the aftermath of the collective's decision to publish the 'houseboy' classified ad described above, which is the most commonly cited moment of crisis that led to the demise of the journal. For many, the collective's uncritical acceptance of sexual freedom at the expense of race-based inequality clarified that this was a white gay male magazine and called into question its relevance to the broader queer community. I include both of these decisions, to *not* censor ads that were perceived by many as sexist and racist, as indicative of broader concerns over the leadership of the journal and the movement. The decision to publish these ads revealed that *The Body Politic* no longer resonated with the queer community, as communities of colour and activist lesbians began to branch off into their own factions with greater militancy. In the concluding chapter, I return to the persistency of these issues, exemplified at the "Paper Trail" symposium, which opened this project. In tracing these absences, I provide insight to the history of the present and make connections to contemporary movements seeking to redress, reclaim, and advance radical liberatory politics that benefit all.

Chapter Two

The Emergence of a Movement

The study of homosexuality can be traced to the late-1800s, when a generation of medical professionals established the field of sexology. In the decades that followed, physicians and psychiatrists developed a 'science' of sexuality that at once challenged and pathologized sexual taboos of the period. In its early incarnations, sexologists viewed humans as having an innate sexual nature that was central to individual identity and behaviour. It followed, there were two 'opposite' sexes, with a naturally occurring sexual attraction between them. This view was reinforced as sexologists focused on strengthening the institutions of marriage and family. Among earliest supposedly scientific categories of analysis was 'inversion,' which included a range of behaviours and attitudes that would later be classified as homosexuality. While some sexologists viewed sexual diversity as equally natural, others saw their work as contributing to a more healthful society, aligned with the nuclear family form as well as notions of racial purity.[9]

Within the influential field of psychology/psychiatry, Sigmund Freud sought to uncover our sex drives, and adopted many of the ideas of sexologists, such as the biological basis of sexuality, with a 'natural' progression of sexual development. Alongside 'normal' sexual expression came 'abnormal' forms of sexual behaviour, drives that should be managed through psychological intervention. Importantly, it was during this period that conceptions of same-sex desire were redefined, shifting from a set of 'sinful' behaviours to an essential aspect of personality.[10] Years later, Michel Foucault would point to this as a pivotal moment in the history

[9] Steven Seidman, *Contested Knowledge: Social Theory Today*, 4th ed. (Malden: Blackwell, 2011); Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality* (London: Tavistock, 1986); Bonnie Zimmerman and George Haggerty, "Introduction," in *Lesbian Histories and Cultures: An Encyclopedia*, vol. I, ed. Bonnie Zimmerman (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2000), ix-xvi; Bonnie Zimmerman and George Haggerty, "Introduction," in *Gay Histories and Cultures: An Encyclopedia*, vol. II, ed. George Haggerty (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2000), ix-xvi.
[10] Ibid.

of sexuality, signifying a shift from behaviour to identity in the construction of the modern 'homosexual.'[11] The impacts of this moment reverberate today, as the establishment of this categorization inadvertently propelled the emergence of a social movement based on that very identity.

In historical accounts, we see that liberation is not a smooth and upward trajectory. Lesbian identity and collective organizing emerged in conjunction with the construction of homosexuality, as well as shifting trends in women's emancipatory politics. Lillian Faderman historicizes the metamorphoses of lesbian identity during the 1900s in the United States, making connections between gender and sexuality specific to lesbian experience.[12] Her analysis documents how the rise and fall of social acceptance of lesbianism coincides with gains and losses in women's economic and political freedom more broadly. Women "in the life" existed with relative acceptability during the liberated 1920s, yet many of those gains were lost during the Depression the following decade. When jobs were scarce, working women were encouraged to return to traditional, domestic roles, and lesbianism became unacceptable. During WWII, women filled traditionally male jobs and the military became more tolerant toward intimacy between women, but following the war when women were expected to return to traditional gender roles, lesbians were targeted by anti-communist purges, removed from their jobs, homes, and social spaces. By the late 1960s, women's and gay liberation movements helped to once again render lesbianism less stigmatized and ushered in the rise of lesbian separatism. Much of the historical work on lesbian life focuses on this period and the development of a collective social, cultural, and political identity.

[11] Michel Foucault, *History* of *Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).
[12] Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

By the 1950s, 'homosexuals' started organizing to address the discrimination they faced. While both 'homosexual' and 'homophile' terminology were in use, the latter was favoured by some for its focus on love ("phile" in Greek), rather than sex. Homophile organizations emphasized a sense of community, while attempting to deemphasize the sexual aspects of this identity that preoccupied and concerned dominant society. They resisted the characterization of homosexuality as perverse but otherwise wanted to assimilate into the societies in which they were raised. Homophile groups appealed to psychiatric and religious authority to legitimize homosexuality in order to gain acceptance from the general community. One of the first such organizations was the *Mattachine Society*, founded in 1950 by gay male communist and labour activists in Los Angeles, which soon expanded with chapters throughout the United States. Members sought to convince heterosexual society that homosexuals were no different from them. The following year, ONE Inc., an offshoot organization that admitted women, formed to unify and educate homosexuals. In 1955, the *Daughters of Bilitis* emerged as the lesbian counterpart organization to the *Mattachine Society*. Initially intended to be a social club for lesbians to gather outside the highly surveilled bar scene, it soon evolved into a political organization focused on advocacy and education to reduce self-loathing during this repressive period.

To this point, sexologists attempted to separate women by constructing the conception of the lesbian as a special category. Psychiatry was popularized in the mainstream through pseudo-scientific articles in magazines such as *Chatelaine* and *Good Housekeeping*, which were read by many women. Likewise, popular mainstream pulp novels often linked lesbianism to pathology, perversity, criminality, and danger; a subset of women who either wanted to be men or who were too repulsive to attract men.[13] As the psychiatric definitions solidified, queer women started to

[13] Faderman, *Odd Girls*; Liz Millward, *Making a Scene: Lesbians and Community across Canada, 1964-1984* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015).

apply alternative conceptualizations to their lives. They did so through homophile organizations, the distribution of periodicals, noble sapphic novels, bar culture, and other social networks. As women found evidence that they were not alone in their desires, they had to reclaim the language used to pathologize and criminalize them. On their own terms, lesbianism came to be an identifier of sexuality, political identity, and social status.

Lesbians self-represented, dialogued, and documented their existence in newsletters, magazines, and novels. The earliest known magazine specifically for lesbians, *Vice Versa* (1947-1948) published nine issues, distributed mostly by hand (to circumvent obscenity laws) to a few dozen readers.[14] The *Daughters of Bilitis* produced *The Ladder* on a much larger scale, to several hundred subscribers, from 1956-1970. Analysis of these early publications suggest that they encouraged assimilation into heterosexual society and avoided risqué themes, instead focusing on fiction, poetry, and personal essays related to experiences of isolation, motherhood, and married life.[15] Pulp fiction provided one of the few ways for lesbians to self-represent within a genre known for its overt sexual content.[16] Sapphic novels, written by lesbians themselves, gave insight to a misunderstood aspect of society that had only been described through heteronormative and misogynistic perspectives of sexologists and psychiatrists. In her analysis of the genre, Liz Millward states that themes of violence and oppression faced by lesbians during the period were prominent.[17] The bar scene also played a prominent role in many of the historical accounts of lesbian life both pre- and post-liberation, which is developed further in the coming chapters. This

---

[14] Jonathan Katz, *Gay/Lesbian Almanac: A New Documentary* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983).
[15] Kats, Gay*/Lesbian Almanac*; Teresa Theophano, "Daughters of Bilitis," *GLBTQ: An Encyclopedia*, last modified October 20, 2005, https://web.archive.org/web/20110629110236/http://www.glbtq.com/social-sciences/daughters_bilitis.html.
[16] Yvonne Keller, "'Was It Right to Love Her Brother's Wife so Passionately?': Lesbian Pulp Novels and U.S. Lesbian Identity, 1950-1965," *American Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (June 2005): 385-410.
[17] Millward, *Making a Scene.*

research typically relies on oral history testimonies and similarly documents a harsh reality of violence and oppression, and queer bars and butch esthetic, as sites of direct resistance.

The Institutionalization of Gay and Lesbian Studies

Paralleling the rise of the lesbian and gay liberation movement, gay and lesbian studies emerged as an academic discipline as queer scholars cited the relevance of the field and were increasingly free to assert themselves within it. Though uncommon and controversial in the 1970s and 1980s, university campuses witnessed the introduction of gay studies classes and student clubs, and by the 1990s, there were lesbian and gay programs, departments, and research centres.[18] The scholarship that developed in this field historicized the rise of 'homosexuality' as a category, and in so doing, challenged the presumed normality of 'heterosexuality.' Seminal works by US scholars documented the socially constructed nature of sexuality. Faderman revisited the supposedly platonic relationships between women historically and reinterpreted their closeness.[19] John D'Emilio highlighted that while homosexual acts have existed throughout history, homosexual identity was a modern phenomenon—a force that has shaped identity, community, and a social movement.[20]

Since the 1980s, the canon of specifically Canadian queer history has been developing as well.[21] Book-length comprehensive volumes have now been produced by notable sociologists and

[18] TBP makes reference to student clubs in high schools and on university campuses. According to Anne Perdue, the first gay studies class taught in Canada was at the University of Toronto in 1974. The course, "New Perspectives on the Gay Experience," was highly controversial, attendants were few, and the professor, Michael Lynch, was asked to refrain from making public statements about homosexuality or teaching on the topic again. See: Anne Perdue, "Out and Proud," *University of Toronto Magazine*, June 11, 2009, https://magazine.utoronto.ca/research-ideas/culture-society/out-and-proud-history-of-gay-lesbian-activism-toronto-anne-perdue/

[19] Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*, (New York: Morrow, 1981).

[20] John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*, 2nd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

[21] Barry Adam, *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement*, revised edition (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995); Ross Higgins, *De la clandestine a l'affirmation: Pour une histoire de la communaute gaie Montréalaise* (Motnreal, Comeau et Nadeau, 1999); Gary Kinsman, *Regulation of Desire: Homo and Hetero Sexualities*, 2nd edition (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1996); Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers: National*

queer activists (and former contributors to *The Body Politic*), such as Barry Adam, Gary Kinsman, Tom Warner, and Tim McCaskell.[22] A review of these works reveals a bias toward contributions of gay white male activists and issues, alongside an absence of lesbian histories.[23] When lesbian activism is discussed, it is generally tucked into paragraphs under subtitles such as "Autonomous Lesbian Organizing" or "Lesbian Feminism" or "Child Custody and Lesbian Parenting."[24] Based on these widely cited grand narratives, one might conclude that lesbians were not very active within gay liberation in Canada throughout the 1970s and 1980s. My work interrogates that conclusion and questions the version of liberation history that makes it into seminal texts. I attempt to locate queer women's lives and experiences—those who have been absented from these narratives, tucked into neat paragraphs under various subtitles, forever orbiting the main plot as side characters, but never gaining full status as *having been there.*

I am not alone in this quest. By the 1990s, lesbian histories were being increasingly excavated within the developing canon.[25] Lesbianism was catapulted into mainstream consciousness in 1992 with the award-winning documentary, *Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives*, which drew on oral testimonies describing bar culture in Montréal,

---

Security as Sexual Regulation (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010); Steven Maynard "In Search of 'Sodom North': The Writing of Lesbian and Gay History in English Canada, 1970-1990," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 21, no. 1 and 2, (March and June 1994): 117-132. Tim McCaskell published *Queer Progress, From Homophobia to Homonationalism* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2016); David Rayside, *On the Fringe: Gays and Lesbians in Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Miriam Smith, *Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada: Social Movements and Equality Seeking, 1971-1995* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Tom Warner, *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

[22] Adam, *The Rise*; McCaskell, *Queer Progress*; Warner, *Never Going Back*.

[23] For example, Warner focuses on autonomous lesbian organizing, rather than recognizing the role of lesbians *within* the gay liberation movement. Likewise, Adam devotes a chapter to lesbian feminism, almost always framing lesbians as outside the movement; for instance, he writes, "For lesbians who decided to stay with the gay movement…" (See: Adam, *The Rise*, 102).

[24] Adam, *The Rise*; Warner, *Never Going Back*.

[25] In the 1970s, Vern and Bonnie Bullough were working to recover one of the first, though rarely documented studies on lesbians. Their article, published in 1977, describes Mildred Berryman's ground-breaking research in the 1920-30s in the United States, with a sample of mostly Mormon women who described having had same-sex erotic desire since childhood and claimed a shared identity. See: Vern Bullough and Bonnie Bullough, "Lesbianism in the 1920s and 1930s: A Newfound Study," *Signs* 2, no. 4 (Summer 1977): 895-904.

Toronto, and Vancouver, with interwoven narratives from pulp novels, the documentary highlighted class schisms between pink-collar and elite lesbians.[26] Scholars in the fields of women and lesbian studies, history, sociology, anthropology, and cultural geography have likewise explored lesbian life through oral histories, and they too have tended to focus on predominantly white, urban lesbians, and bar culture.[27] The proliferation of women's and feminist periodicals during the 1970s and 1980s have provided additional material to explore and historicize political and social dynamics in large and smaller communities.[28] That research indicates that lesbian content was marginal, even within their own publications. Feminist and women's journals tended to focus on education and were mostly dedicated to the observations of white, middle-class, radical lesbian feminists.[29]

To date, there are only a handful of book-length manuscripts documenting lesbian life in Canada, each of which is discussed further in the coming chapters. Becki Ross provides an in-depth analysis of the instrumental yet short-lived *Lesbian Organization of Toronto* (LOOT).[30] One

---

[26] *Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives*, directed by Lynne Fernie and Aerlyn Weissman, National Film Board of Canada, 1992. Film. https://www.nfb.ca/film/forbidden_love/.

[27] Line Chamberland, "Remembering Lesbian Bars: Montréal, 1955-1975," *Journal of Homosexuality* 25, no. 3 (1993): 231-269; Julie Podmore, "Gone 'underground'? Lesbian visibility and the consolidation of queer space in Montréal," *Social and Cultural Geography* 7, no. 4 (2006): 595-625.

[28] Barbara Freeman: *Kinesis* (Vancouver, 1974-2001), *Pandora* (Halifax, 1985-94), and *Broadside* (Toronto, 1979-89); Becki Ross: *Web of Crones* (Hornby Island, BC, 1983-88), *Voices for Lesbian Survival* (Kenora, Ontario, 1980-88), *Pedestal* (Vancouver BC, 1975-80), *Pandora* (Halifax, 1985-94), as well as *Broadside*. See: Barbara Freeman, "Collective Visions: Lesbian Identity and Sexuality in Feminist Periodicals, 1979-1994," in Barbara Freeman, *Beyond Bylines: Media Workers and Women's Rights in Canada* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2011), 157-186; Becki Ross, "Dance to 'Tie a Yellow Ribbon,' Get Churched, and Buy the Little Lady a Drink: Gay Women's Bar Culture in Toronto, 1965-1975," in *Weaving Alliances: Selected Papers Presented for the Canadian Women's Studies Association at the 1991 and 1992 Learned Societies Conference,* ed. Debra Martens (Ottawa: Canadian Women's Studies Association, 1993), 267-288.

[29] Becki Ross, "Tracking Lesbian Speech: The Social Organization of Lesbian Periodical Publishing in Canada, 1973-1988," in Women's Writing and the Literary Institution, ed. Claudine Potvin and Janice Williamson (Edmonton, AB: Research Institute for Comparative Literature, 1992), 173-187, retrieved from https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweblibrary/womenswriting/. See also: Freeman, *Beyond Bylines*; Elyse Vigiletti, "Normalizing the 'Variant' in The Ladder, America's Second Lesbian Magazine, 1956-1963," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 36, no. 2 (2015): 47-71.

[30] Becki Ross, *The House that Jill Built: A Lesbian Nation in Formation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

of the publications that emerged from that organization was *Broadside*, and an edited volume by Philinda Masters analyzing the journal is forthcoming.[31] Liz Millward examines lesbian political and organizational spaces across Canada during the 1970s, especially women's conferences whereby lesbians raised their public profile and visibility to gain greater autonomy.[32] In one of the few accounts of the pre-liberation period, Cameron Duder explores the lives of middle-class lesbians in the decades leading up to the gay rights movement, revealing a world of private relationships, house parties, and discreet social networks.[33] Through testimonials, Line Chamberland examines the roles of, and resistance to, familial, religious, judicial, and psycho-medical institutional constraints on lesbian life in Montréal during the pre-liberation era.[34] Finally, in an edited anthology, novelist Makeda Silvera brings together the works of lesbians of colour from Canada and United States, in one of the first and few accounts of women of colour who spoke openly as lesbians.[35] While these works have been developing over the past decades, Duder's comment from 2010 remains true today: lesbian history is only beginning to be written.[36] The current project is an opportunity to historicize Canadian lesbian political organizing during this period to supplement the historical canon.

Archiving our Histories

During the 1970s, much of lesbian and gay activism took shape on university campuses, and among activists were students, scholars, and archivists seeking to uncover the histories of 'anonymous' people—Black, female, working-class, and those otherwise ignored within the canon

[31] *Inside Broadside: A Decade of Feminist Journalism*, edited by Philinda Masters (the editor of *Broadside* from 1979-1989), is set to be released in October 2019.
[32] Millward, *Making a Scene*.
[33] Cameron Duder, *Awfully Devoted Women: Lesbian Lives in Canada, 1900-1965* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).
[34] Line Chamberland, *Mémoires lesbiennes: Le lesbianisme à Montréal entre 1950 et 1972* (Montréal: Les Éditions du remue-ménage, 1996).
[35] Makeda Silvera (ed.), *Piece of My Heart: A Lesbian of Colour Anthology* (Toronto: Sister Vision Press, 1991).
[36] Duder, *Awfully Devoted*.

of 'great white men.'[37] Recognition of the validity and value of marginalized voices, both in and outside of academia, has created a place for the history of sexuality, and that of queer sexualities in particular.[38] Historians, sociologists, social geographers, anthropologists, and queer people themselves, have pieced together a narrative of queer life, and in so doing, relay the importance of archiving, documenting, and accounting for queer people, cultures, and activism. Given their absence in the dominant narrative, archives enable marginalized communities to form a sense of their own histories, collective memory, and identity. It is through the identification of absences, and the assertion of presence, that communities come to understand themselves.

Significant archives emerged alongside the rise of queer and feminist social movements. In cities across the country, small archives were initially housed at individual apartments, and later donated to university libraries or city archives, while others became defunct. Formative queer and feminist archives in Canada were initiated in a similar manner—in the apartments of invested community members who saw the relevance and importance of their movements and identities. The first formed out of the materials being sent to *The Body Politic* headquarters, which by 1973, far surpassed the space to publish or house them. Collective member, Jearld Moldenhauer, stored materials at his apartment until 1975, when the emergent archive was taken over by a six-member Archives Collective.[39] That collective formed an organizational structure independent of the journal and operates autonomously to this day as *The ArQuives*.[40]

[37] Seven Maynard, "'The Burning, Willful Evidence: Lesbian/Gay History and Archival Research," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991-92): 195-201. Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinuss, and George Chauncey Jr. (eds.), *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York: Meridian, 1990).
[38] Allan Berube, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: Free Press, 1990).
[39] James Fraser, "Canadian Gay Archives 1977-78" *Archivaria* 5 (Winter 1977-78): 158-59.
[40] Initially named the *Canadian Gay Liberation Movement Archives*, it was renamed several times: *Canadian Gay Archives* in 1975, the *Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives* in 2009, and *The ArQuives* in 2019.

Similarly, Pat Leslie helped form the foundational women's archive, storing in her apartment feminist movement material and copies of the Toronto women's newspaper, *The Other Woman*, after it ceased publication in 1977. Five years later, the *Women's Information Centre* published a request for feminist materials. Seeing the value of recording their own histories, organizations across the country sent documents, periodicals, photos, buttons, banners, and other movement artifacts. Over 170 archival fonds and collections were donated to the University of Ottawa in 1992 to form what is now the *Canadian Women's Movement Archives*.[41] During the same period, Montréal was home to the bookstore collective, *Librairie L'Androgyne,* which specialized in LGBT and feminist literature, in English and French (1973-2002). With more material than space to keep it, activist Ross Higgins began storing documents in his apartment, and with Jacques Prince, founded the *Archives gaies du Québec* in 1983.[42] It sees its role as "guardian of LGBTQ+ history," mandated to promote diversity and inclusion of the community both locally and abroad, and continues to make connections between historical and current events through its annual French-language bulletin, *L'Archigai*.[43] Also in Montréal, *Les archives lesbiennes du Québec (Traces)* was founded in 1986; it is a community-based autonomous lesbian archive, with a mandate to acquire, conserve, and preserve materials created by or about the Québec lesbian community.

The *Lesbians Making History Collective* came together in the mid-1980s, interviewing nine women about their experiences as lesbians in the 1950s-1970s in Toronto, a project that is now

---

[41] "Women's Archives," *University of Ottawa*, retrieved from https://biblio.uottawa.ca/en/archives-and-special-collections/womens-archives

[42] Line Chamberland and Catherine Garneau, "Entrevue avec Ross Higgins, anthropologue et cofondateur des Archives gaies du Québec," *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 16, no. 3 (printemps 2008): 21-32.

[43] "Archigai: The Newsletter of the Québec Gay Archives," *Archives Gaies due Québec*, retrieved from http://agq.qc.ca/en/larchigai/

housed at *The ArQuives*.[44] More recently, we witness the process of digitizing materials, which has transformed the conceptual relationship to the archive. Founded in 2010, *The Archive of Lesbian Oral Testimony* amasses and makes accessible hundreds of interviews, lectures, television and podcast episodes about the lives of "same-sex and same-gender attracted women, inclusive of Two Spirit, queer, bisexual, and lesbian women, transmen, and others."[45] The *Transgender Archives* further fills the absence of materials exclusively featuring trans, non-binary, and Two-Spirit people, with artifacts dating back 120 years, in multiple languages and from various countries. Housed at the University of Victoria, it opened officially in 2011 and is believed to be the largest trans archive in the world.[46] The *Marvellous Grounds* (MG) collective was formed in 2013 by Jin Haritaworn, Ghaida Moussa, Rio Rodriguez, and Syrus Marcus Ware to document histories and "unruly presents" that "serve as a counter-archive to the nostalgic, triumphant figure of 'queer Toronto.'"[47] As collective members explain, "These histories differ from dominant accounts that figure white—and often cis—subjects as 'pioneers' of the places, periods, activisms, and artistic creations that become memorable and noteworthy as queer."[48]

---

[44] The Lesbian Making History Collective included Rachel Epstein, Maureen FitzGerald, Amy Gottlieb, Didi Khayatt, Mary Louise Noble, and Laurie Rotenberg. They interviewed nine women about their experiences as 'out' lesbians in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. The audio tapes were donated to *The ArQuives* in 2014. See: "Lesbians Making History: Oral History Project," *The ArQuives: Canada's LGBTQ2+ Archives*, retrieved from http://digitalcollections.clga.ca/exhibits/show/ lmh_ oralhistories/lesbians-making-history.

[45] "Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony," retrieved from https://alotarchives.org. See also: Elise Chenier, "Oral History and Open Access: Fulfilling the Promise of Democratizing Knowledge," *North American Notes Online* (July 2014), retrieved from https://www.nanocrit.com/issues/issue5/oral-history-and-open-access-fulfilling-promise-democratizing-knowledge. See also: Elspeth Brown, "LGBTQ History: Digital Collaboratory," (2014), retrieved from http://lgbtqdigitalcollaboratory.org/.

[46] Archival materials were held at the University of Victoria beginning in 2007, though the *Transgender Archives* did not open officially for another four years. See: "Transgender Archives," *University of Victoria*, retrieved from https://www.uvic.ca/transgenderarchives/. See also the US-based but internationally collaborative *Digital Transgender Archive*, launched in 2016: "Digital Transgender Archive," retrieved from https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/.

[47] Jin Haritaworn, Ghaida Moussa, Syrus Marcus Ware, with Alvis Choi, Amandeep Kaur Panag, and Rio Rodriguez, "Marvellous Grounds: QTBIPOC Counter-Archiving against Imperfect Erasures," in *Any Other Way, How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. Stephanie Chambers, Jane Farrow, Maureen FitzGerald, Ed Jackson, John Lorinc, Tim McCaskell, Rebecka Sheffield, Rahim Thawer, and Tatum Taylor (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 220.

[48] Haritaworn et al., "Marvellous Grounds," 220.

Syrus Marus Ware recounts a recent interview with a white gay male activist, “a self-proclaimed elder,” whose account of the Toronto bathhouse raids is widely cited. Ware writes, “I was telling him about my own organizing, and my desire to build on the important work of trans women of colour leading our movements. He leaned forward and said, matter-of-factly, ‘You know, it’s not true. People nowadays say that trans women of colour were there, but they weren’t. I was there. I would have remembered.’” Ware continues, “He was so certain that he was a more accurate witness of what had happened in the Toronto and New York histories that he could discount the living stories of trans women. He felt such confidence in his own memory as being *the* memory, *the* archive, *the* impartial record of human history.”[49] But as Ware poignantly concludes, “We *were* there,” reiterated by Miss Major, another trans activist of colour, “*still fucking here.*”[50] For Ware, we need a new entry points into queer histories and genealogies that account for those written out and excluded. I aim to be among those, like Ware, who are expanding the queer canon and reclaiming absented lives.[51]

---

[49] Syrus Marcus Ware, “All Power to All People?: Black LGBTTI2QQ Activism, Remembrance, and Archiving in Toronto,” *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 4, no. 2, (May 2017): 176.
[50] Ibid., 176.
[51] See also: Shana Calixte, “Things Which Aren’t to Be Given Names: Afro-Caribbean and Diasporic Negotiations of Same-Gender Desire and Sexual Relations,” *Canadian Women’s Studies* 24, no. 2-3, (2005): 128-137; OmiSoore Dryden and Suzanne Lenon (eds.), *Disrupting Queer Inclusion: Canadian Homonationalisms and the Politics of Belonging* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015); Jin Haritaworn, Ghaida Moussa, Syrus Marcus Ware (eds.), *Marvellous Grounds: Queer of Colour Histories of Toronto* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2018); Jin Haritaworn, Ghaida Moussa, Syrus Marcus Ware, and Gabriela (Rio) Rodriguez (eds.), *Queering Urban Justice: Queer of Colour Formations in Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018); Rinaldo Walcott “Black Men in Frocks: Sexing Race in the Gay Ghetto (Toronto),” in *Claiming Space: Racialization in Canadian Cities*, ed. Cheryl Teelucksingh (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), 121-133; Walcott, “Somewhere Out There: The New Black Queer Theory,” in *Blackness and Sexualities*, eds. Michelle Wright and Antje Schuhmann (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2007), 29-40; Walcott, *Queer Returns: Essays on Multiculturalism, Diaspora, and Black Studies* (London, ON: Insomniac Press, 2016).

Chapter Three

The Politics of Archives

There is now widespread critique of archives as neutral or complete. Archives not only collect and preserve disparate stories but historicize those stories, and the most visible become dominant. Traditionally viewed as sites of knowledge retrieval and fact production that give an authoritative account of history, archives are now understood as a politically-charged act in the writing of history. As Foucault contended, the production of archives reveals the politics of archiving.[52] A queer archive is in and of itself an interjection into normative ideology and historical production. Lesbian and gay archives formed to gain visibility within a culture that rejected them on the basis of obscenity and rendered them invisible across memory institutions. In a hetero- and gender-normative society, the absence of queer histories has been filled by the space of gay and lesbian, feminist, and more recently, trans and queer people of colour archives.

While queer archives are themselves counter-archives, feminist scholars, such as Ann Cvetkovich, Anjali Arondekar, Joan Nestle, and Laura Doan have questioned the relationship of women to the archive, and queer women to queer archives.[53] Emma Perez and Jose Esteban Munoz further consider how race and ethnicity complicate notions of inclusion and exclusion.[54] In her work on colonial archives, historical anthropologist Ann Stoler argues that archives are not sites of "knowledge retrieval," but sites of "knowledge production."[55] In consideration of archives as

---

[52] Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).
[53] See: Anjali Arondekar, "Without a Trace: Sexuality and the Colonial Archive," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14, no. 1/2 (January-April, 2005): 10-27; Ann Cvetkovich, "AIDS Activism and the Oral History Archive," *The Scholar and Feminist Online* 2, no. 1 (Summer 2003), http://sfonline.barnard.edu/ps/printacv.htm; Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University, 2003); Joan Nestle, *A Fragile Union: New and Selected Writings* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1998); Nestle, *A Restricted Country* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1987).
[54] See also: J. Bobby Noble, *Sons of the Movement: FtMs Risking Incoherence on a Post-Queer Cultural Landscape* (Toronto: Women's Press, 2006); Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1998); Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39, no. 4 (Winter, 1986): 3-64.
[55] Ann Stoler, "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance," *Archival Science*, no. 2 (2002): 90.

feminist practice, Kate Eichhorn writes, "Rather than a destination for knowledges already produced or a place to recover histories and ideas placed under erasure, the making of archives is frequently where knowledge production begins."[56] Likewise, reflecting on transgender archives in the construction of collective memory, Jack Halberstam writes, "In order for the archive to function, it requires users, interpreters, and cultural historians to wade through the material and piece together the jigsaw puzzle of queer history in the making."[57]

According to Canadian archivist Rodney Carter, "Silences haunt every archives."[58] And yet, by Terry Castle's account, "Silence implies voice. It does not equal muteness."[59] Castle uses the term "ghosted" to describe lesbian presence in cinema—an invisible, yet ever-present figure, whose contributions have been "routinely suppressed or ignored, lesbian-themed works of art censored and destroyed."[60] The importance of the work is its counternarrative to this absence, "The lesbian is never with us, it seems, but always somewhere else: in the shadows, in the margins, hidden from history, out of sight, out of mind, a wanderer in the dusk, a lost soul, a tragic mistake, a pale denizen of the night."[61] Lesbian historian Lisa Duggan contends, "Though historians have often neglected or distorted the experiences of minority groups and deprived classes, only lesbians and gay men have had their existence systematically denied and rendered invisible."[62] Queers of colour might nuance this further. Syrus Marcus Ware writes, "Historical and grassroots queer

---

[56] Kate Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), 2-3.
[57] J. Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, (New York: NYU Press, 2005), 169-170; see also: Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).
[58] Rodney Carter, "Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence," *Archivaria* 61 (Spring 2006): 217.
[59] Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993): 219.
[60] Castle, *Apparitional Lesbian*, 5
[61] Ibid., 2.
[62] Lisa Duggan, "History's Gay Ghetto: The Contradictions of Growth in Lesbian and Gay History," in *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*, eds. Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 284.

archives often don't do a good job of actively participating in the documentation and preservation of the artifacts, stories, and materials of black and African diasporic cultural production and activism […] This erasure is part of a larger conceptualization of the black queer subject as a new entity, whose history is built upon an already existing white LGBTTI2QQ space and history."[63]

What's in an Archive?

For the past half century, most queer people would have worked to hide their sexuality, and only in the second half of the century, thought to preserve and document queer lives. Archives collect that which is recorded, traditionally in the form of paper documents. Thus, "If the 'love that dare not speak its name' also did not write it down, store it somewhere, and bequeath it to an archive, those LGBT lives are not preserved."[64] This has been particularly true of women, non-white, and economically disadvantaged queer people. Archives have tended to privilege queer life that was predominantly male and organized into activism, bars, and social clubs.[65]

Lillian Faderman points out that before the twentieth century, lower- and working-class women were largely illiterate, leaving little to recover in the way of letters, journals, or autobiographies. In her analysis of the lesbian scene in Canada, Liz Millward contends that while there were Asian, Black, First Nations, and Metis women, it was primarily Anglo- and Franco-Canadians who left a record of their lives.[66] Only toward the mid-1980s, did small groups of Black, Asian, and to a lesser extent Indigenous, lesbians start to formalize and document their politics. Within the context of urban geography, Julie Podmore's analysis of Montréal since the 1950s shows that lesbian communities were constituted through social networks rather than commercial

[63] Ware, "All Power to All People?", 172.
[64] Amy Stone and Jaime Cantrell (eds.), "Introduction: Something Queer at the Archive," in *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 8.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Millward, *Making a Scene*, 21.

spaces.[67] As such, lesbian histories are not easily located within well-defined areas of gay villages. (Despite these villages housing queer archives in Montréal and Toronto). Organizing around transgender and sex worker rights is another overlooked point of entry, especially as they pertain to feminist politics. For example, the documentary *Hookers on Davies* captures in part the political ideas and activism that trans and cis women sex workers were developing on street corners but was never documented otherwise. As Monica Forrester, a Toronto-based trans sex worker and activist, reflected on their life in the 1980s, "The corner was the only community that existed. … And when I was thinking about history, and archiving, I thought, 'Oh! I wish I took pictures.'… I think survival was key. No one really thought about archiving, because we really didn't think we would live past 30. Our lives were so undetermined that no one really thought about, 'Oh should we archive this for later use?'"[68]

In addition to a potential lack of physical documentation, archival absences are compounded by archival processes. In various cities across the country, many smaller archives are initially housed at individual apartments and later donated to university libraries or city archives, while others become defunct. As historian Elise Chenier has noted, much of the research undertaken by Canadian historians and researchers on lesbian history never makes it into the archives, and if it does, remains out of public view. Citing a lack of planning and financial resources, of the numerous oral histories and interviews have been conducted by researchers and activists, only a handful have been donated to archives.[69] In addition to lack of artifacts,

[67] Julie Podmore, "Gone 'Underground'? Lesbian Visibility and the Consolidation of Queer Space in Montréal," *Social & Cultural Geography* 7, no. 4 (2006): 595-625.
[68] Ware, "All power to all people," 175.
[69] Elise Chenier, "Hidden from Historians: Preserving Lesbian Oral History in Canada," *Archivaria* 68 (Fall 2009): 247-269.

methodological, fiscal, and physical limitations affecting archives, there is also a question of the role of archivists in classifying and gatekeeping materials.

The traditional archive is an ongoing project of categorizing, classifying, and organizing artifacts based on acquisition and appraisal by archivists. Archivists are constantly confronted with choices about inclusion. Fiscal constraints and unequal demands, ease and accessibility of materials, passive and unconscious bias, or lack of understanding on the part of archivist, allow some voices to gain prominence. For example, Mél Hogan identifies a tension amongst archivists as to whether lesbian material is best suited to women's archives or gay archives. As many of her archivist interviewees explain, lesbian events were often not explicitly advertised as such, but coded as women-only events, and disseminated through feminist, rather than gay, circles.[70] This participant points to the irony of archivists with little knowledge of feminism who are often in the position of archiving these materials within queer archives. Another archivist questions the very meaning of "lesbian material"— does it include material written by lesbians but not exclusively about them? Does it include bisexual and trans women?[71]

How do we contend with shifting constructions of classification systems? Drawing on correspondence, interviews, journals, and newspaper articles, Cameron Duder documents lesbian lives in the decades before the gay rights movement in English Canada. In these histories, individuals were discrete in their same-sex relationships and did not use contemporary identity categories to describe themselves. As such, Duder writes that it is impossible to assess whether an individual ascribed to butch lesbian or trans-masculine identity.[72] For example, Frieda Fraser, who

---

[70] My unconventional reference to an MA thesis reflects the extent to which this body of work is limited. Notably, Mél Hogan is now a communication studies professor at the University of Calgary and publishes extensively on environmental media and data storage.
[71] Mél Hogan, "Archiving Absence: A Queer Feminist Framework" (MA thesis, Concordia University, 2007), 63-64.
[72] Duder, *Awfully Devoted*, 75.

is identified historically as a butch lesbian, “consistently and insistently used masculine identifiers” in correspondence.[73] Duder continues that it is impossible to know with certainty the meaning of gender in these people’s lives and relationships. Even in research with contemporary people, Catherine Nash describes the methodological challenges of categorization. In her interviews with 15 transmen about their negotiation of queer spaces in Toronto, Nash found that many had “a lesbian history.”[74] Especially amongst the 1970s-era activists, several had identified as lesbian at some point in their lives. And among them, many continued to access lesbian spaces and networks while others rejected them entirely.[75]

Vivian Namaste suggests that for trans communities, LGB identities are often less salient than gender identity.[76] Likewise, Susan Stryker describes the emergence of the term ‘homonormativity’ in the 1990s as an expression of the displacement of trans people within LGB communities whose constructions of gender were largely shared with the dominant culture and “…sometimes had more in common with the straight world than it did with us.”[77] Stryker nuances further that transgender is itself a term with shifting meaning, from pre-colonial constructions of multiple and distinct sex and gender categories, to historical distinctions made between transvestite, transsexual, and drag terminologies, to contemporary usage of queer and non-binary identities.[78] According to David Valentine, the emergence and institutionalization of ‘transgender’ as a category in the 1990s was initially embraced by gender-variant people as a collective and

---

[73] Ibid., 71.
[74] Catherine Nash, “Queer Conversations: Old-Time Lesbians, Transmen and the Politics of Queer Research,” in Kath Browne and Catherine Nash (eds.), *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 138.
[75] Ibid., 139.
[76] Viviane Namaste, *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
[77] Susan Stryker, “Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity,” *Radical History Review*, no. 100 (December 2008): 146.
[78] Ibid.

political identity. Yet, as it was taken up in public health, social services, legislative, and scholarly contexts, many gender-variant people, especially poor people of colour, conceived of gender and sexuality in other terms and rejected the use of "transgender" altogether.[79]

I grapple with my own attachment to the categories of 'lesbian' and 'woman', my conflicted relation to them amid my concern for their place in archival history. These are complex categories, imbued with social and historical meaning. Nonetheless, I immediately identified with activist lesbians who spoke back to the social labels projected upon them, seeking intersectional and coalition politics for the freedom of all, and who entered the revolution by way of the margins. I highlight the perspectives of women in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of liberation politics in Canada. Lesbian contributors to *The Body Politic* are at once overlooked within feminism and gay liberation, yet they maintained a radical intersectional politics at the forgotten roots of both contemporary movements. I align myself with a politics of social change that is radically transformative, gender expansive, egalitarian, and intersectional. This project brings activist lesbian insights to the fore. In earnest, I intend to 'activate' activist lesbian identity as an interlocutor in queer history. What is at stake "are not the worlds these collections claim to represent, but rather the worlds they invite us to imagine and even realize."[80]

With a strong emphasis on feminist and queer theoretical perspectives, this dissertation research involves interpretive analysis of the materials and discourses emerging from the archival research sites. Overall, I consider the narratives constructed by the archive, alongside a purposive inquiry into its absences. Archives tell marginalized communities about their histories, and erasure is part of that story. This inquiry is guided by the following questions: What do archival accounts,

---

[79] David Valentine, *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).
[80] Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn*, 160.

within the pages of *The Body Politic* and the doors of *The ArQuives*, tell us about lesbian/gay/queer organizing in Canada? Where are the absences, and how do they contribute to the invisibilizing of certain groups? Finally, how can this work contribute to the recognition of feminist/lesbian/and queer women's lives, in response to the assumption that 'there's not much there'?

Locating the Researcher

As a young queer undergraduate student, I had never heard of *The Body Politic* until reading, "Sexual Traffic," an article that features an interview between two of my favourite thinkers, Gayle Rubin and Judith Butler.[81] In it, Rubin refers to the journal as one of "North America's two best gay/lesbian newspapers at the time."[82] The other was the *Gay Community News*, but I was especially intrigued by *The Body Politic* when I discovered that it was Canadian.[83] To this point, I had almost exclusively been exposed to an American body of literature on lesbian and gay politics and histories. Fortunately, the journal had recently been digitized and was available online. I was captivated by the retro look of the periodical: the crooked columns and mixed fonts, the hand-drawn images, the black-and-white photographs of demonstrators holding signs that read "equal rights for gay people" and "lesbians are human beings too." I started reading, flipping each digital page as I went, and was immediately transported to what I imagined to be the scene at *The Body Politic* headquarters during production: young queers with thick moustaches and feathered hair, gathered around drafting tables for doing 'paste-up', the air filled with cigarette smoke and excitement.

This romanticized imagining quickly shifted as I came to realize just what was at stake for queer people in Canada in the early-1970s. The impulse toward revolution was driven by violent

[81] Gayle Rubin with Judith Butler, "Interview: Sexual Traffic," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 6, no. 2+3, (1994): 62-99.
[82] Ibid., 77.
[83] *Gay Community News* was an American weekly newspaper published in Boston, Massachusetts from 1973-1992.

oppression. The first issue of *The Body Politic* was published on the heels of the ostensible decriminalization of homosexuality in Canada, yet lesbians and gay men had not seen any tangible changes in their daily lives—they continued to confront discrimination, police harassment, exploitation, and pressure to conform.[84] Their experiences seemed so distant from my own coming out in the early-aughts that barely made waves in my life. It was then, within these pages, that I understood: the queer world I had so easily entered only existed because of those who had fought for and defended it. This perspective, of course, affirms a false narrative that Canadian society has an exemplary history of steadily expanding equality. That is, my experience of queerness is equally intertwined with my experience of belonging to a white middle-class society.

The Body Politic was a ground-breaking gay and lesbian magazine, international in its scope. Covering a wide range of issues, the magazine was instrumental in the formation of the liberation movement throughout the 1970s and 1980s in Canada. The journal would play a role in every major battle fought on the liberation front during this period. Collective members defended the right to freedom of expression in two court trials, fought for inclusion of non-discrimination in the Ontario Human Rights Code, and led the resistance to the Toronto bathhouse raids. In 1973, members initiated the chronicling of gay history through the establishment of the *Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives*, now *The ArQuives*, which is today the largest independent LGBTQ+ archive in the world. In 1975, it incorporated Pink Triangle Press, which also continues to serve as a pillar Canadian queer site. Importantly, *The Body Politic* chronicled the liberation movement

---

[84] In a brief presented to the federal government, Glad Day Committee members explain, "In 1969 the Criminal Code was amended so as to make certain sexual acts between two consenting adults, in private, not illegal. This was widely misunderstood as 'legalizing' homosexuality and thus putting heterosexuals on an equal basis with other Canadians. In fact, this amendment was merely a recognition of the non-enforceable nature of the Criminal Code as it existed." See: Brian Waite and Cheri DeNovo for the Gay Day Committee, "Dear Sir," *The Body Politic* no. 1, (November/December 1971): 4.

in Canada, during a period hostile toward lesbian and gay people, and as such, has become an important source in understanding this period from the perspective of those within it.

Though captivating, centering *The Body Politic* in an historical analysis is also problematic. I started to notice references to the journal, often described as the epicenter of queer activism in Canada during the 1970s and 1980s. But how could that be, if so many voices were absented from it? As I started examining lesbian-specific content, I soon came to hear the refrain: 'there's not much there.' Many of the long-time, mostly male, collective members are regularly touted throughout the canon as key figures in history of lesbian and gay liberation activism. As I scanned *The Body Politic*, there was clearly an activist lesbian story within its pages, names like Chris Bearchell and Jane Rule re-emerged again and again, and yet, they are nowhere to be found in any of the queer history that I had read. My postsecondary education at Canadian institutions in the fields of Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology, and Humanities, had taught me (peripherally) about Stonewall, but not We Demand; I was reading about Gayle Rubin, but not Chris Bearchell. Within the first few pages of *The Body Politic*, one is inspired to reimagine a radically different society, far removed from questions of marriage equality and pride parades with corporate sponsorship and participation of uniformed police officers. Once introduced to Bearchell, the reader recognizes a radical, revolutionary lesbian who was working with gay men, feminists, sex workers, and other marginalized groups to rebuild a collectivist and liberatory society.

Interestingly, *The Body Politic* has not been excavated as a site of lesbian archival history, despite its centrality in a plethora of research projects focused on (cis) gay male experience.[85] There are plenty of studies on the journal, recognized as a vast archive of movement history, but

---

[85] For example, Churchill, "Personal Ad Politics"; Micheal Jackman, "Bawdy Politics: Remembering Sexual Liberation" (PhD diss., York University, 2013); Cameron McKenzie, "Love, Lust, and Loss in the Early Age of AIDS: The Discourse in The Body Politic from 1981 to 1987," *Journal of Homosexuality* 63, no. 12 (2016).

nowhere are female contributions discussed. I revisit this queer archive, in much the same way as Terry Castle describes the "ghost effect" of lesbians in cinema—women who are at once present and out of sight; "Why is it so difficult to see the lesbian—even when she is there, quite plainly, in front of us? In part because she has been 'ghosted'—or made to seem invisible—by culture itself."[86] I chose *The ArQuives* because I was trying to locate lesbians in queer archival histories. *The Body Politic* is also a useful source as it shows the dialogue between lesbians and gay men, whereas feminist counterpart periodicals were far more unified in a pro-censorship and thus anti-gay liberation position, and there were few exchanges between them. In this queer journal, lesbians found allies amongst male activists, and articles often featured dialogue between the two groups, focused on the developing politics of the gay liberation movement. In many ways, we see lesbians keeping the movement 'in check' and aligned with women's liberation.

The tendency has been to subsume all lesbian activism under the umbrella of lesbian feminism, which was very much against the gay liberation ideology on key issues of censorship and sexual freedom. In the following I trace a distinctive trajectory, which I label 'activist lesbian' to distinguish between lesbian feminists, whose lesbian identity was called into question early on. Given my point of entry, this trajectory represents a predominantly white, definitely urban if not Toronto-based, lesbian experience of political activism in the 1970s and 1980s. I describe this work as focused on English Canada. This terminology recognizes that there was a distinctive movement in French-speaking Canada, especially in Montréal, and Québec more broadly, as well as within Indigenous communities, which are not represented in this work.

[86] Terry Castle, *Apparitional Lesbian*, 5.

Research Steps

The Body Politic as Archive

The Body Politic was chosen for analysis due to its influence, wide circulation, and long duration, especially in comparison to the multitude of feminist/lesbian/gay publications of the time. In many of these journals, women's voices emerge in the context of feminist debates, and *The Body Politic* is one of the few sites in which lesbians engage with the gay liberation movement directly, rather than in reaction or opposition to it. From this point of entry, we see the influence that women and feminism had on the gay liberation movement. Published between 1971-1987, *The Body Politic* served as a record of feminist, lesbian, gay, and queer activism, art, and cultural life in English-speaking Canada. In its 17-year run, 135 issues were published, each approximately 30-40 pages of current events (initially across Canada and eventually globally), alongside editorials, book and film reviews, classified ads, community announcements and event listings, as well as feature articles on sexual politics, gay liberation, and feminism that shaped theoretical and political organizing of the period. In 2011, the entire collection of *The Body Politic* was digitized by the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.[87] This is a fantastic and user-friendly internet source that gives a realistic experience of the magazine by allowing the reader to digitally "flip" the pages of each issue, and includes authentic details, such as subscription form inserts. I began my research by reading every issue of *The Body Politic* to provide overall context and to take note of thematic trends and patterns. A second, deeper reading focused on articles that were written by women and columns that had emerged as particularly relevant. I began indexing women's contributions and articles that focused on political debate and dialogue overtly related to feminism and the gay liberation movement.

[87] "*The Body Politic* Collection," *Canadian Museum for Human Rights*, retrieved from https://archive.org/details/canadianmuseumforhumanrights&tab=collection

Women's contributions tended to be concentrated in specific areas: lesbian organizing (such as upcoming conferences, dyke marches, potlucks), political debate (usually over current events or controversial editorial decisions), theoretical dialogue (typically the role of feminism and class considerations in gay liberation), or literary and artistic reviews. There were two other components of the journal from which women were almost entirely absent: they were not represented within the popular classified section of each issue, nor were they the intended audience for most of the advertisements, which formed a significant portion of the journal. I paid less attention to literary and artistic contributions, and as such, important figures and columns, such as *Shared Ground*, Joy Parks' regular review of women's literature, is largely overlooked in this analysis. I focused instead on central figures and columns pertaining to discussions about lesbianism, and also traced several important debates that emerged throughout. Some regular columns not specifically related to lesbians were examined due to their political relevance. For example, *Deliberations*, a column where lesbians and gay men discussed the role of feminism within the gay liberation movement. Relevant themes and cleavages were easily identifiable as they came up repeatedly. The *Letters* section emerged as a key site where ongoing debates unfolded amongst readers and contributors—the 1970s equivalent of a Twitter thread. The *Letters* gave a strong indication of what mattered to people, as the same topics would dominate subsequent issues, and often spurred numerous follow-up articles and editorial responses.

It is certainly true that some people did not have a voice within *The Body Politic*. But there was a group of activist lesbians who wrote for the journal, and their contributions continue to be overlooked within the queer historical narrative. Much of the content within the first several years of publication focused on a liberatory vision. There was a clear shift in focus to human rights and gay male sexual theory. While lesbian content was marginal by comparison, it remained rooted in

this early liberatory vision. I centre *The Body Politic* to excavate what is already there but systematically ignored.

Quantifying the Data

Though ground-breaking and radical, it is well established that *The Body Politic* was dominated by educated, white gay men, as both collective members and contributors. In questioning the very presence of women in journal, a numerical measure provides a systematic method of gauging their participation. The Appendix provides ratios of female and male contributors, alongside the names of women who contributed to each issue. The ratios provide a general sense of proportionality, how often women published, peak periods and areas, and duration of individual participation in the collective. Adding the names of women contributors helped identify key figures over time and fill an enormous gap in current histories and indices.

In terms of coding authors, news correspondents, and collective members, a small fraction of contributors used anonymous names, such as "Portia," and in many cases, names were gender-neutral, i.e. Pat, Terry, Robin, Chris, etc. In these instances, names were coded by researching the individual as well as their articles (for example, Pat writes an article about lesbianism, and so, is coded as female). On the very few occasions when the individual was not found in any other public record, and their article gave no indication as to their sex, they were coded as male. This was not to default to the category male but to err on the side of probability. This occurred in no more than six instances. Ideally, I would have also coded according to other social attributes, such as ethnic, racial, or cis/trans identity, but this was impossible to identify in a systematic way.

In reviewing the table of contents for each issue, all contributors were coded as female or male, cross-listed according to their role as collective member, writer, or news correspondent. Some issues contain *Supplements* (later named *Our Image*, then *Review*, and finally, *This Issue*);

these include reviews of cultural materials, with a unique list of contributors, and are coded separately in the Appendix. The process of quantifying the data was limited to authors of feature articles, columns, and news stories. This excluded other contributors listed in the table of contents, such as office staff and those involved with advertising, subscriptions, design, and layout for each issue. While they certainly contributed to the shape and form of the journal, these categories were excluded in order to focus on the content of authors' published material. Likewise, the numerous individuals who wrote letters, published in each issue, were not included. The *Letters* section remains an important component to my qualitative analysis, as it is in this section that readers air their grievances, concerns, or support of various issues.

Analyzing *The ArQuives*

The second phase of research took place at the physical archive established by *The Body Politic* in 1973. Initially named the *Canadian Gay Liberation Movement Archives*, renamed the *Canadian Gay Archives* in 1975, renamed again in 2009, the *Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives*, and again in 2019, *The ArQuives* is permanently located at 34 Isabella Street in Toronto, with additional storage at its former location on 65 Wellesley Street. The collection is diverse, containing original copies of *The Body Politic*, other periodicals and subscription lists, artwork, a portrait collection, photographs, audio and visual recordings, and movement ephemera such as posters, buttons, pins, and vertical files containing personal and organizational records. An analysis of these artifacts provides a cultural, social, and political framework to queer organizing in English Canada. Exploring various modes of cultural production helps frame a genealogy of feminist, lesbian, and queer political action in Canada since the 1970s. *The ArQuives* represents a "complex record of queer activity" and the materials found in the archive will inform the

"construction of collective memory."[88] In the words of Jack Halberstam, my task is "to wade through the material and piece together the jigsaw puzzle of queer history in the making."[89]

I spent three days at *The ArQuives* in March 2018. Weeks prior to visiting, I was in email communication with several archivists to request all available material related to lesbian organizations and groups between 1971-1987, including flyers, posters, photographs, and periodicals. Based on my preliminary research, I asked for information about specific organizations, events, and one individual in particular: Chris Bearchell.[90]

On the first of my three-day research visit, Alan Miller, a volunteer archivist, handed me a dozen vertical files. Each of my requests had procured a single, thin, file, filled mostly with flyers for gatherings, dances, fundraisers, and protests, as well as conference programs, newspaper clippings, and a few photocopied photographs. Among them was a single vertical file titled, "Chris Bearchell." It included approximately 20 documents—a flyer for an event called "Lesbians in Search of a Smut of Our Own," a copy of her 1983 article "Why I am a gay liberationist: Thoughts on sex, freedom, the family and the state" published in *Resources for Feminist Research*, her resume from 1999, and the rest, printed email exchanges between community members after her death in 2007 and various versions of her death announcement. The obituaries described her prominence and importance, for instance, one was titled, *Death of a Queer Pioneer*, and yet, her vertical gave no indication of that truth. I left the archive that day disappointed that such a key figure in the lesbian and gay liberation movement in Canada had been reduced to a handful of

---

[88] J.Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 169.
[89] Ibid., 170.
[90] Requests were made for information on these organizations: *Wages Due Lesbians*, *Women Against Violence Against Women*, *Lesbian Organization of Toronto*, *Lesbians Against the Right*, *Lesbians of Colour*, and *Zami*. Requests were also made for the information on these events: *The Not So Invisible Woman Conference* (Kingston, 1976), the first lesbians march (Vancouver, 1981), the *Dykes in the Streets* march (Toronto, 1981), the *Lesbian Day of Action* (Montréal, Toronto, Vancouver, 1982), and various lesbian conferences in Canada between 1971-1987.

pages that gave no sign of her influence within and beyond this movement. By the end of the first day, I had thoroughly reviewed all the material, in addition to original copies of *The Body Politic* and their subscription lists. In chapter six I describe a serendipitous encounter that allowed me access to an additional piece of archival footage, one that had been categorized as 'pornography,' rather than 'lesbian,' 'feminist,' or 'Chris Bearchell'.

Upon returning the second day, I expressed my disappointment to the archivist, Lucie Handley-Girard, and to the volunteer coordinator, Jade Pichette, which led them to search the database for any other material. That search yielded an additional file that had been withheld, as well as a personal donation made by Chris Bearchell that was stored offsite. This shows the limits of archives, which relied on my persistence and the archivist's vested interest and personal effort. Lucie took the initiative to seek special permission to grant access to the withheld file; it contained several documents on intergenerational relationships, a topic as sensitive then as it is now, and explored further in chapter six. At the time of my visit, Lucie was in the process of cataloguing *The Body Politic*, and it appeared to me that she had developed a similar affection toward Bearchell, and my inquiry by extension. Thankfully, Lucie took it upon herself to personally retrieve the boxes stored offsite later that night after closing.

Thanks to these efforts, on the third and final day, I arrived to find nine boxes full of Bearchell's personal documents. They contained dozens of coiled notepads detailing every collective meeting, administrative documents such as annual cost reports, application forms and submission criteria for articles; there were drafts of her own articles, typed correspondence between activists, and endless newspaper and magazine cut-outs of women (their significance remains a mystery). To my surprise, there was a letter of resignation, which I take up in the concluding chapter. I was also struck by the fact that all of the material was from the 1980s, leading

me to wonder whether there are more boxes somewhere or why Bearchell would have only then started to meticulously compile and detail the period. My archival research confirmed and strengthened several points I was developing, added new insight and detail to the history that I am excavating, and enriched my conceptual understanding of the politics of time and place.

The archive itself is a subversive structure. I am reminded of the radical nature of the space when I was quietly researching at a table and Alan Miller, the volunteer in his late-60s, entered the room and jokingly exclaimed: “It’s the police!” I am reminded again when Lucie granted me access to the subscription lists from the 1970s but asked that I not record them in order to continue protecting the anonymity of the readers all these years later. And again still, when Lucie sought special permission to grant access to an additional file belonging to the late Chris Bearchell on the condition that no images were taken of it. It was in these moments that I recognized how much I had taken for granted. It was in this spirit that I delved into my research, to locate a lost history of activist lesbians who risked everything for our collective liberation.

Chapter Four

The Emergence of Lesbian Political Identity

This chapter documents the rise of the lesbian and gay liberation movement, and specifically, the place of activist lesbians within it. We will see how lesbians carved out a social, cultural, and political scene to develop an autonomous voice. This was spurred by ongoing erasure and dismissal within the homophile, and later, gay liberation movement, as well as the women's liberation and New Left movements. In this chapter, I analyze the discursive shifts amongst activist lesbians in navigating their position(s) within these movements. As they concentrated on the structural inequalities most pertinent to queer women, the relevance of both the gay and women's liberation movements came under scrutiny. Lesbian positionality offered a vantage point from which they articulated analyses of the interplay between gender, sexuality, race, and class-based oppressions. Activist lesbians encouraged a coalition politics to unite lesbians, feminists, gay men, and advocates of the New Left in a shared vision of human liberation and a total restructuring of the social order. These debates and discussions first took place within homophile, and later gay liberation, organizations, and then, within the pages of *The Body Politic*, which, by the 1970s had become the discursive epicenter of queer politics in English Canada.

This chapter begins with the early homophile movement to set the backdrop for the emergence of lesbian and gay liberation. Historical research suggests that the liberation period was sparked by the Stonewall resistance in New York City in 1969, as its impact reverberated throughout North America.[91] Emboldened, Canadian activists produced a list of demands, and in so doing, pushed past the period of assimilation and opened the doors to liberatory politics. Their demands would land on the cover of the very first issue of *The Body Politic*—the most ground-

[91] Barry Adam, *The Rise*; D'Emilio, John. *Sexual Politics*; Tom Warner, *Never Going Back*.

breaking and important journal in English Canadian queer history—and the lesbian and gay liberation movement started to take shape within its pages.

I document this history, attuned to the presence and perspectives of activist lesbians, an angle often overlooked in the historical canon. It is well-established that *The Body Politic* was pioneering and radical. It is also well known that the editorial collective was dominated by educated, white, cis, gay men. With comparably few contributors who were female, and even fewer who identified in print as non-white or transgender, content directly relevant to these groups was marginal. How did collective members shape the content of the journal, the archive, and gay liberation more broadly? And, how do these narratives continue to form our understanding of queer history?

Certainly, *The Body Politic* was male-dominated—in its organizational structure, publication process, and content. The bulk of each issue included national and international news reports, and most of these focused on gay (male) liberation. Similarly, the numerous classified ads were male-dominated, as were review columns featuring books, plays, and films created predominantly by men, a product of male privilege more broadly. But, qualitative analysis nuances this perception that lesbian content is lacking. Centering the voices of women leads a researcher to the feature articles and editorials, and it is within these pages that important theoretical and political work takes place. In these sections, women's contributions increase exponentially, as they engage in dialogue with each other and with gay men about the role of lesbians and feminist theory within gay liberation, and simultaneously, the role of sexuality within women's liberation. In this chapter, I excavate the contributions of activist lesbians to illuminate the important theoretical work in which contemporary movements find themselves entrenched.

This chapter is divided into three parts. Part I provides an overview of the emergence of the gay liberation movement in the lead up to the seminal "We Demand" march on Parliament Hill in August 1971 and the first publication of *The Body Politic* three months later. In the second part, the focus shifts to lesbian presence within the gay liberation movement, as they negotiated their overlapping position within the women's liberation movement. In this section, I draw on *The Body Politic* to analyze lesbian activism from 1971 to 1981, as they grapple with the nature and focus of gay liberation. In the third part of this chapter, I analyze activist lesbian voices within the debates taking place within women's liberation, especially with regard to sexuality. Focusing on the contributions and perspectives of activist lesbians, I challenge some of the normative assumptions about queer and gender-based movements, histories, and theories in English Canada, including the presumption that 'there's not much there.'

Part I

Political Beginnings: Pre-Liberation

Prior to the late-1960s, lesbian and gay political activism took place mostly within the homophile movement. Vibrant homophile subcultures of the early 1900s, gave way to political organizing in an effort to assimilate into mainstream society. Among homophile activists, women articulated gender theory which distinguished their experiences from male counterparts. In the face of mounting oppression, assimilationist tactics gave way to a radical revisioning of society. By the late-1960s, the international movement had reached a turning point, crystalized by the Stonewall 'riots', which ushered in a new period of lesbian and gay politics. This was a period of rapid social change; social and sexual attitudes were shifting and gave rise to new movements for social justice and equality. Feminism, Black civil rights and Red Power movements, and the student-driven anti-war protests and counterculture, encapsulated by the New Left, emerged to exert pressure for

change in laws and social institutions. Within this context, lesbians and gay men were also forming organizations, a sense of community, and a new collective consciousness.

The primary focus of early homophile groups was to counter bigotry through public education about homosexuality.[92] In 1950, gay men founded North America's first gay rights organization, the *Mattachine Society* in Los Angeles.[93] *Mattachine* activists asserted that homosexuals were "a minority with a common language and culture who warranted protection under civil rights laws."[94] *Mattachine* recognized the need for a more positive gay self-identity, and so, aimed to unify homosexuals to give them a sense of belonging. The founders proclaimed that "homosexuals can lead well-adjusted, wholesome and socially productive lives once ignorance and prejudice against them are successfully combatted, and once homosexuals themselves feel they have a dignified and useful role to play in society."[95] Over the next few years, chapters of *Mattachine* appeared in cities across the United States. By 1952, the organization produced the first widely distributed gay magazine in that country—*ONE Magazine: The Homosexual Viewpoint*. The magazine helped build collective consciousness, becoming "a source of news about police entrapment, harassment of bars, and other acts of oppression."[96]

In 1955, the first lesbian civil and political rights organization, the *Daughters of Bilitis*, was founded by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon in San Francisco, with chapters throughout the US forming soon after. The *Daughters of Bilitis* initially emerged as a social club, where lesbians could gather, socialize, and dance in privacy and security, free from the gaze of tourists, families, and the police.[97] The name was chosen for its obscure reference to a fictional lesbian character, in

---

[92] Kinsman, *Regulation of Desire.*
[93] Warner, *Never Going Back*.
[94] Ibid., 58.
[95] Stuart Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay: Founder of the Modern Gay Movement* (Boston: Alyson Publications, 1990), 154.
[96] Warner, *Never Going Back*, 58.
[97] Ibid.

order to recruit potential members secretively. Within a year of its inception, members wanted more than a social alternative to the bar culture—they wanted lesbians to be able to live free from stigma and to fully integrate into society. As one of the early members of the *Daughters of Bilitis* recalls, "Our goal in helping our people fit in was to allow them to live within whatever societal guidelines and frameworks and limitations they had to contend with and to come out of it as whole and healthy and sane as possible. You have to remember how dangerous the world was then."[98] Much like the *Mattachine Society*, the *Daughters of Bilitis* aimed to help lesbians assimilate into, or at least survive within, existing society.

The *Daughters of Bilitis* also published the first nationally distributed lesbian periodical, *The Ladder* (1956-1972). A four-part statement outlining organizational priorities was printed on the inside of every issue: 1) educate the variant, intended to reach out to women who were isolated, incorporating advice from psychiatrists and doctors on both self-acceptance and assimilation; 2) educate the public, to break down misconceptions and prejudice; 3) participate in research projects, to further the knowledge of 'the homosexual'; 4) investigate the penal code as it pertained to homosexuality, and promote change through legislature.[99] As Joan Nestle wrote, "*The Ladder* was bringing to the surface years of pain, opening a door on an intensely private experience, giving voice to an 'obscene' population in a decade of McCarthy witch hunts."[100] In the same way *Mattachine* attempted to change gay men's perceptions of themselves, the *Daughters of Bilitis* tried to instil in lesbians a more positive consciousness.[101] Together, the *Mattachine Society* and the *Daughters of Bilitis* pioneered lesbian and gay movements in the late-1960s and 1970s.[102]

---

[98] Eric Marcus, *Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights, 1945-1990: An Oral History* (New York, Harper Collins, 1993), 77.
[99] Editorial Collective, "Editorial Page," *The Body Politic*, no. 1 (November/December 1971): 2.
[100] Joan Nestle, "Butch/Fem and Sexual Courage," *The Body Politic*, no. 76 (September 1981): 29.
[101] Warner, *Never Going Back*.
[102] D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics*.

Homophile groups in the United States inspired similar organizing in Canada. In 1964, the Vancouver-based *Association for Social Knowledge* (ASK) became the first large-scale homophile organization in the country. Following the *Mattachine Society* in San Francisco, ASK challenged Canadians "to treat homosexuals with justice and respect and to work for reform of criminal laws on sexual activity."[103] The group organized dances and social events, public forums featuring clergy and psychiatrists, published a regular newsletter, and pioneered legal advocacy. For example, Doug Sanders, who was ASK's president at the time, presented a brief to the Royal Commission on Security calling for the decriminalization of homosexual acts. The organization lasted four years, supplanted by the *National Gay Rights Coalition*, "the first truly national coalition of Canadian lesbian and gay groups."[104] The Coalition campaigned primarily for legislative reform and inclusion in the Canadian Human Rights Act.

By the late-1960s, we see the convergence of early organizers on university campuses, who would later form *The Body Politic* and become leaders within the gay liberation movement. In the fall of 1969, the first Toronto-based gay and lesbian group emerged when Jearld Moldenhauer, Charlie Hill, and Ian Young formed the *University of Toronto Homophile Association* (UTHA). Its constitution stated its dedication to "educating the community about homosexuality, working to combat discrimination against homosexuality, and bringing about social and personal acceptance of homosexuality."[105] UTHA held meetings, discussions, and set up information tables on campus. Soon after, in December 1970, the *Community Homophile Association of Toronto* (CHAT) formed, focussed on providing social services for the growing gay and lesbian community beyond the university campus. For example, CHAT established social service programs for gays

---

[103] Warner, *Never Going Back*, 59.
[104] Donald McLeod, *Lesbian and Gay Liberation in Canada: A Selected Annotated Chronology, 1964-1975*, vol. 1. (Toronto: ECW Press/Homeward Books, 1995): viii.
[105] Warner, *Never Going Back*, 59.

and lesbians, assisted gay men arrested for consensual sexual activities, and provided information to doctors and lawyers about the lesbian and gay community.[106]

The emergence of the *Gay Alliance Toward Equality* (GATE) in 1973 signaled the growing tensions between groups focusing on social service provision versus those pushing for political reform. GATE considered itself a radical civil rights organization, and its primary aim was the inclusion of sexual orientation in the Ontario Human Rights Code.[107] While CHAT supported the civil rights strategy, it emphasized the lived realities faced by gay people (namely men) and sought immediate and direct remedy to distress. As *The Body Politic* collective member Tim McCaskell later writes, "Those in CHAT tended to see GATE and *TBP* as a bunch of young hotheads whose radical ideas might well make things worse."[108] Radical tactics contrasted with assimilative undercurrents. Like most other Canadian homophile groups, CHAT was short-lived, folding in 1977, and GATE, three years later.

Gay activist Tom Warner writes that perceptions of the homophile movement shifted—organizations and strategies deemed progressive and ground-breaking in the 1950s and 1960s were viewed as outdated and conservative by the 1970s. By this time, "Gay liberation was sweeping many parts of the world, fostering a radical consciousness and unleashing a militancy not previously seen."[109] Younger gays affirmed that "gay is just as good as straight" and were willing to come out and proclaim their pride. Their politics focused on developing lesbian and gay pride, public visibility, and fighting for human rights and liberation for lesbians and gay men. This shift

---

[106] Editorial Collective, *The Body Politic* no. 1 (November/December 1971): 1-2.
[107] Tim McCaskell, *Queer Progress from Homophobia to Homonationalism: A Local and Global Story of Queer Activism* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2016).
[108] Ibid., 59.
[109] Warner, *Never Going Back*, 60.

in the political agenda was captured in early liberationist slogans: "Out of the closets and into the streets."[110]

An Ode to (Butch) Lesbians

Very few lesbians were involved in the early homophile groups in Canada, nonetheless, "women made a scene for themselves."[111] Romantic friendships, house parties, and discrete social networks provide evidence of lesbian lives in the pre-liberation era.[112] The limited body of work on lesbian history during this period describes a butch/femme aesthetic that developed in bars and at house parties in North American cities. These networks fostered lesbian pride, solidarity, and political consciousness that gave way to the lesbian and gay liberation movement. In one of the first comprehensive histories of working-class lesbians (1930s-1960s), Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline Davis argue that despite being overlooked in historical accounts, these networks were as important to the gay liberation movement as the early homophile organizations.[113] They locate the bar scene in particular as a culture of resistance, describing an ever-changing cultural experiment related to appearance, eroticism, and defiance, particularly in relation to the butch/femme aesthetic prevalent at the time.

The limited body of research on lesbian history in Canada during this period documents similar themes. Urban working-class lesbians were hanging out in bars in the unofficial red-light districts—the 'Tenderloin', and later Chinatown, in Toronto, 'The Main' in Montréal, and Vancouver's West End neighbourhood—where they lived a 'gay life.'[114] Historian Elise Chenier

[110] Kinsman and Gentile, *Canadian War on Queers*, 243.
[111] Millward, *Making a Scene*, 4.
[112] Duder, *Awfully Devoted*.
[113] See: Nan Alamilla Boyd, "Who Is the Subject? Queer Theory Meets Oral History," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17, no. 2 (May 2008): 177-189; Esther Newton, "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman," *Signs* 9, no. 4, (Summer 1984, The Lesbian Issue): 557-575.
[114] Even less is known about lesbian histories outside of major Canadian cities during the pre-liberation era. Carolyn Anderson (2001) interviewed older lesbians who lived in Calgary during the period and found common themes of isolation, a search for other lesbians, and struggle to build community in a city with far less queer visibility.

writes, “From the early 1950s until the mid-1960s, to live the ‘gay life’ was to live in tandem and in tension with the sex and drug trades, local Chinese residents, the police, the courts, and the prison system.”[115] By contrast, ‘uptowners’ typically lived outside the downtown core, worked pink- and white-collar jobs, and were careful to keep their ‘gay lives’ separate from their family and working lives, opting instead to socialize at house parties and through discrete social networks. As Chenier explains, “the line that divided the two groups was not immutable. Most downtowners arrived as uptowners, and some women dated and socialized across the ‘line.’”[116] Though Cameron Duder contends, many lower- and middle-class women disdained lesbian bars because of the working-class lesbians who frequented them.[117] According to Becki Ross, by the mid-1960s, class-based divisions were compounded by age, where younger lesbians adopted androgynous dress and came to view butch-femme style as “regressive heterosexual mimicry.”[118] As we will see, this generational divide would only become more pronounced in the 1970s with the rise of lesbian feminism.

Class, gender, and sexuality informed employment options and identity, and unlike their femme counterparts who could lead double lives, butch lesbians were gay all the time. The butch refused a double life; she made lesbianism visible to the public and to other lesbians. Butches fought to defend queer spaces in the public sphere and were often targeted by police for it. They were heavily surveilled by law enforcement, bar owners, and each other. In defending their right to congregate, they formed a defiant subculture. Despite being overlooked within scholarship, and even their own communities, Kennedy and Davis write, “Lesbians should be placed alongside

[115] Elise Chenier, “Rethinking Class in Lesbian Bar Culture: Living ‘The Gay Life’ in Toronto, 1955-1965, *Left History* 9, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2004): 86.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Duder, *Awfully Devoted*.
[118] Ross, “Dance to ‘Tie,’ 277.

civil-rights and labor activists as forces representing a strong radical resistance to the dominant conservatism."[119]

It was through these cultural networks and platforms that lesbians gained visibility, a sense of community, and common interests, and by the 1960s, they began establishing lesbian and gay centres, drop-ins at women's centres, rap groups (consciousness-raising groups), lesbian and feminist bookstores, bars, cafes, and private members clubs. Lesbians travelled around the country to meet each other—at conferences, workshops, festivals, music events, and fundraisers.[120] Lesbians aimed to build an enduring cultural, social, and political scene, however, very little is published documenting and commemorating lesbian life during this period.[121] This speaks to the ongoing erasure of lesbians within the canons of queer and women's histories.

The Emergent Lesbian and Gay Liberation Movement

The weekend of June 27, 1969 marked a turning point in lesbian and gay activism in the United States, when New York City police raided a Greenwich Village gay bar, the *Stonewall Inn*. Although raids were commonplace during the 1960s, this time bar patrons fought back in a spontaneous, violent demonstration against the police. This ushered in a new political period. American historian John D'Emilio explains, "Homophile activists had opened up a social, cultural, and political space that was new. The Stonewall generation would make that space wider."[122] According to Canadian sociologist and gay activist, Barry Adam, "What made the Stonewall a symbol of a new era of gay politics was the reaction of the drag queens, dykes, street people, and bar boys who confronted the police first with jeers and high camp and then with a hail of coins,

---

[119] Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline Davis. *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 112.
[120] Millward, *Making a Scene*.
[121] A few exceptions include: Line Chamberland, "Remembering Lesbian Bars: Montréal, 1955-1975," *Journal of Homosexuality* 25, no. 3 (1993): 231-69; Chenier "Rethinking Class"; Duder, *Awfully Devoted*. See chapter two.
[122] John D'Emilio, *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 30.

paving stones, and parking meters."[123] By the end of the weekend, a new form of collective resistance had emerged, and the gay liberation movement was born.

This same year, the Canadian government introduced sweeping changes to the *Criminal Code of Canada*, including the decriminalization of homosexuality. Canadian society was influenced by both the shifting cultural climate in the United States, as well as legislative changes in the United Kingdom.[124] Decriminalization was precipitated by the debate on the legal status of homosexuality that escalated following the Wolfenden report, released in the United Kingdom in 1957. The Wolfenden committee was established three years prior, to investigate homosexuality and prostitution. Many of the recommendations were enacted in British parliament, including the decriminalization of homosexuality with the adoption of the Sexual Offenses Act in 1967. The report had more negative implications for sex workers, with the prohibition of loitering and solicitation under Street Offences Act of 1959, and subsequent police crackdowns on street-based prostitution. Meanwhile in Canada, Everett George Klippert had been arrested and convicted of "gross indecency" for consensual homosexual activity, deemed a "dangerous sexual offender" by prison psychiatrists. The case stoked considerable public interest and debate, leading to several Canadian Members of Parliament speaking out in defence of legal reform. Soon after, then- Justice Minister, and later Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau, introduced bill C-150. The bill became law in 1969, decriminalizing homosexuality in Canada, though Klippert would not be released from prison for another two years."[125]

Legislative rights can offer an important opening: in this instance, and many others to follow, lesbians and gay men would see that they are indeed limited, and often only symbolic. For

[123] Adam, *The Rise*, 81.
[124] Kinsman and Gentile, *Canadian War on Queers*; Warner, *Never Going Back.*
[125] Ibid.

lesbians and gay men, legislative change did not readily translate into widespread social change nor did it even secure homosexuals' equal protection under the law (i.e. in the realms of human, labour, and employment rights). Amendments to the *Criminal Code* were critiqued as non-enforceable; consequently, its effects did nothing to alleviate the oppression experienced by lesbians and gay men. Still confronted with discrimination, police harassment, exploitation, and social pressure to deny sexuality, persistent violations of their rights propelled the emergent movement in Canada. The movement would launch officially on August 28, 1971, in the first large scale public protest for lesbian and gay rights in Canada.

On this day, over 200 protestors gathered on Parliament Hill to support the "We Demand" brief that had been submitted to the federal government a week prior by various gay liberation organizations. In solidarity, activists in Vancouver rallied on the steps of the city's Court House. The "We Demand" brief was the result of collaboration among various lesbian and gay organizations across Canada.[126] These groups were mobilizing to hold the Federal government accountable for various practices that contributed to the ongoing oppression of lesbians and gay men. Later documented in *The Body Politic*, "[W]e as homosexual citizens of Canada, present the following brief to our government as a means of redressing our grievances."[127] The brief outlined ten demands:

- The removal of the nebulous terms "gross indecency" and "indecent act" from the Criminal Code and their replacement by a specific listing of offences, and the equalization of

[126] This was the collective work of the following organizations: Toronto Gay Action, The Community Homophile Association of Toronto, Front du Liberation Homosexual (Montréal), Gay Alliance Toward Equality (Vancouver), Guelph University Homophile Association, University of Western Ontario Homophile Association, University of Toronto Homophile Association, Vancouver Gay Activist Alliance, Vancouver Gay Liberation Front, Gay Sisters (Vancouver), Waterloo University's Gay Liberation Movement, and York University Homophile Association.
[127] Cheri DeNovo and Brian Waite for the August 28th Gay Day Committee, "We Demand," *The Body Politic*, no. 1 (November/December 1971): 4.

penalties for all remaining homosexual and heterosexual acts; and defining "in private" in the Criminal Code to mean "a condition of privacy."

- Removal of "gross indecency" and "buggery" as grounds for indictment as a "dangerous sexual offender" and for vagrancy.
- A uniform age of consent for all female and male homosexual and heterosexual acts.
- The Immigration Act be amended so as to omit all references to homosexuals and "homosexualism."
- The right of equal employment and promotion at all government levels for homosexuals.
- The Divorce Act be amended so as to omit sodomy and homosexual acts as grounds for divorce; moreover, in divorce cases homosexuality, per se, should not preclude the equal right of child custody.
- The rights of homosexuals to serve in the Armed Forces, and therefore the removal of provisions for convicting service personnel of conduct and/or acts legal under the Criminal Code; further the rescinding of policy statements reflecting on the homosexual.
- To know if it is a policy of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to identify homosexuals within any area of government service and then question them concerning their sexuality and the sexuality of others; and if this is the policy we demand its immediate cessation and destructions of all records so obtained.
- All legal rights for homosexuals which currently exist for heterosexuals.
- All public officials and law enforcement agents to employ the full force of their office to bring about changes in the negative attitudes and de facto expressions of discrimination and prejudice against homosexuals.[128]

[128] Ibid, 4-7.

This marks a turning point in queer politics in Canada. No longer content to assimilate, lesbian and gay activists were set to challenge discriminatory laws and enforcement practices. With increased visibility, a clear set of demands, and collective momentum, activists would form a collective based in Toronto from which they would further refine their theoretical insights, material concerns, and cultural development. This protest was the first demonstration of its kind in Canada, and the beginning of an ongoing public campaign seeking legal reforms and tangible social equality. Inspired by the success of the demonstration, lesbian and gay activists in Toronto came together to publish a radical and sex positive gay liberation newspaper called *The Body Politic*.

The Body Politic

The first issue of *The Body Politic* was published in November 1971 and quickly established itself as *the* national gay liberation journal in English Canada. The journal's aim was to generate a widespread and inclusive political agenda for the rapidly rising gay liberation movement. *The Body Politic* advocated a community-based, sex positive approach to emancipatory politics—one that would unite lesbians, feminists, gay men, and advocates of the New Left in a shared vision of human liberation and total restructuring of the social order. Early liberationists had no interest in "token integration." [129] Fueled by the "growing anti-authoritarianism of youth" and inspired by various activist movements, "especially Women's Liberation," gay liberationists aimed to free lesbians and gay men from their oppression by challenging "the deeply rooted sexism" in society and its institutions.[130] To do so, they planned demonstrations, public meetings and debates, conferences, and pickets at anti-gay media establishments – "These actions will carry a clear message to our brothers and sisters in the closet – you are not alone, gay is good, gay is proud!"[131]

---

[129] Editorial Collective, "A Program for Gay Liberation," *The Body Politic*, no. 1 (November/December 1971): 14.
[130] Ibid., 15.
[131] Ibid., 14.

There were 15 members of the collective at inception, including two women, Aileen and Jude – who only used first names as "a slap at the patriarchy."[132] The editorial collective saw a considerable need for a Canadian paper focused on the ideals of gay liberation. The editorial collective was the decision-making group of *The Body Politic*, and all submissions required a two-third majority vote for acceptance. Collective members were also responsible for "writing editorials, expressing, to the best of our ability, the opinion of the entire collective on issues relevant to the gay community."[133] The purpose of the journal was three-fold: to inform the gay community about news events involving the gay liberation movement; to provide a forum for individuals to express their views on sexual politics; and to publish prose, poetry, book and film reviews, and graphics relevant to the gay community. Membership in the collective would change over the years, though several members would see the paper through to its end in 1987.

The Body Politic facilitated an important turning point for queer activism in Canada. It created a collective out of disparate and often isolated individuals. The journal was sold on newsstands in Toronto and mailed to subscribers, often in manila envelopes to ensure discretion, across North America. Long-time collective member, Gerald Hannon, captures the effects of this sentiment: "I got hooked, I guess, on empowerment, the transformation of The Helpless Queer with no history and an unlikely future into Someone, into a group of Someones..."[134] *The Body Politic* was the first tangible voice for lesbians and gay men across English Canada. It enabled them to speak to one another across a vast landscape—to become organized and politicized. A demonstration making demands on the government quickly shifted to a much deeper, more

[132] Rick Bébout, "On the Origins of *The Body Politic*: Conception & Birth, September & October, 1971," last modified September 22, 2003, http://www.rbebout.com/oldbeep/concep.htm.
[133] Editorial Collective, "Editorial Page," *The Body Politic*, no. 4 (May/June 1972): 2.
[134] Ed Jackson, "Introduction," in *Flaunting It!: A Decade of Gay Journalism from The Body Politic*, edited by Ed Jackson and Stan Persky (Toronto and Vancouver: Pink Triangle Press, 1982), 3.

challenging task—a rethinking of political power, ideology, and the role of the government. As many turned toward the state for recognition, many more turned away, transforming themselves intellectually and politically, with the aim of revolutionizing society.

As we will see in the following section, activist lesbians were initially quite involved in both *The Body Politic* and the gay liberation movement more generally. At its initial stages, the movement had strong feminist undercurrents, and often looked to feminist principles and organizational strategies as a model of revolutionary politics. As both the women's liberation and gay liberation movements evolved, activist lesbians found themselves at the crux of an ideological divide. In the second part of this chapter, I analyze ruptures that soon developed amongst lesbians and gay men, and I consider how activist lesbians foregrounded feminist praxis within gay liberation. Analysis of contributions confirm that *The Body Politic* was, indeed, perceived by women involved as male-dominated, as the movement soon turned away from its radical transformative roots to focus on sexual freedom.

Gender-based class inequality becomes a particularly divisive issue within the gay liberation movement. Economic insecurity forced many women to remain in, or return to, 'the closet', and they saw that the pursuit of legal rights would not give rise to greater equality or freedom for those who are 'still a woman with no time and no money'. The first rupture is over the emphasis on sexual versus gender-based oppression. In the subsection, 'Control of our bodies, control of our lives', we see that activist lesbians identified gender-based discrimination as a far more urgent concern than what they perceived as a male-centric focus on civil liberties and sexual freedom. The following subsection, 'a few token articles', adds to the perception of male dominance in that women viewed themselves as contributing only 'token' articles to *The Body Politic*, and moreover, from a position of constantly defending themselves, and their concerns, as equally valid. This

critique would cause a rupture within the lesbian and gay liberation movement, though one that was perhaps most evident to lesbians themselves. Gay male activists continued their pursuit of rights and legal reform, while lesbians would find themselves marginalized within several movements simultaneously, while trying to maintain coalitions and allies throughout.

In developing an intersectional analysis of lesbian oppression, activist lesbians would also find themselves variously marginalized, demonized, and usurped by the women's liberation movement. In that context, activist lesbians foregrounded the importance of sexuality and sexual freedom, which became largely overlooked by a focus on patriarchal oppression. In the final part of this chapter, I analyze how activist lesbians centred sexual expression and freedom within the women's liberation movement, and in navigating these two movements, came to identify the need for an autonomous lesbian movement. Both of these sections analyze debates that took place within *The Body Politic* between 1971-1981 but are separated thematically to consider the work taking place within both movements.

Part II

Lesbian Politics in the pages of *The Body Politic*

The Body Politic was among several political newspapers emerging from movement communities at the time. These various newspapers connected far-flung liberation organizations and served as a platform to spread the word and incite lesbians and gay men to join the gay liberation movement. The liberation movement of the 1970s viewed equality-seeking as a transformative social vision of sexual freedom. The movement sought to undermine traditional sex, gender, and family roles, reduce social stigma attached to sexual preference, and liberate sexuality for everyone—gay, straight, or otherwise. As theorist, and contributor to *The Body Politic*, Barry Adam contends, the early movement was not premised on civil rights (i.e. inclusion

and equality with heterosexual paradigms) but was understood as a revolutionary struggle that would free the homosexual in everyone.[135]

The ideology of the gay liberation movement rejected normative judgments on sexuality; there was no differentiation between 'normal' and 'perverse' sexuality, only endless sexual possibility. Many of these possibilities challenged the conventional and repressive arrangements that confined sexuality to heterosexual, monogamous families.[136] Ultimately, the aim was to eliminate the very categorization of sexual preference or 'sexual orientation', to render 'gay' "not homosexual, but sexually free," whereby, "…in a free society, everyone will be gay."[137] As social historian Jeffrey Weeks explains, "It is a political movement whose aim is its own demise … gay liberation will have achieved its full potential when it is no longer needed. And it will no longer be needed when the categorical differences between the 'normal' and the 'abnormal' disappear.'"[138]

As a forum for discussing sexual politics, *The Body Politic* began as a radical newspaper to "…heighten everyone's awareness of the nature of gay oppression and encourage a greater personal-political commitment to the work of liberation."[139] *The Body Politic* quickly solidified its political tone. Early discussions in *The Body Politic* centred on sexism and alternatives to the nuclear family. While this changes over the life-course of the newspaper, initial contributions clearly identified gay liberation as a social and political force. Much like their feminist counterparts, contributors honed in on forces of structural oppression, identifying sexuality and gender-based inequality as rooted in social institutions. An editorial in the fourth issue stated:

---

[135] Adam, *The Rise.*
[136] Ibid.
[137] Allen Young, "Out of the Closets, Into the Streets," in *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation*, 20th anniversary edition, ed. Karla Jay and Allen Young (New York: NY University Press, 1972), 8.
[138] Jeffrey Weeks, "Introduction to the 1993 Printing," in *Homosexual Oppression and Liberation*, ed. Dennis Altman (New York: NY University Press, 1993), 12.
[139] Editorial Collective, "Editorial Page," *The Body Politic*, no. 4 (May/June 1972): 2.

> Gay liberation is a socio-political force working for a society free of unnecessary repression and oppressive political structures. As gay liberationists, we challenge the dominance of the nuclear family as the basic political unit of institutional sexism. Sexism, the discrimination against, exploitation and/or objectification of people because of their sex or sexual preference, is a major mechanism whereby people are oppressed and perpetuate oppression through their own conditioned attitudes. The socializing into role playing of everyone via the nuclear family, is the foundation of the sexist social structure, reproduced in and perpetuated by every other social institution. As gays, our very existence challenges the major behavioural manifestations of the status quo.[140]

Based on this platform, lesbians and gay men were joining the movement in droves. However, concerns over power, leadership, and representation within the movement quickly emerged. In as much as the gay liberation movement wanted to deconstruct and subvert sexual categories and stable sexual subjects, it was indeed premised on the politicization of a shared sexual identity. The establishment of identity was itself considered a political act and encouraging people to 'come out' was a central movement goal in the 1970s. Gay and lesbian identification was understood as a necessary precondition for the construction of communities, identities, organizations and, ultimately, to place demands on the state.[141] It proved difficult however, to develop a shared political consciousness and collective identity around which to mobilize, and even harder still, to agree on a social and political agenda for the movement.

Almost immediately, lesbians were dissatisfied with their representation within the gay liberation movement, which was perceived as neglectful of lesbian-specific experiences of oppression. Numerous articles in *The Body Politic* expressed these frustrations during these early years. In the very first issue, Nancy Walker pointed out that women were disproportionately absent from gay activities. She wrote, "It takes little imagination to understand that we can 'pass far more easily than the men', but if we want to be truly equal … then we must share equally the

[140] Ibid.
[141] Smith, *Lesbian and Gay Rights.*

responsibility for action toward a better life for all homophiles."[142] She explained, "if all of us came out of our closets and added our voices, our energies, our talents…" then the "mutual cause" of justice and equality for lesbians and gay men will be realized.[143] Many of the initial female contributors to *The Body Politic* placed immediate calls for lesbians to become actively involved in the gay liberation movement. Nancy Walker stated, "No one asks that you carry a banner or make loud speeches" as encouragement.[144]

How do we explain the reluctance of lesbians to come out, to be public? Perhaps it is true that gay men were more recognizable, that (some) lesbians might more easily 'pass' in straight society, but it is also true that women appeared to have far more to lose, and their gendered position created specific barriers to organizing (at least publicly). It is likely that for founding members, Aileen and Jude, the omission of their last names served as both a 'slap' to the patriarchy and a measure of protection against its wrath. In the following section, a few themes emerge that explain the particular position of activist lesbians, and why a collective shift away from feminism and toward sexual liberation was felt so profoundly. Throughout *The Body Politic* during this period, activist lesbians reiterated their position as women, with 'no time and no money,' relegated to low-paying jobs and familial demands. Not only did they lack the resources to support (unpaid) political work, they often risked losing jobs, husbands, and especially, custody of their children. This was likely compounded by their exclusion in the process, such as the dynamics of *The Body Politic* headquarters, reflected in how quickly the agenda shifted away from early goals—employing feminist ideals and targeting the oppressive role of the family—to a primary focus on sexual freedom.

---

[142] Nancy Walker, "Closet Door, Closet Door, You Ain't Got Me Anymore!" *The Body Politic*, no. 1 (November/December 1971): 13.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.

The Lesbian Afterthought

Quantification of women's contributions to *The Body Politic* (see Appendix) demonstrates that activist lesbians were always there; their participation ebbed and flowed, increasing substantially and consistently in the late 1970s, and then dwindling once again. In the first issue, published in 1971, women formed one-sixth of the collective and half of all contributors (i.e. authors of articles, reviews, and news reports). This would be the first and last issue with such a high representation of women. There were some women on the collective in the first few issues, including Kathy Pickard, Donya Peroff, and Linda Koch, though men consistently outnumbered them, about ten-to-one, and their participation ceases by the tenth issue. Of the first 50 issues (1971-79), 31 of them have no female collective members at all. There is some intermittent presence of women on the collective, with Joyce Rock followed by Lily Wood, but it would not be until the final publication of 1978, that we see regular inclusion of at least one female collective member (usually Chris Bearchell, one of the few original members —and the only woman—to remain on the collective until the final publication in 1987).

In terms of feature articles published during the first half of the decade (1971-74), male contributors largely outnumbered women as well. During this time, 16 issues were published, and six of them lacked a single article written by a female author. The women who did write for *The Body Politic* during the early years, were a disparate group, contributing a few times and then never again. Indeed, of the 15 women who contributed articles during this period, only three did so more than once. Women were integral to the initial stages of *The Body Politic*, though its first decade is especially male-dominated. Toward the end of the decade, there is a significant uptake in women's contributions as both authors and collective members. The content of the articles published in the first half of the decade speak to issues of exclusion within the gay liberation

movement, as activist lesbians identified a turn away from the transformative politics that first inspired them to join. This vision, and how activist lesbians struggle to carve a space for themselves within gay liberation, is what we turn to now.

"Control of our bodies, Control of our lives"

The early gay liberation movement was rooted in anti-sexism. Allen Young wrote, "Sexism is irrational, unjust and counterrevolutionary. Sexism prevents the revolutionary solidarity of the people."[145] He explained that sexism was to blame for anti-homosexual sentiments permeating society, leading to the oppression of gays by the "overtly male-supremacist, anti-homosexual institutions of society: the legal system and the police, the church, the nuclear family, the mass media, and the psychiatric establishment."[146] He continued, "Our struggle as gays is to eliminate oppressive patterns that straights have burdened us with."[147] Some men in the gay liberation movement saw the women's movement as paving the way for gay liberation by questioning sex and gender roles and politicizing sexuality.[148] Indeed, many looked to feminism to provide the theoretical framework for gay liberation. At the time, gay liberation involved both sexual liberation and gender liberation. Early optimistic views saw a chance that lesbians would bring about a united gay/feminist movement.[149]

Activist lesbians not only highlighted gendered oppression, but also identified elitism, classism, and racism within the movement. For example, in "Want a token Sister, Mister?" published in 1972, 'Carla' called for broader representation within the gay liberation movement to reflect the needs of "working class sisters, black sisters, drag sisters."[150] She identified

[145] Young, "Out of the Closets," 7.
[146] Ibid., 7.
[147] Ibid., 8.
[148] Smith, *Lesbian and Gay Rights*, 36.
[149] Jill Johnston, *Lesbian Nation: The Feminist Solution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973).
[150] Carla, "Want a Token Sister, Mister?," *The Body Politic*, no. 2 (January/February 1972): 7.

fundamental power imbalances, arguing that a select group of men spoke on behalf of the movement and excluded the concerns of working-class and racialized women. Outside of the occasional “token sister”, she argued that women’s perspectives were largely overlooked and ignored.[151] In the early period of gay liberation, lesbians fought for representation within the movement’s ideological framework and its organizations. In 1972, activist lesbian Chris Fox called for equal decision-making powers at the prominent Toronto-based homophile association, *Community Homophile Association of Toronto* (CHAT.). She wrote, “Equal female/male representation would ensure better and broader representation for the women’s situation and hopefully lead to better mutual understanding.”[152] While she recognized that lesbians and gay men faced different problems, she considered the roots of oppression the same, and this shared oppression, enough to build a movement together.

For many early liberation movement activists, there was much potential in lesbians and gay men working together. In an article called “Strategy for Gay Liberation,” Brian Waite discussed potential alliances between gay and women’s liberation, and in particular, what gay activists could learn from women’s strategies of political organizing. For Waite, the fight to include the term ‘sexual orientation’ in the Ontario Human Rights Code was fundamental in the struggles for gay liberation. He wrote, “Winning this demand, in itself, will not end our oppression, but in the process of fighting for it many gay men and women will develop a higher level of pride and consciousness.”[153] This is where he turned to the Women’s Liberation Movement for inspiration, highlighting their efforts to organize and demonstrate in demanding the inclusion of the word ‘sex’ in the Ontario Human Rights Code. He credited feminists with creating a climate,

[151] Ibid.
[152] Chris Fox, “Why We Need Equal Representation,” *The Body Politic*, no. 2 (January/February 1972): 15.
[153] Brian Waite, “Strategy for Gay Liberation,” *The Body Politic*, no. 3 (March/April 1972): 4.

through demonstrations, but more importantly, public discussions and awareness, whereby the government could no longer ignore the demand for women's equality.

Although the demands of each movement were different, they were much aligned: fighting for control over their bodies and their lives. As an example, Waite referred to 1970 when feminists organized a cross-Canada caravan to challenge the 1969 Criminal Code reforms (Bill C-150) that continued to deny many women access to abortion. The Abortion Caravan travelled from Vancouver to Ottawa campaigning for "Free Abortion on Demand." The Abortion Caravan marked a critical moment in the history of sex and gender activism in Canada, building momentum and demonstrating the power in feminist organizing to repeal laws. Indeed, the women's movement had been so successful because they followed the strategies of other social movements—like suffragists and the anti-war activists, they engaged in petition and letter writing campaigns, informative meetings, as well as large-scale public demonstrations. Waite explained, "Our 'Human Rights' campaign is actually more closely paralleled in the women's abortion fight… Winning our demand will give us the right choose…"[154] For Waite, this meant the right to choose to be 'out' (or not) without the fear of being fired or evicted.

Waite was hopeful for alliances. As Waite explained, when gay liberationists approached women's liberation organizations in late-1971 to discuss a joint campaign, they had responded favourably and seemed willing to support gay liberation demands. Indeed, feminists, lesbians, and gay men all faced a common source of oppression: sexism rooted within the traditional family. He wrote, "The vision of a future society is free from sexism, which is one I feel we all share, can be turned into a reality sooner or later."[155] For Waite, this reality would be realized if lesbians and gay men worked together, and the movement strengthened by demanding the inclusion of the term

[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.

'sexual orientation' in the Ontario Human Rights Code. Winning this demand would bring new meaning to gay pride. He wrote, "It will impel and enable thousands more brothers and sisters to join us in future campaigns for full sexual liberation for humankind… children, adolescents and adults, no matter what their position on the sexual continuum. HOMOSEXUALITY IS A HUMAN RIGHT!"[156]

By early-1973, the civil rights strategy was central to movement goals. *The Body Politic* collective published another editorial outlining the goals of gay liberation, or as they explained, "what a number of sisters and brothers are coming to designate as sexual politics."[157] The first, and most immediate goal: obtain civil rights for lesbians and gay men. The second goal: build a society in which the labels 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual' are no longer necessary. For them, this was the path to liberation. The focus on civil rights did not contradict long-term liberation goals. Instead, the civil rights fight would facilitate the creation and development of a liberatory consciousness and enable more and more gay people to come out and enter the struggle. In the process, it would help build community, strengthen the movement, and "put gay rights on the map in Canada as a potentially serious force."[158]

The early liberation movement was rooted in the "youthful voices of the 1960s" and inspired by the civil rights, anti-war, and student movements of the time. Chris Bearchell later explained, "I think the social transformation that most gay liberationists envisioned in those days was primarily over sex roles and gender-related issues, and they saw gay liberation, therefore, as tied very closely to feminism."[159] As the civil rights strategy became the focus of the gay liberation

---

[156] Ibid.
[157] Editorial Collective, "Never Going Back," *The Body Politic*, no. 8 (Spring 1973): 2.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Miriam Smith, "Interview with Chris Bearchell, Lasqueti Island, 1996," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 48, no.1 (Winter 2014): 256.

movement, many became critical of the shift away from liberatory politics to rights-based activism. Of course, many liberationists argued the struggle for civil rights was not an end in and of itself, but a means to politicize and organize people. But for many lesbians, civil rights were going to benefit men far more than women. The discrimination they faced as women was a much more significant political factor than their sexuality. Lesbians quickly came to see the gay liberation movement as male-dominated—the focus on civil liberties was perceived as far removed from the lived experiences of women.[160]

"a few token articles"

Aside from "a few token articles on women,"[161] *The Body Politic* was described as male-centred and representative of predominantly gay male perspectives. In the first 14 issues, there was typically one female contributor for every ten males per issue (see Appendix). Many questioned if lesbians and gay men had anything in common and were skeptical of their capacity to develop solidarity and collectively mobilize. When Tom Warner of *The Body Politic* reviewed Montréal-based lesbian feminist newspaper, *Long Time Coming*, as "unprofessional," lesbians were quick to respond. In letters to *The Body Politic*, members of the *Long Time Coming Collective* critiqued the "extremely male-oriented" perspective of *The Body Politic* and expressed resentment over the classism and elitism inherent in the 'male judgement' of a feminist paper. They explained, "Women have different priorities (especially gay women, who suffer double oppression) and consequently seek contact with their sisters on a gut level rather than isolating themselves in a haze of abstract ideology and structured red tape…characteristic of male organizations," and concluded: "Women are no longer content to be measured by male value judgments."[162]

---

[160] Smith, *Lesbian and Gay Rights*. See also: Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls.*
[161] Louise Young, of Montréal Gay Women, "Male Standards," *The Body Politic*, no. 14 (July/August 1974): 2.
[162] Ibid.

This sentiment resonated amongst lesbians. In 1975, Jeanne Cordova wrote, "I am beginning to see, yes indeed, being a lesbian is so totally different from being a gay man. We have little in common but the society that mislabelled us and right now we are rejecting that society and its labels."[163] For Cordova, there was little room in the male-identified gay liberation movement for a feminist-identified lesbian. In this, she questioned her responsibility to "the thousands of other sisters" who experienced discrimination as lesbians *and* women. She concluded, "Next year maybe someone will write about how to fight a society which would lock me up on two counts. Both, it seems to me, carry life sentences."[164]

"… a woman with no time and no money"

Throughout the 1970s, ongoing discussions over the exclusivity of the gay liberation movement intensified. As gay men focused their energies on rights-based activism, lesbians came to question this strategy. Many lesbians became increasingly frustrated as male liberationists concentrated on legal reforms, efforts to counter police entrapment, and human rights protections. Indeed, lesbians were skeptical of the benefits that would be derived from obtaining legal rights. Lesbians involved in feminist and women's organizations knew from experience that amending laws had not achieved social or economic equality for women. In 1976, Marie Robertson wrote, "When 'sexual orientation' is put in the Human Rights Code, I will still be a woman with no time and no money."[165] While gay men were fighting for sexual freedom, lesbians were struggling to retain custody of their children or to find meaningful and adequate employment. Here, we see the differential oppression experienced by lesbians—they faced multiple social and material barriers to emancipation, many of which were not addressed through the gay liberation movement. From

[163] Jean Cordova, "What's a Woman to do?" *The Body Politic*, no. 17 (January/February 1975): 11. Reprinted from The Lesbian Tide, April 1974.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Boo Watson, "Conference Urges Lesbian Autonomy," *The Body Politic*, no. 25 (July/August 1976): 7.

the perspective of activist lesbians, gay men took for granted many of the social conditions that made it possible for them to be gay, namely, financial independence.

Government cutbacks to social services during the mid-1970s propelled protests. Ellen Agger, a member of the *Wages Due Lesbians Collective*, explained that cutbacks to social services "hit women the hardest. As lesbians, often without the income of a husband, we are dependent on government benefits…"[166] For many, the economic crisis was an attack on the independence that women, including lesbians, had only just won from men. Agger explained, "Through these cutbacks, we are being forced even further underground. As the crisis continues women are being forced to depend much more on a man's wages. … All the independence from men that we have fought for as lesbian women is under attack."[167] The only solution to improve life chances for lesbians was economic independence for all women. For many, lesbians also needed to organize independently from gay men. Francie Wyland, a member of *Wages Due Lesbians*, was among those pushing for lesbian autonomy within the gay liberation movement. She pointed out, "the power relation between men and women—the power that men have over us because they are in a world where men have money—and women don't—doesn't disappear when the men are sleeping with each other."[168]

During the *Fourth Annual Gay Conference* held in Toronto, the *National Gay Rights Coalition* adopted a motion forwarded by the NDP Gay Caucus encouraging all lesbian and gay organizations to participate in labour's national Day of Protest on October 14, 1976. For many, the motion was a welcome expression of solidarity between middle-class and working-class lesbians and gay men. Furthermore, it recognized that working-class lesbians and gay men were victims of

[166] Ellen Agger, "Address to March 11 Cut-backs Rally," *The Body Politic*, no. 24 (May/June 1976): 6.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Watson, "Conference Urges," 7.

more than just discrimination based on their sexual orientation, but also of class structure. On October 14, lesbian and gay workers across Canada joined in protest against wage controls and cutbacks. The banner of *Wages Due Lesbians*, which read, "Lesbians for Wages for Housework," was prominent throughout the events and became a rallying point for lesbians. The organization wrote, "Many came forward from the crowd to stand beside it and identify themselves with the lesbian face of the protest."[169] The economic crisis was particularly impactful on lesbians who faced the choice of living in dependent relationships with men or giving up their children to live as lesbians. Ultimately, it forced many "back into the closet."[170]

Structural inequalities, and economic inequality in particular, were most pertinent to lesbians, and they were looking for a movement to represent them in their struggles. *Wages Due Lesbians* worked to develop further an intersectional analysis of oppression. In a letter to *The Body Politic*, they wrote, "We are speaking out tonight as lesbian women… We are school teachers, child care workers, nurses and social service workers. We are women on welfare struggling daily to feed and clothe our families on incomes far below official poverty levels. We are immigrant women from the Third World… We are prostitutes because it pays us enough to provide for our children… We are full-time housewives…".[171] *Wages Due Lesbians* continued to articulate a politics rooted in economic justice. But by the end of the 1970s, the gay liberation movement was moving away from gender, class, and race-based inequalities, focusing more on sexual freedom and civil rights to ensure this freedom. As such, gay liberation was becoming representative of economically privileged and predominantly white gay men.

---

[169] Wages Due Lesbians, "Women Speak out," *The Body Politic*, no. 29 (December/January 1976/77): 1.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Wages Due Lesbians Toronto, "Wages Due Replies," *The Body Politic*, no. 49 (December/January 1978/79): 6.

"sexual expansiveness"

From the outset, lesbians had been fighting for more representation within the gay liberation movement. The role of lesbians within the movement came under question: did they even belong in the movement? In 1977, Andrew Hodges considered this in an article for *The Body Politic* entitled "Divided We Stand." He wrote that important events, such as the *Canadian Fourth Annual Gay Conference*, "end in set-piece battles resolved by the same vacuous demands, resolutions and promises that I have heard before and seen fail many times before."[172] Hodges questioned the central assumption underlying these conflicts—that lesbians and gay men were a coherent group, a "single entity." From this perspective, all gay people would put aside their differences (gender, race, class) to fight back in unison. But for Hodges, this model was designed to fail. If lesbians were to put aside their differences, they would end up focusing on gay male issues. And of course, differences due to gender were too great to put aside.

Hodges concluded that at the root of many of these conflicts was the notion that gay people must have a unified view of sexual liberation. He explained, "sexual expression itself is a focal point" of the gay movement, and "it would be quite incorrect to try to draft lesbians into a gay men's program for sexual expansiveness."[173] Two issues later, Chris Bearchell published a reply to Hodges, challenging this perspective. In this, she was skeptical that the liberation movement's focus *was* on "sexual expansiveness."[174] Instead, she pointed to what she referred to as the beginning of a cohesive bi-national movement, with a growing lesbian caucus, focused on the civil rights strategy—as the *first* step toward liberation, not the end goal. For her, lesbians and gay men were often at odds, but were mutually oppressed by the same legal system, the same laws, and

[172] Andrew Hodges, "Divided We Stand," *The Body Politic*, no. 30 (February 1977): 22.
[173] Ibid., 22-3.
[174] Chris Bearchell, "Lesbians and Gay Men *Can* Find Political Unity: A Reply to Andrew Hodges," *The Body Politic*, no. 32 (April 1977): 11.

most importantly, by the same ideology that had given rise to that system and those laws. Bearchell concluded, “What is missing from this article is basic gay liberation politics—in fact, politics period. Politics is dismissed and replaced with an unrealistic yearning after a common view of the sexual ideal.”[175]

“End of a political era”

This sentiment was confirmed by the end of the decade. In June 1979, the conference of the *Canadian Lesbian and Gay Rights Coalition* (CLGRC), dubbed “Celebration ‘79” was held to commemorate the ten-year anniversary of the decriminalization of homosexuality in Canada. While the conference’s focus was on celebrating a decade of gay liberation, many wondered: liberation for who? The event would be pivotal to lesbian and gay politics as it revealed the shifting agenda of the liberation movement, deep divides between lesbians and gay men, and lacked lesbian input and attendance. Georgina Chamber, one of the few lesbians who was present at the conference, told the final plenary session that the gay liberation movement was not addressing the real problems facing gay people, and as such, she did not believe “Canada in 1979 provided much for gay people to celebrate.”[176] Another delegate at the conference explained further, “The struggle for human rights, while important, has perhaps been given too central a role in our movement. For many gays, it may not be as important an everyday concern as, say loneliness or violence.”[177] As Bearchell concluded, “Lesbians simply aren’t thrilled by the civil rights profile the organization has, and I question whether gay men should be excited by it. People are getting disillusioned with the civil rights strategy—and that partly explains why lesbians aren't here. We just got disillusioned

[175] Ibid., 11.
[176] Gerald Hanon, “Célébration ’79: A Return to Basics the Strategy for Our Next Decade? *The Body Politic*, no. 55 (April 1979): 8.
[177] Ibid., 8.

earlier."[178] In effect, "Celebration '79" marked the closing of what many considered to be 'the political era' in Canada.

The male-centric focus on 'sexual expansiveness' would persist, and the gap between activists would increasingly widen with new debates on pornography laws, intergenerational relationships, and resistance to patriarchal power and violence. In response to the gay male focus on sexual liberation, many lesbians would find themselves much more aligned with the aims of the women's liberation movement. Lesbians, initially reviled as a 'lavender menace', would move to the centre of the women's movement, albeit briefly, with the rise of a woman-centred praxis called 'lesbian feminism'. Activist lesbians confronted a parallel set of issues within feminist communities as they did within gay communities. While the latter focused on sexual liberation at the expense of gender inequality, lesbian feminism's focus on gender oppression led to the erasure of sexuality (in both expression of desire and political freedom). In both movements, activist lesbians found themselves in a unique position, as queer women.

Part III

The Lesbian Afterthought: *The Lavender Menace*

In the early period of the gay liberation movement, lesbians articulated a unique gendered and sexual politics. The *Gay Liberation Women*, a caucus within *Gay Liberation Front* (GLF), viewed gay liberation as revolutionary, proclaiming that "Gay Liberation is a movement and a state of mind challenging history's basic legal and social assumptions about homosexuality. Openly proclaiming ourselves lesbians is a revolutionary act and a threat to the prevailing society, which excludes people who live outside the norm."[179] Here we see a shift away from the early

[178] Ibid., 8.
[179] Gay Liberation Front Women (New York City), "Lesbians and the Ultimate Liberation of Women," in *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation*, 20th anniversary edition, ed. Karla Jay and Allen Young (New York: NY University Press, 1972), 202.

homophile movement, including the notion that lesbians should assimilate into the dominant society to dispel myths and gain widespread acceptance.

By contrast, the GLF Women pointed to society itself as the source of lesbian oppression. They wrote, "Our strongest common denominator and greatest oppression lie with society's injustice against us as homosexuals. We are discriminated against as women, but lesbians who live openly are fired from jobs, expelled from schools, banished from their homes, and even beaten."[180] It followed that GLF Women participated in gay liberation because it made their issues and problems a priority: "We are part of the revolution of all oppressed people, but we cannot allow the lesbian issue to be an afterthought."[181] They were dedicated to changing attitudes, institutions, and laws that oppressed lesbians. While some early lesbian groups aligned with gay liberation politics, others stressed the importance of organizing independently.

One of these groups was the *Radicalesbians*, formed in New York City in 1970. First called *Lavender Menace*, the short-lived organization appeared in reaction to lesbian exclusion within the feminist movement. Betty Friedan, then president of the *National Organization for Women* (NOW), had remarked that lesbians constituted a 'lavender menace' to the progress of the women's rights movement. Most notably, they published "The Woman-Identified Woman," a provocative manifesto that challenged all feminists to reconsider their conceptions of lesbians and lesbianism. Because lesbians faced different oppression than gay men and straight women, they argued that lesbians must organize independently. Lesbian identity and consciousness were militant responses to the marginalization and invisibility experienced by lesbians both within gay liberation and

[180] Ibid., 201-202.
[181] Ibid., 202.

women's liberation movements. Channeling this energy, they declared: "What is a lesbian? A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion."[182]

The *Radicalesbians* reclaimed 'lesbian' from its negative connotations, making it into both a political statement and a sexual identity. In their manifesto, they wrote, "Lesbian is a word, the label, the condition that holds women in line. When a woman hears this word tossed her way, she knows she is stepping out of line. She knows she has crossed the terrible boundary of her sex role."[183] The *Radicalesbians* also confronted the women's movement for relegating lesbianism to a "side issue," or dismissing it altogether as a "lavender herring." They concluded, "It is the primacy of women relating to women, of women creating a new consciousness of and with each other, which is at the heart of women's liberation, and the basis for the cultural revolution."[184]

Throughout the 1970s, lesbian organizations flourished, especially in the United States. There were several hundred *Radicalesbians* in Manhattan, alongside other separatist lesbian political cells spotted across the country. The *Furies Collective* formed a lesbian-only commune in Washington, DC, and produced a monthly newspaper by the same name (*The Furies* 1972-73). The *Gutter Dykes Collective* in Berkley, California, the *Gorgons* in Seattle, the *CLIT Collective*, the *Furies*, and *Separatists Enraged Proud and Strong* (SEPS) in San Francisco, the *Collective Lesbian International Terrors* (CLIT Collective) in New York City appeared, alongside outposts of Womyn's Land in rural locations all over the US and Canada. Also termed wimmin's land, lesbian land, or landdyke communities, these were countercultural spaces for lesbians only. These organizations emerged to give voice to "their outrage at the erasure and/or the dismissal of lesbian

---

[182] Radicalesbians, "The Woman-Identified Woman" (1970), *History is a Weapon*, retrieved from https://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/radicalesbianswoman.html.
[183] Ibid., 2.
[184] Ibid., 4.

issues inside the women's movement, gay liberation and the new left."[185] This represented a new wave of largely white, middle-class, urban and college-educated lesbian feminists set out to mobilize a movement, albeit an exclusive one. Some communities questioned whether activists' male children were welcome, and based on essentialist notions of sex, transwomen were explicitly excluded. As Becki Ross explains, transwomen were deemed "undesirable invaders of lesbian culture…"[186]

The concept of the 'woman-identified-woman' was an appealing one to feminist separatists as well. They joined these communities as proud lesbian feminists, declaring lesbianism a political choice—an orientation toward women intended to overthrow the patriarchal order. Likewise, they looked to redefine physical, social, and cultural space by separating from men. Some feminists even urged separation into women-only communities, understanding this as the logical extension of their arguments advocating an end to male domination. They cultivated feminist political strategies, such as symbolic protests and rewriting patriarchal language (i.e. writing 'women' as wimmin, womon, or womyn), expanding the definition of sex away from heterosexual intercourse, and empowerment through lesbian culture. They elevated sexuality in the sense that, by refusing sex with men, lesbians were viewed as the ultimate patriarchal resister, and yet sexuality was seemingly inescapable from the confines of patriarchy. Lesbianism was viewed as a political choice rather than a sexual identity. By 'choosing' lesbianism, 'woman-identified' women empowered themselves and created a space free from male domination. This redefinition of lesbianism in cultural and political terms led to the rise of lesbian feminism.

---

[185] Becki Ross, "The House that Jill Built: Lesbian Feminist Organizing in Toronto, 1976-1980," *Feminist Review* 35 (Summer 1990): 75.
[186] Ibid., 80.

For activist lesbians in Canada, who were at once politicized queer feminists, the need for sexual liberation loomed large. They were trying to find their place in Canada and navigated three different trajectories. So, where should they expel their energy? The first option was to align with the gay liberation movement, but as we saw in the previous section, this would come at the expense of their identity as women (who were also racialized, transgender, poor and working-class, mothers, and feminists). The second option was to align with the women's liberation movement to create and sustain separate women-only communities. In this, lesbians were marginalized, then briefly centred. In the final part of this chapter, we unpack how lesbian feminists coopted 'lesbianism' by deeming it a political, but not sexual, identity. As Faderman explains, "the new lesbian-feminists, many of whom had spent all their previous adult years as exclusively heterosexual, now saw homosexuality as the highest form of love and heterosexuality as a sign of female masochism."[187] But for many, woman-loving did not extend to the bedroom. The third option is addressed in the next chapter, as they evolved into an autonomous lesbian movement.

Building a Movement

The 1970s saw a proliferation of feminist periodicals published across Canada and many provided space for lesbians within their pages. *The Pedestal* (1969-1975) was Canada's first feminist periodical, launched in 1969 as the voice of the Vancouver Women's Caucus, a women's liberation group most famous for initiating the abortion caravan that shut down Canada's Parliament for the first time in the country's history.[188] In its last year of publication, the periodical was taken over by the Lesbian Caucus of the British Columbia Federation of Women.[189] First published in 1970, the Toronto Women's Caucus newspaper *Velvet Fist* (1970-1972) broke new

[187] Faderman, *Odd Girls*, 205.
[188] See: "Pedestal," *Rise Up: A Digital Archive of Feminist Activism*, retrieved from riseupfeministarchive.ca.
[189] Ross, "Tracking Lesbian Speech," 173-185.

ground by including lesbian content.[190] In 1972, a group of women formed *Montréal Gay Women* after splitting from *Gay McGill* because the organization was too "male-dominated."[191] In 1973, they began publishing *Long Time Coming* (1973-1976), the first regularly published English-language lesbian periodical in Canada. *Long Time Coming* produced 20 issues and had a readership that stretched across North America, but "in a testament to the times, none of the women involved allowed her real name to be published."[192] *The Other Woman* (1972-1977), published in Toronto, also had a number of lesbians involved in its production, including Pat Leslie, a frequent contributor to *The Body Politic*, as well as Chris Fox, Adrienne Potts, and Eve Zaremba. *Branching Out* (1973-1980), published in Edmonton, was the only national feminist magazine published in Canada during the 1970s. It featured original fiction, poetry, photography, artwork, and articles; Jane Rule was a frequent contributor.[193] *Kinesis* (Vancouver 1974-2001) published by Vancouver Status of Women, was the longest-running feminist periodical in Canada and was widely read by lesbians and devoted considerable coverage to lesbian concerns.[194] *Lesbian Perspective* (1977-1980) was a monthly newsletter published by the *Lesbian Organization of Toronto* (LOOT); it included LOOT's regular activities as well as articles of broader significance to the lesbian community in Toronto. *Fireweed* (1978-2002) was a feminist literary magazine published in Toronto, popular with lesbians. The first issue of *Lesbian/Lesbienne* (1979-1980) was published in 1979 by a collective of Toronto and Kitchener lesbians; it was a more overtly political paper and in the first issue included articles on the Canadian Women's Movement Archives and lesbians within the women's movement.[195] *Broadside* (1979-1989) was published in Toronto by a

[190] Warner, *Never Going Back*.
[191] Ross, "Tracking Lesbian Speech," 175.
[192] Warner *Never Going Back*, 83.
[193] Tessa Jordan, "*Branching Out*: Second-Wave Feminist Periodicals and the Archive of Canadian Women's Writing," *English Studies in Canada*, 36, no. 2-3 (2010): 63-90.
[194] Warner *Never Going Back*.
[195] Ross, "Tracking Lesbian Speech."

collective of women who referred to themselves as radical feminists.[196] Many of the women who contributed to *Broadside* had ongoing debates with those who wrote for *The Body Politic*; these debates played out in the letters section as well as within feature articles.

During this time, lesbians were also contributing more regularly to *The Body Politic* and by 1977 we start to see far more consistency in women's participation. Some had recurrent feature columns, others regularly wrote articles and reviews, and increasingly, they reported on news events and became collective members. Interchanging groups of five to ten women contributed to each issue, with recurrent figures such as Maida Thilchen, Helen Sonthoff, Sherrill Cheda, Jane Rule, Jean Kowalewski, Judith Crewe, Ilona Laney, Lily Wood, Gay Bell, Mariana Valverde, Lorna Weir, Donna Kaye, and Chris Bearchell. Women consisted of one-sixth to one-third of the authors in most issues. Their participation was greater still in the *Supplemental Issues*, later titled *Our Image*, which were included in the journal every few months beginning in 1976.[197] The supplementals included reviews of lesbian and gay representation in books, film, theatre, music, academia, and mainstream media, and one-third to half of the reviewers were women. The significance of this is in the cultural value of the supplemental sections. Through these reviews, activist lesbians publicized work by other queer women, reviewed lesbian erotica in books and film, and problematized misrepresentations of lesbianism in academic textbooks and mainstream materials. In other words, they elevated each other's work and spoke back to the voices that were speaking about them.

Another major component of *The Body Politic* was the news coverage columns, which began in 1976.[198] They were crucial in raising awareness of protests, police brutality, and current

[196] See: "Broadside," *Rise Up: A Digital Archive of Feminist Activism*, retrieved from riseupfeministarchive.ca.
[197] See: *The Body Politic*, no. 22 (January/February 1976).
[198] See: *The Body Politic*, no. 23 (March/April 1976).

events around the world. Initially, they were entirely dominated by men, and mostly Toronto-based. As this section gained prominence, with increasing numbers of correspondents overall, Rosemary Ray began contributing regularly from Edmonton.[199] By 1979, there was a significant upsurge in women correspondents, with Elizabeth Bolton from Montréal, Chris Bearchell, and later Fay Orr, and then, Elinor Mahoney, Brenda Steiger, Barbara Harding, Debbie Bloomfield, Marcia Gillespie, and Enda Barker, all from Toronto. Participation increased among collective members as well. In the final issue of 1978, Chris Bearchell and Mariana Valverde joined the collective, where Valverde would remain until the following year, and Bearchell until the final publication, despite her attempted resignation in 1984 (resignation letter in Bearchell's personal file at the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives; this is discussed further in chapter eight).[200]

These women tried to make space for lesbian content in what was perceived by many as an inhospitable space. Aside from Bearchell, no other woman would be on the collective until 1983. She consistently bridged divides between liberationists and feminists within the journal. There would only be one issue in which the majority of contributors were women—the *Women's Special Issue*, published in 1979.[201] But even the process of putting together the *Women's Special Issue* was tense. Alongside the table of contents, the collective editorial article opened with: "The process of producing this issue, though, has not been a smooth one…The fact that this issue exists at all testifies to the spirit of co-operation that moved the committee, despite substantial political differences."[202] The Women's Issue Committee echoed this sentiment in their own editorial piece adjacent to the collective's. They wrote, "Because lesbians and gay men have two distinct cultures, there are times in the development of the gay movement when we have to pause to explain to each

[199] See: *The Body Politic*, no. 39-54 (December 1977-July 1979).
[200] See: *The Body Politic*, no. 49 (December/January 1978/79).
[201] See: *The Body Politic*, no. 57 (October 1979).
[202] Editorial Collective, "Special Collectivities," *The Body Politic*, no. 57 (October 1979): 3.

other what we're about."[203] The outpouring of material sent to the collective for publication, which far exceeded the space available to print it, was a testament to women's interest in participating in *The Body Politic*. Both parties expressed hope that this was the beginning of ongoing collaboration and dialogue.

The Feminist 'Issue'

In October 1979, *The Body Politic* published the *Commemorative Feminist Issue* to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the declaration of women as "persons" in Canadian law. The idea was first conceived at the Bi-National Lesbian Conference in 1979 when women from *The Body Politic* announced that as part of their ongoing campaign to increase lesbian and feminist coverage they would launch a special feminist issue. The issue opened with: "The Body Politic collective turned over editorial control of its features section to an autonomous group of women. This group went about generating a series of articles that reflected the diversity of the lesbian and feminist movements in Canada…"[204] The Women's Special Issue Committee described the issue as, "the product of the efforts of women from all layers of the lesbian movement. We're immigrant and native-born, mothers and daughters, prostitutes and social workers, ex-mental patients and athletes."[205] The Committee's feature article opened with a critique that despite legally removing the official status of women as 'non-persons', formal changes in law had had a minimal impact on women's lives. They pointed out that women were earning 60 percent of men's income, with higher rates of unemployment and sex-segregated work opportunities, with little job security and few benefits. Meanwhile, nearly half of women in the workforce were sole supporters of families.

---

[203] Francie Wyland, Dorothy Kidd, Ellen Agger, Chris, Melinda, Gayle, Freda, Jenner, *The Lesbian Mothers' Defence Fund*; Sharon Hohner, Jude Lemieux, Robin Tyler; Baba Yaga, *The Committee Against Street Harassment*; Susan White, *Wages Due Lesbians Winnipeg*, "Special Collectivities," *The Body Politic*, no. 57 (October 1979): 3.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.

All of this was compounded by cutbacks to social services, and the general devaluation of their work, in both the workforce and familial sphere. The articles in the special issue were topically diverse. One gave an overview of therapeutic approaches (such as psychoanalysis and psychiatry) and commonly prescribed drugs (tranquilizers and lithium), while the next addressed theology and feminist fables. Others addressed gay liberation, motherhood and custody rights, and harassment of sex workers. The tone of this issue revealed that these topics, so relevant to women, were far removed from the agenda of the gay liberation movement, at least as it was playing out in *The Body Politic*.

What we see here is how women centered class and gender-based issues that were largely overlooked in *The Body Politic*, with its male-dominated focus and organization that prioritized individual rights and sexual freedom. Having said that, women's contributions to the journal, including the *Special Issue*, show that women did not have a unified vision amongst themselves, but held varying values, priorities, and politics. The debate between gay liberationists and feminists is often presented as one that falls along a female/male divide. My analysis demonstrates, however, that the tension was over the goals and purpose of liberatory politics, and women and men fell on both sides of these polarized positions. Moreover, a focus on activist lesbian discourse demonstrates a third political trajectory, that also included gay male feminists. As they worked to claim a space for women within the gay liberation movement and journal, they simultaneously came up against a shifting feminist terrain, one that was appropriating lesbian identity and narrowing feminist frameworks in which to seek sexual freedom. In the following sections, I trace the emergence of lesbian feminism, and its view of women's liberatory politics. This subsequently sparked tension and debate amongst gay liberationists, some of whom came to disavow feminism

altogether. Throughout, I trace the views of activist lesbians in navigating the debates within both camps, while attending to coalition politics between them.

Lesbian Feminism: *"We are angry, not gay"*

During the 1960s, the Women's Liberation Movement was "full of lesbians" but their concerns were low on the movement's agenda.[206] Feminism had long been scorned as "a fertile breeding ground for lesbianism" and many movement leaders, including Friedan, worried that any association with lesbianism would impede political progress.[207] Yet by the early-1970s, the rise of lesbian feminism shifted the parameters of lesbian identity. All feminists were urged to become 'women-identified', and lesbians "came to be regarded as the quintessence of feminism."[208] Charlotte Bunch, cofounder of *The Furies Collective*, states in 1972: "The woman-identified woman commits herself to other women for political, emotional, physical, and economic support."[209] As Ti-Grace Atkinson famously put it, "Feminism is the theory, lesbianism the practice."[210] Suddenly lesbianism was more than sexual practice, it was a lifestyle. In 1972, Sidney Abbott and Barbara Love proclaim, "Lesbianism is a way of living…"[211] Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon explain, a "Lesbian is a woman whose primary erotic, psychological, emotional and social interest is in a member of her own sex, even though that interest may not be overtly expressed."[212] No longer considered a deviant pathology—it was a choice, a form of resistance, a revolutionary

[206] Sheila Jeffreys, *Unpacking Queer Politics: A Lesbian Feminist Perspective* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), 18.
[207] Faderman, *Odd Girls*, 205.
[208] Ibid., 206.
[209] Charlotte Bunch, "Lesbians in Revolt," *The Furies: Lesbian/Feminist Monthly* 1 (January 2000): 8.
[210] Ti-Grace Atkinson, *Amazon Odyssey: Collection of Writing* (New York: Link Books, 1974).
[211] Sidney Abbott and Barbara Love, *Sappho Was A Right-On Woman: A Liberation View of Lesbianism* (New York: Stein & Day, 1972).
[212] Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, *Lesbian/Woman* (Virginia: Glide Publications, 1972), 1.

political stance. Lesbians were now "the vanguard of the resistance."[213] "And the best news was that any woman could embrace it."[214]

The basis of lesbian feminism was woman-loving, and this was essential in redefining lesbian identity. Any woman could embrace lesbianism because it was not necessarily, or "merely," sexual.[215] As Jill Johnson explains, "The word lesbian has expanded so much through political definition that it should no longer refer exclusively to a woman simply in sexual relation to another woman. … The word is now a generic term signifying activism and resistance and the envisioned goal of a woman committed state."[216] As a result, lesbianism was largely stripped of its sexual element. Becki Ross states, "In the haze of women-identified solidarity there was little room for discussion of lesbian sexual pleasure, practice and/or fantasy." [217] When lesbian sexuality *was* discussed, it was always in relation to a critique of heterosexuality, and lesbian sex came to be viewed as the only politically acceptable sexual practice, a model for describing good sex for women. As Diane Richardson writes, "This evoked a particular representation of lesbian sex. It was sex that was reciprocal, non-oppressive, equal, less goal orientated, non-penetrative or genitally focused."[218] Indeed, sex was not the point of lesbianism. In the article, "Nobody Needs to Get Fucked," Barbara Lipschutz writes that "Lesbianism is, among other things, touching other women – through dancing, playing soccer, hugging, holding hands, kissing. An aspect of sexual liberation is freeing the libido from the tyranny of orgasm seeking. Sometimes hugging is nicer."[219]

---

[213] Johnston, *Lesbian Nation*.
[214] Faderman, *Odd Girls*, 206.
[215] Jane Gerhard, *Desiring Revolution: Second-Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of American Sexual Thought, 1920-1982* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 111.
[216] Johnston, *Lesbian Nation.*
[217] Ross, *The House that Jill Built*, 66.
[218] Diane Richardson, "Constructing Lesbian Sexualities," in Feminism and Sexuality: A Reader, ed. Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 283.
[219] Barbara Lipschutz, "Nobody Needs to Get Fucked," *Lesbian Voices*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1975): 57.

For lesbian feminists, escaping heterosexuality would free women from patriarchal oppression, but this did not necessarily mean that women were embracing homosexuality. In an article in *The Body Politic*, Sally Gearhart explained, "I like to think that the world today is the way all women were before the tyranny of the patriarchy."[220] She continued, "More and more woman-identified women are emerging every day. More and more lesbians. It's not that more and more women are leaping into bed with each other. … that's not the distinguishing characteristic of a lesbian. Lesbianism is a life-style, a mind-set, a body of experiences."[221] For Gearhart, any woman-identified woman was a lesbian; sexual relationships among women were not required. This article stands out in *The Body Politic*, as it is the only one written from an explicitly lesbian feminist perspective. Activist lesbians would quickly critique this emergent lesbian feminist presence and its impact on lesbian community, culture, and sexuality.

Activist Lesbians: *"I'm angry and gay"*

Those who had long identified as lesbians began to question this expanded meaning of the term within the feminist movement. In the very next issue of *The Body Politic*, Jeanne Cordova wrote,

> Although I have been a lesbian for seven years and used to think I knew what being a lesbian meant, I must admit over the last year the feminist interpretation of lesbianism has thrown my political activity in the gay, lesbian, and feminist movement into a quandary. Recently a friend whom I call a nouveau lesbian (because she recently came into lesbianism from heterosexuality via the Women's Movement) told me, "A lesbian is not a homosexual." Last week I read a button put out by a radical feminist/lesbian collective which read, 'we are angry, not gay'.[222]

Indeed, for some, an overemphasis on lesbianism as a 'choice' undermined many important aspects of lesbian sexuality and desire. And for many, lesbian feminism misrepresented the multiple

[220] Sally Gearhart, "The Lesbian and God-The-Father," *The Body Politic*, no. 16 (November/December 1974): 12.
[221] Ibid.
[222] Cordova, "What's a Woman to do?", 11.

oppressions experienced by lesbians in their daily lives. Cordova explained, "I still remember my father throwing my short haired lover out of the house and saying, 'Don't you ever bring a woman *like that* in this house again.'" She also recalled classmates in her Abnormal Psychology classes saying, "We ought to take all those dykes and faggots and shoot'em." Cordova wrote, "I guess that means I remember what it means to be *homosexual* in this society."[223] Cordova continued to discuss lesbians' experience within the gay and feminist communities, and the internal tensions that it brought. She wrote, "I am tired of telling my gay 'brothers', '*No*. You can't do that women'. I am tired of telling my straight and lesbian feminist sisters, 'I'm angry *and gay*.' Sometimes I think my sisters who have found loving another woman through the rosy glow of a woman identified supportive Women's Movement, forgot—or never learned—loving another woman is *also* being queer."[224]

"Sexual courage"

Lesbian feminists critiqued the conservative, assimilationist respectability of the *Daughters of Bilitis* and similar homophile groups of the 1950s and 1960s. Butch/femme lesbians were described as old-fashioned and backwards, their relationships attacked as heterosexual mimicry and working-class.[225] Anything resembling heterosexuality was condemned and anything connoting 'maleness' was suspect. Lesbian feminism promised alternatives to patriarchal culture and so much of what defined butch/femme culture came under attack. Becki Ross writes, "…in keeping with a desire to forget or at least smudge the memories of earlier lesbian struggles, new lesbians advocated the rupture of ties to the 'ugly heterosexual mockery' of the butch/femme bar

[223] Ibid.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Connie Carter and J. Bobby Noble, "Butch, Femme, and the Woman-Identified Woman: Ménage-à-trois of the '90s?," *Canadian Woman Studies* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 25.

culture gay women built in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s."[226] Lesbian bar culture was also criticized alongside this shift in lesbian community. For example, among postings in *The Body Politic* for various events in Toronto, a short notice inviting lesbians to potluck suppers, in order to avoid bar culture: "Why take pot luck at the bars when you can do it in the comfort of your own home? … No fee, no grand romances or dating games, just food, good conversation and a great place to make friends."[227] Many lesbians, however, were not looking to make friends at potlucks; they were seeking lovers, as well as political allies who understood the centrality of homosexuality to their experience as women. This desexualization of lesbianism had lasting effects, as many elements of lesbian culture from previous decades came under attack.

Activist lesbians spoke back to the critiques of butch/femme culture that was so crucial to many lesbian communities over the previous several decades. Joan Nestle's article in *The Body Politic* "Butch/fem and sexual courage" challenged the portrayal of butch/femme relationships as phony heterosexual replicas, and instead, posits them as complex erotic statements. She explained that these relationships were deeply coded with language of stance, dress, gesture, loving, courage, and autonomy. Nestle wrote that everything from hairstyle to the way she held her cigarette was meaningful, "I know this all sounds superficial, but all these gestures were a style of self-presentation that made erotic competence a political statement in the 1950s."[228] For Nestle, lesbians from the 1950s made a mistake in the early 1970s: they allowed their lives to be trivialized and reinterpreted by feminists who did not share their culture. Nestle felt compelled to write about the old times, not to romanticize butch-femme relationships but to salvage an important period of

[226] Ross, "The House that Jill Built," 76.
[227] Potluck Suppers, "Lesbians get potluck," *The Body Politic*, no. 68 (November 1980): 12.
[228] Nestle, "Butch/Fem," 29.

lesbian culture, a time that has been too easily dismissed as the decade of self-hatred. She concluded,

> My butch-fem sensibility also incorporates the wisdom of freaks. When we broke gender lines in the 1950s, we fell off biologically charted maps. One day many years ago, as I was walking through Central Park, a group of cheerful straight people walked past me and said, "What shall we feed it?" The "it" has never left my consciousness. A butch woman in her fifties reminisced the other day about when she was stoned in Washington Square Park for wearing men's clothes. These searing experiences of marginality because of sexual style are crucial lessons.[229]

From her view, lesbian feminism had taken a radical, sexual, political statement of the 1950s and reframed it as a reactionary, non-feminist experience. By erasing lesbian culture and history, lesbian feminism not only reframed gender codes, but also challenged sexual expression central to lesbian and queer identity.

"Feminist closetry"

Feminism had provided an alternative to, and an analysis of, the emerging gay liberation movement. Lesbian feminists were drawn in small numbers from gay liberation and lesbian subcultures, but mostly they came from the more educated, middle-class ranks of the women's liberation movement. For Bearchell, lesbianism was certainly political, but she remained critical of the "daydream of converting all women to love each other."[230] She articulated the privileged position of choosing lesbianism. She wrote, "a woman today who embraces lesbianism is far from being a step closer to liberation by that very act, rather, she becomes subject to an additional form of oppression from the world in which she must survive."[231] And while lesbianism was being touted as a beneficial position from which to counter patriarchy, Bearchell contended that lesbianism did not offer an advantaged position, much to the contrary, "The dyke who thinks that

---

[229] Ibid.
[230] Chris Bearchell, "Lesbianism in the Women's Movement," *The Body Politic* no. 22 (January/February, 1976): 5.
[231] Ibid.

every *real* feminist is a lesbian never has to call herself a lesbian – never has to face Mom, Dad, the CBC and the Toronto *Sun* as anyone other than a feminist. Because she speaks for all women, she never has to speak for herself."[232] She was highly critical of the "practitioners of feminist closetry" who were quick to critique 'heterosexual privilege' but maintain public profiles that did nothing but uphold this privilege. For Bearchell, lesbian feminism was problematic because it encouraged lesbians to remain in the closet. On the one hand, lesbian feminists "created a gay positive environment that has allowed a whole generation of women to come out of the closet through the feminist movement."[233] And yet, they hid their sexuality "behind a cloak of feminism."[234] She explained, "Most lesbian feminists have been lesbian in private and feminist in public. They claim they don't want to jeopardize feminism by coming out, but they've tended to ignore criticisms from gay liberationists, who say that being in the closet, and staying there for fear of soiling someone else's good name, is self-oppressive."[235]

"No one gives up power willingly"

Many feminists and gay men saw little hope for unity, while other feminist lesbians continued working within the gay liberation movement, highlighting obvious alliances between these groups and important connections with feminism. In "The Politics of Powerless" Johanna Stuckey explained that because radical feminism addressed power relationships in society, feminism was relevant to gay men. Indeed, radical feminism and gay liberation were fighting the same enemy: patriarchy. Stuckey wrote, "they too are victims of the power systems of patriarchy! … Gay men and Radical Feminists should be natural allies, for we are fighting a common

[232] Chris Bearchell, "The Cloak of Feminism," *The Body Politic*, no. 53 (June 1979): 20.
[233] Chris Bearchell, "Bar-Hopping," *The Body Politic*, no. 77 (October 1981): 25.
[234] Bearchell, "The Cloak of Feminism."
[235] Chris Bearchell, "The Closet and the Umbrella," *The Body Politic*, no. 81 (March 1982): 7.

enemy."[236] For her, gay men, lesbians, and radical feminists are "constant reminders that the prevailing myths of patriarchy are not working—that socialization is not always effective, that masculinity and femininity are very fragile human constructs, and that heterosexual marriage and the nuclear family are in question. Together the two groups could be a pretty powerful force for change."[237] She asked: could such an alliance ever occur? Perhaps, if gay men were willing to give up some power—but she concluded, "no one gives up power willingly."[238]

Indeed, in "Gay men's feminist mistake" Brian Mossop challenged the prevailing assumption of feminism's "special relevance" to gay men.[239] Mossop strongly disagreed with this argument. For him, "Feminism simply does not address these immediate concerns of gay men."[240] At the time, feminists were demanding stronger pornography laws, while denouncing gay SM and intergenerational relationships as manifestations of male violence and power. For many gay men, this was incompatible with gay liberation goals. As Mossop reduced feminist analysis to this one extreme faction, albeit a dominant one, he understated the relevance of feminism for gay *women's* liberation.

Lesbians were questioning whether they should continue contributing energy to gay liberation or focus on women's liberation instead. Some lesbians wanted to keep working within gay liberation and wanted to demand more space within *The Body Politic*, others wanted to publish a lesbian specific magazine.[241] Lesbians were contributing to various periodicals, such as *Fireweed* and *Broadside*, while *The Body Politic* became a political hotbed that divided many activist lesbians. Some continued to contribute to the journal, citing important alliances between lesbians,

---

[236] Johanna Stuckey, "The Politics of Powerlessness," *The Body Politic*, no. 63 (May 1980): 29.
[237] Ibid.
[238] Ibid.
[239] Brian Mossop, "Gay Men's Feminist Mistake," *The Body Politic*, no. 67 (October 1980): 32.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Val Edwards, "Lesbians in Toronto: The Invisible Community," *Broadside: A Feminist Review* 1, no. 10 (September 1980): 4-5, retrieved from http://www.broadsidefeminist.com/images/issues/Broadside0110.pdf.

feminists, and gay men; but many more came to question a movement that failed to fight for gender equality. In "Feminism and Gay Liberation," Lorna Weir and Eve Zaremba discussed these ongoing tensions. According to them, within gay liberation, women's issues were downplayed as 'straight'—reproductive freedom, daycare, equal pay, even rape. These were perceived as not of personal concern to most lesbians, who, according to this logic, faced more discrimination as lesbians than as women. So, as Weir and Zaremba argued, "… any reluctance on the part of lesbians to identify with gay liberation or any preference for a more inclusive feminist analysis is viewed as a sort of perverse female chauvinistic separatism: a myopic inability to recognize mutuality of interest with gay people."[242]

Of course, relations between feminists, lesbians, and gay men had long been problematic. For Weir and Zaremba, as gay liberation shifted its focus solely to sexual liberation, it had become deradicalized. As such, the shared political terrain of liberation for women and gay people was shrinking. Gay liberation's defense of pornography, intergenerational sex, public sex, and SM combined with "a harsh criticism of feminist sexual politics" was making it difficult for lesbians and feminists to remain aligned with the movement.[243] They explained, "They see no compelling reason to waste precious female energy pulling gay nuts out of the fire by supporting dubious male issues such as pedophilia, public sex, or pornography." They continued, "Some are frankly uncomfortable with the 'flaunting it' extravagances of gay male style…"[244] Here we see the homophobia among feminists, to which many gay liberationists (both male and female) were reacting.

[242] Lorna Weir and Eve Zaremba, "Boys and Girls Together: Feminism and Gay Liberation," *Broadside: A Feminist Review* 4, no. 1 (October 1982): 6, retrieved from www.broadside/feminist.com/images/issues/Broadside0401.pdf.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Ibid.

"Stand back for the fireworks"

These tensions culminated at the New Year's Eve benefit dance and dinner for *Broadside*, Womynly Way Productions (a feminist concert production company), and Mama Quilla II ("the hottest almost-all-women's band in town") at Toronto Dance Theatre at the end of 1981.[245] Bearchell snidely remarked, "Book a small, ugly hall. Allow minor organizational and communication problems to percolate for a couple of weeks. Sell tickets to anyone who wants to come – including men. Add a sprinkling of lesbian separatists. And stand back for the fireworks."[246] What was the problem? Men were invited. As Bearchell explained, once it was clear that conflict was brewing, the organizers decided not to sell any more tickets to men. In the leadup to the event, lesbian feminists (also termed separatists) used various tactics, including harassing the event's organizers and sponsors, and picketing on the evening of the event, to prevent men from attending. In the end, men did not attend. For Bearchell, this was detrimental to lesbian visibility, and revealed profound political divisions amongst feminists. She wrote, "The feminist movement has grown by division, diversifying as it spread beyond the intellectuals and radicals among whom it began. There is no one true feminist position on any given issue, never mind a complete programme for feminist revolution. There has never even been agreement among feminists as to who the enemy is…"[247]

As I traced in this chapter, the initial assimilationist strategies of the early homophile movement, and the lack of critical progress that this brought, compelled a more radical politics. Focus turned to the transformation of core facets and institutions of life, namely the sanctity of the nuclear family, along with the attendant rigidity and inequality of gender roles, and moralization

[245] Chris Bearchell, "The Closet and the Umbrella," *The Body Politic*, no. 81 (March 1982): 7.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Ibid.

of sexual expression. *The Body Politic* encapsulated this radical politics, and simultaneously reproduced a microcosm of social oppression, whereby lesbians soon identified patriarchal patterns within. As the singular focus on sexual freedom overshadowed gender inequality, and other issues directly relevant to lesbians, women themselves would grow divided on their approach to liberation. Some gay liberationists cast feminism as irrelevant, and even damaging to gay liberation goals, while lesbian feminists responded to patriarchal oppression by rejecting men entirely. Both overlooked the voices of activist lesbians who saw themselves at once deeply entangled in both patriarchal and anti-gay oppression.

In this chapter, I have highlighted the voices of activist lesbians, so often overlooked in the historical narratives that polarize debates between feminists and gay liberationists. This is not to suggest that activist lesbians were mediators or moderate in their approach, indeed, they were, from my view, the most radical. They maintained radical liberatory politics, attuned to the marginalization of women within gay liberation, as well as lesbianism within women's liberation. I have focused on the exclusion of activist lesbians from the gay liberation movement and the usurping of lesbianism by lesbian feminists, in order to set the backdrop against which activist lesbian politics took shape. During this same period, activist lesbians were forming an autonomous lesbian movement. They were organizing independently from gay men and feminists, holding conferences and demonstrations, and founding lesbian organizations. It is the rise of this movement that I turn to in the next chapter, and as we will see, many of the same problems will resurface and threaten the sustainability of the autonomous lesbian movement.

Chapter Five

The Rise of the Autonomous Lesbian Movement

This chapter begins with the 1974 case of the Brunswick Four, one of the most important cases of police harassment of the period. I situate this incident of police discrimination against a group of lesbians, and its ensuing trials and press coverage, as a crucial turning point in the lesbian and gay movement. I locate this moment as an overlooked flashpoint in historical accounts of political consciousness-raising and a turn toward radical militancy, including the emergence of the autonomous lesbian movement. Within historical accounts, this incident is reduced to a page or footnote, if referenced at all, and instead, the 1981 Toronto bathhouse raids are cited as the moment of radicalization within the Canadian lesbian and gay liberation movement.[248] Lesbian-centred events in history are often made invisible, absented from the narrative of queer activism, and Canadian culture more broadly. Lesbians have long been fighting for their place in movement history, constantly pushing back against these absenting forces. My work centres these narratives and traces the long trajectory of lesbian organizing both within gay liberation and beyond. This work is part of a marginal but emerging body of literature seeking to fill gaps and build new knowledge about the liberation movement, the communities they fostered, and how they are interwoven within the cultural and political fabric of society.

Within the homophile movement, lesbians and gay men pushed for assimilation within dominant institutions in an effort to gain respectability and acceptance. By contrast, the lesbian and gay liberation movement demanded "an end to sexual regulation and the monopoly of the compulsory family system."[249] At this juncture, economically privileged and predominantly white

[248] See: Kinsman, *The Regulation of Desire*.
[249] Alan Sears, "Queer Anti-Capitalism: What's Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?" *Science & Society* 69, no.1 (2005): 96.

gay men focused on sexual liberation. From the perspective of those who were multiply marginalized, this freedom necessitated an understanding of gender, class, and race-based inequalities. These oppressive societal structures prevented women, trans folks, people of colour, people living with disabilities or in poverty, from focusing on sexual freedom. As activist lesbians felt marginalized within the liberationist movement, they started to carve out their own spaces, specific to their social locations as women, queer, often poor or working-class, and sometimes racialized, and focused on developing coalition politics and a radical reimagining of the social order.

In the previous chapter we saw that throughout the early-1970s, lesbians were fighting for a place within the gay liberation movement. The current chapter highlights the rise of lesbian pride, whereby activists began pushing back against invisibility with greater militancy and moved towards autonomous organizing. As activists focused on the structural inequalities most pertinent to lesbians, the relevance of both the gay and women's liberation movements came under scrutiny; lesbians confronted sexism within the former and heterosexism in the latter. They recognized the strength of their collective power and solidarity and forged a unique space of their own. As we will see in this chapter, a series of lesbian-centred conferences in the mid-1970s facilitated mobilization and community building. Through the establishment of lesbian-specific organizations, activist lesbians developed and articulated an analysis of their oppression, and strategies to fight it.

Some of this momentum was short-lived as lesbians quickly found themselves in conflict over crucial problems—the meaning of lesbian identity, the role of the state in gender and sexual liberation, among other ideological and political cleavages that could not be overcome. Several issues related to sexual expression and activity set the platform for the emergence of a set of

divisive debates, referred to interchangeably as the ‘feminist sex wars’ or the ‘lesbian sex wars’, which only culminated in the 1980s (chapter six). This would polarize lesbians into one of two camps and reframe alliances accordingly: anti-pornography or pro-sex. The former came to be known as ‘lesbian feminism.’ They focused on eradicating violence against women, which was for them, epitomized in pornography, and achieved through state censorship and other protective measures. The latter, framed as ‘gay liberationism’, was acutely attentive to (non-normative) sexuality, including the negative and widespread effects of homophobic state censorship. As we will see in this chapter, the result of this particularly divisive debate led to the demise of the autonomous lesbian movement. Nonetheless, it remains a crucial, albeit brief, moment in our understanding of both feminist and queer histories. The perspectives of lesbian feminists remain central to the academic and collective memory of feminist histories, and the role of gay male activists in the canon of gay liberation. My analysis situates activist lesbians as an influential counterpoint within both feminist and queer histories.

This chapter is subdivided into three parts. In the first, I trace lesbian organizing during the mid-1970s that gave rise to the autonomous lesbian movement. The bulk of this history is documented between 1974-1980 in *The Body Politic*, and this entry point offers insight to a much-overlooked perspective of activist lesbians determined to remain aligned with gay liberation. Much of this history is overwritten, as lesbian feminism dominates the narrative of lesbian organizing during this time period. Within the autonomous movement, lesbians grappled with their stance on pornography, censorship, and age of consent. These largely theoretical debates, outlined in the second section, created irreparable schisms within the autonomous movement. In the final section, I locate strategies deployed by activist lesbians to maintain an autonomous identity, crucial allies, and direction forward. Preluding these sections, I introduce the *Brunswick Four*, who symbolize

an impetus moment that solidified lesbian identity, and amid multiple social events, helped propel autonomous organizing.

"I Enjoy Being a Dyke": The Brunswick Four

On January 5, 1974, Adrienne Potts, Pat Murphy, Sue Wells, and Heather Elizabeth Beyer performed a song on amateur night, "A night when anything goes," at the Brunswick House tavern in Toronto. They sang an original composition, a revised version of "I Enjoy Being a Girl" by Rodgers and Hammerstein. Their rendition directly challenged the unwanted male attention they were receiving at the bar that night, exemplified in this verse: "When I see a man who's sexist and does something that I don't like, I just tell him that he can Fuck Off, I enjoy being a Dyke!"[250] Though the crowd cheered them on, the manager disconnected the microphone mid-performance and ordered them to leave the bar, and when they refused, he phoned the police. The manager later claimed that he feared that the women, "seething with unrest," were stirring up "a riot" in his tavern.[251] The women, later described by the press as *The Brunswick Four*, were dragged from the bar by eight uniformed police officers, loaded into a police van, and taken to the station. It was reported in *The Body Politic* that in the process of arrest, both Murphy and Beyer sustained injuries, and at the station, all of them were verbally harassed by police and denied the right to contact a lawyer. They were not charged with any crime and eventually they were released. In reaction to the discrimination they had experienced, they refused to leave the police station. The police officers forcibly evicted them, punching Potts in the back of the head and throwing her to the ground.[252]

[250] Gay Almanac, "Today in 1974: The Brunswick Four Arrested in Toronto," last modified January 5, 2018, http://www.thegayalmanac.com/2018/01/today-in-1974-brunswick-four-arrested.html.
[251] Michael Riordon, "Gay Woman Recounts Police Violence," *The Body Politic*, no. 18 (May/June 1975): 8.
[252] "Uppity Women," *The Body Politic*, no. 12 (March/April 1974): 1.

They returned to the Brunswick House hoping to find witnesses, but were met by two uniformed police officers, two bouncers, and two plainclothes detectives. Again, they were tossed in an unmarked car and taken back to the station. During the five hours of processing their paperwork, police officers amused themselves with remarks such as, "I bet you drive a tug boat" and "Did you ever put your finger in a Dyke?"[253] In the end, three of the *Brunswick Four* were charged; two were acquitted, while Potts served three months of probation. The three would go on to charge the arresting officers with assault; they were ultimately acquitted.

The incident galvanized the lesbian and gay community in Toronto, much like the consciousness-raising that followed the Stonewall Inn protests in New York in 1969. It revealed the experiences of discrimination that so many lesbians and gay men were facing, and mobilized Toronto's queer community against police harassment. A new militant consciousness took root as lesbians and gay men resolved to fight back and resist state violence. They were united in this fight because they were all vulnerable: "Women or men who step out of traditionally accepted roles and try to choose their own, not only meet with physical and verbal abuse, but are also denied the rights enjoyed by people who behave in the traditional ways."[254] After their arrest and during the trial, the lesbian and gay community came together to support the *Brunswick Four*. CHAT organized dances to raise money for their legal defense and during the trial the courthouse was "packed out" every day with women, and even some men, who were "really supportive" at the time.[255] A transcript of Pat Murphy's oral history reads: "The case pulled together people who hadn't been together for a while. I think it also sort of got the message through that you can just be out any

[253] Ibid.
[254] Ibid.
[255] Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, "#HearOurStory: The Brunswick Four," last modified March 19, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sinp1MDQbI0.

night of the week and something like this could happen. I think it was politicizing for some…"[256] In a recent interview, Sue Wells explains that this was a pivotal moment in queer activism in Toronto because the divisions between lesbians and gay men were, at least momentarily, eliminated.[257] And for many lesbians, like Wells, this moment would transform them into activists.

The bathhouse raids in Toronto in 1981 are often cited as the moment of militarization that solidified a visible and vocal gay liberation movement.[258] But this event, seven years prior, marks a radical shift in the consciousness of lesbians and gay men, and foretold the battles yet to come. The event galvanized the community in the face of homophobic discrimination, and the issue gained widespread press coverage for the first time.[259] The charges laid against the *Brunswick Four* highlighted a distinctively lesbian experience that rang differently from their oppression as women. Queer women coalesced as lesbians and reinforced their alliance with the gay, rather than women's, liberation movement. It also politicized lesbians, including the *Brunswick Four*, who did not think of themselves as activists, by highlighting their need to organize autonomously.

Part I: Organizing

Not-So-Invisible Woman: The Rise of Lesbian Autonomy

Over the course of the 1970s, there was a growing sense of lesbian autonomy, reflected in the pages of *The Body Politic*, alongside a number of lesbian-specific newsletters, conferences, and organizations at local, provincial, and national levels. Conferences played a significant role in lesbian organizing by providing an experience that had been missing from the bars, members' clubs, community centres, and communal houses. They offered workshops on diverse topics,

---

[256] Pat Murphy, "The Brunswick Four: An Oral History," in *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. J. Lorinc et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 133.
[257] Egale, "#HearOurStory."
[258] See: Kinsman, *Regulation of Desire*; Tim McCaskell, *Queer Progress: From Homophobia to Homonationalism* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2016).
[259] Tom Warner, *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 40-41.

including self-defence, coming-out, motherhood, lesbian communes, sex, aging, leadership, power and authority, and autonomous organizing. Conferences were also important social events, featuring coffeehouses and dances with musical performances by female artists, such as Alix Dobkin and Mama Quilla II. Various lesbian groups and organizations across Canada helped to build solidarity while focussing on needs at the local level. Examples of these include the *Lesbian Organization of Toronto* (LOOT), *Wages Due Lesbians* in Toronto, *Atlantic Provinces Political Lesbians for Equality* (APPLE) in Halifax, *Lesbians of Ottawa Now* (LOON), and the *Montréal Gay Women's Collective*.

Through a series of conferences organized throughout the mid-1970s, lesbians carved out a unique political, cultural, and sexual space to articulate their own experiences at the intersections of gender, sexuality, class, and race. Conferences would have been one of the primary places that white middle-class lesbians met, many of whom had shunned the working-class bar scene, and were instead hosting potlucks, house parties, and other social events meant to remedy the bar scene's focus on sex and butch/femme aesthetic. Conferences provided opportunities for women to socialize—coffeehouses and dances were fixtures on conference programs and were often "even more fun" than the conferences.[260] As Liz Millward explains, a "key component of the conferences was the evening social event, an essential lubricant in the process of making sexual and erotic connections."[261] These conferences were transformative for attendees and marked growing lesbian autonomy. They not only fostered political mobilization, theory and knowledge building, but crucially, they helped establish a sense of community, camaraderie, and inclusion, which were foreign experiences for so many lesbians at the time, and especially those outside of Canada's urban centres. Reflections on these conferences highlight feelings of marginalization within both

[260] Millward, *Making a Scene*, 184.
[261] Ibid.

the gay and women's liberation movements. These strategies reflect an effort to recognize and incorporate diversity—of people, perspectives, and issues. They would also cause significant ideological ruptures amongst organizers and attendees.

Conference Organizing: The Rise of Lesbian Autonomy

As a marker of growing autonomy, the very first lesbian conference, the Gay Women's Festival, was held at the YMCA in Toronto in June 1973. It was important to the organizers that everyone "feel safe to come" to the conference.[262] As Ellen Woodsworth explains, "Some of us really wanted to call it the Lesbian Conference or Lesbian Women's Conference or something, but it was clearly going to be a barrier to others—either those who self-identify as gay or those who weren't sure, or others who really were in the gay movement."[263] The conference included workshops on lesbian feminism, relationships, coming out, employment, motherhood, and self-defence, provided daycare at no cost, and concluded with a licensed dance.[264] The organizers insisted on "No Photos No Media" so "beyond the poster, no visual record exists of this groundbreaking event, the first at which Canadian lesbians gathered autonomously."[265] The Gay Women's Festival set the blueprint for most of the conferences to follow. In January 1974, more than 200 "lesbian feminists" met in Montréal for the National Lesbian Conference.[266] Organized by the Montréal Gay Women's Collective, the conference was described as "one of the most successful events of its kind."[267] Women attended from ten cities—Toronto, Hamilton, Guelph, Kingston, Ottawa, Waterloo, Québec City, Saskatoon, and Ithaca, New York. Organizers

---

[262] Ibid., 175.
[263] Ibid.
[264] "Lesbian Conference First in Canada," *The Body Politic*, no. 9 (Summer 1973): 7.
[265] Millward, *Making a Scene*, 176.
[266] "200 Gather at Lesbian Meeting," *The Body Politic*, no. 12 (March/April 1974): 7.
[267] Ibid.

considered this conference an important breakthrough in lesbian activism, and moreover, it helped to launch a Montréal-based lesbian movement.[268]

Building on this momentum, Montréal hosted the second National Lesbian Conference in January 1975. Women came from different parts of Canada and the United States, including Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, New York, and Massachusetts, and all of the conference materials and workshops were bilingual.[269] Like its predecessors, it was a huge success. As reported in *The Body Politic*, "The conference peaked at the Saturday night dance when a women's feminist rock band performed… The Saturday celebrations left many women dazed and exhausted at such a show of solidarity and spirit. The lesbian conference in Montréal was just another example of the growing movement of women supporting women."[270] Moreover, attendees were diverse, especially in politics. It was reported: "Evident at the conference was the fact that not all lesbians are radical lesbians, monogamous, or into stereotyped role situations."[271] These early lesbian-only conferences were very well attended social events. While much of the reporting in *The Body Politic* focused on political content, such as workshops, plenaries, and other key ideas presented, we can also ascertain that there was an important social element. As Millward notes, much of the lesbian 'scene' likely took place in-and-around the conferences, as attendees made travel arrangements together, stayed with, and billeted one another.[272] As one report following the 1974 conference in Montréal stated, "Three weeks later at least one of the out-of-towners is still here; Montréal lesbians are very friendly."[273] They were as much social (and likely sexual) events as they were political.

---

[268] Ibid.
[269] Millward, *Making a Scene.*
[270] Editorial Collective, "Lesbians Meet in Montréal," *The Body Politic*, no. 17 (January/February 1975): 5.
[271] Ibid.
[272] Millward, *Making a Scene.*
[273] "Conference," *Long Time Coming* (February 1974): 2.

Lesbian Visibility: *Wages Due Lesbians*

On Victoria Day long weekend in 1976, the "Not-So-Invisible Woman: Lesbian Perspectives in the Gay Movement" conference was held in Kingston, Ontario. The conference was a formative event in that a group of Toronto-based lesbians, *Wages Due Lesbians*, used the conference as a platform to launch lesbian autonomy within the gay movement. As the name suggests, the group articulated a class-based analysis, at the intersection of sexuality and gender-based oppression. The conference was organized to bring together lesbian and gay male perspectives to reflect on the relationship of women to the gay movement. *Wages Due Lesbians* disrupted the conference and circulated a paper entitled "Lesbian Autonomy and the Gay Movement," which was later published in *The Body Politic* as the first instalment of a column called *Dykes*. In it, they urged the gay movement to take "a clear stand for lesbian autonomy."[274] They explained, "Unless we lesbian women can build our power, we will always risk gay men building their power at our expense."[275]

Specifically, *Wages Due Lesbians* aimed to integrate class analysis into lesbian feminism by linking various aspects of women's oppression to traditional family structures and unpaid labour in the home. From this perspective, women's liberation required the total destruction of the patriarchal system of production and reproduction, whereby women's unpaid labour constituted their common oppression.[276] *Wages Due Lesbians* affirmed: "Our fight is to end the system which commands our work by keeping us weak and penniless, and which deforms our sexuality and

---

[274] Wages Due Lesbians Toronto, "Lesbian Autonomy and the Gay Movement," *The Body Politic*, no. 25 (July/August 1976): 8.
[275] Ibid.
[276] See: Christine Delphy, *The Main Enemy: A Materialist Analysis of Women's Oppression* (London: Women's Research and Resources Centre, 1977); Silvia Federici, *Wages Against Housework* (London: Power of Women Collective and the Falling Wall Press, 1975); Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970).

relationships with one another. Lesbian autonomy is a power in that struggle."[277] The conference culminated with a position statement from the attendees:

> We have decided that there exists a need for an autonomous lesbian movement in Canada to fulfill our needs, and thus have formed an informal coalition ... We realize the need to build our power as lesbian women so that we need no longer subordinate our interests to those of the straight women or the men—straight or gay—and so that our lesbian sisters who are in the majority of cases still invisible to us will have the possibility of coming out.[278]

Two months later, over 80 women from across Canada and the United States gathered in Toronto to attend, "Toward a Strategy for the Lesbian Movement", a conference sponsored by *Toronto Wages Due Lesbians.* The Wages for Housework Campaign aimed to unite women, without ignoring their class-, race-, and sexuality-based differences. As Heather Stirling reported in *The Body Politic*, "Women who previously had no common ground can end their isolation and join forces on the bases of their common need for the time, money and choices they so far have been denied."[279] This conference was different from previous ones because Black lesbians were featured prominently. As Tom Warner explains, *Wages Due Lesbians* were "probably the first group to proactively deal with questions of race."[280] At the conference, Wilmette Brown of *Safire* and *Black Women for Wages for Housework of New York* emphasized the importance of autonomous organizing for Black lesbians—autonomy from Black men and white women, but also from Black straight women, "because of society's definition of black women—as breeders, whores, and the most 'sexual' of women—renders a black lesbian a 'super-freak.'"[281]

In October 1976, over 320 women from across Canada attended the "National Lesbian Conference" at the University of Ottawa, organized by *Lesbians of Ottawa Now* (LOON). The

[277] Wages Due, "Lesbian Autonomy," 8.
[278] Boo Watson, "Conference Urges Lesbian Autonomy," *The Body Politic*, no. 25 (July/August 1976): 7.
[279] Heather Stirling, "Conference Explores Lesbian Autonomy," *The Body Politic*, no. 26, (September 1976): 8.
[280] Warner, *Never Going Back*, 183.
[281] Stirling, "Conference Explores," 8.

conference aimed to be inclusive, providing simultaneous translation "to ensure the conference would be truly national in character."[282] Workshops were varied, ranging from lesbian community and culture to lesbian feminism and autonomy. The workshop on lesbian sexuality was the most popular—reported as "a boisterous and honest meeting with a memorable moment involving a woman and a flower during a discussion on romanticism."[283] Millward posits, "The very large numbers of women who wanted to squeeze themselves into the workshops that dealt with lesbian sexuality and relationships indicates just how hungry women were for opportunities to talk about sex with each other."[284] The dance held in the evening reinforced the feelings of "sisterhood and solidarity" felt during the day—the dance "was like a good dream: dykes, dykes, everywhere—the collective, conservative estimate was 500."[285] In a personal interview with Millward, Jan Trainor recalls the experience of the dances: "Whenever we had these big events, there was always the big dance. The heat that women's bodies would generate was just like 'woah!' I mean it could be forty below and it was melting, you know? … The collective energy of the room was palpable. You can feel it. … It's sort of overarchingly powerful to be surrounded by that many women. You know, that many lesbians…"[286]

"I was being politicized!"

These conferences during the 1970s were essential in building an autonomous lesbian movement. For example, in an article for *The Body Politic*, Anne Fulton discussed her politicization through attending lesbian conferences. She wrote, "When I went to the lesbian conference in Kingston last spring, I did not go with the highest of political goals or ideals in mind

---

[282] Rosemary Lippert, "Lesbians Move Towards National Organization," *The Body Politic*, no. 29 (December/January 1976/77): 5.
[283] Ibid.
[284] Millward, *Making a Scene*, 182.
[285] Lippert, "Lesbians Move," 5; see also: Millward, *Making a Scene*.
[286] Millward, *Making a Scene*, 184-5.

… However, I began to realize very early on in the conference that unexpected things were happening to me. I was being politicized! I was undergoing the metamorphosis from lesbian to dyke."[287] She continued, "And just the suggestion of lesbian autonomy and a national lesbian movement became so infused into my blood that I was nearly crazed and breathless at their mention."[288] This enthusiasm was immediately thwarted when Fulton returned home to Halifax after the conference to find that her politicization made her a "misfit and an anachronism."[289] These feelings of isolation and loneliness would have reverberated with lesbians across the country, especially for those outside the epicentres of queer culture at the time.[290]

This yearning for community served to heighten anticipation of upcoming conferences. Indeed, after the "National Lesbian Conference" in Ottawa in October 1976, Fulton relayed a sense of rejuvenation. With renewed energy and enthusiasm, she wrote, "…just being around 350 dykes, I found that I was flying 20 feet above the ground, sometimes higher. The energy which emanated from all of us was powerful."[291] While they were emboldened with the sense of possibility, conference workshops also revealed that they had little in common and struggled to form an ideological framework to encompass shared goals. Despite this growing sense of community, there were signs a cohesive national movement and strategy would be difficult to solidify. When the conference finally got to the national strategy session, Fulton expected that attendees would articulate concrete goals, but arguments over the structure of the movement quickly stalled any

[287] M. Anne Fulton, "My Personal Love Affair With The National Lesbian Movement," *The Body Politic*, no. 31 (March 1977): 10.
[288] Ibid.
[289] Ibid.
[290] See: Carolyn Anderson's work on lesbian life in Calgary during the 1960s and 70s. Analysis of oral histories emphasize a lack of visibility and validation, exacerbating feelings of isolation. Carolyn Anderson, "The Voices of Older Lesbian Women: An Oral History" (PhD diss., University of Calgary, 2001).
[291] M. Anne Fulton, "My Personal Love Affair With The National Lesbian Movement," *The Body Politic*, no. 31 (March 1977): 10.

strategizing: “This is such a big country, and there are so many lesbians with such diverse ideas … that we cannot yet begin to form any detailed an all-encompassing strategy.”[292]

For Fulton, communication was key in building solidary, unity, and a representative nationwide movement. This would help to ease the isolation felt by those outside of Toronto and other urban areas. She wrote, “We’re dykes! We’re strong and proud. If we can just grow to understand each other, we’ll have a bond unlike that of any other group in the country.”[293] By the end of the conference, six lesbians from the Atlantic provinces, including Fulton, had formed APPLE (*Atlantic Province’s Political Lesbians for Equality*). And by December 1976, they published the first national lesbian newsletter: *Lesbian Canada Lesbienne*. Newsletters and conferences were attempts to establish and foster a network of lesbians across the country. Many were optimistic that they could establish a cohesive, inclusive, autonomous movement, and this sentiment reached its pinnacle with the formation of the *Lesbian Organization of Toronto*.

LOOT

The Ottawa conference concluded with a proposal to establish a national lesbian organization and this was realized the following month with the formation of the *Lesbian Organization of Toronto* (LOOT).[294] Founded in November 1976 by a group of Toronto-based lesbians, LOOT would become one of the largest and most well-known lesbian feminist institutions in Canada. From its inception, LOOT's publicized vision was that of an “umbrella organization open to all lesbians regardless of class, religion, race, political affiliation, degree of openness, or age.”[295] By early 1977, LOOT found a permanent home in a rented house at 342

[292] Ibid.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Rosemary Lippert, “Lesbians move towards national organization,” *The Body Politic*, no. 29 (December/January 1976/77): 5.
[295] Chris Bearchell, “Lesbians plan centre,” *The Body Politic*, no. 29 (December/January 1976/77): 6-7.

Jarvis St. in downtown Toronto. It was joined in its new location by two other women's collectives from the city—*The Other Woman* (a feminist newspaper) and *The 3 Of Cups* (a popular coffee house for women). As a collective, they developed a political action committee, a music library, a counselling group for lesbians in crisis, as well as a drop-in centre.[296] Although *The Other Woman* folded within the year, by its first anniversary, LOOT boasted a membership of over 300 women. LOOT's formation signalled "a distinct group of lesbians" claiming "a collective and empowering public presence in Toronto" during the late-1970s.[297] They were resisting "the legacy of lesbian invisibility" and developing "a new lesbian-positive consciousness and culture."[298]

Members of LOOT who contributed to *The Body Politic* represented an autonomous lesbian voice while continuing to position themselves in relation to both the women's and the gay liberation movements. Navigating these movements was a central theme, as exemplified in Pat Leslie's documentation of the group's progress. Drawing on interviews with six other members, she described how they came to understand the validity of lesbian existence in Toronto. It appeared many had put aside lesbian identity in favour of fighting for women's emancipation and were no longer content to do so. As Leslie's interview participant, Bearchell stated, "For too long, I have seen lesbian energy sustain the women's movement and not any corresponding energy sustaining lesbians. I am not prepared to do that anymore. I also become extremely frustrated when I see women coming out and going into a slightly larger closet which is the women's movement."[299] Likewise, many had sacrificed feminist principles for membership in the gay male movement. As another interview participant explained, "Ultimately, lesbian politics includes more than gay male politics. A lot of men want things that lesbians would consider only an interim measure. In other

[296] Editorial Collective, "Lesbian Group Gets Home," *The Body Politic*, no. 30 (February 1977): 5
[297] Ross, "The House that Jill Built," 76.
[298] Ibid., 77.
[299] Pat Leslie, "Behind Open Doors," *The Body Politic*, no. 43 (May 1978): 13.

words, they want civil rights. That's fine, I wouldn't mind civil rights either, but I want to create a new society."[300] Lesbians, and especially those who participated in LOOT, had come to understand themselves as separate from gay and women's movements. Their sense of collective power and newfound solidarity was reinforced by their success in putting a lesbian organization "on the movement map," at least in Toronto.[301]

Focused attention in the formation of conferences, workshops, newsletters, and now, a distinctly lesbian organization, helped foster collective solidarity and momentum for autonomous organizing. Recognizing the tension that lesbians experienced within gay liberation and feminist movements, did not however ease dissension. Indeed, LOOT's brief existence represents the apex of autonomous lesbian organizing, which dissolved soon thereafter. In theorizing their raison d'être and movement focus, they produced a divergent stance on all major positions. The lesbian feminist militance that is often portrayed in academic histories and popular imagery certainly took hold and became a dominant force and reason for the demise of the autonomous movement. A more neglected undercurrent of activist lesbians developed important intersectional insights that continue to challenge anti-oppression movements.

In the following section, we see the rapid emergence of a respectability politics within the autonomous movement that emulated the very hierarchy that it sought to dismantle. Black lesbian feminists were particularly attuned to this lateral oppression and articulated an experience of hypersexualization, and the compounded burden of respectability, placed upon women who are both Black and lesbian. Activist lesbians critiqued the policing of women's appearance and behaviour within lesbian feminist communities, which suppressed lesbian sexuality and were in many ways homophobic and transphobic. Two key issues would challenge ideological views on

---

[300] Ibid.
[301] Ibid.

sexual liberation—the first, in relation to age of consent and obscenity laws, and the second, pornography and its relationship to violence against women. These issues received extensive attention in *The Body Politic*, with Chris Bearchell, Jane Rule, and Pat Leslie emerging as prominent activist lesbian voices within these debates. I conclude section two by highlighting their views, as they provide a counternarrative to dominant lesbian feminist perspectives. They maintained a commitment to sexual liberation in their anti-censorship stance and documented their own intergenerational relationships as a mode of resistance and queer feminist praxis. They soon abandoned the autonomous movement and realigned with gay liberation, though bringing with them an intersectional feminist perspective, which is taken up in section three of this chapter.

Part II: Theorizing

"…the purity yardstick"

Throughout the 1960s, grassroots feminists challenged patriarchal conventions of hierarchical leadership instead stressing consensus decision-making and equality among membership.[302] LOOT members committed to feminist ideals of 'sisterhood', but "with a distinctly lesbian face."[303] As an organization, LOOT had no criteria for membership, nor an official mandate or set of standards, and yet, an unofficial set of norms structured around notions of "political correctness" developed and permeated.[304] Organized by a small group of largely white, middle-class, young, able-bodied and educated leaders, "well-intentioned claims to openness, consensus and diversity were quickly buried under the push to homogeneity."[305] As a social alternative to lesbian bar culture, members of LOOT were often critical of lesbians who appreciated and

[302] Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin, Margaret McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988); Ross, "House that Jill Built."
[303] Ross, "House that Jill Built," 79.
[304] Ibid., 79.
[305] Ibid., 72.

participated in the bar scene and its aesthetics. This often equated to working-class lesbians who were perceived to engage in butch/femme 'role playing'. There was an equally singular stance on prostitution, bisexuality, and gay male sexuality, all of which were subjected to harsh criticism; male-to-female transsexuals were deemed undesirable invaders of lesbian culture, and after long and heated debate, were prohibited from the LOOT premises.

In her historical analysis of the organization, Becki Ross explains, "These norms typically revolved around self-righteous, highly moralistic definitions of a 'real', idealized lesbian identity, and the more general insistence on the 'magnificence of women'. Slowly anti-male and correspondent anti-heterosexual and anti-left sentiments grew alongside the desire for lesbian affirmation and hardened into a purity yardstick."[306] Any sexual identity or practice that resembled maleness or heterosexuality was condemned in the name of lesbian validation. Political commitment was signalled by clothing and accessories—the unofficial dress code at LOOT included flannel shirts, jeans, work boots, short hair, no make-up, little jewelry, and no perfume—nothing resembling heterosexual femininity.[307]

This is exemplified in Michele Belling's recollection of the atmosphere in the mid-1970s, in an article called "Outsiders" published in *The Body Politic.*[308] She described her experience 'coming out' and moving to a large city in search of fellow lesbians: "at age eighteen … roaring into town with the political fervour of a virgin activist lesbian and the savage individualism of an intellectual punk …. Imagine my surprise … when I walked into my first lesbian centre and met my first lesbians and offered myself for volunteer work. To say I was greeted with hostility would be an understatement."[309] To be accepted by the lesbian feminist subculture, i.e. "The Lesbian

[306] Ibid., 79.
[307] Ibid., 79.
[308] Michele Belling, "Outsiders," *The Body Politic*, no. 113 (April 1985): 47.
[309] Ibid., 47.

Community," Belling had to meet some strict requirements: quit smoking, change her hair, stop wearing mascara, modify her wardrobe, and significantly revise her cultural interests. She identified more as a lesbian feminist but realized she would not be welcome in the bar scene either because of its equally strict requirements. She wrote, "It didn't surprise me that I couldn't make the bar scene, but I'd absorbed the lesbian-feminist rhetoric completely, and I honestly believed them when they said they welcomed and tolerated all lesbians who shared, at least, their political philosophy."[310] She did not fit the bar scene, nor the 'inclusive' lesbian feminist scene, the organization that claimed to respect all voices based on their democratic organizing.

In the early-1970s, lesbian conferences had aimed to be as inclusive as possible, but by the mid-1970s, the drive to define lesbianism overpowered the push towards open-mindedness. Such rigid membership parameters quickly countered LOOT's initial diversity and aims at 'lesbian sisterhood'. Working-class lesbians, lesbians of colour, lesbians with disabilities, young and older lesbians were all underrepresented at LOOT. Compounded by the lack of political direction, many were leaving LOOT altogether. And, those who stayed at LOOT turned away from the promise lesbian organizing held for challenging heterosexism and homophobia.[311]

"…the major systems of oppression are interlocking"

Autonomous lesbian organizing represents but one of the many fractures within the women's movement, though many of these same tensions remerged within the autonomous lesbian movement. Women of colour, Jewish, and immigrant women, women with disabilities, sex workers, and working-class women characterized the dominant feminist movement as exclusively white, Christian, middle-class, and able-bodied. For many however, the autonomous lesbian movement failed to remedy these exclusions. Just as lesbians had pushed for wider inclusivity in

---

[310] Ibid., 47.
[311] Ross, "House that Jill Built," 83.

the gay liberation and women's movements, more groups within the autonomous lesbian movement were looking for a space to be heard. While politically active lesbians had initially believed in the commonality of a true, transcendent lesbian identity as a medium sufficient for politics, culture, and community, the emergent autonomous lesbian movement was far from cohesive. In an effort to collectively define lesbianism, as a political ideology and an identity, the autonomous movement began to fracture.

Black lesbian feminists were among the most prominent voices challenging notions of universal sisterhood. Hopes for cross-racial coalition building between feminists were quickly dashed as racial differences became increasingly salient within the women's movement and the autonomous lesbian movement. These movements did not offer Black lesbians any reprieve from the racism and homophobia they confronted in their daily lives. As Carol Thames, a long-time LGBTQ community member in Toronto later explains:

> Coming out as a Black queer youth in the city was about surviving and creating an identity because you're dealing with two folds: racism and sexual identity. If you were estranged from your family, you may have entered a community that isolated you as a Black person. I remember coming out at that time, I was twenty-one. My then partner and I were standing in a bar and were the only two Black women in there. I thought, "Oh my God, if a fight breaks out, what will happen?" Not to mention the type of pushback I received for being dressed up and wearing lipstick and makeup.[312]

The parameters of "The Lesbian Community" had become so narrow that most did not fit within them. And to fit, meant to be white and middle-class, i.e. not too butch and not too femme. Marginalization and exclusion within the movement spurred many women of colour to break away and create their own organizations.[313]

---

[312] Omisoore Dryden, "Má-ka Juk Yuh: A Genealogy of Black Queer Liveability in Toronto," in *Queering Urban Justice: Queer Colour Formations in Toronto*, ed. J. Haritaworn, G. Moussa & S.M. Ware, with R. Rodríguez (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 68.

[313] This happened a bit earlier in the United States than in Canada. Taken up in the next chapter is the founding of Zami in 1984, and Sister Vision in 1985, which further intersectional understandings of racialized sexual minority status within queer organizing.

One of the best known is the *Combahee River Collective*, created in 1974 by a group of Black lesbian feminists in Chicago, who were frustrated by their marginalization within various liberation movements at the time. Barbara Smith, one of the collective's cofounders, explains,

> I think our goal first of all was to make a political space for people like ourselves. We were marginalized in the Black movement, in the Black liberation movement, certainly in the Black nationalist movement. And we were marginalized in the white feminist movement, for different reasons. One of the reasons we were marginalized in the Black movement, besides sexism and misogyny, was also homophobia. A lot of us were indeed lesbians, and we—including myself, at this time was coming out … We needed to have a place of our own. We needed to have a place we could define our political priorities and act upon them.[314]

Due to the "manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of colour face" the collective developed an "integrated analysis based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking."[315] This was the foundation for intersectional analysis, and later, identity politics. Black feminists rejected any single theoretical tradition in order to capture the interconnections of race, class, gender, and sexuality in Black women's lives— "We believe that sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in Black women's lives as are the politics of class and race."[316] Separating race from class from sex oppression was impossible given they were experienced simultaneously. As Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, editor of the new collection *How We Get Free*, explains, "Black women could not quantify their oppression only in terms of sexism or racism, or of homophobia experienced by Black lesbians. They were not ever a single category, but it was the merging or enmeshment of those identities that compounded how Black women experienced oppression."[317]

---

[314] Barbara Smith, "An Interview," in *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), 61-62.

[315] The Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 4th edition, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (Albany: New York Press, 2015), 210.

[316] Ibid., 213.

[317] Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, ed., "Introduction," in *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), 1-14.

These perspectives were marginal in *The Body Politic*, and when discussed, were about, rather than with or by, people of colour. Of course, lesbians of colour were organizing during the 1970s in Toronto, and yet there is little evidence of this in *The Body Politic*. *Marvellous Grounds*, a Toronto-based QTBIPOC archiving collective founded in 2015, interjects this absence with an edited collection called *Queering Urban Justice*. In the introduction, Jin Haritaworn, Ghaida Moussa, Rio Rodriguez, and Syrus Marcus Ware write, "Despite the fact that Black queers, in particular, have left their 'indelible mark' on Toronto, they always remain newcomers in its official maps and archives."[318] The collection features a discussion led by Omisoore Dryden with several Black women who were active in the Toronto lesbian community during the 1970s and 1980s. In this, Beverly Bains describes the respectability politics affecting women within the Black community, "That approach to our sexuality was very much a radical feminist approach that actually moved across race. As Black feminists, we were also caught within a respectability notion of how blackness is supposed to be."[319] Carol Camper echoes this sentiment, "I came out into a community of Black women who were political radicals. However, on many levels, they were culturally and sexually conservative."[320] Likewise, Debbie Douglas states that lesbians were called out for being involved in the scene, that they were anti-feminist, which exacerbated feelings of isolation.[321] Dionne Falconer furthers a class-based division whereby, "A lot of the organizing was happening in a very middle-class place, even though a lot of us identified as working-class women. But I remember when we used to have events, readings – remember the S&M night? – there were huge debates. There were debates about our own power."[322] The hypersexualization, and pressure

---

[318] Jin Haritaworn, Ghaida Moussa, Syrus Marcus Ware, and Gabriela (Rio) Rodriguez (eds.), "Introduction," *Queering Urban Justice: Queer of Colour Formations in Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 3.
[319] Dryden, "Má-ka Juk Yuh," 75.
[320] Ibid., 78.
[321] Ibid., 75.
[322] Ibid., 74-75.

to conform to middle-class standards of respectability, were compounded for Black women, especially those who were lesbian. This reiterates the ways that Black lesbians were rendered "super-freaks."[323]

What rapidly became exclusionary politics, which failed to meaningfully engage with race and class-based issues, and instead focused on policing of style and sexual tastes, would have a lasting impact on the lesbian community. Much like the women's movement, the autonomous lesbian movement appeared to be dominated by the voices of white, middle-class, socially acceptable and respectable women. These tensions would come to a head in maintaining coalitions with the gay liberation movement. Political views on sexuality—specifically, pornography, censorship, and age of consent laws, would cause an irreparable schism within the autonomous lesbian movement.

Men Loving Boys, Dividing Women

During the late-1970s, the lesbian movement was charting a new course. Towards the end of 1977, a group of LOOT lesbians founded and became heavily involved in *Women Against Violence Against Women* (WAVAW). The group predominantly consisted of lesbians, who met on the LOOT premises before needing a larger space due to the number of women involved. Radical feminist groups such as WAVAW condemned violence as a pillar of patriarchy. Activists organized women's shelters, transition houses, and rape crisis centres. "Take Back the Night" marches began to appear across Canada. Pornography also provoked unprecedented debate toward the end of 1970s and would intensify during the 1980s, revealing deep divides in feminist and lesbian organizing. Some feminists focused on violence against women and children in

[323] Wilmette Brown makes this point at the 1976 "Toward a Strategy for the Lesbian Movement" conference, as described in the preceding section.

pornography, while others embraced freedom of expression and denounced censorship, which was criticized as driven by homophobia.

Conflicts over pornography, age of consent, and censorship amplified tensions between lesbians, feminists, and gay men. For many, these tensions became most apparent in the aftermath of the 1977 police raid of the offices shared by *The Body Politic* and the *Canadian Gay Archives*. The pretext for the raid was the publication of Gerald Hannon's article in *The Body Politic* titled, "Men Loving Boys Loving Men"—the third in a series of articles on consent and youth sexuality. The article was perceived as advocating cross-generational sex and three members of *The Body Politic* were charged under section 164 of the Criminal Code for distributing "immoral, indecent, and scurrilous" materials.[324] This article was part of a larger emergent literature of gay male political theory of sexuality—much of which appeared in *The Body Politic*. There were articles on public sex, fist-fucking, man-boy love, promiscuity, cruising, public sex, and sex ads. As Gayle Rubin explains, "Gay men were articulating a political theory of their own sexual cultures and this body of work evaluated gay male sexual behaviour in its own terms, rather than appealing to feminism for either justification or condemnation."[325] This was important because within feminist rhetoric at the time, male homosexuality, transsexuality, promiscuity, public sex, and sadomasochism were all vilified. Female subordination was attributed to each of them—"Somehow, these poor sexual deviations were suddenly the ultimate expressions of patriarchal domination."[326]

The summer of 1977 marked the beginning of the backlash against the gay community in Toronto. The media became a tool in organizing the backlash. After the publication of "Men

[324] Warner, *Never Going Back*, 109.
[325] Rubin and Butler, "Sexual Traffic," 77.
[326] Ibid., 77.

Loving Boys Loving Men" Claire Hoy of *The Toronto Sun*, well-known for his homophobic commentary at the time, referred to the article as "filthy garbage, not only sick but criminal" and vilified "radical homosexuals" and their "rag," *The Body Politic*.[327] The community also felt a backlash from within. Many lesbian feminists were reluctant to publicly denounce the police for the raid following the article's publication. In so doing, many lesbians reaffirmed the long history of ambivalence towards the gay movement, and gay men more broadly. Many accused *The Body Politic* of bad timing in publishing the article—the lesbian and gay communities were still reeling from Anita Bryant's anti-homosexual "Save Our Children" crusade launched in July 1977, and the reported "homosexual orgy slaying" of twelve-year-old Emanuel Jaques in Toronto in August 1977. Furthermore, the gay civil rights campaign had just started gaining momentum and for some, the article only provided fuel for backlash.

In response to the article and ensuing uproar, Gayle Rubin penned a letter to *The Body Politic* expressing her "unmitigated support" for the paper and the Collective. For Rubin, publishing "Men Loving Boys" was the right thing to do, despite political repercussions. She explained, "It is so important to raise consciousness about the status of the more 'exotic' sexualities, genders, etc. Besides the injustice of the stigmatization of groups like pederasts, sadomasochists, transsexuals, etc., such groups are most vulnerable to attack."[328] Rubin cautioned against abandoning these already vulnerable and stigmatized groups; for her, the ambivalence of the gay and women's movements towards them was deeply problematic. Instead, the most marginalized should be positioned on the "front lines of contest."[329] Rubin recognized that speaking up to defend less "legitimate" activities put herself on the line as well. She concluded, "I

[327] Claire Hoy, "Our Taxes Help Homosexuals Promote Abuse of Children," *Toronto Sun* (December 22, 1977): 20.
[328] Gayle Rubin, "Letters" *The Body Politic*, no. 40 (February 1978): 2.
[329] Ibid.

have always respected the political integrity of *TBP*. While the denouement is awful, the original publication of the essay was another example of the courage and political acuity of *TBP*."[330]

Others saw the publication of the article as indicative of deep philosophical divides between lesbians and gay men. In January 1978, members of LOOT met to discuss the "Men Loving Boys Loving Men" 'crisis'. Many lesbian feminists were outraged by the article and spoke at various public forums to denounce cross-generational sex as abusive and non-consensual. And, they condemned *The Body Politic* for publishing the article altogether. Many lesbians and feminists noted the glaring absence of a feminist perspective on the matter, demanding *The Body Politic* represent their opinions too. In a letter to *The Body Politic*, Judy Springer wrote, "I am not against *TBP*'s decision to include the pro-pedophile article, but want to see another article, preferably by a feminist lesbian, which would give another homosexual's view on the subject."[331] In the following issue Springer reiterated, "I still haven't seen a feminist viewpoint in *TBP* on the subject of pedophiles. … a feminist view of rape includes sex with minors as a form thereof… Without taking account of feminist thought, a discussion of pedophilia will be of no radical consequence."[332] In a letter to the editor of *The Toronto Star* (then republished in *The Body Politic*), *Wages Due Lesbians* spokesperson Francie Wyland wrote, "At issue is the children's right to freedom from sexual coercion by any man, straight or homosexual."[333] Lesbian feminists framed intergenerational relationships as pedophilic and inherently exploitive. In so doing, they created a decisive stance on intergenerational sex, and the state's response to it. From their view, there was only one position: "Are more lesbians going to have to make a choice, others learn to avert their

---

[330] Ibid.
[331] Judy Springer, "Letters," *The Body Politic*, no. 41 (March 1978): 2.
[332] Judy Springer, "Letters," *The Body Politic*, no. 42 (April 1978): 3.
[333] Francie Wyland, cited in Ken Popert, "Bryantism and Wages Due: Recruiting Within Our Movement," in *The Body Politic*, no. 46 (September 1978): 5.

gaze or how to reconcile the two?"[334] In other words, lesbian feminists did not conceive of the possibility that some lesbians and feminists might align with an alternate ideology.

Pornography provoked unprecedented debate during this period. Feminists within multiple movements – women's liberation, autonomous lesbian, and gay liberation – were deeply divided. Some viewed pornography as a form of violence against women, in its production and representation, while others embraced freedom of expression and denounced state censorship, which was frequently driven by homophobia. As Becki Ross explains, this moment represents a "sharpening of lesbian feminist discourse against and in contradiction to gay men's sexual discourse. Indeed, the raid served as a lightning rod for the articulation of competing discourses on issues of sexual practice, representation and the role of the state in legislating matters of sex and morality."[335] Censorship voices would come to predominate debates and drown-out anti-censorship positions.

Pornography

On March 22, 1978 the Justice Committee Report on pornography was tabled at the House of Commons. The 11-member all-party committee held 12 meetings and heard over 25 witnesses, including representatives of the Church, the police, the state, two women's organizations, and the Periodical Distributors of Canada. The report gave a number of recommendations, among them a new definition of obscenity that would include "degradation," an expanded definition of pornography to include any description or depiction of sexual acts of those under the age of 16, and an increase to penalties for "kiddie porn."[336] In other words, a strengthening of pornography

---

[334] Springer, "Letters," no. 42: 3.

[335] Becki Ross, "Like Apples and Oranges: Lesbian Feminist Responses to the Politics of *The Body Politic*," in *Queerly Canadian: An Introductory Reader in Sexuality Studies*, ed. Maureen FitzGerald and Scott Rayter (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2012), 140.

[336] Editorial Collective, "MP's Hit Hard at 'Porn,'" *The Body Politic*, no. 42 (April 1978): 5.

laws. The committee viewed pornography as inherently harmful and degrading to women; the introduction states that pornography is "exploitive of women—they are portrayed as passive victims who derive limitless pleasure from inflicted pain, and from subjugation to acts of violence, humiliation, and degradation. … The effect of this type material is to reinforce male-female stereotypes to the detriment of both sexes."[337]

The April 1978 issue of *The Body Politic* would become central to the ongoing debate about pornography, and sexuality more generally. In this issue, the Collective published a news story "MP's hit hard at 'porn'" giving a summary of the Justice Committee Report, followed by a critique: "It's radical apple pie, it's got all the right buzz-words—one can detect knees jerking in agreement after the first three words."[338] The issue also featured an analysis by Gerald Hannon. In this, Hannon disagreed with the 'feminist position' on obscenity laws, specifically the presentation made by Lorene Clark and Debra Lewis to the Parliamentary Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. He condemned the feminist position as, "Intelligent, articulate, impassioned—and wrong."[339] Hannon argued strongly against any legislation that would restrict the use or distribution of pornography. He wrote, "obscenity laws are laws without content. …they exist to be used for political purposes only, to harass unpopular groups and censor divergent opinion."[340] He concluded, "There should only be one reason to appear before the government on the topic of 'obscenity'—and that is to demand the abolition of all laws that would restrict its use or distribution."[341] Not everyone agreed, and in the issues that followed, members of the lesbian and

---

[337] Ibid.
[338] Ibid.
[339] Gerald Hannon, "Pornography, Feminism and Children's Literature," *The Body Politic*, no. 42 (April 1978): 5.
[340] Ibid.
[341] Ibid.

gay community sounded-off in letters to *The Body Politic*—the August issue featured an article called "Pornography: The New Terrorism?" highlighting various letters.

In the May issue, Marianna Valverde wrote a scathing response. She began her letter by critiquing the position put forward by the Collective in "MP's hit hard at 'porn'"—that pornography legislation would be used to harass and stifle erotica that is experimental or marginal. For her, "the chief end of the pornography industry is not to promote either artistic experimentation or sexual liberation, but rather to prey upon people's sexual insecurities and dissatisfactions and make a good buck out of them."[342] While Valverde agreed with gay liberation's fight for freedom of sexual expression, she was cautious of aligning with the pornography industry in this fight. She wrote, "*TBP* has of course good reasons for loudly defending civil liberties, freedom of the press, and so on: but it should not debase the gay rights movement by implying that it is on the same 'struggle' of certain capitalists to sell more varieties of sex more varieties of sex to more people."[343] By upholding the "right" of the pornography industry to cater to "minority tastes," Valverde accused *The Body Politic* of supporting the view that sexuality is a commodity, to be freely bought and sold on the open market. She concluded, "I, for one, am not all that interested in obtaining a place in magazine racks for lesbian porno. I am interested in coming to an understanding of what sexual liberation involves, and in fighting for it…"[344]

Valverde then turned to Hannon's analysis of feminism and pornography. She wrote, "Hannon seems to feel personally threatened by 'a current in feminist thought' upheld by some anonymous 'other feminists' and even by 'females' in general. This current of thought, in his view,

---

[342] Mariana Valverde, "Feminism and Pornography: A Reply to Gerald Hannon," *The Body Politic*, no. 43 (May 1978): 3.
[343] Ibid.
[344] Ibid.

is intent on sending everyone back to the prudish, sterile world of Victorian drawing-rooms."[345] For her, the presumption that women, based on their "moral values," were the only ones invested in censorships laws, was problematic. Having said that, Valverde was critical of Hannon's "whole-hearted" defense of pornography, suggesting he look closer at the sexism and exploitation involved in pornography. This, she explained, "might well turn out to be a more fruitful enterprise than screaming 'horrors!' at the mere sight of the word 'censorship'. After such a scrutiny, Hannon may well be less prone to see a bigot under every feminist bed."[346]

Susan Cole and Eve Zaremba extended their critique to gay liberation more broadly. In their article in the August issue, they wrote, "Hannon's stand, the position of *TBP* and that of gay liberation are directly opposed to the feminist position. Let's end the charade. We disagree, and it is time we examined the implications of this basic political conflict."[347] They argued that Hannon's "laissez-faire" stance on pornography and censorship is "clear-cut evidence" of a divergence in women's and gay liberation's interests. Cole and Zaremba wrote, "as women, we expect that the abolition of censorship laws would give us few advantages and a lot more of *Snuff*. It is in the interests of women to make a beginning at changing the 'victim' stereotypes which makes it acceptable and 'normal' to brutalize *us*. It is this victim stereotype that is celebrated in *Snuff* and in much of the pornography that Hannon and *TBP* would rescue for the sake of *their* liberation."[348] For them, gay liberation was staunchly male, no matter how many lesbians were in its ranks. This was obvious in its political stance and priorities. They concluded that feminists cannot expect men, gay or straight, to prioritize feminist concerns over their own. Having said that, "Gay liberation would do well to cease paying lip service to feminism on the one hand while interpreting our

[345] Ibid.
[346] Ibid.
[347] Susan Cole and Eve Zaremba, "Pornography: The New Terrorism?" *The Body Politic*, no. 45 (August 1978): 12.
[348] Ibid.

interests for us on the other. It is not only hypocritical and chauvinistic, it is also plain bad for their own cause."[349]

"Doing our own work"

These debates within *The Body Politic* revealed not only the widening ideological gap between lesbians and gay men, but also between lesbians. While Zaremba and Cole, among others, argued for the necessary state regulation of pornography, others were much more skeptical. In her letter to *The Body Politic*, Pat Leslie cautioned against supporting censorship laws that could then be used against lesbians and gay men. In reference to the "feminist response" to Hannon's position on pornography, she wrote, "I guess I am not a feminist. Either that or I am totally out of touch with my own politics. … For once in my life, I find myself in complete agreement with Gerald Hannon. I am way past the point of agreeing with someone simply because they happen to be female."[350] She disagreed with the "feminist position" of Marianna Valverde, Susan Cole, and Eve Zaremba; she explained, "As an anarchist, I do not support laws made and enforced by the State, particularly those laws which could conceivably be used against us."[351]

For Cole and Zaremba, it made sense that lesbians and gay men would have a divergent stance on censorship because they had "legitimately different interests."[352] However, this is where Leslie disagreed, "In a sexually repressive society, no one is free. As long as men are not allowed to express themselves in a human way, no woman will be sexually free from any man. Our goal is the same, even in the case of censorship."[353] For Leslie, lesbians and feminists could not align themselves with the state to fight sexism in pornography—they must do their own work. And,

[349] Ibid.
[350] Pat Leslie, "Doing Our Own Work," *The Body Politic*, no. 46 (September 1978): 2.
[351] Ibid.
[352] Susan Cole and Eve Zaremba, "Pornography: The New Terrorism?" *The Body Politic*, no. 45 (August 1978): 12.
[353] Pat Leslie, "Doing Our Own Work," *The Body Politic*, no. 46 (September 1978): 2.

fighting censorship did not mean aligning with the pornography industry. She concluded, "In fact, I remember very well how feminists last fall, during demonstrations against the *Snuff* movie, were portrayed in the media as allies of the Clean Up Yonge Street group. Some feminists had believed it possible to do business with the censorship board in a neutral manner. Obviously, feminists still believe this, or they would be fighting sexism through their own activity and developing a real movement instead of relying on the state apparatus."[354]

In a letter published in the following issue, Cole responded to Leslie directly; she wrote, "I wonder if those who insist on protecting the rights of purveyors of violence against women would argue as vigorously against for a similar laissez-faire approach to the economy of the ruling class."[355] In the same issue, in another letter, Zaremba wrote, "There must be limits set on the "freedom" of the pornography industry…"[356] She continued, "Freedom from regulation inevitably works to the benefit of those who already hold power and control resources. Freedom is a tricky concept. When someone preaches freedom, let's be careful to ask, 'freedom for whom, to do what?'"[357] For Zaremba, it was time to stop arguing over who was right and who was wrong and instead focus on working towards a realistic synthesis of everyone's "legitimate concerns."[358] She concluded, "How can we optimize our freedom while minimizing the freedom of others to oppress us?"[359]

"I was fifteen, she was forty-three…"

In the midst of the debate, Chris Bearchell published "I was fifteen, she was forty-three…" under the *Dykes* column in *The Body Politic*. In this, she considered the place of female child-adult

---

[354] Ibid., 2.
[355] Eve Zaremba, "Porn Again," *The Body Politic*, no. 47 (October 1978): 4.
[356] Ibid.
[357] Ibid.
[358] Ibid.
[359] Ibid.

relations in the politics of the lesbian movement. She discussed various relationships between younger and older women – whether or not they were autobiographical was undisclosed. She wrote, “Some of us are tempted to view child-adult interactions as ‘a problem’, the way the psychiatric professions traditionally view homosexuality. Some of us use it as ‘an issue’ with which to score political points against men.”[360] But for Bearchell, laws such as the “age of consent” and “statutory rape” provisions of the Criminal Code, were actually modes of control to regulate the sexual behaviour of youth and children, and in particular “uncontrollable” and “incorrigible” girls, under the pretense of protecting them. She explained,

> For the straight world out there a fourteen-, fifteen- or sixteen-year-old is a child for whom any kind of sexual expression is sinful, sick or criminal whether it is gay or straight, with an adult or a peer. To the great “them” out there, a fifteen-year-old “girl” involved with a teacher or a camp counsellor is a child in the grasp of disgusting corruption, no matter how mutual or loving the relationship. This perverse attitude says that sex is primarily reproductive and that the law has the right to interfere with this aspect of our lives, whether it is to deny women control over their bodies, to give preferential treatment to “legalized” relationships, or to outlaw lesbian or gay sexuality altogether. Any vestige of these attitudes has no place in either the gay or lesbian movements.[361]

The following year, Jane Rule explained that the furor created by “Men Loving Boys Loving Men” posed hard political questions for her. While she deplored repressive police action that not only served to stifle any discussion of intergenerational sex but also to intimidate involvement in *The Body Politic*, even as a subscriber, she understood the rage against sexual exploitation. But ultimately, she wrote, “I am convinced that censoring serious discussion of unconventional sexual relationships does nothing to protect those who might be exploited. To test, contest, is the only way to reach forward into understanding areas of human experience vulgarized by either taboo or glorification.”[362] Rule then invoked her own adolescent relationship with a woman who was ten

---

[360] Chris Bearchell, “I was Fifteen, She was Forth-three,” *The Body Politic*, no. 43 (May 1978): 14.
[361] Ibid.
[362] Jane Rule, “Teaching Sexuality,” *The Body Politic*, no. 53 (June 1979): 29.

years her senior – a relationship that she had invited and encouraged: "The only fault I find with that part of my sexual education was the limit her guilt and fear put on our pleasure, the heterosexual pressure even she felt required to put on me."[363]

Pat Leslie, Chris Bearchell, and Jane Rule risked a lot coming out on the pro-sex side of these debates. They were outspoken against censorship and revealed their own intergenerational relationships, despite the resounding feminist backlash. They were baffled to see lesbians and feminists align themselves with the state and other conservative groups. Bearchell feared that anti-pornography laws would be used disproportionally against representations of same-sex sexuality; she warned, "the hotter lesbian pornography becomes the more vulnerable it will be to the whims of the guardians of public morality."[364] This divide between lesbians brought into focus their underlying political differences. As we will see in chapter six, this was just the beginning of a divisive debate that would come to be known as the 'feminist sex wars.'

Part III: Strategizing

Prior to the official 'sex wars', we see a clear divergence in feminist/lesbian perspectives and politics. The trajectory that I have been tracing is that of activist lesbians, a perspective that has been overlooked and treated by lesbian feminists as anti-feminist. Activist lesbians had to strategize their positionality within an increasingly polarizing political climate. The 1977 raid of *The Body Politic* created a divide whereby many lesbian feminists, who were already ambivalent toward gay males and the gay liberation movement, after the publication of "Men Loving Boys" and the subsequent raid, solidified their position as one that was at odds with gay liberation and its goals. By contrast, activist lesbians sided with gay men in their pro-sex and anti-censorship stance.

---

[363] Ibid.

[364] Warner, *Never Going Back*, 128.

I highlight the views of activist lesbians who aligned with gay liberation and expressed their theoretical and political views in *The Body Politic*, as opposed to the many feminist journals that have been used to develop the grand narrative of feminist thinking of the period. By overlooking a specifically activist lesbian perspective, we omit a counter narrative of feminist theorizing and political action of the period, one with a much broader and more inclusive framework, which developed in alignment with gay liberation. In the conclusion of this section, we come to understand the undoing of the autonomous lesbian movement. Lacking clear political strategy, many activist lesbians abandoned feminist lesbians altogether, and continued to focus on grassroots organizing in the 1980s, where they make clear advancements in organizing against obscenity laws and for sex worker rights, which is the focus of the next chapter.

Realigning with the Gay Liberation Movement

Indeed, what I have been referring to as activist lesbianism really comes into fruition during the late 1970s, as they align their energy and goals within the framework of gay liberation. This crystalizes at a critical turning point in the late-1970s. Gay liberation provided them the space to discuss sexuality beyond the victimization narratives so prominent within feminism at the time. This was compounded by homophobia within the women's movement. Activist lesbians were seeking close working relationships with gay and feminist movements "while refusing to live within the shadow of either."[365] Often faced with a stark choice between the two, Bearchell explained that lesbian feminists "weren't interested in lesbians and gay men being organized together … They were only interested in seeing lesbians politicized around issues related to their femaleness. In fact, many of them were, I think, primarily homophobic in their impulse to dissociate themselves from gay men…"[366]

[365] Chris Bearchell, "This is the Last Dykes Column," *The Body Politic*, no. 49 (Dec./Jan. 1978/79): 32.
[366] Smith, "Interview with Chris Bearchell," 35.

By the late-1970s, the relationship between (some) lesbians and gay men was "changing" and reached a critical turning point in early-1978 when Anita Bryant, an American evangelical Christian then-leading a high-profile campaign against gay rights legislation, brought her fundamentalist, anti-gay message to southern Ontario.[367] In response, 1000 people marched down Toronto's Yonge Street in protest.[368] Bearchell explained the inadvertent effects of this event, "For the first time in this country, Lesbians and gay men united to respond to Bryant's challenge on a mass scale in political action."[369] For Bearchell, this was evidence that lesbians and gay men were working together towards common goals. This sense of solidarity was solidified by Gaydays in August 1978, a four-day festival which included an opening gala, panels, concerts, a picnic at Hanlan's Point, as well as a day-long fair at Queen's Park featuring booths for 35 local gay organizations, including LOOT. Bearchell wrote, "Toronto's recent Gaydays celebration did on a cultural level what Anita Bryant had done on a political level."[370]

Bearchell's interpretation of these events further illuminates the divergence amongst lesbians in these spaces. Whereas Bearchell described a moment of unity at the Anita Bryant protest, lesbian feminists seem to have had a different experience. In her analysis of LOOT, Becki Ross describes the very same event whereby lesbians active in LOOT "refused to countenance the 'ugly, misogynistic and unforgivable' tactics deployed by some gay men, from the printing of buttons and T-shirts that proclaimed 'Anita Sucks', and 'Squeeze Anita Out', to the delivery of antiwoman speeches and the burning of the Orange Juice Queen in effigy."[371] They saw this as evidence that gay men were anti-woman and failed to understand the plight of women and therefore did not share

[367] Chris Bearchell, "This is the Last Dykes Column," *The Body Politic*, no. 49 (Dec./Jan. 1978/79): 32.
[368] Warner, *Never Going Back*, 109-10.
[369] Chris Bearchell, "This is the Last Dykes Column," *The Body Politic*, no. 49 (Dec./Jan. 1978/79): 32.
[370] Ibid.
[371] Ross, "The House that Jill Built," 84.

common goals. What is interesting about this example, is the interpretation that emerges based on entry point. When we look at the history of lesbian organizing through a lesbian feminist lens, we undermine the role of activist lesbians within gay liberation and at the forefront of a specifically queer identity. Activist lesbians were fighting for sexual freedom and rights, not just as women or based on their 'femaleness', but as queer women who were marginalized in much the same way gay men were. Indeed, they found more lesbian visibility within gay liberation than they did within lesbian feminism.

From Bearchell's perspective, the lesbian and gay communities in Toronto were in a very "different space" by the end of 1978.[372] This newfound solidarity was marked by the demise of the *Dykes* column in *The Body Politic*, which first appeared two years prior to ensure lesbian input in every issue of the paper. But as Bearchell explained, *The Body Politic* had become an increasingly *lesbian* and gay magazine—the column had served its purpose and become redundant. Lesbians had secured their position within the gay liberation movement; they felt better represented and much more aligned. Indeed, quantification of contributions supports this view (see Appendix). In 1977, we see a notable increase in women's participation in the journal, making between one-sixth to one-third of contributors in most issues, with far more consistency in their involvement. There developed quasi-solidified groups of five to ten women who contributed regularly, some with ongoing feature columns.[373] In 1978, Chris Bearchell joined the collective, and though she was often the only female member, she maintained this role until the journal's demise. Likewise, when news coverage columns began in 1976, they were entirely dominated by male reporters. Two years later, Rosemary Ray began reporting regularly from Edmonton, and by the following year, we see

---

[372] Chris Bearchell, "This is the Last Dykes Column," *The Body Politic*, no. 49 (Dec./Jan. 1978/79): 32.
[373] Key figures included Maida Thilchen, Helen Sonthoff, Sherrill Cheda, Jane Rule, Jean Kowalewski, Judith Crewe, Ilona Laney, Lily Wood, Gay Bell, Mariana Valverde, Lorna Weir, Donna Kaye, and of course, Chris Bearchell.

a marked increase in women correspondents.[374] The surge of activist lesbian contributions to *The Body Politic* reflected Bearchell's sentiment that "Lesbians are no longer content to leave gay liberation to men while occupying themselves with matters primarily of concern to their straight sisters. Many activist lesbians and an increasing number of gay male activists have understood that gay liberation theory shares a lot of common ground with feminism."[375] For Bearchell, both movements challenged the same oppressive social structures (i.e. compulsory heterosexuality, the nuclear family, sex-role stereotyping), though could accomplish more within the gay liberation movement.

"don't rain on my parade, sister; I'm marching for you too"

In an article for *The Body Politic*, Beatrice Baker, a self-confessed "lesbian gay liberationist," discussed the ongoing tensions within the women's movement. She recounted her days as a student in the United States, reading Betty Freidan with "curiosity, consternation, recognition and anger."[376] At the time, she had embraced the student rights movement, worked for the civil rights movement, committed herself to the anti-war movement, but as she explained, these movements were "incredibly sexist."[377] As a result, many women were driven out of the Left and into the women's liberation movement. Baker wrote, "It was a fearful and joyful time. We raged and celebrated; explored and grew. And through the liberating influence of the women's liberation movement I discovered my lesbianism. I came out."[378] But the women's movement was an inhospitable space for lesbians during the 1960s. Baker explained, "Straight women feared that

---

[374] While they covered national and international issues, most were based in Toronto during this period. Regular correspondents included: Elizabeth Bolton from Montréal, Chris Bearchell, Fay Orr, Elinor Mahoney, Brenda Steiger, Barbara Harding, Debbie Bloomfield, Marcia Gillespie, and Enda Barker, all from Toronto.
[375] Chris Bearchell, "This is the Last Dykes Column," 32. *The Body Politic*, no. 49 (Dec./Jan. 1978/79): 32.
[376] Beatrice Baker, "Confessions of a Lesbian Gay Liberationist," *The Body Politic*, no. 57 (October 1979): 23.
[377] Ibid.
[378] Ibid.

society, the media, men would dismiss the movement as 'just a bunch of dykes'."[379] She continued, "But now, ironically, the majority of movement activists seem to be gay … And yet at some feminist gatherings, comprised largely of lesbians, I feel as welcome as an atheist at a Baptist convention."[380] For Baker, the gay liberation movement provided her with visibility as a queer woman. She wrote, "Straight folks say 'homosexual' and see in their minds, a gay male. I don't want to be invisible, and a homosexual organization, mixed or lesbian, is visible in the community as a gay group; a feminist organization is not."[381] She concluded, "Because I am lesbian, I channel most of my energy into the gay liberation movement."[382]

"I felt like I had arrived at a tea party"

By the late 1970s, there was mounting evidence that the autonomous lesbian movement in Canada was losing focus. For example, in May 1978, almost 100 lesbians converged at Carlton University in Ottawa for the "Ontario Lesbian Conference." Participants found the workshops, largely focused on "personal growth", were disorganized and revealed an absence of strong leadership, which was inexcusable against the backdrop of the homophobic backlash experienced by activist lesbians. [383] As one participant in the "Our Political Future" workshop explained: "Here I was crawling into this conference on my hands and knees from burnout, nails raw to the quick from hanging onto my sexual orientation in this heterosexual society, Anita's return trips to Canada, *Body Politic*'s raid, and I felt like I had arrived at a tea party—so little did the majority seem to realize the gravity of our situation."[384] Nonetheless, despite the absence of political vision,

---

[379] Ibid.
[380] Ibid.
[381] Ibid.
[382] Ibid.
[383] Editorial Collective, "Lesbian Conference High on Culture Low on Politics," *The Body Politic*, no. 44 (June/July 1978): 6.
[384] Ibid.

the conference was celebrated as a cultural success, with an impressive array of lesbian talent featured.[385]

The pinnacle of the lesbian conferences came the following year. Victoria Day weekend 1979 was set for the first Bi-National Lesbian Conference/Conference Lesbienne Bi-National to be held in Toronto. It was a much-hyped event organized by LOOT. The planning committee was unabashedly optimistic, advertising the event in *The Body Politic* in a column titled, "1000 lesbians," in which they described their vision of a "cultural, political and social event—a sea of lesbians united in sisterhood."[386] They described women's culture as "thriving", as "more lesbians voices are being heard," and the need to "continue to develop a sense of ourselves."[387] As more and more lesbians were 'coming out', the autonomous lesbian movement was faced with the task of being more inclusive and relevant. In order to be as inclusive as possible, the planning committee mailed a questionnaire to lesbian, gay, and feminist organizations, centres, and publications across the country. In this, they asked lesbians what they were looking for in a conference, and in the autonomous movement more broadly.[388] Based on feedback, they determined they would focus on "basic" needs, such as retaining custody of children or making enough money to pay rent, alongside broader existential concerns, such as the ongoing necessity of an autonomous movement. They really underestimated the depths of the divisions amongst lesbians at the time; they wrote, "Like the rest of our sisters, we'd like to stay away from the false split of the "personal" and the "political." We'd like to stay away from divisions into categories like "radical," "separatist," "socialist," "apolitical," etc. and concentrate on our common identities

[385] Ibid.
[386] Editorial Collective, "1000 Lesbians," *The Body Politic*, no. 50 (February 1979): 30.
[387] Ibid.
[388] LOOT Conference Committee, "What do you do with a Thousand Lesbians?" *The Body Politic*, no. 49 (December/January 1978/79): 36.

as lesbians…"[389] Though, without rectifying the beliefs underlying these labels, the much anticipated "sea of lesbians united in sisterhood" never materialized.

"So where is our movement now?"

Over 400 lesbians attended the Bi-National Lesbian Conference, but it was clear that the energy once propelling the movement was wavering, as it was losing its political edge. As one attendee remarked, "We've come out, but what are we coming out to, who have we come out as?"[390] This would become a resounding question as many lesbians struggled to come together under a common sense of identity. Val Edwards later explained, "The three-day conference should have provided the perfect context for the development of an autonomous lesbian movement. Although the conference was a well-organized social masterpiece, it was a disaster from a political perspective."[391] While hundreds of women attended the dance and banquet, the plenary sessions designed for political exchange and future planning generated almost no interest. For Edwards, "le coup de grace" came at the end of the conference when attendees decided it was time to prepare a Lesbian Bill of Rights, but as she explained, "if we had looked more closely at what rights we felt required protection we might have concluded months ago that Canada's autonomous lesbian movement is little more than a paper tiger."[392]

"LOOT was supposed to be everyone's home"

In May 1980, LOOT closed its doors. This had a significant impact on the lesbian community in Toronto. Some women blamed the early-May opening of the Fly-By-Night, a lesbian bar owned by Pat Murphy, for draining LOOT's last remaining resources. But by January 1981, the Fly-By-Night also closed. In less than a year, Toronto's lesbian community had lost two

---

[389] LOOT Conference Committee, "Getting Some Answers," *The Body Politic*, no. 51 (March/April 1979): 28.
[390] Ibid.
[391] Val Edwards, "Lesbians in Toronto: The Invisible Community," *Broadside* 1, no. 10 (September 1980): 4.
[392] Ibid., 5.

of its most important social institutions and at the time, many felt "a frightening sense of homelessness" and "a serious blow to our sense of collectivity."[393] Many of the women involved in LOOT were involved in producing *Broadside*, a Canadian feminist newspaper that had started publishing in 1979 and would run until 1989. Most of the collective members referred to themselves as radical feminists, and much of *Broadside*'s content reflected that. They focused on violence against women, which included pornography. They also turned their attention to sadomasochism, pederasty, and public sex, which they claimed violated 'feminist principles'. In this, they turned away from the promise lesbian organizing held for challenging homophobia, by reinforcing it through various discourses. Their disdain for sex was revealed in how they talked about gay men and gay male culture more broadly, which included how they described SM and intergenerational relationships. They challenged gay men to consider how they supported patriarchal structures, namely the pornography industry, viewed as the epitome of violence against women. They did this with a complete disregard to queer emancipation, including that of women.

How do we explain the rapid rise and decline of the autonomous movement? Institutionalized with the emergence of LOOT, the organization had thrived during a distinct historical moment in the lesbian and gay liberation movement. Lesbians, often outnumbered, overlooked, and ignored within gay liberation, feminist, and other leftist organizations, formed separate groups of their own. LOOT aimed to build cultural and political unity, but by the end of 1979, the organization was in disarray. Founded on the premise of openness, consensus, and diversity, this had quickly given way to homogeneity. With political attention so focused on the

---

[393] Lorna Weir and Brenda Steiger, "Lesbian Movement: Coming Together in a Hot Gym," *Broadside* 2, no. 10 (August/September 1981): 7.

exact parameters of women-identification and on what lesbianism was *not*, there was little ground to build a cohesive movement.[394]

Lesbians had long struggled for a sense of common identity. But really, many felt that lesbian feminists had nothing in common; they were only brought together by what they did not have in common with gay men and heterosexual men and women. In LOOT's newsletter *Lesbian Perspective* in August 1979, Sharon Stone wrote, "…being a lesbian means a hell of a lot more than sexual attraction. … So, don't give me that bullshit that any woman sexually attracted to another woman is a lesbian. Being a lesbian isn't an on again off again sexual pastime, it's a full-time belief."[395] But, what *did* lesbians believe in? Lesbian identity, entrenched in radical feminist politics, was anti-male, anti-left, and anti-heterosexual; as Sue Golding later explained, "For the first time in the herstory of feminism, our *raison d'être* became a reactive and critical one (i.e., against men), rather than creative and analytic (i.e., how to destroy Heterosexism)."[396] If the community was going to survive, lesbians needed to participate in gay liberation as feminists and in feminism as lesbians— "We need to determine on what terms we will contribute to gay liberation, and to stop complaining that the gay movement is non-feminist while at the same time withholding our feminist energy from it."[397] In November 1979, Pat Leslie wrote in *Lesbian Perspective*,

> We build our lesbian identity through a culture which is uniquely ours, the same way as any other oppressed group. However, this is only a means to an end, not the end itself. Without a culture based on our own power through collective identity, no group of people would ever be able to fight back. Without a political movement, a lesbian culture is useless. So where is our movement now? It is not to be found at LOOT. The biggest mistake we made was neglecting the political and educational needs of our community. Many of us are

[394] Ross, *The House that Jill Built*.
[395] Sharon Stone, "What is a Lesbian?" *Lesbian Perspective* (August 1979): 2.
[396] Sue Golding, "Coming to Terms with Power," *The Body Politic*, no.83 (May 1982): 34.
[397] Val Edwards, "Lesbians in Toronto: The Invisible Community," *Broadside* 1, no. 10 (September 1980): 4.

> left confused as to what it means to be a political lesbian, as opposed to a lesbian who is politically aware.[398]

LOOT had tried to be an umbrella organization for all lesbians in Toronto, whatever their political affiliations. LOOT was reluctant to consciously define itself as political—many wanted the organization to take a more activist stance, but others argued that politicizing LOOT would exclude and alienate too many lesbians, especially those just coming out. Ultimately, by failing to stand for something, LOOT stood for nothing; it "ended up supporting everyone in the abstract and no one in particular."[399] As fewer lesbians made LOOT central to their lives, "the once abundant energy fueling LOOT had all but dissipated."[400] As Becki Ross explains, "the very ground that initially nourished lesbian strength and self-determination gave way to widening ideological fissures, the gradual redirection of energy away from LOOT, and, eventually, the organization's demise."[401]

For many in Toronto's lesbian community, LOOT's closing was indicative of a deep "malaise" in the community and led to the declaration that the autonomous movement was dead.[402] In the September 1980 issue of *Broadside*, Val Edwards wrote "Today there is no lesbian movement…"[403] She continued, "The closing of 342 Jarvis St. is more than the end of a chapter in our history. In allowing the centre to fold, lesbian-feminists have made a cogent statement. In a word, we've given up the ghost."[404] Since the emergence of the autonomous movement, lesbians had struggled to overcome their differences and pull together fragmented backgrounds and politics into a cohesive identity. They had worked hard on building a movement around a "lesbian cause"

---

[398] Pat Leslie, "Opinion," *Lesbian Perspective* (November 1979): 2.
[399] Weir and Steiger, "Lesbian Movement," 7.
[400] Ross, "House that Jill Built," 86.
[401] Ross, *House that Jill Built*, 194.
[402] Val Edwards, "Lesbians in Toronto: The Invisible Community," *Broadside* 1, no. 10 (September 1980): 4.
[403] Ibid.
[404] Ibid.

but most of their issues were deeply intersectional, and thus hard to locate squarely within autonomous lesbian goals. Yet, the emergence of this movement helped develop a network of activists, indeed Edwards wrote, "Toronto's lesbian community has no political or cultural character to express, and our emotional needs are being served adequately by a web of interlocking social circles."[405] Disparate yet interconnected groups laid the foundation for the next generation of organizing.

The 1980s ushered in a new set of increasingly divisive debates, rooted in longstanding tensions between lesbians, feminists, and gay men. From the outset, the lesbian movement had been cross-cut politically by different currents within the women's movement; by the 1980s, many lesbians were shaking off the constraints of lesbian feminism and taking up new causes. During the 1980s, activist lesbians would divide further into distinct groups with clear goals: lesbians of colour, Jewish lesbians, working-class lesbians, leather dykes, SM dykes, lesbians against SM, lesbians with disabilities, plus emergent generational divides. Each had their own brand of identity politics and their own particular analysis of lesbian oppression. They did this within the context of the shifting political terrain of the 1980s, which would see the rise of conservatism and the ensuing backlash against gains made during the 1960s and 1970s.

In this chapter, I have traced lesbian organizing during the mid-1970s that gave rise to the autonomous lesbian movement. During the heady years of autonomous organizing, lesbians found themselves in conflict over crucial issues and soon came to doubt that a cohesive movement was even possible. First, was the question of a true, transcendent lesbian identity, its political and ideological underpinnings. Next, was the question of addressing violence against women, which was becoming a preeminent concern. Yet, activist lesbians challenged the emergent discourse on

---

[405] Ibid.

pornography, censorship, and age of consent. From this momentous rupture, two feminist camps emerged—anti-pornography or pro-sex – and reframed alliances. Activist lesbians, who remained aligned with gay liberation, were acutely aware of the negative and widespread effects of homophobic state censorship and worked to develop a feminist framework of sexuality that rejected notions of pornography, SM, and sex as inherently oppressive or patriarchal. Instead, they located the state as the source of their oppression, and in that, they shared a closer vision with gay men in queer liberation.

This particularly divisive debate amongst feminists contributed to the demise of the autonomous lesbian movement, and resurfaced as the infamous sex wars, which is taken up in the following chapter. Nonetheless, the movement remains a crucial moment in our understanding of both feminist and queer histories. The perspectives of lesbian feminists remain central to the academic and collective memory of feminist histories, and the role of gay male activists in the canon of gay liberation. My analysis has situated activist lesbians as influential voices within both feminist and queer histories. *The Body Politic* offers an important entry point into this history and provides unique insight into the perspectives of activist lesbians determined to remain aligned with gay liberation. Activist lesbians who continued to contribute to *The Body Politic* would forge ahead with new issues and debates during the 1980s.

<u>Chapter Six</u>

Activist Lesbians Foregrounding Coalition Politics

This chapter begins with the viewing of *Slumberparty*, a homemade 8mm porn film recently acquired by *The ArQuives*. The approximately 20 minute-long Super 8 film was made in 1984 by a Toronto-based collective of women artists, activists, and sex workers, as a direct intervention into the feminist porn debates of the period.[406] Calling themselves the "Positive Pornographers," they were responding to the wave of pro-censorship/anti-pornography feminism, which was falling in line with conservative political ideology that permeated government committees and consultations, legislative changes and enforcement practices. I cite this film as an erotic political action that forms part of the development of a pro-sex feminist theory and activist lesbian politics. In this chapter, I continue to trace activist lesbian praxis as these women navigated women's and gay liberation movements. I maintain that they upheld a radical transformative politics that remains overlooked and absented from narratives of feminist and gay liberation histories.

Over the course of the 1980s feminist debates intensified on SM, pornography, censorship, and sex work, and many of these positions were expressed within the realm of gay liberation and throughout the pages of *The Body Politic.* By the beginning of the decade the journal was flourishing: there was a surge in women's participation as authors, news correspondents, and collective members, Chris Bearchell emerged as a key voice within the journal and broader community, and readership peaked as content expanded.[407] Yet by the mid-1980s, many were

[406] The film was screened twice in public in 1984 then disappeared until 2016 when the only remaining reel was recovered and digitized by Cait McKinney and Hazel Meyer. The women featured promised to never show the film again without unanimous permission. See archival description: Hazel Meyer and Cait McKinney, "Slumberparty 2018," *Canadian Filmakers Distribution Centre*, retrieved from https://www.cfmdc.org/film/4629.
[407] See Appendix; see also: Editorial Collective, "True Confessions," readership survey, *The Body Politic*, no. 70 (February 1981): 21.

coming to critique *The Body Politic*, as questions about sexism and racism, and the extent to which they imbued the journal, erupted. We see the demise of the journal unfolding in two controversial decisions whereby the editorial collective took an anti-censorship position at the expense of gender and race-based injustices. The first rupture came in 1983 with the decision to publish an advertisement for Red Hot Video, which had already been targeted in feminist protests due to the store selling misogynistic snuff films and other pornographic materials. The second, more well-known, controversy came two years later in the decision to publish the infamous 'houseboy' classified ad (discussed in chapter seven). These two events revealed the ongoing undercurrent of sexism and racism within the movement, as represented by *The Body Politic*.

The previous two chapters described the rise of the lesbian and gay liberation movement in Canada, highlighting the optimism of early liberationists to revolutionize society. They located the heterosexual monogamous family as the primary site of oppression, a perspective that resonated with lesbians and gay men of all social classes. As we saw in chapter four, the vision of liberation shifted quickly as gay men narrowed their focus to sexual expression and freedom, while lesbians broadened their view to understand sexual repression as one of many oppressive forces. This tension propelled lesbian activists toward autonomous organizing, which was the subject of chapter five. In that chapter, I traced the rise and demise of the autonomous lesbian movement over the span of its four glorious years. The very limited research on this specific history is typically told through the lens of lesbian feminist and women's organizations, periodicals, and events. An overlooked aspect of this narrative includes the activist lesbians who were critical of lesbian feminist ideologies. Within feminist circles, they articulated a feminist perspective that was staunchly anti-censorship and pro-sex. These women, who I refer to as activist lesbians,

likewise remained interconnected with the gay liberation movement, and within those circles, continued to push for radical social transformation beyond sexual liberation.

Chapter six is divided into two parts, tracing the second half of the journal's run. In the first part of this chapter, the lesbian community in Toronto remobilizes after the autonomous movement had been declared dead, along with the closure of two foundational organizations, LOOT and the Fly-By-Night. The rise of the political Right propelled them into action in the face of emergent homophobic hate groups, the onset of the HIV epidemic, government cutbacks to social services, gentrification, and increasingly repressive laws and police enforcement. By 1981, we see the first dyke marches and the first national lesbian conference held on the west coast, giving semblance of a national movement. With increasing political conservatism came a renewed focus on sexuality that aligned with a vocal pro-censorship feminist voice, especially related to SM, pornography, and prostitution. We continue to see lesbians having internal debates, amongst themselves and other feminists, which came to a head at the Barnard Conference in 1982. The first section concludes with a clear and irreparable division between feminists. In the historical shadows of this debate, a voice was developing to speak back to lesbian feminism and the desexualisation of lesbianism. That voice is taken up again in chapter seven, as I trace the legacy of activist lesbians.

Part II of this chapter explores the aftermath of the bathhouse raids, which catapulted the gay community in Toronto into action, aligning lesbian and gay male forces to create a brief but powerful union. Similar sexisms re-emerged, frustration over which erupted in 1983 after the collective's controversial decision to publish an advertisement for a pornographic video store. For lesbian contributors to the journal it was less an issue about censorship than it was about principle. For gay men to support this particular store, or the journal to profit from it, was perceived as an

afront to women. Recognizing that gay male porn was different, by supporting the store, they were endorsing a franchise that profited from violent heterosexual porn, including snuff films about women. The publication of the ad was viewed as a complete disregard of women in the movement, especially in light of what they described to be sexist and misogynistic videos. The publication of the ad divided women within *The Body Politic* and the community. Accusations of sexism would bring many to cancel subscriptions and cease contributing to the magazine, while at the same time, it propelled many other women to get more involved.

In this chapter, see the tangible effects of the censorship wars. As a singular pro-censorship feminism was taking prominence in media and regulatory consideration, activist lesbians strategized to push back. Within *The Body Politic*, there was a surge of articles written by women covering topics from lesbian "smut," to sex toy shopping, to sex worker rights, anti-racism, and how to coalesce subjugated groups. Outside of *The Body Politic*, activist lesbians were producing alternative sexual imagery and formalizing organizations to fight against state regulation. This chapter reclaims the voices of radical activist lesbians who were pro-sex, feminist, and anti-racist, and provide a counternarrative to the version of feminism that was fast gaining prominence. Indeed, it was around this time that Chris Bearchell and others were making their own 'positive pornography.' In chapter seven, we draw on themes of pro-sex feminism and anti-racism in exploring the legacy of *The Body Politic* and to inaugurate activist lesbians into this historical imagining.

The Super 8 Viewing

Weeks prior to visiting *The ArQuives* I had been in communication with several archivists to request all available material related to lesbian organizations and groups between 1971-1987, including flyers, posters, photographs, and periodicals. Based on my preliminary research, I asked

for information about specific organizations, events, and activists. As discussed in chapter three, on the first of my three-day research visit, I was given a dozen vertical files, including Chris Bearchell's, which included only 20 documents. I left the archive that day disappointed that such a key figure in the lesbian and gay liberation movement in Canada had been reduced to a handful of pages that gave no sign of her influence. The following day, my luck took a turn. In addition to gaining access to the withheld vertical file and the nine boxes stored offsite, a serendipitous encounter allowed me access to an additional piece of archival footage. I happened to be working alongside a scholar from Texas in town for a conference and spending the day at the archive researching lesbian pornography. Shortly after arriving, volunteer archivist, Alan Miller, entered the room to declare that he had "it"—an item pertaining to their prior dialogue. "It" turned out to be a homemade porn film, featuring none other than Chris Bearchell. The 1984 Super 8 film titled, "Slumberparty," had taken on near mythical status. It was screened twice in public that same year, and then disappeared, until 2016. For years, researchers and artists Cait McKinney and Hazel Meyer had been searching for it, until artistic director Evalyn Parry recovered the last remaining reel from a friend who had appeared in it.[408] I was struck at the sheer luck of being in the same space as a researcher who had requested "lesbian pornography," as opposed to "lesbian activism" or "Chris Bearchell." If not for her interest in pornography, I may well have never known about the availability of this film.

[408] Cait McKinney is a professor in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University, and Hazel Meyer, an interdisciplinary artist based in Toronto. In the context of their ongoing collaboration examining the process of acquiring, preserving, and providing ethical access to archives of queer porn, in 2016 they recovered and digitized "Slumberparty." (See: Hazel Meyer and Cait McKinney, "Tape Condition: Degraded," *ArQuives Exhibition*, June-September 2016, retrieved from https://arquives.ca/past-exhibitions/tape-condition-degraded/). Evalyn Parry is a queer, feminist, director, writer, performer and musician, and in 2015, was named Artistic Director of Toronto's alternative queer theatre company, *Buddies in Bad Times*. (See: "Artistic Director," *Buddies in Bad Times*, retrieved from http://buddiesinbadtimes.com/about/artistic-director/).

Sitting side-by-side with the porn researcher and Lucie, the archivist, we watched the approximately 20-minute silent film on a computer monitor. We immediately lamented the lack of volume to the extent that Lucie telephoned Cait, who confirmed that the original copy was indeed silent. The film is grainy, set in a dimly lit room, with bed sheets waving across the camera for special effects. The camera zooms in and out as it pans around what appears to be a living room, with approximately eight women drinking and lounging about. The film focuses on two women, one of whom ties the other up. In a long drawn out scene of light bondage, wrist-restraining ropes are visibly made tighter, and with tension mounting, the film abruptly ends.

I viewed this film against the backdrop of reading the pornography debates in *The Body Politic*, which took place predominately amongst gay men and lesbians. Outside of *The Body Politic*, the feminist movement had taken a rightward drift and much of the debates were focused on "legitimate" sexual practices (namely concern over butch/femme, SM, and in some cases, sex altogether), and an increasingly singular focus on regulating pornography through state censorship. Pro-censorship/anti-porn feminists dominated mainstream debates, and their alignment with the agendas of the state and religious fundamentalists perplexed many lesbians who wrote for *The Body Politic*. Against this wave of feminist activism, was a group of women in Toronto, calling themselves the "Positive Pornographers," who were experimenting with sex and technology, making porn videos, and theorizing about them. It was at once erotic, political, and culturally defiant.[409]

[409] Hazel Meyer and Cait McKinney, "Slumberparty 2018," *The ArQuives* 2018, 25min.33s, retrieved from https://www.cfmdc.org/film/4629.

Part I

The Shifting Socio-Political Climate of the 1980s

Broad cultural shifts during the 1980s led to a retrenchment of conservative values. A new era of Right-wing politics emerged as backlash to the sexual revolution and counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s. The 'sexually emancipated' 1970s were placed in direct causal relation to the emergence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Political theorist Wendy Brown explains, "Liberal or radical formulations of freedom were smeared by charges of selfishness and irresponsibility."[410] Gay men were targeted as threats to public health and subjected to intense police surveillance.[411] Jane Rule accused police of enjoying their role in protecting ignorance, "bolstering prejudice in raids on everything from steam baths to newspapers, providing lurid copy."[412] Sex workers were similarly scapegoated as vectors of disease and HIV-transmission, as the antithesis of family values, and as a nuisance to society at large. They likewise faced public harassment and police repression in the face of increasing redevelopment of urban spaces. By the early 1980s, the process was underway; establishments for adult entertainment were shut down, street-based sex workers arrested, and bathhouses raided, as both groups were pushed out of the neighbourhoods where they had long lived, socialized, and worked.

During the 1980s—the decade of sex panics—a series of bitter cultural and political battles raged over sexuality. There was a surge in public attention over the regulation of pornography, prostitution, reproductive freedoms, gender expression, and the scope of legal protections for lesbians and gay men.[413] Over the course of the decade, lesbian feminism was rearticulated by

---

[410] Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 9.
[411] Kinsman and Gentile, *Canadian War on Queers.*
[412] Jane Rule, "So's Your Grandmother: Stumps," *The Body Politic*, no. 54 (July 1979): 20.
[413] Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, an the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004).

prominent cultural and radical feminists, such as Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon, whose position came to be known as anti-pornography, or anti-sex, feminism. They questioned whether pornography was harmless, private, or reflective of sexual liberation, as its defenders claimed. They called attention to its broader impacts: the objectification of individual women as sex objects and the corresponding discriminatory treatment of women in society; how the genre seeped into mainstream society and promoted a culture of sexual violence; how the industry profited from the sexual exploitation of women, and those profits flowed almost exclusively to men. Anti-pornography feminism presented a view that proved remarkably successful in swaying public opinion and the Canadian courts to understand pornography as a grave harm to women and society at large.

Over the course of the past century, concern over pornography has waxed and waned in conjunction with changes in its production and circulation. Historic efforts to prohibit obscene material, such as pornography, have largely been waged by feminists, and the results have been more restrictive and discriminatory application of laws. The first obscenity laws were introduced in the mid-1800s, rooted in Victorian attitudes toward sexuality. From this view, pornography was a vice to which the lower classes were especially vulnerable. The judicial test for obscenity was the determination of whether the material would "deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences."[414] In practice, the law attempted to regulate the "dangerous classes"—the young, uneducated, and working-classes—to preserve the moral order and nuclear family unit.[415] With the fading influence of the social purity movement, interest in obscene publications waned until the late-1940s, upon the emergence of inexpensive and widely available

[414] Richard Jochelson and Kristen Kramar, *Sex and the Supreme Court: Obscenity and Indecency Law in Canada* (Halifax: Ferwood Publishing, 2010), 35.
[415] Ibid., 35.

pulp novels and "girlie magazines."[416] A renewed campaign to toughen up Canada's obscenity laws in the 1950s resulted in its contemporary characterization. In what is now section 163 of the *Criminal Code Canada*, material is prohibited as obscene when "a dominant characteristic of the matter or thing is the undue exploitation of sex, violence, crime, horror, cruelty or the undue degradation of the human person."[417] With the advent of home video in the 1980s, alongside the increasing use of sexuality in mainstream advertisement and the growing influence of anti-porn feminist discourse, the regulation and censorship of sexual materials once again intensified.

The impact of the anti-porn feminist view during the 1980s was exemplified in the Supreme Court decision on obscenity in 1992. The case of *R. v. Butler* was the first constitutional challenge to the obscenity provision since it came into effect in the 1950s. The case relied on the newly enacted *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to argue that censorship of obscene materials infringed on the right to freedom of expression. In this landmark ruling, the Supreme Court of Canada acknowledged that the obscenity law infringes on the constitutional right to free expression, but its restriction is justifiable in order to protect society. In keeping with the laws introduced in the 1950s, the decision was widely touted as an unequivocal feminist victory. Reactions amongst other feminists, queer, and socio-legal scholars were more critical.[418] Notably, the first criminal charges were laid only six weeks later—against the lesbian and gay *Glad Day Bookshop* in Toronto, for selling the lesbian SM magazine, *Bad Attitude*. This would be the first of several court cases involving queer material. Socio-legal scholars emphasize that in the decades since *Butler*, mainstream heterosexual pornography has flourished while alternative sexualities have been

[416] Brenda Cossman and Shannon Bell, "Introduction," in Brenda Cossman, Shannon Bell, Lise Gotell, Becki Ross, eds., *Bad Attitude/s on Trial: Pornography, Feminism, and the Butler Decision* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 3-47.
[417] Ibid.
[418] Ibid.

subjected to intense scrutiny. Meanwhile, the obscenity offense has rarely been used to target sexist and sexually violent material.[419]

While anti-porn feminism gained mainstream influence during the 1980s, and shaped popular understandings of pornography and its intendent harms, other feminist and queer liberationist voices were also developing. During this time, activist lesbians were articulating a pro-sex feminist praxis attune to the problem of state censorship and controls, that forewarned the repressive legislative outcomes described above. From this position they cultivated coalitions with sex workers, and other sexual "outlaws," who were actively fighting against further repression at the hands of the state and feminists who were speaking about, but never with, them.[420] A diverse group of people came together on the topics of SM, pornography, and prostitution, to develop a distinctly feminist critique of state censorship and a more nuanced and grassroots understanding of patriarchal power relations as they intersected with race, class, gender, and sexual expression.

In the following section, I outline the debates between the pro-sex and anti-sex feminist camps, and the location of activist lesbians within them. Here, I develop the theoretical underpinnings of this period in the lead up to the Barnard Conference, which is discussed at the end of this section. That infamous conference, intended to work through and address the debates around sexuality, instead marked the pinnacle of the sex wars. As we see in the remaining sections, the sex wars culminated in an irreversible divide amongst feminists of the time, and inadvertently propelled lesbian life; we see the development of pro-sex theoretical ideas and the flourishing of an erotic lesbian subculture. Activist lesbians were deemed anti-feminist when they turned their

---

[419] Janine Benedet, "The Paper Tigress: Canadian Obscenity Law 20 Years after R V Butler," Canadian Bar Review, 93, no.1: 1-37. See also: Brenda Cossman, Shannon Bell, Lise Gotell, Becki Ross, eds., *Bad Attitude/s on Trial: Pornography, Feminism, and the Butler Decision* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Kirsten Johnson, *Undressing* the *Canadian State: The Politics of Pornography from Hicklin to Butler* (Winnipeg and Halifax: Fernwood, 1995).

[420] Gayle Rubin, "The Leather Menace: Comments on Politics and S/M," reprinted in *The Body Politic*, no. 82 (April 1982): 35.

attention to gay liberation, free sexual expression, and anti-censorship campaigns. And when they could not reconcile with the gay movement's failure to address racism and sexism, they directed their attention to sex worker rights and anti-racism organizing. Per usual, activist lesbians appeared to be nowhere because they were everywhere, fighting for intersecting causes.

"Look over here, look over there, lesbians are everywhere."

The early-1980s were difficult for the lesbian community in Toronto. Both the Fly-By-Night bar and the *Lesbian Organization of Toronto* (LOOT), two important political and social spaces for lesbians, had closed their doors. The former, in response to economic pressures, when organizer Pat Murphy refused to lower wages of employees any further.[421] And the latter, in response to ideological pressures, as LOOT was no longer perceived as meeting the political needs of the community. What had emerged from leadership within that organization was a group of predominately white middle-class lesbians who excluded trans women, critiqued butch/femme aesthetic, and upheld rigid parameters as to who counted as a lesbian (or a woman). When public focus turned to censorship, many of these same women led the charge against pornography in prominent North American organizations like *Women Against Pornography* (WAP) and *Women Against Violence Against Women* (WAVAW).[422] Upon the closure of these two organizations, many in Toronto had declared lesbian politics "dead."[423] And yet energy was quickly revived in the early 1980s with the emergence of new groups and modes of protest. Though many of these actions were sidelined by a dominant feminist ideology emerging with the more singular focus on censorship laws, as we will see, the seeds of radical coalition politics were planted by activist lesbians early in the decade.

---

[421] "Lesbians Against the Right," *Rise Up! A Digital Archive of Feminist Activism*, retrieved from https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/activism/organizations/lesbians-against-the-right/
[422] See chapter five.
[423] Val Edwards, "Lesbians in Toronto: The Invisible Community," *Broadside*, vol. 1, no.10 (September 1980): 4.

In May 1981, more than 500 women attended the fifth Binational Lesbian Conference at Langara College in Vancouver, British Columbia. This was the first ever national conference held west of Ontario, and the first since the politically "disastrous" 1979 Toronto conference.[424] When it ended, the conference committee, which included Dorothy Kidd, Linda Ruedrich, Anne Russell, and Ellen Woodsworth, distributed a "brochure" (a 24-page final report summarizing the events) to keep the organizing momentum going. For them, it was clear that "…a young and vibrant movement exists" and there was an urgent need to develop it into a "…a strong and public lesbian movement."[425] In the brochure, they reported that the conference hosted over 40 workshops on "every aspect of lesbian life" and at times, resembled "more of a festival than a conference."[426] They declared, "We've come a long way from the separatist seventies with its strict codes of dress, conduct, and thought."[427] Workshops addressed a variety of issues, including support for lesbian mothers on welfare; the practical, social, and emotional need of lesbians with disabilities; how to address violence facing lesbians in prison; feelings of isolation among rural lesbians; the positions of lesbians on the job, in trade unions, and in the face of cutbacks to work and government programs. Students described the lack of lesbian content in Women's Studies courses and homophobia amongst the discipline's professors. Lesbians of colour spoke of the urgency to be known to one another and theorized on their distinct position within the greater context of the women's movement. In the brochure, the organizers summed, "While power and visibility for all lesbians were the buzzwords, the women with the least amount of power among us had even more to say."[428]

---

[424] Ibid.
[425] Lesbian Conference Committee, "Final Report: 1981 Lesbian Conference," conference brochure, Lesbian Power: Organizing for the 80s conference (Langara College, May 16-18, 1981), *Rise Up! Feminist Archive*, https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/lesbianconference-1981-finalreport-organizingfor80s.pdf.
[426] Ibid., 1.
[427] Ibid., 2
[428] Ibid.

Crucially, at the conference, they had identified a common enemy that affected all of them—the conservative Right. Through the eyes of the Right, they were all interchangeable—poor mothers, welfare recipients, people of colour, trans folks, lesbians, gay men, sex workers—and this shared status brought them together. The "shocking reports" of harassment against lesbians and gay men in Toronto "set a tone of urgency and led to several resolutions calling for more political action, public education and networking within and beyond the lesbian community."[429] At the close of the conference, 200 women took to the streets in the first dyke march in Canada; they marched from Robson's Square through downtown Vancouver, to the West End Community Centre, chanting: "Look over here, look over there, lesbians are everywhere."[430] According to Bearchell, it was "one of the country's rowdiest and most boisterous demonstrations."[431] The conference and march appeared to breathe life back into the lesbian community and revealed the undercurrent of radicalism that had flowed through the lesbian movement since its inception.

The following month, over 40 women attended the first meeting of *Lesbians Against the Right* in Toronto. The group formed after *Gays and Lesbians Against the Right Everywhere* (GLARE) held a day of workshops to confront ongoing police harassment and the emergence of new homophobic groups. They coalesced over cultural pride and their opposition to "the sexism and racism of the Right."[432] In one of the workshops, lesbians discussed hosting a one-day conference that would focus on fighting the Right, to become the "Lesbians Fighting the Right" Forum. Even the organizers were surprised when over 100 women attended. For them, this

---

[429] Ibid., 5.
[430] The Chez Madame Arthur Bar Boycott in Montréal in 1974 was first lesbian public demonstration. See: Julie Podmore and Line Chamberland, "Entering the Urban Frame: Early Lesbian Activism and Public Space in Montréal," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* vol. 19, no. 2 (2015): 192-211.
[431] Chris Bearchell, "Lesbian Pride March is a First for Canada," *The Body Politic*, no. 74 (June 1981): 10.
[432] Gays and Lesbians Against the Right Everywhere (GLARE), "Police and the Right-Wing: GLARE Position Paper for the City of Toronto's 'Study of Relations between the Homosexual Community and the Police" (August 18, 1981), *Rise Up! Feminist Archive*, https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/glare-1981-neveragainfightbackpamphlet.pdf.

signaled "an energy that day which had not been evident among lesbians in this city for quite a while."[433] *Lesbians Against the Right* (LAR) evolved into a formal organization shortly thereafter.

This newfound energy was emerging in the face of an increasingly hostile social climate. LAR was a political organization, informed by a lesbian-feminist analysis of oppression, and by locating the Right as a shared source of oppression, they were able to bring together, "Political dykes, street dykes, bar dykes, gay women, lesbian mothers, socialist feminists, radical feminists, lesbian separatists, working women … we were all there."[434] And this diverse group of lesbians came together in Toronto's first lesbian pride march, Dykes in the Streets, on October 7, 1981. Over 350 women marched to "openly declare our pride and power, happily and without fear."[435] Indeed, it "was a dangerous time to be visibly lesbian or gay in Toronto."[436] Amy Gottlieb, who helped organize the march, described it as a resistance to the growing tide of homophobia and a specific demonstration against the police arrests of gay men and police harassment of lesbians.[437] Protesters held signs indicating interconnecting concerns: "Will your lesbian co-op be charged as a common bawdy house?"[438] While feminists frequently emphasized gender as the dividing force between lesbians and gay men, queer women recognized that they were not separate; they risked being subjected to the same laws and punishments as gay men based on their status as sexual minorities.

Led by *Dykes on Bikes*, with a police escort and gay male allies marching along the sidewalks, they traced a route that passed several lesbian landmarks and wound through the crowds

---

[433] Lesbians Against the Right (LAR), "Preface" and "Conclusion," *Dykes in the Streets: Lesbians are Everywhere Fighting the Right*, speeches given at the Lesbians Against the Right conference (Toronto, May 9, 1981):1.
[434] Ibid., 31.
[435] Ibid.
[436] Amy Gottlieb, "Toronto's Unrecognized First Dyke March," in *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. J. Lorinc et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 330.
[437] Ibid.
[438] Ibid.

of Saturday afternoon Yonge Street shoppers.[439] First, they marched to The Quest, a gay male bar operated by Phil Stein, who had recently forced the closure of the Fly-By-Night, the sole women-only space in the city. This was at once to protest and mourn the loss of an important socio-political space. The next stop was at LOOT's former home, to acknowledge their political past. Then, the YMCA Macphail Residence for Women, which was under threat of closing, to show solidarity, support, and the urgency of addressing the impacts of cutbacks on women. The following stop at the Continental Tavern, though closed, commemorated Toronto's first lesbian bar. Then, to Cinema 2000, to protest their "pornographic, anti-woman movies, particularly the movie *Snuff*…"[440] The march ended at City Hall to demonstrate "lesbian protest against police harassment, lesbian solidarity with gay men on the bath raids protest, child custody cases of lesbian mothers, and the exclusion of lesbians from the Ontario Human Rights Code."[441] Their march encapsulated lesbians' social and political presence in the city, and the ways in which they were impacted by the rise of the Right.

These are pivotal moments in lesbian organizing in Canada, and attendees documented the events in news reports published in *The Body Politic*. The first, in Vancouver, was a show of pride and revived energy in a movement that had recently been declared dead. The second in Toronto, was a public response to the rising anti-lesbian/anti-sex backlash sweeping across Canada. They were the first lesbian-specific marches in North America, yet there is very little mention of them in the queer canon. They receive nowhere near the elevated status of the We Demand march on Parliament nor the protests that came in response to the bathhouse raids. Outside of *The Body*

[439] Anna Marushka, "Dykes Against the Right," *The Body Politic*, no.78 (November 1981): 13.
[440] Allison Burgess, "The Emergence of the Toronto Dyke March," in *We Still Demand! Redefining Resistance in Sex and Gender Struggles*, ed. Patrizia Gentile, Gary Kinsman, and Pauline Rankin (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 103.
[441] Anna Marushka, "Dykes Against the Right," *The Body Politic*, no.78 (November 1981): 13.

Politic, these events are barely acknowledged at all. Tom Warner mentions both, in all of four sentences, in *Never Going Back: History of Queer Activism in Canada*. In the recently published essay, "Toronto's Unrecognized First Dyke March," Amy Gottlieb, describes events in Toronto but makes no mention of Vancouver.[442] Finally, my archival research turned up a single pamphlet of the Dykes on the Streets march in Toronto, and nothing on Vancouver.

Largely lost to the collective memory of the gay liberation movement in Canada are the voices of lesbians who were speaking back to the conservative socio-political landscape of the time. Though *Lesbians Against the Right* folded in 1983, for the two years that it was active, members worked to form a grassroots organization that made connections between the goals of lesbian, gay, feminist, anti-racist, labour, pro-choice, anti-nuclear, and anti-poverty movements.[443] Even though LAR was short-lived, many activist lesbians continued developing coalition politics and advocating for the socially marginalized. These efforts have been largely overlooked in Queer History, and they are about to be overshadowed by a monolithic feminist voice that was emerging in the context of conservative backlash.

What Color Is Your Handkerchief?

> Some whisper about it. Some accuse it. Some are truly repulsed by the very thought of it. A few are genuinely curious. […] If you happen to be a lesbian and you happen to engage in it, you might easily be considered Anti-Feminist, a Pervert, a Menace, a Sickie, a Reactionary or even a Fascist. And not necessarily in that order. Not surprisingly, you will enrage the police, the right wing's fanatic Moral Majority, and even a few of our own all-too-holy and politically correct lefties. But to your shock and horror, you may also enrage many, many of your own Lesbian-Feminist Sisters – and if you do, you will be condemned by them as a Sexist Male in Female Genitalia Drag. Be prepared. Brace Yourself.[444]

In the passage above, published for *The Body Politic*, Sue Golding was describing the reactionary consequences of practicing SM, which came from all directions—the political Right and Left, and

[442] Gottlieb, "Toronto's Unrecognized."
[443] Burgess, "The Emergence."
[444] Sue Golding, "Coming to Terms with Power," *The Body Politic*, no.83 (May 1982): 32.

amongst them, and perhaps even the most discouraging of all, lesbian feminist sisters in the struggle for equality. As we saw in the previous chapter, lesbian feminists came to dominate the autonomous movement by appropriating lesbianism as the ultimate patriarchal resister—a political identity voided of its sexual basis. Lesbian feminists not only desexualized, but indeed problematized, the sexual element at the core of lesbian identity by imposing a set of heteronormative norms and ideals onto lesbian sexual expression. In so doing, lesbian feminists aligned with the moral and religious majority in their stance against SM, pornography, and prostitution.

Toward the end of the 1970s, several anthologies on SM were published, in "attempt to put sex back into lesbian politics."[445] In 1979, P. Califia published "A Secret Side of Lesbian Sexuality" in *The Advocate*, and shortly thereafter, along with Gayle Rubin and others, formed Samois, a lesbian SM collective based in San Francisco.[446] Within the year, Samois published an anthology called *What Color Is Your Handkerchief: A Lesbian S/M Sexuality Reader*.[447] The publication immediately incited backlash—some feminist bookstores refused to carry it, some feminist publications refused to even advertise it. And so, the SM debate began, and would dominate feminist discussion in *The Body Politic* for the next two years.

The debate was divided into two camps. One side framed lesbian SM as inherently anti-feminist, arguing that it simulated the sexual power dynamics that enabled men to oppress women. Some were less polarizing in their views, but nonetheless, skeptical of its subversive potential. In a letter to *The Body Politic*, Martha Fleming questioned how practicing SM would help to

---

[445] Ibid., 33.
[446] Pat Califia was an influential lesbian writer during this time; still a prolific author, he now identifies as a bisexual trans man and goes by the name Patrick Califia.
[447] Samois, *What Color is Your Handkerchief: A Lesbian S/M Sexuality Reader* (Berkeley: SAMOIS, 1979).

overcome socio-economic inequality, or experiences of marginality and oppression.[448] Others questioned whether this entire dialogue was indicative of a shift in alliances, overriding women's liberation in favour of gay male liberation. Lorna Weir and Eve Zaremba wrote in *Broadside*: "What should be of some concern to the women's movement is the recent alliance of S/M dykes and possibly butch-femme women as well, with gay liberation."[449] From this view, lesbian SM practitioners were aligning with gay male ideology, focused on sex and sexual freedom rather than the presumably more important issues to defend.

The other side of the debate articulated lesbian SM as an erotic and empowering practice, arguing that it challenged gender roles and expectations. In *Lesbian Tide*, Samois asserted that "s/m is a form of sexual dissent. We oppose the patriarchal institution of non-imaginative, reproductive sex. The roles adopted during s/m are not governed by or correlated with gender or social sex-roles."[450] In 1981, Samois published a defense of SM called *Coming to Power*, highlighting the egalitarian and feminist aspects of SM, such as the control held by participants, and by contrasting consent within SM contexts with non-consensual power relations typical in patriarchal society.[451] From this perspective, lesbian SM was political in its capacity to re-center sex within the lesbian movement and community, as these women actively distanced themselves from anti-sex lesbian feminism.

In *The Body Politic*, Sue Golding referred to *Coming to Power* as "profound" and "the best thing that's been published on feminist theory/practice in a long, long time."[452] For her, *Coming to Power* challenged many of the prevailing myths about lesbian sexuality: women do more in bed

---

[448] Martha Fleming, "Letters*:* Sexual Hierarchy Rejected," *The Body Politic*, no.85 (July/August 1982): 4.
[449] Lorna Weir and Eve Zaremba, "Boys and Girls Together: Feminism and Gay Liberation," *Broadside* vol.4, no.1 (October 1982): 7.
[450] Samois, "S/M Challenges Anti-Porn," *The Lesbian Tide*, vol. 9, no. 3 (November/December 1979): 25.
[451] Samois, *Coming to Power: Writings and Graphics on Lesbian S/M* (San Francisco, Up Press, 1981).
[452] Golding, "Coming to Terms with Power," 32.

than discuss women's oppression, sometimes they tie each other up with leather straps, use vibrators, have orgasms. She explained that from her perspective, lesbian SM sex was consensual, erotic, powerful, political, and counter to popular belief, deeply feminist. For her, the book reestablished an overlooked but key point about feminist politics: "It has something to do with Sex, a 'something' that is politically liberating, exciting, strengthening and erotic."[453] Moreover, SM allowed for a deeper exploration of power, "…where power is understood as erotic, sensual and socially/historically created (that is, political), rather than something to be reduced (as is often done) to the crude equation Power = Patriarchy = Male, or in short, as something anti-woman".[454] Here, SM was not viewed as a sexual aberration, nor reflective of the scars of patriarchy, but rather a means to explore deeper nuances and understandings of complex and intersectional expressions of power.

Others in *The Body Politic* were more conflicted in their views. For example, in "Confessions of a lesbian ex-masochist," Mariana Valverde wrote, "My political development made me aware of the subtle ways in which women glorify and submit to the male power that oppresses us, and, especially after I came out as a lesbian, I acquired a healthy disgust for all images of sex that humiliate one of the partners," she continued, "And yet, and yet…Deep down somewhere, far beneath the very correct lesbian feminist that my friends know, there is a very young, very 'femme' girl who just wants to get fucked, in any and every way."[455] Over the following year, Valverde became increasingly skeptical of the "liberating" discourse emerging around lesbian SM and its "false promises." To make her point, she discussed a "truly shocking" pamphlet by Samois, which included a glossary, which defined feminism, fetish, and fist-fucking,

---

[453] Ibid., 32.
[454] Ibid., 32.
[455] Mariana Valverde, "Confessions of a Lesbian Ex-Masochist," *The Body Politic*, no. 56 (September 1979): 18.

alongside the "handkerchief colour code for lesbians."[456] She concluded that "Many of these sexual practices probably will never be appropriate for feminists," explaining further, "Some fantasies are utopian; they lead us towards non-sexist, egalitarian, free communities. Some fantasies, on the other hand, far from pointing to the repressed innocence behind us or to the golden age in front of us, point straight to our patriarchal upbringing."[457] Ultimately, Valverde appeared conflicted between her own desires and political affiliations. For her, SM was not a form of sexual dissent, it was another manifestation of patriarchal relations of power, and therefore 'inappropriate,' however desirable.

Valverde's article provoked a surge of contributors coming out as SM practitioners. The issue escalated over the course of the next two years as lesbians took to *The Body Politic* to debate their positions, especially within the *Letters* section of the journal. In the proceeding issue, Peg McCuaig responded, "When I make sm love, I'm not womon-hating. I'm womon-loving. I'm in love with womyn…I don't play sm love out of hate. I do it out of love."[458] And in the next issue, Amy Groves expressed her disappointment in Valverde's article, positing, "Could it be that Valverde assumes that all 'inequalities' are based on sex roles?"[459] Judith Zutz, "an out S&M dyke" wrote, "Marianna Valverde obviously knows *nothing* about dyke S&M…She doesn't understand what it's all about, because she's appalled by it. She's obviously not into it and has never experienced the emotionality, the sensitivity and the intensity of lesbian love-making that involves any kind of S&M."[460] Zutz called for more dykes who were actually interested in SM to be represented in *The Body Politic*.

---

[456] Mariana Valverde, "Feminism Meets Fist-Fucking: Getting Lost in Lesbian S&M," *The Body Politic*, no. 60 (February 1980): 43.
[457] Ibid., 43.
[458] Peg McCuaig, "Power Trip or Fun and Games: Lesbian S&M, Part 2," *The Body Politic*, no. 61 (March/April 1980): 43.
[459] Amy Groves, "Letters: Lesbian S&M: Valverde Roasted," The Body Politic, no. 62 (April 1980): 4.
[460] Judith Zutz, "Letters: Lesbian S&M: Valverde Roasted," The Body Politic, no. 62 (April 1980): 4.

Contributors as far as San Francisco voiced their positions, demonstrating both the prominence of the issue and the reach of *The Body Politic*. Terry Kolb, a member of Samois, explained, "…I and many like me have had a deep need for S&M sex all our lives. For us, S&M is both liberating and needed."[461] Kolb continued, "Perhaps if Ms. Valverde realized that the very thing that makes masochistic fantasies and experiences so enticing is that a scary situation is brought under the masochist's *control*, she would not have so many problems in recognizing S&M as a politically legitimate expression of our sexuality."[462] In the same issue, Valverde came to her own defense. She explained that her article was not a condemnation of SM, rather an exploration of the relationship between the proliferation of sexual images and sexual liberation. She wrote, "The point feminists are discussing is not whether we are for or against sex…The point is rather: now that we know we can enjoy sex, now that we know our possibilities are as unlimited as those of men, what do we want to do? What kind of sex do we want? What are the implications of buying into the leather culture? What is sexual liberation anyway? What the hell is sex?"[463]

These were the very questions being asked by the Heresies Collective in New York City in the two-year leadup to the publication of their magazine's controversial "Sex Issue."[464] The journal, *Heresies: A feminist Publication Art and Politics* (1977-1993) was a major influence in the feminist art scene and a forum for theoretical thinking at the time, with each publication devoted to a specific theme. Issue number 12 tackled a series of questions about sexuality: "What is sexuality? … Where do our desires come from? How do they manifest themselves in infinite variations? And what, if anything, do they tell us about what it means to be a woman?"[465] The 97-

---

[461] Terry Kolb, "Letters: Lesbian S&M: Valverde Roasted," The Body Politic, no. 62 (April 1980): 4.
[462] Mariana Valverde, "Letters: Mariana Valverde Replies," *The Body Politic*, no. 62 (April 1980): 5.
[463] Ibid.
[464] Heresies Collective, "Sex Issue," *Heresies Magazine*, vol. 3, no. 4 (Issue 12, 1981).
[465] Heresies Collective, "Editorial," *Heresies Magazine*, vol. 3, no. 4 (Issue 12, 1981): 1.

page issue had almost as many contributors, reflecting a diverse range of perspectives on SM, pornography, and other themes deemed sexually risqué at the time, such as sex toys and butch/femme aesthetic. Authors predominantly identified as lesbians, as well as sex workers, artists, and activists, some as Chicana or Black, most were American and a few Canadian. They explored these issues through a compilation of sexually explicit poetry, artwork, photos, and articles, all to restore sex and desire within feminist discourse.[466]

It was a clear rejection of the central tenets of leading organizations such as WAP and WAVAW, and their categorical denunciation of SM and pornography. A central idea put forward in the "Sex Issue" was that pornography was not the cause of violence against women, violence within pornography was but another by-product of patriarchy. They critiqued feminists' tendency to concentrate on the most extreme examples of violence and overlook the medium's subversive potential. Indeed, greater freedom for women relied on a more candid discussion of pleasure, including the role of SM and pornography in said pleasure. The issue itself directly challenged cultural feminist foundations which emphasized the existence of a universally shared womanhood. Instead, they posited that women had unique and complex sexual desires, practices, and identities. They clearly identified anti-pornography feminism as a repressive movement, warning that women must refrain from dictating the boundaries of morality and pleasure. As expected, the issue generated controversy. Anti-porn feminists were angry and dismayed, others, such as Sue Golding, took to *The Body Politic* imploring everyone to "Get it. Read it. Discuss it."[467] She continued, "A long silenced and underground erotic politic among women is finally erupting … With this publication, the Heresies collective categorically marks a new era in feminist theory and practice,

---

[466] Ibid.
[467] Sue Golding, "Sex at Issue: Time for Questioning in Bed," *The Body Politic*, no. 77 (October 1981): 35.

and has done so by removing – no, ripping off – the shackles of fear and isolation that forced many lesbian and straight feminists into the 'politically correct' closet."[468]

"the feminist equivalent of the Anti-Christ"

This juncture overlapped and was largely influenced by the feminist movement in the United States. Amongst other influential "sex-positive" American feminists challenging the prevailing feminist discourses regarding sexuality, perhaps the most well-known is Gayle Rubin. She was a long-time and ardent supporter of *The Body Politic*, especially during the "Men Loving Boys" crisis, when she wrote several letters defending the collective.[469] By the early-1980s, she emerged as a polarizing theoretical thinker. As with others whom I have labelled activist lesbians, her pro-sex ideas were usually better received within gay liberation contexts than those of feminists; for example, while *The Body Politic* was reprinting Rubin's works, women's bookstores were banning SM publications.

In 1982, *The Body Politic* published a section of Gayle Rubin's "The Leather Menace," first printed in *Coming to Power* a year earlier.[470] The collective's introduction to the article read:

> It is a remarkable fact that the gay movement has had so little to say about the realities from which it takes its rise: sex among people of the same sex. Our dependence on the women's movement for theory and our desire not to give our opponents free ammunition have joined to starve us of any extensive discussion and interpretation of our sex lives. … But there are signs that this theoretical logjam is beginning to break up.[471]

Rubin began "The Leather Menace" by offering two divergent experiences of 'coming out'—first as a lesbian and then as an SM lesbian. She wrote, "I came out as a lesbian just when a bad discourse on homosexuality, the product of the anti-gay wars of the 1950s, was coming apart. I did not experience the full force of homophobia…When I came out as an S/M person, I got an

[468] Ibid.
[469] Gayle Rubin, "Letters," *The Body Politic*, no. 40 (February 1978): 2.
[470] Samois, *Coming to Power*.
[471] Rubin, "The Leather Menace," 33.

unexpected lesson in how my gay ancestors must have felt…"[472] The demonization of SM taking shape within the women's movement was akin to one of the harshest periods of homophobic repression and based on the very same issue: sexual expression. As feminists came to define SM as an evil product of patriarchy, it was becoming more and more difficult for SM feminists to remain aligned with the women's movement. She wrote,

> The ease with which S/M has come to symbolize the feminist equivalent of the Anti-Christ has been exacerbated by some long-term changes in feminist ideology. Few women in the movement seem to realize that what currently passes for radical feminism has a tangential relationship with the initial premises of the women's movement. Assumptions which now pass as dogma would have horrified activists in 1970.[473]

For Rubin, the women's movement, like society in general, had quietly shifted to the centre. The vocal group of feminists espousing pro-censorship views did not entertain any alternate perspective, indeed, anyone who did not share their perspective was declared anti-feminist. They coopted the women's movement as this became the dominant narrative that came to represent feminism in the mainstream.

Rubin feared the women's movement was repeating past mistakes—she reminded the reader that the nineteenth-century feminist movement began as a radical critique of women's role and status, and that quickly gave way to conservativism. The morality crusades (anti-prostitution, anti-masturbation, anti-obscenity, anti-vice) of nineteenth-century feminists were being revived by second-wave feminists, manifested through a series of campaigns against recreational sex and sexually explicit material. For Rubin, SM challenged this political tendency. And for her, it was not just sexual practice at stake, but the very shape of feminist ideology and the future direction of the movement.

---

[472] Ibid., 33.
[473] Ibid., 34.

This iteration of feminism relied on a normative sexuality, which was at the heart of the gay movement's central challenge—a sexual hierarchy in which heterosexual, married, monogamous, and reproductive sex was constructed as normal and natural, while sex outside those parameters was judged as inferior and punished accordingly. Rubin's analysis called for feminists to return to their central tenets, "It is time that radical and progressives, feminists and leftists, recognize this hierarchy for the oppressive structure that it is instead of reproducing it within their own ideologies."[474] For her, these debates within the women's movement were regressive but also productive,

> What is exciting is that sex—not just gender, not just homosexuality—has finally been posed as a political question. Rethinking sexual politics has generated some of the most creative political discourse since 1970. The sexual outlaws—boy-lovers, sadomasochists, prostitutes and trans-people, among others—have an especially rich knowledge of the prevailing system of sexual hierarchy and of how sexual controls are exercised.[475]

It is these linkages that created a clear division among feminists, then as now. These dividing lines were drawn at a historic gathering of feminists, and the effects of this clash would reverberate politically, and for many, personally, for years to come.[476]

The Barnard Conference

On April 24, 1982, at the height of these divisive debates, some 800 scholars, students, artists, and activists convened for The Scholar and the Feminist IX conference called "Towards a Politics of Sexuality," at the Women's Center at Barnard College in New York City. Organized by a group of feminists that included Ellen Dubois, Ellen Willis, Gayle Rubin, and Carole Vance, the conference aimed to move beyond feminist debates on sexuality within the context of

[474] Ibid., 35.
[475] Ibid., 35.
[476] Gayle Rubin, personal conversation with author, April 11, 2015. See also: Rubin, *Deviations*; Vance, "More Danger, More Pleasure: A Decade after the Barnard Sexuality Conference," *New York Law School Law Review* 38, no. 1–4 (1993): 289–315.

reproduction, violence, and pornography, and to instead focus on erotic desire. Ultimately, the conference would only underscore deep and polarized divisions within the women's movement. Indeed, the Barnard Conference, as it would later be known, is often referred to as the moment the sex wars exploded.[477]

From the beginning, anti-sex feminist organizations were angered by the composition of the planning group, which they felt was biased and unrepresentative. In the days preceding the conference, the *Coalition for a Feminist Sexuality and Against Sadomasochism*, a group which included the *New York Radical Feminists*, WAVAW and WAP, called for prominent feminists to denounce the conference for inviting proponents of "anti-feminist" sexuality to participate (i.e. lesbian SM advocates and practitioners). As the planning group gathered to organize speakers, they produced a 'conference diary,' a 72-page booklet called the *Diary of a Conference: On Sexuality*, that included planning committee minutes, graphics, bibliographies of suggested reading, and a page devoted to each workshop.[478] As Gayle Rubin later explained, the *Diary* was "designed to be an archival document, not only of the planning process but also of the day itself."[479] In it, they justified their decision to represent pro-sex frameworks arguing that the entire feminist debate on sexuality had, to this point, been dominated by an anti-pornography position. The *Coalition* accused the speakers of being patriarchal, anti-feminist, sado-masochists and pedophiles, and successfully rallied the Barnard College administration to get involved. In response to the controversy, College President Ellen V. Futter, deemed the *Diary*, "a piece of

---

[477] Jane Gerhard, *Desiring Revolution: Second-Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of American Sexual Thought, 1920-1982* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 183-95.
[478] Conference Planning Committee, "Diary of a Conference on Sexuality," conference program for *The Scholar and the Feminist IX*, Barnard College, (April 24, 1982), *Dark Matter Archives*, last modified 2011, http://www.darkmatterarchives.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Diary-of-a-Conference-on-Sexuality.pdf
[479] Gayle Rubin, *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 20.

pornography," and 1500 copies intended to be distributed to attendees were confiscated two days before the conference.[480]

Despite all contention, the conference went ahead. On the day of the conference, WAP staged a protest by wearing t-shirts that read "For Feminist Sexuality" on one side and "Against S/M" on the other. They circulated a leaflet designed to censor various organizations scheduled to hold workshops, including No More Nice Girls, Samois, and The Lesbian Sex Mafia. The *Coalition* claimed to have been excluded from the conference—victims of an "anti-feminist backlash," and denounced participants purported to "support and practice pornography, promote sex roles and sadomasochism and have joined the straight and gay pedophile organizations in lobbying for an end to laws that protect children from sexual abuse by adults."[481] Conference organizers and participants responded by circulating a petition voicing their own accusations against anti-pornography feminists, which read, "With their insistence that they already know what feminists should think about sex—that anyone who disagrees must be purged from the movement—the Coalition repudiates the spirit of free inquiry and the basic principles of a democratic radical movement. If anything, it is their authoritarianism, fear of difference, and lack of principle that deserves the label 'backlash.'"[482] In the end, "The Scholar and the Feminist" conference series lost its major financial support (the Helena B. Rubenstein Foundation) and the Barnard Women's Center lost its hard-won autonomy from the college. Under considerable pressure and legal threats from conference organizers, the College agreed to pay to reprint the *Diary* without Barnard's insignia, which was distributed to attendees after the conference[483]

---

[480] Ibid., 25. See also: Jane Gould, *Juggling: A Memoir of Work, Family, and Feminism* (New York: Feminist Press at CUNY, 1997); Carole Vance, "More Danger, More Pleasure."
[481] Editorial Collective, "Feminists Split on 'Correct' Sex," *The Body Politic* no., 85 (July/August 1982): 16.
[482] Ibid., 16.
[483] Rubin, *Deviations*, 26.

Andrea Dworkin, organizer of WAP, circulated copies of the *Diary* after its reprinting, deploring its obscene content yet urging feminists to read it "from beginning to end."[484] In the attached memo, Dworkin wrote that the *Diary* "shows how the S&M and pro-pornography activists…are being intellectually and politically justified and supported. It shows too the conceptual framework for distorting and significantly undermining radical feminist theory, activism, and efficacy."[485] She concluded, "It is doubtful, in my view, that the feminist movement can maintain its political integrity and moral authority with this kind of attack on its fundamental and essential premises from within."[486] The conference organizers were cast as perniciously anti-woman and anti-feminist. Reverberations from the conference would be felt for years to come, creating an even deeper rift amongst feminists.

In her reflections on the Barnard Conference in *The Body Politic*, Sue Golding also saw a movement at a crossroads, "Perhaps it is a sign of a maturing movement. Maybe just a sign of the times. But whatever it is, feminism and what we have called the women's movement are no longer self-evident, unitary and coherent expression for all women all the time."[487] For one of the organizers, Carole Vance, this was a critical moment for feminists to reconsider their understanding of sexuality and its political consequences. She wrote, "Given the complex grid of class, race, sexual preferences, age, generation, and ethnicity, our personal experience can speak to but a small part of the sexual universe. Yet we wish to develop a framework inclusive of all women's experience. (Sexuality must not be a code word for heterosexuality, or women a code word for white women)."[488] In other words, the second-wave focus on anti-pornography was

[484] Ibid.
[485] Ibid.
[486] Ibid.
[487] Sue Golding, "Dear Diary: How Do We Learn to 'Speak Sex'?" *The Body Politic*, no. 93 (May 1983): 37.
[488] Carole Vance, "Concept Paper: Towards a Politics of Sexuality," in *Diary of a Conference on Sexuality*," conference program for *The Scholar and the Feminist IX*, Barnard College, (April 24, 1982), 40.

harkening back to the nineteenth-century feminist movement as it gave way to morality crusades that imposed white, heterosexual (and middle-class) values.

Rubin, and other activist lesbians, were carving out theoretical trajectories that would lay the groundwork for radical coalition politics. As I demonstrate in the upcoming sections, that was certainly the case with sex workers and anti-racism movements breaking ground in the 1980s, and as trans studies professor Susan Stryker contends, lent the way to trans scholarship in the 1990s. She writes, "Since trannies were lumped in with all the other perverts and outcasts from a good-girl feminism that considered trans folks to be either bad, sick, or wrong in our self-knowledges, it only behooved us to follow in the path of the powerful sisters who were talking back with such sass and eloquence in the face of feminist censure."[489]

Part II

The Politics of Liberation

The 'sex panics' over sadomasochism, pornography, and commercial sex produced an intense socio-political climate through which lesbian activists navigated their positions within gay liberationism, feminism, and anti-oppression movements more generally. Central to these divisions were questions of sexual expression and its role in identity, politics, theory, and activism. Was sexual liberation at the heart of this movement, or a total disruption of interlocking systems of oppression? Severe police repression in 1981, specifically targeting gay male sexual behaviour, inadvertently bolstered movement solidarity, albeit only briefly.

Part II of this chapter begins with the Toronto bathhouse raids which, in popular imagination, are equivalent to the Stonewall riots, and mark an important turning point in lesbian gay activism in Toronto. In this reading, we will see that the response of lesbians and gay men was

[489] Susan Stryker, "The Time has Come to Think about Gayle Rubin," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17, no. 1 (2011): 81.

unified against state oppression and in declaring they would take "No more shit!" (coined by Chris Bearchell), the resultant goals and strategies, however, would divide the movement in profound ways. For gay male liberationists, the bathhouse raids reinforced the need to oppose state sanctions, to focus on sexual freedom, and seek rights-based redress. For activist lesbians, this strategy overlooked race, gender, age, and class-based oppressions, and propelled another wave of feminist theorizing on sex and violence, and the role of the state in relation to both.

During the 1980s, contributors to *The Body Politic* continued to theorize pornography and problematize representations of feminism as universally anti-porn and anti-sex. These debates would come to a head in the aftermath of the Wimmin's Fire Brigade firebombing of three Red Hot Video stores in the Vancouver area. These arguments play out in the pages of *The Body Politic*, and the collective found itself at the centre of the debate following its decision to publish an advertisement for Red Hot Video (in it, the store denounces violence, bestiality, and sex involving minors). Women and many gay men were outraged; they wrote angry letters and editorials, and many cancelled their subscriptions entirely.

Garnering media attention to raise awareness of violence against women was challenging and bombing pornographic video stores proved to be a powerful tactic. The imagery of feminists as militantly anti-sex and anti-pornography would permeate the public imagination for years to come. Many of the female writers in *The Body Politic* struggled with this tension as they identified as feminists but not with the version dominating the movement as well as mainstream media. Their position as both feminist and pro-sex was consistently overlooked and considered anti-feminist by censorship feminist groups. These groups, standing alongside religious fundamentalists at protest events, were demanding state censorship of imagery deemed violent and obscene. Lesbian liberationists understood from experience that the state would not protect them. Instead, they

produced creative alternative sexual imagery, theoretical insights into oppressive social structures, as well as coalitions with others affected by state repression of sexuality, namely sex workers.

Debates on pornography developed among women, as well as between women and men. Gay liberationists were also directing their attention toward the state for rights protections, though staunchly anti-censorship in the pursuit of sexual emancipation. Recognizing the importance of lesbians to the movement, and their central roles in mobilizing after the Toronto raids, many male gay liberationists were equally critical of the collective for publishing the Red Hot Video advertisement, and thus, overlooking violence against women. They questioned whether gay liberation itself had gone off track—fighting for sexual liberation at all costs. These tensions are explored in the following section.

"No More Shit! Fuck You 52!"

On February 5, 1981, more than 150 Toronto police officers raided every major gay bathhouse in the city. They arrested 286 gay men – nearly all on the charge of being "found-ins" under Canada's bawdy-house laws. Accounts from *The Body Politic* report that throughout the raid some men were beaten, humiliated, insulted, or subjected to "fascist taunts" such as "Too bad these showers weren't hooked up to gas."[490] Using sledgehammers and crowbars to break down doors, the police smashed equipment, glass and mirrors, causing over $35,000 in damage. The morning following the bathhouse raids *The Body Politic*'s headquarters "was a madhouse, full of people, all the phones ringing at once," with the collective present to decide on a response.[491] Chris Bearchell argued that the raids were retaliation against their fight to be included in the Human Rights Code, and in response, the group organized a demonstration at Yonge and Wellesley for later that night. By 4pm, 4,000 leaflets had been printed and were ready for distribution; they read:

[490] Editorial Collective, "No Apologies," *The Body Politic*, no. 71 (March 1981): 8.
[491] McCaskell, *Queer Progress*, 248.

"Enough is Enough" and "Protest. Yonge and Wellesley. Midnight Tonight."[492] By midnight, 3000 protestors had gathered, as Bearchell took the podium: "They think that when they pick on us that they're picking on the weakest. Well, they made a mistake this time! We're going to show them just how strong we are. They can't get away with this shit anymore! No more shit!"[493] With that, the slogan was born: "No More Shit! Fuck you 52!" Protesters chanted as they took to the streets toward the 52 Division of the Toronto police station and the legislature at Queen's Park.

The issue of *The Body Politic* following the bathhouse raids was published almost a week late in order to include coverage of the events. In an editorial titled, "No apologies," the collective reported on the demonstration the week previous:

> Yes, we damaged police cars blockading Yonge Street to stop our march. Yes, "queerbashers" who started fights with demonstrators had to be rescued by the police. Yes, we screamed "fascists" at the very police who had invaded the baths the night before like a bunch of stormtroopers. Yes, Toronto saw its most militant protest of the last decade. And no, we don't intend to apologize. We have our own message. It is time for the bigots in Toronto – in uniform and otherwise – to understand that gay men and lesbians will fight back every way we know how … We will fight back, but we won't be alone. Many outside our community who support human rights – other minorities, feminists and progressives – have chosen to stand by our side.[494]

Their unapologetic tone tapped into an overarching sentiment of righteous militancy alongside a renewed sense of solidarity.

The widespread resistance to the bathhouse raids not only aligned coalition groups in the struggle for human rights, but also facilitated a groundswell of support at *The Body Politic* offices in the following days and weeks. As the collective wrote in explaining the tardy distribution, "So, this issue is late (and probably full of typos) but it would have been a lot later if other people hadn't started showing up at the door, offering to provide everything from courier service to phone-

---

[492] Editorial Collective, "Rage! Taking It to the Streets," *The Body Politic*, no. 71 (March 1981): 9.
[493] McCaskell, *Queer Progress*, 250.
[494] Editorial Collective, "No Apologies," *The Body Politic*, no. 71 (March 1981): 8.

answering to proofreading and editorial skills during a week of the craziest days since *TBP*'s own trial in 1979."[495] Brutal unjust raids, intended to weaken an already fragmented community, instead served to revive it. The editorial concluded: "Thanks not just for helping this issue get to press, but for once again making us proud to be part of a strong, committed community."[496]

"Don't worry, there's strength in numbers"

A letter published in the following issue attested to this newfound sense of collectivity. Roger Spencer recounted his experience at the demonstration downtown Toronto the night after the bathhouse raids, "What a fabulous evening! … I would like to relate a little story about the demonstration which showed me, very personally, the strength and solidarity that has developed in the community."[497] He explained that at one point during the demonstration a police officer grabbed him, looked him right in the face and said, "How would you like your face punched?" Spencer responded by smiling and pulling the officer's cap down over his eyes. Just as he braced himself for the consequences, "Suddenly an unknown person grabbed my right arm and pulled me out. The pig wouldn't let go, but neither would my unknown friend and consequently the pig tore the sleeve off my jacket. It turned out later that a lesbian had rescued me, someone I didn't even know. She said to me: 'Don't worry, there's strength in numbers.'"[498]

In the aftermath of the bathhouse raids, lesbian activists showed up—as supporters, allies, and leaders. Many women continued to write for the magazine, and support gay liberation more generally, in the face of harsh condemnation from lesbian feminists. Jane Rule addressed this in one of her most cited articles, "Why I write for the Body Politic,"

> Gay friends of mine, both men and women, who, like me, have established themselves in various professions like teaching, writing, the law, often question my involvement with

---

[495] Editorial Collective, "With a Little Help from Our Friends," *The Body Politic*, no. 71 (March 1981): 3.
[496] Ibid.
[497] Roger Spencer, "Letters: Fuming and Fighting Back," *The Body Politic*, no. 72 (April 1981): 4-5.
[498] Ibid., 5.

> *The Body Politic*, a paper they read only intermittently, about which they are nervously ambivalent. They are quick to criticize, to focus on issues they themselves would not support, like sexual relationships between adults and children, sexual activity in bars and baths. They consider such behaviour exactly what makes it difficult for people like themselves to be accepted…"[499]

Here, she addressed an audience perhaps much like herself—with some social privilege, respectability, and vague investment in gay liberation, and to them responded, "Neither sexual liberation between men and women and boys nor baths are priorities of my own, obviously." Nonetheless, she reminded the reader of the risks of cherry-picking in/appropriate sexual expression without recognizing the fragility of rights gained. She continued,

> …no homosexual behaviour will be protected, because anything any of us does is offensive to the majority. Policing ourselves to be less offensive to that majority is to be part of our own oppression. Tokenism has never been anything else. By writing for *The Body Politic,* I refuse to be a token, one of those who doesn't really seem like a lesbian at all. If the newspaper is found to be obscene, I am part of that obscenity. And proud to be…"[500]

While lesbian feminists were disputing the centrality of sex to gay liberation, Rule was clearly aligning herself with sexual freedom, and made critical reference to this token feminist "who doesn't really seem like a lesbian at all". She rearticulated this point further in an argument with Eve Zaremba, who took issue with her position.

In the following issue, Eve Zaremba wrote a letter objecting to the article, which had appeared in Rule's regular column, "So's Your Grandmother." Zaremba wrote, "The crux of my disagreement with Rule lies in what I take to be the implications of her column: that for us the only alternative to being politically passive is to work for and through Gay Liberation."[501] While Rule argued that the best way to protect the rights of lesbians was through gay liberation, Zaremba (and many other "politically active and astute lesbians") disagreed with a position that did not

---

[499] Jane Rule, "Why I Write for The Body Politic," *The Body Politic*, no. 80 (January/February 1982): 38.
[500] Ibid.
[501] Eve Zaremba, "Letters: Agree to Disagree," *The Body Politic*, no. 81 (March 1982): 5.

differentiate between female and male sexuality, nor consider the divergences in their respective political, social, and economic positions in society.[502] For Zaremba, the feminist movement provided an obvious option for lesbians to emancipate themselves from their primary concern—sexism. In her analysis, "Feminists view Gay Liberation as quintessentially male; almost all the issues and priorities it espouses are male." Ultimately, Zaremba felt that *The Body Politic* did not "speak for" her or the feminism that she espoused.[503]

In this series of letters published in *The Body Politic*, Rule critiqued this analysis as exclusive and simplistic, stating, "I don't expect any paper or magazine to always to speak for me. I speak for myself,"[504] going on to point out that she was no more comfortable with some articles published in *Broadside* than in *The Body Politic*. In another letter, Eleanor LeBourdais, also supported this lesbian liberationist stance, echoing Rule that while the bathhouse raids and washroom arrests might appear to have nothing to do with female homosexuality, "What they do have to do with is the right to consenting adults to engage in sexual activity of their own choosing free of police surveillance and harassment. That is human liberation."[505] Many lesbians who remained active in *The Body Politic* and aligned with gay liberation found that the women's movement had taken a wrong turn and questioned how pornography, and this particular stance on state censorship, had become *the* feminist issue. These women, whom I refer to as activist lesbians, engaged with feminist publications, but contributed primarily to queer spaces. Their endorsement of the right to consensual sexual expression – be it gay, SM, for free or for economic benefit, provided fruitful grounds for coalition with gay men, queer women, and sex workers.

[502] Ibid.
[503] Ibid.
[504] Jane Rule, "Letters: Strange Bedfellows," *The Body Politic*, no. 82 (April 1982): 4.
[505] Eleanor LeBourdais, "Letters: Better to Differ?" *The Body Politic*, no. 83 (May1982): 5.

Not a Love Story

Released in 1982, *Not a Love Story: A Film about Pornography*, directed by filmmaker Bonnie Sherr Klein, "…reflects the high-tide mark of the anti-pornography feminist sentiment" and remains one of the most controversial and commercially successful documentaries in the history of the National Film Board of Canada.[506] Ironically, the film came up against the Ontario censor board and was initially banned for its pornographic content—the very topic the filmmakers were arguing passionately against, though the decision was eventually reversed.[507] The film focuses on the journey of Linda Lee Tracey, an erotic dancer who transforms from liberal sex worker to radicalized feminist. They document the red-light districts of Montréal, New York, and San Francisco, with interviews with feminist theorists interspersed throughout, along with graphic images intended to shock, the documentary presents a one-sided account about the harms of pornography.

Many were inspired by the film, for example, upon its screening in Montréal, 500 women and men were moved to march with the *Feminist Coalition Against Pornography*. Others were immediately critical. For Bearchell, *Not a Love Story* did for pornography what *Reefer Madness* did for marijuana—the film was dangerously biased and misleading. She described it as a "morality tale," whereby, "…strippers are exploited and too dumb to know it. The film ends with her [Tracey's] tearful confession of relief that 'at least I can feel sick' about sexual objectification."[508] For Bearchell, the problem was threefold. First, the emphasis on sexual exploitation at the expense of all other forms of gender-based oppression. Bearchell wondered why

---

[506] Wyndham Wise (ed.), "Not a Love Story: A Film about Pornography," in *Take One's Essential Guide to Canadian Film* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 154. See: Rebecca Sullivan, *Bonnie Sherr Klein's "Not a Love Story"* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).
[507] Wise, "Not a Love Story," 154.
[508] Chris Bearchell, "Not a Love Story and the Anti-Porn Crusade," *The Body Politic*, no. 85 (July/August 1982): 11.

feminists were so keen to attribute false consciousness and focus solely on women's exploitation as sex workers, but not as welfare mothers, secretaries, migrant or factory workers. She wrote, "Nowhere does the film try to locate violence against women in the context of other injustices women face. As hands are wrung and tears are shed, all that is offered is Woman as Victim."[509] The second problem, the seemingly universal characterization in which women are cast as victim and men as perpetrators of violence, as though these roles were written into our DNA. Finally, Bearchell noted the "strange bedfellows" resulting from this narrative. She astutely pointed out that the documentary credits *Canadians for Decency*, a member of the anti-gay and anti-feminist right, as well as *Operation P*, the anti-porn squad that had engineered the first raid on *The Body Politic*.

In response, Bearchell articulated an activist lesbian analysis, "If the film had seen men as agents of violence against women in a social system that is a haphazard hierarchy of interlocking and overlapping power relationships, a system in which gender is an important (but not the only) factor (class, race and sexual orientation being others), and in which violence is a symptom not to be mistaken for the disease itself, it would not have ended up with such strange bedfellows."[510] This intersectional approach cast women and men as active agents within a complex interplay of power dynamics. It challenged a one-dimensional understanding of oppression, agency, and power, remaining attuned to the larger implications of coalescing with the enemy (i.e. religious fundamentalists and the state). This perspective, however, would be sidelined. *Not a Love Story* provoked mainstream consideration of pornography and had a strong influence on how the issue

[509] Ibid.
[510] Ibid.

was framed. Alternative views were silenced, and a particular form of feminist thinking emerged as the singular stance on pornography and censorship.[511]

The silencing of alternative views was quite literal. For instance, on March 12, 1983, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and the YMCA of Metro Toronto presented a day-long consultation entitled "Pornography: How it affects Women" at the Council Chamber of Toronto City Hall. The event attracted about 500 participants, mostly women, who listened to various speakers including, National Action Committee president Doris Anderson, Toronto alderwoman June Rowlands, and Maude Barlow, president of the Canadian Coalition Against Media Pornography, among others. In the afternoon, women-only workshops tackled law reform, political action, and the social effects of pornography. Operation P was also there with a sampling of seized videotapes, books, and magazines.

The morning's speakers were filmed and later broadcast by Rogers Cable TV—with one notable exception: Thelma McCormack (then-chair of the Sociology Department at York University in Toronto), whose presentation was cut from the broadcast. Her address, originally titled "Pornography: Some Sociological Considerations," was the only one among the list of speakers to not condemn pornography. It was later reprinted in *The Body Politic* in attempt to disseminate this seemingly controversial perspective. In it, she explained that pornography was just one oppressive institution among many, including medicine, psychiatry, fine arts, and the media. And yet, "pornography has become the flashpoint in our dialogue."[512] Excluding this

[511] *The Lesbian Show*, which ran for over 20 years on the cooperative radio station CFRO in Vancouver, cited the coverage of the "Scholar and the Feminist" conference at Barnard College and Chris Bearchell's piece on *Not a Love Story* as evidence *The Body Politic* was "anti-feminist." As a result, they cancelled their subscription.

[512] "*Special Report:* Censorship, Access and the Politics of Porn," *The Body Politic*, no. 95 (July/August 1983): 11.

critical view from mainstream broadcasting perpetuated the myth that all feminists were anti-porn, given the only feminist to speak from this perspective was cut from the public dialogue.

Her position also foregrounded an intersectional analysis of oppression. For McCormack, feminism's focus on pornography and censorship was misguided. She explained, "What should we do about pornography? In the long run, the answer to pornography is equality: equality of sex, equality of race, equality of class," and continued, "Alongside with this equality we need to legitimate homosexuality as a normal, acceptable form of sexual orientation."[513] McCormack went on to list a broad range of issues needing redress in order for equality be realized; from gender-free ads, to a proliferation of feminist judges, filmmakers, writers, dancers, and artists, she reimaged a feminist society that was also sex-positive. She concluded her address by reframing the central problem within the dominant feminist narrative: "the real censorship for women in our society is the lack of access. The answer to our problems is not censorship but access…Let's not waste our energies on the politics of revenge."[514] The focus on pornography was seen as a diversion from more pressing issues, and pro-censorship feminists were naively going along with it.

Meanwhile, outrage was growing within women's communities across the country over the apparent state-sanctioned sale of violence against women in the form of pornography. Feminist organizers staged protests, picketed and boycotted various outlets, including the proliferation of Red Hot Video, a pornographic video chain store in British Columbia. Various women's groups criticized the chain for selling violent and degrading materials, many of which depicted rape, sexual abuse, torture, and bondage. The North Shore Women's Centre and the British Columbia Federation of Women had lobbied, without success, to have Red Hot Video shut down through

[513] Ibid.
[514] Ibid.

legal challenges.[515] In a more direct action, on November 22, 1982, close to midnight, firebombs exploded at outlets in Surrey, North Vancouver, and Port Coquitlam.

"Pornography displays the ugliest sexism of the system"

The pornography debate would only intensify after the firebombing, for which the Wimmin's Fire Brigade took credit. Feminists had been protesting Red Hot Video stores for months leading up to the bombings, but as Jackie Goodwin explained in her news coverage in *The Body Politic*, their actions were largely ignored or downplayed in the media. She continued, "but the torching of the three outlets has generated a lot of public attention."[516] The Wimmin's Fire Brigade, later known as the Squamish Five (upon their arrests along the Vancouver-to-Squamish highway), included Juliet Caroline Belmas, Gerry Hannah, Ann Hansen, Doug Stewart, and Brent Taylor. The five anarchists were tired of traditional methods of activism.[517] In their communiqué they stated:

> Red Hot Video sells tapes that show wimmin and children being tortured, raped and humiliated…Although these tapes violate the Criminal Code of Canada and the BC guidelines on pornography, all lawful attempts to shut down Red Hot Video have failed because the justice system was created, and is controlled, by rich men to protect their profits and property. As a result, we are left with no viable alternative but to change the situation ourselves through illegal means. This is an act of self-defence against hate propaganda.[518]

The Wimmin's Fire Brigade was successful in gaining media attention and public support for their cause. Within the feminist community, reactions were mixed.[519] At *The Body Politic* however, many questioned what appeared to be a growing political alliance between anti-porn

---

[515] Marilyn Schuster (ed.), *Queer Love Story: The Letters of Jane Rule and Rick Bébout* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 67.
[516] Jackie Goodwin, "Fanning the Flames: Fire Brigade vs. Red Hot," *The Body Politic*, no., 90 (January 1983): 10.
[517] Ann Hansen, "Building a Revolution," in Karlene Faith and Anne Near (eds.), *13 Women: Parables from Prison* (Vancouver: Douglas & Mcintyre), 221-245.
[518] Jackie Goodwin, "Fanning the Flames: Fire Brigade vs. Red Hot," *The Body Politic*, no., 90 (January 1983): 10.
[519] Greg Joyce, "Women's Group Claims Responsibility for Firebomb Attacks," (November 22, 1982), *United Press International Archives*, https://www.upi.com/Archives/1982/11/22/Womens-group-claims-responsibility-for-firebomb-attacks/6316406789200/

feminists, religious fundamentalists, and the police, a view crystalized and widely covered in media. The collective wrote an editorial criticizing the Wimmin's Fire Brigade, and this entire feminist faction, of lacking evidence of the harms of pornography, and instead, resorting to emotion-laden and ultra-traditional appeals for "the protection of women and children."[520] The editorial goes on to point out that gay male sexuality, among other freedoms, were under attack: "Because video porn stores provide the only access to gay pornography in many cities, gay men are automatically among the targets of this movement. Defenders of freedom of expression, many feminists among them, are also included."[521] For them, the solution is to create alternative porn: "If the anti-porn crusaders were as constructive as the free-choice agitators, they would be openly creating and publishing an alternative sexual imagery."[522]

For Margo Fern, the editorial was a strong indication that the feminist community had no common goals with the gay male community. She found the suggestion of creating alternative sexual imagery "laughable." Her letter was direct, and represented one side of the lesbian critique of gay liberationism:

> If the gay-male community could turn its attention away from its collective crotch for a moment, it might take a look at the trends it seems to be embracing. Ageism, extreme objectification of the body and selfish and dehumanizing sexual encounters are rampant in the community; it seems that the gay-male community has taken the worst of heterosexual society and refined it to a high art. No wonder feminists and the gay-male community collide ideologically—gay men are promoting the very things women have struggled against for thousands of years.[523]

Other feminist contributors took a more nuanced approach, attesting to the oft-overlooked complexity of issues feminists were grappling with at the time. Donna Stewart, Coordinator of the North Shore Women's Centre in Vancouver, countered the editorial by suggesting that the

[520] Editorial Collective, "Arson, Abortion and Freedom," *The Body Politic*, no. 90 (January 1983): 8.
[521] Ibid.
[522] Ibid.
[523] Margo Fern, "Letters," *The Body Politic*, no. 93 (May 1983): 6.

collective question *their* alliances—with the porn industry, and violence against women by proxy. She contended that anti-porn activists were overly focused on violent heterosexual pornography and underestimated porn's significance within the gay male community. Stewart also critiqued the suggestion that women should create alternative sexual imagery by relying on an essential view of sex differences and alternate social locations, "When we have equal pay for work of equal value and have adequate state-sponsored daycare, more of us may have time for that pursuit. You should probably recognize, however, that visual stimulation seems less important to women than men. In general, we are interested in relationships rather than simple turn-ons…"[524] Embedded in this essentialist perception of gender in which women and men have inherently different sexual needs, is a view of sexual expression as a frivolous concern. It underestimates the extent to which sexual performance and alternative expressions are political, and moreover, the extent to which women rely on commercial sex to compensate for inadequate pay and state supports.

Tim McCaskell entered the debate with an article that drew parallels between alcohol prohibition and censorship. He explained how prohibitionists, many of whom were women, viewed alcohol as *the* social problem—the root cause of poverty, criminal activity, and the degradation of women and children. Of course, prohibiting alcohol seemed like the solution for the very real violence women faced, in much the same way censorship did. But, prohibition did not usher in "a new golden age for women," instead, the women's movement stalled amid the conservative backlash it was a part of. Like others, he questioned the alliances drawn between the state, feminism, and conservative ideology. He articulated how pornography "works" as a social problem, "The state and its most conservative politicians and administrators—who refuse women equal pay and free-standing abortion clinics—are happy to take up the porn issue and to push new

[524] Donna Stewart, North Shore Women's Centre, "Letters*:* Pornography, Questioning Associates," *The Body Politic*, no. 92 (April 1983): 4.

censorship laws."[525] He pointed out that while the 400 women protesting Playboy programing on pay TV at Toronto City Hall made front-page news in the *Globe and Mail*, the thousands of marches on International Women's Day were completely ignored by the press.

Many gay male contributors engaged in feminist debate throughout *The Body Politic*. They were almost universally anti-censorship, though opinions varied on other dimensions of feminist thinking, and perspectives on sexism and racism more generally. McCaskell often attempted to view issues from as many perspectives as possible, and he did see heterosexual pornography as "the ugliest sexism of the system."[526] He contended that for the gay movement to take a hardline stance against all censorship did not adequately take violence against women into account, and appealed to both gay liberationists and feminists to find shared ground against their clear and common enemy. McCaskell concluded, "The women's movement has been one of gay liberation's major supporters for the last ten years. We must speak out against a strategy that threatens to side some of our best friends with some of our worst enemies."[527]

Other feminist contributors, like Sharon Page, were growing frustrated with the conflation of all feminists under the rubric of anti-porn activism and critiqued the Wimmin's Fire Brigade for pretending to represent "a monolithic feminist thought."[528] For Page, the assumption that feminist opinion on pornography was universal rendered invisible so many feminist perspectives within the women's movement. She explained that women, lesbian or heterosexual, who "enjoy forms of consensual sexual expression" are deemed "male-identified," "violent," and "anti-feminist" by "these self-appointed arbiters of feminist morality."[529] She seemed to encourage alternative sexual

---

[525] Tim McCaskell, "Pornography and Prohibition," *The Body Politic*, no. 92 (April 1983): 31.
[526] Ibid.
[527] Ibid.
[528] Sharon Page, "Finger Wagging," *The Body Politic*, no. 93 (May 1983): 6.
[529] Ibid.

expressions, writing, "Ms. Bearchell, I know, has lots to say on the subject of porn, sexuality and the like (and I wish we could hear more, and more directly, from her)."[530] Perhaps it is around this time that Chris Bearchell was indeed creating her own alternative sexual expressions on Super 8 film in a dimly lit living room; what a radical political act that must have been in this time and context.

The Sexism of Porn and the Racism of Preference

It was within the context of this heated debate that, in June 1983, *The Body Politic* published a particularly controversial issue. First, it included an advertisement for Red Hot Video, and further, an article titled, "Race, Mustaches, and Sexual Prejudice," in which Ken Popert defended what he referred to as "racialized sexual preference."[531] The decision to publish the Red Hot Video advert would be the first of two significant moments in which the collective would need to defend its position. In this instance, over sexism, and in the next, racism. The reaction to Popert's article marked the beginning of a sustained dialogue about racism that had been building over the previous years, especially in relation to the regular publication of classified ads that read: "GWM [gay white male] seeks same." It tapped into the heart of the question that continuously remerged within gay liberationism—does this movement focus solely on sexual freedom (and personal preference)? Or, is it intended to overcome these prejudices for the liberation for all? This tension was reiterated in the theorizing of lesbians and people of colour in reaction to the predominantly gay, white, male community, which *The Body Politic* seemingly represented.

Debates over racism within the movement built during the 1980s, with an increasing number of queer people of colour writing articles, organizing, and creating their own groups and publications. Accusations of racism would culminate over *The Body Politic*'s publication of the

[530] Ibid.
[531] Ken Popert, "Race, Mustaches, and Sexual Prejudice," *The Body Politic*, no. 94 (June 1983): 34.

'houseboy' ad in 1985, when the collective was unable to adequately defend itself a second time. In the next chapter I analyze those events and their denouement. In the remainder of this section, I turn to the reactions to the Red Hot Video advertisement. I argue that while the racist 'houseboy' ad is cited as the defining moment that led to the publication's demise, animosity had been long building, especially in relation to sexism. Both revealed who was at the helm of the journal. The publication of what was viewed as a sexist advert and a racist classified ad revealed that only the interests of white gay men were being represented.

XXX Adult Store

The copy for the video store advertisement read: "RED HOT VIDEO does not distribute films containing excessive violence, bestiality or sexual acts involving minors no matter what a small, vocal minority would have you believe. Support your right to Freedom of Choice by purchasing from RED HOT VIDEO."[532] It was met with mass backlash. 58 prominent community members, including Maureen FitzGerald, Richard Fung, Amy Gottlieb, Gary Kinsman, Marianna Valverde, and Lorna Weir, wrote a letter to *The Body Politic* condemning its publication of the advert. The letter stated:

> We, the undersigned, protest *The Body Politic*'s publication of an ad for Red Hot Video in its June 1983 issue…The publication of the Red Hot Video ad harms the possibilities for productive dialogue between and among feminists, lesbians and gay men by unnecessarily heightening and polarizing a climate of tension between and within our movements. *TBP*'s action violates the most elementary principles of solidarity which ought to prevail between our movements for women's liberation and gay liberation.[533]

For them, the women's movement had been a far greater ally to the gay community than Red Hot Video, and this was an affront to their mutual respect and solidarity. Valverde wrote an additional letter claiming that feminists "have very little respect left for your publication," a sentiment that

---

[532] Editorial Collective, "XXX Adult Video," Advertisement, *The Body Politic*, no. 94 (June 1983): 39.
[533] Signatories, "Letters: Pornography and Solidarity," *The Body Politic*, no. 95 (July/August 1983): 4.

was echoed by many.[534] Christine Donald wrote, "Your taking the Red Hot Video ad is not a counter-argument to those anti-porn feminists who you feel are so mistaken in their efforts. It is merely a slap in the face to your potential supporters."[535]

In their editorial response, the collective explained their decision was made only after a great deal of heated discussion, and was done with the awareness that pornography, alongside advertising, film, and television, subjugated women. In the end, they decided to publish the ad because pornography has "a valid place in our community as a means of excitement, education and – most especially – a validation of homosexual desire."[536] It initially strikes the reader that the collective was siding with homosexual liberation, and therefore against that of women, but the collective attempted to work through this impasse by addressing the apparent breach of solidarity between the feminist and gay liberation movements. The collective explained, "Our disagreements on pornography and the anti-porn movement are not a struggle *between* feminism and gay liberation, but a debate *among* people within both movements…"[537] They acknowledged the work of lesbians and feminists within gay liberation, the differences amongst them, and highlighted the futility of polarizing the debate, "It is no contribution to solidarity to imply that all gay men are on one side of this question and all women on the other." [538] Caught in a tension whereby both sides were asking for solidarity without offering it, the collective identified the source of their oppression: "Does it bother those who call for stronger obscenity legislation that they're helping provide a 'progressive' cover for the politicians, policemen and fundamentalists who have always

[534] Mariana Valverde, "Letters," *The Body Politic*, no. 95 (July/August 1983): 4-5.
[535] Christine Donald, "Letters," *The Body Politic*, no. 95 (July/August 1983): 5.
[536] Editorial Collective, "Pornography and Solidarity, II" *The Body Politic*, no. 95 (July/August 1983): 8.
[537] Ibid.
[538] Ibid.

wanted more power to suppress sexuality?…If anything can be said to violate the principles of solidarity, surely it is the arming of our common enemy."[539]

By the following issue, various members of the community, mostly women, wrote to say they were cancelling their subscriptions to *The Body Politic*. Many expressed their disappointment over gay men's lack of solidarity with women, turning the accusation on them of having strange bedmates—a neighbourhood porn outlet and advertising dollars. For many feminists, this was interpreted as a deep betrayal. A group from *Kinesis* in Vancouver wrote, "You have just lost some of your most important allies, the same women who gave you tangible and political support after the bathhouse raids and during *The Body Politic*'s obscenity trials."[540] In another letter, Yvette Perreault exclaimed, "Take the word "liberation" off your masthead – at least people would be better prepared for the content!"[541] She explained that no one gets liberated in a vacuum—no one is free until everyone is free—as long as women are "being beaten, and raped and sold as parts by the porn industry" gay men would not be free.[542] She stressed the importance of working *with* others to define oppression and to build a common vision of a free, liberated society. And of course, allies were essential in the struggle for liberation. The *Gays of Ottawa* positioned the anti-porn struggle as part of the larger struggle against straight male power, and it appeared *The Body Politic* had sided with the status quo. For them, the publication of the ad challenged their sense of solidarity as the collective narrowed their focus on freedom of the press over all other liberatory causes, namely sexism and racism.

Joy Parks was in a unique position. As a regular contributor, and among the Toronto friendship group, she was privy to the inner workings of *The Body Politic*, and vehemently

---

539 Ibid.
540 Kinesis, "Letters," *The Body Politic*, no. 96 (September 1983): 4-5.
541 Yvette Perrault, "Letters," *The Body Politic*, no. 96 (September 1983): 5.
542 Ibid.

disagreed with the collective's position. In her regular column, *Shared Ground*, Parks weighed in on the debate, recounting a recent brunch at Chris Bearchell's house. In that discussion, she had expressed how she was "livid" about the publication of the ad, which she found insulting to female readers, before quickly realizing that she was the only one to take such offense. Parks was perplexed to see her fellow lesbians overlook the effects of pornography for that sake of "gay anti-censorship." She wrote, "To me, the choice to run the ad was a political slap in the face, a theoretical kick in the ass. I don't want my column in the same issue as that ad. And I'm enraged to find that I'm the only woman in the room who feels as I do. I'm told that women-only issues are 'narrow' concerns. The hell they are."[543] Parks was so angry she considered no longer contributing to *The Body Politic*, with its anti-woman stance and catering to the "anti-human, pornographic, dollars-motivated machine," but instead decided to stay and fight for space within the publication.[544] Nonetheless, for her, any alliance she once had with gay men and gay liberation had been severed. She wrote, "I can't call myself a gay woman anymore…I'm a lesbian. That means women first."[545]

"the state is not neutral"

Although many canceled their subscriptions, there was a simultaneous surge in collective membership the following issue, which expanded from the usual seven men, plus Chris Bearchell, to include 20 men and four women (see Appendix). A few issues later, male membership on the collective dwindled to a dozen, yet women's participation remained proportionately high, with a consistent group of four to five until the final issues. As women took a stronger leadership role within the journal, readers continued to bombard *The Body Politic* with letters criticizing the

---

[543] Joy Parks, "Who Me? Notes of a Budding Separatist," *The Body Politic*, no. 96 (September 1983): 20.
[544] Ibid.
[545] Ibid.

decision to publish the ad; they often assumed that only men could have reached such a decision and condemned the magazine for privileging gay male voices. Chris Bearchell and Craig Patterson affirmed that the decision to publish the ad was a collective one, based on the fundamental belief in the importance of discussion and debate about sex and sexuality.[546] Though they admitted that the issue of pornography was "complex and troublesome," they remained "certain and unapologetic" about their position on state censorship.[547] They reminded the reader of their reasoning: "If a dozen years of gay organizing in this country has taught us nothing else, we should have learned that *the state is not neutral*."[548]

Despite the monolithic voice of feminism on the issue, Chris Bearchell, Jane Rule, Lee Waldorf, Gillian Rogerson, Varda Burstyn, and other activist lesbians, were very outspoken about their position on censorship: appealing to the state for protection was erroneous. Debra Byrne wrote, "I would like to thank *The Body Politic* for its strong anti-censorship stand. It seems to me that any type of progressive social change demands before all else absolute freedom of speech and of the press: especially the freedom to print what some find offensive."[549] For her, it was surprising how quickly feminists had forgotten that the government was not their ally, but the enforcers of official morality. Indeed, activist lesbians were critical of feminists' inability to see that censorship did not work; the state had no intention of protecting women and would instead use these prohibitions to target gay men and other sexual deviants. Rule wrote, "Gay men and women can be together on this issue. Women don't have to play into the traps of the moral majority by demanding censorship which will be politically abused. Gay men don't have to condone

---

[546] Chris Bearchell and Craig Patterson for the Collective, "Racism and Red Hot Video: A Response," *The Body Politic*, no. 100 (January/February 1984): 5.
[547] Ibid., 6.
[548] Ibid.
[549] Debra Byrne, "Letters," *The Body Politic*, no. 96 (September 1983): 6.

pornography degrading to women in the name of sexual freedom and freedom of expression."[550] This sentiment was echoed by other lesbian contributors and readers alarmed by the rightward drift of the women's movement and continued to question how pornography has become *the* feminist issue.

The anti-pornography feminist faction gaining momentum in mainstream politics either overlooked or was overtly complicit in a position that threatened to deny, repress, and erase queer culture. Neil Bartlett explained its cultural significance, "Gay porn gains its unique power from being the only explicit language of power and sex which gay men have; an oasis in a straight desert."[551] With gay male pornography under attack, gay men started to position pornography cultural artifacts, central to understanding gay male culture. In the article, "A Heritage of Pornography," Tom Waugh described a "once-in-a-lifetime chance" to visit the Kinsey Institute for Sex Research in Bloomington, Indiana, to view over a hundred films from the pre-Stonewall gay underground. He described these films, made between 1920-1970, as "illegal pornographic products," that, "richly document gay cultural history."[552] To this point, official gay history had been constructed through personal papers, oral histories, literary documents, and court records. Waugh claimed gay male pornography as an equally essential source in the documentation of that history, its narrative located in the "sexual practices, identities, and fantasies behind those flickering shadows of our forgotten ancestors."[553]

In her analysis of this history, Becki Ross writes that while many lesbians were, "scornful of what they understood to be 'anonymous,' 'penis-fixated,' 'recreational' and 'public' gay sex-at-any-cost," a small minority, including the likes of Chris Bearchell and Konnie Reich, were

---

[550] Jane Rule, "Pornography, *The Body Politic*, no. 100 (January/February 1984): 33.
[551] Robert Wallace, cited in "Pornography – A Spectacle," *The Body Politic*, no. 111 (February 1985): 34.
[552] Tom Waugh, "A Heritage of Pornography, *The Body Politic*, no. 90 (January 1983): 29.
[553] Ibid.

"drawn to a complex dynamics of dominance and submission, lust and fantasy played out in some segments of the (white) gay male community…"[554] In the following section, we see activist lesbians developing an erotic subculture of their own. This was developed in tandem with the flourishing of lesbian erotic publications, alongside an ideological distancing from anti-sex feminists who were lobbying for laws that would ultimately censor this very form of lesbian expression.

"proud pervert, still feminist": The Bearchell Files

At the beginning of this chapter, I described my disappointment with the limited material on Chris Bearchell available at *The ArQuives*. Upon mentioning this to Lucie, we spoke with Jade Pichette, the volunteer coordinator, who ultimately located nine boxes stored offsite—Chris Bearchell's personal donation to the archive. Lucie generously offered to retrieve them by the next morning, and I return to their contents in the next chapter. In addition to these boxes, Jade turned up one additional file cross-referenced in the archival database. Lucie immediately recognized the name of the file and disappeared upstairs, returning moments later having acquired permission to allow me access, though asked that I not take photographs of its contents. The vertical file was titled: "Chris Bearchell, Philadelphia – NAMBLA – 1982." In it, was a program for the Sixth Conference of the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA), a discussion paper written by David Thorstad, a founding member of the organization, and a handwritten draft of Chris Bearchell's article, "Why I Became a Gay Liberationist," which would later be published in "Resources for Feminist Research."[555] NAMBLA was a highly controversial organization that advocated for pederasty in the United States. They endorsed a view of youth sexuality that included

[554] Ross, "Like Apples and Oranges," 143.
[555] Chris Bearchell, "Why I became a Gay Liberationist: Thoughts on sex, Freedom, the Family and the State," *Resources for Feminist Research*, vol. 12, no. 1 (March 1983): 59-60.

the capacity to consent to intergenerational sexual and romantic interactions. Based on this view, the organization promoted man/boy relationships, along with age of consent reform. While there is no other context provided in the file, presumably Bearchell attended this conference in Philadelphia, or at the very least, meaningfully engaged with the central tenets, even developing her own ideas about intergenerational relationships.

In the published article, "Why I became a Gay Liberationist," Bearchell brings together these perspectives and interjects female sexuality into liberatory politics:

> Many dykes, including those who call ourselves feminists, are compulsive rule-breakers. We take women to beaches, or find them there, and head for the dunes, or take bar-room tricks to bathroom cubicles for quickies. We reject *Playboy* lesbianism because it isn't hot enough and get our polaroids out instead. We seek out lovers we can trust for SM theatre or choose to play sexual games *because* they involve certain risks. We are irresponsible tomboys who refused to grow up and who now refuse to leave out of our lives, including our love and sex lives, a kindred spirit because she happens to be 15 or 16 years old. It isn't true that public sex, porn, S/M and child-adult sex are not lesbian issues.[556]

Her handwritten notes indicate that original drafts of this article include, "we are irresponsible tomboys who can't resist the allure of 15, or 12, yr-old tomboys." Even though Bearchell was unabashedly advancing a radical pro-sex position, it appears she still succumbed to the weight of the backlash she expected to encounter, and self-censored. It is a controversy that resonates 35 years later, evidenced in *The ArQuives*' decision to restrict access to this document, which had been selectively removed from Bearchell's personal files and placed in separate box coded as NAMBLA.

When the feminist movement entered the pornography debate, there were many who believed that creating alternative sexual imagery was the only constructive option. Out of that conviction grew a body of by-and-for lesbian material, and by the early-1980s, a new genre of lesbian-made pornography and erotica had emerged. In 1983, Bearchell set out to create a guide

[556] Ibid.

to "Lezzy Smut." Her article in *The Body Politic* opened by questioning essentialist presumptions about female sexuality: "Is it true that women don't really get turned on by visual representations of sex?"[557] To which she responded, "The fact that lesbians go looking for reflections of our passion in places as unlikely as *Penthouse* or *Playboy* suggests that the urge to find these reflections is a powerful one."[558] Bearchell explained that prior to the 1980s, most dyke-generated erotica consisted of how-to manuals, such as *Loving Women*, *What Lesbians Do*, and *The Joy of Lesbian Sex*, from her view, were more concerned with education than arousal. For Bearchell, there was nothing about this genre worth getting excited about until the 1980 publication of *Sapphistry: The Book of Lesbian Sexuality*,[559] when a tradition of lesbian publishing began. Written by Califia, it includes illustrations by "lesbian-erotica pioneer Tee Corinne," each one an homage to a lesbian who produced erotic drawings of women. As Bearchell documented their very existence, she recognized how they filled an absence in lesbian history, writing, "Why have we been deprived of these women and their work all these years? And where can we find out more about them?"[560]

In questioning this absence, Bearchell contributed to the writing of this history in her reviews, "Another opportunity lesbians have taken to share sexual experience, information, fantasies and sexually arousing work, written and pictorial, is in a series of anthologies…" Published within the same few years were: the "Sex Issue" of *Heresies*,[561] the SAMOIS collective's *Coming to Power: Writings and Graphics on Lesbian S/M,*[562] *A Woman's Touch: An*

---

[557]Chris Bearchell, "Art, Trash & Titillation: A Consumer's Guide to Lezzy Smut," *The Body Politic* no. 93 (May 1983): 29.
[558] Ibid.
[559] P. Patrick Califia, *Sapphistry: The Book of Lesbian Sexuality* (Iowa City: Naiad Press, 1980).
[560] Chris Bearchell, "Art, Trash & Titillation: A Consumer's Guide to Lezzy Smut," *The Body Politic* no. 93 (May 1983): 29.
[561] Heresies Collective, "Sex Issue," *Heresies Magazine*, vol. 3, no. 4 (Issue 12, 1981).
[562] Samois, *Coming to Power*.

Anthology of Lesbian Eroticism and Sensuality for Women Only,[563] and *Sapphic Touch: Writings and Graphics on Lesbian S/M*,[564] each of which explored SM and other sexual themes, often from intersectional perspectives. There was also Tee Corinne's *The Cunt Coloring Book* (also published as *Labiaflowers*), and with that, a tradition of lesbian publishing had begun.[565]

"…renegade voices"

Out of these embittered conflicts, emerged the first ever feminist pornography. Out of San Francisco in 1984, came *On our Backs: The Best of Lesbian Sex*, and that same year, *Bad Attitude: A Lesbian Sex Magazine*, out of Boston. These women-run magazines were the first to feature lesbian erotica intended for lesbians. As Bearchell exclaimed, they promised "to be provocative – to turn on, rather than preach at, their audiences."[566] These sexually explicit magazines, often featuring SM practices, were a response to the debates within the feminist community and a show of solidarity with gay male attitudes toward sex. In her review of the new publications, Bearchell expressed their representational significance, "It's a movement that has questioned many of our preconceptions about the relationship between sex and power…"[567] Erotic publications provided some of the only platforms in which women could discuss, express, and explore their sexuality. Their emergence was a reaction to the feminist ideology that placed greater importance on political identification with women than erotic attraction to them. They challenged the anti-porn analysis so prevalent at time, linking sex with victimization, and imposed oppressive standards of respectability and femininity within women's communities. And the contributors to these

---

[563] Cedar and Nelly (eds.), *A Woman's Touch: An Anthology of Lesbian Eroticism and Sensuality for Women Only* (Eugene: Womanshare Books, 1979).

[564] *Sapphic Touch: A Journal of Lesbian Erotica* was edited by Jeanine Karen and Sue Skope in San Francisco; there was only one volume and 3000 copies printed. See: *Bibliomania*, retrieved from https://www.bibliomania.ws/shop/bibliomania/12995.html

[565] Tee Corinne's famous colouring book was first published in 1975 as *The Cunt Coloring Book*, and was slightly revised and retitled, *Labiaflowers: A Coloring Book*, in 1981.

[566] Chris Bearchell, "At Last!" *The Body Politic*, no. 108 (November 1984): 37.

[567] Ibid.

magazines did so at great personal risk, as Cindy Patton noted, "they are taking a big chance in sharing their secret feelings and articulating, criticizing and analyzing what they may be afraid to discuss at the average lesbian potluck supper. I believe that out of these renegade voices we can reach a better appreciation of and respect for the richness and diversity of our sexualities."[568] These magazines, with their SM themes, filled a gap in lesbian life and propelled sex positive community. In Canada and the United States, only a few gay bookstores would agree to sell them, and almost all women's bookstores refused to do so.[569]

The Toronto Women's Bookstore wrote a letter to *The Body Politic* explaining why they would not carry "lesbian pro-sadomasochistic" material, specifically *On Our Backs*, which they found it to be "anti-feminist, anti-woman, anti-Semitic and racist."[570] They continued, "The material often utilizes traditional pornographic format in that it stereotypes women as enjoying violence and degradation and perpetuates an industry that exploits all women. This tendency has brought home to us the fact that not every idea thought by a feminist is indeed a feminist idea."[571] Several issues later, Califia responded, "The self-righteousness which prompted your decision enrages and grieves me. I can only believe that a singular ignorance of lesbian history has prompted it. Once again, our voices are edited, censored, silenced. Once again, the truth of our lives is turned into contraband."[572] For Califia, the bookstore was overstepping their role by acting as guardians of other women's politics and sexuality.

---

[568] Cindy Patton, cited in Chris Bearchell, "At Last!" *The Body Politic*, no. 108 (November 1984): 38.
[569] Joan Nestle, *Restricted Country*.
[570] The Women at the Toronto Women's Bookstore, cited in Chris Bearchell, "At Last!" *The Body Politic*, no. 108 (November 1984): 37.
[571] Ibid.
[572] P. Patrick Califia, "Letters*:* Carbon Copy," *The Body Politic*, no. 118 (September 1985): 11.

"…one of the strangest experiences I've ever had."

Toronto's first lesbian-sexuality conference, hosted by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in June 1984, was a timely intervention. The event involved 27 workshops spread over two days, covering topics such as promiscuity, SM, and intergenerational relationships, with a keynote address by *Broadside* collective member, Susan Cole. Marianna Valverde thought the "lively" keynote was "a good introduction to the conference," that Cole raised serious issues about the role of sexual pleasure without over-theorizing sexual desire.[573] Valverde relayed, "Talking about male domination as glorified in pornography, she outlined how our very desires are distorted by our internalized images, and how the expression of our desires are hampered by the reality of life in a sexist society."[574] For Lee Waldorf, Cole's talk "provided a strange introduction" to the conference.[575]

In a review of the address, Waldorf heard a "lesbians as victims" narrative. Waldorf criticized Cole's position, which relied on the notion lesbian sexuality was structured by fear of male violence. She explained, "Cole's explanation of sexual inhibition among lesbians—that 'it's hard to open your legs when you don't feel safe,' that we're distracted by fear of attack from men—didn't strike me as having much grounding in reality."[576] Cole believed that lesbians were in danger of being "bought off by orgasms," a position that was confusing for Waldorf, who concluded, "Being told by a feminist that lesbian sex shores up patriarchy was one of the strangest experiences I've ever had."[577] This would have come in direct contrast to the boundary-pushing erotic materials

---

[573] Marianna Valverde, "Lesbian Sexuality Conference: Coming on Strong," *Broadside: A Feminist Review* 5, no. 9 (July 1984): 5.
[574] Ibid.
[575] Lee Waldorf, "If It Feels Good – Suspect It," *The Body Politic*, no. 106 (September 1984): 7.
[576] Ibid.
[577] Ibid.

that were being published at the time and revealed the divide between lesbians in their views on sexuality and its role in political life.

In turn, Cole accused Waldorf of misrepresentation, writing that *The Body Politic* cannot "resist the urge to promote the bogus division between frigid feminists and lusty lesbians."[578] In so doing, we see this tendency of denying lesbians their own voice within *The Body Politic*. Whenever lesbians spoke from this pro-sex position, they were seen as aligning with gay men and gay liberation rather than acknowledging their own autonomous voice developed from within. Attempting to clarify her position Cole wrote, "What I meant … is that sex is not the only thing worth struggling for … that there are other things – like making art, for example, or more important, making change."[579] Again, what we see here is a hierarchical value placed on one form of expression over another. It reads as a classist dismissal of the social change that lesbians were seeking through their own sexual liberation. It also overlooks the very reason that so many lesbians were focused on sexuality—because it was always under threat within the women's movement.

The severity of this repression is evidenced in Bearchell's account of meeting with "three anonymous dykes" in a "gloomy, inner-city basement" several weeks later to discuss their impressions of the conference. One of the women relayed, "there seemed to be a lot of difficulty, in some of the workshops, with women unable to talk about sex specifically, explicitly. Partly it's got to do with the fact that we feel vulnerable talking about sexual experiences—admitting we have sexual experiences we enjoy."[580] In other words, even a lesbian sexuality conference did not create an environment in which lesbians felt comfortable talking to one another about sexuality and sexual desire for fear of judgment and accusations of being anti-woman and anti-feminist.

---

[578] Susan G. Cole, "Letters*:* Lust and Celibacy," *The Body Politic*, no. 108 (November 1984): 3.
[579] Ibid.
[580] Chris Bearchell, "Lots of Talk; Not Much Action: Dykes Discussing Sex, Reflections on a Conference on Lesbian Sexuality," *The Body Politic*, no. 106 (September 1984): 7.

Bearchell explained, "… no one is willing to risk the sex she enjoys today by putting it on the line for politics. Their experiences have taught them to fear the censure of their own community…"[581] Bearchell's effort to engage and amplify the voices of marginalized people, both within and outside the lesbian community, is central to her legacy. By the mid-1980s, activist lesbians were developing revolutionary sexual politics, not only in theory, but on the ground, formalizing organizations to defend sexual minorities facing more punitive conditions.

The Outcome of the Censorship Battles

On April 3, 1985, Canada Customs implemented a new set of guidelines, intended to appear more liberal. Under previous legislation any sexually explicit material could be declared "obscene," whereas now, prohibitions would focus on "violent" sexual material that appeared to "degrade or dehumanize any of the participants."[582] The impacts were felt immediately. A month later, and lesbian erotica was among the first targeted. Customs officers seized a shipment of *Bad Attitude*, en route from Boston to Little Sister's Bookstore in Vancouver. Shipments to Glad Day Books in Toronto were also seized, including *The Leatherman's Handbook*, *Gay Spirit*, *S/M: The Last Taboo*, and *The Men with the Pink Triangle*.[583] In their news coverage, Waldorf and Rodgerson explained that sodomy, bondage, and the use of dildos were now included in the definition of violence. Under the new guidelines, customs had virtually prohibited the importation of lesbian and gay male sexual material.[584] Predictably, Canada Customs demonstrated far less

---

[581] Ibid.
[582] Lee Waldorf and Gillian Rodgerson for the Collective, "Customized Porn," *The Body Politic*, no. 119 (October 1985): 10.
[583] Little Sisters and Glad Day initiated what became lengthy court challenges over materials seized by Canada customs. Notably, censorship came in many forms; in addition to seized goods, queer bookstores such as these, including Librairie L'Androgyne in Montréal, frequently experienced customs delays, blocked shipments, and damaged products.
[584] Lee Waldorf and Gillian Rodgerson for the Collective, "Customized Porn," *The Body Politic*, no. 119 (October 1985): 10.

interest in violence against women, and mainstream heterosexual porn remained largely unaffected.[585]

The same year, a new organization to oppose censorship was formed by Toronto feminists called Feminists Against Censorship (FAC). The group argued that feminists must avoid strategies for dealing with pornography that could ultimately have the same effect as censorship. Varda Burstyn, founding member of FAC, urged feminists to focus on the actual consequences of laws once enacted, in addition to the political alignments that sprang up around them. As many feminists joined forces with ring-wing groups to pass anti-porn legislation, others were alarmed by the direction much feminist organizing had taken. In an interview with Waldorf for *The Body Politic*, Carole Vance argued that with so much focus on male violence and aggression, feminists' understanding of sexuality had become skewed. For Vance, women had rendered themselves powerless by setting up a sexual scenario in which women were always victims; as a result, women had lost their sense of the complexity of sexuality. Likewise, in claiming pornography as central to women's oppression, other modes of oppression were overlooked, such as how women come to understand themselves through not only pornography, but all other institutions, as she stated, "I feel *Good Housekeeping* and the Bible are much more dangerous."[586]

Bearchell had long been a defender of pornography and was recognized for her astute analysis that challenged Canada's obscenity laws. A fan of popular pornographic performers, Annie Sprinkle[587] and Nina Hartley,[588] she passionately opposed censorship and co-founded the *Canadian Committee Against Customs Censorship* following seizures by Canada Customs[589] of

---

[585] See: Cossman, et al., *Bad Attitude/s on Trial.*
[586] Lee Waldorf, "Pleasure…& Danger: Lee Waldorf Talks with Carole Vance," *The Body Politic*, no. 112 (March 1985): 28.
[587] Annie Sprinkle is now a sexologist, educator, writer, sex film producer, and sex-positive feminist.
[588] Nina Hartley is now a sex educator, author, sex-positive feminist, pornographic actress and film director.
[589] 'Customs' is used to refer to what is now the Canada Border Services Agency.

shipments to gay bookstores.[590] As materials such as *Bad Attitude*, *On Our Backs*, and lesbian-made porn videos from Blush Productions were repeatedly banned by Customs, Bearchell wrote, "One of our worst fears is being realized – not since the prosecution of *The Well of Loneliness* has the might of the state been so deliberately marshaled to prevent lesbians from communicating with one another about our lives and our sexualities."[591] This speaks to the validation and cultural significance being fostered through this erotic subculture. As predicted, and reported in *The Body Politic*, this fed into a broader "hysteria about all kinds of sexual matters," generated by politicians and the media, resulting in crackdowns on prostitution, abortion clinics, alongside the panic over HIV/AIDS and a United States Supreme Court ruling against sodomy.[592]

Bearchell was not alone. By the mid-1980s, many lesbians were attempting to reclaim sex. For pro-sex feminists, no lines were to be drawn between correct and incorrect pleasure – what was right and wrong was based squarely on consent; what was possible was limited only by imagination.[593] The first lesbian-made porn films were created in the United States by Tigress Productions and Blush Productions. In 1985, Blush Productions released four VHS films, *Fun With A Sausage*, *L'Ingenue*, *Private Pleasures*, and *Shadows*. In her review of the films, Gillian Rodgerson wrote, "Lesbian porn is off to a good start with these daring efforts – it can only get better. If we could just get Canada Customs to agree…"[594] The films challenged the notion of "politically correct" sexuality and gave women permission to explore butch/femme, SM, leather, dildos, and "fist fucking."[595] But of course, anti-porn feminists were quick to critique them. In an article for *The Body Politic*, Anna Marie Smith responded to these criticisms, "Yet again, we find

---

[590] Micheal Riordon, *Eating Fire: Family Life, on the Queer Side* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2001), 186.
[591] Chris Bearchell, "Sex Panic Hides Real Issues," *The Body Politic*, no. 132 (November 1986): 5.
[592] Ibid.
[593] Sue Golding, "Laying Bare the Tenderloin," *The Body Politic*, no. 112 (March 1985): 26-27.
[594] Gillian Rodgerson, "From Sausages to Slings," *The Body Politic* no. 128 (July 1986): 27.
[595] Faderman, *Odd Girls*, 258.

ourselves fighting to be sexual, fighting to create pleasure."[596] She furthered, "Our resistance to this anti-sex line has itself been creative, despite the continuous attempts of these women to derail our progress."[597] Indeed, many lesbians were speaking back to the "famous Mutiny" that had been going on since the late-1970s within the Women's Movement. Smith wrote, "the disenchanted have got together with the outcasts and the fortunate uninvolved," to produce a host of cultural expressions,

> …producing Samois, the *Heresies* sex issue, *Sapphistry*, *Coming to Power*, the Barnard Conference, *Bad Attitude*, *On Our Backs*, Pat Califia's *The Power Exchange*, Chris Bearchell on porn, Sue Golding on perverts and indiscretion/transgression, Joan Nestle on butch/fem, Gayle Rubin on talking sex, the Lesbian Sex Mafia, S/M support groups, coalitions with sex trade workers, women's sex-toy shops and leather craft, an orgy area at the Holy Lands (the Womyn's Music Festival), and of course numerous parties, women's nights at the baths and strip clubs, and most importantly, lots of fun sex.[598]

In such accounts we see activist lesbians reclaiming lives that had been cast deep in the shadows of queer culture, and in so doing they built, documented, and historicized an inherently erotic and political subculture.

Forging Ahead: The Legacies of The Body Politic

In this chapter, we saw the divisive debates over pornography and censorship, much of which was ideological, and hashed out amongst gay liberationists, activist lesbians, and feminists in the pages of *The Body Politic*. Urgency developed in the early-1980s to move beyond theorizing to taking more direct action. In the next chapter, we see major cities—Vancouver, Toronto, and Montréal—undergo urban redevelopment on behalf of "respectable citizens," and the rest were cast out. With the emergence of respectability politics, we see gay men leading the fight against sex workers in the West End of Vancouver, racism, discrimination, and gender policing in Toronto

[596] Anna Marie Smith, "Fear and Loathing and the Search for Pleasure," *The Body Politic*, no. 128 (July 1986): 25.
[597] Ibid.
[598] Ibid.

gay bars, and the continuing raids of bookshops and bathhouses. Establishments for adult entertainment were rapidly shut down and low-income residents, queers, and sex workers displaced. Harsher federal sanctions were enacted against street-based prostitution, increasing sex workers' vulnerability to violence and poverty. At the same time, the HIV/AIDS crisis emerged, and redirected the focus and attention of queer organizing. By this point, many queer people of colour increasingly focused on organizing *within* communities of colour, and making links between issues of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and now health. For many people within the lesbian and gay community, *The Body Politic* no longer represented the radical politics it once did.

Chapter Seven

Testing the Boundaries of *The Body Politic*

In this chapter I pick up on the two major undercurrents of contention described in the previous—sexism and racism. This chapter analyzes what appears to be a movement gone awry, and the events that gave way to the collapse of *The Body Politic*. By the early-1980s, Chris Bearchell had emerged as a key figure and exemplary activist lesbian. She became actively involved in sex worker rights, drawing parallels between increasingly repressive laws related to prostitution and censorship. In the first part of this chapter, I feature Bearchell as a counternarrative to women's and queer histories. I affirm her rightful place as a key figure in queer politics, as the embodiment of activist lesbianism, and as an inspiration for those seeking radical transformative justice. The remainder of this section follows closely Bearchell's increasing involvement in sex workers' rights, which she came to focus on almost exclusively in her contributions to *The Body Politic*. She raised awareness of issues facing sex workers and repeatedly called for queer liberationists to forge stronger alliances, noting the wave of conservatism that threatened to isolate both groups.

Among other activist lesbians, Bearchell foregrounded the voices of sex workers and emphasized the conservatism within the women's movement, as well as the failure of those in the gay liberation movement to meaningfully incorporate sex worker rights into broader appeals for sexual freedom. I argue that it is this latter failure, the glaring absence of liberationist involvement in challenging the prostitution-related laws in which they also found themselves ensnared, that contributed to the perceived irrelevance of the journal, and perhaps the movement more broadly. Sexual freedom appeared to be a middle-class and male-centred pursuit as gay liberationists, who defended anti-censorship at all costs, continued to overlook the important and obvious alliances to

be formed with sex workers, who were predominantly women. I argue that this sexist undercurrent contributed to the demise of *The Body Politic*, as it came to be viewed as non-representative of the movement. This is a novel point, as most historical accounts connect the end of the journal to the publication of the 'houseboy' ad.

The focus on anti-censorship at all costs fed into the interconnected debate on racism, which is the subject of the second half of this chapter. The objections to the publication of the 'houseboy' ad challenged the notion of unrestrained anti-censorship positions and raised questions about the costs of sexual freedom when it reinforced racial oppression. The ongoing tension building over gay male classified ads, and the erasure of the voices of people of colour more generally, contributed to the overall understanding of *The Body Politic* as out of touch. The decision to publish this particular ad, amid an ongoing debate on racism in the community, brought these tensions to a head. The failure of *The Body Politic* to respond to race-based oppression, within the community itself and in broader society, rendered the journal meaningless to queers of colour. The aftermath of the 'houseboy' debacle revealed a small group of white gay men discussing a movement that was for them and by them, and the journal appeared irrelevant in its capacity to speak for the entire community, if it ever really had. I conclude this chapter with a final reflection on the unfolding of the national gay liberation journal to take stock of the lessons learned and the histories only beginning to be written.

Part I

"If anyone gets arrested, call Chris"

One of the few accounts of Chris Bearchell's personal life is found in Michael Riordan's book, *Eating Fire: Family Life on the Queer Side*.[599] In the chapter titled, "Some Kindred Spirits,"

[599] Riordon, *Eating Fire*, 180-193.

he documents his recollections, including excerpts of an email exchange with Bearchell from her home at 'Camp Swampy' on Lasqueti Island off the west coast of British Columbia, where she relocated in 1995.[600] He recounts their first meeting in 1974 at a gay organization in Toronto, remembering Bearchell as "a nineteen-year-old lesbian and socialist from Alberta, with a searchlight intelligence and a ready laugh."[601] She soon became involved in *The Body Politic*, writing her first article in 1975, joined the collective a few years later, and by 1980, was one of the few paid workers.[602] She was a member of the collective for all 85 issues circulated between 1978-1987 and published almost twice as many articles and news reports throughout that time.[603] She was, by far, the single most influential lesbian contributor to the journal, and had a remarkable influence on queer culture and politics in Toronto and beyond.

An example of her creative, insightful, and compelling personality is found in Bob Gallagher's charming account of their own "gay wedding."[604] In the face of unequal marriage laws, and by extension restricted immigration options, US-born Gallagher writes, "the persuasive and irrepressible Chris Bearchell convinced me the cheeky thing to do was to marry her and file for immigration."[605] He recounts, it was the summer of 1985 at the University of Toronto, and "Camp was the order of the day."[606] Their wedding program was a feminist-socialist manifesto and the service officiated by an openly gay minister; Sue Golding was "the butch-fem best man" and Gallagher's lover the maid of honour; the song "It's Raining Men" accompanied the bridal

[600] Riordon, *Eating Fire*, 180-193.
[601] Ibid., 181.
[602] Bearchell's time as a paid staff member is mentioned in her letter of resignation from the journal staff. This document was among her personal files at *The ArQuives* and described in further in chapter eight.
[603] See Appendix.
[604] Bob Gallagher, "It Seemed Like a Gay Wedding To Me," in *Any Other Way, How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. Stephanie Chambers, et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 302-304.
[605] Ibid., 303.
[606] Ibid., 302.

entrance and the cake toppers were of *Barbie* and *Ken* in an SM scene.[607] Gallagher writes of the event, "This subversive ridicule of patriarchal hegemony was the brainchild of the ever fabulous, politically committed Chris Bearchell, Canada's highest-profile lesbian."[608]

Bearchell dominated lesbian content within *The Body Politic* during the mid-1980s. Upon her death on February 18th 2007, Susan G. Cole writes in her obituary notice, "There was a time when Chris Bearchell was Toronto's only lesbian." And in another memoriam, Gerald Hannon states, "For many men in the early gay movement, she was the only lesbian on the planet." She was influential to lesbians and gay men alike. As Cole writes, "She was out and proud when a lot of us were not nearly so courageous."[609] She was vocal, visible, and focused on coalition politics. Her influence within the gay male community was due to her willingness to "work and play with men," which Hanon contends, "was unusual at a time when lesbian separatism was a significant force."[610]

Though she did play a formative role in the autonomous lesbian movement, it was never at the expense of coalition building. When feminists appeared to hit an impasse amid the highly ideological 'sex wars' taking place within women's organizations, she forged ahead creating purposeful alliances with sex workers. As repression against prostitution mounted, Bearchell made her case for coalition politics in article after article. She highlighted the similarities amongst sex workers, lesbians, and gay men, and the pivotal role that sex workers played in queer liberation. She explained that the alliance between sex workers and queers went far beyond the common contempt of law-makers and the police, "who see all our bedrooms as bawdyhouses."[611] It

---

[607] Ibid., 302.
[608] Ibid., 302.
[609] Susan G. Cole, "Chris Bearchell, 1952-2007," *Now Magazine* (March 1-7, 2007), retrieved from https://www.socialisthistory.ca/Remember/Profiles/Bearchall.htm
[610] Annie Smith, "Goodbye to a Queer Pioneer," *XTRA! West*, no. 353 (March 1, 2007), retrieved from https://walnet.org/csis/news/vancouver_2007/xtrawest-070301.html
[611] Chris Bearchell, "Hookers on Davie," *The Body Politic*, no. 103 (May 1984): 31.

extended to a shared experience as sexual minorities, deviants, and outcasts. She wrote, "From the confusion and anxiety of our mothers to bashings on the street, from the anger of a new-found political voice to the fear or shame that prompts some protestors to don black masks, we share a lot of common ground."[612]

Records and personal accounts reveal that Bearchell had all the makings of a powerful movement leader—a bold and charismatic personality, astute analysis, a deep sense of in/justice, and the optimism that she could influence change. Her inclination towards activism was longstanding. While still a teenager in Edmonton in the late-1960s, she protested her high school dress code, and got involved in the pro-choice and anti-Vietnam war movements.[613] As her friend, Annie Smith wrote in an obituary notice, "Countless people were drawn to her and found themselves instantly connected to allies, lovers and friends for life. She was the first to listen and the last to judge; no wonder she was described as a dyke dynamo." Some of her most memorable moments were at speaking events; by one account, "she had the capacity to inspire in times of great difficulty," and by another, "she was the best rabble-rouser we ever had."[614] She had the ability to radicalize, politicize, and mobilize people, and as we have seen throughout this project, she was at the forefront of countless campaigns, organizations, and rallies.

Concern over the sanitization of queer communities in the early-1980s led to a radical political offshoot in Toronto—a queer refuge called Walnut. Bearchell and Danny Cockerline met at *The Body Politic*, and in 1983, the two purchased a three-story house at 97 Walnut Avenue in what was then a working-class neighbourhood downtown Toronto. Riordon relays, "The idea of Walnut as a refuge had been clear to Chris from the beginning." It was a place where "Dinner was

---

[612] Ibid., 31.

[613] *Proud Lives: Chris Bearchell Tribute*, directed by Nancy Nicol (2016), *The ArQuives Digital Exhibitions*, http://digitalcollections.clga.ca/items/show/678.

[614] Gerald Hannon, cited in Smith, "Goodbye to a Queer Pioneer"; Nicol, *Proud Lives.*

always a big event, with wonderful conversation and always more people at the table than lived in the house," and where people could show up "in the middle of the night, and in desperate straits."[615] Riordan's chapter focuses on this social experiment, orchestrated by Bearchell. In their correspondence Bearchell gave some insight as to her drive to create such an environment, "I'd been on my own from a very early age, a runaway without many resources, and often without a place to live. A lot of people helped me out, and that left a strong impression with me."[616] In another passage she wrote, "Most of us Walnuts don't have kids of our own, but do have a history of taking in people who've been spurned by others."[617] There was a continuous flow of people in and out of Walnut, and those connections extended to the west coast when Bearchell and Andrew Sorfleet moved there in the mid-1990s, and "Walnutship" was extended to newfound friends, allies, and 'in-laws.'

Walnut is described as a space that fostered a convergence of people whose diverse life experiences illuminated for each other systemic oppression, and through which they developed strategies to change that system, its rules and enforcers. Through information sharing and concrete support, they helped Toronto politics evolve. According to Bearchell, "The people who lived there or who were drawn to the house shared commitments to particular struggles for justice. That was our common ground. We wanted others to know about these situations, and to help us transform them."[618] Smith writes that at Walnut, "you never knew who or what to expect; strippers editing their own movies, hookers planning conferences, cutting-edge artists and writers."[619] Similarly, Riordan recalls, "Whores, queens, bulldaggers, radical faeries, perverts of all sorts, pornographers,

---

[615] Bruce Martin, cited in Riordon, *Eating Fire*, 184.
[616] Riordon, *Eating Fire*,185.
[617] Ibid., 185.
[618] Ibid., 185.
[619] Smith, "Goodbye to a Queer Pioneer."

journalists, cats, photographers and artists found a refuge in those horny hallways."[620] Riordan states that Bearchell rejected the idea that she was uniquely central to the Walnut experiment. Bruce, a fellow Walnut, retorts, "Don't listen to her. We all added our various colours to the house but the shape it took depended very much on who she is."[621] She is credited with inciting political engagement amongst fellow Walnuts, helping them to transform their individual experiences into political action and social change.

It was at Walnut that Bearchell and Cockerline both developed an interest in the well-being and rights of sex workers. "For Danny it started as an intellectual thing," Bearchell wrote, "but then he got into doing sex work himself. He became quite renowned as a prostitutes' rights activist and did a lot of work organizing sex workers in response to AIDS."[622] Indeed, the two of them helped found *Maggie's, the Toronto Prostitutes' Community Services Project*, which became the first government-funded and sex-worker-run education project in Canada.[623] It was also out of Walnut that the *Canadian Organization for the Rights of Prostitutes* emerged,[624] as well as the *Canadian Committee against Customs Censorship*, among a host of other initiatives.[625] The police targeted organizers such as Bearchell, and harassed outreach workers giving out free condoms and educational materials. An advisory that was distributed to the outreach workers at the time read: "If anyone gets arrested, call Chris. She will contact a lawyer and generally raise the alarm."[626]

---

[620] Riordan, *Eating Fire*, 185.
[621] Ibid., 186.
[622] Ibid., 182.
[623] Now *Maggie's Toronto Sex Worker Action Project*, this continues to be one of the leading sex worker organizations in the country.
[624] Now *Sex Professionals of Canada*, this remains one of the oldest sex worker organizations. Its members successfully challenged the prostitution-related provisions in the *Criminal Code of Canada*, which were struck down by the Ontario Superior Court in 2010, and again, by the Supreme Court of Canada in 2013.
[625] Riordan, *Eating Fire*, 185.
[626] Smith, "Goodbye to a Queer Pioneer."

Walnut encapsulates a sex radical sentiment that I have now traced since the beginning of *The Body Politic*. It was amongst these sex radicals that sex workers developed alliances and built a movement in Toronto. In this realm, they established a voice that, as we have seen in the previous sections, was silenced by feminists who viewed commercial sex as inherently oppressive and demeaning toward women. Following the work of Bearchell and other activist lesbians, we can trace a counternarrative where crucial alliances were developed amongst sex radicals in the understanding of sexual hierarchies and deviance, whereby the oppression of one lends to the oppression of anyone and everyone.

"…the realization of some of our worst fears"

Through the late-1970s and early-1980s, police cracked down on indoor establishments for adult entertainment in response to increased capitalist investment and redevelopment of urban centres. This contributed to the closure of many indoor venues, such as adult book and video stores, massage parlours, and strip clubs, and these within neighbourhoods, street-based sex workers were displaced from established strolls.[627] Inner-city geographies became contested spaces as police pushed people out of areas where sex work had long been tolerated. There was a clash between street-based sex workers and rapidly forming coalitions of local residents and business owners, who captured the attention of media outlets and law enforcement. In one of the first critical surveys of prostitution in Canada, sociologist Deborah Brock describes the anti-prostitution campaigns during this period as a full-blown moral panic.[628] Brock contends that prostitution came to be

[627] Deborah Brock, *Making Work, Making Trouble: The Social Regulation of Sexual Labour*, 2nd edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); John Lowman, "Violence and the Outlaw Status of (Street) Prostitution in Canada," *Violence Against Women*, vol. 6, no. 9 (2000): 987-1011; Becki Ross, "Sex and (Evacuation from) the City: The Moral and Legal Regulation of Sex Workers in Vancouver's West End, 1975-1985," *Sexualities* vol. 13, no. 2 (2010): 197-218.
[628] Brock, *Making Work*.

regarded as a major social problem “when it infringed on areas whose class character afforded residents the privilege of public protest, media attention, and government response.”[629]

A similar process was underway in Vancouver, as Becki Ross describes the rapidly redeveloping city and the push to create a “family-friendly” downtown core for the upcoming World Expo ’86. In that city, the emergent gay village and a sector of predominantly white gay men who had gained a level of respectability were at the forefront of vigilante organizations that emerged comprised of resident groups, business owners, and local politicians. As established indoor venues were shut down, traffic circles and street blockades attempted to curb street solicitation, and there were many casualties of these “clean-up” campaigns. To continue working while circumventing harassment and arrest, sex workers moved out of the safety of the West End to more dangerous strolls in warehouse and industrial districts. Several researchers have demonstrated that as this process was underway, which coincided with more punitive bylaws and federal legislation in the early-1980s, violence against sex workers began to escalate.[630]

Sex workers have long identified prohibitionist laws as the greatest threat to their health, safety, and security. There have been federal laws prohibiting various aspects of sex work since the enactment of the *Criminal Code of Canada* in 1892. This included the criminalization of bawdy-houses and procuring (i.e. agents or managers, colloquially referred to as “pimping laws”), which remain in effect today. Women were also subjected to vagrancy provisions, which created the offence of *being* “a common prostitute or nightwalker,” and permitted the detainment and mandatory medical exams of any woman “found in a public place and does not, when required,

[629] Ibid., 60.
[630] Lowman, “Violence and the Outlaw”; Ross, “Sex and (Evacuation from) the City.” See also: *Hookers on Davie*, directed by Janis Cole and Holly Dale (Vancouver: Spectrum Films, 1984).

give a good account of herself."[631] This status offense remained in effect until 1972, when it was argued that it violated the Bill of Rights. It was then revoked and replaced with the gender-neutral law prohibiting solicitation. That year, it became the act of solicitation, rather than the status of being a "prostitute," that was criminalized, and for the first time, the law was applicable to both women and men.[632] As prostitution reemerged as a major national concern in the 1980s, governmental committees revisited these laws. Despite recommendations for a more liberal and regulated industry, governments introduced more restrictive legislation. As conditions became more punitive, sex workers acquired allies and started organizing.

Coalition Politics: *"Dykes and Hookers Fight Back"*

In the midst of these changes in law and enforcement practices, sex workers mobilized. Baba Yaga (Margaret Spore), founder of the *Committee Against Street Harassment* (CASH), a Toronto-based organization working for the decriminalization of prostitution, discussed the necessary alliances between lesbians and sex workers in the special feminist issue of *The Body Politic.* She questioned why sex work had not become a subject of debate. She contended that rape, abortion, even lesbianism, had made it into public discourse, and yet feminists had not "come to grips" with sex work.[633] As a result, "The prostitute remains available but invisible. Women cringe at the whore-label as they strive to be respectably employed. Not long ago the lesbian could have been described much the same way."[634] But for her, lesbians had benefitted from the gay liberation movement; media attention, lobbying, and public action had elevated their social status – now it was time for feminists and lesbians to do the same for sex workers using similar tactics. Yaga

[631] Emily van der Meulen, Elya Durisin and Victorial Love (eds.), "Introduction," in *Selling Sex: Experience, Advocacy, and Research on Sex Work in Canada*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 7-8.
[632] Ibid.
[633] Baba Yaga, "Committee Against Street Harassment: Dykes and Hookers Fight Back," *The Body Politic*, no. 57 (October 1979): 22.
[634] Ibid.

recognized that some lesbians might be reluctant, after all, prostitution involves sleeping with men, yet, there was no virtue in a value system that divided women according to their sexual behaviour. Lesbians and sex workers knew all too well the damaging effects of isolation resulting from such divisions, especially for lesbian sex workers. Yaga concluded, "Lesbians can contribute to the fight to decriminalize prostitution because of their ability to work, and empathize, with other women. And many prostitutes are lesbian. Let's make sure our communities are willing to hear them."[635]

In the aftermath of the Toronto bathhouse raids in 1981, lesbians and gay men came together in protest, and Bearchell hoped to extend this momentum beyond the gay liberation movement to forge even broader coalitions to include sex workers, swingers, and other "sexual revolutionaries."[636] This was pertinent for Bearchell because ultimately, they were all interchangeable in the eyes of law enforcement and the media. For example, *The Toronto Sun*'s headline for its first story about the Toronto bathhouse read: "Gay raids sparked by boys-for-hire ring?"[637] Prostitution charges were never laid in connection with the bathhouse raids, but as Bearchell explained, the impression that there was a connection worked to isolate gay men and sex workers both from each other and from the wider community.

These "sensationalized reports" helped the police tailor legislation to their liking in order to bolster arrest statistics and police budgets. Bearchell articulated these connections, "With the bawdyhouse laws, police have hit upon a formula that works for gay men, hookers and swingers."[638] While there were many differences between gay men, lesbians, and sex workers, they had common experiences with the law, and for Bearchell, it was time to seriously consider

[635] Ibid.
[636] Chris Bearchell, "Hustlers, Hookers, Swingers and 'Sexual Revolutionaries: Making Allies among Indecent Activists," *The Body Politic* no. 77 (October 1981): 17.
[637] Ibid.
[638] Ibid.

how sexual minorities were viewed *and used* by the police. She wrote, "Prostitutes, homosexuals, swingers—they don't enjoy a lot of public understanding or support. They're vulnerable targets for law-and-order clean-up campaigns that provide excellent public relations material for police forces and city governments."[639] In this sense, "sexual revolutionaries" were allies in the struggle against oppression, as morality campaigns are always interconnected. As an example, she discussed Toronto's "clean-up" of Yonge Street massage parlours in the late-1970s that not only forced indoor sex workers onto the streets, contributing to the current "problem" of street-based sex work, but also signaled the beginning of political gay-bashing.

"…a good old-fashioned traveling road show"

With mounting pressure from the courts, police associations, residents' groups, and mayors of the largest cities, in June of 1983, the ruling Liberal Party convened the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution, commonly referred to as the Fraser Committee after its chairperson.[640] The committee held public hearings in 22 cities across the country, with local police forces, customs officials, film boards, professors and researchers, and consulted with representatives in all levels of government, as also held private meetings with social workers, sex workers and their families.[641] Bearchell attended the Toronto hearings and reported on them in *The Body Politic*. The committee, she declared, "has all the makings of a good, old-fashioned travelling road show."[642] She went on give her ominous observation,

> I sat…surrounded by gay journalists and activists, hookers, hustlers and strippers—a collection very much the object of hostility for other observers and participants—and as most other debutants to the committee made their pleas for more laws, greater control and

[639] Ibid.
[640] van der Meulen, et al., *Selling Sex*, 9.
[641] Fraser Committee, *Report of the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution in Canada* (Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services, 1985), 4. Retrieved from https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/131616NCJRS.pdf.
[642] Chris Bearchell, "Pornography, Prostitution and Moral Panic," *The Body Politic*, no. 101 (March 1984): 7.

> more power, one palpable feeling grew hour by hour: that our very existence was threatened by this charade, and by the larger process it is a part of.[643]

Of course, moral panics and political scapegoating of sexual minorities was nothing new, but Bearchell foresaw the resurgent attempts to control sexuality as an effect of larger conservative backlash. Because she identified with the collection of outcasts, she was able to see how they were interchangeable in the eyes of people calling to expand legislation. These laws would only bolster institutional power, and though sex workers were the momentary target, the repressive sentiment extended far beyond them specifically.

Combat Zone

In June 1984, Bearchell started publishing a regular column called *Combat Zone* to discuss "the battle over the control of sex."[644] She created space within *The Body Politic* to focus on the sex wars. Her articles analyzed a compilation of news reports on sex workers and the public hearings on prostitution, which were making headlines in mainstream media yet conspicuously absent from the national gay liberation journal. In her column, Bearchell articulated a pro-sex feminist analysis that was marginal within feminist discussions of equality. In the first installment, Bearchell called out politicians for using sex work as a "magnificent distraction" from the real issues at hand. She explained that more than a decade of feminist organizing had done nothing to improve women's economic position—the real source of violence that victimized so many women and children. She wrote, "But let's face it: poverty isn't a very sexy subject for journalists. Not when they can turn their attention to streets supposedly overflowing with hookers…"[645] Bearchell's column filled the void in the gay liberation discussion of prostitution, while responding

---

[643] Ibid.
[644] Editorial Collective, "Sex Wars," Table of Contents, *The Body Politic*, no. 104 (June 1984): 3.
[645] Chris Bearchell, "The Magnificent Distraction," Combat Zone Column, *The Body Politic*, no. 104 (June 1984): 8

to feminists' overemphasis on the issue, which from her view, was a red herring to the broader systemic and economic conditions that women faced.

The column was also an attempt to centre sex workers in the discussion on sexual freedom within a gay liberationist framework. The article, "The Dubious Art of 'Vice' Management," documented the fight against prostitution that was intensifying in Vancouver's West End. It opened with a protest event downtown Vancouver where more than 300 sex workers and their supporters descended on the neighbourhood with whistles and noise-makers. The recurrent uprisings were in response to harassment from coalitions of concerned residents. Gay men were active in a particularly influential group, *Concerned Residents of the West End* (CROWE), that pressed the federal government to make changes to the *Criminal Code* to "deal" with street-based sex workers in the neighbourhood. Bearchell explained how the Chief Justice of the British Columbia Supreme Court had recently issued an injunction banning street solicitation in the West End, which carried an automatic fine of $2000 or two years in jail. In her analysis, sex workers were being used as scapegoats to keep people distracted from the reality of economic downturn and she warned queer people against succumbing to the respectability that higher socio-economic status afforded. Bearchell wrote, "Morality campaigns seldom restrict themselves to one issue or group: they have a way of reaching out to ensnare other deviants…The 'decent homosexuals' of the West End still need to be firmly reminded, however, that it takes only one cruise of a vice cop to turn a 'decent homosexual' into a deviant criminal."[646] Throughout her column Bearchell reiterated the parallel concerns of all sexual deviants, and the consequences suffered by the most marginal—poor and racialized women, men, and transgender street-based sex workers.

[646] Chris Bearchell, "The Dubious Art of 'Vice' Management," Combat Zone Column, *The Body Politic*, no. 106 (September 1984): 18.

"It has been suggested that good girls have more dinners with bad girls"

In February 1985, Peggy Miller, founder of the Canadian Organization for the Rights of Prostitutes (CORP) along with Bearchell, a fellow member, attended a feminist coalition meeting to dispute a statement that was to be included in the leaflet for the March 8th International Women's Day in Toronto. The leaflet read: "Porn shops along Toronto's Yonge Street are harmful to women."[647] Miller and Bearchell argued that the statement did not represent the views of women who work in the sex industry. Their interjection had short and long-term implications—the statement was deleted before the leaflet went to press and they brought sex workers to the table. As fellow activist lesbian organizer, Laurie Bell wrote about this intervention, "It generated countless meetings, several potluck dinners, many disagreements, a conference…All of these constitute the beginning of a long-overdue discussion between sex trade workers and feminists in Canada."[648] The first of this series of events was a dinner in order to continue the initial discussion.

During that dinner in April, feminists grappled with two central questions—how can feminists and sex workers foster discussion with one another? And, what should the feminist response be to the release of the Fraser Report? It was at this dinner that Peggy Miller declared to the group, "You're all a bunch of fucking madonnas!"[649] It seemed the conversation needed to continue further and so they decided to organize a conference. In November 1985 Toronto was host to the "Challenging Our Images: The Politics of Pornography and Prostitution" conference, the contents of which were later edited by Laurie Bell in the volume, *Good girls/Bad Girls: Sex*

---

[647] Laurie Bell (ed.), *Good Girls/Bad Girls: Sex Trade Workers and Feminists Face to Face* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1987), 11.
[648] Ibid.
[649] Ibid.

Trade Workers & Feminists Face to Face. In the introduction to that book, Bell wrote, "It has been suggested that good girls have more dinners with bad girls. Do we really mean it?"[650]

The conference was sponsored by the Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG) and had a broad agenda which included various cultural, historical, and political perspectives on pornography and sex work. It aimed to bring sex workers and feminists together to overcome this profound division amongst women. Feminists and activist lesbians were trying to broaden the analysis of the women's movement to create space for sex workers. It attracted over 400 participants from the fields of law, social services, academia, as well as labour activists, feminists, and sex workers. It consisted of five forums, over 30 workshops, information booths, displays, and a performance night. The role of anti-pornography and anti-censorship movements in the cross-border seizures of prohibited material was a prominent theme. The proposed legislation stemming from the Fraser Report (discussed below) was also a critical issue, and its urgency was underscored by the murder of a sex worker in the city a week prior to the conference.[651]

Bell declared the conference a success, though noted some absences, "It is time for the women's movement to integrate an anti-racist perspective into its analysis, include sex trade workers' rights on its agenda, and to deal with the complexities that arise from both."[652] For Bearchell, the conference failed to bring genuine discussion between sex workers and feminists. Indeed, several local sex workers who attended the conference had to pressure organizers at the last minute to be given time on the agenda. Bearchell also took note of the inhospitable atmosphere for sex workers and any alternative feminist view, writing, "Rather than allowing the hitherto silenced group with the most at stake in the discussion the opportunity to share their experiences

[650] Ibid., 21.
[651] Ibid., 21
[652] Ibid., 20.

and perspectives in a non-hostile atmosphere, the conference forced sex trade workers into endless debates with vociferous opponents."[653] The conference solidified the idea that feminists were spending a great deal of time talking *about* sex workers, but not engaging *with* them.

In response to their position being silenced at the conference, Bearchell attempted to provide a forum for these overlooked voices by publishing in *The Body Politic* excerpts of sex workers' remarks to the Fraser Committee. One theme that emerged was the damaging impact of the *Not A Love Story* documentary, and how it exemplified more broadly feminist engagement with sex workers.[654] In one account, Gwendolyn described the documentary as "a piece of hate propaganda." In another, Maxine stated, "I once had an argument with a feminist about the film and during our discussion she actually said, 'Well, you work in the business so obviously I can't talk to *you* about it.' I work in the business, I'm the person you *should* be talking to about it."[655] Bearchell's attempt to insert the voices of the people most implicated in these debates was controversial because these voices tended to illuminate the falsity of the victim narrative that dominated how pornography and sex workers were understood and spoken about in feminist circles and popular media. As usual, Bearchell was trying to foreground exactly these perspectives to highlight the ways the most marginalized were being silenced, and to point out the incongruity of erasing sex workers from discussions about their working conditions.

While mainstream feminism was entirely opposed to pornography, they did recognize that the criminalization of sex workers was harmful to women. They advocated for measures to reduce or eradicate prostitution while protecting women from state sanction, for instance criminalizing

---

[653] Chris Bearchell, "No Apologies: Strippers as the Upfront Line in a Battle to Communicate," *The Body Politic*, no. 123 (February 1986): 26.

[654] The film was a point of ideological contention amongst feminists and gay liberationists, as described in chapter six. Here we come to understand the deeper ramifications from the perspectives of those most directly impacted – sex workers.

[655] Chris Bearchell, "No Apologies: Strippers as the Upfront Line in a Battle to Communicate," *The Body Politic*, no. 123 (February 1986): 26.

clients and all aspects of the industry except for sex workers themselves. For activist lesbians and sex workers this missed the point entirely, namely the right to autonomy and freedom over their bodies and livelihoods, and even the right to consider this a feminist stance. As Gwendolyn wrote, "I'm sorry, but I'm not a bad girl and that's the only apology I'm ever going to give you. I don't have anything to repent for. I'm doing what I want, with a conscience and a feminist consciousness."[656] For Gwendolyn, the disappointment was compounded by the expectation that feminists would be sex workers' greatest allies, "We expect so much more from them—I expect them to be *thinking* women."[657]

By contrast, activist lesbians such as Bearchell, cast sex workers at the forefront of sexual liberation, and as with all coalition politics, this required open-minded engagement, willingness to learn and to share the platform. Bearchell described first meeting Gwendolyn and Maxine, "I found we shared a lot of political common ground in addition to the conviction that it's not enough just to *talk* about alternative sexual imagery, and they had a lot to teach me."[658] Here, Bearchell alludes to what would come to be *Slumberparty*, concluding, "Little did I know [they] would soon join me…in a lesbian porn experiment."[659] Against the backdrop of respectability politics and sex wars dividing communities, these women forged a radical coalition, theoretically, practically, and sexually.

"the feminist movement has played a peculiar role in these developments"

After nearly three years of research and public consultations across the country, the Fraser Committee issued its report in April 1985, documenting a divide amongst the Canadian public. On the one side, police and residents' groups advocated strengthening *Criminal Code* sanctions to

[656] Ibid., 28.
[657] Ibid., 29.
[658] Ibid., 26.
[659] Ibid., 26.

control street prostitution. On the other, civil libertarians, social service agencies, women's groups, including sex workers themselves, leaned toward decriminalization.[660] The report advised legislators to partially decriminalize sex work, allowing small-scale indoor venues and licensed establishments, alongside tougher legislation penalizing outdoor work to reduce the public nuisances associated with it. The newly elected Progressive Conservative government heeded only the most punitive of those recommendations, passing bill C-49 in December 1985. This law prohibited the act of "communicating" in a public place for the purpose of purchasing or selling sexual services. It was easier to enforce than the solicitation provision, and though its scope expanded to include women and men, workers and clients, it would continue to be women sex workers who were primarily targeted, and especially those who were most marginalized. A subsequent governmental review of the law found that it did not have the effect of curbing street prostitution in downtown neighbourhoods, which was its stated aim.[661] Academic research has found that after the enactment of this law, fatal violence against sex workers notably increased.[662]

Upon the release of the Fraser Report and ensuing enactment of bill-C49, Bearchell wrote, "The feminist movement has played a peculiar role in these developments. Many veteran sex-trade workers and feminists have common roots in the youth revolts of the sixties. While they no doubt came, on balance, from different classes, they often shared a commitment to sexual freedom."[663] As Bearchell explained, by the late-1970s many feminists were less concerned with sexual freedom for pleasure and experimentation, and instead developed an analysis that freedom

[660] Fraser Committee, *Report*, 40.
[661] A. Brannigan, L. Knafla and C. Levy, *Street Prostitution: Assessing the Impact of the Law, Calgary, Regina and Winnipeg* (Ottawa: Department of Justice, 1989).
[662] Brock, *Making Work*; Lowman, "Violence and the Outlaw"; John Lowman and Laura Fraser, *Violence Against Persons who Prostitute: The Experience in British Columbia* (Ottawa: Department of Justice, 1995); Ross, "Sex and (Evacuation)."
[663] Chris Bearchell, "No Apologies: Strippers as the Upfront Line in a Battle to Communicate," *The Body Politic*, no. 123 (February 1986): 26.

from danger was a prerequisite to pleasure. And by the middle of the following decade, prominent feminists were fueling anti-sex hysteria, and in so doing, partnering with the state to enforce sexual repression. She warned, "A round up of street hookers is only as far in the future as the next warm spell." By reiterating that it was sex workers themselves who would be penalized, she made connection to the 'rounding up' of gay men in bathhouses.[664]

By 1986, the coalition organizing the annual March 8th International Women's Day in Toronto made the new federal legislation on prostitution a central issue. That same year, the *Canadian Organization for the Rights of Prostitutes* (CORP) became a member of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), and forced the Canada-wide coalition to reexamine some of its traditional approaches to sexual politics.[665] As Bearchell reported in *The Body Politic*, CORP members stressed the vital importance of sex workers gaining control over their working conditions in order to gain control over their lives. A lesbian member of CORP stood at the microphone and read out the text of the 'pimping law' that criminalized anyone who lives with or is habitually in the company of a 'prostitute.' She explained, "Essentially it says that prostitutes can't have friends. My lover is a prostitute so that law says I'm a pimp."[666] By the end of the meeting, the NAC agreed to work towards repealing the communicating law, to oppose regulatory attempts to control the lives of sex workers, and to include sex workers in the formulation of related NAC policy.[667] This offers a clear example of coalition building and the influence that sex worker activists were having in some feminist organizations that is often overlooked.

---

[664] Ibid.
[665] Chris Bearchell, "Hookers Win Support from Women's Group," *The Body Politic*, no. 129 (August 1986): 10.
[666] Ibid.
[667] Ibid.

Across the country, sex workers organized in response to harsher legislation that displaced them to more dangerous environments, left to defend themselves from harassment and violence at the hands of the public, clients, and police. In Toronto, it was at Walnut where *Maggie's, the Toronto Prostitutes' Community Services Project* was hatched—founded in 1986 by Peggy Miller, Chris Bearchell, June Callwood, Grant Lowry, and Gwendolyn. In the context of the HIV era, the group formed with the intention of including both sex workers and non-sex workers as board members, to engage the broader community, including government, to support a project that involved sex workers. As Cockerline described it, "Our first vision was something like a 24-hour laundromat, with attached daycare centre and space to run everything from self-defense classes to money-management seminars."[668] They made an astute connection between peer education and advocacy with harm reduction strategies to address the emergent HIV/AIDS crisis. In so doing, they were able to garner government funding for sex providers to provide peer-based information and services to other sex workers. They chose the name Maggie's, in honour of Margret (aka Baba Yaga), a fierce defender of sex worker rights (and contributor to *The Body Politic*).

What this section illustrated was a genuine effort on the part of activist lesbians to be inclusive of marginalized people, specifically sex workers, and indeed, to encourage their leadership in the advancement of broader movement goals. The failure of the gay liberation movement, and of contributors to *The Body Politic* specifically, to meaningfully engage with sex workers was a missed opportunity to rearticulate radical liberatory politics. Sex workers, though predominantly women involved in hetero commercial interactions, were scapegoated alongside gay men, for the demise of urban spaces as well as HIV transmission, and gay men were similarly

[668] Danny Cockerline and Gwendolyn, "A Brief History of Sex Worker Activism in Toronto," revised and updated by Andrew Sorfleet (1995), *Walnet Institute*, retrieved from https://walnet.org/csis/groups/swat/torontohistory.html.

(though to a lesser degree) targeted under prostitution-related laws. It is striking that more meaningful alliances were not maintained.

A similar trajectory takes place with the inclusion of queers of colour, or lack thereof. In the following section, we see the build-up of racial tension as activists pushing for anti-racist analyses and politics were perpetually erased within queer spaces and histories. Debates about power, sexual freedom, and racism culminate in the publication of the infamous 'houseboy' advertisement discussed at the opening of this project. Much like sex workers, queers of colour found themselves fighting for a space to speak for themselves, and continually having to defend their right to do so despite being the most directly impacted by the outcomes.

Part II

"White Assed Super Pricks"

The June 1983 issue of *The Body Politic* had two controversial elements: an advert for the franchise Red Hot Video and an article by Ken Popert titled, "Race, Moustaches and Sexual Prejudice."[669] In the second part of chapter six, I focused on the aftermath of the Red Hot Video controversy, as lesbians, feminists, and gay liberation activists debated as to how to reconcile gender equality and sexual freedom. I now return to this moment when similar questions about racism burst to the surface of the gay liberation movement. Around the same time that the collective was receiving criticism for approving the ad for Red Hot Video, they were also receiving flack for rejecting an ad for the pornographic magazine, *White Ass Super Pricks* (WASP), on the grounds that it was racist. It featured only white male models and the subheading read: "Unethnic

[669] Incidentally, Jim Bartley's article, "Charting a Course Between Male and Female," included the first, and perhaps only, mention of trans identity in *The Body Politic*. Unlike those mentioned above, it was not controversial; it was a sympathetic piece based on interviews with two trans women. The interviews transformed the perspective of the author, which reflected a more negative view within the cis gay male community at the time. See: McCaskell, *Queer Progress.*

and Unorthodox." The decision was not unanimous, and it tapped into a longstanding tension within the gay male community over the relationship between sexual liberation and racial equality.

Letters to *The Body Politic* had long critiqued racism, in the classified ads especially, and the collective's policy was already a point of contention.[670] All ads were reviewed before publication to ensure they abided by their policy against discrimination. This policy stipulated that classified ads could not contravene the *Criminal Code of Canada* by specifically excluding a group of people (i.e. 'no blacks', 'no fats', 'no fems'). The issue was twofold. First, many (presumably white) gay male contributors believed that sexual desire should not be constrained nor subjected to censorship or the judgment of *The Body Politic* collective. Moreover, these efforts were tenuous in that classifieds regularly circumvented exclusionary language through the language of sameness (i.e. gay white male seeking same). A quick glance at the hundreds of classified ads in each issue of *The Body Politic* demonstrates that this was the pattern, not the exception.

The classified ads reflected the dynamics and interactions in the Toronto-based community, but given the journal represented the voice of a nation, on an ideological level, they contributed significantly to the perception that the gay liberation movement represented the rights and perspectives of gay white men. Over the years there was a chorus of voices, mostly queers of colour, who wrote in the journal explaining the racism inherent to claims defending racial preference. These perspectives were mostly expressed within the *Letters* section of the journal, and especially in relation to the classified ads. In the very same issue as Popert's article was published, Fo Niemi wrote a letter condemning a classified ad from March placed by a "GWM" that began: "Attention Black Men/other exotic races/nationalities…"[671] Niemi was furious over the use of "exotic" to label racial minorities, but "What infuriates me more is that, on the one hand,

---

[670] See: Churchill, "Personal Ad Politics."
[671] Fo Niemi, "Letters: GWMs and Racial Stereotypes," *The Body Politic*, no. 94 (June 1983): 4.

your magazine stands for high principles of gay liberation and other -isms… while on the other hand, *TBP* somehow accepts material that calls non-caucasians 'exotic'."[672] Clearly, queers of colour, especially men, were subscribing to and reading the journal, and seeking a space to challenge the racism they were experiencing in the movement, editorial decisions, and gay male cultural spaces.

The decision to censor the ad, to denounce racism at the expense of sexual freedom was controversial amongst collective members and readers alike. In the aforementioned article, Popert deemed the decision "simple-minded"[673] and went on to defend the right to sexual preference, free from censorship, however racist. Popert often defended the right to free sexual preference, but this particular article, and the collective's decision to publish it, catalyzed a debate. It was perhaps the first time the journal, and the gay male community at large, had to deal with direct accusations of racism. The ensuing debate set the tone for the reactions, two years later, to the collective's decision to publish that now-infamous ad by a gay white male seeking a young, well-built, black male 'houseboy.'

In "Race, Moustaches and Sexual Prejudice," Popert argued that sexual desire was beyond our conscious control. Much like a personal penchant for moustaches, desire was a force "mysteriously" fixed early in life, and therefore whatever racism or prejudice they contain are beyond our responsibility. Insofar as society is racist, sexuality will be racist too. Popert defended his racist tendencies, "If my sexuality is racially tinged, then it is not because I am a racist, but because I have grown up in a society which attaches great importance to race."[674] He questioned the collective's "brief debate" over the ad, asking, "Should we refuse the ad in order to protect our

[672] Ibid.
[673] Ken Popert, "Race, Moustaches and Sexual Prejudice," *The Body Politic*, no. 94 (June 1983): 34.
[674] Ibid.

non-white readers (and workers) from possible insult or injury? Or should we accept the ad to inform readers with a legitimate sexual preference that this magazine is available?"[675] Popert concluded that his own 'legitimate' preference was more important than injury to others, that the freedom to be racist was fundamental to his sexual freedom. He wrote, "Gay liberation, before anything else, stands for the integrity and inviolability of sexual desire, the right of men and women to choose their sexual partners according to their needs."[676]

Letters flooded the paper in response to the article, and the collective's decision to publish it. Popert's uncritical acceptance of societal inequality was met with thoughtful and nuanced critiques calling for greater reflectivity, intersectional analysis, and a deeper structural view of this collective struggle. For example, Richard Fung wrote, "For me, as for all non-white gay men and lesbians, racism is a central issue in our lives, whether in our daily interactions with a wider society, our interactions within the gay ghetto, or finally, in bed."[677] Eng Ching wrote, "By refusing to struggle against the racism in our homosexuality, we let straight society define our sexuality and also block the further advances of gay liberation."[678] Lesbians also weighed in emphasizing the relevance of racism and its parallels to gender—each overlapping and central to the other, and inextricably linked to sexual liberation. A group of 23 women wrote a letter to "express our anger and concern with yet another offensive article," they continued, "As lesbians who read and buy *The Body Politic*, we expect and demand a full retraction of this article and apology. If it is not forthcoming in the next issue, we will cancel our subscriptions."[679]

[675] Ibid.
[676] Ibid.
[677] Ibid.
[678] Ibid.
[679] Signatories, "Letters," *The Body Politic*, no. 96 (September 1983): 8-9.

In the following issue, the Board of Directors of *Gays of Ottawa* (GO) expressed their "deep concern" and "fundamental disagreement" with *The Body Politic* on "two very important issues—racism and misogyny"[680] GO condemned the collective for publishing an article that excused racism and accepted racist socialization without so much as an editorial explanation defending their position. They turned the tables on Popert's claim—racial preference was not fundamental to sexual liberation, it was counter to it. GO wrote, "Surely the thrust of gay liberation is to oppose negative socialization and to strive to overcome it. We feel that an acceptance of racism is inconsistent with gay liberation."[681]As we saw in the previous chapter, GO was also opposed to *The Body Politic*'s decision to publish the Red Hot Video ad. For them, the anti-porn struggle was part of the larger struggle against straight male power, and by choosing to publish it, the collective upheld the status quo. Anti-racism was likewise integral to this struggle, and once again, the collective was complicit in maintaining the status quo. For GO, these decisions reflected the perspectives of those in power: white gay males. The group concluded, "Over the years, we have felt that *TBP* was part of this same struggle for liberation. However, with your apparent positions on racism and straight pornography, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain this feeling of solidarity as you continue a single-issue preoccupation with censorship and 'freedom of the press'."[682] The singular preoccupation with personal freedom as the dominant narrative within *The Body Politic*, and the responses that this article solicited, revealed that this was not a shared goal. There were indeed coalition politics taking shape amongst constituents.

Tim McCaskell stands out as a critical white gay male voice. He engaged with lesbians, feminists, and anti-race activists, and made an effort to understand issues from multiple

[680] Gays of Ottawa Board of Directors, "Letters," *The Body Politic*, no. 97 (October 1983): 5.
[681] Ibid.
[682] Ibid.

perspectives. McCaskell responded to Popert's article by confronting racism within the gay male community in an article titled, "You've got a nice body… for an Oriental."[683] He argued that while the gay community "did not invent racism…we have our own special ways of reinforcing the message that we are, or should be, all white here."[684] He used gay porn to illustrate his point, noting that its consumers and producers were predominantly white, he wrote, "Our standards of beauty, of who is hot, or even who is gay, are produced along specific genetic lines. They convey the message that a black or Asian person is definitely a speciality item for a subgroup with exotic tastes. Normal taste, normal gay, is white."[685] These histories are often painted with broad brush strokes, with white gay men taking up the charge of sexual freedom on the one side, queer people of colour focused on anti-racism, and women focused exclusively on sexual behaviour. What these responses show is that there were allies and coalitions amongst these groups. But they were not the majority.

"the end of sexism, racism and classism—is very much the same"

By the mid-1980s, lesbians who were Black, Asian, and to a lesser extent Indigenous, made sporadic attempts to organize amongst themselves. As Millward writes of the period, queer women of colour were "sick and tired of being both hyper visible and exoticized by white lesbians on the one hand and almost completely invisible, in terms of numbers or in terms of their non-lesbian communities on the other."[686] In 1984, the Toronto-based group *Lesbians of Colour* (LOC) formed; they held weekly meetings and social events, such as potluck dinners, dances, and picnics, and facilitated workshops on racism at the first Lesbian Sexuality Conference.[687] That same year,

[683] Tim McCaskell, "You've Got a Nice Body…For an Oriental," *The Body Politic*, no. 102 (April 1984): 33-37.
[684] Ibid., 35.
[685] Ibid., 35.
[686] Millward, *Making a Scene*, 21.
[687] Lesbian Sexuality Conference, Toronto, 1984. See: Bearchell, "Lots of Talk," 7-8.

also in Toronto, Black and West Indian lesbians and gay men founded *Zami*, an East Caribbean word for lesbian sex.[688] It was the first organization of its kind in Canada. Its formation reflected "the growing diversity in the city's gay scene,"[689] and it fulfilled social, political, and supportive roles within the community, such as peer counseling and discussion groups.

Tom Warner documents dozens of other organizations that emerged in the latter half of the 1980s in cities across the country, such as the *Asian Lesbians of Toronto*, *Gay Asians* in Vancouver, Ottawa's *Asian and Friends*, *¡hola!* for queer Latinos in Toronto, the *Nichiwaken Native Gay and Lesbian Society* in Winnipeg, among others, and even more in the 1990s with *les Gaies et lesbiennes asiatiques de Montréal*, *Nova Scotia Black Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Association*, Toronto's *Black Sisters Supporting Black Sisters*, *Diversity* in Winnipeg, *Queer Women of Colour* in Ottawa, and Calgary's *Of Colour* and *Dykes of Colour*.[690] While many were short-lived, some were active for years, and all attempted to foster solidarity and community amongst dispersed and marginalized queers of colour, to raise awareness of systemic barriers, the prevalence racial stereotypes and discrimination, and their impacts within queer communities.

Until this point, lesbians of colour were mostly absent from the pages of *The Body Politic*. Though many lesbians who wrote for the journal raised the issue of racism within the community, these discussions rarely included people of colour themselves. There had always been a sentiment of inclusion on an ideological level; contributors reported on race-related issues, and attempts were made to foreground the voices of women of colour, especially at conferences. In her analysis of lesbian conferences and communities across Canada, Millward found that lesbians "tended to

---

[688] In Audre Lorde's book by the same name, she writes that Zami is a Caribbean Island term, a "Carriacou name for women who work together as friends and lovers." See: Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name, A Biomythography* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1982), 255.
[689] Tim McCaskell, "Gays of Colour Get Together for Parties and Politics," *The Body Politic*, no. 109 (December 1984): 8.
[690] Warner, *Never Going Back*, 326-330.

critique racism and colonialism as political issues similar to homophobia and sexism, rather than seeing them as practices internal to the community."[691] Only twice throughout the journal do lesbians review theoretical works by Black lesbians and feminists of colour, when they discovered this mostly American body of literature several years after it had been published. They seemed genuinely surprised at the volume of material available and clearly apprehensive to engage with it as white women.

White lesbian writer and artist Mary Meigs wrote of her own "imperfect notion of the scope of the task" when she set out to write about "third world lesbian writers in the United States," referring to a body of work being produced by Black lesbian feminists. [692] She was struck by the sheer volume of literature available, pointing to the ten-page bibliography at the end of the seminal feminist anthology, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*.[693] She was unaware and seemingly intimidated by "the huge amount of writing that has been produced in the last ten years."[694] Several issues later, in one of her final articles, Joy Parks reviewed three publications by Black lesbians and feminists, opening her article: "How do I, an almost all-white (one-quarter Amerindian) woman, of working class origin/identification, begin to write a column that will look exclusively at writings by Black women, Black feminists, Black lesbians?"[695]

Meigs' contributions to *The Body Politic* disseminated the ideas of key American figures such as Cherrie Moraga, Doris Davenport, Lorraine Bethel, Paula Gun Allen, Chrystos, Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldua, and Barbara Smith. On their writings, Meigs stated, "They have

---

[691] Millward, *Making a Scene*, 21.
[692] Mary Meigs, "Speaking Hard Truths with Their Whole Selves," *The Body Politic*, no. 92 (April 1983): 33.
[693] Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (eds.), *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Watertown: Persephone Press, 1981).
[694] Mary Meigs, "Speaking Hard Truths with Their Whole Selves," *The Body Politic*, no. 92 (April 1983): 33.
[695] Joy Parks, "Forget…and Never Forget," *The Body Politic*, no. 101 (March 1984): 40. See: Anita Cornwell, *Black Lesbian in White America* (Tallahassee: Naiad Press, 1981); Pat Parker, *Movement in Black: The Collected Poetry of Pat Parker, 1961-1978* (Trumansburg, Crossing Press, 1983); Barbara Smith (ed.), *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (New York: Kitchen Table Women of Color Press, 1983).

discovered the relatedness of all forms of oppression, sometimes through the recognition of themselves as lesbians."[696] Parks relayed that this literature highlighted the struggle of "trying to live as a black lesbian in a society that says you shouldn't be either and can't possibly be both…"[697] She concluded that *Home Girls*, along with other projects by Kitchen Table Women of Color Press, were vital in confronting "both the racism and racial indifference that threatens to pull the community apart."[698] She used *The Body Politic* as a platform to reiterate a common goal: "the end of sexism, racism and classism—is very much the same."[699]

This point echoes the argument made by *Lesbians of Colour* at the Challenging Our Images Conference in 1985. Their analysis of pornography nuanced an understanding of the role of racial preference and racism in the censorship debates. They asserted that it was not about censorship per se, but representation: "Most Women of Colour portrayed in pornography appears in one specific, stereotypical image. Black women are usually depicted in a situation of bondage and slavery. The Black woman is shown in a submissive posture, often with two white males. This setting reminds us of all the trappings of slavery: chains, whips, neck braces, wrist claps. These are the means of keeping Black people in their place."[700] Their point highlighted the central role of historical narratives in contemporary oppression. It showed that people of colour were always walking a line between invisibility and hypersexualized racial tropes, that race was inextricably linked to sexual liberation. Lesbians of colour had a unique perspective in how they were thinking about pornography and other issues, which were never really taken up in the dominant debates. As they were coming to recognize their position as women of colour, and in the midst white lesbians

---

[696] Mary Meigs, "Speaking Hard Truths with Their Whole Selves," *The Body Politic*, no. 92 (April 1983): 33.
[697] Joy Parks, "Forget…and Never Forget," *The Body Politic*, no. 101 (March 1984): 40.
[698] Ibid.
[699] Ibid.
[700] Bell, *Good Girls*, 59.

having this anti-racist awakening, we see white gay men posting ads for 'houseboys.' The ad at once reproduced a classist and racist master/slave narrative perfectly aligned with dominant culture, but with its own gay twist.

"These are the means of keeping Black people in their place"

In the pre-internet era, the classified section of journals like *The Body Politic* served as a central hub for people to connect. In this case, the ads were male centred and mostly for those in proximity to Toronto. When the 'houseboy' ad was received, the volunteer reviewing it, who was incidentally a man of colour, anticipated the controversy that might ensue and sought guidance from other collective members.[701] While the entire group was not due to meet until after the issue went to press, those involved in the decision to run the ad acknowledged that while it may provoke "some objections," it did not infringe on the existing policy against exclusion.[702] The number of objections were vastly underestimated.

There were over 200 classified ads in the February 1985 issue, among thousands published previously with similar racist and exclusionary undercurrents, but this particular ad was the catalyst for an eruption of frustration and a debate—on racism and sexuality, the role of *The Body Politic* in the lesbian and gay community, and the very nature of gay liberation itself. Within the context of the dialogue described above, whereby racism was finally being centred as a point of contention, the publication of an advert for a white male seeking a black male 'houseboy,' compounded by the perception that it would instigate only 'some objections,' rang as completely out of touch. The collective's editorial response only reinforced this further. The group wrote, "Thus, in the ordinary course of producing a monthly magazine that must rub up constantly against

[701] Churchill, "Personal Ad Politics," 116.
[702] Editorial Collective, "31 Words," *The Body Politic*, no. 113 (April 1985): 29.

the ambiguities of the real world, a major debate on race and sexuality began."[703] Not only did they view this racial trope as an ambiguity, but the mere beginning of a debate that had been developing for years.

In the editorial, they explained that their decision took place in the context of multiple censorship battles fought by the collective over the past decade. In the aftermath of these struggles, censorship was deemed a primary source of oppression. From this view, the ad did not overtly exclude anyone, even if it was offensive, and if it were to be censored, the cause of gay liberation would fall victim to the oppressive social system that sought to deny, criminalize, and medicalize sexual desire. Others argued against its publication. Dissenting opinion found that the ad relied on racial stereotypes and racist tropes that strengthened existing social inequalities. If the ad were to be published, the whiteness of queer culture, and the social power central to defining sexual desire, would be reinforced. Despite this strong opposition, the majority deemed it acceptable for publication, and the ad was run.

In light of the swift and vehement response to its publication, a meeting was arranged with representatives of *Lesbians of Colour*, *Zami*, *Gay Asians of Toronto*, and *The Body Politic* collective to discuss the impact of the ad. The three-hour meeting revealed a deep divergence within the lesbian and gay community of Toronto. Community representatives left the meeting feeling that the "attitudes of certain collective members were far more offensive and dangerous than the ad itself."[704] The power imbalance was clear as the onus was placed on members of communities of colour to (re)explain to the collective why the ad was offensive and to provide a rationale for pulling it. As Alan Li explained, "we were made to feel that our arguments were non-

---

[703] Ibid.
[704] Alan Li for Gay Asians Toronto, cited in "31 Words," *The Body Politic*, no. 113 (April 1985): 30.

representative, our objections hysterical, and our feelings defensive."[705] In agreement with Li, Richard Fung writes that he was "shocked by the level of arrogance and the cliché responses. I could easily have been talking with the police about gay rights."[706] From Fung's perspective, activists of colour were met with an "incredibly patronizing dismissal" by many on the exclusively white collective.[707] The conversation did not begin or end there.

"31 words"

The innerworkings of the collective and their justification for running the ad were made public two issues later in "31 words," an article that included the exchange of lengthy memos between members outlining their positions. The memos largely focused on sexual desire and racial preference, and questioned the scope of gay liberation: Was the movement about more than sexual freedom? Was the movement about defending the right to love and desire freely, or was it about dismantling intersecting oppression? Familiar perspectives were again voiced in this debate. Collective member Ken Popert asserted, "Gay liberation is about sex."[708] Others echoed this view, concerned that liberationist politics would be lost if the movement were to incorporate 'other' social justice concerns.

One of the most controversial arguments put forth in support of publishing the ad was Popert's contention that "desire is inviolable."[709] He wrote in his memo, "Sexual fantasy and desire is just there, like quasars or protons…it is not there to be morally evaluated and either glorified or condemned."[710] The inviolability of desire was a classic claim of gay liberation—sexual desire must be freed from the oppressive regime of heterosexuality, and central to this claim was freedom

[705] Ibid.
[706] Richard Fung, cited in "31 Words," *The Body Politic*, no. 113 (April 1985): 30.
[707] Ibid.
[708] Ken Popert, cited in "31 Words," *The Body Politic*, no. 113 (April 1985): 31.
[709] Editorial Collective, "31 Words," *The Body Politic*, no. 113 (April 1985): 29.
[710] Ken Popert, cited in "31 Words," *The Body Politic*, no. 113 (April 1985): 31.

from censorship. Popert explained, "When people start censoring classified ads for political reasons, I feel a draft. And when my own sexual desires and practices are prejudicially characterized as belonging only to a privileged minority, I definitely start to shiver."[711] For Propert, the classified ad was sexual fantasy—SM role-play made possible by inequalities in the "real world."[712] To this, Fung responded, "It's not fantasy, it's *real*."[713]

Likewise, Tim McCaskell argued that the desire to have a black 'houseboy' was not role-play but a very real circumstance. Social power—who has it and who does not—was central to the ad's interpretation. He explained the situation as follows,

> In terms of desire, those of us enjoying more social power will generally find fewer restraints on our desires and more freedom to develop them, while those of us with less social power are more likely to find ourselves the objects of others' desire, and struggling to maintain our role as sexual subjects, not objects. Those with more power will resent any 'ideological' restraints on the freedom that comes with our social position (the result of our race, sex, wealth, etc.), while those of us with less power will more likely find ourselves resenting intrusions into our personal space by the desires and powers of others, and more concerned with eliminating attitudes and power relationships which constrain us.[714]

A central assumption of sexual liberation among many white gay men was that any form of sexual expression was emancipatory. Mariana Valverde was similarly critical of the "*laissez-faire* approach" of the collective, arguing that it "conceals such important things as social power, oppression and domination—and of course it makes sense that those who have power (in this case, editorial and political power to define the issues of gay people in Canada) would try and pretend that there is no power."[715] Chris Bearchell explained, "The libertarian impulse promoting the 'inviolability of desire' is a denial of the significance of social power."[716] Lesbians had long

[711] Ken Popert, cited in "31 Words," *The Body Politic*, no. 113 (April 1985): 31.
[712] Ibid., 31.
[713] Editorial Collective, "31 Words," *The Body Politic*, no. 113 (April 1985): 32.
[714] Tim McCaskell, cited in "31 Words," *The Body Politic*, no. 113 (April 1985): 31.
[715] Mariana Valverde, "Letters*:* 31 words, plus," *The Body Politic*, no. 114 (May 1985): 4.
[716] Chris Bearchell, cited in "31 Words," *The Body Politic*, no. 113 (April 1985): 45.

critiqued the singular focus on sexuality within the gay liberation movement. Women and people of colour challenged this presumption and questioned who exactly benefitted from the 'emancipation of desire'.

For Jane Rule, all the questions the personal ads inadvertently raised should have been dealt with consciously in the body of the paper. She placed the onus on the paper, but also people of colour themselves, to delve more deeply into this issue. She wrote, "Richard Fung should be writing us articles about how 'white men relate to us socially, politically, and sexually.' We don't hear enough in the pages of this paper about the facts of racial abuse which provide the racial fantasies of some white men and women."[717] Though true, the community would have benefited from these contributions, it presumed the journal was itself a neutral space rather than a dynamic group of people creating an atmosphere that was more or less hospitable to these discussions. Whereas lesbians, who were predominantly white, increased representation through participation, and in this passage, Rule extended that advice to people of colour: start/keep contributing. Lesbians also organized autonomously when they felt at odds with the dominant voices of the gay movement, though it appears the journal was even less conducive to analyzing race.

Notable contributors of colour were even more outspoken in their memos. Richard Fung wrote that the collective "has not paid much attention to integrating a consciousness of racism in the body of the paper…"[718] He furthered, "To champion the cause of uninhibited desire without addressing the impact of racism and sexism in the sexual arena is to call for the entrenchment of while male privilege."[719] Indeed, pure, unadulterated gay identity was reserved for middle-class white males, and as Fung explained, "Non-white lesbians and gays are just not seen as totally gay.

---

[717] Jane Rule, "Letters," *The Body Politic*, no. 116 (April 1985): 11.
[718] Richard Fung, cited in "31 Words," *The Body Politic*, no. 113 (April 1985): 31.
[719] Ibid.

We are outsiders, our interests are appendices."[720] Alan Li also questioned *The Body Politic* collective's vision of gay liberation. For Li, it was "all safe and grand" for middle-class gay white men to preach 'sexual libertarianism' and centre the 'inviolability of desire' in their politics but failed to see that lesbians and gay men of colour faced multiple forms of oppression. He wrote, "To us, racism, sexism, and socio-economic as well as political oppression are equally important issues to be confronted."[721] Li concluded that until the journal broadened its scope and no longer excluded lesbians and gay men of colour by its 'politically elite structure,' he "cannot see *TBP* as a magazine for the true 'liberation of gays'."[722]

Contributors and community members opposed to publishing the ad argued that allowing racial stereotyping in *The Body Politic* set the stage for further discrimination, isolated queers of colour, and undermined community building. A major schism within the collective took root in this moment. People of import, such as filmmaker John Greyson, started distancing themselves from the publication. McCaskell wrote, "This debate has gone far beyond the question of the ad. The politics and goals of our paper are now in question."[723] These conflicts over the mission of the paper ultimately precipitated its demise in 1987. For many gay liberationists, the shift in focus away from sexual freedom and expansiveness signaled the end of the movement they had fought so hard to build. Yet for lesbians, people of colour, trans activists, and working-class queers, such a narrow focus was limiting the revolutionary potential of queer liberation. The decision to publish the classified ad remains controversial 30 years later, pointing to unresolved concerns and indicative of ongoing racism many are still unwilling to acknowledge.

---

[720] Ibid.
[721] Alan Li, cited in "31 Words," *The Body Politic*, no. 113 (April 1985): 30.
[722] Ibid.
[723] Tim McCaskell, cited in "31 Words," *The Body Politic*, no. 113 (April 1985): 45.

In this chapter, I traced the radical politics of activist lesbians, particularly foregrounding the contributions of Chris Bearchell, an extraordinarily significant figure who has been almost completely erased from queer history. Bearchell was often the face of lesbianism in a time when being public about this identity came at great personal cost. This is not to suggest that she worked in isolation. Indeed, the evidence highlights that she was part of a community of queer folks who admired, respected, and organized with her. To chart this trajectory is to trace an anti-racist, anti-censorship, pro-sex, radical position that foregrounded coalition politics, especially with sex workers. Seen in this context, *The Body Politic* appears increasingly conservative and isolated from larger struggles – not only against racism, which has been well-documented by others, but also sex radicalism itself, the purported foundation of the journal. Gay men's failure to challenge anti-prostitution laws and police surveillance in the context of rapid urban redevelopment, as well as the decision to publish the Red Hot Video ad in 1983, contributed as much to the increasing irrelevance of *The Body Politic* as did the infamous 'houseboy' ad two years later.

What then, do we hear when we listen to the margins? How did sex workers and queers of colour test the limits of the gay liberation movement and its capacity to make organizing intersectional? This chapter excavated a history of activist lesbians who were pushing the boundaries of gay liberation, especially in developing coalitions with sex workers. They recognized that it was only from the margins that they could meaningfully achieve revolutionary goals. It was only from the margins they could understand social power in relation to sexual freedom. It is significant that the leadership of *The Body Politic* only marginally reflected on sex worker rights. An emergent movement was forming in the same city by a group of people stigmatized and criminalized for their sexual practices, pushed out of urban spaces, and blamed for a gamut of social problems. While it was a group that were predominantly women involved

hetero- interactions, many were lesbians, transgender, and queers of colour, indeed it was these further marginalized groups that were disproportionately harmed by the laws. This entry point into revolutionary politics would have been inherently intersectional. In testing the movement parameters, classist, sexist, racist undercurrents are all evident. Yet, this trajectory of activist lesbian movement history is overlooked. Feminist accounts often focus on lesbian feminism, and within gay liberation histories, lesbians tend to be absent or antagonistic. In these accounts, lesbian activists are written-out almost entirely or positioned in conflict with gay men and liberatory aims.

The rupture that followed the publication of the 'houseboy' ad affirms these very same currents. There was a clear build-up of racial tension as activists pushing for anti-racist analyses and politics were perpetually erased or dismissed as similarly antagonistic to sexual freedom. In the decision to publish the ad and the responses that defended it failed to account for the significance of social power in sexual freedom. The classified ad is overtly racist and imbued with classism and gendered tropes. It was a missed opportunity for the gay liberation movement, as represented by internationally recognized progressive magazine, *The Body Politic*, to remain true to that early vision. It is important to recognize these histories, to listen to the voices that have been shouting all along to try and make themselves heard. It is from the margins that we can mark our progress. The canon calls for us to remember our radical liberatory roots, but who is doing that work? In the next and final chapter, I reflect on "Paper Trail: The Legacies of *The Body Politic*," and consider how far we have come in this pursuit.

<u>Chapter Eight</u>

"Re: a letter of resignation"

On the third and final day of my research visit to *The ArQuives*, I sat with Chris Bearchell's personal boxes, each of them packed with dozens of coiled notebooks detailing every collective meeting. And among them, was a letter of resignation. Dated April 9, 1984, the three typed pages outlined Bearchell's reasons for resigning as a paid staff member, effective the first of May. "I've come closer to the brink of burn-out more often than I care to remember," it read.[724] She went on to identify issues likely familiar to many community and movement organizations: financial constraints, increased administrative tasks, a growing dependency on paid staff, and in this case, defending against repeated state attacks.[725] The current organizational structure left little time or energy for direct political action, to read and write articles for the journal, or to interact with the very people and communities "that TBP hopes to reach, reflect and influence."[726] Bearchell alluded to a process of formalization that undermined the formative goals of the journal and the movement more broadly. In part, the purpose of her resignation was to halt this trajectory and to instead encourage a "regular turn-over in paid staff," to incorporate new people, ideas, and contacts.[727]

In the letter, Bearchell referred to earlier efforts to reorganize the internal structure of the journal, but these had proven ineffective when the collective did not make mentorship and skill sharing a priority. She wrote of her resignation,

> In part this move is a deliberate attempt to shake things up: new people will have to take over my responsibilities as a paid staffer and the collective will have another old timer who is not so overwhelmed with administrivia that she can't see the for[r]est for the trees. It is also my way of saying: Our current problems are serious enough to warr[e]nt some kind of

---

[724] Chris Bearchell, Letter of Resignation, April 9, 1984, personal boxes, *The ArQuives* Toronto.
[725] In a 10th anniversary reflective piece, the editorial collective writes that dedicated volunteers often spent 16-20 hours per week on TBP work, while the five full-time staff were paid $8,800 per year and expected to work a minimum of 50-hours per week, though 60 or 70 was "more the norm." See: Editorial Collective, "Who We Were, Who We Are," *The Body Politic*, no. 80 (January/February 1982): 31-37.
[726] Bearchell, Letter of Resignation, 1.
[727] Ibid.

> active intervention rather than trying to ignore them in the hope that time will solve them; that's an abdication of responsibility.[728]

She warned that the organization's growth had been stunted and they desperately needed diversification in both "breadth of political leadership and editorial depth."[729] Her letter urged members to redirect their energies toward expanding opportunities, sharing knowledge, encouraging new leadership, and developing valuable skillsets among a greater number of people.

Despite stating in the letter that she would leave the organizational analysis to "a real theorist," Bearchell went on to give an astute overview of a movement organization at a crossroads.[730] For her, a decisive moment was upon them; the journal had to revitalize itself by refocusing on its radical and intersectional liberatory roots or, succumb to the forces of capitalist respectability that would render the journal irrelevant to the movement. She critiqued the collective's reluctance to develop and deepen political perspectives in editorial pieces, their unwillingness to grapple with the class-based realities that underly "any struggle for liberation under capitalism," and their financially, rather than politically, -driven decisions to publish advertisements.[731] Bearchell wrote,

> I've always seen my commitment to gay liberation, and to The Body Politic, as part of a commitment to get rid of all forms of oppression foisted on the world by class society. So it's little wonder I view TBP's drift toward professional and commercial solutions with alarm. As we continue to grow but fail to cultivate a broader political leadership within our organization, we seem to be moving away from our liberationist origins (volunteer, collectivist, grassroots). We pay more staff, accept more advertising, experience pressure to pay writers, and wrestle with the growing skepticism that says the collective will never be able to provide political direction for TBP and our other projects."[732]

---

[728] Ibid., 2.
[729] Ibid., 1.
[730] Ibid., 1.
[731] Ibid., 2.
[732] Ibid., 2.

She concluded the letter by mentioning a few projects that she intended to focus on, including an upcoming immigration interview with her husband, developing editorial contributions, coordinating cross-country news coverage, and continuing to recruit and integrate women into the journal and movement more generally. Notably, she ended by specifying one particular project underway, "Ideally I would like this to be effective May 1 because I hope to devote as much as possible of the last two weeks of April and the first three weeks of May to making a super-8 film."[733]

Finding this letter of resignation provided confirmation that she had remained true to the early liberationist vision. Bearchell's critiques and warnings forecasted events to come. She wrote, "I feel very strongly that TBP's strength is in its collectivist and liberationist politics; the less it has them, the less I have a commitment to it."[734] I wonder how she would interpret the movement today. According to Gerald Hanon, great gains have been achieved. In the 40-year commemorative of Pink Triangle Press, Hanon writes, "I remember that the Press, in my day, was almost entirely male and very definitely entirely white. But even then, collective members like Christine Bearchell and Tim McCaskell never stopped reminding the rest of us, mostly university-educated, white, middle class men, of how smart it was to try to build a movement that reached out to allies in other communities."[735] It is this spirit of inclusivity and intersectionality that he credits with the current reality of significantly more women, people of colour, and trans folks employed and as board members for the Press.

[733] Ibid., 3.
[734] Ibid., 2.
[735] Gerald Hanon, 2011, "Seeking our History," in *40 Years of Pink Triangle Press: An Xtra! Special Commemorative Supplement*, edited by M.C. Jackman (October 2011): 28. Last modified 2011, https://www.pinktrianglepress.com/sites/default/files/The%20Body%20Politic%20at%20the%20genesis.%20PCJackman.pdf

Yet, as I read these commemoratives, attend symposiums, and engage with activists, I am left with more questions than answers. Has there been an upward trajectory toward greater equality and inclusivity? Into whose vision are we being invited to participate, and by whose measure is that participation happening? There is a renewed call from within the canon to “reclaim”, “revitalize”, “reignite” the radical visionary roots of queer liberation.[736] But who is doing the work of reclamation? Why do sex workers, people of colour, lesbians and queer women continue to orbit the central story?

My research demonstrates that activist lesbians were relentless in centering marginal experiences, and Bearchell’s letter of resignation indicates that the journal’s leadership was forewarned of their growing irrelevance and lack of inclusivity. As I reflect on “Paper Trail: The Legacies of *The Body Politic*,” which took place over 30 years later, it is as though those conversations never happened. The symposium took place in Toronto amidst the rise of an anti-black racism movement burgeoning across North America. A month later, Black Lives Matter Toronto (BLM-TO) marched in the city’s annual Pride Parade as the Honoured Group of 2016. Largely organized and led by black and queer activists, the BLM-TO organization confronts a climate of police hostility and violence, in which queer, trans, and sex workers of colour are directly targeted. Pride Toronto’s press release for the event read: “The Toronto chapter of the international organization Black Lives Matter will be recognized this June and will enable conversations about the intersections of liberation, race, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression.”[737] In other words, BLM-TO were the invited guests, not among the organization leadership, invited to speak to the issue of racism specifically, as though this is not a discussion

[736] See: Kinsman and Gentile, *Canadian War on Queers*; Patrizia Gentile, Gary Kinsman and Pauline Rankin (eds.), *We Still Demand! Redefining Resistance in Sex and Gender Struggles* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017).
[737] *Pride Toronto* (February 10, 2016).

that has been ongoing for three decades. The parameters of the discussion were made very clear when it became apparent that BLM-TO had their own agenda for Pride—one that more closely resembled its radical origins.

As the parade reached the corner of Yonge and College, BLM-TO halted the parade and staged a 30-minute sit-in, refusing to move until Pride Toronto agreed to a series of demands. These included greater inclusion and access to paid positions and leadership roles within dominant organizations, as well as dedicated support and funding of organizations for queer people who are Black, Indigenous, otherwise racialized, trans, or living with disabilities. Finally, as Rinaldo Walcott relays, they demanded "…the removal of police floats from the parade. This last demand has overshadowed all the others."[738] As activists Janaya Khan and LeRoi Newbold explain, "The Pride sit-in explicitly intervened in LGBTQ organizations and communities to address their anti-black racism and the increasing convergence with the carceral and neo-liberal city."[739] Much like the queer activists marching on Parliament Hill in 1971, BLM-TO demanded more than a symbolic gesture of recognition.

In the midst of the sit-in, representatives of Pride Toronto accepted BLM-TO's list of demands, and then later, recanted their support. It was reported that although many spectators stood in solidarity with BLM-TO, others screamed in contempt and hurled bottles at Black activists.[740] As activists noted, this reaction stood "in stark contrast with the welcome extended to

---

[738] Specifically: "They ask for solid financial support for the Blackness Yes group who stage Blockorama, and for a central and fully supported stage for Black Queer Youth. Additionally, the group wants Indigenous, Black and trans people and those living with disabilities to have better access to paid positions within the Pride organization. They also demand the return of the South Asian stage…" See: Tara Atluri, "Black Picket Signs/White Picket Fences: Racism, Space, and Solidarity," Jin Haritaworn, Ghaida Moussa, Syrus Marcus Ware, and Gabriela (Rio) Rodriguez (eds.), *Queering Urban Justice: Queer of Colour Formations in Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 155-156.
[739] Atluri, "Black Picket Signs," 136.
[740] Ibid., 157.

police officers at Pride 2016 and those who defended them."[741] Notably, these events took place at a parade commemorating an historical moment in Toronto, when queer people spoke back to police brutality upon the bathhouse raids of 1981.[742] Reports of these events indicate, "There was a common refrain in the mainstream press and among online commentators that BLM-TO had 'hijacked' the parade and had taken Pride Toronto 'hostage'."[743] I hear this refrain as the subtext to the symposium, and against a chorus of voices from within the canon calling to reclaim the radical roots of gay liberation in Canada. Amid these calls, we continue to highlight and celebrate the work, lives, and ideas of the same groups of people while actively suppressing the voices of those affirming an alternate narrative, a new history, a reshuffling of power. The marginalized remain absented yet hyper visible in the making of our history; repeatedly invited to 'start' a dialogue, yet accused of 'hyjackery' when directing that conversation; tokenized in the invitation to participate, and then blamed for casting a shadow over the celebratory tone of gay liberation—be it at a parade or a symposium.

The Parade, much like the symposium, was ultimately a celebration of one type of queer person for whom achievements include equal marriage, human rights provisions, and a level of tolerance reflected by the participation of heterosexual families and city police officers alongside big banks advertising their support. The most marginal within queer communities challenge this progressive narrative so central to queer history. BLM-TO's intervention reminds us that the history of Pride is a history of activism, and that the radical roots of queer liberation are intersectional. BLM-TO centralizes the experiences of Black women, particularly those who are

---

[741] Ibid., 157.
[742] Ibid., 157.
[743] Ibid., 158.

trans, queer, disabled, and poor.[744] According to Cathy Cohen, "The Movement for Black Lives is different from anything we have seen before in the Black radical tradition because so many of the organizations are led by Black queer feminists."[745] This is another example of queer women and activist lesbians continuing this intersectional work by intervening into the gay liberation movement to highlight ongoing inequalities and injustices. In so doing, they continue to be cast out of the dominant narrative and viewed as impeding the progressive track to liberation or the celebrations of its achievements.

Lesbians have an ongoing, and often unacknowledged, legacy of activism that is only beginning to gain recognition. Reading along the margins of history, we find lesbians everywhere. According to activist Kristyn Wong-Tam, "Queer women have been leaders in the women's movement since the very beginning."[746] They were instrumental in the battle for reproductive rights, the creation of women's shelters and rape-crisis services in Toronto, and on the frontlines of AIDS and queer activism throughout the 1980s and 1990s.[747] In other coalition work, alliances were forged with sex workers and "further cemented in the 1980s and 1990s, even as some radical feminist anti-prostitution positions became more entrenched and institutionalized."[748] The history of queer women is written by entering from the margins. Activist lesbians were central to countless groups and organizations that did not benefit them directly, and so they are often erased within the

---

[744] Janaya Khan and LeRoi Newbold, "Black Lives Matter Toronto Teach-in," in *Queering Urban Justice: Queer of Colour Formations in Toronto*, edited by Jin Haritaworn, Ghaida Moussa, Syrus Marcus Ware, and Gabriela (Rio) Rodriguez (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018).

[745] Cathy Cohen, "The Radical Potential of Queer? Twenty Years Later," *Gay Lesbian Quarterly* vol. 25, no. 1 (January 2019): 143.

[746] Kristyn Wong-Tam, "Forward," in (eds.) Stephanie Chambers, et al., *Any Other Way, How Toronto Got Queer*, (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 10.

[747] Erin Rand, "An Appetite for Activism: The Lesbian Avengers and the Queer Politics of Visibility," *Women's Studies in Communication*, vol. 36, no. 2 (June 2013): 122.

[748] Shawna Ferris, "Safe Sex Work and the City: Canadian Sex Worker Activists Re-Imagine Real/Virtual Cityscapes," in eds. Patrizia Gentile et al., *We Still Demand! Redefining Resistance in Sex and Gender Struggles* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 211; 203-221. Eva Pendleton, "Love for Sale: Queering Heterosexuality" in Jill Nagle (ed.), *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 73.

histories of those groups. They appear to be nowhere because they are everywhere, fighting for intersecting causes.

Conclusion

This dissertation gives a detailed historical account of activist lesbian organizing and political activism during the 1970s and 1980s. This project approaches *The Body Politic*, Canada's leading gay liberation periodical, as a site of archival silences. I set out to explore the representation of lesbian voices within the editorial collective and as writers for the journal, against a body of literature that sites the journal as almost exclusively centred around white gay men. Although lesbians were never equally represented in *The Body Politic*, my research demonstrates significant lesbian involvement in each issue of the paper's 17-year run. This finding upends the misconception that lesbians did not play a meaningful role in the country's most influential gay liberation periodical, or the movement more broadly. My archival analysis of the journal, supplemented with research at *The ArQuives*, uncovered key texts, personal documents, and other ephemera that sheds light on the complex and sometimes contradictory political commitments that activist lesbians negotiated.

A systematic reading of each issue's contributions allowed me to reconstruct a lost and missing history of activist lesbians. My project began by charting the rise of lesbian and gay liberation in English Canada, exploring the tense relationships between gay male activists and lesbian feminists. The initial aim of *The Body Politic* was to generate a widespread and collective cultural and political agenda for the emergent gay liberation movement. While early goals included legal reform and human rights protections, the overall focus was on challenging repressive institutions, namely the state, the church, and marriage, each of which confined sexuality to heterosexual, monogamous families and conventional gender norms. By the mid-1970s, however,

this radical vision of social transformation was largely replaced by a movement premised on civil rights and equality politics. This shift in activism propelled feminist and lesbian activists to develop theory and politics independently of the gay liberation movement, which they chronicled in the journal. This project traces these discursive shifts as activist lesbians came to question a movement that failed to meaningfully oppose state regulation of sexuality, gender, and family structure, as well as racial and economic injustice, which so deeply impacted queer women's lives.

As gay men became increasingly focused on anti-censorship and civil rights, lesbian feminists moved away from the politics of sexual liberation to emphasize questions of violence against women, especially pornography. Many lesbians had left to join the women's movement, despite its increasingly conservative views on sexuality and desire. This tension within the feminist movement exploded at the 1982 Barnard Conference, where anti-pornography feminists battled a sex radical position that situated erotic desire at the heart of women's sexuality. This history has been well-documented, but absent from that documentation is the much longer history of activist lesbians and their longstanding sex-positive radicalism. By overlooking a specifically activist lesbian perspective, we omit a counter narrative of feminist theorizing and political action of the period, one with a much broader and more inclusive framework, which developed in alignment with gay liberation.

Activist lesbians' commitments to intersectionality and coalitional politics emerged out of their contradictory positions within various movements, as they could not afford the kind of purity position that was present in feminist pro-censorship organizing and within gay liberation's commitment to sexual freedom at all costs. It was likely this tension that produced the kinds of negotiations, coalitions, and forms of resistance that characterizes the rise of the autonomous lesbian movement. While the autonomous movement was relatively short-lived in terms of its

formal organizations, the work of activist lesbians such as Chris Bearchell, Jane Rule, Sue Golding, Lee Waldorf, Gillian Rogerson, and Varda Burstyn pre-dated and post-dated its rise and fall. In accounting for their activism, I have excavated a strong and clear vein of activist lesbian politics that is sex-positive, radical, and liberationist. This is a distinct trajectory that grappled with tensions across a spectrum of movement issues, as opposed to being cast as polarizing figures in these respective canons. In the final chapters, I examined the boundaries of *The Body Politic*, a radical journal that came to be viewed as increasingly conservative. Its growing irrelevance was due to racism, which has been well-documented, but also sex radicalism itself. The contributions of activist lesbians highlight the journal's failure to meaningfully engage with other sex radicals and oppressed groups, ushering in its demise.

In this project, I set out to uncover the marginalization and silences of lesbians within a history of queer liberation. In so doing, I became attentive to the complex coalitional politics of this group, and their important contributions—to institutions, publications, conferences, and protest events, that marked turning points in movement history. When we look at the history of lesbian organizing through a lesbian feminist lens, we undermine the role of activist lesbians within gay liberation and at the forefront of a specifically queer identity. Likewise, when queer history is written from the perspectives of white gay male activists, we undermine the role of queer feminists who remained grounded in an intersectional analysis. Indeed, they pushed the movement further by continuing to politicize racial and gender-based inequalities interwoven in capitalist class-based structures of society. By focusing on the contributions, perspectives, and actions of activist lesbians, I have challenged some of the normative assumptions about queer and gender-based movements, histories, and theories, including the presumption that when it comes to radical queer women – 'there's not much there'.

Bibliography

Abbott, Sidney, and Barbara Love. *Sappho Was A Right-On Woman: A Liberation View of Lesbianism*. New York: Stein & Day, 1972.

Adam, Barry. *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement*, revised edition. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995.

Adamson, Nancy, Linda Briskin, Margaret McPhail. *Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Anderson, Carolyn. "The Voices of Older Lesbian Women: An Oral History." PhD diss., University of Calgary, 2001.

Arondekar, Anjali. "Without a Trace: Sexuality and the Colonial Archive." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14, no. 1/2 (2005): 10-27.

Atluri, Tara. "Black Picket Signs/White Picket Fences: Racism, Space, and Solidarity." In *Queering Urban Justice: Queer of Colour Formations in Toronto*, edited by Jin Haritaworn, Ghaida Moussa, Syrus Marcus Ware, and Gabriela (Rio) Rodriguez, 146-166. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018.

Atkinson, Ti-Grace. *Amazon Odyssey: Collection of Writing*. New York: Link Books, 1974.

Bearchell, Chris. "Why I became a Gay Liberationist: Thoughts on sex, Freedom, the Family and the State." *Resources for Feminist Research* 12, no. 1 (March 1983): 59-60.
----. Letter of Resignation (April 8, 1984). Personal boxes. *The ArQuives* Toronto.

Bébout, Rick. "On the Origins of *The Body Politic*: Conception & Birth, September & October, 1971." Last modified September 22, 2003, http://www.rbebout.com/oldbeep/concep.htm.

Bell, Laurie Bell. *Good Girls/Bad Girls: Sex Trade Workers and Feminists Face to Face*. Toronto: Women's Press, 1987.

Benedet, Janine. "The Paper Tigress: Canadian Obscenity Law 20 Years after R V Butler." *Canadian Bar Review* 93, no.1 (2015): 1-37.

Bérubé, Allan. *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two*. New York: Free Press, 1990.

Boyd, Nan Alamilla. "Who Is the Subject? Queer Theory Meets Oral History." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17, no. 2 (2008): 177-189.

Brannigan, Augustine, Louis Knafla, and Christopher Levy. *Street Prostitution: Assessing the Impact of the Law, Calgary, Regina and Winnipeg*. Ottawa: Department of Justice, 1989.

Broadside Digital Project. Last modified 2012, http://www.broadsidefeminist.com/.

Brock, Deborah. *Making Work, Making Trouble: The Social Regulation of Sexual Labour*, 2nd edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.

Brown, Wendy. *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Buddies in Bad Times Theatre. "Artistic Director." 2019. http://buddiesinbadtimes.com/about/artistic-director/.

Bullough, Vern, and Bonnie Bullough. "Lesbianism in the 1920s and 1930s: A Newfound Study." *Signs* 2, no. 4 (1977): 895-904.

Bunch, Charlotte. "Lesbians in Revolt." *The Furies: Lesbian/Feminist Monthly* 1 (January 2000): 8.

Burgess, Allison. "The Emergence of the Toronto Dyke March." In *We Still Demand! Redefining Resistance in Sex and Gender Struggles*, edited by Patrizia Gentile, Gary Kinsman and Pauline Rankin, 98-116. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017.

Califia, P. Patrick. *Sapphistry: The Book of Lesbian Sexuality*. Iowa City: Naiad Press, 1980.

Calixte, Shana. "Things Which Aren't to Be Given Names: Afro-Caribbean and Diasporic Negotiations of Same-Gender Desire and Sexual Relations." *Canadian Women's Studies* 24, no. 2-3, (2005): 128-137.

Carter, Connie, and J. Bobby Noble, "Butch, Femme, and the Woman-Identified Woman: Ménage-à-trois of the '90s?" *Canadian Woman Studies* 16, no. 2 (1996): 24-29.

Carter, Rodney, "Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence." *Archivaria* 61 (2006): 215-233.

Castle, Terry. *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture.*New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Cedar and Nelly. *A Woman's Touch: An Anthology of Lesbian Eroticism and Sensuality for Women Only*. Eugene: Womanshare Books, 1979.

Chamberland, Line. "Remembering Lesbian Bars: Montréal, 1955-1975." *Journal of Homosexuality* 25, no. 3 (1993): 231-269.
--- *Mémoires lesbiennes: Le lesbianisme à Montréal entre 1950 et 1972*. Montréal: Les Éditions du remue-ménage, 1996.

Chamberland, Line, and Catherine Garneau. "Entrevue avec Ross Higgins, anthropologue et cofondateur des Archives gaies du Québec." *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 16, no. 3 (2008): 21-32.

Chenier, Elise. "Rethinking Class in Lesbian Bar Culture: Living 'The Gay Life' in Toronto, 1955-1965." *Left History* 9, no. 2 (2004): 85-118.
----. "Hidden from Historians: Preserving Lesbian Oral History in Canada." *Archivaria* 68 (2009): 247-269.
----. "Oral History and Open Access: Fulfilling the Promise of Democratizing Knowledge." *North American Notes Online*. Last modified July 6, 2014. https://nanocrit.com/issues/issue5/oral-history-and-open-access-fulfilling-promise-democratizing-knowledge.

Churchill, David. "Personal Ad Politics: Race, Sexuality and Power and The Body Politic." *Left History*, 8, no. 2 (2003): 114-134.

Cohen, Cathy. "The Radical Potential of Queer? Twenty Years Later." *Gay Lesbian Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (January 2019): 140-144.

Cole, Susan G. "Chris Bearchell, 1952-2007." *Now Magazine.* March 1-7, 2007. https://www.socialisthistory.ca/Remember/Profiles/Bearchall.htm.

Combahee River Collective. "A Black Feminist Statement." In *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 4th edition, edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, 210-218. Albany: New York Press, 2015.

Conference Planning Committee. "Diary of a Conference on Sexuality." Conference Program for The Scholar and the Feminist IX, Barnard College, April 24, 1982. *Dark Matter Archives*. Last modified 2011, http://www.darkmatterarchives.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Diary-of-a-Conference-on-Sexuality.pdf

Corinne, Tee. *The Cunt Coloring Book*, 1975. Revised and retitled, *Labiaflowers: A Coloring Book*, 1981.

Cornwell, Anita. *Black Lesbian in White America*. Tallahassee: Naiad Press, 1981.

Cossman, Brenda, Shannon Bell, Lise Gotell, Becki Ross. *Bad Attitude/s on Trial: Pornography, Feminism, and the Butler Decision*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.

Cossman, Brenda, and Shannon Bell. "Introduction." In *Bad Attitude/s on Trial: Pornography, Feminism, and the Butler Decision*, edited by Brenda Cossman, Shannon Bell, Lise Gotell, Becki Ross, 3-47. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.

Cvetkovich, Ann. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham: Duke University, 2003.
----. "AIDS Activism and the Oral History Archive." *The Scholar and Feminist Online* 2, no. 1 (Summer 2003). Last modified 2013, http://sfonline.barnard.edu/ps/printacv.htm.

D'Emilio, John. *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University.* New York: Routledge, 1992.
----. *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*, 2nd edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Delphy, Christine. *The Main Enemy: A Materialist Analysis of Women's Oppression.* London: Women's Research and Resources Centre, 1977.

Dryden, Omisoore. "Má-ka Juk Yuh: A Genealogy of Black Queer Liveability in Toronto." In *Queering Urban Justice: Queer Colour Formations in Toronto*, edited by J. Haritaworn, G. Moussa & S.M. Ware, with R. Rodríguez, 62-83. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018.

Dryden, OmiSoore, and Suzanne Lenon. *Disrupting Queer Inclusion: Canadian Homonationalisms and the Politics of Belonging*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015.

Duberman, Martin, Martha Vicinuss, and George Chauncey Jr. *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past.* New York: Meridian, 1990.

Duder, Cameron. *Awfully Devoted Women: Lesbian Lives in Canada, 1900-1965.* Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011.

Duggan, Lisa. "History's Gay Ghetto: The Contradictions of Growth in Lesbian and Gay History." In *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*, edited by Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig, 281-292. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986.
----. *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, an the Attack on Democracy*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2004.

Edwards, Val. "Lesbians in Toronto: The Invisible Community." *Broadside: A Feminist Review* 1, no. 10 (September 1980): 4-5 and 13-14. *Broadside Digital Project*. Last modified 2012, http://www.broadsidefeminist.com/images/issues/Broadside0110.pdf

Egale Canada Human Rights Trust. "#HearOurStory: The Brunswick Four." Filmed August 2014. Video, 7:05. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sinp1MDQbI0.

Eichhorn, Kate. *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013.

Faderman, Lillian. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present.* New York: Morrow, 1981.
----. *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-century America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

Federici, Silvia. *Wages Against Housework.* London: Power of Women Collective and the Falling Wall Press, 1975.

Ferris, Shawna. "Safe Sex Work and the City: Canadian Sex Worker Activists Re-Imagine Real/Virtual Cityscapes." In *We Still Demand! Redefining Resistance in Sex and Gender Struggles*, edited by Patrizia Gentile et al., 203-221. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017.

Firestone, Shulamith. *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970.

Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives. Directed by Lynne Fernie and Aerlyn Weissman. National Film Board of Canada, 1992. Last modified 2019, https://www.nfb.ca/film/forbidden_love/.

Forum, Barbara. "Homosexuality in Canada: Introducing *The Body Politic*." Interview with Hugh Brewster, February 11, 1972. Audio, 3:07. *CBC Digital Archives*, https://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/homosexuality-in-canada-introducing-the-body-politic.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archeology of Knowledge*. Translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.

----. *History* of *Sexuality: An Introduction*, vol. I. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

Fraser Committee. *Report of the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution in Canada*. Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services, 1985. Last modified April 3, 2013, http://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.840147/publication.html

Fraser, James. "Canadian Gay Archives 1977-78." *Archivaria* 5 (1977-78): 158-59.

Freeman, Barbara. "Collective Visions: Lesbian Identity and Sexuality in Feminist Periodicals, 1979-1994." In *Beyond Bylines: Media Workers and Women's Rights in Canada*, edited by Barbara Freeman, 157-186. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2011.

Gallagher, Bob. "It Seemed Like a Gay Wedding To Me." In *Any Other Way, How Toronto Got Queer*, edited by Stephanie Chambers, et al., 302-304. Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017.

Gay Almanac. "Today in 1974: The Brunswick Four Arrested in Toronto." Last modified January 5, 2018, http://www.thegayalmanac.com/2018/01/today-in-1974-brunswick-four-arrested.html.

Gay Liberation Front Women (New York City). "Lesbians and the Ultimate Liberation of Women." In *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation*, 20th anniversary edition, edited by Karla Jay and Allen Young, 201-206. New York: NY University Press, 1972.

Gays and Lesbians Against the Right Everywhere (GLARE). "Police and the Right-Wing: GLARE Position Paper for the City of Toronto's 'Study of Relations between the Homosexual Community and the Police." Pamphlet, August 18, 1981. *Rise Up! Feminist Archive*, https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/activism/organizations/lesbians-against-the-right/glare-1981-neveragainfightbackpamphlet/.

Gentile, Patrizia, Gary Kinsman, and Pauline Rankin. *We Still Demand! Redefining Resistance in Sex and Gender Struggles*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017.

Gerhard, Jane. *Desiring Revolution: Second-Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of American Sexual Thought, 1920-1982*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

Gottlieb, Amy. "Toronto's Unrecognized First Dyke March." In *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, edited by J. Lorinc et al., 30-32. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017.

Gould, Jane. *Juggling: A Memoir of Work, Family, and Feminism*. New York: Feminist Press at CUNY, 1997.

Halberstam, J. Jack. *Female Masculinity.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.
----. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: NYU Press, 2005.

Hanon, Gerald. "Seeking our History." In *40 Years of Pink Triangle Press: An Xtra! Special Commemorative Supplement*, edited by Michael Connors Jackman, 28. Toronto: Pink Triangle Press, 2011. Toronto: Pink Triangle Press. Last modified 2011, https://www.pinktrianglepress.com/our-history.

Hansen, Ann. "Building a Revolution." In *13 Women: Parables from Prison*, edited by Karlene Faith and Anne Near, 221-245. Vancouver: Douglas & Mcintyre, 2005.

Haritaworn, Jin, Ghaida Moussa, Syrus Marcus Ware, with Alvis Choi, Amandeep Kaur Panag, and Rio Rodriguez. "Marvellous Grounds: QTBIPOC Counter-Archiving against Imperfect Erasures." In *Any Other Way, How Toronto Got Queer*, edited by Stephanie Chambers, et al., 219-223. Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017.

Haritaworn, Jin, Ghaida Moussa, Syrus Marcus Ware *Marvellous Grounds: Queer of Colour Histories of Toronto.* Toronto: Between the Lines, 2018.

Haritaworn, Jin, Ghaida Moussa, Syrus Marcus Ware, and Gabriela Rodriguez. *Queering Urban Justice: Queer of Colour Formations in Toronto*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018.

Heresies Collective. "Sex Issue." *Heresies Magazine* 3, no. 4 (Issue 12, 1981). *Internet Archive*, https://archive.org/details/heresies_12.

Higgins, Ross. *De la clandestine a l'affirmation: Pour une histoire de la communauté gaie montréalaise*. Motnreal: Comeau et Nadeau, 1999.

Hogan, Mél. "Archiving Absence: A Queer Feminist Framework." MA Thesis, Concordia University, 2007. Last modified January 2018, 2018, https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/975789/1/MR34695.pdf.

Hookers on Davie. Directed by Janis Cole and Holly Dale. Vancouver: Spectrum Films, 1984.

Hoy, Claire. "Our Taxes Help Homosexuals Promote Abuse of Children." *Toronto Sun*, December 22, 1977.

Jane Rule…Writing. Directed by Lynne Fernie and Aerlyn Weissman. National Film Board of Canada, 1997.

Jackman, Michael. "Bawdy Politics: Remembering Sexual Liberation." PhD diss., York University, 2013.

Jackson, Ed. "Introduction." In *Flaunting It!: A Decade of Gay Journalism from The Body Politic*, edited by Ed Jackson and Stan Persky, 1-6. Toronto and Vancouver: Pink Triangle Press, 1982.

Jeffreys, Sheila. *Unpacking Queer Politics: A Lesbian Feminist Perspective*. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 2003.

Jochelson, Richard, and Kristen Kramar, *Sex and the Supreme Court: Obscenity and Indecency Law in Canada.* Halifax: Ferwood Publishing, 2010.

Johnson, Kristen. *Undressing* the *Canadian State: The Politics of Pornography from Hicklin to Butler*. Winnipeg and Halifax: Fernwood, 1995.

Johnston, Jill. *Lesbian Nation: The Feminist Solution*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973.

Jordan, Tessa. "*Branching Out*: Second-Wave Feminist Periodicals and the Archive of Canadian Women's Writing." *English Studies in Canada*, 36, no. 2-3 (2010): 63-90.

Joyce, Greg. "Women's Group Claims Responsibility for Firebomb Attacks." (November 22, 1982). Retrieved from *United Press International Archives*, https://www.upi.com/Archives/1982/11/22/Womens-group-claims-responsibility-for-firebomb-attacks/6316406789200/.

Katz, Jonathan. *Gay/Lesbian Almanac: A New Documentary.* New York: Harper & Row, 1983.

Keller, Yvonne. "'Was It Right to Love Her Brother's Wife so Passionately?': Lesbian Pulp Novels and U.S. Lesbian Identity, 1950-1965." *American Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2005): 385-410.

Kennedy, Elizabeth Lapovsky, and Madeline Davis. *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Khan, Janaya, and LeRoi Newbold. "Black Lives Matter Toronto Teach-in." In *Queering Urban Justice: Queer of Colour Formations in Toronto*, edited by Jin Haritaworn, Ghaida Moussa, Syrus Marcus Ware, and Gabriela (Rio) Rodriguez, 136-145. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018.

Kinsman, Gary. *The Regulation of Desire: Sexuality in Canada.* Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1987.
----. *Regulation of Desire: Homo and Hetero Sexualities*, 2nd edition. Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1996.

Kinsman, Gary and Patrizia Gentile. *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010.

Lesbians Against the Right. "Preface" and "Conclusion." In *Dykes in the Streets: Lesbians are Everywhere Fighting the Right*, 1 and 31-32. Speeches given at the May 9th, 1981 Lesbians Against the Right conference, Toronto, 1981. *Rise Up! A Digital Archive of Feminist Activism*, https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/activism/organizations/lesbians-against-the-right/.

Lesbian Conference Committee. "Final Report: 1981 Lesbian Conference." Brochure, Lesbian Power: Organizing for the 80s conference, Langara College, May 16-18, 1981. *Rise Up! Feminist Archive*, https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/lesbianconference-1981-finalreport-organizingfor80s.pdf.

Leslie, Pat. "Opinion." *Lesbian Perspective*, (1979): 2.

Lipschutz, Barbara. "Nobody Needs to Get Fucked." *Lesbian Voices* 1, no. 4 (1975): 57.

Lorde, Audre. *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name, A Biomythography*. Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1982.

Lowman, John. "Violence and the Outlaw Status of (Street) Prostitution in Canada." *Violence Against Women* 6, no. 9 (2000): 987-1011.

Lowman, John, and Laura Fraser. *Violence Against Persons who Prostitute: The Experience in British Columbia.* Ottawa: Department of Justice, 1995.

Mann, Arshy, "What was The Body Politic, anyway?" *Xtra*, June 9, 2016. Pink Triangle Press, https://www.dailyxtra.com/what-was-the-body-politic-anyway-71206.
Marcus, Eric. *Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights, 1945-1990: An Oral History*. New York, Harper Collins, 1993.

Martin, Del, and Phyllis Lyon. *Lesbian/Woman*. Virginia: Glide Publications, 1972.

Maynard, Steven. "'The Burning, Willful Evidence: Lesbian/Gay History and Archival Research." *Archivaria* 33 (1991-92): 195-201.
----. "In Search of 'Sodom North': The Writing of Lesbian and Gay History in English Canada, 1970-1990." *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 21, no. 1-2 (1994): 117-132.

McCaskell, Tim. *Queer Progress: From Homophobia to Homonationalism: A Local and Global Story of Queer Activism*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2016.

McKenzie, Cameron. "Love, Lust, and Loss in the Early Age of AIDS: The Discourse in The Body Politic from 1981 to 1987." *Journal of Homosexuality* 63, no. 12 (2016): 1749-1763.

McLeod, Donald. *Lesbian and Gay Liberation in Canada: A Selected Annotated Chronology, 1964-1975*, vol. 1. Toronto: ECW Press/Homeward Books, 1995.

Meyer, Hazel and Cait McKinney. "Slumberparty 2018." Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, 2018. Film. Retrieved from https://www.cfmdc.org/film/4629
----. "Tape Condition: Degraded." *ArQuives* exhibition. Toronto, June-September, 2016. Retrieved from https://arquives.ca/past-exhibitions/tape-condition-degraded/.

Millward, "Lesbian Conferences in Canada in the 1970s: Sexual and Erotic Spaces?" In *Sapphists and Sexologists: Histories of Sexualities*, vol. 2, edited by Sonja Tiernan and Mary McAuliffe, 128-43. Newcastle-on-Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.
----. "Making a Scene: Struggles over Lesbian Place-Making in Anglophone Canada, 1964-1984." *Women's History Review* 21 (2012): 553-69.
----. *Making a Scene: Lesbians and Community across Canada, 1964-1984*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015.

Moraga, Cherrie, and Gloria Anzaldúa. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Watertown: Persephone Press, 1981.

Murphy, Pat "The Brunswick Four: An Oral History." In *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, edited by J. Lorinc, et al., 131-133. Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017.

Namaste, Viviane. *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Nash, Catherine. "Queer Conversations: Old-time Lesbians, Transmen and the Politics of Queer Research." In Trans experiences in lesbian and queer spaces." In *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research*, edited by Kath Browne and Catherine Nash, 129-142. Burlington: Ashgate, 2010.

Nestle, Joan. *A Restricted Country*. San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1987.

Newton, Esther. "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman." *Signs* 9, no. 4 (The Lesbian Issue, 1984): 557-575.

Noble, J. Bobby. *Sons of the Movement: FtMs Risking Incoherence on a Post-Queer Cultural Landscape*. Toronto: Women's Press, 2006.

Parker, Pat. *Movement in Black: The Collected Poetry of Pat Parker, 1961-1978*. Trumansburg, Crossing Press, 1983.

Pedestal Collection *Rise Up: A Digital Archive of Feminist Activism*, https://riseupfeminist archive.ca/publications/the-pedestal/.

Pendleton, Eva. "Love for Sale: Queering Heterosexuality." In *Whores and Other Feminists*, edited by Jill Nagle, 73-82. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Perdue, Anne. "Out and Proud." *University of Toronto Magazine*, June 11, 2009. Last modified 2009, https://magazine.utoronto.ca/research-ideas/culture-society/out-and-proud-history-of-gay-lesbian-activism-toronto-anne-perdue/.

Podmore, Julie. "Gone 'underground'? Lesbian visibility and the consolidation of queer space in Montréal." *Social and Cultural Geography* 7, no. 4 (2006): 595-625.

Podmore, Julie, and Line Chamberland. "Entering the Urban Frame: Early Lesbian Activism and Public Space in Montréal." *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 19, no. 2 (2015): 192-211.

Prosser, Jay. *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*. New York, Columbia University Press, 1998.

Proud Lives: Chris Bearchell Tribute. Directed by Nancy Nicol. Video, 16:28. *The ArQuives Digital Exhibitions*, http://digitalcollections.clga.ca/items/show/678.

Radicalesbians. "The Woman-Identified Woman." (1970), *History is a Weapon*, https://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/radicalesbianswoman.html.

Rand, Erin. "An Appetite for Activism: The Lesbian Avengers and the Queer Politics of Visibility." *Women's Studies in Communication* 36, no. 2 (June 2013): 121-141.

Rayside, David. *On the Fringe: Gays and Lesbians in Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

Richardson, Diane. "Constructing Lesbian Sexualities." In *Feminism and Sexuality: A Reader*, edited by Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott, 276-87. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

Riordon, Michael. *Eating Fire: Family Life, on the Queer Side*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2001.

Ross, Becki. "The House that Jill Built: Lesbian Feminist Organizing in Toronto, 1976-1980." *Feminist Review* 35 (1990): 75-91.

----. "Tracking Lesbian Speech: The Social Organization of Lesbian Periodical Publishing in Canada, 1973-1988." In *Women's Writing and the Literary Institution*, edited by Claudine Potvin and Janice Williamson, 173-185. Edmonton: Research Institute for Comparative Literature, 1992.

-----. "Dance to 'Tie a Yellow Ribbon,' Get Churched, and Buy the Little Lady a Drink: Gay Women's Bar Culture in Toronto, 1965-1975." In *Weaving Alliances: Selected Papers Presented for the Canadian Women's Studies Association at the 1991 and 1992 Learned Societies Conference,* edited by Debra Martens, 267-288. Ottawa: Canadian Women's Studies Association, 1993.

----. *The House that Jill Built: A Lesbian Nation in Formation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995.

----. "Sex and (Evacuation from) the City: The Moral and Legal Regulation of Sex Workers in Vancouver's West End, 1975-1985." *Sexualities* 13, no. 2 (2010): 197-218.

----. "Like Apples and Oranges: Lesbian Feminist Responses to the Politics of *The Body Politic*." In *Queerly Canadian: An Introductory Reader in Sexuality Studies*, edited by Maureen FitzGerald and Scott Rayter, 139-150. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2012.

Rubin, Gayle, and Judith Butler. "Sexual Traffic: Interview with Gayle Rubin by Judith Butler." *A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 6, no. 2/3 (1994): 62-99.

----. *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

Samois. *What Color is Your Handkerchief: A Lesbian S/M Sexuality Reader*. Berkeley: Samois, 1979.

----. "S/M Challenges Anti-Porn." *The Lesbian Tide*, vol. 9, no. 3 (November/December 1979): 25. *Independent Voices: An Open Access Collective of an Alternative Press*, https://voices.revealdigital.com/?a=d&d=EFGABHD19791101.1.25&e=-------en-20--1--txt-txIN---------------1

----. *Coming to Power: Writings and Graphics on Lesbian S/M.* San Francisco: Up Press, 1981.

Sears, Alan. 2005. "Queer Anti-Capitalism: What's Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?" *Science & Society* 69, no.1 (2005): 92-112.

Seidman, Steven. *Contested Knowledge: Social Theory Today*, 4th edition. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2011.

Schuster, Marilyn. *Queer Love Story: The Letters of Jane Rule and Rick Bebout*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017.

Sears, Alan. "Queer Anti-Capitalism: What's Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?" *Science & Society* 69, no.1 (2005): 96.

Sekula, Allan. "The Body and the Archive." *October* 39, no. 4 (Winter, 1986): 3-64.

Silvera, Makeda *Piece of My Heart: A Lesbian of Colour Anthology*. Toronto: Sister Vision Press, 1991.

Smith, Annie. "Goodbye to a Queer Pioneer." *XTRA! West*, no. 353 (March 1, 2007). *Walnet Institute: Commercial Sex Information Service*, https://walnet.org/csis/ news/ vancouver_2007/ xtrawest-070301.html.

Smith, Barbara. *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*. New York: Kitchen Table Women of Color Press, 1983.

----. "An Interview." In *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*, edited by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, 32-70. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017.

Smith, Miriam. *Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada: Social Movements and Equality-Seeking, 1971-1995*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

----. "Interview with Chris Bearchell, Lasqueti Island, 1996." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 48, no.1 (2014): 252-75.

Stoler, Ann. "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance." *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 87-109.

Stone, Amy, and Jaime Cantrell. *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015.

Stone, Sharon. "What is a Lesbian?" *Lesbian Perspective* (1979): 2.

Stryker, Susan. "Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity." *Radical History Review* 100 (2008): 145-157.

----. "The Time has Come to Think about Gayle Rubin." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17, no. 1 (2011): 79-83.

Sullivan, Rebecca. *Bonnie Sherr Klein's 'Not a Love Story.'* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014.

Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta. *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017.

Theophano, Teresa. "Daughters of Bilitis." *GLBTQ: An Encyclopedia*. Last modified October 20, 2005, https://web.archive.org/web/20110629110236/http://www.glbtq.com/social-sciences/daughters_bilitis.html.

Timmons, Stuart. *The Trouble with Harry Hay: Founder of the Modern Gay Movement.* Boston: Alyson Publications, 1990.

Valentine, David. *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

Valverde, Marianna. "Lesbian Sexuality Conference: Coming on Strong." *Broadside: A Feminist Review* 5, no. 9 (1984): 5.

van der Meulen, Emily, Elya Durisin, and Victorial Love. *Selling Sex: Experience, Advocacy, and Research on Sex Work in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013.

Vance, Carole. "More Danger, More Pleasure: A Decade after the Barnard Sexuality Conference." *New York Law School Law Review* 38, no. 1–4 (1993): 289–315.

Vigiletti, Elyse. "Normalizing the 'Variant' in The Ladder, America's Second Lesbian Magazine, 1956-1963." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 36, no. 2 (2015): 47-71.

Walcott, Rinaldo, *Black Like Who? Writing Black Canada*, 2nd edition. Toronto, ON: Insomniac Press, 2003.
----. "Black Men in Frocks: Sexing Race in the Gay Ghetto (Toronto)." In *Claiming Space: Racialization in Canadian Cities*, edited by Cheryl Teelucksingh, 121-133. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006.
----. "Somewhere Out There: The New Black Queer Theory." In *Blackness and Sexualities*, edited by Michelle Wright and Antje Schuhmann, 29-40. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2007.
----. *Queer Returns: Essays on Multiculturalism, Diaspora, and Black Studies*. London, ON: Insomniac Press, 2016.

Ware, Syrus Marcus. "All Power to All People?: Black LGBTTI2QQ Activism, Remembrance, and Archiving in Toronto." *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 4, no. 2, (2017): 170-180.

Warner, Tom. *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto, 2002.

Weeks, Jeffrey. *Sexuality*. London: Tavistock, 1986.
----. "Introduction to the 1993 Printing." In *Homosexual Oppression and Liberation*, edited by Dennis Altman, 1-15. New York: NY University Press, 1993.

Weir, Lorna, and Eve Zaremba. "Boys and Girls Together: Feminism and Gay Liberation." *Broadside: A Feminist Review* 4, no. 1 (1982): 6-7. *Broadside Digital Project*. Last modified 2012, http://www.broadsidefeminist.com/.

Weir, Lorna, and Brenda Steiger. "Lesbian Movement: Coming Together in a Hot Gym" *Broadside* 2, no. 10 (1981): 7 and 14. *Broadside Digital Project*. Last modified 2012, http://www.broadsidefeminist.com/.

Wise, Wyndham. "Not a Love Story: A Film about Pornography." In *Take One's Essential Guide to Canadian Film*, edited by Wyndham Wise, 154. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.

Wong-Tam, Kristyn. "Forward." In *Any Other Way, How Toronto Got Queer*, edited by Stephanie Chambers, et al., 9-10. Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017.

Young, Allen. “Out of the Closets, Into the Streets.” In *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation*, 20th anniversary edition, edited by Karla Jay and Allen Young, 6-30. New York: NY University Press, 1972.

Zimmerman, Bonnie and George Haggerty. “Introduction.” In *Lesbian Histories and Cultures: An Encyclopedia*, vol. I, edited by Bonnie Zimmerman, ix-xvi. New York: Taylor & Francis, 2000.
----. “Introduction.” In *Gay Histories and Cultures: An Encyclopedia*, vol. II, edited by George Haggerty, ix-xvi. New York: Taylor & Francis, 2000.

Zorzi, Peter. “The Start-up of The Body Politic: Fall 1971.” *Queer Catharsis*. Last modified 2011, http://onthebookshelves.com/bp01.htm.

<u>The Body Politic</u>

The Body Politic Collection, from the *Canadian Museum for Human Rights.* Last modified December 31, 2014, https://archive.org/details/canadianmuseumforhumanrights&tab=collection.

Agger, Ellen. “Address to March 11 Cut-backs Rally.” *The Body Politic*, no. 24 (May/June 1976): 6.

Baker, Beatrice. “Confessions of a Lesbian Gay Liberationist.” *The Body Politic*, no. 57 (October 1979): 23

Chris Bearchell. “Lesbianism in the Women’s Movement.” *The Body Politic* no. 22 (January/February 1976): 5.
----. “Lesbians Plan Centre.” *The Body Politic*, no. 29 (December/January 1976/77): 6-7.
----. “Lesbians and Gay Men *Can* Find Political Unity: A Reply to Andrew Hodges.” *The Body Politic*, no. 32 (April 1977): 11.
----. “I was Fifteen, She was Forth-three.” *The Body Politic*, no. 43 (May 1978): 14.
----. “This is the Last Dykes Column.” *The Body Politic*, no. 49 (Dec./Jan. 1978/79): 32.
----. “The Cloak of Feminism.” *The Body Politic*, no. 53 (June 1979): 20.
----. “Lesbian Pride March is a First for Canada.” *The Body Politic*, no. 74 (June 1981): 10.
----. “Hustlers, Hookers, Swingers and ‘Sexual Revolutionaries: Making Allies among Indecent Activists.” *The Body Politic*. no. 77 (October 1981): 17.
----. “Bar-Hopping.” *The Body Politic*, no. 77 (October 1981): 25.
----. “The Closet and the Umbrella.” *The Body Politic*, no. 81 (March 1982): 7.
----. “Not a Love Story and the Anti-Porn Crusade.” *The Body Politic*, no. 85 (July/August 1982): 11.
----. “Art, Trash & Titillation: A Consumer’s Guide to Lezzy Smut.” *The Body Politic*, no. 93 (May 1983): 29-33.
----. “Pornography, Prostitution and Moral Panic.” *The Body Politic*, no. 101 (March 1984): 7, and 9-10.
----. “Hookers on Davie.” *The Body Politic*, no. 103 (May 1984): 31-32.

----. “The Magnificent Distraction.” *The Body Politic*, no. 104 (June 1984): 8
----. “Lots of Talk; Not Much Action: Dykes Discussing Sex, Reflections on a Conference on Lesbian Sexuality.” *The Body Politic*, no. 106 (September 1984): 7-8.
----. “The Dubious Art of ‘Vice’ Management.” *The Body Politic*, no. 106 (September 1984): 18.
----. “At Last!” *The Body Politic*, no. 108 (November 1984): 37-38.
----. “No Apologies: Strippers as the Upfront Line in a Battle to Communicate.” *The Body Politic*, no. 123 (February 1986): 26-29.
----. “Hookers Win Support from Women’s Group.” *The Body Politic*, no. 129 (August 1986): 10.
----. “Sex Panic Hides Real Issues.” *The Body Politic*, no. 132 (November 1986): 5.

Bearchell, Chris, and Craig Patterson, for the Collective. “Racism and Red Hot Video: A Response.” *The Body Politic*, no. 100 (January/February 1984): 5-6.

Belling, Michele. “Outsiders.” *The Body Politic*, no. 113 (April 1985): 47.

Byrne, Debra. “Letters.” *The Body Politic*, no. 96 (September 1983): 6.

Califia, P. Patrick. “Letters: Carbon Copy.” *The Body Politic*, no. 118 (September 1985): 11.

Carla, “Want a Token Sister, Mister?” *The Body Politic*, no. 2 (January/February 1972): 7.

Cockerline, Danny, and Gwendolyn. “A Brief History of Sex Worker Activism in Toronto.” Revised and updated by Andrew Sorfleet, 1995. *Walnet Institute: Commercial Sex Information Service*. Last modified February 13, 2018, https://walnet.org/csis/groups/swat/torontohistory.html.

Cole, Susan and Eve Zaremba. “Pornography: The New Terrorism?” *The Body Politic*, no. 45 (August 1978): 12.

Cole, Susan G. “Letters: Lust and Celibacy.” *The Body Politic*, no. 108 (November 1984): 3.

Cordova, Jean Cordova. “What’s a Woman to do?” *The Body Politic*, no. 17 (January/February 1975): 11. Reprinted from *The Lesbian Tide* (April 1974).

DeNovo, Cheri, and Brian Waite, for the August 28th Gay Day Committee. “We Demand.” *The Body Politic*, no. 1 (November/December 1971): 4.

Donald, Christine. “Letters.” *The Body Politic*, no. 95 (July/August 1983): 5.

Editorial Collective. “Unmasquerade.” *The Body Politic*, no. 1 (November/December 1971): 1-2.
----. “A Program for Gay Liberation.” *The Body Politic*, no. 1 (November/December 1971): 14.
----. “Editorial Page.” *The Body Politic*, no. 4 (May/June 1972): 2.
----. “Never Going Back.” *The Body Politic*, no. 8 (Spring 1973): 2.
----. “Lesbian Conference First in Canada.” *The Body Politic*, no. 9 (Summer 1973): 7.
----. “Uppity Women.” *The Body Politic*, no. 12 (March/April 1974): 1.

----. “200 Gather at Lesbian Meeting.” *The Body Politic*, no. 12 (March/April 1974): 7.
----. “Lesbians Meet in Montréal.” *The Body Politic*, no. 17 (January/February 1975): 5.
----. “Lesbian Group Gets Home.” *The Body Politic*, no. 30 (February 1977): 5
----. “MP’s Hit Hard at ‘Porn.’” *The Body Politic*, no. 42 (April 1978): 5.
----. “Lesbian Conference High on Culture Low on Politics.” *The Body Politic*, no. 44 (June/July 1978): 6.
----. “1000 Lesbians.” *The Body Politic*, no. 50 (February 1979): 30.
----. “Special Collectivities.” *The Body Politic*, no. 57 (October 1979): 3.
----. “With a Little Help from Our Friends.” *The Body Politic*, no. 71 (March 1981): 3.
----. “No Apologies.” *The Body Politic*, no. 71 (March 1981): 8.
----. “Rage! Taking It to the Streets.” *The Body Politic*, no. 71 (March 1981): 9, 12, and 16.
----. “Who We Were, Who We Are.” *The Body Politic*, no. 80 (January/February 1982): 31-37.
----. “Feminists Split on ‘Correct’ Sex.” *The Body Politic*, no. 85 (July/August 1982): 16.
----. “Arson, Abortion and Freedom.” *The Body Politic*, no. 90 (January 1983): 8.
----. “XXX Adult Video.” *The Body Politic*, no. 94 (June 1983): 39.
----. “Pornography and Solidarity, II.” *The Body Politic*, no. 95 (July/August 1983): 8.
----. “*Special Report:* Censorship, Access and the Politics of Porn.” *The Body Politic*, no. 95 (July/August 1983): 11-12.
----. “Sex Wars.” Table of Contents, *The Body Politic*, no. 104 (June 1984): 3.
----. “31 Words.” *The Body Politic*, no. 113 (April 1985): 29.

Fern, Margo. “Letters.” *The Body Politic*, no. 93 (May 1983): 6.

Fleming, Martha. “Letters: Sexual Hierarchy Rejected.” *The Body Politic*, no.85 (July/August 1982): 4.

Fox, Chris. “Why We Need Equal Representation.” *The Body Politic*, no. 2 (January/February 1972): 15.

Fulton, Anne M. “My Personal Love Affair with the National Lesbian Movement.” *The Body Politic*, no. 31 (March 1977): 10.

Gays of Ottawa Board of Directors. “Letters.” *The Body Politic*, no. 97 (October 1983): 5-6.

Gearhart, Sally. “The Lesbian and God-The-Father.” *The Body Politic*, no. 16 (November/December 1974): 12.

Golding, Sue. “Sex at Issue: Time for Questioning in Bed.” *The Body Politic*, no. 77 (October 1981): 35.
----. “Coming to Terms with Power.” *The Body Politic*, no.83 (May 1982): 32-33.
----. “Dear Diary: How Do We Learn to ‘Speak Sex’?” *The Body Politic*, no. 93 (May 1983): 37.
----. “Laying Bare the Tenderloin.” *The Body Politic*, no. 112 (March 1985): 26-27.

Goodwin, Jackie. “Fanning the Flames: Fire Brigade vs. Red Hot.” *The Body Politic*, no., 90 (January 1983): 10.

Groves, Amy. "Letters: Lesbian S&M: Valverde Roasted." *The Body Politic*, no. 62 (April 1980): 4.

Hanon, Gerald. "Pornography, Feminism and Children's Literature." *The Body Politic*, no. 42 (April 1978): 5.
----. "Célébration '79: A Return to Basics the Strategy for Our Next Decade?" *The Body Politic*, no. 55 (April 1979): 8.

Hodges, Andrew. "Divided We Stand." *The Body Politic*, no. 30 (February 1977): 22.

Kinesis. "Letters." *The Body Politic*, no. 96 (September 1983): 4-5.

Kolb, Terry. "Letters: Lesbian S&M: Valverde Roasted." *The Body Politic*, no. 62 (April 1980): 4.

LeBourdais, Eleanor. "Letters: Better to Differ?" *The Body Politic*, no. 83 (May1982): 5.

Lesbian Organization of Toronto (LOOT) Conference Committee. "What do you do with a Thousand Lesbians?" *The Body Politic*, no. 49 (December/January 1978/79): 36.
----. "Getting Some Answers." *The Body Politic*, no. 51 (March/April 1979): 28.

Leslie, Pat. "Behind Open Doors." *The Body Politic*, no. 43 (May 1978): 13.
----. "Doing Our Own Work." *The Body Politic*, no. 46 (September 1978): 2.

Lippert, Rosemary. "Lesbians Move towards National Organization." *The Body Politic*, no. 29 (December/January 1976/77): 5.

Marushka, Anna. "Dykes Against the Right." *The Body Politic*, no.78 (November 1981): 13.

McCaskell, Tim. "Pornography and Prohibition." *The Body Politic*, no. 92 (April 1983): 31.
----. "You've Got a Nice Body…For an Oriental." *The Body Politic*, no. 102 (April 1984): 33-37.
----. "Gays of Colour Get Together for Parties and Politics." *The Body Politic*, no. 109 (December 1984): 8.

McCuaig, Peg. "Power Trip or Fun and Games: Lesbian S&M, Part 2." *The Body Politic*, no. 61 (March/April 1980): 43.

Meigs, Mary. "Speaking Hard Truths with Their Whole Selves." *The Body Politic*, no. 92 (April 1983): 33-34.

Mossop, Brian Mossop. "Gay Men's Feminist Mistake." *The Body Politic*, no. 67 (October 1980): 32.

Nestle, Joan. "Butch/Fem and Sexual Courage." *The Body Politic*, no. 76 (September 1981): 29.

Niemi, Fo. "Letters: GWMs and Racial Stereotypes." *The Body Politic*, no. 94 (June 1983): 4.

Page, Sharon. "Finger Wagging." *The Body Politic*, no. 93 (May 1983): 5-6.

Parks, Joy. "Who Me? Notes of a Budding Separatist." *The Body Politic*, no. 96 (September 1983): 20.
----. "Forget…and Never Forget." *The Body Politic*, no. 101 (March 1984): 40.

Perrault, Yvette. "Letters." *The Body Politic*, no. 96 (September 1983): 5.

Popert, Ken. "Bryantism and Wages Due: Recruiting Within Our Movement." *The Body Politic*, no. 46 (September 1978): 5.
----. "Race, Mustaches, and Sexual Prejudice." *The Body Politic*, no. 94 (June 1983): 34.

Potluck Suppers. "Lesbians get potluck." *The Body Politic*, no. 68 (November 1980): 12.

Riordon, Michael. "Gay Woman Recounts Police Violence." *The Body Politic*, no. 18 (May/June 1975): 8.

Rodgerson, Gillian. "From Sausages to Slings." *The Body Politic* no. 128 (July 1986): 27.

Rubin, Gayle. "Letters." *The Body Politic*, no. 40 (February 1978): 2.
----. "The Leather Menace: Comments on Politics and S/M." Reprinted in *The Body Politic*, no. 82 (April 1982): 33-35.

Rule, Jane. "Teaching Sexuality." *The Body Politic*, no. 53 (June 1979): 29.
----. "So's Your Grandmother: Stumps." *The Body Politic*, no. 54 (July 1979): 20.
----. "Why I Write for The Body Politic." *The Body Politic*, no. 80 (January/February 1982): 38.
----. "Letters: Strange Bedfellows." *The Body Politic*, no. 82 (April 1982): 4-5.
----. "Pornography." *The Body Politic*, no. 100 (January/February 1984): 33.
----. "Letters." *The Body Politic*, no. 116 (April 1985): 11.

Signatories. "Letters: Pornography and Solidarity." *The Body Politic*, no. 95 (July/Aug. 1983): 4.
----. "Letters." *The Body Politic*, no. 96 (September 1983): 8-9.

Smith, Anna Marie. "Fear and Loathing and the Search for Pleasure." *The Body Politic*, no. 128 (July 1986): 25.

Spencer, Roger. "Letters: Fuming and Fighting Back." *The Body Politic*, no. 72 (April 1981): 4-5.

Springer, Judy. "Letters." *The Body Politic*, no. 41 (March 1978): 2.
----. "Letters." *The Body Politic*, no. 42 (April 1978): 3.

Stewart, Donna, for North Shore Women's Centre. "Letters: Pornography, Questioning Associates." *The Body Politic*, no. 92 (April 1983): 4.

Stirling, Heather. “Conference Explores Lesbian Autonomy.” *The Body Politic*, no. 26 (September 1976): 8.

Stuckey, Johanna. “The Politics of Powerlessness.” *The Body Politic*, no. 63 (May 1980): 29.

Valverde, Mariana. “Feminism and Pornography: A Reply to Gerald Hannon.” *The Body Politic*, no. 43 (May 1978): 3.
----. “Confessions of a Lesbian Ex-Masochist.” *The Body Politic*, no. 56 (September 1979): 18.
----. “Feminism Meets Fist-Fucking: Getting Lost in Lesbian S&M.” *The Body Politic*, no. 60 (February 1980): 43.
----. “Letters: Mariana Valverde Replies.” *The Body Politic*, no. 62 (April 1980): 5.
----. “Letters.” *The Body Politic*, no. 95 (July/August 1983): 4-5.

Waite, Brian. “Strategy for Gay Liberation.” *The Body Politic*, no. 3 (March/April 1972): 4.

Waite, Brian, and Cheri DeNovo, for the Gay Day Committee. “Dear Sir.” *The Body Politic*, no. 1 (November/December 1971): 4.

Wages Due Lesbians (Toronto). “Lesbian Autonomy and the Gay Movement.” *The Body Politic*, no. 25 (July/August 1976): 8.
----. “Women Speak out.” *The Body Politic*, no. 29 (December/January 1976/77): 1.
----. “Wages Due Replies.” *The Body Politic*, no. 49 (December/January 1978/79): 6.

Waldorf, Lee. “If It Feels Good – Suspect It.” *The Body Politic*, no. 106 (September 1984): 7.
----. “Pleasure…& Danger: Lee Waldorf Talks with Carole Vance.” *The Body Politic*, no. 112 (March 1985): 27-28.

Waldorf, Lee, and Gillian Rodgerson, for the Collective. “Customized Porn.” *The Body Politic*, no. 119 (October 1985): 10.

Walker, Nancy. “Closet Door, Closet Door, You Ain’t Got Me Anymore!” *The Body Politic*, no. 1 (November/December 1971): 13.

Wallace, Robert, as cited in “Pornography – A Spectacle.” *The Body Politic*, no. 111 (February 1985: 33-34.

Watson, Boo. “Conference Urges Lesbian Autonomy.” *The Body Politic*, no. 25 (July/August 1976): 7.

Waugh, Tom. “A Heritage of Pornography.” *The Body Politic*, no. 90 (January 1983 90: 29): 29-33.

Wyland, Francie, Dorothy Kidd, Ellen Agger, Chris, Melinda, Gayle, and Freda Jenner. *The Lesbian Mothers’ Defence Fund*; Sharon Hohner, Jude Lemieux, Robin Tyler; Baba Yaga, *The Committee Against Street Harassment*; Susan White, *Wages Due Lesbians Winnipeg*. “Special Collectivities.” *The Body Politic*, no. 57 (October 1979): 3.

Yaga, Baba. "Committee Against Street Harassment: Dykes and Hookers Fight Back." *The Body Politic*, no. 57 (October 1979): 22.

Young, Louise, of Montréal Gay Women. "Male Standards." *The Body Politic*, no. 14 (July/August 1974): 2.

Zaremba, Eve. "Porn Again." *The Body Politic*, no. 47 (October 1978): 4.
----. "Letters: Agree to Disagree." *The Body Politic*, no. 81 (March 1982): 4-5.

Zutz, Judith. "Letters: Lesbian S&M: Valverde Roasted." *The Body Politic*, no. 62 (April 1980): 4.

Appendix

This is an index of women's contributions to *The Body Politic*. It is arranged by year/issue, cross-listed with a tabulation by ratio (male:female) of contributors, collective members, and news correspondents. Beside each category is a list of women contributors for that issue.

Year: Issue	Cont. (m:f)	Contributors	Coll. (m:f)	Collective	News	News Correspondents
1971: 1[749]	10:5	Pat Murphy Linda Jain Nancy Walker Iris Cheri Denovo	13:2	Jude Aileen		
1972: 2[750]	13:2	Iris (x2) Carla	10:1[751]	Kathy Pickard		
3	15:0		13:0			
4	7:1[752]	Donya Peroff	10:1	Kathy Pickard		
5	15:2	Adrianne E. Potts Linda Jain	11:2	Donya Peroff Kathy Picard		
6	9:3	Carol Leard Loraine Donya Peroff	9:0			
1973: 7	6:0		8:1	Linda Koch		
8	12:1	Julie Mosgrove	8:1	Linda Koch		
9	11:0[753]		10:1	Linda Koch		
10[754]	7:0		11:0			
1974: 11[755]	6:0		11:0			
12	11:1	Jeanne	13:0			
13	8:1	Nancy Walker	13:0			
14	10:0		12:0			
15	5:1	Pat Normington	9:0			
16	12:1	Sally Gearhart	5:0			
1975: 17	8:1	Jeanne Cordova	5:0			
18	12:4	Jan London Lorraine Milne Helen Notzl	5:0			

[749] The Body Politic Editorial Collective is not listed in the first issue. Instead, I combined the partial historical accounts of Rick Bébout (http://www.rbebout.com/oldbeep/concep.htm) and Peter Zorzi (http://onthebookshelves.com/bp01.htm). By the second issue, names of collective members are provided. Only at issue 4 are lists of contributors provided, as such, the tabulation of the first three issues is based on my own documentation of each article throughout (though many do not list authors).

[750] Cost: 25 cents and 35 cents outside Toronto

[751] "The Editorial Collective for each issue includes those individuals contributing to the: content (articles, artwork) and/or printing (typing and layout). Members of the collective have a vote in all decisions pertinent to the publication of the paper. Content and arrangement are decided on by the collective during editorial meetings and during layout" (p.4).

[752] Starting at Issue 4, the newspaper provides a list of Collective members and Contributors for each issue.

[753] Also: "Anon" and Montréal Gay line

[754] Cost: 15p in the UK

[755] Cost: 35c / US 50c / UK 15p

		Marie Robertson				
19[756]	17:5	Chris Bearchell Lucie de Blois Jeanne Cordova Lorraine Judy Zutz	6:0			
20	11:1	Connie Harris	6:0			
21	15:3[757]	Chris Fox Connie Harris Jane Rule	7:0			
1976: 22	15:1	Chris Bearchell	7:0			
Suppl. 1[758]	5:1	Chris Bearchell				
23	11:4	Rita Mae Brow Chris Fox Vicky Pullam Joyce Rock	9:0		6:0[759]	
Suppl. 2	6:3	Chris Fox Vicky Pullam Joyce Rock				
24	17:4	Chris[tine] Bearchell Marie Robertson Jane Rule Wages Due Collective	9:1	Joyce Rock	6:0	
Suppl. 3	7:2	Chris Bearchell Jane Rule				
25	12:2	Susan Baker Boo Watson	10:1	Joyce Rock	7:0	
Suppl. 4	6:0					
26	9:3	Kate Middleton Vicky Pullam Heather Sterling	11:1	Joyce Rock	8:0	
27	10:4	Terry Faubert Fran Koski Maida Tilchen Wages Due Lesbians	11:1	Joyce Rock	9:0	
Suppl. 5	2:2	Fran Koski Maida Tilchen				
28	14:3	Gloria Geller Kate Middleton Rosemary Ray	9:0		9:0	
Suppl. 6	5:2	Gloria Geller				

[756] Cost: 50c / US 75c
[757] Also: ABK Graphic Consultants
[758] Every issue includes a section titled *Our Image*, in which various contributors review lesbian and gay representation in books, film, theatre, music, academia, and mainstream media. In every second to third issue, this section comes as a Supplement, consisting of 6-12 pages.
[759] Starting with this issue, News correspondents from various Canadian cities are listed in addition to Collective members and Contributors.

		Kate Middleton				
1976/77: 29[760]	18:7	Ellen Agger Chris Bearchell Dolores Klaitch Pat Leslie Rosemary Lippert Cheryl Pruitt Jane Rule	9:0		10:0	
1977: 30	23:1	Chris Bearchell	8:0		12:0	
31	22:7	Sherrill Cheda Anne Fulton Karla Jay Rosemary Ray Jane Rule Helen Sonthoff Maida Tilchen	8:0		13:0	
Review Suppl. 7	6:5	Gwen Hauser Karla Jay Jane Rule Helen Sonthoff Maida Tilchen				
32	24:4	Chris Bearchell Gay Bell Sherrill Cheda Maureen Paul	8:0		16:0	
33	30:7	Chris Bearchell Sherrill Cheda Judith Crewe Jean Kowalewski Daphne Kutzner Ilona Laney Fiona Rattray	10:0		16:0	
Review Suppl. 8	7:6	Sherrill Cheda Judith Crewe Jean Kowalewski Daphne Kutzner Ilona Laney Fiona Rattray				
34	35:5	Chris Bearchell Sherrill Cheda Ilona Laney Tricia Murphy Gayle Rubin	10:0		16:0	
35	31:6	Chris Bearchell Judith Crewe Barbara Freeman Jean Kowaleski Daphne Kutzer	10:0		16:0	

[760] Cost: 75c

		Jean Wilson				
Suppl. 9	5:4	Judith Crewe Jean Kowalewski Daphne Kutzner Jean Wilson				
36	35:6	Chris Bearchell Sherrill Cheda Judith Crewe Portia Barb Thornborrow Francie Wayland	10:0		16:0	
Suppl. 10	6:2	"Portia" Sherill Cheda				
37	31:5	Gwen Hauser Jean Kowalewski Ilona Laney M. MacDonald Barbara Thornborrow	10:0		16:0	
38	28:8	Chris Bearchell Gay Bell Sherrill Cheda Judith Crewe Judy Lynne Heather Ramsay Rosemary Ray Liz Wood	10:0		16:0	
Suppl. 11	10:3	Gay Bell Sherrill Cheda Judith Crewe				
1977/78:39	40: 9	Chris Bearchell Gay Bell Judith Crewe Irka Huzyk Ilona Laney Sheilagh McCarthy Heather Ramsay Maida Tilchen Lily Wood	9:0		13:1[761]	Rosemary Ray (Edmonton)
Suppl. 12	9:2	Ilona Laney Maida Tilchen				
1978: 40	26:3	Chris Bearchell Pat Leslie Sarah McKenzie	10:1	Lily wood	12:1	Rosemary Ray (Edm)
41[762]	35:5	Chris Bearchell Judith Crewe	10:1	Lily Wood	13:1	Rosemary Ray (Edm)

[761] Also: The Education Collective, Gay Community Centre (Saskatoon). This organization is a news correspondent in every issue herein until August 1980.
[762] Cost: $1

		Ilona Laney Heather Ramsay Jane Rule				
Suppl. 13	11:4	Judith Crewe Ilona Laney Jane Rule Lily Wood				
42	31:5	Chris Bearchell Gay Bell Judith Crewe Jean Kowalewski Jean Wilson	10:1	Lily Wood	12:2	Lily Wood (Toronto) Rosemary Ray (Edm)
43	27:5	Chris Bearchell Gay Bell Judith Crewe Georgette Gann Pat Leslie	10:1	Lily Wood	16:1	Rosemary Ray (Edm)
44	28: 10	Chris Bearchell Gay Bell Gillean Chase Judith Crewe Ann Fulton Dawna Gallgher Kathy MacNeil Margo Pearce Evelyn Lilith Sapphaelle Helen Sonthoff	11:0		16:1	Rosemary Ray (Edm)
Suppl. 14	8:3	Gillean Chase Judith Crewe Helen Sonthoff				
45	34:12	Chris Bearchell Gay Bell Liz Bolton Gillean Chase Susan Cole Judith Crewe Andrea Dworkin Libby Hopkins Linda Lounsberry Heather Ramsay Mariana Valverde Eve Zaremba	11:0		16:1	Rosemary Ray (Edm)
46	29:6	Chris Bearchell Elizabeth Bolton Libby Hopkins Eileen Renton Marianna Valverde Lorna Weir	10:0		20:1	
Suppl.	11:0					

15						
47[763]	20:5	Elizabeth Bolton Ilona Laney Mariana Valverde (x2) Clara Valverde Fiona Rattray	10:0		20:1	Rosemary Ray (Edm)
Our Image[764]	6:3	Elizabeth Bolton Ilona Laney Mariana Valverde				
48	22:7	Mariana Valverde (x2) Blanche Wiesen Cook Konnie Reich Lorna Weir Chris[tine] Bearchell (x2) Naomi Brooks Karen Henderson	9:0		21:1	Rosemary Ray (Edm)
Our Image	9:2	Blanche Wiesen Cook Konnie Reich				
1978/79:49	23:4	Mariana Valverde Ilona Laney Lorna Weir Chris[tine] Bearchell (x2)	8:2	Chris[tine] Bearchell[765] Mariana Valverde	21:1	Rosemary Ray (Edm)
Our Image	7:2	Ilona Laney Lorna Weir				
1979: 50	17:2	Mariana Valverde (x2) Lorna Weir	8:2	Chris[tine] Bearchell Mariana Valverde	29:4	Chris Bearchell, Mariana Valverde (Toronto); Elizabeth Bolton (Montréal); Rosemary Ray (Edm)
Our Image	6:1	Lorna Weir				
51	20:5	Mariana Valverde (x2) Ilona Laney Chris Bearchell Lynda Hurst	8:2	Chris[tine] Bearchell Mariana Valverde	25:3	Chris Bearchell (Tor); Elizabeth Bolton (Mtl); Rosemary Ray (Edm)

763 From here on, more expansive categories are used to credit writers in the table of contents: Our Image; Features; Columns, and in later issues, 'Out in the City' and 'Reviews and Features', all of which are included in this tabulation. Excluded are those listed under: Letters/Community Page; Design and Production; Advertising and Promotion; Subscriptions and Distribution, and Office Staff. These categories were excluded for simplicity sake and because the analysis is focused on published material and its authors.

764 The previous issue contained the final Supplement. However, the Our Image section, with reviews of books, film, and theatre, continues as a regular section, with a separate list of contributors midway through the magazine, as was the case when it was a Supplement. The writers are listed separately here, as they are in TBP.

765 Always listed as Chris Bearchell, except as a Collective member, where always listed as Christine.

		Lorna Weir				
Our Image	10:2	Ilona Laney Mariana Valverde				
52	20:8	Mariana Valverde Elizabeth Bolton Heather Ramsay Konnie Reich Lorna Weir Fiona Rattray Mary Schendlinger The Lesbian Conference Committee	8:2	Chris[tine] Bearchell Mariana Valverde	18:2	Elizabeth Bolton (Mtl); Rosemary Ray (Edm)
Our Image	6:3	Elizabeth Bolton Heather Ramsay Konnie Reich				
53	21:5	Mariana Valverde Gay Bell Lorna Weir Jane Rule Chris Bearchell	8:2	Chris[tine] Bearchell Mariana Valverde	24:3	Chris Bearchell (Tor); Elizabeth Bolton (Mtl); Rosemary Ray (Edm)
Our Image	6:2	Gay Bell Lorna Weir				
54	25:6	Mariana Valverde Donna Kaye Gay Bell Chris Bearchell Susan Hamilton Jane Rule	8:2	Chris[tine] Bearchell Mariana Valverde	24:3	Chris Bearchell (Tor); Elizabeth Bolton (Mtl); Rosemary Ray (Edm)
Our Image	9:2	Gay Bell Mariana Valverde				
55	22:2	Donna Kaye Irene Warner	9:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	22:2	Chris Bearchell (Tor); Elizabeth Bolton (Mtl)
Our Image	7:1	Donna Kaye				
56	22:2	Donna Kaye Irene Warner	9:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	24:2	Chris Bearchell (Tor); Elizabeth Bolton (Mtl)
Our Image	8:2	Heather Ramsay Mariana Valverde				
57	8:12	Debbie Bodinger Donna Kaye *The Women's Issue Committee:* Chris Bearchell; Josephine; Dorothy Kidd; Linda Lounsberry; Marilyn; PegMcCuaig; Konnie Reich;	7:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	21:2	Chris Bearchell (Tor); Elizabeth Bolton (Mtl)

		Mariana Valverder; Susan Watson; Francie Wayland				
Our Image	3:3	Ilona Laney Heather Ramsay Mariana Valverde				
58	13:3	Chris Bearchell Jane Rule Rose Stanton	8:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	20:2	Chris Bearchell (Tor); Elizabeth Bolton (Mtl)
Our Image	5:0					
1979/80: 59	12:1	Mariana Valverde	8:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	22:2	Chris Bearchell (Tor); Elizabeth Bolton (Mtl)
Our Image	5:2	Suniti Mamjoshi Kathy Orlin				
1980: 60	12:3	Chris Bearchell Jane Rule Mariana Valverde	8:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	24:2	Chris Bearchell (Tor); Elizabeth Bolton (Mtl)
Our Image	6:4	Rosemary Barnes Clara Valverde Mariana Valverde Lorna Weir				
61	12:1	Peg McCuaig	7:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	23:2	Chris Bearchell (Tor); Elizabeth Bolton (Mtl)
Our Image	9:2	Mariana Valverde Lorna Weir				
62	12:1	Jane Rule	7:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	21:2	Chris Bearchell (Tor); Elizabeth Bolton (Mtl)
Our Image	8:3	Blanche Wiesen Cook Mariana Valverde Lorna Weir				
63	15:1	Chris Bearchell	7:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	24:1	Chris Bearchell (Tor)
Our Image	13:1	Jane Rule				
64	14:1	Chris Bearchell	7:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	21:1	Chris Bearchell (Tor)
Our Image	6:3	Chris Bearchell Jean Kowalewski Mariana Valverde				
65	10:1	Lorna Weir	7:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	19:2[766]	Chris Bearchell; Fay Orr (Tor)
Our Image	6:2	Lynn Murphy Heather Ramsay				
66	9:3	Chris Bearchell (x2) Jane Rule Mariana Valverde	7:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	21:2	Chris Bearchell; Fay Orr (Tor)
Our Image	2:3	Maureen Fitzgerald Jean Kowalewski Mary Meigs				

[766] The Education Collective, Gay Community Centre (Saskatoon) no longer contributes as a News Correspondent.

67	11:1	Chris Bearchell	6:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	21:2	Chris Bearchell; Fay Orr (Tor)
Our Image	7:2	Gay Bell Fay Orr				
68	9:1[767]	Jane Rule	6:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	19:2	Chris Bearchell; Fay Orr (Tor)
Our Image	6:1	Jody Berland				
1980/81: 69	16:2	Martha Fleming Mariana Valverde	12:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	20:2	Chris Bearchell; Fay Orr (Tor)
Our Image	3:4	Martha Fleming Lynn Murphy Jane Rule Mariana Valverde				
1981: 70	14:3	Martha Fleming Jane Rule Lorna Weir	12:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	20:2	Chris Bearchell; Fay Orr (Tor)
Our Image	6:3	Bronwen McGarva Lorna Weir Mariana Valverde				
71	17:4	Martha Fleming Chris Bearchell Christine Donald Fay Orr	12:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	19:2	Chris Bearchell; Fay Orr (Tor)
Our Image	11:2	Jean Kowaleski Bronwen McGarva				
72	28:4	Martha Fleming (x2) Chris Bearchell Gay Bell Jane Rule	11:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	19:4	Chris Bearchell; Elinor Mahoney; Fay Orr; Brenda Steiger (Tor)
Our Image	5:1	Martha Fleming				
73	25:5	Martha Fleming (x2) Chris Bearchell Mary Meigs Gay Bell Heidi Laudon	11:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	19:3	Chris Bearchell; Elinor Mahoney; Brenda Steiger (Tor)
Our Image	5:1	Elizabeth Bolton				
74	22:1	Martha Fleming	10:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	19:3	Chris Bearchell; Elinor Mahoney; Brenda Steiger (Tor)
Our Image	3:4	Marcia Cannon Sue Golding Elinor Mahoney Jane Rule				
75	21:2	Chris Bearchell Fay Orr	10:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	18:3	Chris Bearchell; Elinor Mahoney; Brenda Steiger (Tor)
Our Image	5:2	Lynn Murphy Heather Ramsay				

[767] Also: The Committee of Lesbian and Gay Male Sociologists

76	19:2	Chris Bearchell Jane Rule	10:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	15:3	Chris Bearchell; Elinor Mahoney; Brenda Steiger (Tor)
Reviews	6:2	Sue Golding Jean Kowalewski				
77	18:1	Chris Bearchell	10:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	15:2	Chris Bearchell; Elinor Mahoney (Tor)
Reviews	5:3	Gay Bell Sue Golding Heather Ramsay				
78	18:3	Chris Bearchell Maggie Midd Jane Rule	8:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	16:2	Chris Bearchell; Elinor Mahoney (Tor)
Reviews	4:4	Sue Golding Barbara Halpern Martineau Maggie Midd				
79	17:2	Chris Bearchell Maggie Midd	8:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	19:1	Chris Bearchell (Tor)
Reviews	5:1	Maggie Midd				
1982: 80	15:4	Chris Bearchell Maggie Midd Joy Parks Jane Rule	8:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	17:3	Chris Bearchell; Elinor Mahoney; Judith van Dyke (Tor)
Reviews	9:4	Joy Parks Jane Rule Judith van Dyke Sue Golding				
81	16:3	Maggie Midd Joy Parks (x2) Chris Bearchell	8:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	22:4	Chris Bearchell; Elinor Mahoney; Maggie Midd; Judith van Dyke (Tor)
Reviews	8:4	Gay Bell Heidi Laudon Elinor Mahoney Joy Parks				
82	19:3	Edna Kaplan Joy Parks Jane Rule	8:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	24:4	Chris Bearchell; Barbara Harding; Elinor Mahoney; Elizabeth Raymer (Tor)
Reviews	8:2	Catherine Bennet Joy Parks				
83	17:2	Edna Barker Joy Parks (x2)	8:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	22:2	Chris Bearchell; Barbara Harding (Tor)
Reviews	7:1	Sue Golding				
84		"Angus MacKenzie"[768]				

[768] The April 1982 (Issue 82) publishes, "Lust with a very proper stranger", discussing "the etiquette of proper fist-fucking." The feature article was written by Angus MacKenzie, "the pseudonym of a Toronto writer who, for

Reviews	6:2	Christine Donald Maureen McReavy				
85	17:2	Edna Barker Joy Parks (x2)	8:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	23:4	Chris Bearchell; Marcia Gillespie; Barbara Harding; Elinor Mahoney (Tor)
Reviews	7:1	Aimée Leduc				
86	19:3	Edna Barker Barbara Halpern Joy Parks	8:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	26:4	Chris Bearchell; Edna Barker; Debbie Bloomfield; Marcia Gillespie (Tor)
Reviews	10:4	Chris[tine] Bearchell Christine Donald Mary Meigs Gayle Rubin				
87			8:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	25:3	Chris Bearchell; Edna Barker Debbie Bloomfield (Tor)
Reviews	9:3	Barbara Halpern Martineau Joy Parks Jane Rule				
88	19:3	Edna Barker Carol Auld Joy Parks	8:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	25:3	Chris Bearchell; Edna Barker; Debbie Bloomfield (Tor)
Reviews	5:3	Heidi Laudon Fay Orr Joy Parks				
89	19:3	Edna Barker Carol Auld Joy Parks	8:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	25:5	Chris Bearchell; Edna Barker; Debbie Bloomfield Marcia Gillespie (Tor) Fay Orr (Calgary)
Reviews	11:2	Margaret Cannon Jane Rule				
1983: 90	16:3	Edna Barker (x2) Carol Auld Joy Parks	8:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	33:5	Chris Bearchell; Edna Barker; Marcia Gillespie (Tor) Jackie Goodwin (Van) Fay Orr (Cal)
Reviews	5:4	Edna Barker Jackie Goodwin Sara Londerville Kathryn Sword				
91	19:4	Carol Auld Edna Barker	8:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	31:5	Chris Bearchell; Edna Barker;

professional reasons, chose to author this article anonymously." This article led to another police raid of TBP. The publication of Issue 84 was delayed two days, as all nine members of the Collective were charged on May 12, 1982. In place of the table of contents, it reads: "We are all Angus MacKenzie."

		Joy Parks Jane Rule				Marcia Gillespie (Tor) Jackie Goodwin (Van) Fay Orr (Cal)
Reviews	7:3	Edna Barker Sue Golding Joy Parks				
92	19:3	Carol Auld Edna Barker Joy Parks	7:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	33:3	Chris Bearchell; Edna Barker (Tor) Jackie Goodwin (Van)
	8:2	Mary Meigs Joy Parks				
93	19:3	Carol Auld Edna Barker Joy Parks	7:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	31:4	Chris Bearchell; Edna Barker (Tor) Jackie Goodwin (Van) Fay Orr (Cal)
Reviews	8:3	Chris Bearchell Christine Donald Sue Golding				
94	20:4	Carol Auld Midi Onodera Edna Barker Joy Parks	7:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	36:4	Chris Bearchell (Tor) Gillian Rogerson (x2) (TO; International) Jackie Goodwin (Van) Fay Orr (Cal)
	8:4	Edna “Bottoms” Barker Christine Donald Susan Huxford Midi Onodera				
95	18:5	Carol Auld Edna Barker Midi Onodera Anita Smith Joy Parks	7:1	Chris[tine] Bearchell	37:6	Chris Bearchell; Edna Barker; Vicky Burrus (Tor) Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (TO; Intl.) Jackie Goodwin (Van) Fay Orr (Cal)
Reviews	7:3	Chris Bearchell Edna Barker Jane Rule				
96	16:5	Wendy Adams Sue Golding Midi Onodera Joy Parks Jane Rule	20:4	Edna Barker Chris[tine] Bearchell Sue Golding Gillian Rodgerson	32:7	Chris Bearchell; Edna Barker; Vicky Burrus (Tor) Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Jackie Goodwin (Van) Gale Comin (Cal) Fay Orr (Cal)
Reviews	6:3	Michele Belling Gillian Rodgerson Jane Rule				
97	15:5	Wendy Adams	20:4	Edna Barker	33:7	Chris Bearchell;

		Sue Golding Midi Onodera Edna Barker Joy Parks		Chris[tine] Bearchell Sue Golding Gillian Rodgerson		Edna Barker; Vicky Burrus (Tor) Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Jackie Goodwin (Van) Gale Comin (Cal) Fay Orr (Cal)
Reviews	5:1	Edna Barker				
98	20:4	Sue Golding Midi Onodera Joy Parks Jane Rule	17:4	Edna Barker Chris[tine] Bearchell Sue Golding Gillian Rodgerson	26:7	Chris Bearchell; Edna Barker (Tor) Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Jackie Goodwin (Van) Gale Comin (Cal) Fay Orr (Cal)
Reviews	6:2	Michele Belling Sue Golding				
99	23:4	Sue Golding Midi Onodera Joy Parks Jane Rule	17:4	Edna Barker Chris[tine] Bearchell Sue Golding Gillian Rodgerson	26:6	Chris Bearchell; Edna Barker (Tor) Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Jackie Goodwin (Van) Gale Comin (Cal) Fay Orr (Cal)
Reviews	7:4	Michele Belling Joy Parks Jane Rule Helen Sonthoff				
1984: 100	20:2	Joy Parks Jane Rule	14:4	Edna Barker Chris[tine] Bearchell Sue Golding Gillian Rodgerson	24:6	Chris Bearchell; Edna Barker (Tor) Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Jackie Goodwin (Van) Gale Comin (Cal) Fay Orr (Cal)
Reviews	8:0					
101	13:2	Joy Parks Jane Rule	9:2	Chris[tine] Bearchell Sue Golding	24:6	Chris Bearchell (Tor) Edna Barker (x2) Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Jackie Goodwin (Van) Gale Comin (Cal) Fay Orr (Cal)
Reviews	3:2	Michele Belling Catherine Bennett				
102	17:1	Joy Parks	11:4	Edna Barker; Chris[tine] Bearchell Sue Golding Gillian Rodgerson	26:8	Chris Bearchell; Sonja Mills; Konnie Reich (Tor) Edna Barker (x2)

						Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Jackie Goodwin (Van) Gale Comin (Cal) Fay Orr (Cal)
Reviews	10:1	Jane Rule				
103	18:2	Sonja Mills Joy Parks	11:4	Edna Barker Chris[tine] Bearchell Sue Golding Gillian Rodgerson	27:8	Chris Bearchell; Jane Smith; Lee Waldorf (Tor) Edna Barker (x2) Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Jackie Goodwin (Van) Gale Comin (Cal) Fay Orr (Cal)
This Issue[769]	6:2	Chris Bearchell Gillian Rodgerson				
104	15:4	Sonja Mills Ann Stokes Joy Parks Chris Bearchell	10:3	Edna Barker Chris[tine] Bearchell Gillian Rodgerson	26: 10	Chris Bearchell; Jane Smith; Lee Waldorf (Tor) Edna Barker (x2) Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Jackie Goodwin (Van) Gale Comin (Cal) Fay Orr (Cal) Sheila Gostick; Colleen Darraugh (Intl.)
This Issue	6:2	Helen Sonthoff Elinor Mahoney				
105	17:4	Sonja Mills Anne Stokes Joy Parks Chris Bearchell	13:5	Edna Barker Chris[tine] Bearchell Barbara Klemme Sonja Mills Gillian Rodgerson	26:8	Chris Bearchell; Jane Smith; Lee Waldorf (Tor) Edna Barker (x2) Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Jackie Goodwin (Van) Gale Comin (Cal) Fay Orr (Cal)
This Issue	3:5	Cindy Patton Chris Bearchell Sonja Mills Jane Smith Edna Barker				
106	14:4	Sonja Mills	13:5	Edna Barker	27:8	Chris Bearchell;

[769] TBP continues to publish reviews, but no longer provides a distinct list of contributors for the section. A new layout places series of headlines under the caption 'This Issue', within the first few pages of the magazine. The feature headlines, including reviews, interviews, major news stories, and other pieces, are written by a set of authors distinct from those listed in the table of contents. They continue listed separately here, as they are in TBP.

		Chris Bearchell Joy Parks Jane Rule		Chris[tine] Bearchell Barbara Klemme Sonja Mills Gillian Rodgerson		Jane Smith; Lee Waldorf (Tor) Edna Barker (x2) Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Jackie Goodwin (Van) Gale Comin (Cal) Fay Orr (Cal)
This Issue	11	Sonja Mills Chris Bearchell Lee Waldorf Jane Rule				
107	17:5	Sonja Mills (x2) Adrienne Matte Chris Bearchell Joy Parks Jane Rule	12:5	Edna Barker Chris[tine] Bearchell Barbara Klemme Sonja Mills Gillian Rodgerson	15:6	Chris Bearchell; Jane Smith; Lee Waldorf (Tor) Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Gale Comin (Cal) Fay Orr (Cal)
This Issue		Gillian Rodgerson Chris Bearchell Sharon Page Lee Waldorf				
108	17:8	Sonja Mills (x2) Adrienne Matte Jane Smith Lee Waldorf Anne Stokes Chris Bearchell Joy Parks Jane Rule	13:5	Edna Barker Chris[tine] Bearchell Barbara Klemme Sonja Mills Gillian Rodgerson	15:6	Chris Bearchell; Jane Smith; Lee Waldorf (Tor) Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Gale Comin (Cal) Fay Orr (Cal)
This Issue	3:3	Edna Barker Jane Rule Chris Bearchell				
109	18:7	Sonja Mills (x2) Adrienne Matte Jane Smith Laura Spicer Michele Belling Lee Waldorf Joy Parks	10:4	Chris[tine] Bearchell Barbara Klemme Sonja Mills Gillian Rodgerson	20:6	Chris Bearchell; Jane Smith; Lee Waldorf (Tor) Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Gale Comin (Cal) Fay Orr (Cal)
This Issue	4:2	Gillian Hanscombe Michele Belling				
1985: 110	15:7	Sonja Mills (x2) Adrienne Matte Jane Smith Laura Spicer Lee Waldorf Jane Rule Joy Parks	12:5	Chris[tine] Bearchell Barbara Klemme Sonja Mills Gillian Rodgerson Lee Waldorf	20:6	Chris Bearchell; Jane Smith; Lee Waldorf (Tor) Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Gale Comin (Cal) Fay Orr (Edm)

This Issue	2:4	Chris Bearchell Jane Rule Sonja Mills Mary Meigs				
111	17:7	Sonja Mills (x2) Irit Shimrat Adrienne Matte Jane Smith Laura Spicer Lee Waldorf Joy Parks	12:5	Chris[tine] Bearchell Barbara Klemme Sonja Mills Gillian Rodgerson Lee Waldorf	20:6	Jane Smith; Lee Waldorf (Tor) Chris Bearchell (x2); Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Gale Comin (Cal) Fay Orr (Edm)
This Issue	4:2	Sue Harris Elsa Gidlow				
112	17:9	Chris Bearchell Sonja Mills (x2) Irit Shimrat Adrienne Matte Jane Smith Laura Spicer Sheryl Wright Joy Parks Jane Rule	12:5	Chris[tine] Bearchell Barbara Klemme Sonja Mills Gillian Rodgerson Lee Waldorf	21:6	Chris Bearchell; Lee Waldorf (Tor) Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Gale Comin (Cal) Elizabeth Donovan (Halifax) Fay Orr (Edm)
This Issue	7:3	Lee Waldorf Carole Vance Sue Golding				
113	14:9	Chris Bearchell Sonja Mills (x2) Irit Shimrat Adrienne Matte Jane Smith Laura Spicer Sheryl Wright Michele Belling Joy Parks	12:4	Chris[tine] Bearchell Sonja Mills Gillian Rodgerson Lee Waldorf	24:6	Lee Waldorf; Pat Spencer Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Gale Comin (Cal) Elizabeth Donovan (Hal) Fay Orr (Edm)
This Issue	4:7	Jackie Goodwin Pat Spencer Lee Waldorf Gillian Rodgerson Susan Cole Lynn King Michele Belling				
114	17:9	Chris Bearchell Sonja Mills (x2) Irit Shimrat Adrienne Matte Jane Smith Laura Spicer Sheryl Wright Joy Parks Jane Rule	11:4	Chris[tine] Bearchell Sonja Mills Gillian Rodgerson Lee Waldorf	25:6	Pat Spencer; Lee Waldorf (Tor) Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Gale Comin (Cal) Elizabeth Donovan (Hal) Fay Orr (Edm)

This Issue	3:2	Lisa Kanemoto Lee Waldorf				
115	22:8	Chris Bearchell Sonja Mills (x2) Joy Parks Jane Rule Irit Shimrat Patty Letourneau Adrienne Matte Sheryl Wright	10:4	Chris[tine] Bearchell Sonja Mills Gillian Rodgerson Lee Waldorf	25:6	Pat Spencer; Lee Waldorf (Tor) Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Gale Comin (Cal) Elizabeth Donovan (Hal) Fay Orr (Edm)
This Issue	6:3	Catherine Bennett Mary Meigs Jane Rule				
116	22:8	Chris Bearchell Sonja Mills (x2) Joy Parks Gillian Rodgerson Jane Rule Irit Shimrat Patty Letourneau Shery Wright	10:4	Chris[tine] Bearchell Sonja Mills Gillian Rodgerson Lee Waldorf	25:5	Pat Spencer (Tor) Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Gale Comin (Cal) Elizabeth Donovan (Hal) Fay Orr (Edm)
This Issue	6:2	Jane Rule Gillian Rodgerson				
117	21:7	Chris Bearchell Sonja Mills (x2) Joy Parks Gillian Rodgerson Jane Rule Irit Shimrat	10:4	Chris[tine] Bearchell Sonja Mills Gillian Rodgerson Lee Waldorf	23:4	Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Gale Comin (Cal) Elizabeth Donovan (Hal) Fay Orr (Edm)
This Issue	8:2	Joan Nestle Sandra E. Lundy				
118	22:6	Gillian Rodgerson (x2) Chris Bearchell Joy Parks Irit Shimrat Lysena Bertoli Lee Waldorf	12:5	Chris[tine] Bearchell Robyn Budd Sonja Mills Gillian Rodgerson Lee Waldorf	22:2	Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Elizabeth Donovan (Hal)
This Issue	3:6	Kam Trish Sharon Jane Rule Terri Jewell Laura Coramai				
119	23:6	Gillian Rodgerson (x2) Chris Bearchell Joy Parks Irit Shimrat Lysena Bertoli	12:5	Chris[tine] Bearchell Robyn Budd Sonja Mills Gillian Rodgerson Lee Waldorf	23:2	Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Elizabeth Donovan (Hal)

		Lee Waldorf				
This Issue	5:1	Lee Waldorf				
120	23:6	Gillian Rodgerson (x2) Chris Bearchell Joy Parks Irit Shimrat Lysena Bertoli Lee Waldorf	12:4	Chris[tine] Bearchell Robyn Budd Gillian Rodgerson Lee Waldorf	23:2	Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Elizabeth Donovan (Hal)
This Issue	7:0					
121	22:6	Gillian Rodgerson (x2) Chris Bearchell Joy Parks Irit Shimrat Lysena Bertoli Lee Waldorf	12:4	Chris[tine] Bearchell Robyn Budd Gillian Rodgerson Lee Waldorf	23:2	Gillian Rodgerson (x2) (Tor; Intl.) Elizabeth Donovan (Hal)
This Issue	7:0					
1986: 122	23:7	Gillian Rodgerson (x2) Chris Bearchell Danielle Comeau Joy Parks Irit Shimrat Lysena Bertoli Lee Waldorf	12:4	Chris[tine] Bearchell Robyn Budd Gillian Rodgerson Lee Waldorf	24:1	Gillian Rodgerson (Intl.)
This Issue	5:1	Gay Bell				
123	26:6	Gillian Rodgerson (x2) Chris Bearchell Danielle Comeau Joy Parks Irit Shimrat Lee Waldorf	11:4	Chris[tine] Bearchell Robyn Budd Gillian Rodgerson Lee Waldorf	24:4	Nancy Irwin; Lee Waldorf (Tor) Elizabeth Donovan (Hal) Anna Marie Smith (Intl.)
This Issue	4	Chris Bearchell Ruthann Tucker Anna Marie Smith				
124	25:7	Gillian Rodgerson (x2) Chris Bearchell Danielle Comeau Joy Parks Irit Shimrat Lysena Bertoli Lee Waldorf	10:4	Chris[tine] Bearchell Robyn Budd Gillian Rodgerson Lee Waldorf	22:5	Nancy Irwin; Lee Waldorf (Tor) Elizabeth Donovan (Hal) Gillian Rodgerson; Anna Marie Smith (Intl.)
This Issue	5:3	Midi Onodera Lee Waldorf Cyndra McDowell				
125	26:7	Gillian Rodgerson (x2)	10:4	Chris[tine] Bearchell Robyn Budd	23:4	Nancy Irwin; Lee Waldorf (Tor)

		Chris Bearchell Danielle Comeau Joy Parks Irit Shimrat Lysena Bertoli Lee Waldorf		Gillian Rodgerson Lee Waldorf		Elizabeth Donovan (Hal) Gillian Rodgerson (Intl.)
This Issue	5:1	Kam Rao				
126	28:5	Gillian Rodgerson (x2) Chris Bearchell Danielle Comeau Joy Parks Irit Shimrat	10:4	Chris[tine] Bearchell Robyn Budd Gillian Rodgerson Lee Waldorf	24:4	Nancy Irwin; Lee Waldorf (Tor) Elizabeth Donovan (Hal) Gillian Rodgerson (Intl.)
This Issue	7:0					
127	24:5	Gillian Rodgerson (x2) Chris[tine] Bearchell Joy Parks Irit Shimrat Anna Marie Smith	10:4	Chris[tine] Bearchell Robyn Budd Gillian Rodgerson Lee Waldorf	24:4	Nancy Irwin; Lee Waldorf (Tor) Elizabeth Donovan (Hal) Gillian Rodgerson (Intl.)
This Issue	7:1	Lee Waldorf				
128	23:6	Gillian Rodgerson (x3) Chris[tine] Bearchell Corrie Campbell Joy Parks Irit Shimrat Anna Marie Smith	9:4	Chris[tine] Bearchell Robyn Lake Gillian Rodgerson Lee Waldorf	21:3	Nancy Irwin (Tor) Elizabeth Bosma (Hal) Gillian Rodgerson (Intl.)
This Issue	4:3	Anna Marie Smith (x2) Robyn Lake Gillian Rodgerson				
129	22:6	Gillian Rodgerson (x2) Chris[tine] Bearchell Corrie Campbell Joy Parks Irit Shimrat Anna Marie Smith	9:3	Chris[tine] Bearchell Robyn Lake Gillian Rodgerson	21:3	Nancy Irwin (Tor) Elizabeth Bosma (Hal) Gillian Rodgerson (Intl.)
This Issue	4:2	Anna Marie Smith Nancy Tatham				
130	15:6	Gillian Rodgerson (x3) Chris[tine] Bearchell Corrie Campbell Joy Parks Irit Shimrat Anna Marie Smith	19:2	Chris[tine] Bearchell Robyn Lake	21:4	Nancy Irwin; Lynne MacFie (Tor) Elizabeth Bosma (Hal) Chris Bearchell (Intl.)
This Issue	2:4	Lois Corbett Chris Bearchell				

		Libby Oughton Corrie Campbell				
131	17:5	Chris Bearchell Corrie Campbell Joy Parks Irit Shimrat Anna Marie Smith	8:1	Chris Bearchell	22:4	Nancy Irwin; Lynne MacFie (Tor) Elizabeth Bosma (Hal) Chris Bearchell (Intl.)
This Issue	7:1	Michelle Belling				
132	17:5	Chris Bearchell Corrie Campbell Joy Parks Irit Shimrat Anna Marie Smith	9:1	Chris Bearchell	25:4	Lynne MacFie (Tor) Elizabeth Bosma (Hal) Chris Bearchell (Intl.) Diana van Oort (Amsterdam)
This Issue	7:2	Rachel Mailloux Robyn Lake				
133	16:5	Chris Bearchell Corrie Campbell Joy Parks Irit Shimrat Anna Marie Smith	10:1	Chris Bearchell	26:4	Lynne MacFie (Tor) Elizabeth Bosma (Hal) Chris Bearchell (Intl.) Diana van Oort (Ams)
This Issue	7:2	Chris Bearchell Jane Rule				
1987: 134	12:4	Chris Bearchell Corrie Campbell Joy Parks Irit Shimrat	10:1	Chris Bearchell	23:4	Lynne MacFie (Tor) Elizabeth Bosma (Hal) Chris Bearchell (Intl.) Diana van Oort (Ams)
This Issue	5:0					
135	12:4	Chris Bearchell Corrie Campbell Joy Parks Irit Shimrat	11:1	Chris Bearchell	23:4	Lynne MacFie (Tor) Elizabeth Bosma (Hal) Chris Bearchell (Intl.) Diana van Oort (Ams)
This Issue	8:2	Michele Belling Terry Miller				