“Strategies of Resistance and Subversion”: The Politics and Writing of Jane Rule, 1960s-1980s

by

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B.A., Dalhousie University and University of King’s College, 2020

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We acknowledge with respect the lək̓wəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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ABSTRACT

Jane Rule was a lesbian novelist and political commentator, whose debut novel *Desert of the Heart* represented one of the earliest lesbian romances in North America. The process of publishing both *Desert of the Heart* and her first work of long-form non-fiction *Lesbian Images* reveals that Rule saw herself as a Canadian lesbian public figure with a responsibility to her community. Her work for the gay liberationist publication *The Body Politic* also showed her commitment to gay liberation movements. Despite this literary and political presence, Rule's life and work have been relatively absent from scholarship on the history of Canadian lesbian and gay communities. This thesis examines Rule's life and writing as the subject of historical, rather than literary inquiry, in order to locate Rule's politics within their historical context. Using both archival and oral history sources, this thesis offers a close reading of how Rule's work engaged with both lesbian feminism and gay liberation, revealing the heterogenous nature of her political perspectives. I argue that Rule's life and politics offer historians a window into the nuances and complexities of lesbian feminism and gay liberation, as well as insight into her relationship to these movements.

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DEDICATION

this thesis is dedicated to Jane and Helen, with gratitude

Introduction

"Resisting both State and Subculture"

> Art, even our own, does not transform our lives. It does not cure Adrienne Rich's arthritis or Kate Millett's broken heart or Audre Lorde's cancer. But it does transcend the defining prisons of our suffering. We are silly; we die, and the song survives us.[1]
>
> ~Jane Rule

I. Jane

Jane Rule, born March 28, 1931 in Plainfield, New Jersey, was a lesbian novelist, essayist, political commentator, and one of the earliest women in North America to identify publicly as a lesbian. She moved to Vancouver, British Columbia in 1956, where she worked as an English professor at the University of British Columbia for around 20 years. In 1964, she published *Desert of the Heart*, her debut novel, and an instant cult classic. She later relocated to Galiano Island with her partner Helen Sonthoff. On Galiano, Rule became known as the island matriarch, a generous source of loans, and the person responsible for teaching local children to swim. She occupied her later years as an elder on the island.[2] While literary scholars like Marilyn R. Schuster, Christina Strobel, and Linda Morra have examined Rule's life and circumstances, they broadly approach her story from a literary criticism perspective, not an historical one. Historians whose scholarship focuses on lesbian and gay communities in Canada rarely mention Rule beyond listing her among other influential community members. Given that Rule wrote about lesbian romance and community, and penned essays on gay and lesbian politics before the height of social movements made such works popular, this relative silence in the historical scholarship comes as a surprise. This thesis aims, therefore, to treat Rule as the subject of

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[1] Jane Rule, "Mozart's Laugh," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 4, no. 4 (2000): 131.

[2] Nathaniel Christopher, "Galiano Island Remembers Jane Rule: Friends and Neighbours Reflect," *Xtra Magazine* 373 (2007): 1-3, https://xtramagazine.com/power/galiano-island-remembers-jane-rule-38818.

historical rather than literary inquiry to better situate Rule and her politics in their historical context. To do so effectively, in this introductory chapter, I first discuss my methodology, as well as offer a self-location. I then provide a review of major texts in the field of lesbian and gay history in Canada and the United States since the 1970s. I finally offer an overview of the central argument and the body chapters of this thesis.

II. Methodology and Language

Histories of sexuality have always had an intimate relationship with oral history, one necessitated by the lack of available archival and document-based sources, but also one born out of a political framework which prioritized alternative epistemologies. Historian Nan Alamilla Boyd explains that

> unlike researchers who choose to work with special collections of well-preserved documents, those who study women, queers and—we might add—other subaltern groups such as communities of color and migrant workers by and large have had to start from scratch: where no documents or acid-free folders existed, researchers set out to create them.[3]

Boyd argues that the lack of available archival material made it impossible to create the kind of history produced by contemporary scholars in other subdisciplines. Canadian lesbian historian El Chenier added in 2009 that "in Canada, no single institution or archive actively supports and promotes the production and preservation of oral histories of lesbians, gays, or members of any other sexual minority group."[4] Broadly, however, lesbian and gay archives in Canada do exist, and have since the 1970s (albeit, as Chenier points out, not dedicated to oral histories specifically). The Canadian gay liberationist publication *The Body Politic* created ArQuives in 1973 to house their materials, and they exist to this day. A much later creation, the University of

[3] Nan Alamilla Boyd and Horacio N. Roque Ramírez, *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5.

[4] El Chenier, "Hidden from Historians: Preserving Lesbian Oral History in Canada," *Archivaria* 68 (2009): 247.

Victoria houses the Transgender Archives, which officially opened in 2011. Chenier themself created the Archive of Lesbian Oral Testimony in 2010 to digitize Canadian oral histories collected by scholars in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The combination of archived oral history sources and the expansion of archives of documents enables a wider variety of methodological approaches to lesbian and gay histories. Additionally, as we progress further away from the times when the subjects of these histories lived, sources for oral histories become scarce. As such, archives of documents become increasingly important to writing lesbian and gay histories.

This thesis draws on the Jane Rule fonds, located at the University of British Columbia (UBC) Archives. Rule chose to donate her writings, correspondence, and personal files to UBC during the Canadian Supreme Court Case *Little Sisters Book and Art Emporium v Canada*. In pursuit of evidence, the state raided ArQuives, then called the Gay Liberation Movement Archives, which prompted Rule to place her own papers behind the protection of an academic institution to avoid them being targeted. Canadian literary scholar Morra argues that Rule's fonds "bear witness to her efforts to create legal and imaginative space for the queer and feminist communities, the archive itself further protects and authorizes those efforts and that space."[5] Rule's archive contains sixty-four boxes of textual records and over 9000 photographs. I chose to explore the archives of Rule's writing and correspondence during the time she was producing her first novel, and her first non-fiction book. Much of her later political writing and correspondence was published, either by Rule herself or by scholars working on her material. However, these early documents were only accessible through the archive, which guided my choice to examine them. In total, I sifted through five of the boxes, containing just under eight hundred pages of

[5] Linda M. Morra, *Unarrested Archives: Case Studies in Twentieth-Century Canadian Women's Authorship* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 108-110.

letters, articles, teaching notes, and drafts and revisions of manuscripts. These textual records form the main basis for my analysis in Chapter One.

Writing this thesis in 2021 and 2022 during the COVID-19 pandemic presented its own methodological challenges, including accessing the archives that historical actors had worked so hard to create. Initially, bans on travel off Vancouver Island, where I currently live, prevented me from accessing UBC's archives in Vancouver. Once those travel bans were lifted, the archives discovered that their retrieval system required major maintenance work, and Rule's archive remained unavailable to me. While I waited, I focused on interviewing Rule's colleagues, friends, and peers, all of whom shared important insights into her life and its context. Even as archival documents become more available, oral histories continue to offer vital insights into lesbian history.

Methodologically, oral history presents historians both with a unique source base and unique challenges. As historian Lynn Abrams points out in her book *Oral History Theory*,

> oral history involves communicating with living, breathing human being. No other history method does this. […O]ral history is a *dialogic* process; it is a conversation in real time between the interviewer and the narrator, and then between the narrator and what we might call external discourses or culture.[6]

Abrams, alongside Alessandro Portelli, Joan Sangster, Valerie Yow, and other scholars in psychology, neuroscience, anthropology, and history all explore the role of human memory in the creation of oral histories.[7] As Yow summarized succinctly, "human memory is both fallible and¾when we approach the oral history document *critically*¾trustworthy."[8] Theorists like

[6] Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2016), 19-20.

[7] Ibid., 18. A non-exhaustive list of additional work on oral history theory includes: Joan Sangster, "Oral History and Working Class History: A Rewarding Alliance," *Oral History Forum d'histoire orale* 33, (2013): 1-15.; Valerie Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2nd ed. (Walnut Creek: Alta Mira Press, 2005); Alessandro Portelli, "Oral History as a Genre" in *Narrative and Genre: Contexts and Types of Communication*, ed. Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson (New York: Routledge, 1998), 23-45.

[8] Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 36.

Abrams and Yow posit that peoples' memories represent both the partial individual record of significant occurrences during a moment in peoples' lives, and also the memories of the wider familial, communal, and public context, articulating what Abrams calls memory "as a socially shared experience."[9] By conducting interviews, historians gain both an insight into what the individual recalls as *significant* to them personally about the period being discussed, as well as a broader understanding of how the communal, and public representations of what was significant impacted the interviewees recollections. This type of source base has its drawbacks in terms of the fallibility of human memory. Proponents of oral history suggest that, rather than holding oral histories to the same standard as written sources, the interpretation of oral history requires "analytical techniques that are particularly suited to its many layers," in order to account for both the individual and the social elements of memory production and recollection.[10]

I began my own oral history interviews by connecting with Morra, whose work focuses on the role of Rule's novels within the Canadian canon, and who is currently working on a biography of Rule. She introduced me virtually to Betsy Warland, an author and friend of Rule and Sonthoff's, who lives in British Columbia. Warland and I spoke over Zoom in October 2021. With her help, I connected with four more of Rule and Sonthoff's friends, with whom I spoke virtually in October and November. I also connected through my supervisor with Mariana Valverde, a Canadian sociologist and legal scholar who had worked for the Toronto gay liberationist publication *The Body Politic*, for which Rule also wrote extensively. In my interviews, I asked about Rule's books and their relationship to lesbian communities, focusing on the impact of *Desert of the Heart*. I also asked about Rule's political views, and people's reactions to them (see Appendix B). Interviewees also shared insights into the broader histories

[9] Ibid., 38. Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 79.
[10] Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 18.

of gay and lesbian communities in Vancouver and Toronto.[11] The answers to these questions helped to shape my understanding of Rule's complex and nuanced relationship to lesbian and gay politics in Canada.

Using the information gleaned from my interviews, this thesis incorporates oral history with records of correspondence, and unpublished written material from within Rule's archive. I also draw on the online archives of the gay liberationist paper *The Body Politic*, which operated from 1971-1987 out of Toronto, providing political commentary, community news across the country, and reviews of gay and lesbian literature. *The Body Politic* provides both an archive of much of Rule's published political writing as well as a broader picture of the gay liberation movement, and its tense relationship to lesbian feminism. The archives of the radical feminist publication *Broadside*, which operated from 1979-1989, and was run primarily by lesbian feminists out of Toronto, also contributed to my understanding of the complexities and nuances of the lesbian feminist movement specifically. These sources largely form the basis for Chapter Two. Using this combination of sources seeks to honour both the vital contribution of oral histories to the histories of sexuality, and the project of preservation inherent in the creation of lesbian and gay history archives.

Like other sexual subaltern groups, researching lesbian history poses specific methodological challenges. A longstanding debate among scholars writing about lesbian history deals with the question of defining lesbianism, particularly when examining time periods when women in relationships with other women likely would not have identified with the term. Valerie Traub's chapter "The Present Future of Lesbian Historiography" argues that

[11] Appendices A-C include a list of interviewees, a copy of the consent form, and the interview questions.

> thanks to social and cultural history […] we now possess a densely textured picture of what it might have meant for women to love, desire, and have sex with each other at various times in specific locales.[12]

She argues that this fairly new but densely textured picture means that the debate about how to define lesbianism historically has become less relevant to current scholarship. Given the longstanding nature of the debate, however, offering a definition of lesbian history to inform this thesis continues to hold merit.

I employ Boyd's definition of lesbian history as a theoretical basis in this thesis for discussing lesbianism during a time when not all players involved might identify themselves as such:

> lesbian history is actually the history of an idea rather than a group of people. Lesbian history includes all those involved in the discursive production of the category; that is, it includes all of the actors and institutions that participate in the production of meanings that contribute to the articulation and rearticulations of the concept lesbian, as it changes over time and moves across space.[13]

Boyd's definition allows for the history of identity *production* rather than simply the history of *community formation* based on a previously produced identity. She continues by pointing out that

> [lesbians] have a history and a political utility that has something to do with the deployment of the idea of identity, but the history of the identity is often subsumed by the history of the community.[14]

This thesis centers on someone who did use lesbian as a descriptor, but who also came of age during a time when pathology and scrutiny of lesbian identity was intensifying in North America¾the late 1940s and early 1950s.[15] The choice to identify with the word lesbian as an

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[12] Valerie Traub, "The Present Future of Lesbian Historiography," in *A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Studies*, ed. George Haggerty and Molly McGarry (Blackwell: Oxford, 2007): 126.
[13] Nan Alamilla Boyd, "The History of the Idea of the Lesbian as a Kind of Person," *Feminist Studies* 39, no. 2 (2013): 362.
[14] Ibid., 364.
[15] Miriam G. Reumann, *American Sexual Character: Sex, Gender, and National Identity in the Kinsey Reports* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 18.

indicator of political allegiance occurred two decades later. Using a framework like Boyd's, which does not constrain our historical research to include only those comfortable with the moniker of lesbian, enables a greater understanding of how that identity became central to the emergence of a political movement in the 1970s. This thesis argues that an historical analysis of Rule's life and work reveals her as connected to that identity production.

The second theme specific to the practice of lesbian history relates to the first. Visibility, for lesbian figures of the 1970s, represented a political stance for which they fought. Although this project of visibility began with the 1950s bar culture, the 1970s saw the rise of a political community who specifically organized around the term lesbian.[16] Sociologist Jeffrey Weeks explains that

> the frequently privatized nature of lesbian bonds, [and] the slower [than gay male] development of a bar scene […] were crucial factors in the separate, slower, but distinctive lesbian identity.[17]

When he speaks to the "privatized nature" of lesbian life, he alludes to the fact that, in North America, lesbians were less likely to receive attention from the state. Two women living or working in proximity held less suspicion than when two men exhibited the same behaviour. This experience, however, hindered the ability of lesbians to find one another, form community, and create meaningful political change together.

Lesbians as early as the 1940s chose to make themselves visible to one another through the adoption of subcultural identities such as butch/femme. Butches, by dressing in clothes associated with working-class men, also made themselves visible to the outside world. Elizabeth

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[16]The community broadly known as lesbian feminists stood in contrast to earlier groups of lesbians who organized both socially and politically under terms like butch/femme and gay, rather than lesbian. "Bar culture" refers broadly to the social conventions and subcultures of butch/femme identity associated with gay and lesbian bars in the 1950s.

[17] Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality and Its Discontents: Meanings, Myths, and Modern Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 192.

Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeleine D. Davis argue in their pioneering history of lesbian bar culture that "tough bar lesbians" (their term for butches and femmes) "expanded their public presence and became more explicitly defiant. They expressed increased pride through their willingness to welcome newcomers and their desire to end the double life."[18] Chenier defined bar culture in their 1995 thesis as

> a subculture whose tremendous significance lies in the fact that it openly and forcefully challenged expectations of women's socio-sexual behaviour in the face of acute discrimination, violent opposition and personal sacrifice."[19]

Kennedy and Davis argue that this dangerous project of forceful and public visibility undertaken by lesbians involved in the 1950s bar scene was foundational to later gay and lesbian political movements.

Class, race, and gender identity all played roles in how lesbians chose to make themselves visible, but visibility itself became crucial to lesbian political life. Rule lived publicly as a lesbian very early on, and wrote novels which featured unapologetically lesbian characters. She was, crucially, a part of the project to make lesbians visible. Understanding the politics of this visibility proves vital to understanding lesbian history in the latter half of the twentieth century, and this thesis explores both Rule's participation in that project of visibility, and the impact Rule's early work had.

To conclude this discussion of the subject of methodology and language, I provide a self-location. I am a white, cisgender, heterosexual woman from a middle-class background. When writing about lesbian history while not myself a lesbian, I recognize that the value of lived experience cannot be replicated through academic study. I therefore chose deliberately not to

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[18] Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeleine D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 68.

[19] El Chenier, "Tough Ladies and Troublemakers: Toronto's Public Lesbian Community, 1955-1965," (MA thesis, Queen's University, 1995), 3.

engage in debates internal to lesbian communities and their history, nor do I seek to make lesbian life into a spectacle through my choice of topic.[20] In part, I chose to explore Rule's life in order to explore a history which has similarities to my own. Rule was also white, middle-class, and a woman, and those experiences also shaped her life. My exploration of Rule as an entry point into an understudied and under-represented history represents only one intervention into the history of lesbianism, where there remains infinite space for further work. My hope is that by providing this self-location, I enable my readers to better understand biases and deficiencies in my work. III. Literature Review

Jane Rule represented a pivotal figure in Canadian gay and lesbian history, particularly in the literary world. However, she appears mostly as the subject of scholarship focused specifically on her writing, rather than within the canon of Canadian sexuality history. Since the primary aim of this thesis is to provide historical context to better understand her politics and relationship to gay and lesbian communities, I first offer an overview of the writing that does exist on Rule's life and work. I then discuss the literature in the history of sexuality in North America, and lesbianism in Canada, expanding on the limited ways that Rule appears in these works.

In 1999, literary scholar Marilyn Schuster published *Passionate Communities: Reading Lesbian Resistance in Jane Rule's Fiction*. The book opens with a description of Schuster's trip to visit Rule and Sonthoff at their home on Galiano Island. As she travels, Schuster reflects on the questions which brought her to Rule's work. "How could it be" Schuster asks,

> that a writer so vitally important to readers throughout North America has been ignored by the professional arbiters of literary reputation¾academics, literary critics, and now queer theorists.[21]

[20] Including, but not limited to, debates around the precise definitions of butch/femme, who has been historically considered a lesbian, whether lesbianism necessitates a particular politic, etc.

[21] Marilyn R. Schuster, *Passionate Communities: Reading Lesbian Resistance in Jane Rule's Fiction* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 3-4.

This represents a theme in work on Rule since Schuster's book. Scholars who encounter Rule and her work often express surprise that she does not appear in histories of gay and lesbian Canada.

Passionate Communities analyses most of Rule's novels as well as a collection of short stories. Schuster's work was the first to describe Rule as central to Canadian literary history. Schuster argues that Rule's fictional writings represent resistance to both pathological and political definitions of lesbianism, resisting "the constraints of identity whether legislated by state or subculture."[22] *Passionate Communities* acts in this thesis as a vital entry point into Rule's life and a touchstone for an analysis of the specific political space Rule occupied. Schuster's book does, however, focus on Rule's fiction, exploring politics within the literary elements of her writing (form, language, characters, plot, and world building). By contrast, this thesis uses Rule's written work as the starting point for examining the historical context which produced it.

The same year that Schuster published *Passionate Communities*, Christina Strobel published *Reconsidering Conventions: Jane Rule's Writing and Sexual Identity in North American Feminist Theory and Fiction*. Strobel's work was the product of a study undertaken during a year she lived in Vancouver. Like Schuster, Strobel met with Rule and Sonthoff to discuss Rule's work. She offers a literary analysis based in queer theory. Schuster named the lack of queer theoretical analysis of Rule's work as a gap in the scholarship but did not herself explore it to the degree that Strobel had. *Reconsidering Conventions* devotes the first part to a literary criticism of Rule's early work, before delving into an analysis of identity categories in Rule's fiction and their relationship to contemporary feminist novels.[23] Strobel's work is firmly

[22] Ibid., 57.
[23] Christina Strobel, *Reconsidering Conventions: Jane Rule's Writing and Sexual Identity in North American Feminist Theory and Fiction* (Augsburg: Wißner, 1999), 27.

situated within the field of literary criticism, providing historical context only as necessary to understanding her analysis of Rule's writing. Like Schuster, her work provides some important insights into Rule's written work, but does not contribute significantly to an historical analysis of her life.

The final scholar who produced scholarship on Rule is Morra. Morra's 2014 book *Unarrested Archives: Case Studies in Twentieth Century Canadian Women's Authorship* expands in chapter four on the preservation of Rule's archive. Morra's work seeks to establish how Rule's choice to preserve the majority of her documents bears

> witness to her vigorous attempts to achieve self-agency as an author, to protect her moral commitments to the queer and feminist communities through her professional engagements, and to expand the space for their public representation.[24]

Morra's work initially sparked my interest in considering Rule's absence from the historical record. Her work posits Rule as an active participant in "queer and feminist communities," yet Rule herself barely appears in the histories of those communities. It was through Morra's exploration of Rule's dedicated archival preservation of her work that I came to question her relative absence. Her work offers both important contextual and biographical information about Rule and her life, as well as insights into how Rule's archive provides evidence of her involvement in queer and feminist activism. This thesis aims to examine Rule's life, work, and activism in its historical context and analyze why Rule only rarely appears in the histories of the political communities to which she belonged. Morra's work provides a starting point from which to begin asking that question.

Exploring Rule's life in the context of Canadian gay and lesbian politics requires an understanding of questions that have been raised in the history of sexuality. The field rests on the

[24]Morra, *Unarrested Archives*, 111.

premise that, as Weeks explains "there is no simple relationship between 'sex' and 'society' (nor a simple 'sex' or 'society'), no easy fit between biological attributes, unconscious fantasy and desire, and social appearance and identity."[25] Historians of sexuality seek to unpack the historical relationship between sex and society from the understanding that no easy answers to these questions exist, and that scholarship on the subject should center nuance, complexity, and (vitally) change over time.

In 1976, French philosopher Michel Foucault published the first volume of *l'Histoire de la sexualité*, translated two years later into the English *History of Sexuality*. Foucault asks a series of pivotal questions:

> Why has sexuality been so widely discussed, and what has been said about it? What were the effects of power generated by what was said? What are the links between these discourses, these effects of power, and the pleasures that were invested by them? What knowledge (*savoir*) was formed as a result of this linkage? The object, in short, is to define the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains the discourse on human sexuality in our part of the world.[26]

The history of sexuality, perhaps more than older subfields of history, has its roots in a specific theoretical and philosophical school of thought, in which discursive analyses of power and knowledge make up the basis for much of the analysis. Foucault takes issue with the ahistoricity of sex in earlier historical scholarship; scholars assumed a stable relationship between sex and its repression. Weeks' argument that no stable and simple relationship between sex and society exists comes directly from Foucauldian theory. The aim of Foucault's series of books on the history of sexuality lay in developing a historicized understanding of sex, using his conceptions and analyses of the workings of power.

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[25]Weeks, *Sexuality and Its Discontents*, 4.

[26]Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, 3rd ed, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 11.

While lesbian history falls under the umbrella of the history of sexuality, certain key elements of lesbian history distinguish it from its subfield parentage. Lesbian communities contended with their own challenges related to visibility, and community building. The lesbian feminist movement also shaped lesbian history, distinguishing it from other community histories. Broadly, two types of lesbian histories exist: those written by lesbians who documented their own histories as they lived them; and those written after the fact, still often by lesbians, but taking a more academic. In the former case, the authors produced lesbian histories approach. before such a thing was academically viable. Therefore, these narratives act both as primary sources, and as historical analyses. The second type of lesbian history focuses on historical source material analyzed by someone looking back on the past.

> Joan Nestle, in the preface to *A Restricted Country*, her 1987 collection of essays, writes:
>
> > for gay people, history is a place where the body carries its own story. I would like this book to be read as a history, these stories and essays to be the documents of a flesh and a spirit that lived through and were changed by their times: the McCarthy fifties, the activist sixties, the institution -building of the seventies and the renewed social struggle of the eighties […] the personal is historical.[27]

This collection of essays is an example of the first type of lesbian history discussed above. Nestle lived through the times she describes, and she also insists on the embodied nature of lesbian history, in that she focuses on the bodily and mental experience of being formed by the histories lesbians lived through. *A Restricted Country* contains essays on selfhood, lesbian memory, weighing in on definitional debates, the change over time of what it means to "come out," the history of the relationship between lesbians and sex workers, and the experience of family life for lesbian women. Nestle chose to deliberately record her own history for fear that future lesbians might never otherwise know theirs. She further demonstrated her dedication to

[27] Joan Nestle, *A Restricted Country*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2003), xv-xvi.

preserving lesbian history with the creation of the Lesbian Herstory Archives at her apartment in New York City. The archive sought to "preserve for the future all expressions of [lesbian] identity-- written, spoken, drawn, filmed, photographed, recorded."[28] It is thanks to this first type of history and the preservation of its artifacts that scholars can write the second, academic type (of which this thesis is an example) at all.

Acting as a somewhat unique intermediary between the two types of history I have identified, Lillian Faderman's extensive scholarship became canonical in the field. In the forward to the 2020 edition of Faderman's memoir, essayist Carmen Maria Machado highlights the "singular experience" that reading Faderman for the first time as a queer woman produces:

> first, an overwhelming sense of disbelief and surprise, followed by a rush of overdue longing supplanted by a desire to consume it all, to fill in the gaps around your body and your history."[29]

Faderman came out in the 1950s, and her relationship with her partner spans over 40 years. She, like Nestle, lived through the changes about which historians now write. Faderman entered the academy in 1958. In one interview, she describes an entrance examination at UCLA during the McCarthy era, which included questions trying to determine the sexualities of prospective students; "all of us who were homosexual," Faderman explained, "knew if we were smart enough to get into UCLA, we had to say no to any question like that."[30] Faderman's scholarship includes eleven published books, but two of them became seminal texts in the field of lesbian history specifically. She published her first book, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*, in 1981. Drawing

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[28] Sahli Cavallaro et al., "Dear Sisters," *Lesbian Herstory Archives Newsletter* 1, no. 1 (1975): 1, https://lesbianherstoryarchives.org/content/uploads/2020/06/News01.pdf.

[29] Carmen Maria Machado, forward to *Naked in the Promised Land: A Memoir,* by Lillian Faderman (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), 8.

[30] Rita Mcloughlin, "Interview with Lillian Faderman: Chronicles of LGBT Struggles," *Socialist Review* 333 (2009): 1-2, http://socialistreview.org.uk/333/interview-lillian-faderman-chronicles-lgbt-struggles.

together a series of five papers on various subjects in lesbian history, *Surpassing the Love of Men* investigates the changes to lesbian identity in a longue durée format. The book's scope spans 400 years and examines the histories of women loving women not only in the United States but also across Western Europe.[31]

A decade later, Faderman published *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in 20th Century America*, which offered a more focused examination of working-class lesbian life in twentieth-century urban United States. It touches on many of the themes that Nestle also explored in *A Restricted Country*, but did so through a different, more chronological structure. Faderman specifically mentions both Nestle and the Lesbian Herstory Archives in her acknowledgements, and recognizes the legacy the two created. Unlike Nestle's work, however, Faderman extends beyond the period of her own memory in both *Surpassing the Love of Men* and *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*. In doing so, she places herself between the histories recorded as people experienced them, and those produced in an academic setting thereafter. Faderman ushered in the second era of lesbian historical scholarship in writing both books, and both provide invaluable contextual information used throughout this thesis.

Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, who themselves came of age in the same spaces as Nestle and Faderman, produced in their 1993 book *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* one of the most significant contributions to the second type of lesbian history. Their book relies on the oral testimony of working-class lesbians from Buffalo, New York, and focuses only on the past, specifically the mid-1930s to the early 1960s, without the addition of work on the present. Kennedy and Davis introduce their work, saying that

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[31] Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: Quill, 1998), 13.

> this study encompasses social life in bars and house parties and sexual and emotional intimacy and the interconnections between them. It asks such questions as: How does women's sexuality develop outside of the restraints of male power? What was the role of community socializing in the development of lesbian sexuality? How did lesbians balance an interest in sex and a desire for emotional closeness? What was the impact of community social life on the longevity of lesbian relationships?[32]

The thesis that "in the twentieth century […] being lesbian or gay became a core identity around which people came together with others like themselves and built their lives" centers the idea that something about lesbian life changed in the twentieth century, away from an individualized experience of sexuality (i.e. a woman interested in sex with other women), and toward the building of a community based in a political and social identity.[33] Kennedy and Davis, in their analysis, root this change as beginning with the bar and house party culture of the late 1940s through the 1950s. Their analysis of lesbian working-class culture informs my own analysis of the 1950s. They argue that "lesbians expanded their public presence and became more explicitly defiant" during a time "when the persecution of homosexuals and lesbians was stronger than any other period of U.S history. The decade was characterized by extensive witch hunts against gays and lesbians as typified by the McCarthy investigations."[34] Their work on the McCarthy investigations also allows for comparisons with Canadian state persecution of lesbians and gay men.[35] Kennedy and Davis historicize a very particular experience of lesbian life in the United States, during which visibility, and defiance of heteronormativity reached new heights, but prior to the widespread lesbian political organizing, and the emergence of lesbian feminism in the late 1960s and 1970s.

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[32]Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather Slippers of Gold*, 5.
[33]Ibid., 8.
[34]Ibid., 68-9.
[35]Gary William Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010). The Canadian state purged suspected lesbians and gay men from both military and civil service, which Kinsman and Gentile explore in detail.

Moving away from broad staples of American lesbian history, six important lesbian histories that focus on the Canadian context provide background for themes discussed in this thesis. In 2011, Cameron Duder published *awfully devoted women: Lesbian Lives in Canada 1900-65*. Duder's work explores the lives of lesbians in Canada from the beginning of the twentieth century to the dawn of the second-wave feminist movement in the mid-1960s. He seeks to provide an analysis of lesbian history specific to Canada, while identifying similarities and differences to the United States context. Duder argues that

> Canadian lesbians could not be said to have a formalized structure based on lesbian identity before perhaps the 1950s. Prior to the 1950s, precursors to lesbian communities were formed in relation to a subjectivity based on shared same-sex desire, although evidence suggests that identity labels were not used.[36]

This insight into the formation of lesbian community and its relationship to identity provides Duder with the basis for his work, in which he explores and analyzes the shifts in the lives of lesbians in Canada. Rule herself, however, appears only briefly in a list Duder provides of influential figures in Canadian lesbian life.

Like *awfully devoted women*, El Chenier's 1995 MA thesis and canonical work "Tough Ladies and Troublemakers" uses oral histories they collected to create a recorded history of lesbian life in Toronto following the Second World War. Chenier shows that the "development of a distinct historical account of lesbian women in Canadian social history has thus far failed to materialize" due to a "scarcity of readily accessible sources combined with the lack of broad-based institutional support for such projects." But, as Chenier asks the reader, "are lesbian lives truly invisible? Is evidence of lesbian lives utterly irretrievable?"[37] Their thesis clearly indicates that the answer was no. By creating the source base of oral testimonies and identifying

[36]Cameron Duder, *awfully devoted women: Lesbian Lives in Canada, 1900-65* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 62.
[37]Chenier, "Tough Ladies and Troublemakers," 6.

methodological challenges, Chenier produced the basis for a Canadian lesbian history. The thesis itself explores the "tightening of the conceptual links between female liberation, gender non-conformism and lesbianism" in Canada following the Second World War.[38] It also offers important contextual information, including stories of women who grew up and came out in the same decades as Rule, which contribute further to understandings of loneliness, struggle, and identity formation prior to the advent of the lesbian feminist movement.[39]

Picking up where both Duder and Chenier left off, Liz Millward's *Making a Scene: Lesbians and Community Across Canada 1964-84* moves away from working primarily with oral histories to also using the archives of lesbian organizations across the country. In this book, Millward seeks to identify how space and the creation of lesbian spaces specifically influenced the formation of lesbian identity and community in Canada. Millward argues that

> particular physical locations held the promise of a place beyond her lover's bed, where a woman could go to 'be a lesbian.' They generated a sense that there was a situated and bounded lesbian community that congregated in those places."[40]

By moving beyond the time periods explored by Duder and Chenier, Millward provided Canadian lesbian history with a next chapter, which did not depend on a single location or source base, but rather on a multitude of spaces and sources. She, crucially, took Canadian lesbian history into the archives, seeking out the physical spaces lesbians used to form their political and social communities. This offered a significant and invaluable intervention into the field. Despite focusing on the two decades when Rule was most active, *Making a Scene* makes only a passing mention of Rule's writing, and does not discuss her political involvement. Millward's book

[38] Ibid., 39.
[39] Ibid., 74.
[40] Liz Millward, *Making a Scene: Lesbians and Community across Canada, 1964-84*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 30.

provides insights into where and how lesbians in Canada organized as they established the lesbian identities explored by Duder and Chenier.

Also looking at a time period when community formation and political action became increasingly important, Becki Ross' ground-breaking 1995 book *The House that Jill Built: A Lesbian Nation in Formation* focuses on the lesbian feminist movement in Toronto, and specifically the history of the Lesbian Organization of Toronto (LOOT). Ross explores the role lesbian feminism played in the politics of the 1970s. She looks at the question of visibility as a political tool, the relationship that lesbian feminists had to the second-wave feminist movement more broadly, and the way in which lesbian feminism "became the ideological heartbeat of a new and potent identity-based politics."[41] LOOT represents one of the most visible lesbian movements in Canadian history during a time when lesbian feminism chose to define itself in relation to other political and social movements of the period. Rule engaged with members of LOOT frequently, and she receives a few passing mentions in *The House that Jill Built.*

In 2018, Valerie J. Korinek published *Prairie Fairies: A History of Queer Communities and People in Western Canada, 1930-1985*. Korinek asks what it meant to be gay or lesbian in rural prairie towns during the twentieth century, arguing that this community represented an understudied gay and lesbian experience in Canada. *Prairie Fairies* challenges the notion that Canadian sexuality history was limited to Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver and the idea that lesbian and gay histories were entirely separate entities in the twentieth century. In the introduction, Korinek explains that the book examines the histories of both lesbians and gay men because it "reflects the prairie realities, despite the inevitable gendered and political tensions

[41] Becki Ross, *The House That Jill Built: A Lesbian Nation in Formation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 43.

between and among lesbians and gay men, of the necessity for cooperation."[42] Korinek's work offers Canadian lesbian history a rural lens, through which she reads the impacts of class and geography on community formation and identity production. Given the focus on the prairies, Rule's absence from *Prairie Fairies* is much less surprising than in other texts. The book provides an example of how lesbians and gay men organized together when circumstances required it, regardless of broader political conversations and significant tensions that often seemed to prevent the same cooperation in large urban centres.

Finally, Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile's *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation* represents the most comprehensive overview of Canadian sexuality history penned to date, covering the 1950s through the 1990s. While not exclusively focused on lesbians, Kinsman and Gentile's research on the relationship between queerness and the Canadian state is crucial to the creation of any Canadian sexuality history written thereafter. Written in part to respond to the escalating modern emphasis on "national security," *Canadian War on Queers* serves as a potent reminder of what happens when the state chooses an identity category as an enemy.[43] The book examines the history of the Canadian state (represented by the military, police, provincial, and federal bodies), and its relationship to those it surveilled because of their sexuality. More specifically, the authors explore the state's purge of its military and public service offices, the use of federal police services to investigate and intimidate those suspected of homosexuality, and the continuation of state violence following homosexuality's decriminalization in 1969.[44] In this thesis, *Canadian War on Queers* assists in part in understanding the implications of Rule's class status, in that class and race were factors that

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[42] Valerie J. Korinek, *Prairie Fairies: A History of Queer Communities and People in Western Canada, 1930-1985* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 10.
[43] Kinsman and Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers*, xiii.
[44] Ibid., 221-243.

shaped the risks associated with lesbian and gay visibility, and who was the potential target of state surveillance and repression. As a result, Kinsmen and Gentile's book offers vital context to understanding Rule's position in Canadian gay and lesbian politics.

This review of the literature sought to explore the relationship between Canadian lesbian history and histories of lesbian and gay communities in the United States. These texts form an important foundation of the field of sexuality history in the United States and Canada. The fact that Rule makes at most fleeting appearances in these meticulously researched texts suggests that there must be a legitimate reason for the omission. Rather than assume that Rule's absence from this historical record represents a deficiency in the scholarship, I seek to examine why she was relatively absent from these works, and what this tells us about the particular positions she took in relation to the histories chronicled by these scholars. This thesis argues that Rule showed her commitment to lesbian and gay liberation in Canada through specific avenues which do not always fit comfortably within a history of either gay liberation or lesbian feminism. When holding up her life and politics against those of the gay men and lesbians explored in the existing literature, her absence becomes less surprising.

IV. Chapter Overview

This thesis has two main chapters. The first, titled "'So Courage with Your Pen': The Publication of *Desert of the Heart*," explores the process involved in the publication of Rule's first novel. The chapter argues that Rule's relative absence from the historical record does not result from Rule's lack of interest in the advancement of lesbian rights and visibility. To support this claim, I first offer a description of the world in which Rule grew up, came of age, and came out as a lesbian, demonstrating the impact of working out her lesbianism without the existence of a widespread social movement had on Rule's early politics. I then explore the letters exchanged

between her and her publisher as they attempted to get *Desert of the Heart* published. Rule worked hard to have the book published in a mainstream, hardcover press, which illustrated her determination to bring a lesbian love story to a mainstream fiction audience, as well as a complicated class politic. At the same time, this publication story also demonstrated her commitment to a group of people she saw as her community. The chapter also analyses some of the letters Rule received from lesbian readers to show the early impact of the novel. I conclude with an examination of Rule's first published book of non-fiction, which suggests that her dedication to lesbian politics extended beyond her fictional writings. In short, Chapter One examines the evidence that Rule published novels and non-fiction books for the explicit purpose of making lesbians part of a mainstream literary culture. It argues that her exclusion from scholarship on Canadian lesbian history was not based on a lack of engagement with lesbian life and politics.

The second main chapter of the thesis, titled "'Hard to Stay Angry At a Sincere Liberal': Jane Rule, Lesbian Feminism and Gay Liberation," looks at Rule's engagement with lesbian and gay politics during the height of the lesbian feminist and gay liberation movements in Canada, from the 1970s through to the early 1980s. I argue that Rule's exclusion from the histories of these movements is the result of her choice to remain independent from both. By exploring her writing for the Toronto based gay liberationist publication *The Body Politic* alongside responses to her work from lesbian feminists, a clear pattern of political thinking emerges. Rule often agreed with lesbian feminist political goals. The chapter explores several examples, including fighting the pervasive misogyny in gay liberation organizing, the complicated politics of sexual liberation, and the fight against pornography. She often disagreed, however, with calls for censorship and state involvement which accompanied lesbian feminist goals. On issues of

censorship, Rule often aligned with gay liberation movements. Although some later lesbian feminist movements of the 1980s had strong anti-censorship voices, Rule's stance was articulated earlier. The chapter seeks to move away from needing to place Rule in one camp or the other, and instead uses her life to show how political actors in both camps engaged in rigorous dialogue, and frequently landed in the political in-between. I also draw on her written work during this period to show the sophisticated and informed nature of her political thinking, exploring where her politics fit in the context of the 1970s and early 1980s. Her political sophistication becomes particularly clear in her communications and writing on the AIDS crisis. The chapter concludes with an analysis of her writing on AIDS, as well as her letters between her and her editor Rick Bébout on the subject. In short, Chapter Two explores the question of where Rule's political allegiances lay. I argue that Rule lived, not uniquely, in a political in-between which makes her difficult to place in broader histories of each movement; however, this should not diminish the impact of her independent political contributions to both lesbian feminist and gay liberationist movements.

What drew me to undertake this study was the question of Rule's relative absence from histories of lesbian and gay communities, despite the significant role she played in both. Exploring only her own writing on the subject, the idea that she would not appear regularly and fully in those histories makes little sense. Indeed, her work publishing books like *Desert of the Heart* and *Lesbian Images* reveal that Rule saw herself as a Canadian lesbian public figure with a responsibility to her community. Her work for the gay liberationist publication *The Body Politic* also showed her commitment to gay liberation movements. A closer look at how her writings engaged with both lesbian feminism and gay liberation also suggest the heterogenous nature of her political perspectives, which often challenged or rejected existing orthodoxies of both lesbian

feminism and gay liberation. Rule's refusal to subscribe to a particular identity politic, despite an overarching commitment to both lesbian feminism and gay liberation, makes it difficult to place her among the leaders of either movement. By exploring her lack of allegiance to a specific political group, and her commitment to acting as an independent political voice, this thesis reveals that Rule's life and politics offer a window into her relationship to lesbian communities as well as the nuances and complexities of lesbian feminism and gay liberation from the 1960s to the early 1980s.

Chapter One

"So Courage with Your Pen!": The Publication of *Desert of the Heart*

It was, in fact, very difficult to admit to being a writer. Only years of experience which tended to thicken the skin made such a confession possible. In my personal world, I came out as a lesbian long before I came out as a writer.[1]

I. Introduction

In this chapter, I examine Jane Rule's life as she wrote about it in her correspondence, personal papers, and books, and provide contextualizing histories of the politics that governed her life in the United States. I begin by examining the history of the climate surrounding homosexuality, and particularly lesbianism, in the United States, where Rule lived until moving to Canada in 1956. I also explore the types of lesbian literature available during Rule's early life, along with her experiences reading some of it. Following this contextual analysis, the chapter explores the publication of Rule's first and most widely read novel, *Desert of the Heart*, in 1965. I analyze how Rule, her agent, and her publishers viewed the book, its reception in the literary world prior to publication, and a brief look at the book's early reception following its publication. The purpose of understanding the road to *Desert of the Heart*'s publication lies in making clear the unprecedented nature of the work, and its unique importance to lesbian life prior to the existence of a coherent lesbian political world. I also seek to demonstrate how homophobia, and classism intersected during the book's road to publication. Rule's work in publishing this lesbian romance novel demonstrates her commitment to move lesbian literature out of the less respectable paperback pulp genre, and into the hardcover mainstream, countering

[1] Jane Rule, *Loving the Difficult* (Sidney: Hedgerow Press, 2008), 31.

the plausible hypothesis that her relative absence from scholarship on lesbianism in Canada resulted from Rule's lack of interest in or commitment to lesbian politics.

II. The Cold War, Lesbians, and Literature

Rule came of age in the McCarthy era in the United States, and this had a particular effect on her life and her politics. In his 2004 book *The Lavender Scare*, historian David K. Johnson explains that, while most of the scholarship on Joseph McCarthy focuses on the Red Scare and the hunt for communist sympathizers, the majority of those identified by the United States government as "security risks" within the public service were fired for their association with homosexuality.[2] Johnson argues that the scholarship on the Red Scare incorrectly relegates the associated "Lavender Scare" to the margins; historians view it as an inevitable by-product of the main event. *The Lavender Scare* "reveals [that] a fear that homosexuals posed a threat to national security and needed to be systematically removed from the federal government permeated 1950s political culture."[3]

Rule attended college in this political context, when homosexuality became synonymous with threats to the security of the United States. Rule wrote her first published novel not during the height of the lesbian feminist movement, or with the support of a large and politicized community, nor even with the support of a community built in her home country. Instead, she moved to Canada, where the state engaged in a different war on homosexuality. Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile describe the Canadian version of the Lavender Scare as more secretive than the McCarthy policies, saying

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[2] David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 2-3.

[3] Ibid., 9.

> Canadian state agencies were especially invested in keeping security issues cloaked from public view; however, this supposed veil of secrecy did not in any way reduce the impact these security campaigns had on people's lives.[4]

This veil of secrecy may well have meant that Rule was unaware of the Canadian state's national security campaign.

Understanding the context of the Lavender Scare proves vital to understanding Rule's political positioning. Johnson states explicitly that the history of the Lavender Scare is not only one of persecution, but also one of the origins of gay and lesbian rights movements.[5] It also represents the origins of those movements' literary culture, leadership, and political consciousness. Rule herself responded to a question about her place in gay movements in an interview with the Toronto gay liberationist publication *The Body Politic* by saying "because of my age I don't associate my growth with either the women's movement or the gay […] my own work required me to move honestly before [those movements] came along."[6] Understanding Rule's place in that history begins with understanding the difference between the nature of lesbian cultures when she was young, versus later communities that wanted her as a figurehead.

Marilyn Schuster investigates the literary impact of this earlier culture in her 1998 article "Inscribing a Lesbian Reader, Projecting a Lesbian Subject: A Jane Rule Diptych." She breaks existing lesbian literature down into three categories. The first she titles "self-punishing," describing books with lesbian characters who bring about their own misery through self-hatred. According to Schuster, the 1928 British novel by Radclyffe Hall titled *The Well of Loneliness* exemplified this category.[7] Rule herself describes her first encounter with *The Well* in her book

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[4] Gary William Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 10.
[5] Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 14.
[6] "Jane Rule: The Woman behind Lesbian Images," *The Body Politic* 5, no. 21 (December 1975): 17.
[7] Marilyn R. Schuster, "Inscribing a Lesbian Reader, Projecting a Lesbian Subject: A Jane Rule Diptych," *Journal of Homosexuality* 37, no. 3-4 (1998): 88. *The Well of Loneliness* is hereafter referred to as *The Well* to be concise.

Lesbian Images. At the age of fifteen, a young Rule read the book knowing nothing of Hall's life, and wrote that she was "badly frightened." Despite not yet seeing herself as a lesbian, Rule explains that

> like Stephen Gordon, the main female character of the book, I was six feet tall. I had broad shoulders and narrow hips, no bosom, and a deep voice. […] In *The Well of Loneliness,* I suddenly discovered I was a freak, a genetic monster, a member of a third sex, who would eventually call myself by a masculine name […] wear a necktie and live in the exile of some European ghetto.[8]

Hall's book centers on a semi-autobiographical Stephen Gordon, whose self-loathing of her body and sexuality is rivalled only by the author's own loathing for the character. It remains among the most famous and widely read lesbian novels. As literary scholar Heather Love points out, it also remains the one "most hated by lesbians themselves."[9] In the same *Body Politic* article quoted above, Rule explains her later analysis of her initial reaction to the novel, saying "it took me years to figure out why I found it so horrible […] *The Well of Loneliness* is a heterosexual book in terms of political structure."[10] By this, she meant that the book ascribed the same power imbalance of heterosexual relationships onto lesbian ones, and created a monster out of the character's inability to conform to those power structures. As a key example of the self-punishing genre of lesbian literature that Schuster identifies, *The Well* teaches its readers that lesbianism represented a genetic malfunction that rendered Gordon's life lonely and loveless. For a young Rule and others of her generation, *The Well* was the first time they saw themselves in literature. Fifteen-year-old Rule's fearful reaction comes, therefore, as no surprise.

The second type of lesbian literature that Rule grew up with, as identified by Schuster, is "formulaic." This category refers to the widely read, and popular genre known as "lesbian pulp

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[8] Jane Rule, *Lesbian Images* (New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc.,, 1976), 3-4.

[9] Heather K. Love, "'Spoiled Identity': Stephen Gordon's Well of Loneliness and the Difficulties of Queer History," *GLQ* 7, no. 4 (2001): 487.

[10] "The Woman behind Lesbian Images," 14.

fiction." Lesbian pulps were one subcategory of a type of novel which originated in the early twentieth century. Their popularity among working-class and racialized populations, as well as the cheap material used to produce them, caused them to become characterized as outside of the realms of "real literature." Literary scholar David M. Earle explains that pulp novels "provided inexpensive reading material and education to rural and underprivileged populations," and were read by and associated with "second generation immigrants, the labor class and African Americans."[11] The publishers of pulp novels also carried a stigma of producing cheap reads without significant literary merit¾itself a classed distinction.

Literary scholar Christopher Nealon explains that the primarily women authors of the lesbian pulp genre understood that they had an officially male audience, who expected the lesbians in the books to either commit suicide, go insane, or get married to men for their reformation.[12] Scholars debate the purpose and impact of lesbian pulp novels. Some view them as examples of early lesbian political writing. They argue that the authors wrote about honest and loving commitments but had to couch them in homophobic narratives for the pleasure of the officially male readership. Suzanna Danuta Walters maintains that Ann Bannon's pulps, among the most famous and widely read of the genre, "distinguished themselves through their female audience that was reading as much for the pleasure of self-confirmation as for the pleasure of the text."[13] This reading of the history of pulp novels focuses on the affirmation contained within the texts and argues that the intended male audience made up only a part of the actual readership. These scholars maintain that lesbians read pulp novels too. They saw lesbians as having

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[11] David M. Earle, "The Pulp New Deal: Audience, Popular Front Politics, and the Pulps as a Socially Democratic Form," *The Journal of American Culture* 44, no. 1 (2021): 9.

[12] Christopher Nealon, "Invert History: The Ambivalence of Lesbian Pulp Fiction," *New Literary History* 31, no. 1 (2000): 745.

[13] Suzanna Danuta Walters, "As Her Hand Crept Slowly Up Her Thigh: Ann Bannon and the Politics of Pulp," *Social Text* 23, no. 2 (1989): 84.

identified themselves and their lives within them. Walters goes a step further and suggests that Bannon's novels represented a kind of guide to lesbian subculture, through which lesbians could learn about the necessary etiquette, and politics in order to participate in lesbian life in the 1950s.[14] Other scholars point to flaws in this line of argumentation. Nealon argues that this reading of pulp novels is anachronistic, contending that it points to a level of community identity which exists only later. He asserts that Bannon's characters made no distinction between hatred and self-hatred until the moment one of them either murdered the other or committed suicide.[15]

Regardless of where scholars fall within the debate over pulp novels' impacts and readership, they all agree that the authors followed specific formulas. They disagree mostly on the reason for following them, rather than on the formulas themselves. Pulp novels, so-called for the cheap paper publishers printed them on, offered a specific narrative of lesbian life, in which someone usually ended up dead. No longer the lonely self-loathing of Stephen Gordon, the novels nevertheless continued to show lives on the social margins. In the 1995 documentary on her life, Rule calls this the "traditional Hollywood happy ending, that is one woman would kill herself, and the other would get married."[16] Whether pulp novels positively impacted other lesbian lives or not, Rule felt that her work fell outside of them.

Schuster identifies the third and final type of lesbian literature available to readers during the McCarthy era as the "highly coded." Citing Gertrude Stein as its exemplar, Schuster does not describe this type further. However, the scholarship on pulp novels tends to cite Stein's work as the opposite of pulp. Walters argues that "Bannon insists on uncoded lesbian sexuality, *devoid of*

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[14] Ibid., 90.

[15] Nealon, "The Ambivalence of Lesbian Pulp Fiction," 758.

[16] *Fiction and Other Truths: A Film About Jane Rule*, directed by Lynne Fernie and Aerlyn Weissman (Great Jane Productions, 1995).

the elaborate codings of a Woolf or Stein."[17] Walters' "elaborate codings" refer to Stein's heavy reliance on metaphor and deconstructed language to code the nature of lesbian relationships in her work. Catherine R. Stimpson makes the case that Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* exemplifies the genre which chooses to adapt the "conventions of the social and psychological novel to appraise bonds between women, and demonstrate that such relationships are potentially of psychic and moral value."[18] Essentially, this subgenre of lesbian literature used fashionable forms and conventions of writing (in Stein's case, the modernist fashions) to encode lesbian relationships into their work. Stimpson cites Stein's novella *Melanctha* as a pertinent example, in which Stein masculinizes one of the characters, whom she based on herself, for that character to sleep with another woman.[19] This genre would not have frightened the reader as Hall's might, nor would it have had the simultaneously sexually explicit plotline, and violent end as a pulp novel. However, Stein's work was written for a particular audience of academic elites familiar with the modernist style. Its coding of lesbianism would not have provided a text in which a fifteen-year-old in the late 1940s or a college student in the early 1950s would have found solace that her sexuality did not mean a life hidden from polite society, at the risk of violence, exile, or death.

The existence of this literature does not imply that lesbian relationships or descriptions thereof were met with acceptance by the broader American public. The literature on the psychology and sociology of homosexuality in the 1950s turned same sex sexuality into a spectacle that many Americans viewed with equal parts fascination and moral disgust,

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[17] Walters, "Ann Bannon and the Politics of Pulp," 86. Italics my addition.

[18] Catherine R. Stimpson, "Zero Degree Deviancy: The Lesbian Novel in English," *The Journal of Lesbian Studies* 1, no. 2 (1997): 185.

[19] Catherine R. Stimpson, "The Mind, the Body, and Gertrude Stein," *Critical Inquiry* 3, no. 3 (1977): 501.

particularly among the American middle class. Understanding this morbid curiosity helps to form a fuller contextual picture of the experiences of lesbians and gay men in the United States during this period. It also provides more context on how Rule herself grew into her identity. Historian Miriam G. Reumann explores the phenomenon of this morbid curiosity in her 2005 publication *American Sexual Character: Sex, Gender and National Identity in the Kinsey Reports*. She explains that, following the end of the Second World War, experts in psychology and sociology began to ring alarm bells about the departures from traditional moral values among American youth. She also notes that among the American middleclass there was the feeling that the United States did not adjust to post Second World War peace following their wartime heroism.[20] In particular, Reumann argues that the publications of two books by sexologist Alfred Kinsey in 1948 and 1953 on male and female sexual behaviour respectively, caught the American public's attention in unexpected ways. Kinsey argued that homosexual sexual practices and desires were far more commonplace among Americans than anyone thought. Reumann maintains that this information rocked American readers. She explains that

> despite their complex graphs and charts and abstruse scientific language, the volumes became bestsellers and spurred unprecedented public discussion of national sexual practices and ideologies.[21]

While not acceptable as an identity category and not the subject of polite dinner conversation, homosexual urges and behaviours became a subject of discussion. Homosexuality represented a deviation from a middle-class ideal. Understanding the level of scrutiny of the postwar generation in the United States, particularly those who deviated from sexual or gender norms,

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[20] Miriam G. Reumann, *American Sexual Character: Sex, Gender, and National Identity in the Kinsey Reports* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 18.
[21] Ibid., 1.

proves crucial to understanding and contextualizing the life Rule led prior to her move to Canada, and the publication of *Desert of the Heart*.

Rule herself explores her responses to being viewed as a lesbian around the age of fifteen, in the years 1947-1948. This account, too, suggests an external interest in Rule's sexuality stemming from the scrutiny of what was considered, at the time, to be abnormal teenage behaviour. "There was no one moment," she says in her posthumously published autobiography *Taking My Life*,

> when I confronted my own sexuality. […Everyone] obviously assumed I was a lesbian […] I suppose I must have seemed to each of them a sexual time bomb that could go off at any moment.[22]

This reflection comes after recounting the events which led to her first expulsion from her San Francisco private school, during which she published an article in the school paper criticizing the lessons in makeup, dress, and deportment.[23] While not explicitly sexual, this refusal to conform to the "nice girls" education offered by her private school elicited suspicion from her friends, their parents, and school administrators. She described it to the editors of *The Body Politic* as the reason she initially worked out her identity: "I couldn't possibly have moved in terms of a heterosexual relationship […] I was raised as a 'southern woman,' but I will **not** behave as one!"[24] Rule's deviations from gender norms were met, in the late 1940s and the 1950s, with the accusation of lesbian desire. Refusal to conform to classed expectations of gender became associated with homosexuality. Her friend and first lover Ann Smith, who in their college years encouraged Rule to pursue a heterosexual relationship, had what Rule identified as a "Freudian rather than religious interpretation for my fall, for she was far more interested in my conditioning

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[22] Jane Rule, *Taking My Life*, ed. Linda Morra (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2011), 110-11.
[23] Ibid., 107-110.
[24] "The Woman behind Lesbian Images," 14.

than in my morality."[25] Understanding this level of scrutiny, including both moral and psychological judgements of her behaviour, provides insight into the climate in which Rule grew up. Authority figures in Rule's life viewed her behaviour as indicative of sexual deviancy. These insights are still relevant in analyzing her life and her later work.

III. *Desert of the Heart*

The persecution of homosexuality in this era did not remain confined to United States borders. Nevertheless, Rule decided in 1956 to relocate to the Canadian West Coast. In an essay titled "The Canadian Climate," Rule describes living in ignorance about the rest of the world as a child in the United States. This ignorance prevailed until she moved to England for a year as an undergraduate student. She described returning home embarrassed about how little she knew of the world. Three years later, she visited Vancouver with a cousin. Describing it as "rarely beautiful," and "a good time in the city's history for its aspiring young," Rule was hired in UBC's English department, and made the move permanent.[26] In Vancouver, Rule finished the manuscript for *Desert of the Heart*, which at the time she titled *Permanent Resident*. To fully understand the story of the book's road to publication, I first offer a summary of the novel's plot and explore how Rule incorporated, and centered lesbian life, and culture therein.

Desert of the Heart follows the story of Evelyn Hall, an English professor from California who flies to Reno, Nevada, to complete the six-week residency needed to file for divorce. There, she meets and eventually falls in love with Ann Childs, a fellow lodger at the boarding house where Evelyn stays, and an employee of the Frank's Club casino.[27] Throughout the book, Rule's characters consistently subvert the expectations and stereotypes of

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[25] Rule, *Taking My Life*, 182.

[26] Jane Rule, *A Hot Eyed Moderate* (Kansas City: Naiad Press, 1986), 9-11.

[27] Jane Rule, *Desert of the Heart* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1991).

homosexuality and bisexuality popularized during Rule's childhood, and adolescence. Her refusal to use lesbian archetypes like those popularized in pulp novels, and *The Well* differentiates *Desert of the Heart* from its predecessors. It also provides an early example of Rule's consistent disapproval of conforming to any external definition of lesbian life. This principle would govern Rule's political engagement throughout the 1970s and early 1980s.

Rule sets up characters to fit the psychological and sociological molds of lesbianism, and then uses the characters to push against them. For example, Evelyn initially sees her feelings of attraction to Ann as those of a mother to a child, alluding to the Freudian tendency to cast lesbians as women who have not fulfilled their biological need to procreate. Rule herself identifies her understanding of this psychological "cause" of lesbianism in *Lesbian Images*, calling it "pure Freud."[28] Ann's experience of lesbian identity comes closer to Rule's own, although it is not a perfect mirror. The characters in the book tend to view Ann's lesbianism as a symptom of her general disregard for social norms, or as the result of her mother's early death. They saw her attraction to women as a substitute for the mother she lacked as a child.[29] While Rule herself did not lack a maternal figure in the way Ann does, she too was cast as a lesbian by those around her, not due to her sexual preferences or practices but because of her challenges to normative gendered behaviour.

Rule does not limit the demonstration of her understanding of lesbian life to her main characters. The character of Silver, a bisexual friend and lover of Ann's who works at the same casino, chooses early in the book to marry her long-time male partner. She thereby breaks off her sexual relationship with Ann and surprises everyone involved.[30] Silver's character subverts the

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[28] Rule, *Lesbian Images*, 39.
[29] Rule, *Desert of the Heart*, 82.
[30] Ibid., 42.

common expectation of a bisexual character as promiscuous, and non-monogamous. This careful subversion demonstrates Rule's awareness of a phenomenon described by Duder as a "community hostility toward bisexual women which resulted in many bisexual women either leaving the community or subsuming bisexual desires under a lesbian-identity label."[31]

A careful reading of the published version of *Desert of the Heart* reveals the extent of Rule's engagement with the earliest stages of lesbian politics, which challenged a pathologizing view of sexuality that rendered lesbian and bisexual women the products of either their own, or their parent's transgressions. Jeffrey Weeks attributes this pathologizing view to nineteenth-century sexologists. He argues that

> what was new to the nineteenth century was the sustained effort to put [sexuality] on to a new scientific footing: to isolate, and individualize, the specific characteristics of sexuality, to detail its normal paths and morbid variations, to emphasize its power and to speculate on its effects.[32]

In individualizing specific aspects of sexuality and creating a science around it, nineteenth-century sexologists posited deviant sexualities¾including lesbianism¾as the result of individual problems with either upbringing, or lifestyle choices. Rule's characters refuse to fit the sexologist mold.

The process of publishing *Desert of the Heart* proves at least as revealing of Rule's early lesbian politics as the final product. As Rule and her agent worked to find a publisher, Rule remained committed to publishing the book with a respectable press that would neither use her work to sensationalize nor propagandize lesbian life. This points to consistency in Rule's dedication to keeping her political life and voice nuanced. The challenges of publishing the book in this way are revealed in the archival material related to *Desert of the Heart* stored in Rule's

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[31] Cameron Duder, *awfully devoted women: Lesbian Lives in Canada 1900-65* (Vancouver: UBC Press 2011), 176.
[32] Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality and Its Discontents: Meanings, Myths, and Modern Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 66.

archive at UBC. Rule's archive contains three very full folders of material about her early publications.

On September 5, 1962, Kurt Hellmer wrote to Rule as an author representative. He begins by telling her what a pleasure it was meeting her in New York, and subsequently reading the manuscript of her novel. He then outlines the usual terms of his work with authors, and suggests becoming the agent for the book everywhere but England, where Rule was already in conversation with a separate agency.[33] The letter seems like an auspicious beginning to Rule's work with Hellmer, and she responds to the letter on September 9. She kept a draft of her response, in which she explains her ties to the agency in Britain more fully. Hellmer also remarks that Rule described the novel to him as "simply 'a book about human relations' and it is just that. It's a rich book in every aspect, an honest book, and a book which somehow haunts you."[34]

Of course, *a book about human relations* is an accurate description of the novel's overarching plot. However, Hellmer himself states things more explicitly earlier on in the letter. Prior to working with Hellmer, Rule had worked with Willis Kingsley Wing, a representative from Britain's top firm, who had placed the novel with eight publishers before their relationship had soured, and Rule had sought alternative representation.[35] Hellmer responds to the first eight rejections by stating his confusion that no publisher had accepted the book, and asks outright: "could it be the subject matter, lesbian love?"[36] One might interpret this phrasing in a few ways.

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[33]University of British Columbia Special Collections (hereafter UBC-SC), Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Kurt Hellmer to Jane Rule, September 5, 1962.

[34]UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Kurt Hellmer to Jane Rule, September 5, 1962.

[35]Linda Morra, "'Vexed by the Crassness of Commerce' Jane Rule's Struggle for Literary Integrity and Freedom of Expression," *Canadian Literature* 205, no. 205 (2010): 88. For a more fulsome account of Rule's early publishing woes and her relationship with Wing, see both Morra's article and her book *Unarrested Archives: Case Studies in Twentieth-Century Canadian Women's Authorship* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2014). The title of Morra's book is capitalized elsewhere in the thesis – be consistent.

[36]UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Kurt Hellmer to Jane Rule, September 5, 1962.

It could be that Hellmer is not surprised that the book has not yet received the approval of his literary colleagues, and that his wording attempts to make clear to Rule the uphill battle such subject matter represented. However, given Hellmer's desire to take on the project and his financial incentive of ten percent commission from proceeds within the US and Canada and twenty percent from any international sales outside of Britain, it seems unlikely that he saw the battle as so uphill that the task does not warrant taking on.[37] It seems doubtful that, were Hellmer squeamish about selling a lesbian romance novel, he would have taken the project on in the first place. His statement might, then, represent genuine surprise and thoughtful consideration as to why the book had thus far not found success. While this theory has merit, it ignores Hellmer's knowledge of the publishing world, demonstrated throughout his letters to Rule. The most likely explanation, then, is that Hellmer knew full well why the manuscript had yet to receive attention, but felt that selling the book as Rule described it to him, a book about human relations, was likely to find success where the previous agent's lack of skill had failed.

Rule sent Hellmer copies of the comments received from some publishers who had already seen the book. These comments are stored along with the letters in the archive. Burton L. Beals, the editor of W.W. Norton & Company, responded to the manuscript in 1961 with a brief note of rejection:

> I'm afraid the Jane Rule manuscript PERMANENT RESIDENT, put me off on a couple of counts: chiefly the theme, of course, which is pretty familiar stuff in paper books of a certain sort.[38]

Paper books "of a certain sort" refer to the pulp novels of the 1950s discussed above. As noted, the books carried a classed stigma that rendered them less respectable than hardback literature.

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[37] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Kurt Hellmer to Jane Rule, September 5, 1962.

[38] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Burton L Beals to Willis Kingsley King c/o Josephine Rogers, December 6, 1961.

Beals' letter represents the most explicit rejection based on the lesbian theme in these first eight, but almost all mention the lesbian subject matter to some degree. Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.'s editor-in-chief Julian P. Muller reassures Wing that their rejection does not represent "prudishness in some phases of the subject matter" and indeed praises Rule's "candor about what, in some quarters, could be considered extremely objectionable." Rather than prudish distaste, Muller simply found "the subject matter, of itself, of insufficient interest."[39] In other words, Muller's publishing house claims not to view the book as inappropriate in its theme but rather insufficiently interesting for its audience.

The comments rejecting the book based on its style or subject matter prove common in *Desert of the Heart'*s early rejections. McClelland and Stewart Ltd., in February of 1962, rejected the book on the basis that "we do not feel that this is a novel which we could market successfully in Canada."[40] GP Putnam's Sons "found it rather too flimsy in story content and pace to make a dent in today's difficult fiction market."[41] Herman Ziegner of Atheneum Publishers explained that the publishers "do not feel that [Rule] was adequate to a most difficult theme and cannot make an offer to publish."[42] A spectrum of reasons for rejecting the manuscript were made prior to Hellmer receiving it. Criticisms ranged from Rule's failure to handle her lesbian characters appropriately, to the publishing house's market being unsuited to the task of publishing a lesbian romance, to the editors themselves finding the subject matter off-putting. These early rejections prove fascinating to understanding Rule's later politics, because the

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[39]UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Julian P. Muller to Willis Kingsley Wing c/o Josephine Rogers, October 16, 1961.

[40]UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Diane Mew to Willis Kingsley Wing c/o Josephine Rogers, February 14, 1962.

[41]UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Peter Israel to Willis Kingsley Wing c/o Josephine Rogers, November 14, 1961.

[42]UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Herman Ziegler to Willis Kingsley Wing c/o Josephine Rogers, August 30, 1961.

publishers focus on the unique nature of the book as much as focusing on the subject matter itself. Their letters suggest that the publishers had concerns about tapping into a market that did not yet exist. They were not houses that published pulp novels, and there was no such thing as a "respectable" lesbian romance novel, except that exemplified by *The Well*. This culture of respectability combined homophobia with middle-class literary snobbery. Rule's book about human relations met with pushback that makes sense within the context of existing lesbian literature and middle-class publishing culture in the 1950s, and early 1960s.

The question of "the market" became central in the post-Second World War publishing world, and Rule's experience was not unique. In an edited collection on *The History of the Book in America,* Beth Luey explains that during this postwar period, "the trade sector" of publishing (which Luey defines as any book intended for the ordinary reader) "depended on both the bestseller and the niche book" focusing on "a burgeoning array of specialty categories," as well as bestselling authors.[43] *Desert of the Heart* aimed squarely to resonate with the category of a niche book, not in itself a new or unique strategy. However, the book also had to dodge a "pulp" classification, something it did not always manage successfully. The early 1960s saw the very beginnings of mainstream publishers choosing to use the still very new paperback format to disseminate their books. Luey explains that "trade publishers were initially leery of paperback publication, fearing that it would cheapen authors' reputations and cut into revenues. Both authors and hardcover publishers were sometimes reluctant to see their books between the lurid paperback covers in favor in the 1940s and 1950s."[44] Rule's attempt to publish *Desert of the Heart* occurred during this period of hesitation, demonstrating the extent to which the publishers

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[43] Beth Luey, "The Organization of the Book Publishing Industry," in *The History of the Book in America Volume 5: The Enduring Book Print Culture in Postwar America* ed. David Paul North, Joan Shelley Rubin and Michael Schudson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 42.
[44] Ibid., 44.

to whom Rule and Hellmer marketed the book wished to separate themselves from houses choosing the paperback format. This attitude would change in the following decade. Luey argues that "by the mid-70s [the paperback trade] was difficult to distinguish from the rest of the industry." [45] Rule's attempt to sell the book in the 1960s as one suiting a niche market still had to contend with the prejudice against publishing houses working with books of the lurid nature described by Luey. Understanding this line which Rule's work had to walk contributes to understanding how lesbophobia and class politics operated within the publishing sector prior to the mass popularity of paperbacks, and the formation of lesbian and feminist publishing houses. Continuing to explore the work to publish *Desert of the Heart* reveals Rule's investment in keeping the book with respectable publishers, and far away from the sensationalist world of paperback publishing.

Desert of the Heart's publishing troubles did not end with the change in its representation from Wing to Hellmer. In October 1962, Hellmer wrote to Rule to tell her that Little Brown turned down the book. He enclosed the rejection letter and said he disagreed with its reasoning but requested its return, so it did not appear in the archive. However, he also notes that he had a discussion with Little Brown's editor who "said something even more foolish [than the formal rejection]: that a novel about Lesbianism must be written better than WALL OF LONELINESS (sorry if this isn't the exact title, but it slipped my mind)."[46] Hellmer, of course, refers here to Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, but the wording "better written" bears closer examination. More overtly, calling *The Well* better written suggests that *Desert of the Heart* lacked the literary style that would warrant its publication by a respectable publisher. As I have argued, this represents a

[45] Ibid., 46.

[46] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Kurt Hellmer to Jane Rule, October 8, 1962.

heavily classed distinction. However, it seems unlikely that the editor at Little Brown chose to make a purely formal or stylistic commentary on the difference between Hall and Rule's writing abilities. The comment comparing the two relates also directly to other publishers' carefully worded concerns about the available market. If *Desert of the Heart* did not represent a new entry into the pulp category of writing, and failed to meet the highly coded modernist formulaic standards of the Steinian genre, it must match *The Well,* in both literary style and theme. Rule had written her characters as refusing to cling to their self-hatred or to exile themselves from their community in Reno. Instead, she wrote them living out a happy life together which continues past the end of the novel's pages. *Desert of the Heart* did not fit the only genre of lesbian fiction appropriate for the middle-class mainstream presses to which Hellmer sent the book. The book's rejection based on its theme might seem obvious given the time, but the choices of justification for its rejection complicate a narrative of straightforward homophobia and draws out the additional element of class expectations. From these letters, a more detailed picture of Rule's early publishing woes emerges.

The description of the publishing process thus far paints Hellmer as an unreserved ally to Rule and her work. Indeed, Hellmer often took pains to portray himself as such. In another letter explaining the latest rejection in December 1962 (this time by Viking Press), he asks Rule to "please bear with me to get rid of this — (I refuse to say 'our' — because it isn't 'my') puritanical heritage."[47] He follows this with a quote from Viking Press, who felt that the sensationalist material (though "handled in an honest fashion") would not fare well with the publication's readership.[48] However, this dismissal of the puritanical heritage to which the

[47]UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Kurt Hellmer to Jane Rule, December 4, 1962.

[48]UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Kurt Hellmer to Jane Rule, December 4, 1962.

German Hellmer does not feel he belongs does have its limits. In the same letter, he tells Rule that a senior editor at Viking Press had signed the rejection "a female (which is mentioned as a fact, not as anything else, please)."[49] He also suggested that a manuscript for one of Rule's first attempts at a novel (titled *Not for Myself Exactly*) failed in "too many important aspects." Hellmer found it "disturbing" that Rule wrote the book in the first person from a man's point of view.[50] The agent drew a line at Rule writing as a man and pre-empted any feminist criticism of the presses rejecting the book. At the same time, he claimed not to subscribe to the prudish heritage which made publishers squeamish about a lesbian romance.

The inconsistency in Hellmer's allegiance to Rule produces an interesting avenue for further exploration of attitudes toward lesbianism prior to the height of its political movements. Hellmer's objections to Rule's behaviour and writing dealt much more with her non-conformity to his gendered expectations rather than explicitly with her lesbianism. Herein lies another example of the way in which Rule's class position played into the homophobia she experienced in the publishing world. Hellmer associates the failure to conform to appropriate middle-class virtues of femininity with lesbian desire, an association which Rule also experienced throughout her childhood. The attitude mirrors that held by peers and adults in Rule's teenage life, who reflected their anti-lesbian sentiments through the lens of wanting Rule to behave more like a proper lady. The questions posed by this examination of these letters' context do not deal with whether *Desert of the Heart* would have had an easier or more difficult time being published a decade later. Instead, it explores the specific circumstances under which the book *was eventually* published in England and Canada in 1964 and the United States in 1965.

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[49] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Kurt Hellmer to Jane Rule, December 4, 1962.

[50] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Kurt Hellmer to Jane Rule, October 31, 1962.

Following Simon & Schuster's rejection of the book in 1963, *Desert of the Heart* went out to McGraw Hill, who were, according to Hellmer,

> looking for novels of prestige, novels which won't necessarily be bestsellers, or rather novels, which they want to be proud of publishing, in contrast to pure money-making, mass appeal novels.[51]

This further demonstrates the attempt to create a new niche for books like *Desert of the Heart*, which might never become bestsellers, but would appeal to a specific market, and offer a particular image to the publisher and the author. What exactly made the book one which Hellmer thought McGraw Hill could be proud of publishing he leaves unsaid. He does, however, explain in his forwarding of McGraw Hill's rejection that he described the book to them as "on the borderline between literature and mass appeal."[52] This quote reads as the most honest description of Hellmer's relationship to *Desert of the Heart* within any of the letters. For Hellmer and the publishing world more broadly, *Desert of the Heart* was written too well and by someone of too high a class position to become a pulp novel. It also did not mimic the literary style of *The Well*, which served as a way of suggesting that *Desert of the Heart* was not literary enough for publication. The book did not contain sufficient misery and suffering for its lesbian characters to become the next *The Well* either. It straddled the line between literary respectability, and a lower-class pulp, and both Rule's agent and all of the agencies it went to tended to focus on the challenge that line represented, rather than outright rejecting the lesbian romance novel.

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[51] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Kurt Hellmer to Jane Rule, February 8, 1963.

[52] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Kurt Hellmer to Jane Rule, March 11th, 1963.

The book next went to Houghton Mifflin, whose New York editor, despite "objections to the lesbian story as such," appreciated the style of the book and sent it on to her colleagues in Boston for further reading.[53] They, too, ended up rejecting the book on the grounds that

> the novel's appeal necessarily rests on its sensational theme, and we feel we are not the house to capitalize on the kind of exploitation the book would need in making it a commercial success.[54]

The purpose behind reiterating the various reasons given for the twenty-odd rejections of *Desert of the Heart* lies in demonstrating that the publishers coated their homophobia with a middle-class veneer of respectability. While the publishers often cited the lesbian nature of the material as an issue for them, it served as the official basis for the book's rejection only a small handful of times. The publishers cushioned their homophobia in other concerns related to the existing market, the form and style of the novel, and their disinterest in becoming a publisher of pulp novels of *that* sort. Given the rampant and overt homophobia of the 1950s and 1960s, this cushioning came, initially, as a surprise. Rule's class background and the work with Hellmer to publish the book with a respectable middle-class press provides a possible explanation. Rule's class status demanded a certain level of respect, which produced a veiled homophobia in the publishers' rejections.

Hellmer and Rule did, of course, eventually end up placing the book. Hellmer writes to Rule on November 1, 1963, with

> great pleasure in informing you that the twenty-second publisher to whom PERMANENT RESIDENT was offered, namely the American-based World Publishing Company, today accepted your book for publication.[55]

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[53] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Kurt Hellmer to Jane Rule, March 15, 1963.

[54] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Kurt Hellmer to Jane Rule, May 2, 1963.

[55] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Kurt Hellmer to Jane Rule, November 1, 1963.

World had, in 1963, published books by Brigid Brophy and Simone de Beauvoir, placing Rule within a distinguished company of authors who also wrote books centring on women and women's politics.[56] The fact that World represented the twenty-second publisher to see the manuscript likely indicates that Hellmer and Rule were not particularly choosy about where to send the book next. However, Hellmer placing *Desert of the Heart* with a house responsible for the publication of women's literature rather than lesbian pulps settled the book permanently onto one side of the line between pulp, and literature. Although the respectability politics involved in such a system bear questioning, the types of feminist and lesbian presses with whom Rule would publish many of her subsequent novels did not yet exist. Writing a lesbian romance novel that refused to reproduce the various tropes set out by existing literature of the twentieth century was one thing. Placing it with a respectable press in the United States represented entirely different territory for the story Rule set out to tell. Although neither she nor Hellmer ever, from the archival material at least, put into words the desire to keep the book within the confines of literature rather than the mass market, the fact that the two never took the advice of many of the rejections to turn to publishers focusing exclusively on paperbacks suggests that Rule had a vested interest in keeping the book in a respectable market. Rule was committed, in actions if not in words, to keeping the novel away from the pulp genre. In finally publishing with World, she had succeeded, and the first book of its kind made its eventual way onto shelves.

However, the acceptance of *Desert of the Heart* did not represent the end of the woes of actually having the manuscript published. Rule explains why she preferred her original title of Permanent Resident in a draft of a letter to the editor at World who handled the book's publication.

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[56] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Kurt Hellmer to Jane Rule, November 1, 1963.

> The English publishers insisted on [*Desert of the Heart*], claiming that PERMANENT RESIDENT, as a phrase, would mean nothing to an English audience. I sympathized with their complaint about the original title, but I argued without success against their suggestion because their title suggests so many other similar titles and because it also echoed books like THE WELL OF LONELINESS. A comparison between the two books is bound to be made by someone, alas, but I'd just as soon not encourage a connection. […] The only other title I really considered was WHATEVER ONE LOVES, but I admit I'm not wild about that either because it might suggest propaganda of the sort I am not writing.[57]

Rule makes three assertions in this quote, all of them worthy of analysis. She begins by explaining the book's change in title when it was published in England. The original title of *Permanent Resident* refers to the residency requirement to which Evelyn's character must conform to obtain a divorce in Reno. In a 1996 article for *Smithsonian*, Robert Wernick asserts that in 1931, Nevada shortened the residency requirement for divorce from six months down to just six weeks to bolster a growing divorce economy. Wernick describes the divorce culture in the twentieth century as one which

> carried a social stigma. Nice people did not do it, and in most jurisdictions, the breaking of a marriage was deliberately made a slow, costly and embarrassing process. In a frontier state like Nevada, more tolerant views prevailed.[58]

At the end of the novel, Rule presents Evelyn in the courtroom, asked by a judge whether she intended to make Reno her home for an indefinite period, a question her lawyer explained as establishing that she fulfilled the residency requirement.[59] She becomes, in other words, a *Permanent Resident* in the eyes of the court. The title does not refer to the lesbian theme of the book's romance but rather to the divorce case around which the plot centres. The two additional assertions Rule makes explain why. She states her desire to avoid inviting comparison to Hall, which publishers had already begun doing in their letters of rejection. She also mentions her

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[57] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Jane Rule to Aaron Asher, November 12th, 1963.

[58] Robert Wernick, "Where You Went if You Really Had to Get Un-Hitched," *Smithsonian* 27, no. 3 (1996): 65

[59] Rule, *Desert of the Heart*, 220.

other possible title, *Whatever One Loves*, which she rejects because it falsely suggests the book promotes an agenda. Answering the question of whether the reason for this rejection represents the truth or merely a political choice given the climate at the time, requires a certain amount of speculation. However, given Rule's persistent anti-censorship stance and the unequivocal nature of Ann and Evelyn's relationship in the book, it seems likely that this represented her genuine feelings on the subject. This early nod to a political stance against propagandizing lesbian (or any other type of) relationship has later relevance to this thesis, and serves as a reminder that Rule intended to publish this book on her terms as much as possible. She did not want *Desert of the Heart* to become the next desperately sad tale of the woes of lesbian life, nor an erotic story wherein men could find sexual pleasure. Rather, the book was a story about human relations, which could show its readers a normal and familiar relationship dynamic, but between two women rather than between a woman and a man.

World Publishing assuaged Rule's fears. Asher's response to the letter assures Rule that the house had the same interest, stating that he wanted "to lay to rest your fears about propagandistic promotion on our part. The enclosed catalogues will indicate, I think, that we are not a cheap house. We have no intention of utilizing in a sensational manner anything in the book."[60] Rule's commitment to her book not becoming associated with the types of lesbian literature already available from the "cheap houses" to which Asher refers, might seem initially snobbish or otherwise problematic. However, I see it as vital to stress the complete non-existence of a lesbian romance genre that did not seek to arouse men sexually, or moralize and pathologize lesbian love as something to fear. Rule committed to having others see the unapologetically positive outcome of this story as worthy of literary esteem, which had crucial long-term

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[60]UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Aaron Asher to Jane Rule, November 19, 1964.

implications on lesbian life thereafter. She was also committed to doing so in a way that did not create an illusion of lesbianism as a perfect life, but rather as a type of human relation¾no better or worse than any other.

After further challenges related to editing and marketing, World finally did publish *Desert of the Heart* on June 20, 1965. Its first American review came out a month prior in *Publisher's Weekly*, which said that the book

> will probably sell because of the detailed macabre description of the gambling casino and because of the lesbian theme, which is treated with much sympathy and taste, not sensationally.[61]

Unfortunately for Rule, the early sales of *Desert of the Heart* proved *Publisher's Weekly* wrong. World attempted to find a paperback publisher for the book, avoiding, according to Hellmer, "selling it to a third-class publisher specializing in lesbian novels."[62] However, this initially failed, and, on June 7, 1966 (just shy of a year after the first edition's publication), the book sales dropped, and the publishers remaindered the stock at twenty-eight cents per copy.[63] Together, Rule and Hellmer had the rights to the book reverted to them to one day sell the publishing rights for a paperback edition themselves.[64] While events on the publisher's side do not show an initial success story, Rule also kept letters she received about the book, many of them responses to the first edition. Rather than those from Hellmer and World Publishing, it is these letters from which a picture of *Desert of the Heart*'s early impact truly emerges.

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[61] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Kurt Hellmer to Jane Rule, May 26, 1965.

[62] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Kurt Hellmer to Jane Rule, November 19, 1963

[63] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Bernard S. Deeter to Jane Rule c/o Kurt Hellmer, June 7, 1966.

[64] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Kurt Hellmer to Jane Rule, June 10, 1966.

In 1967, Rule received a letter from Carolyn B. Kane, a New Yorker who wrote to express her disappointment that *Desert of the Heart* had gone out of print, as she had read the book several times and wanted to give a copy to a friend. She wrote mainly hoping that Rule could suggest a place to get a copy. She signed off the letter by saying, "thank you again for your sensitive story of these two gentle, loving people. Please keep writing and publishing."[65] While Kane does not state in writing that she found something of herself in the book, the desire to share the novel with a friend, and her appreciation for the sensitivity with which Rule treated her characters suggests that, at minimum, something in the novel comforted her. Another letter from Marianne Morgan in California in October 1966 commends Rule's "honest, straightforward approach" and says that Rule's "in-depth treatment of the subject certainly tops Radclyffe Hall's." She, like Kane, asks Rule where to find more of her work. [66] Shortly following the book going out of print, a letter from Florence Brown Breene tells Rule "you cannot fail because the best of the world is with you and needs you […] The stigma is fading!! So courage with your pen!"[67]

These letters, a few among a whole folder of them which Rule kept for decades, demonstrate that the book did find an audience, many of whom shared the book with friends, and found in it solace that they were unable to find in books like *The Well of Loneliness*. As Breene tells Rule¾people needed her work. Not all the letters came from Americans either. Lois McCullagh of Vancouver wrote to thank Rule for her book, saying that "courageous novels on

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[65] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Carolyn B Kane to Jane Rule, March 27, 1967.

[66] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Marianne Morgan to Jane Rule, October 8, 1966.

[67] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Florence Brown Breene to Jane Rule, September 7, 1966.

homosexuality are sorely lacking unless one enjoys the purely sensational and erotic."[68] Most of the women writing to Rule do not state their sexual identity outright. Some, like Allene F. Schnaitter, hint at their partnerships without any explicit identification. In her 1965 letter thanking Rule for the book, she tells her that "I have resided for some years with a fellow librarian who also writes−mostly poetry, although she, too, is working on a novel."[69]

Women wrote from Canada, the United States, England, Wales, and Ireland. They held various jobs, told a variety of life stories, and alluded to their identities, which they found mirrored in *Desert of the Heart*. What they all make clear together, is the impact that the first edition of *Desert of the Heart* had on its readership, small though it initially may have been. They also make various statements about sharing the book. Allene Schnaitter remarks that her copy "yes, is owned, not borrowed," while others sought copies to give out to friends or read for themselves as the book circulated among their social group.[70] While this exchange of books does not suggest that *Desert of the Heart* experienced wild popularity in the first few years of its publication, it does indicate a wider readership than the publishers would have known from their sales numbers. More importantly, the book's impact on the lives of the women who read it and wrote to Rule to express how grateful they were to read a lesbian story that did not centre their misery, and Rule keeping those letters, demonstrates a commitment to those women and a sense of community with them.

I asked Judy Russell, a friend of Rule's who grew particularly close to her in the years prior to Rule's death, whether she thought Rule knew how important *Desert of the Heart* was to

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[68] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Lois McCullagh to Jane Rule, May 25, 1966.
[69] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 19, General Correspondence, Letter from Allene Schnaitter to Jane Rule, September 7, 1966.
[70] Ibid.

her readers, following a comment about how much the book had meant to Russell. She responded by stating,

> I think she knew because people told her. I honestly think that that was a very real thing for her to understand. Yeah. Yeah. I really believe that she knew. And I also think that she wore that mantle. She just was the Crusader on so many different levels for people.[71]

In an essay titled "Letters," Rule reflected on the letters herself, saying

> I feel my heart better informed for them. And they, as much if not more than reviews, describe the climate in which my books have been written […] To read those letters is not only to recognize suffering but to encounter remarkable courage. […] They have been support for me without which it would have been impossible to go on writing.[72]

The letters and Rule's response to them solidify what the process of publishing *Desert of the Heart* had already begun to reveal: a steadfast, honest, and deeply felt commitment to her lesbian community, and her relationship to it.

IV. *Lesbian Images*

Following the publication of *Desert of the Heart*, Rule continued to work at UBC as a professor until 1976. She and Sonthoff then decided to move permanently to the summer home they had bought a few years before, located on Galiano Island, following Sonthoff's early retirement from UBC. Rule had, by the time they moved, written two additional works of fiction. *This is Not For You* (1970) and *Against the Season* (1971) were both published by Naiad Press. Naiad was the creation of former *Ladder* editor Barbara Grier, who founded the press with the explicit purpose of publishing lesbian novels.[73] In the six years between the publication of *Desert of the Heart* and *This is Not For You*, Rule was able to move to a press whose work centered exclusively on lesbian content. Chapter Two offers a more fulsome account of the changing

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[71] Judy Russell (physiotherapist) in discussion with the author, October 29, 2021.
[72] Jane Rule, *Outlander* (Talahassee: Naiad Press, 1981), 191.
[73] Jaime Harker, *The Lesbian South: Southern Feminists, the Women in Print Movement, and the Queer Literary Canon* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 49. Harker gives a full and nuanced account of the founding of Naiad, which goes beyond the scope of this thesis but provides interesting and valuable background.

political climate during the early 1970s. For now, it is important to note the remarkable change in the publishers with whom Rule worked in the early 1960s compared to when she published her subsequent novels. Understanding the unique nature of *Desert of the Heart* relies on comparisons to Rule's later books and publishing efforts.

To transition between the focus on Rule's fiction writing and publishing and her writing and publishing for lesbian and gay political presses, the final section of this chapter explores Rule's first work of long-form non-fiction. In 1975, Rule published *Lesbian Images*. The book reviewed different types of lesbian literature, offering biographical, contextual, and historical information about the authors, as well as analysis of the works themselves. Rule intended to trace the many paths lesbian literature had taken by 1975, and called herself "proud to be in such company, to share such a risk and such a heritage."[74] The project documents that heritage and exposes the many nuanced portrayals of lesbianism in literature. In a letter to the book's editor Kate Medina in 1973, Rule crankily concedes that

> though I began this book and continue it with the uncertain faith that I am the person to be writing it, I do want to serve it as well as I can. Biased as I am in the conviction that literature offers more insight into the human condition than books on psychology or religious dogma, I think that it is important to know what has been written and what it says.[75]

I aim to take Rule at her word that she had a conviction about the role of literature in understanding human lives, and use *Lesbian Images* and the analyses Rule presented within it to better understand how Rule saw her relationship to the by then-burgeoning lesbian community.

Rule wrote to Medina after the transfer of *Lesbian Images* from its original editor Judith Finlayson. Rule called the book "[Finlayson's] enthusiasm rather than mine" and suggests that in the event the book turned out unpublishable, she would "at least have learned how much I enjoy

[74] Rule, Lesbian Images, 4.

[75] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 4, Lesbian Images, Letter from Jane Rule to Kate Medina, November 22, 1973.

the solitary independence of fiction writing."[76] Despite what one can only describe as the frosty tone of Rule's initial letter to Medina, she did devote considerable time and effort to the book. Rule explains that

> this book is not intended to be a comprehensive literary or cultural history of lesbians. It is, rather, a common reader–or not so uncommon reader–a statement of my own attitudes toward lesbian experience as measured against the images made by other women writers in their work and/or lives.[77]

She seeks to make clear that the women who explored lesbian themes in their work ought to surprise the reader with both their number and the diversity of their opinions, and experiences, "for no one can comfortably dismiss all those who find a place in these pages."[78] The focus on the diversity of lesbian experience represents a continuation of a theme in Rule's politics. She avoids homogenizing lesbian experience, something which would impact her relationship to both lesbian feminism and gay liberation.

Following the introduction, the first two chapters of *Lesbian Images* deal with the history of lesbianism and its persecution. While writing "Myth and Morality: Sources of Law and Prejudice," a chapter which deals mainly with the religious basis for many of the typical moral objections to homosexuality, and love between women specifically, Rule reached out to a friend–Bruce Jones. Jones was a lecturer in the Religious Studies Department at Mills College (Rule's alma matter), and provided feedback on Rule's religious analysis. Rule wrote to him after reading a copy of a lecture he delivered at Mills in 1972 titled "A Second Look at the Bible and the Homosexual." The lecture looks at commonly cited reasons for condemning homosexuality used by Christians, responding to examples such as Sodom and Gomorrah, verses

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[76] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 4, Lesbian Images, Letter from Jane Rule to Kate Medina, November 22, 1973.
[77] Rule, *Lesbian Images*, ix.
[78] Rule, *Lesbian Images*, ix.

from Leviticus, and the condemnation of homosexuality by Paul in Romans.[79] Jones closes the lecture with a comment which, he says

> tries to look at biblical theology as a whole: The whole experience of the covenant community says to me that persons become fully human in a relationship, in relationship to God and to one another. Cannot we consider all sexuality from that perspective?[80]

This sympathetic understanding of why gays and lesbians responded negatively to the Christian church and his encouragement of fellow Christians to understand all relationships as fundamental to the human experience led Rule to ask him for his thoughts on her analysis.

In her analysis, Rule links the hatred of the body and sexual acts to Christianity instead of Judaism.[81] Jones agrees with her in his comments but encourages her to consider that Christians gained their distrust of the body from a late Greek intellectual tradition, which she otherwise praises.[82] While the draft she sent Jones does not appear in the archive, her handling of the Greeks has more nuance than Jones' criticism implies. Rule reaching out to a Christian scholar to discuss her religious analysis suggests an academic rigour which foresaw criticism from Christians, and a desire to have the information as up-to-date and exact as possible, without responding directly to reactionaries who would have condemned the book regardless. While it is impossible to know how many of Jones' suggestions Rule incorporated in the final version of *Lesbian Images*, the evidence suggests that she took him seriously enough to make some changes to her language, and add nuance to her argument. Rule's commitment to the project and her desire to have it taken as seriously in the world of non-fiction proves as fierce as her dedication

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[79] Bruce Jones, "A Second Look at the Bible and the Homosexual" in UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 4, Lesbian Images, October 29, 1972. Jones explains in a later letter to Rule that he chose not to publish the article because much of it drew on other peoples'peoples' work, and he did not feel it contained enough original thought.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Rule, *Lesbian Images*, 21.

[82] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 4, Lesbian Images, Letter from Bruce W. Jones to Jane Rule, September 17, 1973.

to having *Desert of the Heart* taken seriously among fiction publishers. Rule cared about how people saw and understood lesbian relationships, demonstrating a political commitment to lesbianism and lesbian community.

Rule readily admits the reason for her interest in the subject matter and forgoes any pretense at scholarly objectivity. "I am so far from objective disinterest," she declares, "that my life, or at least the quality of my life, depends on what people think and feel about what it is to be a lesbian."[83] This declaration of herself as a lesbian does not represent the first time Rule made her sexuality clear to the public (she and Sonthoff had lived together openly since 1957), but it remains a radically public statement, even a decade after the publishing of *Desert of the Heart*. Rule could easily have chosen to hide behind the label of scholar. Indeed, her colleagues at UBC had encouraged that particular move after *Desert of the Heart*'s publication. Rule tells this story at the beginning of *Lesbian Images*. After World published *Desert of the Heart*, the English Department at UBC considered not reappointing Rule as a lecturer because of her sexuality. "My more liberal colleagues," Rule explains,

> defended me with the argument that writers of murder mysteries were not necessarily themselves murderers; therefore, it followed that a writer of a lesbian novel was not necessarily a lesbian. I was reappointed.[84]

Rule's declaration that the quality of her life *depended* on the public perception of lesbianism serves as another indication of her allegiance to lesbian community. It also pre-empts accusations of bias in her work by stating the bias outright. By aligning herself with lesbian community, and asserting her analysis as biased, Rule goes against the common suggestion that her work comes from a place of heterosexual scholarly interest. In a letter to a librarian at the

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[83] Rule, *Lesbian Images*, 3.

[84] Rule, *Lesbian Images*, 1.

Graduate Theological Union Library thanking him for his assistance in researching the book, Rule writes, "it isn't arrogance to say I will not write a book that is less than good. If I use my voice to speak for us, I must be able to speak in tongues, which for me is not transcending the rational but endowing the personal with the power of community we have."[85] With language like *us* and *we*, Rule makes it clear that, in writing *Lesbian Images*, she intended to place herself firmly as part of the lesbian and gay communities she saw forming around her. Her choices to remain visible, even when well-meaning friends or allies attempted to make her sexuality invisible, held real power, and she refused to shy away from the challenges that might present.

Unlike for *Desert of the Heart*, I did not find material related to the reception of *Lesbian Images* in Rule's archive. However, magazines, newspapers, and journals published several reviews of the book. Reviews written outside of the gay and lesbian feminist presses tended to critique *Lesbian Images* from the position that Rule failed to adequately define "lesbian." In the *Times Literary Supplement*, a British publication, Victoria Glendinning argued that the main problem with *Lesbian Images* was its dodging of "the question of where lesbianism in life or in literature begins and ends."[86] FE Kenyon, in *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, called the book "an un-satisfactory sandwich," and felt its greatest weakness lay in "ducking the central issue of how lesbianism should be defined; in this book at least it seems to mean what the author wants it to mean."[87] These critiques mainly sought to discredit the book on the basis that many of the authors Rule identified as lesbians simply had close female friendships, and that her work represented an ahistorical attempt by a lesbian author to find herself in the work of famous women. Both Glendinning and Kenyon also reference in their opening paragraphs the fact that

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[85] UBC-SC, Jane Rule Fonds, Box 4, Lesbian Images, Draft of a Letter from Jane Rule to Laurance de Vries, February 9, 1973.
[86] Victoria Glendinning, "Lesbian Images," *Times Literary Supplement* 3880 (1976): 904.
[87] FE Kenyon, "Lesbian Images," *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 130, no. 3 (1977): 310.

Rule outs herself in the book's introduction, something which clearly coloured the rest of their reviews.

Of greater interest in understanding Rule's relationship to gay and lesbian political communities are reviews published within the gay and lesbian feminist presses. In 1976, Boston-based feminist magazine *The Second Wave: The Magazine of the New Feminism* published Karen Feinberg's review. Feinberg praised the book's careful research, the evidence of Rule's "passionate concern for with love between women" and her choices of which authors to explore within the book.[88] However, she felt that Rule showed herself to be "not political," as she sympathized evenly with the "radical lesbian as with the woman still in the closet," something which Feinberg felt was "less than totally satisfying, a little too detached for [her] own anger."[89] This theme carried through another lesbian feminist review of the book. In her review of *Lesbian Images* for *The Body Politic*, Chris Fox argued that Rule's "detachment from the actual political fray may produce severe irritation for anyone involved in the very real pain of the struggles she outlines."[90] Not all lesbian feminists reviewing the book agreed, however. Donna Martin's review for Milwaukee publication *Gay People's Union News* felt that the book "demonstrated just how multifaceted is the lesbian experience¾and thus how unrealistic and potentially harmful it is to try and imprison the lesbian in some nice narrow social and/or psychological stereotype."[91] These reviews help to shape the debate about Rule's politics and level of political engagement, which requires looking outside of her early publications and into the world of lesbian feminist and gay liberationist politics in Canada.

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[88]Karen Feinberg, "Lesbian Images," *The Second Wave: The Magazine of the New Feminism* 4 no. 3 (1976): 48.
[89]Ibid., 49.
[90]Chris Fox, "Lesbian Images & Theme for Diverse Instruments," *The Body Politic* (November/December 1975): 22.
[91]Donna Martin, "Lesbian Images," *GPU News* 5, no. 1 (1975): 12.

V. Conclusion

Rule's early publications kept lesbian life and love at the forefront. Having grown up in the McCarthy era, Rule came out prior to the advent of a lesbian feminist movement. She saw a need to create and sustain lesbian community. By writing and publishing *Desert of the Heart* as an unapologetic lesbian love story, Rule offered her community a literary lifeline among otherwise sad and formulaic depictions in literature. While the book did not originally sell in huge numbers, letters to Rule strongly indicated both the devotion of the novel's early readership, as well as Rule's continued commitment to them. Her work made her lesbian life visible at a time when that visibility did not come with lesbian feminist community. However, her class, racial, and employment status all shaped her ability to be visible. Rule did not engage with the bar scene, which as Chenier, and Kennedy and Davis point out, opened lesbians up to a high level of violence, and state involvement in their lives. Unlike many other middle-class gay men and lesbians, Rule did not work directly for government institutions. She was also not part of the Canadian military. Avoiding both helped her to avoid the purges and surveillance described by Kinsman and Gentile. No study of Canadian university policy on homosexuality exists, so there cannot be a complete picture of the risk to Rule's employment¾although the fact that she was nearly fired from UBC does suggest that she experienced some employment insecurity. The complicated politics of Rule's privileges and oppressions bear further examination.

As the lesbian feminist and gay liberation movements gained ground and carried out political actions, Rule's life on Galiano Island began to cause rancour among lesbian feminists. In an interview with Betsy Warland, a lesbian author in British Columbia who knew Rule and Sonthoff, she remarked that Rule "wrote a lot of articles and was able to stay active politically in

that way but [Rule and Sonthoff] really were quite removed, from the ground, what was happening here."[92] This second picture of Rule, as separate from the community she wrote about, is the subject of Chapter Two.

[92]Betsy Warland (writer), in discussion with the author, October 12, 2021.

Chapter Two

"Hard to Stay Angry at a Sincere Liberal": Jane Rule, Lesbian Feminism, and Gay Liberation

It is not necessary for men to protect and despise women, nor for women to nurture and fear men. It is time for us to share subversive truths about the courage of men and women to live in diversity and peace.[1]

~Jane Rule

I. Introduction

This chapter explores the question of Rule's relationship to gay liberationist and lesbian feminist communities during the 1970s and early 1980s. Scrutiny of Rule's political allegiance, if based only on her fiction writing, might strike readers of her work as odd. Given the early publication of *Desert of the Heart* and Rule's public presence as an out lesbian from the 1960s onward, it seems logical to group her firmly into the emerging lesbian feminist political ideology. However, exploring her later work and especially her non-fiction, as well as the writing of others about her political perspectives, reveals a more complex political positioning. To assume that she instead positioned herself on the side of gay liberation also does not hold up when examining the evidence. Placing Rule on either the side of lesbian feminism or gay liberation does not sufficiently consider the nuances of her political views and fails to account for political actors who lived their activist lives between and sometimes in tension with the two politics.

Some scholars speculate that the reason for Rule's absence from histories of either lesbian feminism or gay liberation is the result of either scholars or her peers casting her as an

[1] Jane Rule, *Hot Eyed Moderate* (Kansas City: Naiad Press, 1986).

apolitical historical actor. In *Parallel Encounters: Culture at the Canada-US Border,* Canadian literature scholar Susan Billingham argues that Rule's

> writing has frequently been castigated as apolitical or as not political in the correct ways: her texts have been regarded (variously) as too humanist, too assimilationist, and too realist at a time when lesbian literary trends favoured separatism, utopian role models, or postmodern linguistic experimentation.[2]

Marilyn Schuster argues in *Passionate Communities* that while Rule's fiction writing "incorporates multiple points of view," refusing to write exclusively about the lesbian experience, her works "are not apolitical exercises in relativism."[3] In accordance with Billingham's assessment, Schuster writes that Rule "has been considered assimilationist or domesticated - two attributes disdained by queer culture."[4] Schuster's and Billingham's literary analyses reveal interesting possibilities for the reason behind Rule's absence from the historical literature, and the question of Rule's possible reputation as "apolitical" requires further historical context in order to adequately address it.

The primary sources contain some evidence to support Billingham's and Schuster's arguments. In Fox's 1975 review of *Lesbian Images*, she contends that

> Rule's treatment of non-fiction about lesbians is again, unimportant to most political gays. In fact, her detachment from the actual political fray may produce severe irritation for anyone involved in the very real pain of the struggles she outlines.[5]

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[2] Susan Billingham, "Detained at Customs: Jane Rule, Censorship and the Politics of Crossing the Canadian-US Border," in *Parallel Encounters: Culture at the Canada-US Border,* ed. Gillian Roberts and David Stirrup (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2013), 262.
[3] Marilyn R. Schuster, *Passionate Communities: Reading Lesbian Resistance in Jane Rule's Fiction* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 41.
[4] Ibid., 50.
[5] Chris Fox, "Lesbian Images & Theme for Diverse Instruments" *The Body Politic* 21 (November/December 1975): 22.

In my interview with Warland, she called Rule and Sonthoff "removed from the ground."[6] Canadian legal scholar, and former contributor to *The Body Politic* Mariana Valverde told me she

> had the sense that [Rule] was of the previous generation and that, you know, postmodern irony or gender bending or anything of the sort would've been totally beyond her and she did have a sort of realist style of writing that even in the early eighties was no longer really with it or cool.[7]

Much of this chapter is devoted to teasing out the question of how Rule ended up with a reputation of being apolitical in some later scholarship. I argue that Rule's lack of consistent alignment with lesbian feminism meant that lesbian feminists defined her as insufficiently political. This language did not actually mean the same thing as apolitical, but the loss of historical context has caused the two to become interchangeable. By looking back into the historical context, a slightly different explanation for Rule's exclusion from these histories emerges.

This chapter begins by offering a contextual history of lesbian feminism and gay liberation, in particular the split between the two and their subsequent political positions. It then delves into the issues of misogyny and separatism; sexual liberation and pornography; and the AIDS crisis, exploring each side's political writing, and debate on the subjects, and then situating Rule within them. Rule held political opinions which deviated from both gay liberation and lesbian feminism as it manifested itself in the 1970s, and early 1980s. Nuances of political perspectives are easily lost when writing histories of large organizations, and these accounts necessarily flatten out the subtle and not so subtle disagreements between individual members. Rule shared in these disagreements. However, her points of departure from the consensus were

[6] Betsy Warland (writer), in discussion with the author, October 12, 2021.
[7] Mariana Valverde (sociologist), in discussion with the author, October 21, 2021.

more pointed, more public, and traversed the lines between gay liberation and lesbian feminism. This chapter argues that the history of the divide between gay liberation and lesbian feminism makes it difficult to situate individual historical actors whose politics do not neatly fit into either of those worlds. Looking at Rule as an example of such an individual actor both tells us more about the context of her own politics, and offers a public example of political work and activism in the in-between.

II. Timeline of Lesbian and Gay Activism in Canada and the US

In *Making a Scene: Lesbians and Community Across Canada 1964-84*, Liz Millward describes the development of lesbian political community over the course of two decades as having

> commenced with ASK [Association for Social Knowledge] in the 1960s. From that time on, a lesbian scene developed in fits and starts, gaining momentum in the 1970s and splintering in the early 1980s along lines of racialized identity, class distinctions, generational differences over political priorities, and, in some cases, the redirection of energy to the politics of HIV.[8]

This overview encompasses how lesbian and gay political organizing shifted from the mid-1960s, when Rule published *Desert of the Heart*, to the mid-1980s when she largely retired from writing. This next section of the chapter provides a timeline of organizing in Canada from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s, which also includes a discussion of some of the influences emanating from the United States. Early organizers divided themselves into various radical groups that included both gay men and lesbians. By the 1970s, these groups split into more centralized organizations, and were divided along gendered lines, developing into lesbian feminism, and gay liberation. In the early 1980s, these organizations fractured further, as

[8] Liz Millward, *Making a Scene: Lesbians and Community Across Canada, 1964-84* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 25.

Millward points out, along class, racial, generational, and political lines. Each of these phases of organizing influenced political priorities and the rigidity of organizations' political stances.

In the 1960s, gay and lesbian organizing had not yet split, for the most part, along gendered lines. Instead, different groups tended to involve both gay men and lesbians, and split between more radical militants, and less radical assimilationists. Gay liberationist activist Tom Warner's *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada* describes a New York based group which represented the more radical end of this organizing spectrum. It also had offshoots in major Canadian cities during the 1960s. He writes:

> The Gay Liberation Front (GLF), which, using a radical new rhetoric, stated one of its objectives as being to 'examine how we [gays] are oppressed and how we oppress ourselves.' GLF's use of 'front' a word borrowed from the National Liberation Front, the Vietcong group within Vietnam engaged in a war against the United States, was deliberate. Some of the founders of GLF also had close ties, or at least affinity, with the militant Black Panther Party, which worked for the liberation of oppressed and impoverished black Americans, and the left wing, antiwar group, Students for a Democratic Society. They saw themselves as a revolutionary front that would free gays, lesbians, and all oppressed peoples.[9]

The GLF, importantly, advocated for an approach based on fighting oppression on all fronts, which exemplified one type of organizing popular in the 1960s. Rather than focus on a single oppressed group, the GLF, and its many political followers across both the United States and Canada argued that true liberation lay in the liberation of all.

Simultaneously, however, other lesbian and gay groups began to organize in Canada. Warner explains that

> the first and most successful group was ASK, founded in Vancouver in April 1964 […who] committed to 'seriously confront Canadian society with the fact of its homosexual minority' and challenge Canadians to treat homosexuals with justice and respect and to work for reform of criminal laws on sexual activity."[10]

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[9] Tom Warner, *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 62.
[10] Ibid., 59.

While the group had early ties to a predecessor of the GLF, by 1966, ASK's statement of purpose reflected what Gary Kinsman described as "the transformations within homophile organizing as the group shifted more clearly to a gay and lesbian organization."[11] The GLF's focus on multiple issues existed alongside groups like ASK, who quickly shifted their mission to focus singularly on gay and lesbian oppression. This rapid shift demonstrates that the debates about radicalism and militancy which the GLF espoused impacted Canadian organizing both for and in opposition to it. The single-issue focus won, at least temporarily, by the end of the 1960s. According to Warner, in 1969, following the Stonewall riots and the fall of GLF groups across the continent,

> a new model for organizing emerged and spread across North America. […The Gay Activist Alliance] (GAA) described itself as a 'militant (though non-violent) homosexual civil rights organization.' It claimed to be 'exclusively devoted to the liberation of homosexuals and avoids involvement in any program of action not obviously relevant to homosexuals.'[12]

This early debate on political focus preceded the split along lines of gender in the 1970s, but it had an early impact. By shifting away from a holistic focus on fighting all types of oppression, organizations like GAA, and its offshoots, also ignored the impact of gendered oppression. The consequences of this shift in political priority did not take long to emerge.

> Kinsman, in his book *The Regulation of Desire: Sexuality in Canada*, explains that
>
> the early movement tried to unite lesbians and gay men and to ally itself with a feminist critique of sex and gender relations, but this initial unity was shattered as differences between lesbians and gay men exploded.[13]

The lesbian politic against which scholars and organizers would eventually measure Rule's political stances emerged in the context of this explosion. Warner describes the split further:

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[11]Gary Kinsman, *The Regulation of Desire: Sexuality in Canada* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1996), 234.
[12]Warner, *Never Going Back*, 68.
[13]Kinsman, *Regulation of Desire*, 289.

> lesbians became angry at the sexism and misogyny of gay men, and the reluctance of these men to deal with them. They encountered a profound disinterest on the part of gay men to take up issues important to lesbians.[14]

The fact that organizations like the GAA had focused on the politics of gay organizing along a single axis of oppression meant that lesbians felt left behind by their former allies. Millward argues that, in the Canadian context,

> organizations [that] had been created and developed by men […] rarely showed much interest in undergoing a complete redesign to cater to the aspirations of women as well. Instead, women's political, social and ideological demands appeared to be add-ons, never fully incorporated into the existing structures.[15]

The mounting frustration that resulted from this apparent disinterest in incorporating a gendered analysis did more than annoy lesbian organizers on an interpersonal level. Young lesbian-feminists, in particular, felt that gay men ignored the power dynamics inherent in debates around sexuality, focusing exclusively on the right to have sex with each other.[16] The lack of gendered analysis in the political organizing of the early 1970s caused this frustrated group of younger lesbians to split off, forming what became the most recognized and studied form of lesbian organizing in the 1970s through the early 1980s: lesbian feminism.

Faderman, in *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in America*, defines the lesbian feminists of the 1970s as the

> revolution of those young women who loved other women and wished to make a political statement out of their love but denied that they were 'gay.' They insisted on being called lesbian-feminist.[17]

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[14] Warner, *Never Going Back*,
[15] Millward, *Making a Scene*, 143.
[16] Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in America* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 1991), 211.
[17] Ibid., 205.

In describing the women as young and political, Faderman differentiates them from their predecessors in the 1960s; those women had organized alongside gay men and frequently called themselves gay. Faderman explains further that

> While lesbian-feminists, as homosexuals and as feminists, had natural affinities with other gay and feminist groups, their relationships were not always without ambivalences. Butch/femme women and older middle-class and wealthier lesbians generally shunned them for their radicalism. Racial and ethnic minority lesbians felt that lesbian-feminist goals were irrelevant to the major problems that minorities faced. Feminists sometimes feared that lesbian-feminists would stigmatize the whole women's movement as being made up of nothing but a bunch of man-hating dykes. Movement gay women felt uncomfortable with the separatist program of some lesbian feminists. Though there were occasional useful and fulfilling coalitions and mergers between lesbian-feminists and members of other groups, mistrust was frequent.[18]

Lesbian feminism represented the most prevalent form of lesbian organizing in the 1970s, and its tenets resulted directly from the split from gay organizations, whose lack of gender politics proved consistently disappointing at best and harmful to the cause at worst. It was not, however, as Faderman points out, the only type of lesbian politic at the time. Earlier organizers did not disappear, but eschewed the radical politics which this new generation of lesbian feminists brought to their work, particularly the split away from gay men. Millward offers the argument that in the Canadian context, "some groups also debated the question of whether lesbians and gay men could or should work together."[19] Valerie Korinek argued that in smaller and more rural areas, gay men and lesbians did not have the luxury of debating that question, as population size, small town politics, and culture forced people to work together.[20] These ambivalences in both United States and Canadian organizing make it necessary to be precise when discussing lesbian feminism in the 1970s. Rather than assuming that lesbian organizing existed as an unnuanced monolith, lesbian feminism in this thesis refers to the organizing undertaken as described by

[18]Ibid., 209.
[19]Millward, *Making a Scene*, 143.
[20]Korinek, *Prairie Fairies*, 10.

Millward and Faderman: a leadership consisting of younger organizers who made a political statement out of their love for other women, while refusing to define themselves under the umbrella of gay liberation.

Despite not representing a unanimously agreed upon politic, lesbian feminism did have a strong political influence in the 1970s in urban English Canada, particularly in Vancouver and Toronto. Giving context to the rise of LOOT from the early 1970s, Becki Ross explains that,

> bursts of long suppressed anger and passion touched off a series of axioms: 'lesbians live what feminists theorize about,' 'lesbians are the women's movement's natural leaders,' 'lesbians are the revolutionary vanguard of the women's movement,' 'lesbianism is the very antithesis of the male power struggle,' and 'lesbians are the most liberated women.' To those who believed in this powerful, essentialist discourse, 'lesbian + feminist' became the quintessential, uncontested symbol of protest against the male domination and inhibitive sex/gender roles. It also became the ideological heartbeat of a new and potent identity-based politics. […] Throughout the early-to-mid 1970s, the most well-organized expressions of grass-roots feminism in Toronto (and most other large centres) embodied the conceptual framework of gender separatism.[21]

Ross' "conceptual framework of gender separatism" refers to the lesbian feminist political stance that lesbians should separate from men as much as possible. The definition of separation varied across a spectrum, with some organizers feeling that separation from men meant politically and in organizing, where others saw separation as a goal in all aspects of life (in alignment with the popular feminist tenet "the personal is political"). Warner argues that in "Canada, separatism remained, for the most part, a small, but very vocal, minority view among lesbians. It never really took root here."[22] Political scientist Miriam Smith maintains that separatism did find roots in Canada. Quoting her interview with Vancouver based lesbian feminist Frances Wasserlein, Smith notes

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[21] Becki Ross, *The House that Jill Built: A Lesbian Nation in Formation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 43.
[22] Warner, *Never Going Back*, 82.

> 'there was a much more developed separatist ethic among radical feminist lesbians in the late 70s, early 80s than ... is the case now.' […] Autonomous lesbian organizations such as LAR in Vancouver 'functioned in a cultural way' according to Wasserlein."[23]

While the degree to which separatism gained support in Canada is the subject of some debate in the scholarship, there is support for the idea that a more moderate form of separatism contributed to the political success of lesbian feminism in Canada. Ross summarized the reason for lesbian feminism's rise in popularity, saying

> in the mid-to-late 1970s in Toronto, lesbian feminists felt caught between a mainstream culture that either ignored or oversexualized their existence, a women's movement and left organizations mostly content to preserve the invisibility of lesbians, and a gay-liberation movement that tended to equate political lesbianism with asexual puritanism.[24]

When arguing that Rule's politics fell outside of lesbian feminist politics in the mid-to-late 1970s, I do not contend that she fell outside of all lesbian politics, or represented a unique point of view. Instead, I argue that she came up against this specific form of lesbian organizing and politics, which had developed a strict orthodoxy in response to the misogyny organizers experienced in larger movements.

Kinsman argues that understanding the history of lesbian and gay liberation requires situating that history

> within a broader context of sexual and social struggles over the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and equality rights on the one hand and intensified sexual policing and the continuing denial of our actual sexualities and relationships on the other.[25]

This divide between a rights based, and liberation based politic described by Kinsman co-existed with the continued separation of the gay and lesbian activist movements. Warner explains that

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[23]Miriam Catherine Smith, *Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada: Social Movements and Equality-Seeking, 1971-1995* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 33.
[24]Ross, *The House that Jill Built*, 136.
[25]Kinsman, *The Regulation of Desire*, 375.

> by the early 1980s, it seemed that more divided the lesbian and gay liberation and feminist movements than united them. Lesbians who sought to work with gay men were caught in the middle - and in the crossfire.[26]

This further fracturing, alongside shifts in Canadian legislation, and the enactment of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, created a political climate which resulted in a multitude of visions of liberation. On the one end of this political spectrum, developed over the course of the previous decades, were the sexual liberationists whose "militancy on sexuality issues grated on assimilationist, equality-seeking advocates."[27] The other end of the spectrum, represented by these assimilationist activists, who had roots 1960s groups like ASK, made use of the advent of the Charter to further legal, and rights-based protections of private sexual acts. Kinsman identified this strategy of legally protecting sexual orientation as the important work of years of campaigning but a "relatively limited tool for bringing about lesbian and gay liberation [… as it] does not stop criminalization of sexualities or guarantee our spousal and family rights."[28] These political debates about strategy and goals recall the early divides in lesbian and gay activism during the 1960s. Often these groups are thought of as homogenous movements for gay rights. Understanding the various lines along which these groups organized paints a more nuanced picture of the political landscape of these decades. People like Rule prove easier to place in this more nuanced history, existing in the political in-between. Rule represents a particularly public example of this type of political actor, who refused to align consistently with one side of any of the debates in gay and lesbian activism in Canada.

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[26]Warner, *Never Going Back*, 131.
[27]Ibid.
[28]Kinsman, *The Regulation of Desire*, 363.

III. Misogyny and Separatism

The Canadian form of separatism discussed in Ross' and Warner's works, which has been described as having a less militant quality than its United States counterpart, gained some popularity in the mid-1970s. Emerging lesbian feminist theory saw lesbianism as both a sexual orientation and the living out of a feminist utopia. Rule published an essay titled "Integration," summarizing her stance on lesbian separatism in 1985 in *A Hot Eyed Moderate*, saying:

> I try not to make a principle of being politically incorrect, for rebelling against a code can be as limiting as serving it. I depart, valuing the journey. I object to lesbian separatism because it, like all forms of bigotry, judges people by gender and class rather than as individuals. To assume that all negative traits we call male would disappear if there were no men is to reveal the basic error of labeling aggression, competitiveness and violence as masculine. The Margaret Thatchers and Indira Gandhis and Golda Meirs of this world should disabuse us of the hope that women, given power, would necessarily run a more peaceful world than men. Finally, lesbian separation would not simply cut women off from men, but cut lesbians off from the majority of women who will not be persuaded that isolation from men can solve anything.[29]

The first portion of the essay clarifies Rule's stance on lesbian separatism, and she makes a case against it as a political goal. As explored above, these debates about goals and strategies pervaded lesbian organizing since its early days. Rule states that she believes in creating spaces separate from oppressors as a stage in the process of organizing, and acknowledges the history of hostility between lesbians and gay men. She states "that lesbians refuse to participate where they are given second-class citizenship is important. Where they refuse to cooperate with gay men because they are men is finally self-defeating."[30] Rule's stance on lesbian separatist politics reveals an awareness of the history which created them. The essay's support of "any beleaguered group to have opportunities to be exclusive" expresses sympathy for the reasons behind lesbian separatism's existence as a political framework without supporting it as a political end goal. This

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[29] Jane Rule, *A Hot Eyed Moderate* (Kansas City: Naiad Press, 1986), 96.
[30] Ibid.

represents one example of a larger theme in Rule's contributions to debates in lesbian political organizing, where she agrees with the political premise but not the end goal of lesbian feminist politics.

One place where discussions about political goals among lesbian feminists occurred in print was in the radical feminist publication *Broadside*. In her autobiography, Eve Zaremba, a founding member of the collective running *Broadside*, explained that the collective, overwhelmingly lesbians, began *Broadside* to produce something better than the feminist papers that were already in production in the late 1970s; she recounted that "collective members were white, educated, and overwhelmingly lesbian."[31] While *Broadside* was not an officially lesbian publication, and a portion of its contributors were straight, it mostly gave voice to the group Zaremba describes.

In a 1980 article in *Broadside*, Val Edwards responded to the closing of LOOT's headquarters at 342 Jarvis Street, which had acted "for years" as "the only lesbian centre in Canada."[32] Edwards met the news with some despair, and attempted, in her article, to conduct what she saw as a kind of post-mortem on the lesbian community in Toronto. She describes wanting to title the article "The Strange Death of the Toronto Lesbian Community" but changed her mind, saying "I'm not at all sure the community is dead; I'm even less sure that it has ever really existed as a community. And yet there is no doubt that something has happened, that we've changed."[33] Edwards laid the blame at the loss of a separatist politic in Toronto. She felt that without separatism as a tenet exclusive to lesbians, there no longer existed a purpose for a defined lesbian community:

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[31]Eve Zaremba, *The Broad Side* (London, ON: Insomniac Press, 2015), 154-8.
[32]Val Edwards, "The Invisible Community," *Broadside* 1, no. 10 (1980): 4.
[33]Ibid.

> As the drive to develop a distinct lesbian culture dissipates, so too does our only real hope of creating something that can be properly called a community. For without separatism, however loosely we define it, there is no such thing as lesbian politics — our only hope of attaining a powerful common denominator — for the simple reason that there are no purely lesbian issues. Our efforts to build an autonomous lesbian movement have centred, up until now on isolating and developing a lesbian cause. But the cause is a myth. Even custody rights for lesbian mothers — our big apple pie issue — can be analyzed completely in terms of the oppression of women on the one hand, and the oppression of gays of the other.[34]

Ultimately, Edwards concluded that the time for a distinct lesbian politic had passed, and that the only way forward was to establish openly lesbian presences in both gay and women's liberation movements instead.[35]

Readers of *Broadside* met Edwards' article with furious backlash. *Broadside*'s collective published three of the letters it received in response in its next issue. Judith Quinlin declared that

> our purpose — our power — is contained in the fact that we are lesbians. […] *The boys have proclaimed the death of our movement countless times*. We do not need to proclaim it for them.[36]

Quinlin refers here to the tendency of gay liberationists to write off lesbian feminism as stubbornly avoiding the obvious¾that their political community could not survive without gay liberation. To suggest that this argument had merit represented political betrayal to the lesbian feminist cause. Edwards critiqued the desire to define "lesbian" as anything other than a woman who sleeps with other women. An anonymous writer rebuked this point, saying

> a lesbian is not, and cannot be perceived in the patriarchal terms, as just a woman who prefers to sleep with other women. If that simple definition were true, then all the revelations and growth I have experienced since emerging as a lesbian would be invalid. I know that is not true for myself, nor for the lesbian community.[37]

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[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., 14.
[36] Judith Quinlin, "Letter One," *Broadside* 2, no. 1 (1980): 8. Italics my addition.
[37] Anonymous, "Letter Two," *Broadside* 2, no. 1 (1980): 8.

Definitional debates, attempts to find the political lines the community should organize along, and disagreements about the ultimate political goals of lesbian feminism occurred frequently. This debate in *Broadside* represents only one example, but it illustrates the intensity with which radical lesbian feminists responded to being lumped in with gay men, who, in Quinlin's words, "proclaimed the death of the movement countless times."[38]

Zaremba herself also gave a framework for understanding the differences in opinion which split lesbian political communities. In an interview with Bronwyn Bragg in 2008, Zaremba explained that there was

> a real split through the lesbian community and politicized lesbians. And by and large, non-political lesbians preferred hanging out with gay men rather than with straight women to a large extent. At least they felt freer because, of course, a lot of straight women were very antsy about lesbianism.[39]

Zaremba calls lesbians who did choose to create organizing communities with gay men "non-political." While one could read Zaremba as referring to a more general group of lesbians, she made an example of Rule in the interview, saying

> Jane Rule wrote for *Body Politic* on and off. And I'm not saying she was against feminism, she wasn't. But she really liked the guys, you know, they would sit, they would go and visit her, on Galiano and go through a couple of bottles of scotch and have a good time. And while the women that used to go there, all wanted to go to bed with her. And the guys didn't, so that would make it easier.[40]

Zaremba provides evidence of the specific betrayal of lesbian feminist political values working with gay liberation represented. In labelling Rule as an example of a "non-political" lesbian, Zaremba was not saying that Rule held no political values, or that she acted apolitically. What Zaremba meant was that she was not aligned with the lesbian feminist politic that advocated for separation from gay liberation organizing. Rule, while not "against feminism" in Zaremba's

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[38] Quinlin, "Letter One," 8.
[39] Eve Zaremba (author) in discussion with Bronwyn Bragg, September 2008.
[40] Eve Zaremba (author) in discussion with Bronwyn Bragg, September 2008.

view, did not offer adequate support to the lesbian feminist cause. Though Zaremba calls her non-political in this instance, a clearer phrasing would define Rule as deviating from a particular political orthodoxy. Understanding this dynamic proves vital to understanding Rule's political positions in the 1970s and 1980s.

Zaremba and Rule engaged with one another through Rule's writing in *The Body Politic*. In 1982, Rule published a column titled "Why I Write for *The Body Politic*" in their tenth anniversary issue. Rule defended her positive view of the publication; she explained that her gay friends, both men and women, frequently challenged her writing for it. She responded that

> 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 […] I am kept informed about our scholars, artists and politicians as well as our victims and fighters.[41]

Rule held this position consistently; she did not wish to become a mouthpiece of any one political stance. Zaremba strongly challenged Rule in a response one month later:

> 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. This may be true for gay men, but it most assuredly is not for lesbians. We have the feminist movement. [… *The Body Politic*] is a fine paper in many ways, but it does not speak for me. Its content, choice of issues, presentation, emphasis, advertising policy do not represent my interests or my political or sexual orientation.[42]

Zaremba makes several points in her letter to the editor. She reads Rule's work as implying that lesbians' only recourse against oppressive power structures lies with aligning with gay liberation. This suggests that she, at minimum, wanted to make clear where she saw Rule's alliances. Her assertion that *The Body Politic* might speak for others, but it did not speak for her exemplifies her later explanation of *Broadside*'s origins¾that none of the political papers available in Toronto wrote adequately about lesbian feminist politics. Examining the back and forth about

[41] Jane Rule, "Why I Write for The Body Politic," *The Body Politic* 80 (January/February 1982): 38.
[42] Eve Zaremba, "Agree to Disagree," *The Body Politic* 81 (March 1982): 4.

The Body Politic not speaking for Zaremba helps to show two sides of a political split. It was less about being aligned with gay men, and more about not voicing the right kind of lesbian feminist perspective. Rule's column defending her writing for *The Body Politic* struck a nerve in the lesbian feminist community. Their response, through Zaremba, irked Rule and others like her.

Rule hit back against Zaremba's letter in the following issue. Her response implies that Zaremba hid behind a critique of the paper when her actual problem lay in the fact that Rule did not contribute to *Broadside*. Rule wrote:

> There is certainly enough to do for *Broadside*, an admirable enterprise, to keep more than a few women committing full or all of their spare time to it, and I know Eve Zaremba is active in other areas of the women's movement as well. So, we don't disagree about how she uses her time, only how I use mine […] For me it is time marvellously well spent, however, because I am able to express views which don't fall into the category of preaching to the converted. […] My problem with buying any party line, whether it's lesbian separatism, sexual liberation, socialism or the Unitarian Church is that commitment to a shared view seems to become exclusive and simplistic. I am no more comfortable with some articles in *Broadside* than I am with some articles in *The Body Politic*. I don't expect any paper or magazine always to speak for me. *I speak for myself.*[43]

The choice to emphasize that she *speaks for herself*, after accusing Zaremba of demanding that Rule buy the lesbian separatist party line, drives home Rule's most public quarrel with this part of the lesbian feminist political world. Various factors contributed to Rule's refusal to align more firmly with this segment of the lesbian feminist movement. Her view, which she clarifies in her response to Zaremba, was that to align too closely with lesbian feminists was to have them expect her to speak for others.

Rule was not the only lesbian to publicly take issue with Zaremba's statement about *The Body Politic*'s failure to speak for her. In a letter to the editor in the May edition, Port Moody resident Eleanour LeBourdais argues that what Zaremba says about *The Body Politic*

[43] Jane Rule, "Strange Bedfellows," *The Body Politic* 82 (April 1982): 4. Italics my addition.

> can also be said of almost all other newspapers, most of the literature written down through the ages, the bulk of the contents of the public library system and any other heterosexually oriented media.[44]

Zaremba responded to both critiques in the following issue, proclaiming her dismay that Rule had taken her original letter as a personal attack, and arguing that her statement about *The Body Politic* not speaking for her was one of "fact, not of condemnation."[45]

The reason I have discussed this public debate between Zaremba and Rule in such detail is that it suggests locating Rule within the gay liberation movement, existing wholesale outside of the political sphere of lesbian feminism, relies on a particular lesbian feminist narrative. This narrative represents only one element of lesbian political work in the 1970s. Indeed, this politic proved popular and had its roots in legitimate issues with gay liberation. However, the argument that Rule aligned herself exclusively with gay men is not supported by much evidence. One can certainly argue that Rule did *not* align with a branch of lesbian feminism in Toronto in the 1970s and 1980s. Rule's lack of alignment with that particular group, however, did not mean anyone saw her as an apolitical actor. Rather, it provides insight into lesbian feminism's view of Rule's politics, which were aligned with the wrong kinds of political organizing, not no political organizing at all.

In an interview with Barbara Herringer, who first lived in Toronto before moving to Vancouver, she analyzed Rule's relationship to hardline political stances, saying,

> certainly there was an orthodoxy that I really didn't like, and maybe that's what Jane felt like. She didn't wanna, you know, have to toe a particular line. She was following her own path for years before many of us showed up.[46]

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[44]Eleanor Lebourdais, "Better to Differ?," *The Body Politic* 83 (May 1982): 4.
[45]Eve Zaremba, "A Third Option," *The Body Politic* 84 (June 1982): 4.
[46]Barbara Herringer (writer) in discussion with the author, November 30, 2021.

This argument provides further evidence that a closer examination of the theory that Rule had no relationship to lesbian politics actually relates to her adversarial relationship to the specific type of lesbian feminist organizing at the time. Rule engaged with questions of misogyny in gay liberationist organizing, and lesbian separatism but reached different conclusions from those made popular by what Ross called "a new and potent identity-based politics."[47]

IV. Sexual Liberation and Porn

The contentious nature of Rule's political opinions, and her tendency to arrive at different conclusions from those reached by her lesbian feminist counterparts did not exclusively revolve around questions of separatism. In the 1970s, another issue developed between gay male and lesbian feminist organizers. Warner explains:

> Angry, divisive debates raged over the agenda of sexual liberation, especially regarding issues principally driven by gay men: abolition of the age of consent; support for pornography and opposition to censorship; promotion of consensual sex in places the law considered to be public. Particularly problematic were radically differing views of sexuality expressed by some elements of gay and lesbian liberation on the one hand and many feminist lesbians on the other, causing a deep rift that seemed unbridgeable.[48]

Sexual liberation represented a political priority for gay liberation organizing at the time. As Warner points out, this umbrella encompassed issues related to consent laws, access to pornography, and public sex. Ross explains that her interviewees who had worked with LOOT expressed their dismay that

> gay men towards whom they might lean for support were either busily perfecting misogyny through camp and drag, roaming the bars decked out in hyper-sexualized 'Village People' gear, or losing themselves in super-masculine disco 'clone' appeal.[49]

When referring to the divide of the 1970s, this collection of issues represented a battleground on which the lack of gender based analysis on the part of gay liberation organizers played out. In a

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[47] Ross, *The House that Jill Built*, 43.
[48] Warner, *Never Going Back*, 119.
[49] Ross, *The House that Jill Built*, 86.

1974 essay in the Toronto based feminist paper *The Other Woman*, Gillean Chase criticized the failure of gay liberation to divert its attention away from the question of sexual liberation:

> it is not surprising that the behaviour of the oppressed lends itself to extremes. So one could say sympathetically: 'of course. It's a fucked up world.' But. I'm not prepared to be nearly so liberal. I believe we are all responsible for our behaviour and how we oppress each other and ourselves. It is not accidental that male organizations for gays provide travelogues about where to get laid from town to town¾an index of places to go for possible sexual adventures. It is not accidental that 'The Body Politic' prints pictures of pretty boys and personal ads for 'desirable' companionship. Few women feel comfortable with such blatant sexual orientation. Few women flaunt their bodies with one another the way gay men do.[50]

The goal of having sex freely and with whomever drew criticism from lesbian feminists who felt strongly that this failed to consider how that goal impacted the lives of women, particularly those who were victims of sexualized violence. In response, gay men began to cast lesbian feminists in a role of "asexual puritanism," accusing them of falling in line with Christian anti-sex values in the name of feminist politics.[51] Rule's own stance on the questions of sexual liberation and its limits became public during one of the most contentious debates in Canadian sexuality activism.

In the December 1977 issue of *The Body Politic*, editor Gerald Hannon published an article titled "Men Loving Boys Loving Men." In it, Hannon recounts his interviews with three men, who identify themselves as "boy-lovers," under the pseudonyms "Simon," "Peter," and "Don." The article argued that intergenerational relationships between men and boys were always consensual, frequently romantic, and served the purpose of teaching the young boys about sex and their bodies. Hannon did not use the article, or his interviews, to probe questions of power dynamics, or consent politics. He presented the interviews without criticism. In *Queer Progress: From Homophobia to Homonationalism, Body Politic* organizer Tim McCaskell

[50] Gillean Chase, "Gay Pride? Week," *The Other Woman* 3, no. 1 (1974): 16.
[51] Ross, *The House that Jill Built*, 136.

explained that the piece "was originally conceptualized as a way of confronting the hysteria about children and sex."[52] Hannon intended, according to the article, to show that

> the media equates boy-love and child molestation. And they use that equation as a weapon against all gay people. Children are molested when they are physically or psychologically coerced into a sexual act, and that sort of thing is almost exclusively a heterosexual preoccupation.[53]

His goal was to argue that the use of children's safety as a weapon against gay men's liberation represented a false narrative, that child molestation occurred at the hands of heterosexuals (and mainly fathers), not at the hands of gay men. The collective running *The Body Politic* had the piece for six months prior to publication, and published it with the disclaimer that "the climate will never be right […] The tide must be resisted, the discussion must be opened up."[54] In his book, McCaskell remarks that collective member "Ken Popert later mused 'that didn't mean that every time was right.' But it was the grand argument at the time, an argument for bravado."[55]

To say the article exploded both within and outside of the gay liberationist community is an understatement. The backlash began with the publication of an article on December 22 by *Toronto Sun* columnist Claire Hoy titled "Our taxes help promote abuse of children."[56] In his memoir, *Body Politic* editor Rick Bébout called this

> a familiar line, though this time *The Body Politic* actually had got some government bucks: two annual grants from the Ontario Arts Council, all of $1,500 each -- maybe two percent of our entire budget.[57]

Hoy published a second article on December 25, titled "Kids, not rights, is their craving." The *Sun* ran an editorial a few days later, as did the *Globe*.[58] Amounting for most readers to a defense

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[52]Tim McCaskell, *Queer Progress: From Homophobia to Homonationalism* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2016), 126.
[53]Gerald Hannon, "Men Loving Boys Loving Men," *The Body Politic* 39 (December1977): 30.
[54]The Body Politic Collective, "Men Loving Boys Loving Men," *The Body Politic* 39 (December 1977): 29.
[55]McCaskell, *Queer Progress*, 126.
[56]Claire Hoy, "Our Taxes Help Homosexuals Promote Abuse of Children," *Toronto Sun*, December 22, 1977, 20.
[57]Rick Bébout, *Promiscuous Affections: A Life in the Bar, 1969-2000* (self pub., 2001), rbébout.com.
[58]Ibid.

of paedophilia, the Canadian criminal justice system launched a court case against the *The Body Politic* which would last many years, beginning with a police raid of subscription lists, manuscripts, advertiser contracts, and unpublished materials on December 30, 1977.[59] Hannon, along with collective members Popert and Ed Jackson, was charged with using the mail to distribute "immoral, indecent and scurrilous" material.[60] Although both in Canada and the United States, gay and lesbian organizers publicly rallied around the publication against both the raid, and the criminal charges, internal debates about the article's content, and publication raged within the gay and lesbian movements.

While *The Body Politic* certainly expected and was prepared for backlash from the mainstream media and the Canadian state, they also had to contend with the awkward position in which other gay and lesbian organizers found themselves. Ross summarized LOOT's position:

> A meeting of LOOT's newly resurrected political committee held in early January 1978 to discuss the 'Men Loving Boys Loving Men' crisis signalled one of few conscious attempts made to generate analysis and to formulate and implement policy. Though the debate unleashed fundamental disagreement on multiple levels, most lesbian feminists agreed that the bad timing of the article could have been prevented. Published when it was, they argued, it endangered the civil-rights campaign that seemed to be gaining momentum. Bluntly told, void of nuance, the sensationalist account worked to feed and reinforce the myth of the homosexual child molester, hence providing right-wing organizers with fuel for their pro-family, anti-homosexual backlash. In fact, some LOOT members and a handful of outspoken gay men believed that the exposé confirmed their own and the general public's worst fears about homosexuals [….] Many LOOT members felt that the portrayal of Men Loving Boys tested and ultimately broke the already strained back of joint lesbian/gay activism.[61]

This meeting's summary suggests that this lesbian feminist organization felt that the lack of concern about how the public would receive the articles demonstrated a lack of care by *The Body Politic's* collective. In her doctoral thesis, Kelly Phipps argued that

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[59] McCaskell, *Queer Progress*, 127.
[60] Warner, *Never Going Back*, 109. They were eventually acquitted of these charges, after two appeals.
[61] Ross, *House That Jill Built*, 166-67.

> 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 […] lesbian feminists did not conceive of the possibility that some lesbians and feminists might align with an alternate ideology.[62]

Although Phipps convincingly points to lesbian feminists' hardline stance on the issue, members of their community also voiced dissenting opinions, which contradicts her argument that they did not conceive of alternate viewpoints. Valverde, who Phipps' thesis places firmly on the lesbian feminist side of the debate, recalled attending the community meeting discussed by Ross, where she defended *The Body Politic*. "I didn't wanna defend that particular article," Valverde told me, referring to "Men Loving Boys Loving Men"

> because I thought, well, Gerry Hannon is so naive. He just has no understanding of power relations, whether it's in relation to gender or in relation to age, you know, I mean he had this totally naive kind of sexual liberationist view, which I thought was really passé.[63]

Nevertheless, Valverde considered *The Body Politic* itself, including any missteps, as worthy of defense, and felt that some of the critiques from fellow lesbian feminists bordered on aligning with the homophobic conservative mainstream, "in the sense of thinking that gay men are likely to be child molesters."[64]

Zaremba, too, had a more nuanced view of the article and *The Body Politic* than Phipps' thesis suggests. She published her thoughts in *Broadside* saying that lesbian feminists would not, of their own accord, produce a collective opinion on the nuances of inter-generational relationships. She called the topic "quintessentially male" and bemoaned the fact that, despite being

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[62] Kelly Phipps, "'Look over here, look over there, lesbians are everywhere': Locating Activist Lesbians in Queer Liberation History," (PhD diss., Concordia University, 2019), 120.
[63] Valverde in discussion with the author, October 21, 2021.
[64] Ibid.

> ambivalent about the issue, here we are again being asked to contribute money, time and effort in the name of freedom of the press. Is it any wonder that many of us feel that we have been manipulated?[65]

She too, however, voiced her ultimate support for *The Body Politic*, at least in terms of its legal battle, saying "I want *BP* to win this case in spite of my disagreement with many of its policies and tactics. It's important that the homophobic authorities lose."[66] Zaremba and Valverde both appear in Phipps' thesis as vocal members of the lesbian feminist community she sees as having a one-sided view on the issue, but Valverde's and Zaremba's actual writing on this question challenges that thesis. LOOT did produce a position at the meeting Ross discusses, namely that "pedophilia is neither a feminist nor a lesbian issue."[67] However, the argument that this position represented an unnuanced lesbian feminist political perspective fails to account both for the complexity of these women's views on the issue, and the hefty debates which led to this stance. "Men Loving Boys Loving Men" resulted in a clearly painful and difficult conflict both within the lesbian feminist movement and between lesbians and gay men.

Rule contributed her view to the discussion of "Men Loving Boys Loving Men" in 1979 through her *Body Politic* column. She stated that,

> the furor created by *The Body Politic*'s 'Men Loving Boys Loving Men' posed hard political questions for me. On the one hand, I deplore repressive police action designed not only to stifle any discussion of the subject of sexual activity across generations, but also to intimidate anyone even so involved with the paper as to be a subscriber. On the other hand, I understand the rage against sexual exploitation by men not only of children of both sexes but of women and other men, the pleasures of which *The Body Politic* can sometimes be accused of advertising.[68]

These "hard political questions" align with those discussed by lesbian feminists in Toronto. Far from distancing herself from these questions, Rule actively participated in the same debate,

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[65] Eve Zaremba, "Freedom to Oppress," *Broadside* 1, no. 6 (1980): 4.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ross, *House that Jill Built*, 168.
[68] Jane Rule, "Teaching Sexuality," *The Body Politic* 53 (June 1979): 29.

suggesting that she was aware not only of *The Body Politic*'s perspective on the issue, but also that of lesbian feminists. Beyond awareness, this article demonstrates a deeply felt sympathy for the lesbian feminist anger at the editorial board of *The Body Politic* for encouraging what they saw as sexualized violence by men. Where Rule diverts from the line established (though hotly debated) by LOOT is again in her recommended strategies for moving forward. She does not argue that *The Body Politic* ought not to have published the article; instead, she makes a case for having such conversations as openly as possible. In the conclusion of the article, she states

> if we accepted sexual behaviour between children and adults, we would be far more able to protect our children from abuse and exploitation than we are now. […] Children are sexual, and it is up to us to take responsibility for their real education. They have been exploited and betrayed enough by our silence.[69]

Rule offers an analysis which contributes a clear understanding of the power dynamics missing from Hannon's article. Her understanding of that power, however, leads her to conclude that those concerned about inter-generational sex ought to engage in de-stigmatizing the issue, rather than avoiding it for the sake of respectability. In voicing her view that this de-stigmatization would contribute to the "real" sexual education of children, Rule criticizes Hannon's argument that inter-generational sex between men and boys aids in the sexual education of the minors involved. This again demonstrates Rule's continued engagement with the politics of the era, and her refusal to conform any one political orthodoxy, instead forging an independent opinion which considered all sides. "Men Loving Boys Loving Men" posed complicated questions for both gay liberationists and lesbian feminists, and contributed to the deepening of the split between the two. However, Rule and many others found themselves caught in the in-between, and for many, no one clear answer ever emerged.

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[69] Ibid.

There were other battlegrounds between lesbian feminists and gay liberationists on questions of sexual liberation that went beyond debates over articles published in *The Body Politic*. Another issue worth exploring is that of pornography. Warner offers context, calling the debate over pornography and censorship "inflammatory" and explaining that

> some feminist organizations converged to seek greater state regulation of pornography and obscenity. Considerable organizing by women's groups against pornography in which women were humiliated, degraded, or victims of violence […] was securing both political and mainstream support.[70]

Anti-pornography feminists, of whom lesbian feminists made up a considerable number, theorized pornography as propagandizing the violence inherent to the patriarchal system, some going as far as to cite it as the root cause of women's oppression.[71]

McCaskell cited the pornography debate as having "contributed to the unravelling of the short-lived lesbian and gay unity" of the early 1970s. He summarized the stance of gay liberationists, saying that they saw the war on pornography as the resurgence of right-wing conservatism.[72] This again points to what Ross identified as a major problem for lesbian feminists, namely that gay liberationists cast them as sexual puritans whenever they disagreed with the sexually explicit, indeed pornographic, aspects of liberationist activism.[73] In a letter to *The Body Politic* in 1982, Yvonne M. Klein argued that

> those who fight against [pornography] are accused of puritanical feminism; and this argument continues only because the men who defend the civil liberties of pornographers are unwilling to confront the implications of that defense namely that they care more about the rights of pornographers than about women.[74]

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[70] Warner, *Never Going Back*, 124-5.
[71] Shannon Bell et al., *Bad Attitude(s) on Trial: Pornography, Feminism, and the Butler Decision* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 18-9.
[72] McCaskell, *Queer Progress*, 139-144.
[73] Ross, *The House that Jill Built*, 136.
[74] Yvonne M. Klein, "You're All Guilty," *The Body Politic* 80 (January/February 1982): 4.

Pornography exemplified, perhaps more than any other issue, that gay liberationists did not sufficiently take feminism into account, at least in the view of lesbian feminists.

Rule offered her perspectives on the pornography debate more than once. It became the subject of a disagreement between her and Bébout, her editor at *The Body Politic*. In 1981, *The Body Politic* published Rule's review of Andrea Dworkin's *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*. Dworkin was at the forefront of the anti-pornography feminist movement and had written to Rule personally to request that she review the book, despite Rule's warning that she was unlikely to review it positively.[75] Rule kept to her word. In the review, she criticizes Dworkin's main arguments, stating that

> to put all men into the category of beasts and murderers is to embrace the same blind hatred of the sex which Andrea Dworkin accuses men of in their attitudes towards women as nothing more than sexual objects.[76]

She calls Dworkin's writing hot-headed and full of misdirected anger, and critiques her tendency to aim to convert, rather than convince, the reader.[77] However, Rule's anti-censorship and nuance-based politics which form the basis of her critique also formed the basis of her argument with Bébout. She wrote to him, in a style by now familiarly cutting, and polite:

> in my review of Andrea Dworkin's book, one whole paragraph has been deleted. It is the paragraph most specifically positive about the work she has done […] it looks very much like political censorship.[78]

Bébout's hasty response assured Rule that the mistake occurred during copy editing, and while he could see how it looked, he hoped that a printing of both the missing paragraph and an

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[75] Jane Rule to Rick Bébout, May 27, 1981, in *A Queer Love Story*, ed. Marilyn Schuster (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 11.
[76] Jane Rule, "Pornography as Proof," *The Body Politic* 74 (June 1981): 27.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Jane Rule to Rick Bébout, May 27, 1981, in *A Queer Love Story*, 11.

apology in the following issue would help to rectify the situation and Rule's trust in the paper. He also copied Dworkin in his response.[79]

Rule's initial concerns that *The Body Politic* had attempted to censor her work focused on the fact that the omitted paragraph had extoled the strengths of Dworkin's book. She refused to allow the publication to obscure her commentary on the piece of the book about which she had the most positive things to say. This reveals something about her refusal to align herself unquestioningly with gay liberationist politics. Even outside of the omitted paragraph, Rule concedes that, although Dworkin borders on extremism akin to the violent pornographers, "about pornography she is right. The scenarios for our torture and destruction are not entertainment. It is hate literature against half of human kind."[80] Like in the cases of "Men Loving Boys Loving Men," and lesbian separatism, Rule understands and sympathizes with the lesbian feminist argument, acknowledging the accuracy of their analyses, but she disagrees with their political solutions. Her disagreement was on two points. First, she argued against Dworkin's generalizations about men as inherently violent, and second, against the theory that censorship would solve the problem. In a 1984 column on pornography, Rule wrote:

> I think one of the basic failures in recent debates in *The Body Politic* about pornography and censorship is some women's inability to see that censorship won't work, and some men's inability to see that pornography is an issue as important as, and separate from, freedom of expression.[81]

In her support for the feminist characterization of pornography as hate speech and her rejection of the feminist cure of state-sponsored censorship, Rule lived in a political in-between, and her writing consistently demonstrated it. Even as she described her review of Dworkin's work as negative, she acknowledged what Dworkin got "right" about the politics of pornography. Rule

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[79] Rick Bébout to Jane Rule, June 1, 1981, in *A Queer Love Story*, 12.
[80] Rule, "Pornography as Proof," 27.
[81] Jane Rule, "Pornography" *The Body Politic* 100 (January/Feburary 1984): 33.

frequently aligned herself with lesbian feminist analysis, disagreeing more about political strategies than about the problem.

Rule's stance against state censorship of pornography did not represent as polarizing a position in the early 1980s as it would during the sex wars of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Chris Bearchell, another lesbian contributor to *The Body Politic*, explained that she didn't think

> in the early days, the women who were shaping [the anti-pornography] campaign had the same agenda, which the pornography movement later evolved to have.… When I engaged them in personal conversations, [many of them were] at least as opposed as I was to the idea that the state should in some way monitor or police or decide what was acceptable or not acceptable to be said or written or published. So, although they might have objected to images in pornography or the availability or the display of certain pornography in certain situations, they would not have recommended the use of the obscenity laws and the police as a way to respond to them.[82]

Over the course of the decade, the issue became distinctly more divisive, as Bearchell suggests. As the debate over pornography continued, "sexuality became polarized in an either/or opposition - it was a site either of oppression and danger or of pleasure and agency."[83] Understanding this shift in the language around sexuality and pornography in feminist and lesbian feminist organizing matters when analyzing Rule's place in this discourse. Bearchell argues that the pro-state censorship component of anti-pornography activism in Toronto came about in the late 1980s.

Lise Gotell describes the tenets of the anti-pornography movement by the end of the 1980s:

> sexual representation was viewed as harmful; sexuality was defined as inherently violent and dangerous; pornography was increasingly subsumed within the social problem 'violence against women'; *and the necessity of new forms of legal regulation became widely accepted*.[84]

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[82] Miriam Catherine Smith, "Interview with Chris Bearchell, Lasqueti Island, 1996," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 48, no. 1 (2014): 259

[83] Shannon Bell et al., *Bad Attitude(s) on Trial*, 25.

[84] Lise Gottell "Shaping Butler: The New Politics of Anti-Pornography" in *Bad Attitudes on Trial*, 60. Italics my addition.

This explanation focuses on the shift to a politic which saw state involvement as necessary, something which both Gotell and Bearchell describe as a phenomenon of the late 1980s. Rule made her comments publicly during an earlier period. This did not represent a perspective ahead of its time; rather it seems to fit with a discourse about pornography that recognized it as harmful, and nevertheless maintained an anti-censorship stance, which is the very discourse that Bearchell argues existed feminist communities in Toronto in the early 1980s. Here again, the questions of politics of the in-between become relevant to understanding the reception and critique of Rule's history, thinking, and writing. Viewed through the lens of a late 1980s anti-pornography discourse, Rule's opinions were seen as being on the wrong side of lesbian feminist politics even though she shared more with her contemporaries than this criticism allowed for.

V. AIDS

The beginnings of the AIDS crisis in the early 1980s tested the strong sexual liberation position within the gay liberationist community. Understanding Rule's engagement with questions of sexual liberation requires an understanding of her engagement with the early days of the AIDS epidemic. Rule wrote about AIDS publicly and communicated frequently with Bébout about *The Body Politic*'s articles and communication strategy on the subject. As the question of how the disease spread caused widespread fear about the culture of casual sex and multiple partners prevalent in gay male communities, concerns about state repression of gay sexual activity arose within gay liberationist spaces. Rule's writing about AIDS reveals another avenue through which her nuanced and anti-state intervention politics became clear.

On October 30, 1982, Bébout wrote to Rule to say that

> Tim McCaskell and I have had an odd flu¾fever, muscle aches, sensitive skin and now a sore throat, but through it all, most overwhelmingly, fatigue. Apparently, it's going around. Gerald [Hannon] has a cold; others are trying to be very careful.[85]

Rule's response did not indicate that she understood the implication of the letter. Bébout, however, already feared the outcome by this time, his lover having written a 10,000-word article about Kaposi's Sarcoma, one of the original theories for the source of AIDS. In Bébout's autobiography, he writes about the period that he worked

> with a thermometer in my mouth, charting my temperature for my doctor Phillip Berger […] looking for lesions that might mean Kaposi's. There were none. He tested for mononucleosis: negative. Other infections, too. All negative. I felt lousy well into December. But it passed, undiagnosed.[86]

The following summer, Rule published an article on AIDS in her column, which she sent to Bébout to edit in April. Titled "An Act of God," Rule's article cautioned against allowing fear of the unknown to have unintended consequences on gay spaces in Toronto. She noted "we are all concerned that health authorities might use the excuse of AIDS to close down the baths and must resist those attempts unless evidence justifies them."[87] Bébout responded to the article agreeing with Rule, articulating his concern that "death is random, not the result of deciding to 'fight' […] this very randomness is what makes AIDS dangerous politically."[88] Bébout's early response to the AIDS crisis demonstrates the initial concerns of sexual liberationists about how the state could weaponize the panic over AIDS against the strides made toward having sex freely in gay spaces. Rule's concerns aligned, in this case, with the liberationists. While she was not fighting about the right to engage in any particular sexual act, Rule maintained that state involvement in censoring, or otherwise legislating consensual sex between adults would make

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[85] Rick Bébout to Jane Rule, October 30, 1982, in *A Queer Love Story*, 57.
[86] Bébout, *Promiscuous Affections*, 1982 May 31 through December.
[87] Jane Rule, "An Act of God" *The Body Politic*, July/August 1983, 39.
[88] Rick Bébout to Jane Rule, April 26, 1983, in *A Queer Love Story*, 83.

things worse for gay men, and for lesbians. McCaskell described the desperate attempt to balance safety with protecting a sexual liberationist politics:

> *The Body Politic* railed against panic, but sex radicals were helpless as community mores changed in response to the epidemic. The promiscuity we had once celebrated seemed at best irresponsible. At worst, suicidal. Couples were definitely in. Even the terms were changing, from the sexually focused 'lover' to the far more salubrious 'partner.'[89]

In December 1983, Bébout penned *The Body Politic*'s second long form piece on AIDS, titled "Is There Safe Sex?" The piece echoed many of the concerns that Rule and Bébout had discussed in their letters in 1983. Bébout cautioned readers that the world did not yet know what caused AIDS, and that

> the urge to find conclusive evidence of what will [give you AIDS] has led some scientists and the media (especially gay media) to trumpet any new research wrinkle as a route to *the* answer.[90]

This article represents an attempt by Bébout and *The Body Politic* to impede the use of AIDS-based fear mongering to curtail homosexual sexual pleasure. Bébout attempts to clarify what the research at the time actually said about sexual practices causing AIDS. He argues that the research did not, yet, know what caused AIDS, and that, therefore, any advice had at least some basis in speculation.[91] Based on the most common theories about the causes of AIDS, Bébout advised readers to take the time to get to know prospective sexual partners, use condoms, and not to make decisions fueled by panic. Because numbers in 1983 remained fairly low, Bébout argued that

> we have a chance in Canada ¾ and in many other places where the number of diagnosed cases is still small ¾ to find ways of dealing with AIDS without giving into unreasonable fears. The key to that process is going to be information and the intelligent application of it.[92]

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[89] McCaskell, *Queer Progress*, 386.
[90] Rick Bébout, "Is There Safe Sex: Looking Behind Advice on AIDS," *The Body Politic* (December 1983): 33.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid., 36.

In his autobiography, he reflects on the process of writing and publishing the piece. "We rarely spoke of sex as anything but free and easy," he explained, "we ¾ gay men especially ¾ had learned no language for talking about sex as complex, painful, maybe even dangerous. Now we had to. To save our lives and to save sex, too."[93]

Rule wrote to Bébout following the issue's publication. She praised the "marvelous piece you've done on safe sex, full, clear, fair and responsible without being alarmist."[94] This does not mean that Bébout downplayed the seriousness of AIDS. He sought to demonstrate to the readers that "all advice is based on speculation […] anything said about the causes of AIDS can only be founded on theories, assumption and arguments by analogy with other diseases."[95] Rule's assessment of the piece aptly exhibits the balance Bébout sought to strike. *Responsible without being alarmist* was more than an eloquent writing goal; it was the political objective of the article. In a letter to Rule following the article's publication, Bébout writes that Michael Lynch called it "all very Ricky Bébout," which Bébout explained meant he had "done my standard trick of taking a relatively firm line in so soft a way that almost everyone would be happy with it."[96] This represented a very delicate political stance at the time.

> In 1996, Kinsman's article "'Responsibilty' as a strategy of governance" explored the
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> tendencies towards responsibilizing and normalizing in the context of social struggles over AIDS and sexual regulation allow for those constructed as 'responsible' to be managed through forms of self-regulation and professional forms of governance of their lives.[97]

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[93] Bébout, *Promiscuous Affections*, 1983 October through December.
[94] Jane Rule to Rick Bébout. December 1, 1983, in *A Queer Love Story*, 109.
[95] Bébout, "Is There Safe Sex," 35.
[96] Rick Bébout to Jane Rule, December 23, 1983, in *A Queer Love Story*, 113.
[97] Gary Kinsman, "Responsibilty' as a strategy of governance: regulating people living with AIDS and lesbians and gay men in Ontario," *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 25, no. 3 (1996): 394.

Kinsman explains that, in the early 1980s, activist groups tended to get entangled in practices of regulation around AIDS, which involved a rhetoric of personal responsibility, focusing mainly on an individual diagnosed with AIDS.[98] Bébout taking a stance against that, even with the adoption of a diplomatic tone, meant going against both public health and many gay community organizations' messaging. Bébout's writing and Rule's assessment of it each denote a keen awareness of these challenges, and their context.

Both Rule and Bébout demonstrated a clear commitment to not feeding the widespread moral panic in their writing about the early days of the AIDS epidemic. This matters when seeking to answer the question of Rule's political alignment. The argument that Rule developed a reputation as apolitical, made by some literary scholars, has already been complicated by the distinction between apolitical and a failure to conform to particular political orthodoxies explored throughout this chapter. Rule's complex and nuanced positions on important political issues, such as the AIDS crisis, reveal a deep interest in the complicated questions of sexual liberation, communication, government policy, public health, and safety.

VI. Conclusion

The review of *Lesbian Images* by Chris Fox in *The Body Politic* exemplifies the combination of respect for a community figure, and frustration by lesbian feminists at Rule's insufficiently radical politics. Fox states that "it's very hard to stay angry at a sincere liberal who is willing to use her position as a well-known writer to better the lesbian's position in society."[99] Rule became a symbol onto which it was easy to project decades-long debates over radicalism, separatism, gay men's role in lesbian organizing, and respectability politics. But throughout those debates, Rule maintained a consistent political presence. Her failure to align herself with a

[98] Kinsman, "'Responsibilty' as a strategy of governance," 395.
[99] Fox, "Lesbian Images," 22.

specific politics makes her hard to place, but reading her work in the context of other writing about her reveals the complexity of her political position, and the political position of others. Without a careful examination of the context, reading lesbian feminists' assessments of Rule might suggest they saw her as apolitical or disinterested in important issues. The context of such statements reveals that they saw Rule as insufficiently committed to a specific lesbian feminist cause, not insufficiently committed to politics at all. Her work frequently sided with lesbian feminist analysis, but she also often disagreed with separatism, or with advocacy for censorship or state intervention, arguing instead for unity, and cooperation between lesbians and gay men against the state. Rule's life and work contributed enormously to lesbian and gay political discourses in Canada. The trouble in locating them does not lie in the number of times Rule participated, but rather the in-between, nuanced and independent nature of her political positions.

Conclusion

"I Have Never Lived in a Subculture"

"The sense in society is that special sexuality is totally defining and limiting.
I'm not writing to prove that it isn't so. I'm simply writing out of my sense of the world as I live in it." ~Jane Rule[1]

Histories of gay liberation and lesbian feminist movements, particularly in Canada, have only just begun to delve into the complexities and nuances of their politics, strategies, and discourses. These histories provide insights into broad political goals, major debates, and the relationship between these two movements. Crucially, however, many of the political actors of the 1970s and 1980s lived in political in-betweens. This thesis sought to use the life and work of one such historical actor to demonstrate such complex realities. By applying historical analysis to Rule's life and work, I illustrate how important the contextual histories of class, gender, and sexuality politics are to understanding these lives in the middle. Scholars who have written on Rule to date largely do so through the lens of literary analysis. This work provides vital insights into how form, style, characters, and plot all exhibit Rule's personal and political views. By combining their work with the contextual histories provided by scholars working on gay liberation and lesbian feminism in Canada, a fuller picture of her political involvement emerges. Living in the political in-between did not, for Rule, represent disinterest in the advancement of lesbian liberation. In fact, her life and work testify to a deeply felt commitment to lesbian liberation, and lesbian communities. Nuanced pictures of political organizing help us to consider the diversity of opinions and discourses that shaped them, and offer insights into how scholars might investigate these histories in the future.

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[1] Geoff Hancock, "An Interview with Jane Rule," *Canadian Fiction Magazine* 23 (1976): 90.

Chapter One of this thesis began by exploring the historical context of coming of age as a lesbian during the McCarthy era in the United States. Offering this context served a broader purpose throughout this study. Understanding that Rule did not come of age with the support of a visible lesbian political movement helps to contextualize her fierce commitment to being an independent political voice later in her life. The chapter then moved to an examination of existing lesbian literature prior to the publication of *Desert of the Heart*. This literature broadly fell into three categories: the self-punishing literary novels like Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, the sensational and lurid pulp novels written by authors like Ann Bannon, and heavily coded modernist literature like Gertrude Stein's *Melanctha*. *Desert of the Heart* did not fit the literary conventions of any of the categories. Rule's class background placed her closer to authors like Hall, but many publishers felt that her novel was insufficiently literary to follow in *The Well*'s footsteps. Both Rule and her agent worked hard not to have *Desert of the Heart* published by a pulp press, whose advertising would have made the book seem vulgar and whose reputation would have associated the novel with a lower class of readership. This complicated combination of class politics and homophobia resulted in over twenty rejections from publishers. Nevertheless, Rule remained committed to having her lesbian romance novel published by a mainstream, respectable, hardback press. This chapter aimed to balance the complexity of the politics and prejudices involved to demonstrate Rule's political commitment to bringing a lesbian love story to a mainstream audience.

Chapter One concluded with an analysis of Rule's first book of non-fiction. *Lesbian Images* helps to solidify Rule's sense of responsibility to lesbian communities. By exploring how she wrote about the book to her editor and friends, the final section of this chapter aimed to demonstrate that Rule felt very strongly that her work held meaning for her lesbian readership.

She did not want to write about or for them badly. Offering this analysis of her non-fiction also bridges the gap between Chapter One and Two, as it introduces Rule's commitment to lesbian liberation outside of her fiction writing. Given that much of the scholarship on Rule focuses on her fiction, this additional analysis of her non-fiction and the context in which it was produced helped to introduce the historical analysis presented in Chapter Two. Chapter One focused on demonstrating that Rule's absence from literature on Canadian lesbian history cannot be explained away by suggesting that she had a lack of interest in or commitment to lesbian communities.

Chapter Two began by offering a plausible hypothesis for Rule's absence from some of the secondary scholarship. These scholars argued that Rule had a reputation for being apolitical within lesbian feminist communities. The chapter interrogates this hypothesis by first offering the historical context of gay liberation and lesbian feminism in Canada and the United States, including the complex and often tense relationship between the two movements. This context helps to make sense of what many felt was at stake during a time of tumultuous and fast-paced political change. Having offered this context, Chapter Two placed Rule within it by offering examples of specific debates within these movements along with Rule's interventions and engagements.

I argue in Chapter Two that scholars should not seek to answer the question of Rule's political alignment by placing her firmly on one side or the other of lesbian feminism or gay liberation. Rather, her participation in these movements was predicated on her ability to remain independent of the orthodoxies in both. That independence, crucially, did not mean that Rule failed to engage fully with the complexities and nuances of the debates that raged in the 1970s and 1980s. As I illustrated in Chapter Two, Rule's writing on various issues, both publicly and in

her private correspondence, demonstrated her understanding of different sides of questions related to pornography, separatism, and messaging around the AIDS epidemic. By providing important contextual information, and examining how Rule's independence was received by other political actors, Chapter Two focused on situating Rule in the political in-between.

Rule's archive contains almost eleven meters of textual records and over 9000 photographs. There remains so much more about her life and work to research and analyze. During my own research, one theme emerged that fell outside of the scope of this thesis, but would introduce another avenue for complicating our understanding of gay liberationist, and lesbian feminist movements. In my interviews, I asked participants what they considered to be Rule's most controversial political position. Her close friends Ann Saddlemeyer and Joan Coldwell replied that "the question of marriage, of course, came up a great deal. She hated the notion of referring to your partner as your wife."[2] Warland, similarly, identified being against marriage as among Rule's most controversial opinions.[3] Identifying this as Rule's most controversial stance reveals an interesting avenue for further scholarly exploration.

While little secondary scholarship exists on the relationship between the fight for marriage equality, and lesbian and gay political movements in the 1970s and 1980s, the topic was the subject of significant political debate. El Chenier referenced the anti-marriage stance in the introduction of a 2018 article titled "Love-Politics: Lesbian Wedding Practices in Canada and the United States from the 1920s to the 1970s," calling it "the queer Left critique of the marriage equality movement that dominated American lesbian and gay politics in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries."[4] Lawyer and activist Paula Ettelbrick argued in a 1989 article that

[2] Ann Saddlemeyer and Joan Coldwell (professors) in discussion with the author, October 27, 2021.
[3] Betsy Warland (writer) in discussion with the author, October 12, 2021.
[4] El Chenier, "Love-Politics: Lesbian Wedding Practices in Canada and the United States from the 1920s to the 1970s," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 27, no. 2 (2018): 294.

"[m]arriage runs contrary to two of the primary goals of the lesbian and gay movement: the affirmation of gay identity and culture; and the validation of many forms of relationships."[5] Warner summarized the gay liberationist stance on marriage during the 1980s as "particularly contentious."[6] So, while Rule's anti-marriage stance may well have represented her most controversial one among her friends and colleagues, it was not a unique one, particularly during the height of the lesbian feminist, and gay liberationist movements. Her writing on the subject might, however, offer an interesting entry point into further scholarship on the origins of the fight for marriage equality in Canada, and the debates which surrounded it within the gay and lesbian communities.

Some interviewees also alluded to Rule practicing some form of non-monogamy.[7] Rule herself wrote on the subject of sexual fidelity for *The Body Politic* in 1981.

> Sexual fidelity is the most misunderstood, overburdened and abused of our so-called principles. It is based not on a concept of love but on a concept of property. […] In relationships which are formed without motives of protecting property or progeny, based on attraction and companionability, why is sexual fidelity an issue at all?[8]

Her arguments against marriage and in favour of non-monogamous relationships relate to her feelings about state involvement in her life. In an interview, published posthumously in *The Women's Review of Books*, Rule said that the

> increasingly conservative trend in gay politics can also stir me to tirades—against gay marriage, for instance. It seems to me that we should be leading our straight friends out of that cage rather than asking to be invited in, where the state can exercise control over our relationships.[9]

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[5] Paula Ettelbrick, "Since when is marriage a path to liberation?," *Out/Look: National Lesbian & Gay Quarterly* 6, no. 9 (1989): 16.
[6] Warner, *Never Going Back*, 221.
[7] Anonymous in discussion with the author, October 2021.
[8] Jane Rule, "The Myth of Genital Jealousy" *The Body Politic* 78 (November 1981): 28.
[9] Eloise Klein Healy, "Interview: Jane Rule: Inventing and Reinventing Community," *The Women's Review of Books* 25, no. 1 (2008): 11.

These passionate opinions, which my interviews and sources indicate Rule held for several decades, offer an insight into another facet of gay and lesbian organizing that bears further scholarly exploration.

In an interview with Geoff Hancock for *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, Rule declared "I have never lived in a subculture."[10] This emphatic point summarizes very neatly the purpose of this study and its outcomes. Rule had an active political voice, and a public presence as a lesbian in Canada from the publication of *Desert of the Heart* in 1964 until her relative retirement from writing in 1990. In that time, very vocal, and engaged gay and lesbian political organizations emerged in Canada. Rule's public image as a lesbian figure carried with it the expectation of her participation in these movements. While she did participate, she chose repeatedly to do so on her own terms, independently, and without the adoption of any movement's politic. Her refusal to live in any particular subculture, and instead engaging with them critically, and consistently, represent one type of participation in these social movements. Further scholarly attention to this type of engagement is sure to uncover more about the nuances, complexities, and political in-betweens of gay liberation and lesbian feminism.

[10] Hancock, "Interview with Jane Rule," 89.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

1. Joan Caldwell
2. Barbara Herringer
3. Judy Russell
4. Ann Saddlemeyer
5. Mariana Valverde
6. Betsy Warland

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you tell me a bit about how you identify in terms of sexuality/class/ethnicity? Did you identify differently in the 1960s-1980s? Are there other facets of your identity that you feel are important to understand in relation to your experience of lesbian community in British Columbia?
2. What was your relationship to lesbian community in British Columbia? When would you say you were most involved?
3. Were you involved in any official lesbian political organizing, or were your groups primarily social/friendship based? Of course, these may have overlapped significantly. Can you tell me more about these organizations, or about the social groups you were part of?
4. Do you know anything about the lesbian community prior to your participation in it? If so, where did you hear about it? Can you tell me more about this? Did anyone ever talk about what it was like in the 1950s/early 1960s? What kinds of things did they say?
5. Anything else you'd like to say or emphasize about the BC lesbian community?
6. Did you and your friends ever talk about lesbian books or novels? If so, which ones stood out? Can you remember why they might have stood out?
7. How well did you know Jane Rule personally? What would you like me to know about her? Was she involved in any of the same lesbian groups or friendship networks as you were?
8. Did you ever speak to Jane about political activism? What did she have to say on the subject? Did you ever agree or disagree strongly about lesbian politics? What subjects came up frequently?
9. Which of Jane's books have you read? What did you think of them? Did they have any impact on your coming out or your identity formation?
10. What did your friends/peers think of her books? Do you know if her books impacted any of their coming out experiences or their identity formation?
11. Anything else you would like to say or emphasize about Jane, her life or her writing?
12. Do you have any suggestions for other people I might speak to? Would you be willing to put me in touch with them?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

University of Victoria

Participant Consent Form

Project Title: Strategies of Resistance and Subversion: Jane Rule's Life, Writing and the Formation of Lesbian Community in Postwar BC

Funded by: *SSHRC C-GSM*

Researcher(s): Ms. Christine Hughes, Graduate Student, History, University of Victoria, 506-897-1387, christinehughes@uvic.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Lynne Marks, History, 250-721-7392, lsmarks@uvic.ca

Purpose of the Research:

- I am trying to find out about the reputation and importance Canadian author Jane Rule had to the BC lesbian political and social community, as well as general contextual information about middle class BC lesbian life in the late 1950s through the 1980s.

This Research is Important because:

- There is very little historical information available about this era in lesbian community formation, despite the heavy activist presence in the 1970s. This research will help to expand that knowledge.

Participation:

- You have been selected to participate because, either directly or indirectly, you have some knowledge of Jane Rule's life and role in lesbian community during the late 1950s and early 1960s in BC or you have contextual information on BC lesbian life and community.
- Participation in this project is entirely voluntary.
- Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your position [e.g. employment, class standing or how you will be treated.

Procedures:

- This project involves participation in an interview, which will take place over zoom, skype or by phone, depending on your preference. You will have the option of being audio recorded or having me take notes as you share. I will then create either a transcript of that recording or a detailed copy of those notes, and keep them securely on my computer.
- **Duration:** The interview will take between 60 and 90 minutes (1-1.5 hours)
- **Location:** The interview will be conducted remotely from my home office over skype, zoom or by phone.

- Zoom servers are located outside of Canada, and Zoom stores users' names and usage data outside of Canada. No other information is stored outside of Canada, and recordings of Zoom meetings are not stored on Zoom servers

Benefits:

By participating in this project, you will have the opportunity to share with me a portion of your personal history and contribute to a history of your community in BC. Together we might also provide future researchers new avenues through which to explore this history.

Risks:

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research**.**
Should you like a copy of a list of free mental health resources, please feel free to let me know.

Researcher's Relationship with Participants:

The researcher may have a relationship to you as a friend of their family. To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, the following steps to prevent coercion have been taken: you are under no obligation to participate in this research, and the researcher will never bring up or discuss your lack of participation in future conversations with you, nor make any effort to guilt, shame, or otherwise cause you discomfort for choosing not to participate.

Withdrawal of Participation:

You may withdraw at any time without explanation or consequence. Should you withdraw, your data will be destroyed, no transcript will be created, and all written notes will be shredded. Nothing you have provided up to the point of withdrawing will be used in the project, disseminated further, or donated to future research.

Anonymity and Confidentiality:

You are more than welcome to provide me with a fake name to use instead of your real one in the research, in case you want to be able to find yourself in any published work. I can also provide you with one, and share it should you prefer. You may also use your real name.
While every effort will be made to secure your confidentiality, I cannot promise that no one, particularly no community members, will recognize you or your stories in my research.
I will store all information shared with me in a password protected folder on my computer, which is also protected by a different password.

Research Results will [may] be Used/Disseminated in the Following Ways:

I will be using this research in my MA thesis at the University of Victoria. Following my graduation (anticipated in 2022), I may publish some or all of the thesis in an academic journal, popular press or blogpost. It may also be available publicly through a University of Victoria database. I may also present this work at an academic conference. You may also request a summary of my research, which I can make available to you in September, 2022 (approximately).

Disposal of Data

The data will be disposed of (deleted) within 5 years after the end of my MA thesis work.

Questions or Concerns:

- Contact the researcher(s) using the information at the top of page 1;
- Contact the Human Research Ethics Office, University of Victoria, (250) 472-4545 ethics@uvic.ca

Consent

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	*Signature*	*Date*

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Waiving Confidentiality: If you would not like to use a fake name and instead use your real one, please initial below.

I consent to be identified by name / credited in the results of the study.
I consent to have my responses attributed to me by name in the results.

_____ (Participant to provide initials)