

Editorial

Is this the "lesbian issue" that came too late?

As the Guest Editorial Board for "Lesbians and Politics" held its final meeting we noted a certain irony in the first lesbian issue of *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme* hitting the stands in the midst of smoldering debates about deconstructing sexual identities altogether. However, articles included here suggest that periods of contestation can open up space for more inclusive and thoughtful notions of solidarity. While some might suggest that the recent movement against unitary notions of identity implies that the category of "lesbian" is no longer useful, historical investigation suggests that the meanings of terms like "homosexual" and "heterosexual" have been debated from the moment they came into common usage. Recognizing this, the "lesbian" issue of *CWS/cf* problematizes the plural meanings attributed to same-sex relationships in a variety of different cultural and historical sites.

The intent of the title "Lesbians and Politics" is similarly to invite an eclectic investigation of the wide range of practices associated with doing "politics." Thus this issue investigates both the possibilities and contradictions implied in lesbian activism and theory.

Articles are organized into four areas that query questions of representation, (in)visibility, communities, and activism. We wished that we could have used all the submissions we received. However, constrained by space we have attempted to foreground articles that address a diversity of concerns, for example: questions of censorship, gender transformations, survival, disability issues, "lesbian" histories, parenting, and AIDS. Not satisfied with presenting conventional academic works, we were committed to including a variety of literary forms.

This issue of *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme* boldly resists the erasure of lesbian existence despite the ascendancy of neo-conservative discourses throughout the country. Highlighted here are a myriad ways in which lesbians are transforming customary notions of social change, through the work of groups like the Lesbian Avengers, in addition to the systematic efforts to shift and remake policy.

In short, our aim has been to examine what happens when one imagines lesbian sexualities at the centre of possibilities for friendship, communities, eroticism, ethics, and political activism.

Ce numéro sur les lesbiennes arrive-t-il trop tard?

Tandis que la dernière réunion du comité éditorial spécial sur le numéro «Lesbians and Politics» (Politiques lesbiennes) avait lieu, nous notions avec une certaine ironie que le premier numéro de *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme* consacré aux lesbiennes prenait vie au milieu de débats animés sur la déconstruction des identités sexuelles. Les articles du présent numéro démontrent cependant que les périodes de contestation peuvent élargir les notions de solidarité les nuancant de sensibilité. Quoique le récent mouvement contre les notions unitaires d'identité suggère que la catégorie «lesbienne» ne soit plus utile, l'histoire démontre que la signification des termes tels «homosexuel» et «hétérosexuel» est débattue depuis le début de leur utilisation. Ceci dit, ce numéro de *CWS/cf* sur les lesbiennes met en relief les significations pluri-elles afférentes aux relations entre personnes du même sexe dans une multitude de contextes culturels et historiques.

Le choix même du titre «Lesbians and Politics» (Politiques lesbiennes) vise un questionnement original des notions associées à «faire de la politique». En outre, ce numéro questionne à la fois les possibilités et les contradictions qui coexistent dans l'activisme et les théories lesbiennes.

Les articles, subdivisés principalement en quatre groupes, abordent les questions de représentation, d'invisibilité, de communautés et d'activisme. Nous aurions aimé inclure toutes les soumissions mais le manque d'espace nous contraignant à faire une sélection, nous avons tenté de privilégier les thèmes plutôt que les auteures. Ainsi, les articles choisis abordent les questions de censure, d'handicaps et de survie sans négliger les transformations sexuelles, l'histoire «lesbienne», les enfants, et le SIDA. En plus des textes académiques, nous avons inclus une variété de styles littéraires.

Ce numéro de *CWS/cf* se prononce ouvertement contre l'effacement de l'existence lesbienne malgré la recrudescence du discours néo-conservateur. Ce qui ressort avec puissance des textes, c'est la façon dont les lesbiennes transforment les notions conservatrices de changements sociaux par leur prise de conscience et leur activisme. L'organisme Lesbian Avengers en est un bon exemple.

Finalement, notre objectif principal était d'examiner ce qui peut se produire lorsque l'on positionne les sexualités lesbiennes au coeur de l'amitié, des communautés, de l'érotisme, de l'éthique, et de l'activisme politique.

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