TORONTO THE GAY: THE FORMATION OF A QUEER COUNTERPUBLIC IN PUBLIC DRINKING SPACES, 1947-1981

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Abstract:

This dissertation examines the development of a queer counterpublic in Toronto's post-war taverns and cocktail lounges, which were overseen by a relatively moderate provincial licensing authority. In the absence of homophile associations, social networks and discourses of resistance were formed by men in Toronto's public drinking spaces, wherein strategies to oppose discrimination were formed, as well as subversive camp rituals that protected the community and expressed pride. The dissertation focuses primarily on men's spaces and communications and is divided, roughly, into four major areas of inquiry, namely, community formation in bars and resistance to patron discrimination; public rituals as an expression of camp discourse and community pride; resistance to surveillance and, finally, the culmination of all these bar-based strategies into an overt queer activism that challenged hate crimes as well as systemic discrimination. The counterpublic was made up of competing discourses, that created and negotiated gender, class, ethnicity and sexual comportment, largely falling into two main categories: mononormative discourse and camp. The latter was more likely to challenge the disciplinary discourses of the era, which were present in both print media and physical surveillance, whereas, the normalizing discourse engaged civil rights arguments and was successful in reshaping the media and general public's ideas about queer Toronto. At times, the two discourses acted co-operatively, as an expression of solidarity and both expressions of Toronto's bar-based queer political activism were key to the development of more overt activism of the 1970s that laid the ground for resistance to and protest over Operation Soap in 1981.

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Introduction

"IT WAS DRILLED INTO MOTHER GOOSE'S HEAD that we (in Toronto the GAY) are so lucky. To quote our informant (indirectly) 'we hold camp in one of the smartest bars, locate ourselves centrally, have a social column of our own, and can boast of being 'the most organized city in North America.' NOW GIRLS! If that isn't praise, AND ALL THIS from a someone that HAS BEEN AROUND."[1]

This passage appeared on February 11, 1952, in "A Study in Lavender," a regular column written by "Mother Goose" in *True News Times*, one of Toronto's several postwar tabloid newspapers. It was not the only occasion on which Mother Goose referred to "Toronto the Gay," a phrase that refers to a queer counterpublic that existed in the city after the Second World War. Individuals organized themselves in the 1950s and 1960s in both physical spaces—primarily bars—and metaphorical spaces, which were comprised of social networks, public rituals and circulating texts that forged a space for the construction of a range of discursive identities and a sanctuary from compulsory heterosexuality.[2] Although vibrant, this counterpublic, however, could not be considered especially inclusive and was dominated by men, which this dissertation focuses on, almost exclusively. [3] Toronto the Gay was a hotly contested space, in which class, race, gender and sexual comportment were highly contentious and deeply divisive. These divisions can be seen clearly in the establishment and self-organization of the counterpublic, the development and containment of camp discourse through public ritual, self-policing of public sex, and, ultimately, dealing with wide-scale overt political resistance. As divisive as Toronto the

[1] "A Study in Lavender," *True News Times*, February 11, 1952.
[2] Michael Warner. *Publics and Counterpublics*, (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 56-57. Although there are many different modifications of Habermas's theory of the public sphere that utilize the notion of a counterpublic or subaltern public, Warner's essays in this volume specifically deal with camp discourse, sex in public and the imposition of the closet. This dissertation is making use of his notion of a queer counterpublic, namely, an active, self-organized group of individual strangers that are transformed into a counterpublic through discourse.
[3] In part, as a result of the sources and spaces investigated.

Gay was, however, these bar-based, pre-political communities established rituals that foreshadowed the Pride parade, tactics for political resistance and a camp discursive identity that was crucial to the definition and organization of the queer counterpublic.[4] Camp, a nebulous and contested term, was not unique to Toronto. It was observed in many postwar, pre-Stonewall urban centres in North America, and has been referred to as a strategy for surviving the repression imposed by the closet, in that it is a form of secret communication, as well as a "relationship between activities, individuals, situations and gayness," which helped build and bind clandestine communities.[5] While association and community-formation in the context of repression is already an act of resistance, camp has an additional political dimension, since both "swish" and "drag" are performative challenges to binary divisions and rigid gender roles.[6]

Like the "lavender set," "fairy clan," or "limp-wrist colony," Toronto the Gay referred to a rich and active community that existed despite the era's imposition of the "closet" on queer individuals.[7] This might come as a surprise to those who imagine postwar Toronto as a stronghold of sexual repression that made it difficult for lesbian and gay individuals to form social networks. Evidence of this postwar queer counterpublic, which developed strategies of resistance to discrimination, complicates a history that focuses on men in the period after the "We Demand" protest of 1971 (marking the second anniversary of the decriminalization of homosexuality and the first issue of the *Body Politic* magazine), often framed as the birth of

[4] It is also a reference to "Toronto the Good," a political slogan used in the nineteenth century that reflected a vision for moral reform in a decadent city. The slogan has come to refer, in contemporary general culture, to a repressed culture in the city of Toronto, which, after the repeal of the prohibition on alcohol, was often characterized as a city with little night life thanks to restrictive blue laws.
[5] Esther Newton. *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972); Jack Babuscio. "The Cinema of Camp (AKA Camp and the Gay Sensibility)," in ed. Fabio Cleto *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 199), 117-136.
[6] Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 135-139. Butler builds on Newton's analysis and positions the concept as inherently subversive.
[7] "A Study in Lavender," *True News Times*, June 11, 1951, 10; Eric Setliff uncovered several group names that alluded to a community in Eric Setliff. "Swish Kids and Sex Fiends," in eds. Kathryn McPherson, Cecilia Morgan, and Nancy M. Forestell *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1999), 165-167.

queer political action.[8] This interpretation of Toronto's queer history, however, relies on a narrow definition of agency and political resistance to discrimination. The material uncovered through interviews, memoirs and tabloid articles for this dissertation demonstrates that everyday acts of defiance (including insistence on public accommodation); discursive identity formation; proto-Pride public rituals; the establishment of social networks and the development of a camp discourse were well established in the 1950s and 1960s in Toronto the Gay. This counterpublic established models for cultural and political resistance (often based in identity politics) that were echoed in later political actions that included protests against discriminatory accommodation policies at Toronto's Brunswick House, pressuring owners to respect patrons' safety and rights in the Parkside Tavern and staging an annual proto-Pride event that embraced diversity of sexual comportment and satirized heteronormative values. This queer counterpublic grew out of bar-based cultures, formed in a network of spaces that were made active and connected by a self-organized community that used discourses of identity and several publications to transform individual strangers into a relatively cohesive subaltern counterpublic—Toronto the Gay.

The role of public drinking spaces in "pre-political" organization has been the subject of debate in several studies of postwar lesbian and gay communities, which weighed the impact of homophile associations against "bar-based cultures."[9] Whereas John D'Emilio argues that homophile organizations in San Francisco played a greater hand in the city's political activism than had previously been acknowledged, Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline Davis provide a different model of political growth in Buffalo, a small city that had few homophile

[8] Miriam Catherine Smith. *Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); David S. Churchill "Demanding Possibilities: The Legacies and Potentials of Sex and Gender Activism," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 48.1 (2014): 5-14. respectively. Both point to the early 1970s as a turning point. The other date, however, is often used in more popular, journalistic accounts of a timeline in gay history.
[9] Nan Boyd, *Wide-Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p 10-12.

organizations but did have a well-developed bar culture.[10] Like Buffalo, Toronto had no formal gay or lesbian political organizations until the tail-end of the 1960s. Despite this, there was a clear community established nearly 20 years prior to that and this community asserted its rights repeatedly through camp discourse, civil rights arguments and the use of its economic power—at times threatening boycotts.[11] This bar-based community was accommodated by several relatively tolerant, public-drinking spaces in postwar Toronto, one of which was gay-owned and managed. This contradicts the narrative that characterizes public drinking spaces patronized by gays and lesbians in Toronto as exploitative establishments, where queer patronage was occasionally tolerated, but never encouraged.[12]

Bars patronized by Toronto's queer community prior to the late 1970s have often been characterized as run by bigoted profiteers who saw an under-serviced and captive market and exploited this near monopoly by treating the clientele with disdain and, in some cases, outright abuse.[13] Such bars did exist. In fact, dangerous and repressive public drinking spaces were a prominent and controversial feature of the queer public drinking scene in the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, oral histories and tabloid accounts reveal a rich bar culture and well-established social life established in some bars patronized by gay men in the 1950s and 1960s, despite the fact that the city was mired in "compulsory heterosexuality."[14] The fact that a rich community

[10] John D'Emilio. *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Elizabeth L. Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis. *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community*. New York: Penguin Books, 1993.

[11] Although plans for the formation of a Toronto homophile association were announced as early as 1964, no formal organizations existed until five years later. "Homosexuals Plan Own Organization," *Toronto Daily Star*, Saturday, July 25, 1964, 2. Granted, none of the boycotts seem to have been carried out to the point of being effective.

[12] Gary Kinsman, for example, refers to the bars of Toronto as "negative" and "alienating" spaces in Gary Kinsman. *The Regulation of Desire: Sexuality in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 145.

[13] Ibid. Also in the early 1970s, tabloids voiced complaints along those lines. "The Gay Set," *Tab*, June 6, 1970, 8 (to name one). The reference to the change in the late 1970s is to the date that many commonly assert was the establishment of the first gay-owned bar in Toronto (Dudes). This project's documentation of Letros contradicts this commonly-held belief. In addition, Pimblett's, which opened in 1977, seems to have been gay-owned and gay-friendly.

[14] Elaine Tyler May. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York, Basic Books, 1988), May lays the framework for the wider context of post-War sexual norms in the United States. John D'Emilio. "The Homosexual Menace: The Politics of Sexuality in Cold War America," in Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons, with Robert A. Padgug, eds, *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History* (Philadelphia, 1989), 226-40. D'Emilio demonstrates how queer men came to be associated with security risks. In Canada, similar studies, such as Gary Marcuse and Reginald Whitaker's *Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State: 1945-1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto

life was established in relatively tolerant beverage rooms and cocktail bars in the immediate postwar era is not widely-known, which may be, partially, the result of the contemporary mainstream media's silence regarding Toronto the Gay.[15] In addition, the current lack of general knowledge about the era's vibrancy and tight community may also stem from assumptions that Toronto was similar to other, better-known urban areas in North America, such as San Francisco and New York, where bars were subject to frequent harassment from liquor authorities and/or police, since there is a tendency to universalize postwar repression.[16]

There is evidence of systematic, discriminatory and intrusive harassment of patrons of gay and lesbian bars in Toronto. Much of it, however, occurred in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, when policing became focused on the Continental Hotel on Dundas, near Bay Street, and, later, the Parkside Hotel and the St. Charles Tavern, two of the best-known gay bars on Yonge Street. Police harassment and surveillance of the patrons at the Parkside, in particular, became a galvanizing issue for the gay community, which began to demand the right to accommodation and a safe public drinking space. As crucial as this episode of resistance to discrimination and police harassment is to the evolution of Toronto's queer community and political action, however, the formation of a queer counterpublic in the 1950s and 1960s foreshadowed the development of a more conventionally politically active community in the early 1970s. That said, there was no one, universal experience in Toronto for lesbians and gay men, since public drinking spaces were segregated by class, ethnicity, gender and gender performance and the queer counterpublic was an ever-changing space that often marginalized

Press, 1996), make the case for a very similar climate, especially in Ottawa, where issues of national security were a larger part of the public culture and every day work life.

[15] The timeline of media reportage will be outlined in detail but, in essence, there was no mention of gay bars in Toronto's daily newspapers until the mid-1960s.

[16] Martin Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York: Penguin Dutton, 1993); John D'Emilio. *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Both detail frequent harassment of patrons of bar-goers in both cities, where bars were either run by the mafia (New York) who paid off the police or were shut down frequently by police and/or the state liquor authority.

competing discourses. In the 1950s, however, there were several centrally-located licensed venues that were known for their consistent policy of allowing gay patronage, one of which—the Letros Nile Room—was gay-owned. This contradicts the frequently repeated assertion that there were only "mixed bars" in postwar Toronto and that there were no gay-owned bars in the city until the late 1970s.[17] Letros, on King, opposite the King Edward Hotel, in particular, provided a safe, welcoming and stable public drinking space in which a segment of gay men could establish social networks, form a discursive camp identity and establish a proto-Pride ritual in the form of an annual drag ball.

Although Letros was the only bar owned and operated by a licensee who identified as a gay individual, several other "mixed" public drinking spaces were patronized by lesbians and gay men more or less consistently, forming a network of bars that provided long-standing public spaces for social connection. Individuals who identified as lesbians and gay men discovered these bars through word of mouth and, to some degree, Toronto's many tabloid newspapers, which, unlike the mainstream media (silent on the topic of gay and lesbian public drinking spaces in Toronto until 1963) devoted considerable coverage to gay bars.[18] *Justice Weekly* and *Hush* both frequently published sensationalistic expos*és* of good-bars-gone-gay in Toronto, as well as stories of arrests for gross indecency in the washrooms of public parks, subway stations and coffee shops.[19] Interview subjects have suggested that, regardless of how these stories were intended to have been read, they were used as a field guide to Toronto the Gay that could be

[17] This comes up frequently in interviews. Even people familiar with Letros don't always realize that the owner was part of the community and was identified as gay by patrons who recall being there and contemporary tabloid accounts..

[18] Kinsman, *The Regulation of Desire*, 168; David Churchill. "Mother Goose's Map" Churchill discusses how Toronto's "tabloid geographies" helped shape gay male experiences in post-War Toronto. The *Toronto Evening Telegram* ran some negative articles about Letros and homosexuality in Toronto in late 1963 and early 1964. *Maclean's* covered the topic in 1964. *The Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* did not devote any coverage to the gay communities in Canada until the tail end of the 1960s.

[19] "'Pansies' Bloom in Cocktail Lounge, *Hush Free Press*, March 17, 1951, 6,; "Gay Boys Nabbed at Bowles Lunch," *Hush Free Press*, Aug 11, 1951, 6, among others. As Setliff argues in "Swish Kids and Sex Fiends," the tabloids' discursive stance is more sympathetic and multi-faceted in its construction of the gay male identity than it initially appears.

bought discretely from the newsstands, since the subject matter was wide ranging.[20] In addition to the sex-in-public exposés, however, there were also two other genres of queer features that regularly appeared in several of the tabloids, producing multiple discourses of homosexuality. First, throughout the early 1950s, many of the tabloids had regular gay gossip columns, written by anonymous insiders who chronicled and organized the gay bar scene. These included "Toronto's Gay Nights" and Mother Goose's "A Study in Lavender" in *True News Times*; *The Rocket*'s "Fairy Tales are Retold," (also written by a "Mother Goose"), and *Tab*'s "Fairy-Go-Round," which would eventually be replaced by "The Gay Set" in the late 1960s.[21] *Justice Weekly* never featured a social column for Toronto's queer community, but, it did run "Homosexual Concepts," a semi-regular feature contributed by Jim Egan, under a pseudonymous byline—"J.L.E."[22] This represented a second, separate discursive construction of homosexuality. Egan, who objected to both the scandal sheet stories that depicted gay men as perverts and the gay gossip columns, which he considered trivial and demeaning, used the column to make critical arguments for civil rights, based, sometimes on ancient Greek and Roman literature and philosophy, psychoanalysis and the contemporary work of Dr. Alfred Kinsey. Egan also used it to construct a discursive identity that challenged the dominant prevailing discourse of the criminal sexual psychopath.[23] On a few occasions, he argued for the importance of gay bars as social spaces and defended them as more civilized than the drunken scene in other Toronto bars, but he did not deal with the Toronto bar scene in any kind of semi-comprehensive fashion, as the

[20] David Churchill. "Mother Goose's Map" *Journal of Urban History* 30(6):826-852, September 2004. To some degree, Churchill echoes Maynard's suggestion that men might have learned of gay spaces through reading accounts of gross indecency trials in the *Toronto Evening Telegram* in "Through a hole in the lavatory wall: Homosexual Subcultures, Police Surveillance, and the Dialectics of Discovery, Toronto, 1890-1930" in *Journal of the History of Sexuality*. 5(2) (October 1994), 207-242.

[21] "Toronto's Gay Nights" was replaced by Mother Goose's column.

[22] There is an even earlier precedent to this in *True News Times*, which ran James Egan's "Aspects of Homosexuality" for seven weeks in 1951.

[23] Jim Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy of Silence* (Toronto: Homewood Books, 1998), 50.; Elise Chenier. "The Criminal Sexual Psychopath in Canada: Sex, Psychiatry and the Law at Mid-Century," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History.* Volume 20, Issue 1, 2003, 75-101; George Chauncey. "The Post-War Sex Crime Panic," in William Graebner, ed., *True Stories from the American Past* (New York: Praeger, 1993), 160-78. While Chauncey associates this discursive identity with moral panic, Chenier adds to this interpretation by situating the criminal sexual psychopath in medico-legal discourse—one that the mainstream newspapers employed when referring to homosexuality in the media. So did the tabloids, although not exclusively.

social columns often did. Egan, instead, deliberately constructed a narrow and idealized idea of gay public drinking spaces in Toronto—one that did not include many of the characters and stories that were chronicled in the gay gossip columns nor, in fact, elements of his memoir, in which he expounded upon his many nights spent in the very bars he tried to obscure.[24] Between the sensational news items, the rational arguments written by Egan and the gossip columns, there were three distinct streams of discourse regularly appearing in the tabloids. Much like the communications networks established in San Francisco in the 1950s and 1960s analysed by Martin Meeker, these organizing discourses were important for both identity-formation and community-building, both of which are pre-cursors to social movement organization. [25] That said, there were substantial differences between the media and networks Meeker studied and the ones in Toronto, primarily the fact that the first wave of publications were largely produced by the homophile associations in San Francisco and, in that era, Toronto had none. Similarly assimilationist arguments were circulating in Toronto, although almost entirely through the columns and letters to the editor penned by Egan in tabloids and mainstream newspapers. Although they are often referred to as "civil rights arguments" in this project, they represent assimilationist arguments, that challenged a "conspiracy of silence" in very much the same way that the publications from the 1950s and 1960s produced by San Francisco's Mattachine did—even using the same language about the silent conspiracy that was a product of the conditions of the closet. [26] In addition, though, Egan's columns constructed a specific discursive identity in relation to the dominant discourses of the era, offered by the ones offered in the daily newspapers and the scandal sheets. The analysis of the streams of discourse that presented

[24] Jim Egan. *Challenging the Conspiracy of Silence* (Toronto: Homewood Books, 1998), 70-78.
[25] Martin Meeker. *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s -1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 10-13.
[26] Meeker, *Contacts Desired*, 50-65.

themselves in this project is, ultimately, done with power relations in mind, since the discourse relates to both the communication of bodies of knowledge, identity formation, representation and, in addition, discipline, a characteristic that can be teased out through the interplay between the different streams of discourse.

Alison Jacques argues that Egan's columns and the scandalous public sex stories express two different discourses of homosexuality in this postwar era.[27] The first was framed as the "good" kind, in which gay men could pass for bachelors in public and, at home, in private, mimicked heterosexual monogamy with two partners, one playing what was considered the "masculine" role and the other playing the role of the traditional "wife." Other articles described "bad" lesbian and gay behaviour, which involved cross-dressing, public sex and the sex trade. Jacques' study focuses on *Justice Weekly* alone, however. By examining the other tabloids, which also featured regular gay social columns, this dissertation aims to build on this framework. These columns not only mapped out Toronto's gay bars, they also organized and classified them, encouraged economic boycotts and actions to insist on public accommodation and, finally, helped to establish an embodied discursive camp identity that became an alternative to postwar compulsory heterosexuality. This elevates the importance of the tabloids from maps or field guides to queer Toronto to active agents which, along with bar owners and patrons, helped to form the counterpublic.[28] The tabloid publications were responsible for creating a public audience for the discourse—one that was comprised of strangers—since "Duke Gaylord," "Bettina" and "Mother Goose" could be read by anybody who bought tabloid newspapers from Toronto newsstands. The tabloids also established an interactive, ongoing dialogue between the columns and the bars, meaning that there was a legitimate "circulation," in that columns could be

[27] Alison Jacques, "The Newspaperman and the Tabloid: Recovering the History of Philip H. Daniels and *Justice Weekly*" (Doctoral Dissertation) McGill University, 2014. Accessed by contacting author.
[28] Churchill, "Mother Goose's Map".

discussed in cocktail bars and beer parlours and, on occasion, even read on premise.[29] This exchange between written and verbal discourse made for a unique public space in which patrons were active, informed and self-organized through discourse.[30]

This idea of a counterpublic has its roots in Jürgen Habermas's theory of the "public sphere," in which private individuals assembled and, through critical-rational argument and discursive identity formation, were able to form a bourgeois identity and public sphere in opposition to the prevailing powers of aristocratic and monarchist government.[31] Since Habermas argued that the public sphere was eroded by modernity—the result of the rise of capitalism and the welfare state (which blurred divisions between private and public) as well as mass media (which made it difficult to create a coherent discursive identity)—his theory might seem to be an inappropriate tool with which to try to understand the postwar era.[32] Furthermore, as many critics have pointed out, the bourgeois public sphere would have excluded many of the subjects on which this dissertation is focused. However, queer and feminist critiques of Habermas have posited that, even at the historical moment that Habermas's idealized, universalizing, public sphere was supposed to have existed, it was not the only space in which individuals self-organized through discourse. At that time, there also existed subaltern counterpublics that were previously dismissed as belonging to the private sphere or not formed through rational-critical discourse. Those counterpublics are the key to modifying Habermas's theory in order to retain it as a useful tool for critical inquiry, since the splintering of the public sphere need no longer be considered a problem specific to modernity. Counterpublics, in both the

[29] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 11-18.; David Churchill. *Coming Out in a Cold Climate*: *A History of Gay Men in Toronto in the 1950s*, Masters Thesis, University of Toronto, 1993. Circulation is an important aspect of a counterpublic, argues Warner and Churchill argues that the tabloids mapped out Toronto's gay community. In terms of the tabloids being a circular conversation, there are several references – one as early as December 29, 1956, when Letros was referred to as "reading room" and another as late as October 2, 1971, when there were references to discussions in the Parkside and elsewhere ("Fairy-Go-Round," *TAB*, June 8, 1957, 4, for example).
[30] D'Emilio. *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*.
[31] Jürgen Habermas. *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*.
[32] Jürgen Habermas, *The theory of communicative action: Lifeworld and system: A critique of functionalist reason*, as well as Habermas. *The structural transformation of the public sphere*.

historic period that Habermas writes about and those that came after, exist in tension with the dominant public sphere and represent a space for withdrawal, identity formation and the planning of "agitational activities." [33] This makes it possible to still critique the bourgeois public sphere as a hegemonic tool, that has been universalized and depicted as a space of pure, neutral discourse and, at the same time, still hold on to the tool of publics as a potential tool for community-building and social change.[34]

Rather than reject Habermas's framework altogether, it can be rehabilitated by adopting the approaches offered by theorists like Nancy Fraser and Michael Warner, who theorize that counterpublics can be seen as a vehicle for discursive identity construction in opposition to the hegemonic order that the public sphere imposed.[35] Warner argues that it would be impossible to engage in the hegemonic bourgeois public sphere without being "closeted" and inhabiting a "disembodied state" and that the counterpublic is a discursive space that comes about through the self-organized, active, identity formation in opposition to the heteronormative sphere.[36] There are several aspects to Warner's particular conception of the queer counterpublic that make it a valuable theoretical tool for investigating postwar Toronto drinking spaces and texts, not the least of which involves his concept of "poetic world-making" that is vital to the existence of the counterpublic. Differentiating the counterpublic from the bourgeois public sphere, which "consists of private persons whose identity is formed in the privacy of the conjugal domestic family" the counterpublic Warner describes "are scenes of association and identity that transform the private lives they mediate." He elaborates: "Homosexuals can exist in isolation; but gay people or queers exist by virtue of the world they elaborate together," meaning that identity in

[33] Nancy Fraser. "Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy." *Social text* 25/26 (1990): 56-80
[34] Seyla Benhabib. "Twilight of sovereignty or the emergence of cosmopolitan norms? Rethinking citizenship in volatile times." *Citizenship studies* 11.1 (2007): 19-36.; Fraser, "Rethinking the public sphere".
[35] Fraser, "Rethinking the public sphere"; Michael Warner. "Publics and Counterpublics" *Public culture* 14.1 (2002): 49-90.
[36] Warner, Michael. *Publics and Counterpublics*, New York: Zone Books, 2005, 52-53.

this case is not ahistorical, essentialist or fixed, but, rather, fluid and continually negotiated in a relationship with counterpublic through acts of citizenship. [37] Unlike the idea of community, Warner divorces the counterpublic from a "precise demography" and ventilates it to include participation in circulation of discourse, through print culture, performance and exchange that often has a "critical relation to power." [38]

This "flexible methodology" helps to bridge the gap between social history and queer theory, since the counterpublic does not assume any kind of authentic, stable identity of queerness that would have been formed in a private realm. [39] Although the counterpublic is theorized as a tool that can be used to produce change, it is not mired in the narrative of progress, since counterpublics are not necessarily working towards any universalizing liberal goal, even though they may have a critical relation to power and authority. [40] Much of the investigation into the Toronto postwar counterpublic (populated primarily by gay men) is done through texts, but, in addition to its cultural history backbone, it incorporates a "bottoms up" social history approach in addition to the cultural history one, since it examines the lived lives of many of the men who frequented the public drinking spaces in that era. In that sense, it follows the "queer turn" in history described by Marc Stein, that was built out by Lisa Duggan through the combination of social history and cultural representation. [41] Karen Krahulik describes this shift in cultural and social history (as well as her own approach, which takes it further) as a focus on "everyday acts of resistance and their accompanying power relations, reading both as cultural narratives," with a power to be disruptive and destabilizing forces. [42] This project follows in that

[37] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 57-58. This example is not limited to queer theory. Based in Warner's reading of Hannah Arendt, he posits that poetic world-making in counterpublics can be an expression of gender or race.
[38] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 56.
[39] Lisa Duggan. "The Discipline Problem: Queer Theory Meets Lesbian and Gay History" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (1995), 2(3): 179-191
[40] Duggan, "The Discipline Problem," 186.
[41] Karen Christel Krahulik. "Cape Queer? A Case Study of Provincetown, Massachusetts." Journal of Homosexuality 52.1-2 (2006): 185-212.
[42] Krahulik, "Cape Queer?," 186-188.

tradition. Using Warner's methodology allows for the exploration of historical subjects engaged in poetic world-making, which is a particularly elegant solution to the inherent tension between the ideas of constructing a public and problematizing truths, since, within the context of a counterpublic, it is possible to tease out the actions of a public comprised of organic intellectuals performing their sexuality to create "gender trouble." [43] Without erasing the historical context in which this counterpublic organized itself in opposition to the heteronormative public sphere—or the lived lives of the people involved—it is possible to see how, in postwar Toronto, a self-organized counterpublic invented, performed and circulated texts that problematized truths and challenged authority. Toronto the Gay was all of that—for some. Since it was segregated by gender, ethnicity, gender performance, and (sometimes obsessively) class, it was far from inclusive and, as such, there is a tension within it that undermines its potential to be fully subversive.

That said, Toronto was described by some as a relatively comfortable city in which to live under the conditions of the closet, notably Egan, the activist who chronicled the era in his memoir. [44] Egan's efforts to "challenge the conspiracy of silence" in the city at the time were even resisted by one faction of Toronto's gay community at the time, since that person conjectured that it would be more difficult to work and live in the city undetected if the media and general citizenry were more aware of the presence of gay men. Egan suggested that the general ignorance of the public in Toronto worked to the advantage of closeted men, at least the ones who could afford the cloak of middle-class respectability. This, in and of itself, was probably not enough to make Toronto unique in terms of gay and lesbian public drinking spaces, within North America, since it probably shares a lot of common ground with smaller American

[43] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 151-158. As well as helping to bring together Habermas and Foucault.
[44] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 43.

cities, such as Minnesota or Philadelphia. Although postwar New York is often thought of as a city in which it would have been desirable to move to in the 1950s and 1960s, it has been argued that the large, visible, gay community in that city led to particularly aggressive and repressive municipal policing. [45] Cold War-era Ottawa was likely more closely surveilled than Toronto, since Ottawa had a larger civil service, which was invested in the construction of gay men and lesbian as security risks. Since Toronto's economy had more private sector opportunities, men in Egan's circle benefitted from their relative invisibility and the citizenry's ignorance, even as they sought to change those very conditions. In addition, the provincial licensing regulations may have increased invisibility, since they kept bar life fiercely concealed from public view, with barriers hiding the beverage room patron from the street. Licensing regulations have also been cited as having had an effect on the formation of this counterpublic and the specific drinking and cruising culture within, since it created gender-segregated drinking areas and regulations regarding standing and drinking. Even with these limitations, however, the public drinking spaces in Toronto were a site for some segments of the city's gay public to construct an embodied discursive identity. This construction provided a range of identities—as Eric Setliff observes, not merely "swish kids" and "sex fiends," but also "dowagers," "sweater queens," "butches," "ribbon clerks," "camp queens" and "chickens," among others.[46]

Despite this relatively wide range of identities, with a few exceptions, the public drinking spaces that were a part of the counterpublic had fairly rigid dress codes for men, who generally wore conservative business attire and, nearly always, traditionally "male" clothing.[47] There were exceptions made for the occasional impromptu drag performance and the annual Hallowe'en

[45] David Carter. Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked The Gay Revolution (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 15-18.
[46] Setliff, "Swish Kids and Sex Fiends," 165-167. Setliff theorizes a "lavender set" that constitutes a community and references to the tabloid columnists' characterizations of the patrons in the bars.
[47] Almost every interview subject who lived in Toronto made reference to how people got dressed up to go to the King Street bars. In addition, there are similar references in *Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives* dressing up to go to the King Edward Hotel.

drag ball (a public event that attracted many spectators) but, other than that, the clientele at these bars generally dressed in accordance with heteronormative standards. These standards of dress code and gender performance were more relaxed at the mixed bars near City Hall, on the outskirts of the area known as "the Ward," where drag was more permissible. Women, who had fewer public drinking options, also patronized these bars, although they were less frequently mentioned in the tabloid feature articles and gay gossip columns. When the tabloids dealt with lesbians, it was often in connection with the sex trade and it typically divided them into one of two discursive identities—butch or femme.[48] And, other than the Continental Hotel (Dundas West), in lieu of bars, many of the commercial establishments associated with the lesbian community in the tabloids were unlicensed—restaurants and cafés in Chinatown in the 1960s and, in the 1970s, unlicensed, private dance clubs.[49] Women's exclusion from public drinking spaces may have been partially cultural, since bars were (and still are) gendered spaces, but, in addition, the exclusion of women was grounded in economic inequality, since, on average, women had less disposable income than men.[50] One sample survey estimated that only 25 per cent of women in the 1940s would identify themselves as beverage room patrons, compared with 75 per cent of men.[51]

Aside from gender, Toronto's public drinking spaces were also segregated by ethnicity and class. The sole reference to race in the Letros establishment file involves a complaint received by the provincial authority over an incident of alleged discrimination, involving refusal of service to two African-Canadian men—an assertion that did not result in censure, since the

[48] Largely in exposés of Chinatown and the Continental, such as "Lesbian Vermin Plagues Toronto," *Tab*, September 28, 1963, 3, that painted women as "bull dykes" or feminine sex workers.
[49] Liz Millward. *Making a Scene: Lesbians and Community Across Canada, 1964-84* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2015), 76-148. Many of the spaces examined in Millward's book are unlicensed.
[50] Note that there are also specific licensing conditions in Toronto that affected the drinking culture in Canada – in beer parlours, for example, men's and women's beverage rooms were not merely segregated in practice but, in addition, by law. Not every hotel licensed to sell beer even opted to have a "ladies and escorts room," where women could drink, citing it being too much trouble.
[51] Robert E. Popham. "Working Papers on the Tavern, #3. Notes on the Contemporary Tavern," (Toronto: Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Research Foundation, 1982), 22. Refers to a Canada Facts 1946 survey.

establishment denied it.[52] Oral histories and tabloid reports from that bar (as well as most of the other public drinking spaces that were part of the queer counterpublic) do nothing to add to a sense that the bars encouraged any sort of ethnic diversity in that era and, as such, it is reasonable to assume that, even if they had no official policy of discrimination, most were essentially a white male domain. There are more references to ethnic diversity in the bars closer to City Hall and Chinatown, which catered to patrons with less economic power and, in addition, tended to be subject to more frequent inspections and surveillance by the police. The bars in the latter category were frequently categorized as problem bars for a range of reasons. They were said to cater to a transient population connected with the court system across the street, were suspected of being associated with, or patronized by, sex workers, bookmaking or illicit drugs and were frequently the site of violent incidents.[53] Although few Toronto bars ever lost their licences outright, these bars were subject to fairly regular inspections, which, in some periods, became quite intense and frequent. Although the atmosphere, surveillance, service and core regular clientele at the various bars would have been relatively distinct, these venues were included fairly frequently in the Toronto tabloids—both in the gay social columns and in the sensational features that fed the era's sense of moral panic.[54] Still, a discourse of resistance cut across class lines and Toronto the Gay was located in bars that catered to patrons of different income levels.[55] These early proto-political communities foreshadowed the actions and strategies employed some 10 to 20 years later by more formal groups such as Toronto Gay Action (TGA) and the

[52] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B207919 (Letros Tavern), Inspector's Report, December 3, 1947; multiple dates. Churchill, "Mother Goose's Map," 839-840, 845. Churchill draws attention to racist stereotypes in the tabloids, which were one of the more public expressions of the counterpublic and suggests that there was a possibility of uneven enforcement (according to ethnicity) of state penalties for those charged with public indecency. This may account for a hesitation amongst African-Canadians to attempt to take part in the largely white queer counterpublic of the downtown Toronto bars. If there were alternative counterpublics in other ethnic communities, they were not chronicled in the tabloids.
[53] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B109744 (Municipal Tavern); AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B401293 (Union House Hotel); AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B134023 (The Continental Public House) (multiple dates).
[54] Although the core set of regulars would have been relatively separate and distinct, interviews suggest that there was some overlap between patronage at the bars near City Hall and those just east of Yonge on King.
[55] In several bars in the 1950s, including the Ford Hotel and Letros, before ownership fully shifted, giving George Letros autonomy and then, quite clearly in the Parkside.

Community Homophile Association of Toronto (CHAT) and politically-oriented publications specifically targeted at a gay demographic such as the *Body Politic, Two* and *Gay*—the latter two distributed largely through unlicensed after-hours clubs.[56]

The postwar tabloids were not gay and lesbian publications, even though some segment of their readership and advertising revenue was associated with this demographic.[57] However, these publications offered an alternative to the mass media that Habermas suggested was a detriment to the public sphere, since they operated on small budgets and, in comparison to the dailies, were low-circulation publications. Many were only in existence for a few years and, besides being focused on moral transgression and corporal punishment, represented political positions that their publishers felt were lacking in the mainstream media.[58] These unofficial texts helped to establish sexual citizenship in the counterpublic in opposition to a matrix of domination, similar to the way that texts have been used in other public contexts.[59] Not only did they aid in the organization of these spaces, they also advanced critical discourse and offered a wide range of discursive embodied identities in opposition to the heteronormative sphere that, as Michael Warner argues, produced a disembodied state for private individuals who are "closeted."[60] Other than the basic right to accommodation, many actions would not resemble political organization or action in a narrow, conventional sense, since, other than the basic right to demand accommodation, they largely revolved around demanding better service. However, as Marc Stein has argued, everyday acts of defiance need to be considered as political as well, given the assault on personal rights and freedom of association endemic to that period.[61]

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[56] Kinsman, *Regulation of Desire*, 145.
[57] Jacques, "The Newspaper Man and the Tabloid," 17-23. Jacques demonstrates that the personals section of the classified advertisements in *Justice Weekly* did a brisk trade with lesbian and gay clients.
[58] Ibid. "Corporal punishment" refers to the huge cache articles throughout the 1950s about spanking children and wives, usually endorsing it.
[59] Ian McNeely, *The Emancipation of Writing: German Civil Society in the Making, 1790s-1820s* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2003), 3.
[60] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 52-53. The tabloids classified bars according to class, occasionally ran civil rights arguments and, often, organized economic boycotts.
[61] Marc Stein, *City of Brotherly and Sisterly Loves: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia, 1945-1972* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004).

Licensing and Inspection

In comparison with some other major North American cities, Toronto's queer community enjoyed comparative freedom to associate in several licensed establishments that were relatively free from harassment by agents of the state.[62] Even in the small clutch of bars that was regularly scrutinized and more heavily policed, nothing like the level of harassment that existed in cities such as San Francisco or New York can be found. The reason for this can be attributed, in part, to Ontario's licensing body, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO), which was consumed with gathering details about the enforcement of easily quantifiable offences such as double-serving, over-crowding, failure to provide a hot meal with a beverage on Sundays, serving under-aged patrons and short-serving draught beer. Ontario's liquor laws also differed from those in other jurisdictions in several specific regards that helped to shape bars that catered to Toronto's queer community. First, prior to the late 1970s, patrons were not allowed to stand while drinking, a law that interfered with cruising patterns. Second, beverage rooms were segregated by gender, in that women were not legally allowed to patronize a men's beverage room and could only be in the rooms reserved for "ladies and escorts," a rule that one memoirist suggested was a boon for men in the gay community.[63]

In addition to these regulations, there were oddities that had an impact on a few specific bars, such as the dinnertime closing hour that was mandatory for beer parlours but not cocktail bars.[64] The differences in legislation between beverage rooms and cocktail bars were an expression of anxieties around class and alcohol and it is possible that this bias may have

[62] Duberman, *Stonewall*; D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*.
[63] Rick Bébout. *Promiscuous Affections: A Life in the Bar, 1969-2000* (Toronto: rbebout.com, 2000), 1971. Although women could not enter men's beverage rooms, women did not have women's only spaces, since men were allowed to enter the ladies and escorts rooms, provided they had a woman escort. Post-1947, these spaces still existed and operated as they always had. But, in addition, a new class of non-segregated bar, the cocktail tavern, was legally allowed in Ontario.
[64] This is thought to have been the reason that gay patrons began frequenting the St. Charles tavern—the Red Lion had to close for 90 minutes and customers went across the street.

extended into surveillance. Although it is difficult to show a consistent pattern of uneven enforcement regarding liquor inspections without having done a more comprehensive survey of the establishment files, there are several files from the late 1940s up to the early 1960s that are considerably more detailed than others, indicating that these establishments appear to have been visited much more frequently.[65] These appear to have been divided along class lines: A comparison of the files from Letros (King, just west of Yonge) and the Municipal Hotel (a bar located on the outskirts of Toronto's "Ward" that was known for its cheap beer by the glass and transient clientele), for example, indicates that the latter received far more surveillance than the former.[66] Even then, bars with frequent infractions, such as the ones near Toronto's City Hall and in the area formerly known as the Ward, were not shuttered but, instead, subject to censure and increased inspections.[67]

Other than this, the provincial authority's comments were often devoted to the quality of the musical entertainment, which was a major preoccupation for inspectors that intersected with race and focused on vocals.[68] The provincial authority's vast network of surveillance was partially devoted to ensuring that there were no inappropriate lyrics, an example of which can be seen in this inspector's comment: "Four negroes, Cy McLean and His Rhythm Rompers … An all musical programme, no patter or off-colour stories." Another, earlier, inspection was more explicit about the anxieties around the intersection of race, entertainment and licensed spaces: "The entertainment was good. No suggestive or risqué numbers, no vocals, four coloured boys, and they played very good music. While I was there all the numbers were well done with no

[65] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B109744 (Municipal Tavern); AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File 401293 (Union House Hotel); AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B134023 (Continental Public House Hotel). (Multiple dates)
[66] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File 207919 (Letros Tavern); AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B109744 (Municipal Tavern) stated, this isn't a comprehensive study of all the bars in Ontario. That said, among the dozen or so bars that regularly admitted gay patrons, there is a pattern of selective enforcement in bars that catered to a lower-income clientele.
[67] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B109744 (Municipal Tavern) AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File 401293 (Union House Hotel); AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B134023 (Continental Public House Hotel). (Multiple dates)
[68] Judging from viewing about 100 establishment files, most of which were from Toronto bars.

'harlem jive' being played."[69] Although the entertainment was frequently evaluated in racial terms, in the files accessed for this project, there were few references to the race of the patrons, an omission that reflects the lack of racial diversity in many of the spaces that made up the queer counterpublic, with a few exceptions, notably the establishment files that document incidents involving fraternization amongst men and women of different ethnicities. Inspectors, in that case, often expressed sympathy for the licensees who dealt with problems based on ethnic difference: Notes included observations that the staff and management were doing the best they could, "given the locality" and patrons that were "hard to handle."[70] These examples demonstrate, not only anxieties over ethnicity, but also the paternalistic and lenient model of enforcement instituted by the LCBO after the 1927 partial repeal of Prohibition that Dan Malleck describes in framing his discussion of the provincial authority in terms of "biopower."[71] For the large part, the licensing board was lenient and focused on surveillance and strict attention to detail in Toronto's postwar bars, as opposed to an instrument of tight social control.[72]

Licensing, Valverde and Cirak argue, is a "legal technology" built on the premise that policing disorder can be subcontracted out and, in the case of Toronto bars in the 1950s and 1960s, maintaining and monitoring the subcontractors was largely achieved through covert inspections, as opposed to police involvement.[73] Of all the arrests of men on gross indecency charges, for example, the vast majority were the results of surveillance operations in the bathrooms of coffee shops and lunch counters, parks and public transit stations. If there were regular police raids on the city's public drinking spaces in the 1950s and 1960s, records of this

[69] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B109773 (Parkside Tavern), Inspection Report, October 23, 1952; Inspection Report, May 21, 1954.
[70] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B134023 (Continental Public House Hotel), Inspection Report, July 27, 1951, for example (from which the specific comments were taken).
[71] Dan Malleck. *Try to Control Yourself: The Regulation of Public Drinking in Post-Prohibition Ontario, 1927-1944* (Vancouver: UBS Press, 2012), 8. "Partial," because public drinking would not be legal for another seven years.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Mariana Valverde and Miomir Cirak. "Governing Bodies, Creating Gay Spaces: Policing and Security Issues in 'Gay' Downtown Toronto." *British Journal of Criminology* 43.1 (2003): 110.

type of event were not uncovered in the course of research for this project.[74] Unlike in New York, where organized crime was involved in the management of gay bars, or California, where the police and liquor authorities actively attempted to shutter some gay bars, liquor control in Toronto was relatively moderate and lenient in the immediate postwar period. This policy shifted in the early 1970s, which saw increased police surveillance of gay bars, particularly *after* Bill C-150 that, in 1969, partially decriminalized same-sex acts between consenting adults.[75] Some of this increased policing was presumably aggravated by news of gay activism in cities like New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles, and an increasing anxiety over the rising youth culture that seemed to threaten postwar heterosexual norms. In addition, there is a clear correlation in conflicts between police and the gay community as the visibility of the gay community increased—a result of increased political action but, in addition, because many public drinking spaces in Toronto relocated to central, busy, Yonge Street. These were all likely factors in the excessive police force used on the queer community in the 1970s. It should also be read, however, as a localized backlash to the increased economic and political power that the queer community was perceived to be amassing—both on a federal level after C-150 and on a local level—as queer-owned businesses were established, including the *Body Politic*, which represented a new era in gay journalism.

[74] Requests for the germane files from the Toronto Police Museum made in person and by email. Both were denied.
[75] Thomas Hooper. "'More Than Two Is a Crowd': Mononormativity and Gross Indecency in the Criminal Code, 1981-82." *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes* 48.1 (2014): 53-81. Hooper argues that it was only a partial decriminalization, since the only sex acts that were legally allowed were in private and between no more than two consenting adults over the age of 21. This would have implications for bathhouse raids in the 1970s and early 1980s.

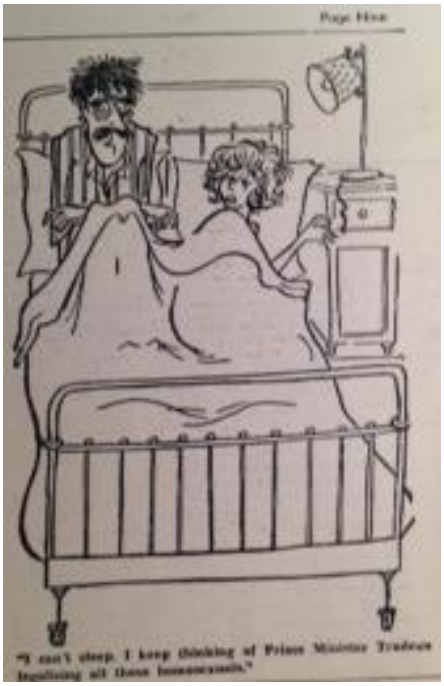


Image 1 – Cartoon from *Tab*, Dec 6, 1969. Caption reads: "I can't sleep. I keep thinking of Prime Minister Trudeau legalizing all those homosexuals."

Even in the more turbulent 1970s, when gay bars on Yonge Street were subject to police harassment and the targets of a burgeoning homophobic sentiment, accusations that provincial inspectors employed selective enforcement were never proven. It does appear as if a concerted effort to limit the number of new licences on Yonge was launched in the late 1970s, but that was likely in response to municipal appeals. Despite this, the LLBO did not seem to selectively enforce regulations in any consistent pattern.[76] With some exceptions, it appears to have maintained its post-prohibition model as a moderate agent of the state.

[76] While it might appear as if "LLBO" and "LCBO" are used interchangeably, there is a distinction based on period. The 1947 establishment of the LLBO marks a distinct change that will be explained in the first chapter. There were allegations that some queer bars were subject to more frequent inspections by the LLBO than others. For a range of reasons, it is difficult to assess the validity of such claims. Joey Slinger, a columnist at *The Toronto Star*, responded to this story with an investigation and concluded that the bars that were subject to constant surveillance were, in fact, violating the conditions of their licence by over-crowding and, as such, were rightfully inspected on a more frequent basis than some other bars. "Homosexuals and Police Must Both Obey the Law," *Toronto Star*, June 24, 1982.

Historiography

In the introduction to *Queer Twin Cities*, an anthology about Minneapolis/St. Paul's queer history, Jennifer L. Pierce challenges the myth of a backwards and repressive mid-west lagging behind the gay activism found in the Pacific and Atlantic coastal cities of the United States—a useful challenge to keep in mind when contemplating Toronto's queer counterpublic.[77] We should expect bar-based cultures to be substantially different from one urban area to another since there is a range of factors that might affect how communities form in bars, from licensing to demographics. Still, it might be easy for people to extrapolate from the extremely well-known pre-Stonewall era in New York and assume that other cities' gay communities went through a parallel (albeit later and/or smaller), linear evolution from repression to activism—or to make assumptions that every city outside of Los Angeles, San Francisco or New York was a hopeless conservative backwater. This common notion of a uniform and unidirectional progression towards equal rights, led by several major urban centres (with second-tier cities lagging behind in terms of self-organization and pre-political activity) is complicated by evidence gathered from tabloid stories and interviews that indicate the presence of several postwar bars and restaurants in Toronto that were gay-friendly (one of which, Letros, gay-owned) and, a lively, rich social life in Toronto the Gay.

In this sense, postwar Toronto, which was more gay-friendly than is sometimes presumed, might be considered in the context of the pre-repeal Manhattan that George Chauncey uncovered in *Gay New York*—a Manhattan that was shrouded in myths of invisibility, isolation and self-loathing.[78] Although these were the dominant myths created by the "coming out" narrative, Chauncey revealed a city in which, prior to the repeal of Prohibition, a gay community

[77] Jennifer Pierce, *Queer Twin Cities* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2010), xi-xii.
[78] George Chauncey. *Gay New York: : Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994.), 2.

lived, openly, in public spaces. After Repeal and the re-establishment of public drinking spaces, however, gay men and lesbians were increasingly excluded. Nor did this situation improve after the Second World War, since the period from 1934 to the early 1970s is characterized by many as having been, essentially, an extension of Prohibition for gays and lesbians. Like the speakeasies of the past, New York's gay bars were owned and run by organized crime syndicates and the community that frequented them was subject to unsafe physical conditions and blackmail schemes, often concocted by the management itself.[79] Although the bars in the 1970s on Toronto's Yonge Street strip might have been comparable with Stonewall-era bars, many of the ones open to gay patronage in the 1950s were not. As opposed to being made up of isolated individuals, "Toronto the Gay" was a tight, organized and active community that spanned across several public drinking establishments and was far from invisible—at least to anyone who looked. The queer counterpublic's presence was there to see and was represented in the tabloids, in gay bars, in the mixed bars across from city hall and, every year on Hallowe'en, at the very public drag ball that began as an expression of pride.

Gay bars were not illegal in New York State, per se, but were treated as such, since they were often raided on the grounds that they were serving patrons deemed to be "disorderly."[80] Since gay bars were vulnerable and their operations fell into a grey area of New York State liquor licensing, many were operated by people connected with organized crime and raids were part of the negotiations between corrupt police and bar management. Although there was a small spate of police activity on the premises of a few Toronto bars in 1956 (and a clear "raid" in 1962 that targeted an unlicensed club), there is little evidence of police actions involving gay bars in Toronto in the 1950s. That said, many of Toronto's gay bars—the ones at the King Edward Hotel

[79] Duberman, *Stonewall*, 180-186.
[80] Ibid.

and the Park Plaza, for example—would have had much in common with the high-end hotel bars in New York that catered to a gay clientele and were not harassed by police.[81] Manhattan's Oak Room at the Plaza and the men's bars at the Biltmore and Astor hotels, all catered to a queer clientele, even if, on occasion, house rules that prohibited standing at the bar (to discourage cruising) were invoked and, for periods, gay patronage was discouraged. New York was not alone in its two-tier system of gay bars, with unmolested swank hotel bars on one hand and, by contrast, more affordable bars that were frequently harassed by state liquor authorities, police or predatory management. In California, for example, the State Liquor Authority actually shuttered gay bars in the 1960s, despite court challenges regarding this practice.[82] In San Francisco and Los Angeles, bars that catered to a lower-income clientele were frequently the target of sting operations and raids and the average lifespan of a San Francisco gay bar was said to be under one year.[83]

John D'Emilio argued that the persecution of gays and lesbians in postwar San Francisco was part of a larger Cold War "lavender scare," in which people who were not in heterosexual relationships were purged from civil service positions and marginalized on the grounds that they could easily be blackmailed and, therefore, represented security risks. These policies were in place long after the Red Scare abated, as David K. Johnson explains in his study of postwar Washington D.C., in which he demonstrates how such policies became institutionalized and normalized. In his closing chapter, Johnson describes the scene at Washington's gay bars, which included those in the Mayflower and Statler hotels, as well as several stand-alone bars, notably the Derby Room and the Chicken Hut, which were lively, despite tight regulations on alcohol service and closing hours. Johnson says that, although the bars were under surveillance, they

[81] "Homosexuality in America," *Life Magazine*, June 26, 1964, 66-74
[82] D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*.
[83] "Homosexuality in America," *Life Magazine*, June 26, 1964, 66-74.

were never closed, similar to those in Toronto.[84] This is not to suggest that Washington and Toronto shared parallel queer histories. If one thing has become clear from the many city-specific queer histories, including, but not limited to, Philadelphia, San Francisco, New York, Washington, Los Angeles, Portland (Oregon), Buffalo and Minneapolis-St. Paul, it is that each North American city's queer community had a unique development, influenced by demographics, liquor licensing, other legislation, police culture, bar culture, and the presence or absence of homophile associations.[85]

The Lavender Scare in Canada (Historiography, continued)

The relative freedom of association enjoyed by some segments of Toronto's queer population during the Cold War can not be attributed to a more tolerant society in Canada or a less extreme reaction to national security risks than the United States during that same period. Despite Canada's reputation for being less alarmist about national security than the U.S., and the fact that, with the possible exception of Quebec's Maurice Duplessis, there is no one Canadian figure who embodies Cold War paranoia and hysteria quite as neatly as Senator Joseph McCarthy, Canada did succumb to both the Red Scare and Lavender Scare. As Gary Marcuse and Reginald Whitaker have demonstrated, the implementation of a paranoid insecurity state was comprehensive.[86] Gary Kinsman has demonstrated that Canadian Cold War policy increasingly marginalized gays and lesbians in the civil service and military and, in another study (co-authored with Patrizia Gentile), it is noted that bureaucratic gender anxiety emerged alongside the government's hiring of women to fill a labour shortage that began in 1941.[87] Like "Rosie the

[84] David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 163-166.
[85] Marc Stein, *City of Brotherly and Sisterly Loves*; John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*; Martin Duberman, *Stonewall*; David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*; Lillian Faderman, and Stuart Timmons. *Gay LA: A history of sexual outlaws, power politics, and lipstick lesbians*. Basic Books, 2006. Peter Boag, *Same-Sex affairs: Constructing and Controlling Homosexuality in the Pacific Northwest*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003; Kennedy and Davis. *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*; Twin Cities GLBT Oral History Project, *Queer Twin Cities.*
[86] Marcuse and Whitaker, *Cold War Canada.*
[87] Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010) 57-61.

Riveter," Sally the Stenographer's presence posed a threat to traditional "gender and sexual boundaries," but was contained through the use of containment tools that included women's residences and, postwar, Miss Civil Service beauty pageants, which mitigated concerns over crossing gender boundaries. For those in the military in the Second World War, "mobilizations expanded possibilities for same-gender eroticism," which resulted in the invention of a category of the unfit – "psychopathic personality with abnormal sexuality" as early as 1943.[88]

The Canadian government constructed gay men and lesbians as security risks, going so far as to attempt to invent a "fruit machine," a literal mechanism that was designed to detect closeted homosexuals working in the civil service. The rhetoric surrounding secret, undetectable communists passing as citizens was interchangeable with the "hidden menace" of closeted gays and lesbians. And, although the actual "fruit machine" project lost funding relatively quickly, Whitaker and Marcuse uncovered a special squad designed to "out" homosexual civil servants, in response to the case of John Watkins, the Canadian ambassador to Moscow, who'd been targeted in a blackmail scheme. In addition, Kinsman and Gentile noted that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) regularly engaged in surveillance of gay bars in Ottawa, such as the basement tavern of the Lord Elgin Hotel.[89] Their presence was well-enough known for the patrons to have designed a system of signals to alert others to the fact that an undercover officer was in the bar. In addition, in the same study, Kinsman and Gentile demonstrated some level of co-operation between the RCMP and Toronto police in the 1960s.

Montreal's gay bars may not have been a top priority for the RCMP, but they certainly were being monitored by the local authorities, who were responsible to a large Roman-Catholic

[88] Kinsman "Constructing Gay Men and Lesbians as National Security Risks, 1950-1970," in Kinsman et al. *Whose National Security?* (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2000); Kinsman and Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers*; Chauncey, "The Postwar Sex Crime Panic"; Chenier, "The Criminal Sexual Psychopath in Canada". Chauncey argues that the panic was connected to the era's anxieties over shifting gender roles, Elise Chenier complicates that narrative by also situating it in the pro-active parenting culture and the medico-legal discourse that constructed a criminal sexual psychopath.

[89] Kinsman and Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers*, 197-202.

population. Often lauded for having a relatively open gay bar scene that was established in the red-light district as early as the 1920s when it became a destination for weekend tourists from dry provinces and the United States (which was under Prohibition) Montreal's bar scene was fraught with contradictions and paradoxes. To start, by the 1950s, there were two distinct communities, the Anglophone bars near McGill University and the Francophone bars on "The Main."[90] Regardless of the area, most were subject to mafia ownership that created "safe" spaces for gay men to associate free from harassment by the police, who were enforcing Mayor Jean Drapeau's anti-vice policy. That said, this left the community vulnerable to abuse from the mob—a legacy that lasted for half a century as motorcycle gangs and the mafia negotiated for the territory.[91] The lesbian community, instead, congregated in clubs and cafes, largely in the red-light district, since, according to provincial law, women weren't allowed to drink in taverns in Quebec until 1971. When that legislation changed, it led to a brief "golden age" of visibility in the late 1970s and early 1980s before the lesbian community disappeared from view again, eclipsed by the commercially successful Gay Village.[92] Since Ottawa was dominated by the civil service and Montreal was the largest city in a province that had elected the ultra-conservative Duplessis as its Premier, we might expect both cities to have greater anxiety over the alleged security risk that lesbians and gay men posed than Toronto, where there are fewer indications of raids and undercover surveillance of the queer community. That Toronto did not have as large diplomatic or military communities after the Second World War likely contributed to the fact many of its gay bars did not appear to be heavily targeted for many raids and sting operations in the 1950s and 1960s.

[90] Demczuk, Irene and Frank W. Remiggi, eds., *Out of the Shadows: Stories of Lesbian and Gay Communities of Montreal* (Montreal, VLB Editor, 1998).
[91] Ibid.
[92] Podmore, Julie A. "Gone 'underground'? Lesbian visibility and the consolidation of queer space in Montréal." *Social & Cultural Geography* 7.4 (2006): 595-625.

Toronto, itself, has been the subject of several gay social history studies that have examined the intersection of leisure, policing and sexuality, including Steven Maynard's work on gross indecency cases tried between 1890 and 1930 in Toronto courts. Maynard connects these to anxieties over urbanization and the city's first public washrooms, sites that challenged the boundaries between public and private and, as such, began to fall under the surveillance of the state but were also a part of what he refers to as the "dialectics of discovery."[93] In his Master's thesis for the University of Toronto Criminology department, Bart Sarsh examines a similar intersection of surveillance and public sex, although he focuses on a different period—the postwar period and, unlike Maynard's sources which include daily newspapers, Sarsh's sources are almost entirely confined to Toronto tabloids, which, he says, attempt to perform a Durkheimian function by illustrating bad behaviour in order to produce good behaviour.[94] However, Sarsh demonstrates that the relationship between the tabloids, the police and those under surveillance was a complex interaction, since these "polysocial spaces" were used by the individuals in the parks to subvert their intended goals and by Toronto police to enforce sexual regulation. In a later period still, Mariana Valverde and Miomir Cirak interrogate the relationship between the Toronto police and the inhabitants of the "Gay Village," with a special focus on the added layer of complication in the interaction when it came to governing bodies in commercial spaces—distinct from the streets.[95] Valverde continues this line of inquiry in *Law's Dream of Common Knowledge* and, although the period studied is later than the one examined in this

[93] Steven Maynard. "Through a hole in the lavatory wall: Homosexual Subcultures, Police Surveillance, and the Dialectics of Discovery, Toronto, 1890-1930" in *Journal of the History of Sexuality*. 5(2) (October 1994), 207-242.
[94] Bart Sarsh. "'Disgusting' Noises, and 'Dangerous' Spaces: Tabloids, Sexualities, and Discourses of Perversion, Toronto, 1950-1962," (Toronto: Centre of Criminology, University of Toronto, 2005), Master's thesis.
[95] Valverde and Cirak, "Governing Bodies".

project, the lens is germane to this dissertation, since the regulatory practices described are particularly complicated in commercial spaces, such as the ones described in this project.[96]

In separate projects, Eric Setliff and David Churchill both wrote about the Toronto tabloids in relation to the city's gay community, with Setliff focusing more closely on the articles from *Hush Free Press* and Churchill on columnists such as "Mother Goose," which were featured in a range of different tabloids.[97] By doing a close reading of the texts from that one tabloid over the years 1946-1956, Setliff demonstrates how the language used in even the most sensational articles were far more fluid than was usually supposed, including defenses of the gay community and a range of identities that went far beyond the usual tropes of sex fiends and swish kids. Churchill's work on postwar Toronto demonstrates how the tabloids were used to map out the city's gay social geography and, as such, acted as guides for negotiating spaces including parks, theatres and bars.[98] This project builds on these two ground-breaking re-interpretations of tabloids and argues, further, that the conversation between the bars and the tabloids organized the culture as well as resistance to discrimination. Some of the organization found in the tabloids falls along class lines, which is a theme closely examined in Elise Chenier's seminal work on the Continental.[99] That framework, which divides lesbian bar culture into downtowners and uptowners, is relied upon heavily for this project as well, especially since her work demonstrated community and every day acts of resistance within the bar. Ideas of resistance and community in bars have also been explored by Kinsman and Gentile in the aforementioned book about the construction of gay men and lesbians as security risks, which, in

[96] Mariana Valverde. *Law's dream of a common knowledge*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009)
[97] Setliff, "Swish Kids"; David S. Churchill. "Mother Goose's Map Tabloid Geographies and Gay Male Experience in 1950s Toronto." *Journal of Urban History* 30.6 (2004): 826-852.
[98] David S. Churchill. "Coming Out in a Cold Climate: A History of Gay Men in Toronto During the 1950s." (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1993), Master's thesis.
[99] Elise Chenier. "Rethinking Class in Lesbian Bar Culture: Living 'The Gay Life' in Toronto, 1955-1965." *Left History* 9.2 (2004): 85-118.

particular, uncovered everyday resistance in bars such as the one in Ottawa's Lord Elgin Hotel.[100]

Camp discourse and the idea of a "lavender language" has not been closely studied within the context of postwar Toronto, but there is a cache of international literature to draw from, beginning with the work of Mark Warner who, in *Publics and Counterpublics*, situates camp discourse as a counterpublic in and of itself, since it is a self-organized space for agitational activities.[101] In *Mother Camp*, Esther Newton examines female impersonation in 1970s America, and positions the language of camp as a subversive original invention of the performers who are problematizing truths about sexuality.[102] These two explorations into the meaning of camp, as well as some more theoretical approaches found in cultural studies and queer theory, are central to this project's interpretation of several of the cultures that grew out of the bar communities of postwar Toronto.

Primary Sources

The sources available for this study include official records from the provincial liquor authority, newspapers, magazines, tabloids, memoirs and interviews with people who frequented Toronto's gay and lesbian bars between 1947 and 1980. The City of Toronto Archives had one report exploring the relationship between the police and the gay community that was commissioned after the 1981 Operation Soap police raids. The LLBO establishment files include no references to raids from other agencies (like local or provincial police) and few indications that public drinking spaces that cultivated a queer clientele were under any sort of special scrutiny. Of the hundred-plus files accessed through the Ontario Archives in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, there are only two that cross-reference

[100] Kinsman and Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers*, 200-210.
[101] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 56.
[102] Newton, *Mother Camp, 1972*.

efforts with other governing bodies—the Toronto police, the military and Toronto's public health department. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, one tabloid frequently alleged that the inspectors were incompetent and/or corrupt and that enforcement of regulations was uneven, so it is possible that the files are not reliable, especially given the additional possibility that some censure might have been verbal and "off the record."[103] There is no other confirmation of this alleged uneven enforcement, however. In an attempt to corroborate this information (or lack of), two inquiries were made to the Toronto Police Museum to access its archives. Both were denied.

In addition to the provincial authority's establishment files, sources for this dissertation included magazines and newspapers—both mainstream dailies and the tabloid press. Whenever an incident was recorded in an establishment file, it was cross-referenced with the databases for Toronto's dailies, although there are few matches. In fact, there is little material of any kind in reference to the gay and lesbian public drinking spaces in the *Toronto Daily Star, Globe and Mail* and *Toronto Evening Telegram* until after late 1963, when the *Telegram* ran a column about the Hallowe'en ball on King Street. In 1964, there were two features on Toronto's gay and lesbian community—one in *Maclean*'s and one in the *Telegram*, but it would take five more years before the *Globe and Mail* or *Toronto Star* covered Toronto's gay community, except on the rare occasions when it intersected with a crime story. James Egan framed his struggle to fight for his community's civil rights and visibility as a challenge to the "conspiracy of silence" in the mainstream media, which he tried to dismantle through frequent letters to the editor in the daily newspapers, semi-regular columns in at least two tabloids and by acting as a guide to sympathetic investigative journalists, such as Sydney Katz, who wrote the 1964 *Maclean's* article. The daily newspapers, though, cannot be said to have been entirely silent on the matter.

[103] "Lowdown" *Justice Weekly*, September 19, 1953, 10. The editorial line at *Justice Weekly* often took a dim view of the way that the LCBO was being run - there are several other similar articles that accuse inspectors of uneven enforcement. This may also have been motivated by a particular editorial position, however.

There were, for example, about 140 articles in the *Star* between the years 1950 and 1965 that contained the words "homosexual" or "homosexuals" and an additional half-dozen articles containing the word "lesbian." The majority of these articles, however, were either theatre or book reviews of fictional works that dealt with conflicted queer characters *or* a discussion of the issue of homosexuality in terms of medical and/or legal discourse. The Wolfenden Report, that, in 1957, suggested certain types of sex be decriminalized in England, for example, was cause for several articles in the *Star*, as were recurring stories of possible treatments for homosexuality. Aside from these, stories appeared only when a criminal case involved a gay or lesbian perpetrator or victim. There were no stories that might have given the reader any kind of glimpse into the lived experience of members of the gay and lesbian community.

The omission of stories outside of articles that dealt with the "homosexual problem," is an interesting puzzle—one that does not appear to have an easy answer. There are several partial explanations, but none are completely satisfactory. There were some members of the gay and lesbian community that would have been invested in media silence, since publicity might invite scrutiny for people who were closeted.[104] It is possible that this influenced editorial policy. It is also possible that reporting on the community in a normalizing discourse would have been in conflict with the trope of the gay man as a criminal sexual psychopath and/or, as Kinsman and Gentile have argued, the project of constructing lesbians and gay men as security risks.[105] In addition, progressive newspapers such as the *Toronto Star*, wished to steer clear of accusations of sensationalism.[106] *The Toronto Star*'s readership included grade school children and it was under explicit, external pressure by the municipal government, the medical community and

[104] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy of Silence*, 84-85. This will be explored in greater detail in Chapter One, in reference to one incident in particular that saw Egan discussing the wisdom of this.
[105] Chenier, Elise. *Strangers in Our Midst, Sexual Deviancy in Post-War Ontario*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 65-67. Chenier here also clarifies that it this editorial policy was not built by the media but, rather, in response to sources, including police and psychiatric experts. Kinsman and Gentile. *The Canadian War on Queers*, 197-202.
[106] Joseph Atkinson, editor from 1899-1948, established progressive editorial guidelines at *The Toronto Star* known as the "Atkinson Principles."

religious leaders to quell news of gay and lesbian sex. When the first Kinsey Report came out in 1948, the City of Toronto Board of Control requested that it not be widely circulated or reported upon, since it would serve to "increase the interest of the public" in" the subject matter.[107] At a city meeting, it was suggested that the book's audience should be restricted to the medical community and that doctors were "disturbed" about the idea of the Kinsey Report being distributed to the public—particularly amongst "certain classes."[108] It was resolved that book dealers and newsstand operators, some of which were also urged to suppress gangster magazines, would be asked to stop selling the Kinsey Report.[109]

The tabloids also contain mentions of the Kinsey Report and legal issues as they intersected with homosexuality, but, in addition, reported on the lived experiences of the burgeoning gay community, mapping out bars, restaurants and housing complexes such as the City Park Apartments, as well as chronicling individual characters who were active on the scene. Where the daily newspapers were silent on these issues—maintaining the heteronormative values of the postwar public sphere—the tabloids were not, part of the genre's self-described dogged commitment to social justice and the truth.[110] One subject, interviewed in 2001 about his recollection of *Tab*'s "Gay Set," said that the tabloids sometimes used people's *real names* and, in addition, this: "I don't know who it was, it was undercover, somebody who was incognito that did the write-up and nobody ever knew who it was." This regular patron from the St. Charles and the Parkside continued: "It was like the Hedda Hopper of the gay community, you know, all the scandals and everything used to be written up in this column. We'd all know who the people were that were being talked about but the editor, the writer, was never ever revealed. It was

[107] "Ask Police to Ask Shops to Stop Kinsey Report Sales," *Toronto Daily Star*, June 10, 1948, p 2.
[108] *Ibid*. Mayor McCallum clarified the issue of class.
[109] "Board to Ask Dealers Suppress Kinsey Book," *The Globe and Mail*, June 11, 1948, p 5.
[110] Jacques, "The Newspaperman and the Tabloid".

somebody among us but we never knew who."[111] "Mother Goose," the columnist from *The Rocket* in the early 1950s certainly did not help to solve the mystery: "WHO IS MABEL???" WHO IS MOTHER GOOSE???" This week I would like to clear up the controversy!!! NEITHER MOTHER GOOSE NOR MABEL EXIST!!! They are only two names that someone thought of!!!"[112] In a playful manner, "Mother Goose" set out to have a little fun with a question that was obviously already circulating in the 1950s: "WHO WRITES THIS COLUMN? I, (the present Mother Goose) have made this column look like the work of any number of people!!! This column has never been written!!! IT HAS BEEN COMPILED from facts and incidents that we hope will make it INTERESTING AND AMUSING TO OUR READERS!!!!"[113] The camp tone, coded language and veiled references make it challenging to decipher these tabloids. However, these columns were integral to the development of the camp discourse that was a defining feature of the queer counterpublic.

Those columns, however, only represent one side of the tabloids, which were unwieldy publications—some of which had brief, fleeting, lifespans—with an occasionally incoherent editorial line, even though, loosely speaking, they could all be called crime publications. Toronto had a half-dozen tabloids in the postwar period and most of the material found within those pages was drawn from the courts, where tabloid reporters would be dispatched, so that they could report on the more salacious stories. In some instances, tabloids published lists of all the people arrested for misdemeanour crimes, including public drunkenness and gross indecency charges. Some of the people who made regular appearances in the courts became regular characters who, at times, warranted their own small feature stories that chronicled their struggles

[111] Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony. Interview with Al Maloney, by Elise Chenier, September 13, 2001.
[112] "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket*, June 21, 1952, 12. Mother Goose was sometimes written as a dialogue of sorts between two characters.
[113] Ibid.

with alcoholism. Aside from the cover price fees paid by the readers, much of the advertising revenue for these tabloids came from cocktail bars and restaurants, particularly in the postwar period, when public drinking spaces more commonly featured musical entertainment. To maximize this revenue, most tabloids instituted "nightcrawler" columns that gave readers insight into the city's best entertainment options, as well as some of the gossip surrounding the characters who inhabited that *demi-monde,* including those involved in boxing matches, politics and stock trading.

Tabloids used as sources for this dissertation include *Justice Weekly, True News Times, Hush Free Press, Flash, The Rocket* and *Tab*. They were accessed at the University of Toronto's Thomas Fisher Rare Book Room, the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives and the Toronto Public Library. It is important to note that not every issue is available for all of these titles and, as with most ephemera, the series are incomplete in most cases. In addition to these newspapers, the public library's stores of *Saturday Night, Guerilla, Maclean's, Toronto Life, The Globe and Mail, The Toronto Star, The Toronto Evening Telegram* and the *Toronto Sun* were used. The entire print run of the *Body Politic, GAY, Two* and the *Bob Damron Address Book* are intact, all of which were consulted for this dissertation. Other print primary sources include memoirs, such as Brian Dedora's *A Slice of Voice at the Edge of Hearing*, Jim Egan's *Challenging the Conspiracy of Silence, My Life As a Canadian Gay Activist* and Rick Bebout's *Promiscuous Affections* (published online).

These first-person accounts were augmented with interviews. In addition to the ones that already existed and are available online through the Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony and in the holdings at the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, 11 people were interviewed for this project. Half of the people who were interviewed in person responded to a request sent to the

Primetimers, a Toronto group for queer seniors that met for a number of activities at a community centre on Wellesley, including a session on Tuesday afternoons. With the exception of one interview subject, born in the late 1940s, all were of legal drinking age in the 1950s and 1960s and frequented Toronto bars at the time. The interviews were conducted in groups over four meetings after the Tuesday afternoon sessions, so the participants were different each time—only one man was present at all four interviews. Although questions were prepared in advance, the interviews rarely followed the structure that was designed, since interview subjects built on each others' stories as memories were sparked and it was more fruitful to let the subjects have some control over the direction of the interviews. For example, in the first interview, the first few questions—about how people found bars and if they read tabloids—elicited little feedback. The fourth question, however, which was about raids, produced a ten-minute exchange between the two interview subjects about how police harassment was a 1970s phenomenon—not a major feature of gay life in the 1950s and 1960s that they could recall. Their conversation sparked new questions and lines of inquiry. The interview with this group included the first one, with Don and Paul, a second with Don, alone, a third, with Don, Paul and Bob and, a final one with Don, Paul and Neil. The advantage of being able to re-interview Don and Paul several times made it possible to confirm old stories, review material and follow up on new lines of inquiry.

In addition, there were seven interviews with individuals (ranging in age from 65-85) who were tracked down through a network of people—most originating from a lead in a Toronto book club. Other than one, which was done with two interview subjects at once, all of these interviews were done one-on-one. Although it is a small sample, the group interviews produced more material than the individual interviews, possibly because, in groups, people helped to jog each others' memories, even though the periods and bars were not always precisely in harmony.

Some asked to remain anonymous—two refused to have the interview taped—all of these will be given pseudonyms. All interview subjects were given an option to have interviews transcribed and given to the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives—some opted for this.

Finally, there were existing interviews in archives that were used. One, conducted in 1985, with a journalist who studied at Ryerson in the late 1940s, was from the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives. It was not possible, at the time, to access Foolscap, the larger cache of oral history at the archives to which this interview belongs, since it was in the midst of being transcribed, a task that may still be underway for another year. In addition, ten interviews from the Archive of Lesbian Oral Testimony were reviewed, several of which are directly quoted from in this project.

Other than the interviews accessed through the Archive of Lesbian Oral Testimony, all of the interviews were with men. It was not the intent of this project to limit the interviews to men but, rather, the result of the people who responded to the call for interview subjects. This speaks to a larger issue with the sources for this project, which was originally limited to postwar public drinking spaces for both practical and theoretical reasons. First, the LCBO Establishment Files were initially designated the main primary source that would form the backbone of this project—a projection based on having viewed several files that revealed a rich interaction between the liquor authority and the bar owners, leading to the conclusion that the regulatory practices shaped the culture within the gay and lesbian bars and justifying a focus on public drinking spaces. Unfortunately, those sources were not as fruitful as had been hoped and the project's focus shifted to the bars covered in the tabloids, as the rich dialogue between the bars and columnists revealed itself. That focus, however fruitful as it was for revealing the close workings of one community, excluded others, most notably women, but also any communities that had

little access to the bars that made up the predominantly white, male and affluent public that constituted Toronto the Gay. [114]

Public Drinking in Toronto the Gay: A Social Geography

Designating a bar "lesbian" or "gay" is a complicated exercise, regardless of the era or location. Especially since, in addition to frequently mentioned bars such as the Municipal's Essex Room, Parkside Tavern and Continental Hotel, establishments as various and wide-ranging as the Brunswick House, the Silver Rail, the Embassy Tavern, the Pilot Tavern, the Zanzibar and the Gladstone Hotel are all mentioned on occasion in tabloid articles, columns and in interviews with subjects who were familiar with the bar circuit in the 1950s and 1960s. Don, an interview subject, said that, in the 1950s and 1960s in Toronto, any bar was a good bar in which to cruise, indicating a relatively fluid and porous bar scene, at least for men who did not openly and obviously challenge the era's gender performance norms in comportment or clothing.[115] Aside from the fact that many "straight" bars were common cruising grounds, a taxonomy of Toronto's gay and lesbian public drinking spaces becomes even more complicated when it is considered that interview subjects and memoirists tended to qualify the use of the term "lesbian bar" or "gay bar," pointing out that many of Toronto's gay bars were considered "mixed."

As such, the map that follows is an overview of establishments that, from 1947 to 1981, came up frequently and/or factored into events described in this dissertation. This is not intended to be a comprehensive map of every bar but, rather, a geography of the public drinking spaces that were key players in Toronto the Gay. They are listed, roughly, in the order in which they

[114] In addition, it is important to note that one file in particular, the one for the Continental Hotel, was promising at the outset of the project, leading to the conclusion that there might be other lesbian bars to investigate. That was, unfortunately, a dead end and, since it had been thoroughly studied by Elise Chenier in her paper "A Place Like the Continental," it seemed redundant to revisit that material. It remained an important reference point and model for this project, though.
[115] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014.

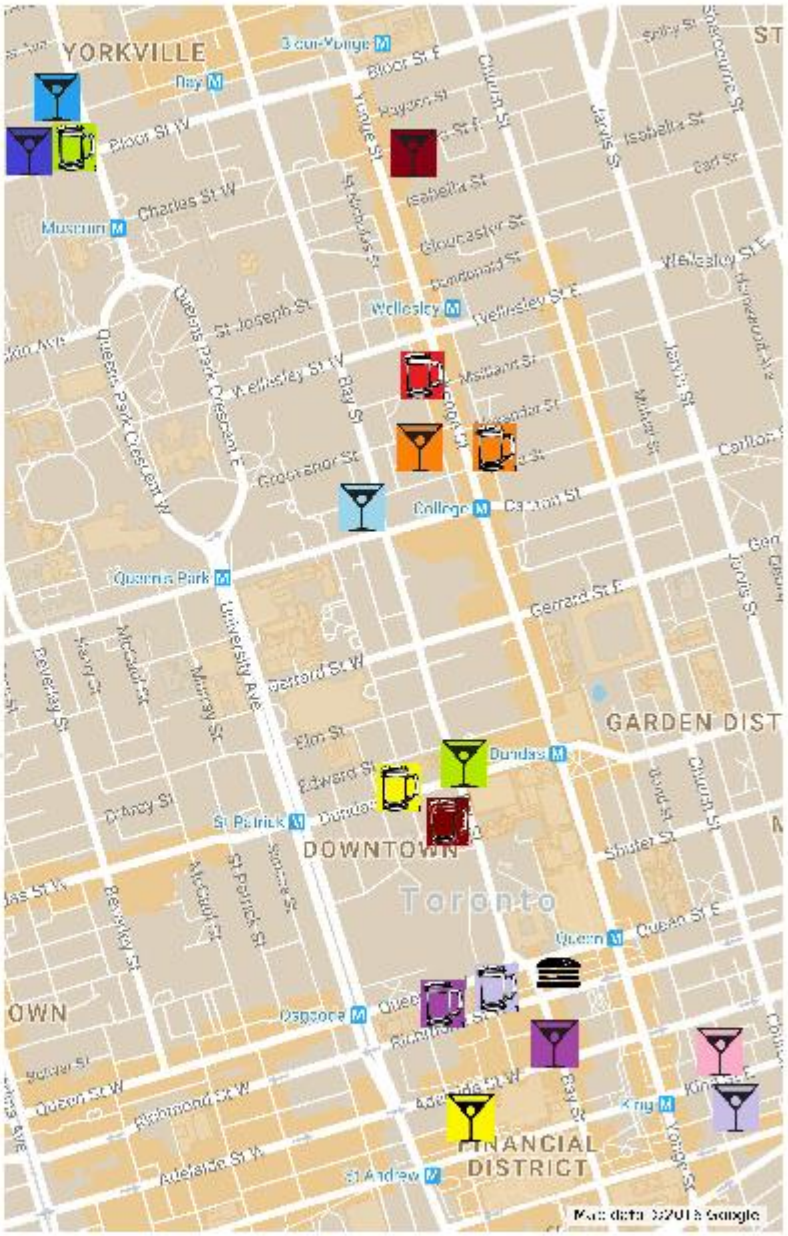
first appear in the tabloids and colour-coded from purple to red in that order, so that a loose pattern of migration north from the present-day financial district to Yonge street can be seen.[116] The icons differentiate between license types, since some bars were licensed to sell liquor and others, only beer. To put this into a larger perspective, there were 144 licensed establishments (including dining lounges, cocktail taverns and beer parlours) in the city as of March 31, 1950, representing, roughly one tavern per 5,000 drinking-age residents of the city of Toronto, with a total legal seating capacity of 43,950.[117]

[116] Although an attempt has been made to impose a chronology for these bars, it is difficult to fix a firm timeframe, since some . As such, no dates have been specified on this map. A more detailed description of active years for each bar and area follows.
[117] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 10, 18. The region is defined as from the harbourfront to Lawrence on the north and from the Humber River on the west to Dawes Road in the east. In addition, the adult population (estimated at 711,199) is drawn from a contemporary source that included every person above the age of 15, as opposed to those who were actually legal drinking age. Depending on the boundaries, there are slightly different figures for the population of the era, but it was on the cusp of breaking one million in that period.

Toronto's Gay and Lesbian Bars, 1947-1981

Toronto's Gay and Lesbian Bars
- Savarin Hotel-336 Bay
- King Edward-37 King E
- Chez Paree-220 Bloor W
- Letros-50 King E
- Union House-71 Queen W
- Municipal-67 Queen W
- Bowles Lunch-395 Bay
- Plaza Rooftop-4 Avenue
- Malloney's-66 Grenville
- Ford Hotel-595 Dundas
- King Cole Room-4 Avenue
- Metropole-141 King W
- Continental-150 Dundas W
- Westbury-475 Yonge
- St Charles-488 Yonge
- Parkside-530 Yonge
- Bay House-572 Bay
- Famous Door-665 Yonge

An overview of the most frequently mentioned bars.



Downtown Core

Public drinking spaces frequented by lesbians and gays in the downtown core (south of College/Carlton) were generally divided into three main areas, classified roughly according to the intersections: King and Toronto streets, Queen and Bay and Dundas and Bay. There was a heavy concentration of licensed establishments in this area in the postwar period—of the 144 licensed establishment in Toronto in 1950, roughly 35 were east of the Don River, west of Dufferin or north of Bloor. The vast majority of the remaining 110 were located south of College and within one mile of Yonge street in either direction.[118]

Beginning with the King Street area, the two most frequently mentioned bars were the Letros' Nile Room and the cocktail bar at the King Edward Hotel, which, at different times, was named the Pickwick Room, the Times Square Lounge and the Golliwog Lounge.[119] Although the management at the King Edward did not always encourage gay patronage and, at times, implemented discriminatory policies, it was mentioned by interview subjects and in the tabloids frequently throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The Nile Room at Letros, however, is one of the few public drinking spaces in Toronto that qualifies as a "gay" bar, since the gay-owned and gay-operated bar was open to gay patronage from at least 1953 to 1970, when it closed.[120] Letros was home to two different establishments: A main-floor, white-tablecloth restaurant known for its high-quality food and a basement cocktail bar, which was a queer space, that was said to be popular, in part, because of its proximity to Bay street's financial district. Since its walls were covered in snakeskin wallpaper, the lower-level Nile Room bar was sometimes referred to as the "Snake Pit." Over the years, this high-end place was patronized by gay men and, to a lesser

[118] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 10b.
[119] The bars in the King Edward Hotel changed names several times. Later, in the 1970s, it was called the Golliwog.
[120] As opposed to a mixed bar.

degree, lesbians, the arts community, tourists, and, at times, hustlers.[121] The Letros family was prominent in both the Greek community and among Toronto's small business owners, with several ventures.[122] The longest-standing restaurant in the Letros family, however, was the King Street location, where its basement bar, the Nile Room, was patronized by queer individuals as early as 1951. From 1951 to 1968, it was also home to an annual Hallowe'en drag ball, at which contestants vied for the title of "Miss Letros."[123]

Image 1 - View of the Letros Building at the corner of King and Toronto Streets. Archives of Ontario, Fonds: Gilbert A. Milne, 28 July, 1947

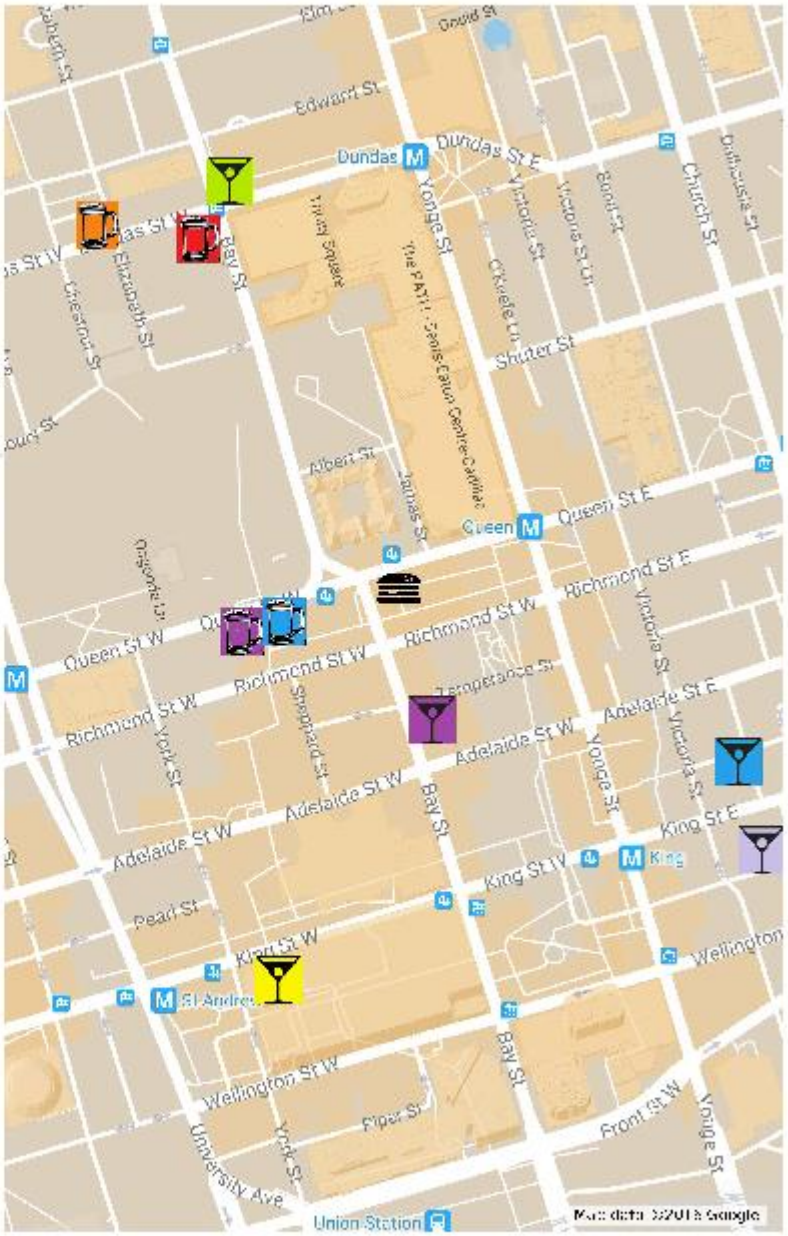
[121] International travel guides from 1964-1970 all list "Letro's" (sic) as (G) and (H) for "Gay" and "Hustlers."
[122] The family emigrated to Toronto from Greece early in the 20th century and got into the restaurant business in 1908 with a lease at 99 Yonge St. and went on to establish restaurants such as The White City Café, the first place to be attacked in Toronto's 1918 anti-Greek riots, and a restaurant across from the newly-opened Maple Leaf Gardens that would attract the attention of Conn Smythe in his attempt to keep beer parlours out of the province, particularly near entertainment areas. "Angry Mob Wrecks Dozen Restaurants," *Toronto Star*, August 3, 1918, 10; "Returned Soldiers Raid Many Greek Restaurants," *The Globe and Mail*. Aug 03, 1918, p1.
"Toronto Greeks Celebrate 100th Anniversary of Liberation from Turks," *Toronto Star*, April 5, 1930, p3; *The Globe and Mail*. "Withdrawal of Hotel Bid is Promised," Jan 31, 1938, p9.
[123] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, Dec. 6, 1969, 8.

Downtown Toronto Bars - Inset

Toronto's Gay and Lesbian Bars

- Savarin Hotel-336 Bay
- King Edward-37 King E
- Union House-71 Queen W
- Municipal-67 Queen W
- Bowles Lunch-395 Bay
- Letros-50 King E
- Ford Hotel-595 Dundas
- Metropole-141 King W
- Continental-150 Dundas W
- Bay House-572 Bay

A more detailed map of bars located from Dundas to King, off Yonge and Bay Streets.



West of Yonge on King street was the Hotel Metropole, one of the original five bars licensed to sell liquor by the glass in 1947 and a bar that, at certain points, seems to have catered to a mixed clientele.[124] In addition (not listed on the map, since it was only mentioned once or twice in the tabloids), there was the Pump Room in the Lord Simcoe Hotel, which opened in 1957 at the corner of King and University Avenue.[125] Two interview subjects mentioned the Princess Lounge at the Royal York Hotel (across from Union Station on Front near Bay) as a place to meet men, although with far less frequency than other venues.[126] The old tap room at the Royal York was mentioned in a tabloid column as having once been a lively place that, by 1951, was all but forgotten.[127] The unlicensed Bowles Lunch at King and Yonge was popular after the bars closed and was mentioned in the tabloids, sometimes in connection with arrests. *Justice Weekly* remonstrated the snack bar as early as 1947 for having filthy washrooms and urged its management to "control the language and actions of its 'patrons' … around the midnight hour and thereafter."[128]

Kitty-corner from Old City Hall at Bay and Queen were two hotel bars, the Municipal Hotel's Essex Bar and the tavern in the Union House Hotel, both of which were beer parlours that were relatively heavily monitored by liquor inspectors and police, in part, because of allegations that they were associated with violence, the sex trade and were vectors of sexually transmitted disease.[129] The Municipal, in particular, was known to be a "rough" bar, patronized by hustlers and ex-convicts. The area, known for cruising, was referred to as "The Corners," and/or "Queer Street," and was defined, largely, by these two bars, although it also included the

[124] "81 Cocktail Bars Seek Approval Of Liquor Board," *The Globe and Mail*, March 17, 1947, 23.; Interview with Bob, Don and Paul conducted by Sismondo, Nov. 25, 2014. (Bob)
[125] "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, March 9, 1957, 4
[126] Interview with Bob, Don and Paul conducted by Sismondo, Nov. 25, 2014. (Bob)
[127] "A Study in Lavender," *True News Times*, May 21, 1951, 4.
[128] "Caught in Passing," *Justice Weekly*, March 1, 1947, 5.
[129] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B401293 (Union House Hotel), March 28, 1946; June 21, 1946; July 3, 1952. Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony. Interview with Jack Webster, January 13, 1994. Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy of Silence*, 79.

Variety Inn, which was mentioned in an interview with a police officer, who characterized it as a bar patronized by lesbians.[130] In addition, there was Bowles Lunch, located at the south-east corner of Queen and Bay, which was a well-known pick-up spot, covered by the tabloids frequently. In a story that dealt with the sentencing of eight men, including six "youths," it was dealt with as follows: "It came as no surprise to those who know what goes on at certain downtown spots that the contacts in this case were made at Bowles lunch … a known hangout late nights for all sorts of queer characters, as a visit to the place about midnight will reveal."[131] Just south of Bowles Lunch, on Bay, the Savarin Hotel was an early, upscale and mixed hotel beverage room that was turned into a cocktail bar—one of only two Toronto bars named in the 1949 *Swasarnt Nerf* international guide to gay bars.[132] The Savarin did not admit gay patronage for long, however, since, it implemented a discriminatory policy to discourage gay patronage before 1950 and there are no references to it after that.[133] On Yonge Street just north of Queen, the Silver Rail—one of Toronto's first licensed cocktail bars in 1947—was said to have had a very "mixed" crowd at cocktail hour and, just south of that, on Richmond east of Yonge, was the Saphire Tavern, which is only mentioned in the tabloids twice but was the venue at which Jackie Shane played regularly.[134]

[130] Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony. Interview with Jack Webster, January 13, 1994.
[131] "Eight Adult and Teenaged Males Interrupted During Sexual Orgy," *Justice Weekly*, July 4, 1953, p2.
[132] Hagius, Hugh. *Swasarnt-Nerf's Gay Guides for 1949*. (New York: Bibliogay Publications, 2010 Reprint), 92
[133] "Homosexual Concepts, By "J.L.E.," *Justice Weekly*, February 13, 1954, p13.
[134] Primetimers interview with Don by Sismondo, May 12, 2015; "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, July 7, 1956, 4; "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, March 23, 1957, 4; Steven Maynard, "'A New Way of Lovin'': Queer Toronto Gets Schooled by Jackie Shane," *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 2017), 11-18. There are only two references to the "Saphire girls" in *Tab* but Maynard discovered that it was the site of Jackie Shane's performances and that George Hislop patronized the Saphire.

Image 2 - Municipal Hotel, circa 1945.
City of Toronto Archives.

Dundas and Bay

North of City Hall, at the intersection of Bay and Dundas, was the Ford Hotel, the only other Toronto establishment (aside from the Savarin Hotel) to have been listed in the 1949 *Swasarnt Nerf* guide that helped gay tourists find friendly accommodation.[135] The Ford's Tropical Room was known as a "mixed gay-straight" cocktail bar that was regularly visited by liquor inspectors, in part, because of the hotel's proximity to the Gray Coach bus terminal, which was associated with the sex trade.[136] The Ford Hotel would eventually become known as the "Queen of Dumps"—a result of its association with a transient population and violent crime.[137] In addition, at this corner, Bay Public House and the nearby Continental Hotel (Dundas and

[135] Hagius, *Swasarnt-Nerf*, 92.
[136] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy of Silence*, 79.
[137] "Ford Hotel Has 19 Days Left After 45 Downhill Years," *Toronto Star*, Oct 1, 1973, 4.

Elizabeth) were mixed bars, both of which eventually came to be known as "rough" bars in the late 1960s that, respectively, were patronized by gay men and lesbians who did not adhere to heterosexual norms in clothing, sexual comportment and outward appearance. In addition, there was the Rose, a bar with a mixed clientele in the 1950s (Centre, north of Dundas) and the Turf Club Hotel (Elm Street, between Bay and University), although the latter seems to have had change in policy (or its patrons decided to stop going there) in 1956.[138] There were also several unlicensed restaurants, including the New Star and Wong's Café—both on Dundas that were often mentioned in connection with the lesbian community.[139] The Bay Public House—a beer parlour—was mentioned more frequently in the late 1960s and 1970s and was said to be only patronized by men.[140] When regular customers at the Parkside considered boycotting that Yonge street tavern, some suggested Bay House as an alternative.[141] In 1950, there were 20 licensed establishments in the area bordered between Queen and College streets (south and north, respectively) and Yonge and Bathurst streets (east and west, respectively).[142]

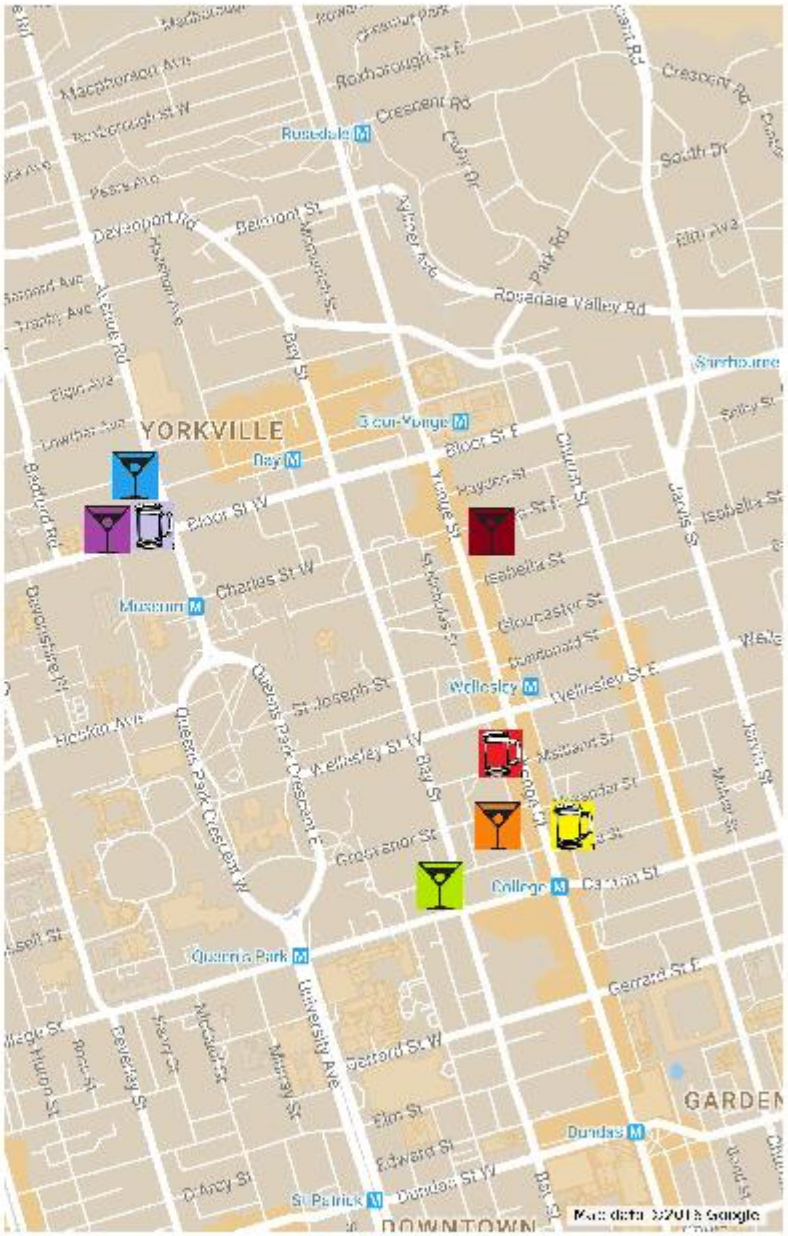
[138] Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony. Interview with Jack Webster, January 13, 1994; "Gorilla Girls' Lurid Sex Riot Finally Bared!," *Flash,* July 21, 1956, 1-2.; The Continental closed in 1972.
[139] "Lesbian Vermin Plagues Toronto," *Tab,* September 28, 1963, 3.
[140] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014.
[141] Roebuck, Martin. *Spearhead: Thirty-five Years of Toronto Gay History* (Toronto: Roebuck, 2005), 6.
[142] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern, #3." 10b.

Midtown and Yorkville Bars - Inset

Toronto's Gay and Lesbian Bars

- Chez Paree-220 Bloor W
- King Cole Room-4 Avenue
- Plaza Rooftop-4 Avenue
- Malloney's-66 Grenville
- Westbury-475 Yonge
- St Charles-488 Yonge
- Parkside-530 Yonge
- Famous Door-665 Yonge

Bars located north of College and Yonge



College and Yonge

West of Yonge and one block north of College/Carlton, Malloney's Studio Tavern on Grenville was the most upscale gay-friendly bar in the area.[143] Frequented by professionals, politicians and civil servants, Malloney's catered to a mixed crowd and appears to have been rarely visited by liquor inspectors.[144] The "Studio" in its name was in reference to J. Merritt Malloney's gallery, which was transformed into an art space/tavern, although it seems to have become increasingly known for its public drinking and dining facilities throughout the 1960s.[145] West of Malloney's, on Yonge, just north of College, the Westbury Hotel (previously the Torontonian) was home to two bars—a basement beer parlour and a rooftop piano bar called the Sky Lounge.[146] The upstairs bar was quite upscale and catered to a mixed patronage; the basement bar, the Red Lion, was said to have been a gay bar from the day it opened in 1957.[147]

By the early 1960s, the St. Charles Tavern—a cocktail bar located on Yonge across the street from the Westbury Hotel—was frequented primarily by gay patrons.[148] The St. Charles began hosting a Hallowe'en drag ball in 1963, meaning that Letros was no longer host to the only drag pageant in Toronto.[149] Also on the west side of Yonge, but slightly further north, the Parkside Hotel, a beverage room licensed to sell only beer, was open to gay patronage by the middle of the 1960s.[150] In 1975, the owner of the Parkside bought the St. Charles, which meant that the same family owned the two largest gay bars in Toronto at the time.[151] The gay and lesbian community had an ambivalent relationship to the management of these bars, since they

[143] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014.
[144] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B221237, B279734 (Malloney's Studio Tavern), Multiple Dates.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Interview with Bob, Don and Paul conducted by Sismondo, Nov. 25, 2014. (Bob)
[147] "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic*, April, 1980, 26.
[148] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, September 28, 1963, 13.
[149] "Joe Tensee's Confidential Diary," *Tab*, November 23, 1963, 4.
[150] "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic*, April, 1980, 26.
[151] "The Rise of Gay Capitalism," *Toronto Life*, September 1976, 150.

were described as shabby and run-down bars and the staff often treated the clientele with contempt.[152] Further north on Yonge, the Famous Door was an upscale mixed cocktail bar in the 1960s, known for its entertainment, including drag shows.[153] Even before it was re-named Quest and marketed as a gay bar (1970), it was described as a gay-managed bar in *Tab* magazine.[154] There were also restaurants in the area that were associated with cruising, including Lindy's, Fran's, White Chef and the Country Style Donuts—all near Yonge and College.[155] Finally, that area was also well-known for its many unlicensed dance clubs, notably the Astronaut, the Music Room and the Melody Room, which fell outside the jurisdiction of the LLBO.[156]

Yorkville/Bloor and Yonge

At Bloor and Avenue Road, the Park Plaza Hotel housed two bars that were both gay-friendly at times: A basement beer parlour named the King Cole Room and the much more expensive rooftop cocktail bar, that catered to a mixed, wealthy clientele.[157] Mary Millichamp had a restaurant in the Park Plaza before she established her eponymous Yorkville restaurant. Millichamp ran the noteworthy restaurant with her long-time companion, Pansy Reamsbottom, and the pair apparently gave discounts to people connected to the radio and television arts scene.[158] Although Millichamp's restaurant comes up in at least one interview, it is unlikely that the pair ever cultivated an exclusively gay or lesbian clientele.[159] In addition, there was Chez Paree on Bloor, west of the Park Plaza, an "expensive" licensed restaurant and cocktail bar with wall murals and a grand piano that was frequented by both the straight and queer communities as

[152] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014.; "The Gay Set," *Tab*, November 20, 1971, 8. This "Gay Set" column is one of a dozen in which "Duke Gaylord" and other columnists complained of weak furniture, poor décor, bad service and over all contempt.
[153] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014.
[154] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, June 6, 1970, 8.
[155] "Reign of Terror Unloosed Against Local Gay Set," *Tab*, May 20, 1961, p 3.
[156] "The Gay Set," *Ta*b, June 19, 1965, 13.
[157] "Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, July 14, 1956, 9.
[158] Toronto Gay Oral History Project, Interview with Bev Wilson by John Grube, May 28, 1985
[159] Toronto Gay Oral History Project, Interview with Bev Wilson by John Grube, May 28, 1985

early as 1948.[160] To some degree, the culture of the bar was determined by the house entertainment, usually Jimmy Roulston, a "flamboyant, in-your-face type," who was mentioned in the first tabloid item about Chez Paree, which claimed that the bar "really got rolling" when he was the featured pianist.[161] Although it was reported that the management of Chez Paree attempted to impose discriminatory policies in 1951 and then again in 1953, it was still mentioned in memoirs and tabloids as late as 1964.[162]

Abstract – Chapter Outlines

CHAPTER ONE – "Pansies Bloom in Cocktail Bar": The Establishment of a Counterpublic

Using evidence from tabloids and interviews, the first chapter demonstrates that Toronto the Gay was an active, self-organized counterpublic formed by the establishment of discursive identities in public spaces and circulating texts in the 1950s and 1960s. The dialogue between the tabloids and the bars was complex and detailed, often exploring the dynamic between management policies, discrimination and patron resistance. Although it is clear that many patrons expressed resistance—often through camp discourse—this was not always the dominant discursive identity of the group. Some assimilationist arguments in the tabloids, instead, emphasized the patrons' essentially passive nature and compliance with discriminatory policies. These competing streams of discourse express some of the divisions inherent in Toronto the Gay, which was a deeply contested space—one that was divided by gender, ethnicity, sexual comportment and class, categories that, to some degree, overlapped.

[160] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B335052 (Chez Paree), Inspection Report, Feb 19, 1960; *Hush Free Press*, "Toronto Breeze Around," Oct 2, 1948, p7; Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy of Silence* (Toronto: Homewood Books, 1998), 72
[161] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy of Silence*, 72
[162] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy of Silence*, 72

CHAPTER TWO – Choose Miss Letros: Public Rituals in the Queer Counterpublic

Camp discourse was an expression of the tensions between the queer counterpublic and the public sphere and the most brazen challenge to the distinction between public and private spheres, as well as the compulsory heterosexuality of the era. However, although camp discourse was, at times, celebrated within Toronto the Gay through public rituals such as the Hallowe'en Drag Ball, it was also highly contentious and tightly regulated.[163] Although the public expression of camp discourse was risky and dangerous, these overt and public challenges to compulsory heterosexuality were about empowerment and the expression of pride. It was these rituals, as well, that, ultimately, attracted members of the larger public sphere and the mainstream media to engage with the queer counterpublic. In addition, these rituals, emerging from bar-based cultures, would inspire other, similar, camp protests, including "zaps" and the Brunswick Four's public satirical parody of heterosexual bar culture at the Brunswick House.

CHAPTER THREE – "Howcum Bowles Tolerates This Kind of Nonsense?": Sex and Surveillance in Toronto Bars

Between increasingly well-known entrapment schemes and the controversial sex trade near Toronto's Yonge Street bars, "bad sex"—the kind that was visible in public—began to move out from liminal spaces and into public view. In reaction to this, the queer counterpublic increasingly forged a discursive identity that was more in line with the assimiliationist arguments than camp discourse. This shift reinforced the line between good, private sex and bad public sex. Maintaining these lines, however, was a complicated and ongoing negotiation, which involved

[163] Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 25; 271-300. The Hallowe'en drag balls in Toronto presumably had less to do with debutante culture and masquerade that Chauncey describes and more to do with mimicking the era's beauty pageants, which became popular in the Cold War as a reaction to the anxiety over the erosion of traditional gender roles. While the subject matter may be different, the camp performance that challenges and satirizes it performs a similar political function to the one that Chauncey describes. Halloween Balls may have existed in Toronto prior to this period, but no record of them was discovered in the course of this research.

resisting surveillance techniques and re-affirming a division between the private and public spheres in the queer counterpublic.

CHAPTER FOUR – "Ugly Toronto Puts In Its Annual Appearance": Sex and Camp in the Public Sphere

Although the gay community was deeply divided and camp discourse was often marginalized, the annual Hallowe'en ball, which, by the 1970s, had moved to Yonge north of College, continued to express the tensions between class and sexual comportment within the community, as well as resistance to the heteronormative public sphere. The ritual was transformed, however, from a symbolic battleground into a physical one, as it became a target for violent homophobic mobs—especially as anxieties over the sex trade on Yonge grew more pronounced. Although camp discourse was hotly contested within the queer counterpublic and civil rights discourse was increasingly common in both gay publications and the mainstream media, activists worked together to diffuse the annual ritual of violence that developed throughout the 1970s. This forced an alliance of activists and bar-goers to defend and re-define itself using tactics developed out of both bar-based cultures, gay liberationists and the civil rights discourse that was being employed in the nascent homophile groups of the 1970s and the *Body Politic*, which organized the group's discursive identity. The protests after Operation Soap were a culmination of a coherent effort to conjoin two different discursive identities for direct political action and substantive change.

CHAPTER ONE "Pansies Bloom in Cocktail Bar": The Establishment of a Counterpublic

Introduction

There was a thriving community of regular bar patrons in postwar Toronto who established tight social networks, a range of discursive identities and camp rituals that were employed to resist discrimination, despite the lack of homophile organizations in the city. In place of formal activist groups, Toronto had bars, within which communities organized themselves with public rituals, discourse and circulating texts that were read by members of the community as well as strangers in the greater public sphere. Toronto the Gay was a self-organized and active queer counterpublic that resisted the compulsory heterosexuality of the day. The discursive space of Toronto's queer counterpublic, however, was deeply divided along class, gender, ethnicity and sexual comportment lines and the struggle to define the counterpublic played out in the bars and the tabloids, in which we can discern three distinct, competing streams of discourse.

Competing Discourses

On March 17, 1951, *Hush Weekly* started naming names. The Toronto tabloid published the story "Pansies Bloom in Cocktail Bar," sounding the alarm bells about unsuspecting off-duty soldiers at risk of being targeted by "one of the large colony of 'pretty boys' or 'queers' which seem to be on the increase in Toronto."[1] The article outed one member of the colony and, in addition, listed licensed establishments that were suspected of playing host to the community.[2] Although the story warned of a trend in which "queers" were increasingly

[1] "'Pansies' Bloom in Cocktail Bar," *Hush Free Press*, March 17, 1951, 6.
[2] Ibid.

preying on Camp Borden's soldiers, the specific case that provided the pre-text for this incendiary article was actually one in which the soldiers were the perpetrators of a crime. The off-duty soldiers burgled an apartment leased by "Bambi," who, the previous week, had treated the pair to a home-cooked dinner and let them stay over after a night out at the King Edward. Although the anonymous soldiers were charged with the crime, it was their host who suffered the harshest repercussions—a suspended sentence for indecency, an order to return to Winnipeg and his name printed in the tabloid press.

This story, purportedly about a criminal case, had next to nothing to do with the remainder of the article, which dealt with the subject matter alluded to in the headline: Gay cocktail bars and an increase in the population of "effeminate creatures" in Toronto. This was not a new tack for a postwar tabloid (stories that involved some mention of gay bars appeared relatively frequently) but it stands out in that it mapped out a clear geography of gay Toronto that included mention of Chez Paree, Malloney's, The King Edward Hotel, the bus terminal, Simpson's department store and, in considerable detail, the Nile Room at the Letros Tavern on King Street, the cocktail bar to which the headline refers. Whereas many previous articles and columns made veiled references to specific bars, the explicit nature of this story was unusual enough to elicit strong reactions from different quarters. *True News Times*, a rival tabloid, addressed the issue in its gay social column: "That thure wath a nathty article in last week's issue of 'SHHHH.'"[3] The columnist, "L.F.I.," went on to question the unusual specificity of the article, asking these rhetorical questions: "Why name names?" and "Why point fingers?"[4] In *Hush* itself, a few weeks later, a letter to the editor, "No Objection to Blooming," was printed.[5]

[3] "A Study in Lavender," *True News Times*, April 2, 1951, 9.
[4] Ibid.
[5] "No Objection to Blooming," *Hush Free Press*, April 13, 1951, p 10.

The letter's author urged the editor to "live and let live" and suggested that the original journalist responsible for "Pansies Bloom" was merely jealous that he couldn't partake in the fun at these gay cocktail bars. Signed, "A Maritimer," the letter also suggested the article was hypocritical, by claiming Toronto bars were full of inebriated patrons who behaved worse than those at Letros.[6] A third, albeit less direct, response to the "Pansies" article was published three months later in yet another rival tabloid, *Flash*. In it, the anonymous author (actually Jim Egan) defended the "invert's twilight life," arguing that, with few alternatives for public discourse, "homosexuals" had to "find their relaxation in what had become known as 'gay' bars."[7] Egan went on to explicitly name Letros and the King Edward as "well-known" spots and situated them as part of a universal phenomenon, claiming that many similar bars existed "in all large cities, some under rigid police protection, unknown to the good citizens of the community."[8]

This clutch of clippings is a good representation of the major discursive positions of Toronto's postwar tabloid publications—scandalous exposés that uncovered secret enclaves of gay men from all walks of life, rational pleas for tolerance that made the argument that the lavender scare was based in prejudice, as opposed to rationality and, finally, gay gossip columns that chronicled lesbian and gay bars in a comical tone with little or no moral censure. The "scandal sheets" traded on salacious exposes that the mainstream press was silent about for a variety of reasons, including the trend towards the dailies distancing themselves from sensationalism and the media's investment in the construction of a medical explanation and cure for sexual deviancy.[9] Since the newspapers rarely mentioned homosexuality outside of a medico-legal discourse that situated individuals as either criminal sexual psychopaths or victims of the

[6] Ibid.
[7] "Toronto Homo Exposes Inverts' Twilight Life," *Flash*, July 23, 1951, page unknown (clipping at CLGA obscures page number). "Prolific" because of the volume of articles and letters to the editor he contributed to *Justice Weekly* and *Hush Weekly Press*,
[8] Ibid.
[9] Chenier, *Strangers in Our Midst*, 24-42

"homosexual problem," the actual lived lives of lesbians and gays virtually never made it to print in the mainstream media.[10] The tabloids, on the other hand, filled that void and pursued features about homosexuality as it intersected with criminality as a "folk devil" to fuel the moral panic regarding deviancy and societal degeneration.[11] How these tabloid stories were used, however, is another matter, since David Churchill has suggested the scandal sheets were used by lesbians and gay individuals as field guides to map out tabloid geographies.[12] The "Pansies" story is an explicit and early example of the tabloids providing maps for lesbian and gays, but, as the backlash indicates, these scandal features were far from the only queer content in these tabloids. In addition, there were the letters to the editor—demonstrating the papers' circulation—as well as more formal contributions from individuals in the gay community such as Egan, who made rational arguments for tolerance and basic human rights.

When Egan wrote about gay life in Toronto, his primary goal was to construct an image of respectability, which, he argued, was easier to achieve through assimilation and surveillance than in isolation: "How much better is it that these people be allowed to meet in known bars, with the approval and under the eyes of the authorities, rather than be wandering through parks or on the streets?"[13] This surveillance was not only better for the greater good, argued Egan, it was, simultaneously, an important sanctuary for men who, in daily life, had to put on a "façade of normality" and, in the bars, could "drop the mask" for a few hours.[14] Egan was careful to note, however, that the mask did not conceal a monster, but, rather, completely "average" people like himself, who were "conservatively dressed and well-spoken" and

[10] "The Homosexual Problem Troubles the Conscience of Victims and Society," *Toronto Daily Star*, June 29, 1960, 7 (One of several.); Kathryn Campbell. "'Deviance, Inversion and Unnatural Love': Lesbians in Canadian Media, 1950-1970," in Atlantis, Volume 23.1 Fall/Winter 1998. Campbell argues that the media was silent on homosexuality prior to 1950 and that the Kinsey report was a major reason that the silence was broken.
[11] Chauncey, "The Post-War Sex Crime Panic,"160-78.
[12] Churchill, "Coming out in a Cold Climate," 80-90.
[13] Homosexual Concepts, By "J.L.E.," *Justice Weekly*, February 13, 1954, 13.
[14] "Homosexual Concepts, By "J.L.E.," *Justice Weekly*, February 13, 1954, 13.

"successful" in their professions.[15] They wore no make-up or nail-polish and, often, were in monogamous relationships made up of two partners who conformed to mononormative notions of femininity and masculinity, with one partner playing the "aggressive-masculine" role, and the other, being a "passive-feminine" type.[16] Bar owners, Egan argued, were acting against self-interest when they discriminated against a gay clientele, which he characterized as ideal regular customers, as opposed to the "pimps," "prostitutes" and "drunks" who engaged in brawls at straight bars.[17] Egan's construction of the patron of the gay bar as a middle-class, model citizen-drinker was one that he, himself, knew did not accurately capture the range of identities of the gay patrons at all of Toronto bars, since, in addition to Chez Paree and the Savarin, he frequented the bars at the Corners—Queen and Bay—that catered to a wide range of people, many of whom were not well-heeled, well-behaved quiet patrons, but, instead, patrons who engaged in drunken brawls and sex work. And Egan was friends with many of them.[18] At the Union House Hotel, for example, Egan warned a friend not to leave the bar with a hustler with a dangerous reputation in May, 1960, and learned, the following day, that his unheeded warnings had been well-founded. His friend had been murdered.[19]

Not only did Egan construct bars as peaceful and normal in his countless editorials, letters to the editor and feature articles, in the 1960s, he also continued to try to present the bars as completely average in every way to journalists. Egan was calculated about what he showed to *Maclean's* reporter, Sidney Katz, for example, timing the tours to minimize exposure to the seamier side of the Toronto bar scene, since he did not want the press to represent patrons as

[15] "Toronto Homo Exposes Inverts' Twilight Life," *Flash.* July 23, 1951, page unknown (clipping at CLGA obscures page number).
[16] Ibid.
[17] "Homosexual Concepts, By "J.L.E.," *Justice Weekly*, February 13, 1954, 13.
[18] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy of Silence*, 72-76. Egan describes many of his friends with which he used to drink at the Municipal and the Union.
[19] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 77-78.

highly-effeminate men, sex workers, or criminal sexual psychopaths. Egan was deliberate in the construction of a discursive identity that would challenge conventional ideas about homosexuality and, in addition, make it easier for the postwar Toronto public to accept non-threatening gay men—the "homosexual next door," as Katz referred to it in his landmark *Maclean's* article, for which Egan was the main source.[20]

Egan described his contributions to the public discourse as a necessary correction to the other discursive identities in the tabloid and mainstream press, including the gay social columns—a feature of most Toronto tabloids at one point or another.[21] These helped in the organization of the counterpublic and offered a wider range of discursive identities, including an expression of camp discourse.[22] These columns were written in a campy tone and made use of nicknames and codes to refer to people and places but, still managed to organize and represent Toronto's postwar bars. Indeed, the bars were the source for nearly all the columns' material. In addition to organizing the community and rehashing bar-room events, the columns painstakingly drew up taxonomies of the classes of bars, encouraged patrons to resist discrimination and insist on accommodation and helped people avoid potentially unsafe situations. The tabloid columns were a media extension of the bars, ensuring that the counterpublic had a wider audience than simply the bars' patrons and also engaged in a dialogue with the bars, meaning that there was a truly interactive "circulation" of ideas in "Toronto the Gay." We know that *Tab* was occasionally even read in bars like Letros and, at times, seems to have taken on a public dimension: "Larry has been passing back-issues of *Tab* to her 'sisters' during dull nights at Letros," transforming

[20] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 79-83. The article ran in 1964 and was titled "The Homosexual Next Door."
[21] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 50.
[22] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 50. He dismissed the columns as "demeaning and idiotic" gay trivia.

the "Snake Pit" into a "reading room."[23] On another occasion, Bettina reported that a bar regular was going around "accusing everyone of being Bettina."[24]

Although the ambivalent tabloids were often hostile to the gay bars, they were simultaneously part of the conversation being held by the gay community and a major public forum advocating for gay rights, largely through the regular columns and letters to the editor. In addition, columns occasionally overtly threatened boycott action, such as in this call to action in *True News Times* that took issue with the staff at Letros for being too rigorous in enforcing policies: "…we may feel like all moving up to 3885 – and don't think it hasn't been discussed – it wouldn't take much of a campaign through THIS column to launch the move!"[25] Letros, in particular, was one of the most frequently mentioned bars throughout the 1950s and 1960s, since, as it was establishing itself as a gay bar, it was the focus of much of the early dialogue between the tabloid columnists and bar management over class and the management's early discriminatory treatment of patrons. This was something that would be echoed in the late 1960s and 1970s as gay activist groups organized to protest the management of the bars on Yonge.

The Source of the Nile: Letros and its Origins

Located across from the King Edward Hotel, Letros was established in 1947 in a new building that was owned and operated by Christopher Letros, a member of a prominent restaurant family in Toronto. Letros applied for one of the city's first licences to sell liquor—one of the 81 applications submitted prior to April, 1947.[26] Within a year, Letros had converted the main floor into the Ebony Dining Room and, by February, 1949, the basement bar, a cocktail

[23] "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, Dec 29, 1956, 4. There were also several references in columns to discussions overheard about who the columnists might be and what the codified references meant.
[24] "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab.* June 8, 1957, 4.
[25] "A Study in Lavender," *True News Times.*, April 7, 1952, 13. It is not clear what "3885" refers to.
[26] "81 Cocktail Bars Seek Approval of Liquor Board," *Globe and Mail*, March 17, 1947, 23.

lounge decorated with snakeskin wallpaper and equipped with a bar and piano, was opened.[27] This basement bar, the Nile Room, was visited by sociologist Robert E. Popham in the 1950s in the course of his fieldwork for "Notes on the Contemporary Tavern," which had a section devoted to gay bars. Popham noted that the basement space in the two-storey establishment had been a gay bar since it had first opened and still operated as such when he observed the bar for his field notes sometime between 1952 and 1956.[28] In addition to Letros, Popham visited "six other taverns" that had "Gay patrons" in the 1950s and noted that he ran across four more that "were reported to have had a Gay patronage in the past."[29] Popham drew some key distinctions between Letros and the other taverns, where "the Gays were always a minority" and their patronage was not always welcomed by management.[30] Popham's observations led him to believe that gay patronage in most of Toronto's bars (but not Letros) was "transitory, persisting for a year or two in a given tavern and then moving to another."[31]

By contrast, Letros was a stable and welcoming environment that functioned as both a neighbourhood bar for the "local Gay community" and a bar for "Gays on short visits to the city" by virtue of its proximity to the city's largest hotels.[32] By the time Popham visited, the Nile Room was a unique and anomalous space in Toronto and, in fact, unique to most urban centres in postwar North America, in that it was gay-owned.[33] However, a change in management in the early 1950s calls into question whether or not a gay clientele was welcome at the bar from the

[27] "Display Ad," *Globe and Mail*, May 13, 1948, 11; Display Ad, *Toronto Star*, Feb 4, 1949, 22. Although Letros had bars on two floors, it was the basement "Nile Room" that would be used as a gay bar.
[28] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 37-41, 67-69. In a publication in the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, Letros was identified as the bar described in Popham's paper, although Popham never identifies it by name. That said, it corresponds precisely to the Nile Room in a number of ways, including geographical location, description of the room and the owner. It seems highly unlikely that there was another stable bar run by a gay man in downtown Toronto in that era. Every effort has been made to check that the details in Popham's paper correspond to what is known about Letros and no discrepancies have been found.
[29] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 37. Popham capitalized the "G" consistently in his use of the word.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Letros was not the first or only gay-owned, stable gay bar in post-War North America. But there were relatively few that were gay-operated and had longevity since most fell into one of three categories: hotel bars with ambivalent management; taverns with hostile management or bars with short life spans, resulting from police harassment (or from license inspectors).

outset.[34] The earliest source discovered in the course of researching this project that characterized the Nile Room as a gay space was a brief note in a nightlife column in *Hush* in February, 1951, which implied that this was a relatively recent development: "Scout 69 reports that the lavender set are now making Letros Nile Room their home-away-from-home. Swish!"[35] Shortly thereafter (in another tabloid), there is mention of a "certain gay King Street bistro" and a thank you to "Georgina for playing host to all the gay things practically every night but Sunday in that swish drinking establishment."[36] This is the first of many references to "Georgina," which is the tabloid code name for George Letros, son of founder Christopher Letros, and one of the most oft-mentioned characters in "Toronto the Gay"—both in interviews and in tabloid columns. Given his regular mentions in the tabloids and the fond recollections people retain of George Letros (who was himself, gay) it seems likely that he was largely responsible for the culture of the bar, although, for the first several years, he appears to have struggled to maintain it as a gay bar. Prior to 1953, the clientele appears to have been ambivalent about the management at Letros, just as management appears to have been ambivalent about its policy.

Shortly after the sensational "Pansies Bloom," article, which had suggested that "on any Friday or Saturday night you could fire off a load of buckshot and very probably not hit a normal person," Letros briefly backed away from its policy of admitting gay patronage.[37] In April, 1951, the *True News Times*' "Lavender" columnist reported that the "Knights of the Nile are very few" and that it had only welcomed gay patrons for a brief period, noting that it had been "a gay life but a short one."[38] One tabloid columnist actively critiqued the decision and implied that it was not George Letros who had put a discriminatory policy in place but, rather,

[34] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 38
[35] "Toronto Breeze Around," *Hush Free Press*, February 3, 1951, 9.
[36] "Toronto's Gay Nights," *True News Times*. February 19, 1951, 9. "Georgina" was the name the tabloids used to signify George Letros.
[37] "'Pansies' Bloom in Cocktail Bar," *Hush Free Press*, March 17, 1951, 6.
[38] "A Study in Lavender," *True News Times*, April 21, 1951, 4.

his father: "Looks like the cabbage crop at the certain bistro wasn't too hot GEORGINA. Maybe because papa wouldn't lettuce do what we want!! So VOILA … all vegetables and no fruit!!!! Financially a bad "Dye-IT????[39] The next several references suggested that the core group of regular Letros patrons were now frequenting alternate venues, including Bloor Street's Park Plaza rooftop and Malloney's on Grenville near Queen's Park. It was also alleged that the Nile Room was plagued by straight "tourists" who wanted to gawk, according to a complaint in one column.[40] By the end of the year, however, it was reported that the Letros Tavern now offered a "coin operated perfume spray machine in the 'men's' washroom," offering a choice between "Tabu" and "Evening in Paris," which the columnist suggested was an indication that it had gone back to its earlier policy of welcoming gay patrons.[41]

Despite this gesture of reconciliation, the volatile situation continued into the following year, as the owners were accused of employing "hostile" servers.[42] Columns purporting to represent the patrons who resented the owners (both father and son) for profiting from a captive clientele with limited options for spaces in which to escape the disembodied state that resulted from the conditions imposed by the "closet," while refusing to provide the basic courtesies of service free from abuse. This critique situates Letros, circa 1951-1953, in that large category of bars that were seen as being exploitative of a clientele of which it was contemptuous—a category that existed in Toronto and elsewhere.[43] As such, references to profits and the owners financial circumstances were frequent and pointed. In January, 1952, when a TTC strike threatened to disrupt some downtown businesses, a columnist assured readers that "George" and "Papa" were

[39] "A Study in Lavender," *True News Times*, May 21, 1951, 2.
[40] "A Study in Lavender," *True News Times*, June 25, 1951, 10.
[41] "Toronto Breeze Around," *Hush Free Press*. October 20, 1951, 9.
[42] From various columns in both *True News Times* and *the Rocket* throughout 1952.
[43] Duberman, *Stonewall*; There are various studies that have established this practice in various cities. The best-documented is New York City, where the mafia controlled the bars.

still doing well and would "continue to eat."[44] Shortly thereafter, the financial arrangement between the Nile Room and the larger business was clarified when it was suggested that George was "shelling out 25 per to Poppa."[45] When a fire threatened the space, a columnist implied that it might not have been accidental.[46] In another column, devoted to George Letros' road trips to Buffalo it was noted that he was driving a "streamline Cadillac" that was "lavender black" in colour.[47] The patrons and management had a tenuous relationship, an ambivalence that is indicated in numerous columns from 1951-1953. The "fabulous vehicle" was mentioned at least six more times in tabloid columns in the *Rocket* and, references were not limited to profits but, also, the owner's leisure time and his cavalier attitude towards daily management—George Letros was frequently under fire for his many road trips to Buffalo, Chicago and Detroit. In some cases, Mother Goose made it clear the problem was, in part, that his clientele were "green" with "their favorite colour (ENVY!!)" but the other problem with George's peripatetic lifestyle was that he was failing to live up to his responsibilities to his clientele.[48] Letros was rebuked for touring Michigan and Illinois in the summer of 1952, at which point "PAPA" apparently "made his presents conspicuous," and Mother Goose warned the absentee owner, George, that these lapses would eventually lead to long-term problems, since the clientele was threatening to leave altogether.[49]

Most of the complaints over tensions at the Nile Room abated in 1953, when Christopher Letros died, suddenly, at the age of 58. Son, George, it was announced on the front page of the *Toronto Star* on November 10, 1953, would be executor of the will and inherit the lion's share of his father's $225,534 estate. From that point on, George Letros appears to have been able to

[44] "A Study in Lavender," *True News Times,* January 28, 1952, 14.
[45] "A Study in Lavender," *True News Times,* April 7, 1952, 14.
[46] Ibid. The word "accident" was in quotes. The column also stated that "barmaid" "Phyllis" was thought to be at fault.
[47] "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket.* June 21, 1952, 14.; "Retold Fairy Tales," *The Rocket,* March 15, 1952, 16.
[48] "Retold Fairy Tales," *The Rocket,* March 15, 1952, 16.
[49] "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket,* June 7, 1952, 12.

operate the Nile Room with relative impunity.[50] The basement bar at Letros was firmly established as "Toronto's only Gay bar," as Popham referred to it when he visited it in the course of his field work. In that era, Popham's suggestion that it was unique, in that it was completely open to gay patronage, was confirmed in a column: "No other spot in Toronto offers the gay set such consideration," continuing on to say that patrons were free to "prance and mince in the Nile Room and chant Krafft-Ebing's praise to their hearts' content."[51] This unique situation can be attributed to the stewardship of George Letros, who identified as gay within the counterpublic that was lived in the bars and tabloids. He was sole proprietor, beginning in 1953 and appears to have run his bar as he saw fit. This is not to suggest that his management was never subject to any critiques whatsoever, but, rather, that the tenor of the complaints changed in the tabloids and there were few barbs (if any) about abusive staff after that point. The reasons for this will be addressed in the next section.

Elements of a Gay Bar: Staff and Patron Selection

Given the fluidity of bar culture, it is difficult to define what makes a public drinking establishment "gay" versus "straight" or "mixed." In fact, the very idea of a "gay bar" is a shifting category. In addition, as Popham observed, in postwar Ontario, gay patronage at many bars was fleeting and transitory.[52] That said, the Nile Room at Letros—from 1953 until it closed in October, 1970—does seem to qualify as a gay bar by any standard. For those 17 years, the Nile Room was referred to as a gay bar in the tabloid press, had a gay owner, had a consistently queer clientele and, perhaps most importantly, a team of employees that welcomed gay patronage. The staff is a crucial component in any bar, since it has an active role in creating the

[50] Having informally interviewed a member of the Letros family by phone, it has become clear that some members of the family did not approve of the bar and wished the family name was not associated with it, at least in the period in which it was open. But it is unclear how strong the objections and how long-lasting they were. A rumour persists that the final closure of the bar in 1970 was at the behest of a sister who wanted to get the money out of the building. But this cannot be confirmed.
[51] "Strike Hits Pansies Favorite Hangout," *Tab*, October 20, 1956, 2.
[52] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 37.

culture of the bar and shaping its clientele, a function that Popham referred to as "patron selection." When Popham observed the bar, he noted that every member of the front of house staff at the Nile Room was gay and made a note that he observed "much friendly joking and conversation between patrons and waiters."[53] From this, we can surmise that Popham likely observed the bar after 1953, since, prior to that, there were complaints about abusive floor staff.[54] The tension between staff and patrons was particularly high in 1952, according to Mother Goose, who employed a campy but clearly angry tone when describing how the "NASTY NASTY" waiters took advantage of patrons when George Letros was absent.[55] On another occasion, the columnist took issue with "SERVICE WITH THE NILE!!!" and expressed the patrons' concerns that "GEORGINA should be told that the ladies of the court are not in the habit of taking all the crap that her employees (M.D.s ALL OF THEM … mental delinquents!!!) are serving with the drinks."[56]

This is an early instance of a tabloid columnist playing a major role in the production of a discourse of resistance in the queer counterpublic. With George Letros absent, Mother Goose bypassed the staff and gave a voice to the patrons, appealing to a higher authority. In some instances, the columnists demanded action: "It has also been recommended by the Ladies of the House, that the court servants (waiters) be severely dealt with," wrote one, claiming to have authority to speak for a larger group, thanks to an "official petition which was read to the House concerning one of the ladies in waiting who was upset to the point of dropping her powder puff!"[57] Had it been George Letros' powder puff, Mother Goose complained, the situation would

[53] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 38.
[54] "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket*, June 7, 1952, 12; "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket*, April 26, 1952, 12; "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket*. May 3, 1952, 12; "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket*, June 14, 1952, 14.
[55] "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket*, June 7, 1952, p 12.
[56] "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket*. April 26, 1952, 12.
[57] "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket*, May 3, 1952, 10.

have been "REMEDIED … BUT FAST!!!"[58] About two months later, the tone had only become more angry: "DOES G. HAVE TO BE HIT OVER THE HEAD WITH A MANHOLE COVER??? DO SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR HIRED HELP!!! THEY'RE OBNOXIOUS!!!!!!"[59] A few weeks later, "Mother Goose" claimed that the King Edward's Pickwick Room was reclaiming business from Letros, noting that "the NILE is operated under unfavorable conditions."[60]

After the death of Chris Letros, the complaints in the tabloids mostly stopped, making it possible to infer that George Letros fully converted the Nile Room into a gay bar at the time. Complaints still erupted from time to time over small policy nuisances, but, other than a strike in 1956, the staff would not become an issue again. By the time Popham observed the bar, there was no observable conflict between the gay clientele and the staff and, in fact, he even observed an incident in which the staff protected the clientele, an incident consistent with patrons' memories that Letros' employees were responsible for making it a safe bar.[61] Popham recorded an altercation between two patrons who he surmised were travelling salesmen and, therefore, unfamiliar with the fact that Letros was a gay bar. A regular patron "placed his hand on the inside" of the salesman's leg, who responded by physically assaulting the patron.[62] Despite the fact that the new customer claimed he had been provoked, he and his companion were asked to leave.[63] In an interview, "Bob" echoed the idea that the staff—doormen, bartenders, waiters and management—was a big part of what made Letros a "protected" bar: "That's why I went there,"

[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket*, June 28, 1952, p12
[61] Interview with Bob, Don and Paul conducted by Sismondo, Nov. 25, 2014. (Bob)
[62] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 66.
[63] Ibid.

he recalled, "They had a proper bouncer and a coat check, which you needed in those days, and the bar was beautifully run and you were safe."[64]

Popham identifies "Gay functionaries" as a key factor in the maintenance of a stable and enduring "Gay bar," since front-of-house employees effectively curated the clientele.[65] Popham suggested that, to establish a friendly and comfortable atmosphere for gay patrons, at least one staff member would have to be gay, given the "strongly negative attitudes which many persons hold towards homosexuality."[66] In interviews conducted for this project and other, similar projects, waiters and bartenders featured quite prominently in people's recollections of the bars—not at all surprising, given that staff's importance in creating the culture of any establishment.[67] The tabloid columns often referred to specific waiters as a draw: In one instance, Bettina, writing in *Tab*'s "Fairy-Go-Round," reported that the King Cole Room's popularity was due to the presence of a waiter who was a "gorgeous hunk o' man."[68] A year later, there was excitement in the tabloids about the new uniforms at one of the bars at the newly-opened Lord Simcoe Hotel: "What is a 'curry boy'? They will be servants in the new Lord Simcoe Pump Room. A "curry boy" is defined as "one who does you a favor or one you do a favor. The lads will be dressed in East Indian costumes, complete with fancy leggings and stockings…"[69] In some cases, too, there were instances of staff members physically protecting the clientele, such as at the Municipal, where Jim Egan witnessed a bartender intervene to help a victim in a gay-bashing incident and, at the Continental Hotel, where a bartender named Johnny Russo was known for helping his patrons escape police harassment.[70]

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[64] Interview with Bob, Don and Paul conducted by Sismondo, Nov. 25, 2014. (Bob)
[65] Ibid.
[66] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 67.
[67] In addition to the interviews conducted specifically for this project, this is also a common refrain in several ALOT interviews.
[68] "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, July 14, 1956, 4.
[69] Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, March 9, 1957, 4.
[70] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 72-73; Elise Chenier, "A Place Like the Continental," Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer, (Toronto: Coach House Press, 2017), 98-101.

Several interview subjects recalled how helpful the bartenders at the Westbury and Plaza Hotel were in terms of actively helping patrons build social networks and cruise for sex, an activity that was difficult in Ontario, since patrons were not allowed to stand while holding a drink.[71] At the Plaza rooftop, a mixed bar with a "gay undertone," that was said to be patronized by a lot of bisexual men, it was not merely the prohibitions on movement that made picking people up difficult, it was also that the celebrated Toronto institution was "quietly gay," so interaction needed to be subtle.[72] In an interview, Don recalled that the "bartenders—both of them—were always very helpful" and would let him know who you "might want to sit beside" in order to facilitate the process.[73] Joe Gomes, who began working at the Plaza's rooftop lounge in 1959, first as a busboy, then, beginning in 1961, as a bartender, recalled that one of his co-workers was gay and that he had cultivated a small group of regular patrons who were also gay.[74] Gomes indicated that, at least during his tenure, the Plaza had no policy one way or the other regarding gay clientele—so long as people were behaved and dressed according to the bar's code (men were required to wear ties, which Gomes, himself, had a supply of), all patrons were welcome.[75] Regular patrons recall demonstrating their appreciation with financial remuneration: "You tipped according to how good the return was," Bob said in an interview, also remarking that "if you tipped well in the bars, they ran protection for you." [76] He recalled, further, that, at the rooftop piano bar at the Westbury Hotel, the bartender "lined up people for you."[77] Bob continued: "She knew how to spot a gay man and if she saw someone in there she thought you

[71] Interview with Bob, Don and Paul conducted by Sismondo, Nov. 25, 2014. (Don).
[72] Ibid; "A Study in Lavender," *True News Times*. May 21, 1951, 2.
[73] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014. (Don)
[74] Interview with Joe, conducted by Sismondo, Oct 12, 2016.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Interview with Bob, Don and Paul conducted by Sismondo, Nov. 25, 2014. (Bob).
[77] Ibid.

might like, she'd say, 'You know I have a friend coming in tonight, I'll introduce you.' And she would."[78]

It may seem obvious that tips would secure the good favour of the waiters and bartenders, but the economic relationship between patrons and staff of the establishment is a complicated one—more than merely transactional. Although front-of-house staff are dependent on gratuities for their livelihood, they're also employed by the proprietor and, as such, act in an intermediary function with obligations to their employer, patrons and, in addition, the provincial authority. In this complicated maze of responsibilities, tipping was—and still is—often more than a financial transaction. Instead, tipping should be viewed as a form of communication. When asked about tipping, Don mentioned a non-restaurant/bar experience he had had on a Canadian train: "In those days, you'd put your shoes out to have them shined and you would normally tip. And I put 69 cents in my shoes."[79] The interview subject then went on to explain that in the 1950s, that would have been considered a fairly large tip. He then proceeded to leave his door unlocked and recalled that "somewhere in between Toronto and Ottawa, the porter came in and spent some time with (him)."[80] That was the only occasion Don could recall using a tip with a specific denomination to communicate his desires, but all interview subjects emphasized that it was common for patrons to consistently tip well.[81]

The flip-side of tipping that led to tight bonds between servers and patrons was something Popham observed and labelled "tip rejection"—the act of servers and bartenders rejecting tips from undesirable patrons.[82] He described this action to demonstrate how waiters used this technique, in combination with other strategies, to communicate with a customer that

[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Interview with Bob, Don and Paul conducted by Sismondo, Nov. 25, 2014. (Don).
[81] Ibid.
[82] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 68.

they were unwelcome. Popham witnessed tip rejection in a "relatively small Neighbourhood tavern" that had "acquired a group of Gay regulars" as the result of having unwittingly hired a "Gay waiter."[83] The management, "distressed" about its reputation as a "Gay bar" chose to employ subtle tactics for patron selection, as opposed to outright barring the patrons from the premise.[84] This may be viewed as an extension of Ontario's moderate philosophy of enforcing liquor regulations—the correction put in place after the repeal of the excessive state control represented by the prohibition of alcohol in the province from 1916 to 1927.[85] In the neighbourhood tavern that Popham observed, a discriminatory policy was subtly put in place, beginning with the dismissal of the waiter who had cultivated the queer clientele. He was fired for having violated one of the establishment's minor, unrelated regulations—ones which were also often broken by other staff members, leading Popham to believe that it was the pretext for the dismissal and an instance of uneven enforcement.[86] After the dismissal, the remaining staff employed a regimen of subtle but consistent discriminatory practices: Slow service, bad service and "tip rejection" to get rid of the "Gay regulars."[87] Popham also observed this practice in a "mixed bar," where waiters used these methods to negotiate the antagonism that developed amongst the "non-Gay regulars" who would make "audible and sarcastic" comments about "Pansy alley."[88] He observed one of the "Gay regulars" attempt to tip, despite being on the receiving end of deliberately poor service: "Upon the waiter's return with his beer, he very explicitly pushed the usual tip towards the waiter and said clearly: 'This is for you.' The waiter, with a slightly sarcastic smile, pushed the money away and left.[89] As Popham noted, tip

[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Malleck, *Try to Control Yourself*, 8.
[86] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 68.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid. From the way this is written, it appears that the money was given to Popham, himself.

rejection was not restricted to enforcement of heterosexual norms, since "functionaries" utilized patron selection to discourage clientele in a range of contexts. Servers and bartenders shape the clientele of bars to create the desired environment and, while these factors are largely based on class, age, gender and ethnicity, some other less quantifiable factors are sometimes at play.[90]

Refusal of Service: Discriminatory Policies and Discourses of Resistance

Some bars used more aggressive tactics than tip rejection and slow service in their patron selection methods. In one letter to the editor, Egan argued that the majority of Toronto bars had a blanket policy of refusing to accommodate gay and lesbian patrons: "The homosexual may be—and often is—refused service in a bar or restaurant because some waiter or doorman suspects he may be homosexual."[91] Some methods of discrimination were formalized with cards that were given out to patrons: When the Sheraton hotel chain bought the King Edward in 1950, the new management implemented a policy of discrimination by giving patrons who appeared to be gay cards that conveyed a message that "management would appreciate it if they took their business elsewhere."[92] The Savarin, located in the downtown core on Bay, two-and-a-half blocks south of City Hall, went from being so full that it was "impossible to find an empty seat in the beverage room" after 9 o'clock on a Friday or Saturday night, to being deserted after it began to discriminate against gay patrons in 1948.[93] Although Egan could not understand why the bar had instituted a policy of discrimination, he suggested that the Savarin's original policy of tolerance was a financial one, since he suspected the gay clientele "had financed the construction of the cocktail lounge," in which he and fellow patrons were not welcome after 1948.[94]

[90] Ibid. For example, one of the groups that Popham observed being discouraged was a group of English immigrants who treated the bar as though it was a British pub, sitting in large groups and nursing pints of beer.
[91] "Civil Liberties and the Homosexual," *The Toronto Star,* October 23, 1963, 7.
[92] "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic,* April, 1980, 26.
[93] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 79. This is where Egan met his partner in 1948.
[94] "Homosexual Concepts, By "J.L.E.," *Justice Weekly*, February 13, 1954, 13.

Egan wrote that the clientele was compliant with such policy changes, citing total acceptance at both the Savarin and, later, at Chez Paree, a Bloor street piano bar/restaurant that attempted to implement a discriminatory policy in 1954. Egan, again, failed to comprehend the rationale to transform the popular venue from a "favorite hangout for the 'sa-wish' kids," into a "dead zone."[95] Chez Paree had a history of shifting policy: The bar was referred to in 1951 as having once been a "home-away-from-home" for gay patrons but, no longer, since the management had "weeded out" gay patrons and sent them "scurrying back to their nests."[96] The management at Chez Paree appears to have relented, however, since, in 1953, it was reported that the swish kids had "returned to their old haunt."[97] The following year, however, Egan reported that the bar had another policy change and "without warning, the 'gay' boys were barred."[98] Egan said that it had gone from a bar with a thriving business, where prospective patrons often had to wait an hour for a table into a "half-empty graveyard."[99] Here, again, the claim is made that compliance with the new policy was almost immediate, since, after one or two nights of refusing to serve "regular customers without any explanation," people stopped trying to get in and went elsewhere.[100] News traveled quickly, he said, and, the "matter ends then and there."[101]

For Chez Paree, at least, the matter did not end there. The bar would continue to be patronized by Toronto's queer community into the 1960s by a range of people, including Egan, who went there as late as 1964, when he met with an anonymous man to discuss the wisdom of his doing interviews with mainstream media.[102] Although the Savarin is a notable exception

[95] "Toronto Breeze Around," *Hush*, October 19, 1948, 9.
[96] "Pansies Bloom in Cocktail Bar," *Hush*. Mar 17, 1951, 6.
[97] "Toronto Breeze Around," *Hush*. July 18, 1953, 13.
[98] "Homosexual Concepts, By "J.L.E.," *Justice Weekly*, February 13, 1954, 13.
[99] "Homosexual Concepts, By "J.L.E.," *Justice Weekly*, February 13, 1954, 13.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 84-85. Specifically Sidney Katz and Pierre Berton, whose show Egan was scheduled to appear on. Several members of the queer community had heard that Egan was co-operating with media and sent a representative from their group to try to dissuade

(since there does not seem to be any mention of it in tabloids after 1948), most bars that implemented discriminatory policies did not find the barred patrons acquiesced to the new rules. There was, instead, considerable resistance to such policies. In 1952, for example, Mother Goose said that King Street would no longer be Queen Street, thanks to "a certain HOTEL MANAGER" who began a "reform," even attempting to corral other neighborhood bars in an effort to clean up the area.[103] However, it seems to have been short-lived, possibly due to a tabloid campaign that urged resistance to this discriminatory policy: Mother Goose promised King street would again be open for queer business and that readers could expect to read about it in that column, which was said to be the "OFFICIAL court publication."[104] "WE SHALL RETURN TO RECLAIM WHAT IS RIGHTFULLY OURS," said Mother Goose, indicating a sense of ownership over the bars on King.[105] The following week, cocktail hour at the King Edward was reported to have been attended by "a great number of the steady clients at that palatial basement" regardless of the "CLEAN UP PROPAGANDA" which flowed around the court for weeks!!!"[106] One week after that, Mother Goose triumphantly declared: "GAY! GAY! GAY! That's the word for King Street last weekend!!! As M.G. said last week in this column (if I may quote) "Things are getting back to ABNORMAL!!!" Just everyone in the "PINK BOOK" (and we do mean all the lavender bloods!!) were present!"[107]

We may never learn what motivated the attempts to implement discriminatory policies in public drinking spaces, but there does seem to be a loose correlation between the sensational

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Egan from making the community more visible. This is another indication of the efficient communication across social networks in Toronto the Gay.

[103] "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket*, April 5, 1952, 12. This is a reference to a manager at the King Edward Hotel. This contradicts the idea that the bars at the King Eddy were cleared of gay patrons in 1950. It is possible that the first date is wrong, of course, and that the incident referred to in the *Body Politic* is later, in 1952. Regardless, there are indications that the King Edward had queer patronage at least into the 1960s.

[104] "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket*, April 5, 1952, 12; "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic*, April, 1980, p26. Hannon wrote that patrons left there permanently although other sources suggest that the gay patronage did return.

[105] "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket*, April 5, 1952, 12.

[106] "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket*, April 12, 1952, 12.

[107] "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket*, April 19, 1952, 12.

stories about gay bars in the tabloid press and some well-documented policy changes within bars. Letros implemented a short-lived policy deterring gay and lesbian patronage shortly after the "Pansies" story appeared in 1951, at which point, tabloid columnists indicated that patrons temporarily adjourned to Malloney's Studio Tavern and the bars in the Park Plaza.[108] Egan connected the tabloid article with the policy change in his column devoted to the implementation of discriminatory policies in gay bars in Toronto, claiming that papers needed to occasionally "fill up" space with a "spiteful attack" on a bar that was being "patronized by homosexuals."[109] The King Edward Hotel's first recorded bout of discrimination closely followed a sensational story that hit the newsstands at the end of March, 1952, which raised concerns about pick-ups in hotel bars.[110] Since one of the two men was under-aged, it gave the tabloid press an opportunity to devote space to male sex work, linking solicitation to Toronto's many hotel cocktail bars.[111] The two had met in the bar at the Ford Hotel, and the defence lawyer claimed his under-aged client frequented "cocktail bars" and "sought out … hotel rooms to sleep in at night" because he was "adrift alone in a big city."[112] The tabloid connected the queer sex trade to "dimly-lit night clubs," that enabled his "parasitic life" that catered to the "demented animalistic desires of certain individuals."[113] This story was on the cover of *True News Times*, which read in bold letters: "Queers Flushed From 'Love' Nest."[114]

[108] "A Study in Lavender," *True News Times,* April 23, 1951, 2; "A Study in Lavender," *True News Times,* May 21, 1951, 2; "A Study in Lavender," *True News Times,* June 11, 1951, 2.
[109] "Homosexual Concepts, By "J.L.E.," *Justice Weekly*, February 13, 1954, 13.
[110] "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket,* April 5, 1952, 12.
[111] "Youth Frequents Bars 'Picks Up' Strange Men," *Flash,* March 29, 1952, 4; "Queers Flushed From 'Love' Nest," *True News Times,* Feb 4, 1952, 12.
[112] "Youth Frequents Bars 'Picks Up' Strange Men," *Flash,* March 29, 1952, 4.
[113] "Youth Frequents Bars 'Picks Up' Strange Men," *Flash,* March 29, 1952, 4; "Queers Flushed From 'Love' Nest," *True News Times,* Feb 4, 1952, 12.
[114] "Queers Flushed From 'Love' Nest," *True News Times,* Feb 4, 1952, 1.

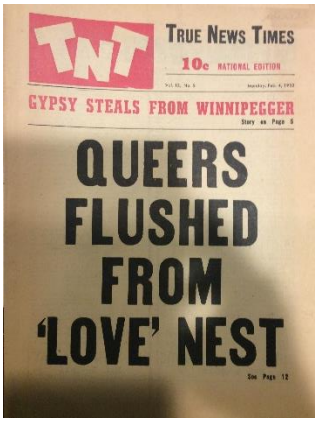

Image 4 - *True News Times* cover, Feb, 4, 1952

The Ford periodically imposed discriminatory policies—the best-known one took place in 1956, not long after a tabloid exposé of "Toronto's male sex market," that was "still flourishing" at the Gray Coach Bus Terminal at Dundas and Bay, directly across the street from the Ford.[115] The area was characterized as being frequented by "bums," "thieves," "drifters," and the "homosexuals who will hire them," claimed the article.[116] Later that year, at the Ford Hotel's Tropical Room, select patrons were given cards that read: "Your future patronage would not be appreciated here!"[117] Bettina predicted in *Tab* that this would be a "sorry financial mistake," since, for the "past six months, 'gay' crowds constituted a huge part of their business … in spite of the gaudy atmosphere, poor service, and stifling Tropical heat."[118] Bettina pointed out that the hotel's overall business (not just its bar business) would be affected as well, since "a sizable number of room rentals also have been made by 'gay' people."[119] It was unclear to Bettina, though, whether management was trying to permanently bar its entire gay clientele or, perhaps, merely adopt a policy that would discourage the "obvious swishes" who failed to conform to

[115] "Toronto Bus Terminal Still Male Sex Mart," *Flash*, Mar 10, 1956, 5
[116] Ibid.
[117] "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, October 13, 1956, 6.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.

postwar conventions of masculinity.[120] Bettina continued: "Some of the local characters are trying to collect," the cards while, others were tearing them up while characterizing them as "calling cards from … their many admirers."[121] Although Bettina noted that management efforts to reclaim the bar as a heterosexual space was initially successful, the "Ford Follies" were back soon after. All of this to say that, despite Egan's claims that gay patrons were compliant when it came to discriminatory policies, Bettina and Mother Goose tell a very different story: Collecting the cards as souvenirs, destroying or disregarding them and refusing to leave and returning, regardless of the policies were all instances of political resistance to discrimination.

Image 5 - King Edward Hotel, 1925. Valentine and Sons.
Toronto Public Library.

At the King Edward, which employed discriminatory policies several separate times over the course of fifteen years, attempts to change its client base were ineffectual over the long term. In 1961, the hotel engaged in its most well-publicized attempt to purge its bars of unwanted

[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.

clientele, following a sensational feature that claimed the King Edward was "plagued" by an "overflow of homosexuals from Letros Tavern, situated directly across the road," and that it had "declared an all-out war on the invading members of this limp-wrist set!"[122] Using militaristic language, the story referred to Cardy's determination to "stamp out alarming encroachments" with his "anti-queer army" that would "repel the invaders at every beachhead."[123] Letros was identified as the source of the hotel's problem with "cruising pansies" who were, it was alleged, the source of numerous complaints from hotel guests. Said Cardy: "It is unfortunate that we are located right across the street from one of the biggest homosexual haunts in Toronto. This is a geographical fact that we can do nothing about. However, the horrors perpetrated in the past by these people have come to an end."[124]

This was not the first time that the King Edward Hotel made the tabloids. Aside from many mentions in the social columns, there were other items, including a story from 1953, in which an elevator operator was accused of robbing and blackmailing at least one King Edward hotel guest, threatening to "out" the victim for being a "member of the group commonly known as 'Queers'."[125] It was suggested that blackmailing people of "lavendar-leanings" (sic) was common and concluded with a suggestion that these "pitiable creatures" would do better by keeping to their "own company rather than flirt with outsiders."[126] The King Edward also came up frequently in interviews conducted for this project and in other oral histories, including for the documentary film *Forbidden Love*, in which one interview subject, Carol Ritchie-Mackintosh,

[122] "King Edward Hotel Declares War on Letros Queers!" *Tab*, December 2, 1961, 3
[123] Ibid. Incidentally, the manager, Gordon Cardy, had earned a Military Cross for his service with the Royal Canadian Artillery in 1944-45).
[124] Stephen Maynard. "Through a hole in the lavatory wall: Homosexual subcultures, police surveillance, and the dialectics of discovery, Toronto, 1890-1930." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5.2 (1994): 207-242. The ambivalence of publications like *Tab* has been dealt with in several studies in addition to Maynard, including the aforementioned Jacques dissertation, "The Newspaperman and the Tabloid" and Setliffe's "Swish Kids and Sex Fiends" all of which demonstrate that tabloids ran both sensational exposés of the gay underworld and columns like Mother Goose's, Bettina's Fairy-Go-Round, Jim Egan's "Homosexual Concepts," that actually defended the rights of the queer community and attempted to enlighten readers. As such, the gay social columns warned readers of hostile conditions in public drinking spaces, while the features celebrated measures like attempts to purge the King Edward's bars of its gay patrons.
[125] "Elevator Operator Robs 'King Eddie' Hotel Guest," *Hush Free Press*, March 14, 1953, p4.
[126] Ibid.

recalled that the King Edward was home to a couple of Toronto's most "posh" bars.[127] She related her memory of having gone to the bar on dates—gays and lesbians went together, passing as heterosexual couples: What their dates "did in the men's washroom was none of your business."[128] The men's washrooms, incidentally, were accessible to people other than the guests of the hotel and bar patrons, since the layout of the hotel meant that the basement washrooms could be accessed from a side entrance, without going through the lobby. The bar, on the other hand, recalled Don, was located far from the washrooms and patrons "had to go all the way across the lobby in front of the front desk."[129] Despite this history of having been relatively tolerant in its policies, Cardy blamed the hotel bar's patronage on Letros, the bar across the street.

*Tab'*s story about the hotel's "war" on undesirable patrons provoked at least one letter to the editor: "At Letros, you will find no washroom problems as at the King Edward, because Letros patrons are generally too well-behaved and appreciative of the good service and protection-in-numbers that Letros has offered them for years."[130] The letter-writer went on to rebuke the hotel's management for its obfuscation of the establishment's legacy of tolerating queer patrons: "The 'gay' clientele of the King Edward is one of long-standing, centering mainly around the bar of the Times Square Lounge. The King Edward Hotel management must have been aware long before this so-called crisis that certain sections of the hotel were homosexual meeting places." The reader referred to the "war" on the gay patrons of the Times Square Lounge as an exercise in hypocrisy, since "they have never protested about taking their money,"

[127] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014, Interview with Don, Paul and Bob, conducted by Sismondo, Nov. 25, 2014 and Interview with Don, Paul and Neil, May 26, 2015; *Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives,* Director Weissman, Aerlyn and Fernie, Lynn, 1993.
[128] *Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives,* Director Weissman, Aerlyn and Fernie, Lynn, 1993.
[129] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014.
[130] "Reader Defends Letros' 'Queers'" *Tab,* Dec 16, 1961, 2.

echoing Egan's 1954 critique of hypocritical bar management practices and defence of gay clientele as well-behaved and orderly.[131]

The counterpublic actively asserted their right to assemble and be served and, in doing so, kept public drinking spaces queer, regardless of the intentions of the management and in defiance of discriminatory policies implemented in the early 1950s and 1960s. Aside from persistently returning to bars after being asked to leave, patrons also engaged in strategies that included posing as heterosexual couples, ignoring requests to leave and responding with camp gestures like tearing up or collecting the cards that were meant to be eviction notices. These tactics were celebrated and broadcast by columnists such as Bettina and Mother Goose, who also encouraged patrons to resist being barred by simply returning. These "every day" acts of resistance were representative of the common "subterfuge" that many felt was necessary for "survival," since, as Egan argued, these bars were a necessary respite from the tiring daily life of wearing the mask of "normality."[132] Egan glossed over and minimized the camp resistance that was manifest in both the columnists' attempts to organize resistance and the patrons' defiant actions in his discursive construction of the average gay bar patron. This was part and parcel of the prevailing assimilationist discourse, that made frequent use of normalizing discourse and stressed that the patrons were, for the large part, middle-class, professional, law-abiding citizens whose comportment was conservative. The premise that gay patrons were well-behaved and well-heeled was key to Egan's assimilationist discourse, which argued that bar owners' economic interests were in line with repealing discriminatory policies. Exposing the small acts of civil disobedience would have undermined his argument based on a premise that gay patrons were, typically, orderly.

[131] "Homosexual Concepts, By "J.L.E.," *Justice Weekly*, February 13, 1954, 13.
[132] "Homosexual Concepts, By "J.L.E.," *Justice Weekly*, February 13, 1954, 13.

Despite the differences in expression between the camp discourse in bars, civil rights arguments by Egan and the columnists' rallying cries to the community, these strategies for resistance were all based on a deep, embodied understanding that these policies of discrimination needed to be challenged. Throughout the 1960s, this collective frustration and sense of injustice would evolve into public protest and direct action in a number of American cities, the first of which took place in Philadelphia, where, in 1965, the imposition of a discriminatory policy at Dewey's lunch counter provoked a sit-in. Stein argues that this instance of direct action is of particular interest in that this first protest of its kind challenged not only discriminatory policies, but, also, the politics practised and espoused by the city's homophile groups who were invested in "the politics of respectability."[133] Although there were no homophile groups in Toronto at that time, the same strain of conservative, normalizing discourse is evident in Egan's approach to the question of public accommodation.

The Clientele and the Class Divide

Toronto's relatively queer-friendly public drinking spaces may have been, as Egan suggested, a sanctuary for a segment of the lesbian and gay population but, it is clear that they were highly-gendered and stratified spaces and that these boundaries were often re-drawn and challenged. In fact, the tensions between management and clientele at Letros in 1952, expressed in the tabloid columns demonstrate this, since the second round of complaints about discrimination by staff and management fell along class lines. Earlier that year, when the management at the King Edward implemented a discriminatory policy to discourage gay and lesbian clientele, some regular patrons began frequenting Letros as an alternative, including, most notably, Peter Marshall, who would become one of the Nile Room's most oft-mentioned

[133] Marc Stein, *City of Brotherly and Sisterly Loves,* 246. Stein argues that the direct action in Philadelphia put forward a new pair, the masculine woman and the feminine man.

regular patrons in the columns.[134] At the same time, Letros hired "Jack," the "FABULOUS" former assistant manager from the hotel's Times Square Lounge.[135] The management at Letros did not join with the King Edward in implementing a discriminatory service policy, because, according to the tabloids, it, and other bars were "addicted to luxury" and the "GAY DOLLAR."[136] However, it was at this time that a range of complaints about Letros' new policies were being voiced in the tabloids. Not only were the aforementioned waiters a source of constant grumbling, the columns also alleged that the bar was attempting to rid itself of beer drinkers and replace them with people who could afford to spend money on cocktails. Patrons were to be on a "strict diet of ZOMBIES," which cost "a dollar PLUS."[137] Two weeks after this item, a number of consecutive columns mentioned that the Nile was often full and prospective patrons had to wait because there was "no room" in the basement. However, although some people had to wait to gain admission—some of whom would order drinks or food in the upstairs restaurant while they waited to get into the Nile Room, others were seen being "smoothly escorted" downstairs, bringing out charges of preferential treatment and edicts that it should be "first come, first served."[138] The chorus of complaints included the "long arm at the door" and overzealous enforcement of policies by the doorman under the new management's watch, the first line of patron selection.[139] One columnist blamed "Jack's policies," and the strategy of "importing Miss MARSHALL and such clientele," since they were surrounded by an entourage of young men who sat all evening to wait for "some old Duchess" to buy them drinks.[140]

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[134] Not only in contemporary columns, in fact. Also a regular feature in memoirs such as Egan's and interviews conducted by Sismondo. Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014 (Paul).
[135] "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket*, April 19, 1952, 12.
[136] "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket*, April 5, 1952, 12.
[137] "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket*, March 15, 1952, 14.
[138] "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket*, April 26, 1952, 12.
[139] "A Study in Lavender," *True News Times*, April 7, 1952, 8.
[140] Ibid. "Jack" was the manager brought over from the King Edward.

Aside from having been a regular patron at Letros, Peter Marshall was associated with the old Royal York tap room, the King Edward and, according to Egan, Chez Paree, where he would come in with his party of "chickens" and "sweep by."[141] Whether at Chez Paree or Letros, Marshall, heir to a mattress manufacturing enterprise, was often described as a "flamboyant character" or "duchess" who would be seen "holding court" with young men who were between the ages of 21 and 24.[142] If you were older than that, you didn't get invited to the table, recalled Paul in an interview.[143] Marshall's house in Rosedale was often referred to, since his parties were legendary in the Toronto bar scene, even though it is difficult to track people down who were actually invited to these exclusive affairs.[144] Egan wrote about this specific issue in reference to these parties, describing how he and Marshall fell along class lines: "We didn't move in those circles."[145] Egan describes a "Series of levels" that included "opera queens" and "highly educated university types" with "ribbon clerks"' at the bottom.[146] He recalled a "certain amount of overlap" but stated that he only ever associated with people from the "lower orders."[147] People like Peter Marshall and "Madame Butterfly," a charismatic opera singer that he was loosely acquainted with, were, in a sense, public characters that people in the community knew of, even if they did not really socialize with them.[148]

Egan's characterization of class divisions corresponds to the tabloid columnists' many, explicit references to class stratification in bars. Interviews also provide evidence for a fairly rigid class divide: Although Don suggested that wearing a full suit made other patrons

[141] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 70
[142] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014 (Paul).
[143] Ibid.
[144] Interview with Don, Paul and Bob, conducted by Sismondo, Nov. 25, 2014. Bob recalled going to a party at Marshall's house.
[145] Egan, Jim. *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 70. "We" refers to Egan and his partner, both of whom were more likely to frequent the Municipal and Union Hotels.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 76

uncomfortable at Letros (since they worried about undercover police surveillance), he and others confirmed that the dress code for the two bars in that area was fairly conservative and upscale.[149] One woman recalled that, to go to the King Edward at night, you "dressed and you dressed well."[150] As interview subject Bob recalled, the only time he had ever witnessed somebody ejected from the King Edward was when "there was somebody very improperly dressed" who, judging from their "dress and their demeanour, obviously didn't belong in the hotel."[151] One writer called Letros too "toney" for his tastes and described the crowd as dressed in "suits" or "angora sweaters."[152] The tabloid columns were frank about their assessment of the bars and their clientele and, returned to the topic of class divisions frequently. In 1956, one column delivered a class-based analysis of Toronto's public drinking spaces that divided them into three tiers: the "lower class," which frequented movie theatres, the Municipal and the King Cole Room; the "middle class," that went to the Ford Hotel and the "upper crust," which frequented Letros. This was qualified with the admission that there was some "intermingling" between these groups and, an additional segment, the "Luxury Queens," that never went to "gay" bars but, instead, opted for mixed, upscale cocktail bars, such as the rooftop of the Park Plaza.[153]

[149] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014 (Paul).
[150] *Forbidden Love*, Weissman, Aerlyn and Fernie, Lynn, 1993.
[151] Interview with Don, Paul and Bob, conducted by Sismondo, Nov. 25, 2014 (Bob)
[152] "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic*, April, 1980, 26.
[153] "Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, Aug 4, 1956, 13.

Image 6 - Park Plaza Hotel, 1954.
James Victor Salmon. Toronto Public Library.

The columnist proceeded to ridicule the patrons that went to the Park Plaza and accused that set of being so determined not to be "obvious" that it made itself "supremely so."[154] This is an indication of a relatively loose correlation between class, performance of gender and the level of surveillance that patrons were subject to, that seems to have been expressed in nearly obsessive contemporary accounts of class and dress code at some of the bars. Interview subjects consistently recalled that this had been the era of the "suit and tie, blazer and tie," and that was the uniform for going "into a bar in downtown Toronto," referring to Letros and the King Edward.[155] And, with a couple of notable exceptions, men who went to Letros dressed in accordance with the codes for compulsory heterosexuality of the era.[156] One edition of *Bob Damron's Address Book*, a travel guide that listed gay-friendly bars across North America, listed

[154] Ibid.
[155] Interview with Don, Paul and Bob, conducted by Sismondo, Nov. 25, 2014 (Bob, in this case quoted directly.)
[156] Exceptions, referring mainly to performance. These will be expanded upon in detail in the section dealing with Hallowe'en and sex in public.

Letros as "P.E." ("Piss Elegant", according to the book's glossary) but warned of the possible presence of hustlers with the mark, "(H)".[157] "Elegant" had a specific connotation: It applied to "a homosexual who prides himself on his higher social level … in comparison to his more sordid brethren" and was said to have "implications of both snobbishness and repression."[158] "Piss Elegant" was an even more snobbish version of "Elegant."[159] One memoirist wrote that the Letros Bar and the "side bar at the King Edward Hotel were hospitable to the 'sweater queens' or the quiet business men who frequented them."[160] One regular, Bob, who belonged to what he described as "a pretty big social group" recalled that nearly everybody in his acquaintance—a social circle that gathered frequently at Letros and the King Edward—"lived well," "had good addresses … nice cars," and "dressed well, so nobody bothered us."[161] This observation correlates to official records which show no evidence of selective enforcement of regulations by licence inspectors at bars such as the King Edward, Letros, the Sky Bar at the Westbury, the Park Plaza, Malloney's or Chez Paree. At the latter, in fact, the inspector explicitly noted that, in general, the patrons appeared to be "good," "middle class" customers, who were "enjoying themselves in pleasant surroundings."[162]

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[157] Bob Damron. *Bob Damron's Address Book,* (San Francisco: Bob Damron Enterprises, 1969), 94.

[158] Hugh Hagius. *Swasarnt Nerf's Gay Guides for 1949* (New York: Bibliogay Publications, 2010 reprint), 50.

[159] Ibid.

[160] Martin Roebuck. *Spearhead: Thirty-five Years of Toronto Gay History*, (Toronto: Roebuck, 2005), 5.

[161] Interview with Don, Paul and Bob, conducted by Sismondo, Nov. 25, 2014 (Bob). In this interview and others, there were several references to living in Rosedale and the freedoms afforded to those that had the "right" addresses. Aside from Peter Marshall's house, there were two apartment buildings specifically mentioned—the Fontainebleu and the Arbor Glen on Rosedale Valley Road. Aside from the obvious indication of status, one interview subject suggested it also kept people safe from police harassment in the event that they were asked for identification.

[162] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B335052 (Chez Paree), Inspection Report, May 13, 1952.

City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1257, f1257_s1057_it0541

Image 7 - Union Hotel, 1945. City of Toronto Archives

Conversely, bars like the Municipal and Union House, with their "equally grungy" beverage rooms, were subject to frequent inspections from licence inspectors and police. These were characterized in the tabloids as mixed bars that were frequented by people who could not afford the price of cocktails at Letros or to eat at "middle class" establishments like Chez Paree and, instead, went to these beer parlours where they could sit nursing beer that only cost 10 or 15 cents a glass.[163] These two bars, dubbed by some as "The Board of Trade and the Chamber of

[163] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 53; "Watch Out, Men: Queers Stalk Washroom at Municipal," *Tab*, Jan 4, 1964, 5. 15 cents by the time this article was printed in 1964 but in the 1950s, beer would only have been 10 cents a glass. This, compared with cocktails that were often priced as high as $1.60 per drink.

Commerce," were often described as "rough." They were frequented by flamboyant characters, drag queens, hustlers, panhandlers, "working class gays," and "older men, rough workman types," who would usually drink their beer and mind their own "business."[164] One interview subject said that he used to frequent the Union and that there was a "terrible undercurrent of violence" in the room.[165] When he and a friend visited once, he told his companion to get under the table if anything happened. "Two minutes later, the most awful row broke out."[166] The pair ducked for cover until a lull in the action gave them a chance to escape through the side door.[167] The recurring violence at this "bucket of blood" may have been used to help justify the increased surveillance: One LCBO inspector observed that the Essex Room bar in the Municipal was "a meeting place for young men with feminine characteristics and possibly sex perverts," noting that there were "at least twelve of this calibre seated at different tables in the south part of the room."[168] The tabloids described the queer clientele at the Municipal as the "lovelies" or "belles," of which there were a few regular characters that came up frequently in both tabloids and memoirs—Miss Jeffries, Mad Arlene, Madame Mamie, Miss Purlie Victorious, Frances and Geraldine, the latter of which was once described as the "toast of the Municipal set," known for her "notorious drag ensembles."[169] Egan described Geraldine as a hustler with "porcelain features and makeup galore" who "could pass," with customers because the average straight man wouldn't question whether or not it was really a woman.[170] With Frances, on the other hand, a "black guy who weighed two hundred pounds" and was "plastered with makeup" it was "difficult to tell whether you were looking at a man or a woman," according to Egan, who

[164] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 53; 72-73
[165] Toronto Gay Oral History Project. Interview with X by John Grube, May 28, 1985.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid.
[168] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B109744 (Municipal Hotel), Inspection Report, June 27, 1958.
[169] "Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, Dec 21, 1957, 8. Egan spelled "Frances" with an "e," the *Tab* columnist spelled the name "Francis."
[170] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 72-73

included a story in his memoir in which Frances clashed with a gay-basher in the Municipal.[171] "You were protected down there," wrote Egan, noting that the bartender responded by trying to intervene on Frances' behalf with a sawed-off pool cue and would eventually throw the gay-basher out, "but in this particular instance, Frances handled the situation very well."[172] Egan does not mention women at the Municipal or Union, but one retired police officer claimed problems arose when "straights" would patronize the bar, making "smart aleck remarks" to cause fights that were handled by the queer community which was "usually" able to "look after" itself, with the "lesbians" helping the "men, the homosexuals and vice versa."[173] In another tale from the Municipal, "Miss Jeffries," described by Egan as a "fragile, fussy, character" who had a habit of brushing back his hair and fluttering his collar in the bar, verbally rebuked a man who was rudely staring—not an uncommon occurrence at the Municipal, which was plagued with many "tourists" and "rubberneckers" who came to look at the "she-males," as one tabloid referred to some of the clientele.[174]

The "Municipal Set" was an important part of Toronto the Gay with a public voice in the tabloid social columns and a sense of community, even though it was left out of the Egan columns focused on an idealized bar life for his assimilationist arguments. Egan's version was closer, in reality, to Chez Paree, where middle-class patrons were described as having enjoyed themselves in pleasant surroundings, than it was to the Municipal, where bartenders leapt over the bar with sawed-off pool cues to break up fights between cross-dressing sex workers and gawking tourists. Egan, however, had spent "many a fascinating evening" frequenting both

[171] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 72-73
[172] Ibid.
[173] ALOT interview with Jack Webster, January 13, 1994.
[174] "Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, November 17, 1956, 4; "Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, April 6, 1957, 4; "Watch Out, Men: Queers Stalk Washroom at Municipal," *Tab*, Jan 4, 1964, 5.

bars.[175] It was not only Egan whose normalizing discourse marginalized men who challenged heterosexual norms for comportment. *GAY* magazine, a relatively short-lived Toronto publication that was circulated in gay clubs, ran a piece purporting to be a conversation overheard in a "crowded bar" in which one patron asked another how "straight people" were ever expected to "understand the homosexual" when he "parades in shocking clothes and is obviously feminine?"[176] "Not all homosexuals are obvious," another patron said, to which it was countered that the "Obvious ones," were the "worst representatives of the group."[177]

There are similarities between the class divisions in the men's bars and the ones analyzed by Elise Chenier, largely at the Continental Hotel, which was almost the only public drinking option for lesbians in postwar Toronto until the early 1960s.[178] Although there have been occasional mentions of additional venues—the Rose, the Turf Club Hotel, the Holiday Tavern and the Rideau Tavern—most alImage

ternatives to the Continental seem to have been short-lived and transitory, since they don't appear in the literature very consistently. In addition, there are occasional mentions of queer women at the King Edward, Letros and both the Municipal and Union House, even though Egan never includes mention of any women in either contemporary accounts or later memoirs. Since the Continental was the only public drinking space that was regularly and consistently patronized by lesbians in the 1950s, the class divide—or, between downtowners and uptowners, as Chenier clarified in the context of Toronto's queer community—was played out in that one bar, unlike the divisions in bar culture in places such as Buffalo, where Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline Davis analyzed class differences that reinforced butch-fem

[175] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 53.
[176] "The Biased I," *GAY,* Aug 15, 1964, 4. *GAY* was a short-lived Toronto magazine that aimed for a bi-monthly publication schedule.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Elise Chenier. "Rethinking class in lesbian bar culture: Living 'the gay life' in Toronto, 1955-1965." *Left History* 9.2 (2004): 85-118.

stereotypes.[179] On occasion, the Toronto tabloids did mention the lesbian community, but almost always in connection with either sex work or violence that the butch members of the community were said to be engaged in.

Identity Politics—Strategies of Defiance and Self-Protection

Chenier demonstrates that the "downtowners" who patronized the Continental constructed an identity based on survival techniques adapted from living in close proximity to the sex trade, drugs, violence and the threat of an abusive police force.[180] Although men interviewed for this project also used terms like "survival" and "subterfuge," there were distinctly different strategies amongst the communities that frequented Toronto's postwar gay bars, too. Many of the patrons at Letros describe adopting a strategy that was opposite to the one employed by the downtowners at the Continental, since the patrons at Letros, the Park Plaza and the King Edward attempted to dress ultra-conservatively and rarely challenged the era's standards for gender comportment. This was similar to the strategy that Egan advocated in his many columns, which emphasized the middle-class normality of the patrons of gay bars. There were several patterns of resistance, however, that cut across class divisions in bars.[181]

Popham described a tight-knit network among the "almost exclusively Gay patronage," who would have been considered "regulars" at Letros. When he visited the bar for observation, the only unoccupied table was at the back of the bar and he and his "straight" companion were "made to run a psychological gauntlet" to get there, which he felt was due to the fact that they were neither regulars, "nor Gay."[182] Although it is possible the regulars were concerned about the new clients being undercover police, it seems more likely that Popham and friend would have

[179] Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*.
[180] Chenier, "Rethinking class in lesbian bar culture," 85-118.
[181] "Homosexual Concepts, By "J.L.E.," *Justice Weekly*, February 13, 1954, 13.
[182] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 37.

been viewed with suspicion for being tourists, there to gawk at patrons.[183] Egan wrote in 1951 that Letros did a brisk business in out of town visitors who "came in to gawk at the 'fairies' and have something to tell the gossips back home."[184] One writer recalled his first visit to Letros was the first time he had ever experienced "The Look," also noting the presence of two "whispering" and "giggling" heterosexual couples, apparently there to view the scene: "We were a freak show, and I hated them."[185] Another interview subject recalled that Letros "was one of those bars where, when you walked in, everybody looked up and stared at you as you made your entrance."[186] As such, the "psychological gauntlet" Popham experienced may have served several functions—to discourage tourists and gawkers, to protect against inspectors and to warn the other patrons of the presence of an unfamiliar patron.

Still, Popham was served "without difficulty" by the waiters whom, he observed, were jovially engaged with the customers.[187] From his table, he noted it "was abundantly evident that the majority of patrons were known to one another" and that the clientele freely and openly socialized with each other and most of the cruising took place at the back of the bar.[188] "Quieter men" sat along the wall, some of them in couples, whom, he felt, behaved in much the same way a straight couple would—replete with gender role differentiation that extended even as far as one member of the couple ordering "masculine" drinks (whisky) and the other "feminine" (pink gin).[189] Like Egan, who described couples arriving and boys "table-hopping" in his representative gay bar, Popham noted that patrons frequently moved around from table to table, engaging in "clowning" and "pantomime."[190] Popham noticed a male patron sit down with some

[183] "A Study in Lavender," *True News Times*, June 25, 1951, 10. This and other entries indicate a concern over the number of gawkers: "For one drink, the normal crowd doesn't see Egyptian mummies but real live Queens (THAT'S FEMININE!) of the Nile."
[184] "Toronto Homo Exposes Inverts' Twilight Life," *Flash*, July 23, 1951, 6.
[185] "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic*, April, 1980, 26.
[186] Interview with Alan, conducted by Sismondo, May 28, 2014
[187] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern,"37.
[188] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 37-38.
[189] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 39.
[190] "Homosexual Concepts, By "J.L.E.," *Justice Weekly*, February 13, 1954, 13; Popham, 37.

girls and "put his arm around the shoulders of one and begin to stroke her arm," a gesture that brought "roars of laughter" from nearby tables.[191] Despite the fact that some of this behaviour might have been frowned upon by the liquor authority (hopping tables was discouraged and outright prohibited if the table jumper was holding a drink), Popham made note that the drinking he observed was moderate and there were no instances of drunkenness.[192] Whether or not that was universally true, it does seem, from this account and interviews, that there was no culture of excessive drinking at the bar and, that, in addition, there was a tight group of regular patrons who had a long-standing relationship. In some ways, Letros could have served as the model of the idealized gay bar that Egan represented in his rational arguments printed in the tabloid press.

Even Letros, however, had elements that Egan would have been happier to brush under the carpet, such as the "sweet things" that would sit around like "animated mannequins, flutter their eyelashes, roll their eyes and slap each other playfully as they engage in a bit of gigglish repartee."[193] There was a highly codified language and a rigid set of rituals that were unique to the discourse of this self-organized and self-defined counterpublic—one that was formed in opposition to the heteronormative public. Popham noted a "distinctive language" that employed the female pronouns, "she" and "her" instead of "he" and "his."[194] In addition, Popham's study included a partial glossary of the community's language, which included "bitch" (particularly effeminate), "butch" (hypermasculine mannerisms) and "cruising," an activity that sometimes took place at the back of the bar and, at other times, at tables, where people would "cluster in groups with a queen as the focal point."[195] The queen was no more of a "sexual object than other

[191] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 38.
[192] Ibid.
[193] "'Pansies' Bloom in Cocktail Bar," *Hush Free Press*, March 17, 1951, 6.
[194] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 38; William Leap. *Beyond the Lavender Lexicon: Authenticity, Imagination and Appropriation in Lesbian and Gay Languages* (New York: Taylor&Francis, 1993). Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 110-114. This fits in with the ideas of both the "lavender lexicon" and language within the queer counterpublic, as described by Warner.
[195] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 38.

members" of the group but was simply "a focus," of the group, like "Madame Pietra, THE Queen Bee," according to Bettina.[196] In addition, Popham noted the following terms: "drag-queen," (a queen in female clothing)," "gutter-gay," (indigent homosexual) and "camping" (the act of seeking to gain attention).[197] There was also ritualized "bitching," (a game of insults) that was a "variety of camping" and took place later in the evening when "the activities of the queens become increasingly fractious."[198] Descriptions of events like this at a "certain gay King Street bistro" turned up occasionally in the tabloid columns as well: "There certainly was a lot of hair-pulling and screaming when two of the more elegant queens started throwing words, then limp wrists at each other."[199]

After nine o'clock at night, pairs, or sometimes small groups of three or four would engage in short (not usually more than five minutes) exchanges of insults.[200] Incidentally, some of the Damron's *Address Book* listings for Letros specified "(after 9 p.m.)," so it seems likely that the culture of the bar shifted throughout the night.[201] In another magazine, a column devoted to the "special art" of conversation at the club, indicated this was guided by "certain rules."[202] It was clarified that for the first hour, the "opening round," the conversation was limited to people who were absent.[203] After that, however, the conversation shifted, and "subtle" bitching became more open, with "spear-thrusts" being "parried back and forth."[204] "Bitching" was subject to strict rules of protocol, since the insults were not supposed to contain "embarrassing truths," and should "pertain only to appearance or to the imagined sexual misadventures of one's opponent."

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[196] Ibid; "Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, Aug 4, 1956, 8.
[197] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 38.
[198] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 39.
[199] "Toronto's Gay Nights," *True News Times*, Feb 19, 1951, 9.
[200] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 39.
[201] Damron. *Bob Damron's Address Book,* 94.
[202] "The Art of Conversation at the Club," *GAY*, May 29, 1964, p5.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid.

"The queen of the bitches would come over to chat," and the patrons at neighbouring tables were the audience for this performance delivered in "high, arched tones."[205] "Approval" was "awarded for speed and poise of the delivery and fancifulness of the content."[206] The entire ritual was "governed by an informal rank-order," with the "most respected queens" keeping "aloof" and generally "confining themselves to a pointed remark or two."[207]

At times, camping—and its more exaggerated form, bitching—was used as a protective strategy to ward off the gawkers, argued Egan in one column, describing an event in which a patron, who had been having a discussion about the future of ballet in Canada, suddenly put on a "loud, effeminate voice" and performed for the "tourists" with a little speech: "Mercy, girls, your old mother is exhausted, I cleaned house all afternoon, and then had to cook a big supper for my husband."[208] Although Egan acknowledged the essentially defensive nature of this camp outburst, he also critiqued the strategy, since it did "nothing" to help "bring about a better understanding between normal and heterosexual."[209] Egan also managed to get this story into wider circulation, since it was included, nearly verbatim, in Katz's *Maclean's* piece, in a manner that made it sound as if Katz had witnessed it himself: "One night, a party of gay people found themselves next to a table of giggling, finger pointing homosexuals. One of the homosexuals leaped up and, in a loud, shrill female voice, said, 'I must now go, my dears, Your poor mother is exhausted after washing, ironing and cooking all day.'"[210] Despite Egan's disapproval, camp discourse was an expression of agency—as seen in this rebuke to "tourists" and its use as a refusal to be subjected to policies of discrimination at bars such as the Ford's Tropical Room. It

[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid; Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 39.
[207] Ibid. It was also positioned in opposition to the discursive construction of brawling butches.
[208] "Homosexual Concepts, By "J.L.E.," *Justice Weekly*, February 20, 1954, 13.
[209] Ibid.
[210] "The Homosexual Next Door," *Maclean's*, February 22, 1964, 28.

was also a key part of cruising, as indicated in the column that suggested it could be carried on at a "superficial level while one's eyes scan the crowd for that one and only."[211] Camp discourse was one of the most common counterpublics and it was embodied and expressed both in the bars and in the tone and content used by Bettina, Mother Goose and Duke Gaylord in the circulating texts of the tabloid social columns.[212] It was a method of establishing status and confirming the individual who would be "queen of the bitches," but it transcended class and habitus—the same strategies employed by Miss Jeffries at the Municipal Tavern were used at the Ford Hotel and at Letros or Chez Paree.[213] It was a discursive identity construction that provided one answer to the disembodied state of living a queer life in the context of postwar compulsory heterosexuality. In all its different forms, this camp discourse—developed between the public drinking spaces and the tabloids in opposition to heteronormative standards—was not just expression of a queer counterpublic. It was at its very core.

Conclusion

In opposition to the postwar era's compulsory heterosexuality, a queer counterpublic developed. It was well-defined and organized through both camp and civil rights discourse, both of which challenged the logic of the closet and the discourse of the criminal sexual psychopath. Although the queer counterpublic was a hotly-contested space and deeply divided by the dialectic of competing discourses, as well as by class, gender, ethnicity and sexual comportment, camp discourse cut across class lines and could be found in a range of public drinking spaces and texts. Camp discourse was not only about empowerment and identity politics, it was also used as a protective strategy employed against tourists and was used to assert people's rights to accommodation—a clear expression of agency. In addition to this, the counterpublic was

[211] "The Art of Conversation at the Club," *GAY.* May 29, 1964, 5.
[212] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 110-114,
[213] Pierre Bourdieu. *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford University Press, 1990, 55-62. Habitus, as in the embodiment of cultural capital.

organized and politicized through bar-based culture and the tabloids to resist discrimination and to exercise the community's right to safety and equal treatment.

CHAPTER TWO–"Choose Miss Letros": Public Rituals in the Queer Counterpublic

Introduction

Although camp discourse was a universal language that connected the bars and the social columns, it was not something that many people in postwar Toronto would have been familiar with or experienced on a regular basis. Tabloid gossip columnists would even occasionally admonish the queer counterpublic when it became too conspicuous, warning that the crowd needed to be less "OBVIOUS" when they were outside of the "INNER CONFINES OF THE NILE."[1] It was a private communication that proliferated in sanctuary spaces—a lavender code. There was one major exception, however, and that was every year on Hallowe'en, when the "Miss Letros" pageant, a massive, public drag ball that was referred to as the "focal point of the Gay community," put camp discourse on display in downtown Toronto's streets.[2] This was Toronto the Gay's most brazen challenge to the distinction between public and private spheres and heteronormative standards for masculinity and femininity—even breaking the bar's own policy against cross-dressing patrons.[3] Miss Letros was subversive, empowering and an expression of pride that would, ultimately, attract large numbers of the larger public sphere and force the mainstream media to end its policy of silence. In addition, this ritual, grown out of bar-based cultures, would inspire other, similar, camp protests, including "zaps" and the Brunswick Four's public satirical parody of heterosexual bar culture at the Brunswick House.

Subversive Camp Rituals

"In most large North American cities, queens and transvestites take advantage of that night's confusion to appear publicly in drag," wrote Popham, "Although this is permitted in

[1] "Fairy Tales Are Retold," *The Rocket*, April 19, 1952, 12.
[2] Robert Popham. "Working Papers on the Tavern," 39.
[3] George Chauncey. *Gay New York*, 25. The Hallowe'en drag balls in Toronto presumably had less to do with debutante culture and masquerade that Chauncey describes and more to do with mimicking the era's beauty pageants. While the subject matter may be different, the camp performance that challenges and satirizes it performs a similar political function to the one that Chauncey describes in chapter 10, p271-300.

Toronto in any case, the custom is still in force."[4] A Hallowe'en drag tradition dates back to the 1920s in many large cities, most notably Chicago and New York, where events were widely publicized, held in central venues such as Webster Hall and Madison Square Gardens in New York and attracted, not only participants, but also a wide range of spectators engaged in "slumming."[5] Nick Rogers suggests that the use of Hallowe'en for political protest is common, particularly when it comes to identity politics, because of the carnivalesque atmosphere and themes of inversion.[6] However, Rogers questions the level of potential for the holiday being truly subversive, as opposed to transgressive.[7] The "Miss Letros" Hallowe'en drag ball, however, was more than just a single night's event—it was the public expression of a culture and community that lived and performed camp discourse throughout the year.

Marc Stein argues that Philadelphia's tradition of drag parades on New Year's Day and Hallowe'en challenged boundaries between "private" and "public," "masculinity" and "femininity" and "women" and "men."[8] These events, including the underground ones that took place in many cities in North America throughout the Cold War (and well after), represented an activity that challenged conventional sexual dichotomies and expressed resistance to compulsory heterosexuality in a risky and public expression of defiance.[9] Situated in the context of Toronto's postwar queer counterpublic, however, the annual Letros drag ball takes on a yet more subversive function, since it existed in a city without an active homophile group. Even in a city like San Francisco, which did have a homophile association, the Tavern Guild's establishment of the Beaux-Arts Ball in 1963 was a community event that included people that the homophile

[4] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 30.
[5] Chad Heap. *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010) p 271.
[6] Nick Rogers. *Hallowe'en: From Pagan Ritual to Party Night* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 136-139.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Marc Stein, *City of Brotherly and Sisterly Loves*, 105.
[9] Esther Newton. *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 34-6. Newton wrote that it was a tradition alive in most large cities in the United States in 1972.

associations failed to inspire, argues Nan Alamilla Boyd.[10] Even in its first year, the Beaux-Arts Ball was labeled as an annual tradition—one that would lead to the institution of the Imperial Court System, an international organization that started as a grassroots movement that evolved into an important fundraising organ.[11] These were a pre-cursor to contemporary "Ball Culture," a well-established, organized subculture of communities that competed in dance and drag competitions.[12]

The first mention of a postwar Hallowe'en ball in Toronto is from 1949, when the event was held at "a certain downtown hotel.[13] It was not Toronto's first Hallowe'en ball, however, since the journalist noted that the masquerade party was held "as usual"—an indication that it was already a Toronto tradition.[14] The 1949 version was called a "smashing success," attended by 25 "girlishly garbed boys and their he-men escorts," who "cavorted," "camped" and "danced, under the nose of the management" which took no action to stop the party until a violent incident involving two soldiers and the drag contestants broke out in a hallway.[15] In 1951, the annual drag ball, which featured "drag queens" admired by a large crowd, was held at Letros, where it would be held for nearly two decades.[16] By 7:30 in the evening on October 31, 1951 it was reported that Letros was at capacity—"jammed to the rafters" on both floors.[17] "The evening was QUIET except for an elderly gentleman who entered the lower BELLEROOM and repeatedly swooned,"

[10] Nan Alamilla Boyd. *Wide-Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2003), 288.
[11] Newton, *Mother Camp*, 34-6.
[12] Marlon Bailey. *Butch Queens in Pumps: Gender, Performance and Ballroom Culture in Detroit.* (Detroit: University of Michigan Press, 2013).
[13] "Lavender Lads Make Woo! Woo! Hallowe'en Eve," *Flash*, Nov 15, 1949, 5. The first mention found in the archival materials surveyed for this project, that is. It is possible that there are other mentions in earlier tabloid stories that have not survived or exist in private collections. Tensee would go on to found his own magazine, *Tab*, which had a regular, long-standing gay social column and nearly annual coverage of the Letros Hallowe'en ball.
[14] "Lavender Lads Make Woo! Woo! Hallowe'en Eve," *Flash*, Nov 15, 1949, 5.
[15] Ibid.
[16] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, Dec. 6, 1969, 8. A crowd assembled outside Letros to gawk at the Hallowe'en drag ball but it never materialized. Letros closed less than a year after, in October 1970.
[17] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, Dec. 6, 1969, 8. A crowd assembled outside Letros to gawk at the Hallowe'en drag ball but it never materialized. Letros closed less than a year after, in October 1970. "A Study in Lavender," *True News Times*, Nov 19, 1951, 14. This article does not explicitly name Letros but mentions "Georgina" the musician "Briana" (Brian was the name of the main pianist at Letros) and several other details that confirm the location.

reported one tabloid columnist, continuing by identifying him as Christopher Letros, Sr.: "This gentleman (it is whispered) was the owner."[18] According to the columnist, the highlight of the event was a "SOPHIE TUCKER 'RED HOT MAMA' ROUTINE … THAT would put even Miss Tucker to shame."[19] These descriptions are consistent with Popham's observations of the "gay ball" at Letros between 1952 and 1956, which was described as a "fashion show" that drew a "packed" room of patrons, gathered to watch and judge "40 or more" queens.[20]

Since there were only three designers "willing to work for queens" in Toronto, the outfitting of the contestants was an industry in and of itself that tested "the resources of the community."[21] This is testament to the importance of these events to Toronto the Gay—or, at least, a segment of the queer community—who pooled their skills and raw materials to dress some individuals up for the masquerade. Since few off-the-rack dresses would have been ready-to-wear for the drag ball, most contestants had to design and tailor "their own creations" to the pageant.[22] Contestants were "judged less for realism and poise of carriage than for originality and excellence of attire," noted one observer, demonstrating that the costume was as much a cultural critique of contemporary gender norms as it was a display of craft.[23] In 1956, one columnist reported that many "belles" had "worked their fingers to the bone, sewing and fussing on their ensemble" for the Letros Hallowe'en ball in 1956. The forethought, originality and statement has to be continually reinvented: After the 1961 event, another columnist reported that contestants were "trying to sell their Hallowe'en gowns as second-hand," since they "wouldn't be seen in the same 'Drag' two years running."[24] A dress, however, might make a second

[18] "A Study in Lavender," *True News Times*, Nov 19, 1951, 14.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 39.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, Nov. 17, 1956, 13; "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, Dec 9, 1961, 13.

appearance at an event staged in a more informal, private setting, of which there were many, throughout the entire year—not just at Hallowe'en. In July of 1956, for example, Bettina related the highlights from an event at which people wore "lavish" gowns, "elaborate make-up" and, although Mimi, wearing a French maid costume won, all the contestants were described as "gorgeous."[25] In addition to this July event, there are references to an "unofficial" "Easter Parade," and a "Christmas Day ball at the "Queens' Palace," where one of the hostesses was expected to wear a "pheasant-'girl' ensemble."[26] There was also a New Year's Eve party that involved sequins, jewels and high heels, at which "Les Letros Girls outdid themselves with splendour."[27] Although the public rarely would have read of events like these outside of the Letros Hallowe'en ball, masquerades were an important element of the queer counterpublic that maintained camp discourse on a continuing basis.

Another testament to the importance of these events to Toronto's queer community can be found in coverage of Local 280 of the Hotel, Restaurant Employees and Bartenders Union picket of Letros Tavern. It was detailed in "Strike Hits Pansies Favorite Hangout," a tabloid feature story that detailed the "breakdown in discussions" between 15 bartenders and waiters and owner, George Letros, in the negotiation of the employees' first contract.[28] As a result of the stalled negotiations, the "lavender lads" were losing their "favorite hunting grounds" because they didn't have enough "guts" to cross a picket line, an argument that simultaneously demeaned labour activists and queer men.[29] This was followed by a digression into nomenclature and

[25] "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, July 14, 1956, 13
[26] "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, April 25, 1956, 13; "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, Jan 12, 1957, 13;
Stein, *City of Brotherly and Sisterly Loves*, 105. Stein notes that Philadelphia also had an Easter Parade in which drag queens participated.
[27] "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, Jan 12, 1957, 13. "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, Jan 12, 1957, 13. In the drag ball tradition established in cities in the United States, New Year's Eve was also a popular night to stage events. Although some of these events may have taken place at licensed establishments, complaints about George Letros's habit of donating bottles and then quickly leaving can be interpreted as an indication that these were private parties, since the LLBO had very strict rules that dictated all alcohol had to be purchased on an establishment's license.
[28] "Strike Hits Pansies Favorite Hangout," *Tab*, Oct 20, 1956, p 2.
[29] "Strike Hits Pansies Favorite Hangout," *Tab*, October 20, 1956, 2.

mythology: "In ancient Greece, Ganymede was the cup bearer to the gods. It follows therefore that bartenders and waiters at Letros could be termed Ganymedes—cup bearers to the gods, or rather goddesses of swish."[30] Two weeks later, Bettina noted that the strike was still on at Letros and that "local belles" hoped management would "break down and give the trade a raise."[31] Letros, however, did not and the strike was a long, intractable one that threatened to disrupt the Hallowe'en drag ball: *Tab* argued that the "laddies who would rather be ladies" lived with the "haunting fear" that the strike wouldn't be settled in time for the event and that "Hallowe'en without Letros would be worse than Christmas without Santa Claus."[32]

In addition to this labour problem that threatened to thwart the 1956 festivities, Letros was also facing an unusual amount of police scrutiny that year, something Bettina suggested was a result of concerns over the "wild Hollowe'en celebration" of 1955, which had been marked by "dance exhibitions on top of King St. autos."[33] There is no corroboration of this account, since, neither the *Toronto Star* nor *Globe and Mail* had any reports of specific events in that year, although both papers *did* run stories about vandalism and disturbances from the previous evening, seemingly unrelated to the King Street event. *The Star* reported that the police responded to "one call after another," while the *Globe* suggested that, no matter how lively the city was, it was still better than it had been in previous years, taking the opportunity to reflect on the Hallowe'en "riot" of 1945, which took place in the east end of Toronto, near Kew Beach.[34] Despite this call to reason, anxiety over Hallowe'en was intense in an era of Cold War soft authoritarianism which pathologized transgressive behaviours.[35] Despite police pressure, pickets

[30] Ibid.
[31] "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, November 3, 1956, 13
[32] "Strike Hits Pansies Favorite Hangout," *Tab*, October 20, 1956, 2.
[33] "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," Tab, November 17, 1956, 13
[34] "Wave of Vandalism Sweeps Over Ontario," *The Toronto Star*, November 1, 1955, 1; "Rotten Eggs, Torpedoes, Fireworks … Quiet," *The Globe and Mail*, November 1, 1955, 5; One example of anxieties over the potentially violent and transgressive nature of Hallowe'en in the past.
[35] Rogers, Halloween, 10; 93-98. Although Rogers primarily deals with anxieties about children's safety, the era's anxiety over Hallowe'en was also an expression of conservatism around gender norms and youth crime.

outside the bar's entrance *and* heavy rain, the 1956 Letros drag ball *did* proceed: "George relented and decided, as the evening wore on, to let the 'drag queens' enter and exit thru a rear doorway – while four pickets were parading in front of the establishment."[36] The uncertainty, though, put a damper on the evening and Bettina reported there were only "eight or ten" contestants—a low number compared with "previous years."[37] Possibly inspired by the obstacles facing Letros in 1956, that year saw competition for the Hallowe'en ball hosting duties, with both the Union House and the Municipal hotels staging similar drag events, one of which attracted quite a few "tourists."[38] The class distinction between the clientele at Letros and the bars across the street from City Hall at the Corners was made clear in the tabloids: "While the elegant "flowers" were blooming along the Nile, more earthy ones found greener pastures in Civic Square," wrote Bettina.[39] Two of the "Union 'girls'" were characterized as "slightly tipsy" who were having a "gaylorious time" entertaining the tourists and getting a "cheap thrill out of being on exhibition."[40]

After the labour dispute was settled, Letros resumed its role as the pre-eminent host of the Hallowe'en party and, to some Torontonians, it even became evidence of the city's new-found cosmopolitan nature, as opposed to a symptom of moral degradation.[41] One *Tab* columnist had lamented the lack of big city entertainments in the city in 1956, citing a lack of "exotic top-notch floor shows," "glossy supper clubs," "champagne-guzzling patrons" or "glittering café society."[42] New York, Buffalo, Detroit and Montreal had these "attractions" but, despite the "legalization of bars and cocktail lounges," Toronto did not.[43] Three years later, that same

[36] "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab.* November, 17, 1956, 13
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] "Confidential Diary: Choose Miss Letros," *Tab*, November 21, 1959, 12
[42] "Inside Toronto," *Tab*, November 3, 1956, 4.
[43] Ibid.

columnist had changed his mind, citing the Miss Letros 1959 event as an indication that Toronto was now "a big town" that had "come of age in more ways than one."[44] "In addition to the fortunate hundreds able to get inside to view the queer, sophisticated revue by a dozen female impersonators, upwards of a thousand others were turned away to while away the evening outside the gin-mill," he wrote, providing more confirmation that the event was a massive spectacle, despite the daily newspapers' total silence regarding the Miss Letros pageant. He continued: "At midnight, they produced a four-star traffic tie-up that required many cops more than half an hour to restore conditions to normalcy."[45] Inside Letros, there was singing, dancing and comic impersonation that brought down "waves of applause" from the packed audience that "virtually hung from the rafters and aisles."[46] A highlight, the columnist wrote, was "Toronto's Sophie Tucker," who received a standing ovation.[47] In addition, there was a "sultry dish" in a gold lamé sheath billed as "Miss Nile Room 1957," who was described as a "bundle of flapper-era loveliness" putting on "an exhibition of the Charleston like one seldom sees in this town today."[48] An account eight years earlier, from 1951, also included mention of "Sophie Tucker" and a flapper, so it seems probable that there was a fairly steady clutch of regular performers and that the annual Hallowe'en pageant was comprised of variations on a theme—perhaps only the dresses were made new every year, as opposed to the acts and personae.[49]

This tabloid story helps to corroborate the many stories told in interviews with contemporaries who recall large, peaceful crowds gathered outside Letros. Toronto performer Allan Maloney once said in an interview that "George always had a mad, mad party going on for

[44] "Confidential Diary: Choose Miss Letros" *Tab,* Nov. 21, 1959, 12
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] "A Study in Lavender," *True News Times,* November 19, 1951, 14.

Hallowe'en," which he recalled was patronized by such notables as Peter Marshall and other well-known figures in the community.[50] One interview subject, Don, recalled not being able to get into the ball, despite being a regular patron at Letros. He and his partner stood watching from outside on King Street one night, which he believed to have been in the late 1950s: "There was a whole crowd on the steps and on the sidewalks in front of the King Edward," he said.[51] "And there was this great big 300-pound cop trying to control the crowd so the streetcars could get through."[52] Despite the crowds and police presence, the scene was peaceful, something that the interviewee credited to calm police tactics: "He handled it so well," said one interview subject, "He stepped off the curb and he minced his way across the street … I mean, really mincing … He said 'Now girls, if you'll just get back.'" The subject credited the police officer's gentle humorous approach for the peaceful scene: "He had no trouble with the crowd whatsoever that night … there was not even any hint of violence," he recalled, remarking that the officer had even "encouraged the fun."[53] Toronto was not the only North American city to experience such a peaceful demonstration against binary categories such as public/private and man/woman. Philadelphia's parade culture was also very peaceful and the "mixed crowd" of "lovely" spectators was characterized as "supportive."[54] Similar to Toronto, this situation was also partially credited to competent police who kept order.

A friendly and lively scene continued on King street—"on all sides the mob grew"—even after the party ended. "From the King Edward Hotel across the street, hundreds poured out to join the milling throng," presumably to get closer to the action, since, many had been watching

[50] ALOT interview with Al Maloney, Sept. 13, 2001; "Confidential Diary: Choose Miss Letros" *Tab*, Nov. 21, 1959, 12/ It is a likely possibility that Maloney was the Sophie Tucker character since, in later years, that is how Maloney's performance was described. Also Tensee does relate that while "Sophie Tucker" was performing, his wife was in the audience cheering him on, "He's my husband—Sophie Tucker! The father of my two children!"
[51] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014 (Don)
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Stein, *City of Brotherly and Sisterly Loves*, 108.

from above: “The hotel’s windows, from bottom to top, framed scores of others, many yokels catching their first glimpse of a different side of Toronto life.”[55] The bar had emptied before midnight, but the pageant continued on the street for an additional 90 minutes, to the “delight” of the “massed spectators.”[56]

> Using busy, car-swollen King Street as a stage, the belles walked from one curb to the other. To and fro the pretty things went, mincing, camping, hamming it up, weaving between cars, casting admiring, come hither looks at the cops trying to unravel the traffic snafu. Every now and then, a peel of ribald applause would drift down from some high windows in the King Edward Hotel, whereupon the she-men would register acknowledgement by dainty bows and the throwing of kisses! Ole![57]

Two years later, an entertainment columnist wrote that 1961 saw “masquerade festivities stretched over a full week,” since the big night fell on a Tuesday that year and there was no consensus about which weekend the celebrations should take place upon.[58] There were reports of activities at the Lord Simcoe, the Westbury and, in addition, an increased plain clothes police presence assigned to “keep tabs on Jarvis Janes and Letros boys-will-be-girls set.”[59] *Tab* ran another feature on the Miss Letros contest, rebuking the “big Toronto dailies” for “blithely glossing over” one of the “most spectacular … galas,” even going so far as to compare the mainstream media’s “conspiracy” of silence to the Russian Kremlin’s policy of censorship over atomic bomb testing.[60] The “carnival-spirited” event was a success, with crowds on King street estimated to be “in the thousands.”[61] In response to the crowds, security was tight—two “big” and “burly” bouncers worked the door, turning back all those who did not belong to the “inner circle.”[62]

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[55] “Confidential Diary: Choose Miss Letros,” *Tab,* November 21, 1959, 12
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] “The Big Beat,” *Tab,* November 18, 1961, 16.
[59] “The Big Beat,” *Tab,* November 18, 1961, 16.
[60] “Joe Tensee’s Confidential Diary,” *Tab,* November 25, 1961, 12
[61] Ibid. By the reporter, that is. Although this large-sounding crowd estimate is not from official sources, the 1970s Hallowe’en mobs were in the thousands. It is possible this is not an exaggeration. *Tab.*
[62] Ibid.

Neil, another interview subject, said the only sure-fire way to gain admission was to dress in drag, which he did, in 1961, when he was one of roughly 30 contestants.[63] When Neil, who would later be crowned Miss Letros 1961, arrived at the bar, he recalled that his taxi driver couldn't reach the sidewalk outside the bar, since there were so many spectators standing on the street.[64] He had hired a custom taxi—a "London-type taxi"—since his showgirl-style head dress wouldn't fit into a regular car. Neil also remembered that the pageant took over both floors of Letros that night.[65] *Tab* reported one of the participants saying that, if the event got any bigger, "impresario George Letros was going to have to move it to the O'Keefe Center"; another voice in the crowd was overheard saying that "John Bassett should buy the rights and air the pageant on CTV."[66] *Tab* reported that the judging took "two hectic hours," at which point, Miss Letros 1961 (the interview subject for this project) was chosen and awarded a sash and bouquet of flowers.[67] Neil went outside, where, the crowd had grown even bigger—there were "flashbulbs all over the place" and the "crowds on the street were unbelievable."[68] After some effort, he made it across to the King Edward, where he and his escort "did a very quick roundabout in the Times Square Lounge."[69]

[63] Interview with Don, Paul and Neil, May 26, 2015 (Neil)
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] "Joe Tensee's Confidential Diary," *Tab,* Nov. 25, 1961, 12
[67] "Joe Tensee's Confidential Diary," *Tab,* Nov. 25, 1961, 12
[68] Interview with Don, Paul and Neil, May 26, 2015 (Neil)
[69] Ibid. The basement bar of the King Edward.

Image 8 - Miss Letros 1961, courtesy of Neil Gilson

The *Tab* reporter wrote this of Miss Letros 1961: "She is something you could bring home to meet your mother – if only you could trust your old man. 'She' came in the costume of New York's famous Copa Girls, and on top of her head 'she' sported a dazzling, tree-like adornment."[70] And, after being crowned Miss Letros 1961, she made her exit and "was followed by a big mob of male admirers who clamored for 'her' phone number." The reporter bragged: "I have this number, which is a top-secret, and I am not revealing it to anybody!"[71]

Aside from the transgression against heteronormative codes for sexual comportment at the balls, "Miss Letros" subverted norms by being especially inclusive. For example, although few interview subjects could recall the presence of female patrons at the bar—"the only time there was a woman was if someone brought their granny in or something," remarked one former regular patron—women were in attendance at the Hallowe'en event.[72] Tensee reported "several

[70] "Joe Tensee's Confidential Diary," *Tab*, November 25, 1961, 12
[71] Ibid.
[72] Interview with Don, Paul and Neil, May 26, 2015 (Neil); "Joe Tensee's Confidential Diary," *Tab*, November 25, 1961, 12; Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 38. Popham observes women at Letros on one of his visits. Despite these several mentions, it seems to have been primarily a male enclave. A photo from 1959 shows a woman front and center and the *Tab* stories, such as the one from 1961 indicate that women were in attendance at least some years.

prominent Lesbians in evening clothes" who looked "downright formidable" and a "beetle-browed Butch" with the "physique of a quarter-back."[73] In addition, he noted that the 1961 pageant threatened to "smash segregation" with the inclusion of the very first African-Canadian Miss Letros candidate: "A ravishing, pulsating, black-maned beauty aptly named 'Blaze' – that's her 'gay' cognomen – was the sepian entry."[74] There aren't many recollections of African-Canadian patrons at Letros and, as David Churchill pointed out in his paper, *Mother Goose's Map*, in 1947, there was once a letter of complaint from two African-Canadian men denied entry to the tavern, allegedly an instance of discrimination based on ethnicity.[75] In addition to ethnicity and gender, the tabloid story refers to people of all ages from young "girls" to "dowagers" and even a subversive female impersonator, a "phony" drag contestant who, it turned out, was "Paulette, a King Edward Hotel cigarette girl."[76] There was also an explicit political protest taking place when one "Queen" showed up with an "over-size button" identifying her as "Alderman Margaret Campbell." The real Margaret Campbell, a conservative politician, would go on to become a city controller and, in 1969, a candidate in the mayoral race. Tensee reported the faux-alderman protestor had masqueraded the previous year as "Controller Mrs. Jean Newman" and, in 1961, had been crying out to the crowds: "I'm out to close all the sin-bins on Jarvis Street … I'll close them if it kills me – and I hope they do!"[77]

The police presence outside on King street was remarked upon in one tabloid story, which made the claim that there were no fewer than 14 policemen outside, including "stalwart Staff Inspector Walker," a paddy wagon "ominously" parked in front of Letros and motorcycle

[73] "Joe Tensee's Confidential Diary," *Tab*, November 25, 1961, 12.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Churchill, "*Mother Goose's Map*, 826-852.
[76] "Joe Tensee's Confidential Diary," *Tab.* November 25, 1961, 12
[77] Ibid.

and traffic police working nearby to disentangle the traffic of the area.[78] That year's relatively lively drag ball immediately preceded the King Edward Hotel's most well-publicized attempt to implement a discriminatory policy, announced by the tabloid story about the hotel's "war" on Letros patrons, which referenced the "monster, sensational 'fag' party at Letros Tavern Hallowe'en."[79] Although the winner of the Miss Letros 1961 pageant recalled no problems gaining admittance to the King Edward's Times Square Lounge, the article claimed that "two or three limp-wristed stragglers tried to gain entrance to the King Eddy" after the 1961 ball, but that the always-vigilant management had set them back on their "dainty derrieres."[80]

In the early 1960s, drag balls were not the only drag performances in Toronto—there were regular performers at various private clubs, including the Maison de Lys (raided in April of 1962) and at licensed establishments, such as the Famous Door, Warwick and Westover hotel bars. The Famous Door, a renowned venue for jazz, was located on Yonge near Wellesley and, by the middle of the 1960s, it was considered "gay-friendly."[81] In an interview, Don described it as the "kind of a place that you could be openly gay," (even though) "it wasn't a gay bar."[82] He recalled that it had the "advantage" of being the bar of choice for "three, if not four, provincial cabinet ministers who drank there" regularly, using it as their "neighbourhood" after-work, local bar, which, he suggested, helped ward off harassment and intrusive surveillance.[83] In 1961, an entertainment columnist for the *Toronto Star* covered the bar's entertainment, which featured two headlining female impersonators from California who were following in, what the writer referred to as, the "ancient and honorable" stage tradition of impersonation that had, of late, been

[78] Ibid.
[79] "King Edward Hotel Declares War on Letros Queers!" *Tab*, December 2, 1961, 3
[80] Ibid; Interview with Don, Paul and Neil, May 26, 2015 (Neil)
[81] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014 (Don)
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid. Likely more an indication of class than specific intervention.

taken up at "circus side-shows" and "burlesque male chorus line(s)."[84] The touring impersonation show was "for laughs only," the columnist assured readers, as was a similar show at the Westover, where "Brandee" played a "Sophie Tucker red hot mama type of woman" whose act was so good that it had "fooled several customers."[85] "Brandee" was Allan Maloney, who would go on to perform at the Warwick and become one of Toronto's best-known performers. Maloney also frequented Letros and, in an interview, recalled how, on weekends when a musician named Brian was on the piano, he would be invited to "do a couple of numbers," even though men in drag were not welcome in the bar as patrons—only as performers.[86] It was the same, Maloney recalled, at the Parkside and the St. Charles, in that, a man in drag would not have been allowed to sit at the bar and have a drink, even if he was, on occasion, allowed to perform.[87]

Although there were other venues with drag performances, the most serious competition emerged in 1963, when several other establishments hosted drag balls—the unlicensed Music Room (formerly Maison de Lys), the Municipal Hotel and the St. Charles Tavern. The St. Charles "swung, swung, swung," wrote one columnist, who noted that the event at the Nile Room was a "monumental bust and bore."[88] Tensee, who had covered the event since 1949, said that, since Toronto was home to "some 40,000 homosexuals," it was inevitable that Letros would eventually face some competition.[89] George Letros had also promised the crowd that Pierre Berton would make an appearance and, after "that sorry letdown," (Berton never showed), "the

[84] "Female Imitators for Laughs Only," *The Toronto Star*, November 23, 1961, 22.
[85] Ibid.
[86] ALOT interview with Al Maloney, Sept. 13, 2001.
[87] Ibid. Interviewer Elise Chenier points this out in her interview with Allan Maloney and notes the similarity between drag performers and African-American performers who performed in white venues that would not give them accommodation. Another interview subject on this tape points out that it was like "*Victor/Victoria*" in that people could wear make-up, but not women's clothing.
[88] "The Gay Set," *Tab,* November 30, 1963, 16; "Joe Tensee's Confidential Diary," *Tab,* November 23, 1963, 12.
[89] "Degenerates Parade, Inspector Says," *The Globe and Mail,* November 14, 1963, 13; "Homosexuals" November 23, 1963, 6. The *Globe* piece also cites 40,000 but Egan said it was likely more like 75,000 in his response.

balance of the night was more in the nature of an anti-climax."[90] *Tab* reported that people were eager to leave and that, when they did, they were not confronted with the usual crowds. [91] He lamented: "Letros' Hallowe'en 1963, had rung out for the last time!"[92]

That was overstatement—there would be Hallowe'en drag balls at Letros for five more years. That year did, however, mark the beginning of a new era, with other venues offering up alternatives. It also marked a shift in the media's relationship with the event, since the *Toronto Evening Telegram*, a mainstream newspaper, broke "new ground" by publishing a preview story about the Letros Hallowe'en ball, baiting readers who might be interested in what the newspaper referred to as a "poignant clinical experience" to gawk at the contestants on King Street.[93] The writer, McKenzie Porter, had, in an earlier column, taken aim at the "homosexuals of modest means" who "infested" the grounds at Queen's Park; the "female homosexual prostitutes" at Dundas and University and the "alarmingly strong cliques" in certain professions.[94] Although Porter claimed to have no truck with discreet individuals—he made a point of listing "three men and two women homosexuals among (his) oldest friends"—his column made the claim that "brazen homosexuality" was a symptom of a "decadent society" that had contributed to the fall of empire.[95] The column closed with a call to action, urging society leaders to cull their guest lists and make a statement that homosexuals were "no longer welcome, en masse, in our drawing rooms."[96] In a second, similar column, Porter had signed off with an appeal asking legislators to "put an end" to the pitiful harliquinade" (sic) that took place at the Letros Hallowe'en Ball, since

[90] "Joe Tensee's Confidential Diary," *Tab*, November 23, 1963, 12. According to Tensee, Pierre Berton had dedicated a show to the topic of homosexuality that had featured queer guests.
[91] Ibid. The rain may have had something to do with smaller crowds, too, however.
[92] Ibid. It wasn't literally the last, obviously, since it continued until 1968.
[93] "Inside Toronto," *Toronto Evening Telegram*. October 29, 1963, 19
[94] "Joe Tensee's Confidential Diary," *Tab*, November 23, 1963, 12.
[95] "Inside Toronto," *Toronto Evening Telegram*, October 18, 1963, 19
[96] Ibid.

this "annual act of brazen public exhibitionism" was "intolerable."[97] On top of the morality, Porter argued, the annual event "jams traffic for blocks" and called for the "employment" of extra police officers.[98] Stein notes that, in Philadelphia, crowds at that city's Hallowe'en Ball were said to have become too "unwieldy" around the same period—in 1962, the mobs provided a pre-text for cracking down on bars that allowed patrons "in costume."[99]

Camp Discourse and the Media

This signalled the beginning of a small flurry of articles in the mainstream media. The *Telegram* published a follow-up, with an observation that the audience of "200 curious sidewalk spectators" outside Letros "was considerably smaller than in recent years." At one point, police even "outnumbered onlookers."[100] Rival newspapers also began to report on queer Toronto shortly thereafter: *The Toronto Star* published an opinion piece by James Egan that appeared to be something akin to a rebuttal to Porter's *Telegram* piece.[101] In "Civil Liberties and the Homosexual," Egan argued that the contemporary treatment of gays and lesbians was in contravention of the Canadian Bill of Rights. In November, the *Globe and Mail* ran a piece, "Degenerates Parade," that framed the queer community of Toronto as a public menace, which elicited a letter to the editor from Egan a week later.[102] And, although Pierre Berton did not attend the 1963 Letros Hallowe'en drag event, he did have Egan on his television show.

Although Egan thought that "challenging the conspiracy of silence" of the daily newspapers was an important component of activism, not everybody in Toronto the Gay agreed the media beginning to focus on Toronto's queer community was a good thing. Egan was

[97] "Inside Toronto," *Toronto Evening Telegram*, October 29, 1963, 19
[98] Ibid.
[99] Stein, *City of Brotherly and Sisterly* Loves, 109.
[100] "Inside Toronto," *Toronto Evening Telegram*, November 18, 1963, 19
[101] "Civil Liberties and the Homosexual," *Toronto Star*, October 23, 1963, 7
[102] "Degenerates Parade, Inspector Says," *The Globe and Mail*, November 14, 1963, 13; "Homosexuals" November 23, 1963.

summoned (through a friend in common) to Chez Paree one day in 1963 to meet with a "charming," "distinguished, grey-haired gentleman" who did not have any gay mannerisms and was "oozing money, position, and power."[103] The anonymous gentleman told Egan that "a group" of people had heard of his scheduled appearance on the Paul Berton show, as well as Egan's forthcoming plan to show Sidney Katz, a *Maclean's* reporter who was writing a feature for *Maclean's* a tour of Toronto the Gay and decided this was "unwise."[104] As he explained: "My friends and I are very concerned and we think you should not do it. You should change your mind and inform Katz that you will not cooperate with him."[105] His argument was based on a concern that public interest in gay life would mean it would no longer be possible for men who lived a "quiet, unobtrusive life," to be safe.[106] One striking thing about this exchange is the obviously fluid networks of communication in this community, which, apparently, crossed class lines quite easily.

Egan expressed surprise with both the summons, as well as the argument, despite the fact that he had characterized the majority of people of his acquaintance in the 1950s as "reasonably content" reconciling the contradictions and conditions imposed by the closet.[107] Since "straight society generally didn't have a clue about gay people," everyday life—holding down a job, keeping your sexual life hidden from your family or even renting an apartment with another man—was relatively easy for a lot of men who might have echoed Egan's claim that the "situation was not entirely bad."[108] Despite this, Egan did not agree that the status quo and media silence was the best way to keep gay men safe. He rejected the stranger's suggestion and gave

[103] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 84.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid. "Katz," here, referring to Sidney Katz, the *Maclean's* reporter.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 43.
[108] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 43.

the *Macleans'* reporter a tour of Toronto the Gay, pointing out that his role as ambassador gave him an unprecedented opportunity to shape the narrative that would be printed in a national magazine, in which he would "have some influence to ensure its accuracy."[109] As a tour guide, Egan deliberately showed Katz a carefully curated glimpse of Toronto the Gay and steered him away from the bars that would have disturbed Egan's discursive construction of the homosexual as a middle class, average citizen—normal in every way except one. When the pair were at the Red Lion at the Westbury, Egan told Katz that about 95 per cent of the clientele was gay. Katz concluded that, despite police characterizations of gay beverage rooms as dens of iniquity, there was not a single person at the Red Lion whom he would not have been "proud to call (his) son as far as personal appearance was concerned."[110] The article, which came out in February of 1964, was called "The Homosexual Next Door," and represented a serious victory for Egan, who had spent more than a decade arguing that Toronto the Gay was made up of perfectly average men, who were practically identical counterparts to men in straight society. As to the bars, themselves, Katz described most of them just as Egan had: "Homosexuals lack many of the social outlets, not to mention family home life and many of the occupations and activities of the normal man," argued Egan. He went on to characterize the patrons as "well-mannered, quiet, polite males," who visited the bar "week after week," where they were "free-spenders and good tippers" who "rarely if ever become drunk or involved in a fight."[111] Katz wrote the following, highly-derivative description a decade later: "Because they have no family, the homosexuals spend a lot of time in bars, they drink steadily, they tip generously and they seldom smash the furniture."[112]

[109] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 84.
[110] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 83.
[111] "Homosexual Concepts, By "J.L.E.," *Justice Weekly*, February 12, 1954, 13.
[112] "The Homosexual Next Door," *Maclean's*, February 22, 1964, 28. There are, in fact, four instances in which Katz lifts passages from Egan's columns on gay bars and paraphrases them, sometimes even mimicking some of Egan's word choices. It is worth pointing out, too, that Egan failed to take Katz to the Continental and that the article contained few references to women.

In the article, Katz even created a taxonomy, in which the "'married' homosexuals had the "highest status in homophile society," backing this claim up with an anecdote about how he witnessed a "'married' couple" who were "regarded with envy" by the other patrons as they made their entrance to the bar.[113] Interestingly enough, Egan describes a similar scene ten years earlier in his "Homosexual Concepts" column in *Justice Weekly*: "Here come two young men together—they are a couple who have been together for many years … Many here tonight envy those two for their successful relationship—such affairs are desired by most homosexuals, but comparatively few are of long duration."[114]

Sex in Public: Yonge Street

Both Egan and the anonymous stranger, who claimed to represent a small group of wealthy individuals who wished to avoid media exposure, were trying to control the discourse, both attempting to keep sex out of the public sphere. But, as the urban geography of Toronto shifted—and the entertainment district became increasingly concentrated on Yonge Street—sex in public became more common. The geographical shift was the result of a combination of factors. First, there was the re-development of the Ward, a modernization initiative that aimed to break up a perceived concentration of poverty, vice and sexual deviance in the area bounded by University Avenue, Yonge, College and Queen.[115] This massive project was done in several phases over 60 years and included the relocation and expansion of both the Hospital for Sick Children and the Toronto General Hospital.[116] This included the demolition of the small hotels, pawn shops and theatres at the intersection of Queen and Bay so that they could be replaced with

[113] "The Homosexual Next Door," *Maclean's*, February 22, 1964, 11, 28.
[114] "Homosexual Concepts, By "J.L.E.," *Justice Weekly*, February 20, 1954, 13.
[115] Mariana Valverde. *The Age of Light, Soap and Water:* Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 135-138.
[116] John Lorinc. *The Ward: Life and Loss in Toronto's First Immigrant Neighbourhood.* (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2015), 13.

New City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square. Prior to these modernization projects, the Queen/Bay entertainment area was connected to Dundas/Bay by north-south streets lined with mixed residential and commercial buildings. The Dundas and Bay area was home to the Bay Public House (later referred to as Charlie O's or Charlie O's Keg), the Ford Hotel and the Continental Hotel. The last phase was the redevelopment of the south side of Queen (west of Bay) on which the Municipal and Union House Hotels were located.

Although the demolition of the Ward was designed to eradicate an area associated with contagion, poverty, immigrants and moral dissolution, it had another effect, namely, to push urban residential housing from the downtown core into outlying areas.[117] South of Queen, what residential housing was left was being converted into office and commercial space and various institutions. As most of the housing in the downtown core was disappearing, the corner that Letros and the King Edward Hotels both occupied (east of Yonge on King), was increasingly cut off from urban residential neighborhoods. In addition, the King Edward continued to have bouts of ambivalence in regards to its gay patronage, often implementing discriminatory policies in spurts in a sporadic effort to eradicate the gay clientele. In 1965, for instance, the management "got wise" to the idea that the piano bar encouraged "middle-aged dowagers" and, as such, stopped hiring pianists to discourage that kind of clientele.[118] Without the King Edward, Letros was even more isolated and its clientele was aging. One article described the bar as crowded, but noted a "man with an oddly artificial looking face," who was sitting at a table "like a sultan holding court."[119] A patron told the journalist that the patron had had "his face lifted three times" so that there was "nothing left to lift anymore."[120] The guide also commented that the "sultan"

[117] Valverde, *The Age of Light,* 135-138.
[118] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, July 24, 1965, 13.
[119] "Society and the Homosexual," *Toronto Telegram*, April 11, 1964, 7.
[120] Ibid.

went "around town in a Rolls" that he could afford because his "old man was a millionaire."[121] In 1965, Lady Bessborough declared that Letros had become a "pathetic woebegone place," frequented by "mannikins," that would not dare move their bodies around for fear of "cracking."[122] It was also said that Letros was "hardly even mentioned any more," going to "prove it dead or on its last legs."[123] "LIFE FOR THE Gay Set has really fallen apart in Toronto," declared Lady Bessborough in a 1965 column, "Everything is so de-centralized now."[124]

Lady Bessborough's fears would eventually prove to be incorrect, since the displacement of bars from the Corners (Queen and Bay) and the gradual migration of patrons from the Letros/King Edward area would, ultimately, create a centralized hub for gay bars—along Yonge. "The centre of Toronto's gay life is north from College to Bloor, east and west from Jarvis to Yonge," and its "dormitory is to the northwest above Bloor," explained one article in 1964.[125] In addition to this area, the article described several bars that lay beyond the boundaries, including the taverns on Queen (not yet shuttered at the time of this article's publication, although they were months away from being closed), the bars at Dundas and Bay, Dundas and Elizabeth and, finally, Letros, all of which were the last vestiges of a decentralized Toronto the Gay. As the Queen strip relocated to Yonge, the Westbury was the earliest, stable anchor for the new "centre" of Toronto's "Gay life," as described in the *Telegram.* When the Westbury opened in 1957, its Red Lion Room, a basement beer parlour, was immediately established as a gay bar.[126] The tabloids suggested that the Westbury had become a gay bar as a result of its location, since it was

[121] Ibid. The reports and recollections of many interview subjects about Peter Marshall, who drove a Rolls Royce and was the heir to a mattress manufacturing company, "held court" at Letros are consistent with this account. Regardless, we see a venue with an aging, wealthy clientele.
[122] "The Gay Set," *Tab,* June 12, 1965, 13.
[123] Ibid.
[124] "The Gay Set," *Tab,* May 15, 1965, 13.
[125] "Society and the Homosexual," *Toronto Telegram,* April 11, 1964, 7
[126] "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic*, April, 1980, 26. Although Hannon pointed out that nobody was really sure why – it could not be traced to any specific owner or manager.

close to the City Park apartments—one block east at Church and Wood—which would become famous for housing a large number of gay tenants: "City Parkers have taken to the new Westbury Hotel like bees to honey," reported Bettina, who nevertheless doubted that the "carriage trade" would "persist at this new swank spot for very long."[127]

By the late 1960s, the Yonge Strip, between Queen and Wellesley had clearly become the main artery of Toronto's nightlife, with crowds so steady on Friday and Saturday nights that it was dubbed "Toronto's year-round-midway."[128] As such, the discourse from that era reflects the usual anxieties about leisure areas in conjunction with alcohol and sexuality. Unlike the annual Canadian National Exhibition or the seasonal attractions at Sunnyside Pavillion or Ward's Island, however, "The Strip" had to be monitored throughout the year.[129] In addition, the era's massive cultural changes, brought about in tandem with the rise of youth culture was highly visible in the area, which was patronized by "swinging young moderns … wearing marvellously unisexual clothes" taking part in the early evening Friday night "parade" on Yonge.[130] The swinging young moderns, however, were not the "Beautiful People" from Yorkville but, rather, "working-class couples … middle-class teenagers, old marrieds" that still liked a "good time" and "the beads-and-buckskin set."[131] This diverse group of Torontonians was drawn to Yonge, home of cheap hamburgers, all-you-can-eat spaghetti houses, "sex-horror-motorcycle movie houses," record shops, the "Funland arcade," and the Zanzibar Tavern, with its "topless go-go girls."[132]

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[127] "Fairy-Go-Round, *Tab*," June 8, 1957, 4.
[128] "It's the Yonge Street Strip for the Saturday night action," *Toronto Star,* September 20, 1969, 1
[129] Mary Louise Adams. "Almost Anything Can Happen: A Search for Sexual Discourse in the Urban Spaces of 1940s Toronto" *The Canadian Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 19, No. 2, (Spring, 1994), pp. 217-232. Mary Louise Adams maps out anxieties in conjunction with seasonal entertainment venues.
[130] "Making Toronto's Saturday night scenes," *Toronto Star,* February 8, 1969, 35.
[131] "It's the Yonge Street Strip for the Saturday night action," *Toronto Star,* September 20, 1969, 4.
[132] Ibid

The Zanzibar was not the only venue that offered burlesque entertainment on "The Strip." In the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, there were several establishments that, at various times, offered adult entertainment—Starvin' Marvin's, the Bermuda Tavern and the Brown Derby, for example—generally located on the east side of Yonge, which was also the busier side. The west side of the street, by contrast, had less foot traffic, except on one block, which was often crowded with people drawn to a particular arcade.[133] To the north of that, also on the west side, were the St. Charles and the Parkside, two taverns rarely explicitly mentioned in the dailies' semi-regular stories about the various entertainments on Yonge. Veiled references, however, to the strange "characters," one was likely to meet on the "wild" street were common. In one story, the assistant manager of the Ford Hotel was quoted as saying: "Name the people you want to see and you'll find them along here." [134] To many, the "characters" were part of the overall attraction to the area, since a Saturday night stroll along "The Strip" was an exercise in voyeurism and immersion not dissimilar to the "slumming" and sexual tourism that had taken place in The Ward prior to the 1960s.

The anxiety produced by the mingling of hordes of adolescents and young heterosexual couples with the "characters" who frequented the gay bars was typically expressed in subtle fashion, but there were exceptions. One story, for example, celebrated the Strip's diversity and ended with a late-night snapshot of "La Trique," a club on the fourth floor of a building on Breadalbane (just west of the back alley behind the Parkside).[135] There, in between segments of a drag show, "male couples crowd the dance floor," with more "single males" forming a "stagline around the walls."[136] The "lukewarm" audience went "wild," when red-headed, full-figured,

[133] The St. Charles and Parkside taverns were both on the west side of the street.
[134] "The strip has a pastime to suit every preference," *The Globe and Mail.* July 13, 1971, 27.
[135] "Making Toronto's Saturday night scenes," *Toronto Star*, February 8, 1969, 35.
[136] Ibid.

"Bodine," winner of the 1969 Miss Letros drag ball, performed "Won't You Come Home Bill Bailey?" and the writer concluded with the potentially uplifting thought that there are "scenes in this city where even Bodine can be … herself."[137] Another article explored the Maygay, the bar above the St. Charles; a scene outside a strip joint; a panhandler and a 19-year-old selling the underground newspaper, *Guerilla*, a "paper that upsets people."[138] At the Maygay, men were "dancing and fondling each other just like at a high school dance," some of them watching themselves in a mirror, apparently "blatant and proud of their perversity."[139] Others are "straight-looking" and dressed in "ordinary" clothes, but all are in shape, with the exception of the manager, a "fat guy in an orange shirt" with a cigar that "stinks."[140] He's quoted in the story as saying: "No we don't have any trouble here, except when a guy will come out of the Don (jail) and try to start something."[141] This type of altercation was a semi-regular occurrence and some tabloid columns expressed concerns over the "tourists" who went to the St. Charles, especially on the weekends.[142] But, ultimately, Hallowe'en became the chief attraction.

Camp Discourse on Main Street

Speculation that Yonge would become the centre of Toronto's Hallowe'en activity began as early as 1963, when one tabloid columnist predicted Letros would have serious competition that year. So "many of the girls" have "relocated at the Westbury/St. Charles drinking hole that one of them should go for broke on Hallowe'en and put on the big drag show," advised Lady Bessborough.[143] The St. Charles held a rival ball that year, a bellwether that foretold that the Yonge/College area would become the focal point and hub of queer Toronto in the 1960s and

[137] Ibid.
[138] "The strip has a pastime to suit every preference," *The Globe and Mail.* July 13, 1971, 27.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid.
[142] "The Gay Set," *Tab,* November 2, 1968, 13.
[143] "The Gay Set," *Tab,* September 28, 1963, 13.

1970s. It also marked the establishment of a new Toronto institution—the St. Charles Hallowe'en drag ball, which would become both a dramatic annual ritual of homophobia and, in response, a successful campaign of political activism and reform.

The migration from Letros to the St. Charles Tavern was not immediate but, instead, a fierce annual competition between rival parties. Although King street was no longer an important destination for Toronto the Gay, it still held on to the Hallowe'en ball, even though, some years it suffered as a result of the persistent rumours that Letros was closing. One magazine reported in 1964 that Letros had hosted the event for the last time "for the third year running," but it had competition from the St. Charles, the Music Room, the 511 and the Melody Room, which were all said to have a younger group of contestants in attendance.[144] The following year's Hallowe'en centred on four bars, including the St. Charles, where "Anita Modes" graciously won the crown; the Music Room, where Riki Tik was awarded the prize; and the Melody Room, where "Miss Day had the doubtful honor of becoming Miss Melody Room against nil competition."[145] The fourth bar, Letros, however, still wore the crown for the pre-eminent host of the Hallowe'en party, with "many hundreds" in the "onlooking crowds."[146] "Arrivals at Letros were greeted with … cheers of approval" and "derisive hoots and howls, depending on how gorgeous or tacky the drag was." A group of cheerleaders staged a "kick line" for the "enthusiastic" crowd and were threatened with arrest for causing a disturbance, but the evening ended without incident.[147]

The 1966 event had also been divided between four locations, this time, Letros, the St. Charles, the Music Room and the Astronaut—the latter two unlicensed clubs. The crowd of spectators and gawkers outside of Letros was "smaller than usual," but some 600-700 people

[144] "Halloween," *Two,* March/April 1965, Vol 04, 23.
[145] "Halloween '65," *Two,* March/April 1966, Vol 09, 8.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.

attended the St Charles, where crowds were "spilling over sidewalks" on both sides of Yonge for the entire evening.[148] Contestants seem to have treated that year's event as a party circuit and were ferried between events by a "flotilla" of limousines, which would have given the crowds more opportunities to gawk at the contestants. In the early years, there was more playful parading, getting into and out of cars and, according to one note, even along the entire 140 metres between the Parkside and the St. Charles.[149] The bars were "jam packed" and you had to pay the doorman two dollars to get into the St. Charles, where contestants would "parade the U before the final crowning after a trip down to Letro's across the street from the King Eddy."[150] A memoirist described it as a jovial scene, a flirtatious crowd and a busy, thriving scene on the inside, with beer "slingers with trays … sliding through … with never a spill," and "regulars … recruited to pick up empties, clean ashtrays, and send glasses through the washer."[151] After the parade ended, the contestants waited for the master of ceremonies to announce the "Princess and Prince" and then "with a drumroll and fanfare the Queen and King, the pride of the Judy Garland Bowling League, her supporters stamping their feet, clapping, and wolf whistling."[152]

The Hallowe'en ball at the St. Charles may have begun as a relatively positive experience, with contestants sporting sparkling tiaras and "chandelier earrings" blowing kisses and giving the crowd "parade waves," but, as the years went on, the crowd grew more hostile.[153] By the middle of the 1960s, the police had to start holding back the "jeering straights," and "Vagabonds," some of whom "ended up in the paddy wagon" that night, leaving "many queens running tearfully after their tricks."[154] In 1966, the *Globe and Mail* reported an incident

[148] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, November. 26, 1966, 13.
[149] Brian Dedora. *A Slice of Voice at the Edge of Hearing* (Toronto: Mercury Press, 2008), 110
[150] Ibid. The U-shaped bar.
[151] Dedora, *A Slice of Voice*, 111
[152] Ibid.
[153] Dedora, *A Slice of Voice*, 110
[154] Dedora, *A Slice of Voice*, 109; *Tab.* The Gay Set," Nov. 26, 1966, 13. This may be a reference to the motorcycle gang.

involving "vandals" who "wrecked" the St. Charles tavern.[155] Money was stolen from the cash register and cigarettes from the machines. In addition, 50 liquor bottles were emptied; lounge and office chairs were smashed; cleansing powder poured over frozen meats; files destroyed with ink; eggs thrown and, finally, the water taps were left open from the second floor, causing serious damage. Water was reportedly running out the front door when the incident was discovered the following morning.[156] No mention of this appears in the tabloids but the bar must have closed briefly to fix the damage and do minor renovations, since an item shortly after in the "The Gay Set" claimed that "Charlie's has gone elegant!"[157] Although the columnist appreciated the new coat of paint, the item nevertheless voiced complaints about the "petal blossom orange" lighting that, Lady Bessborough claimed, was well-suited to the average St. Charles patron—"Nil on taste."[158]

The following year, 1967, The St. Charles attracted a mob, but it was nothing compared with the scene on King, where the Letros event attracted an estimated 2,000 spectators, as well as two television crews (CFTO and Channel 6) and Ray McFadden, a photographer from the *Toronto Telegram*.[159] Although the two news reports are not available for viewing, 33 photographs still exist and they corroborate the accounts from the tabloids and interviews that characterize the crowds as massive and friendly. The following seven images are offered as visual evidence to confirm a number of assertions.

[155] "Vandals wreck Yonge tavern," *The Globe and Mail*, Feb 21, 1966, 5.
[156] Ibid.
[157] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, March 12, 1966, 13.
[158] Ibid.
[159] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, December 2, 1967,13.

Image 9 - "Hallowe'en: Letros (not used)," by Ray McFadden, October 31, 1967. York University Libraries, Clara Thomas Archives & Special Collections, Toronto Telegram fonds, ASC14977

From these three 1967 photographs (Images 9, 10 and 11), it is clear that sidewalks on both sides of the street were, indeed, full of spectators—estimates that put the crowd at 2,000 does not seem unreasonable.

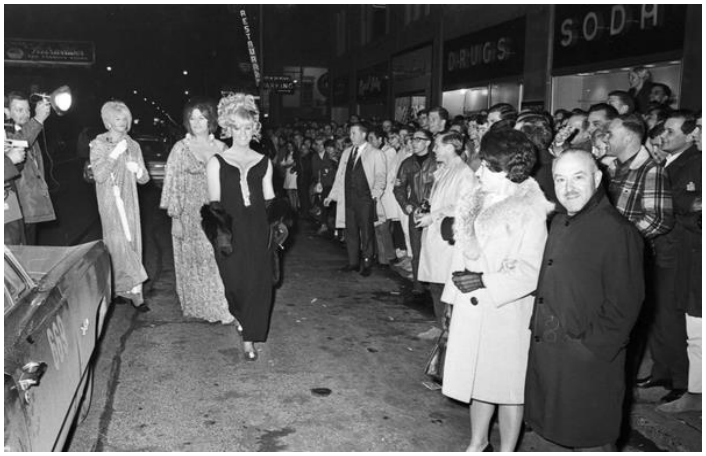

Image 10 - "Hallowe'en: Letros (not used)," by Ray McFadden, October 31, 1967. York University Libraries, Clara Thomas Archives & Special Collections, Toronto Telegram fonds, ASC14946

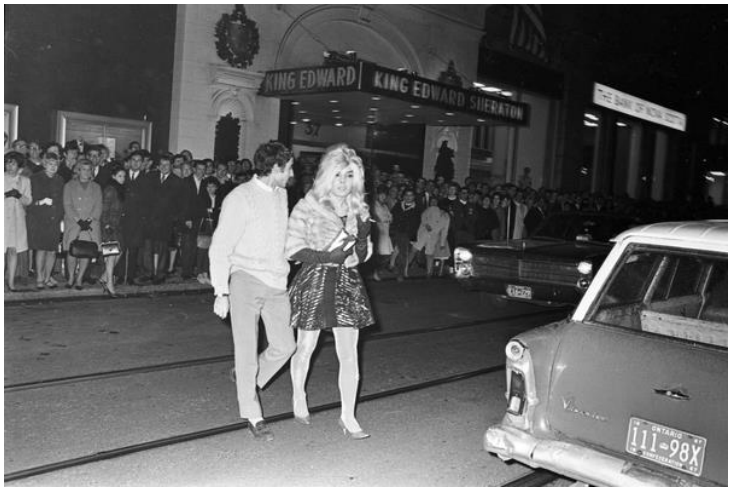

Image 11 - "Hallowe'en: Letros (not used)," by Ray McFadden, October 31, 1967. York University Libraries, Clara Thomas Archives & Special Collections, Toronto Telegram fonds, ASC14967

In particular, Image 11 demonstrates how disruptive the event would have been to the King Edward Hotel, since guests could not have gained access to the main entrance of the hotel. Images 12 and 13 demonstrate how challenging traffic control would have been, given, that the pageantry of the evening began on the street outside the venue, starting with the arrival of the contestants by car. This demonstrates that Neil Gilson's recollection from 1961 was not singular but, instead, a well-established, enduring ritual that mimicked the red carpet rituals of formal events, such as awards shows, gala parties and opening night ceremonies, which establish themselves in the public imagination by giving the press and public a preview of an exclusive event. Not only is this a subversive parody of award and pageant culture, the Letros drag ball was an extraordinarily public camp spectacle that invited the press and the public to witness and interact with the queer community's unapologetic gestures of resistance.[160]

[160] Patrizia Gentile, "Government Girls" and "Ottawa Men": Cold War Management of Gender Relations in the Civil Service, in Gary Kinsman, Dieter K. Buse and Mercedes Steedman, eds., *Whose National Security? Canadian State Surveillance and the Creation of Enemies*, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2000), 130–41.

Image 12 - "Hallowe'en: Letros (not used)," by Ray McFadden, October 31, 1967. York University Libraries, Clara Thomas Archives & Special Collections, Toronto Telegram fonds, ASC14976

Image 13 - "Hallowe'en: Letros (not used)," by Ray McFadden, October 31, 1967. York University Libraries, Clara Thomas Archives & Special Collections, Toronto Telegram fonds, ASC14968

Image 14 captures an officer who appears to be respectfully and gently helping the contestants negotiate the crowds and enter Letros, an image that is consistent with interview subjects who recall police actions that defused potential volatility.

Image 14 - "Hallowe'en: Letros (not used)," by Ray McFadden, October 31, 1967. York University Libraries, Clara Thomas Archives & Special Collections, Toronto Telegram fonds, ASC14960

Image 15 - "Hallowe'en: Letros (not used)," by Ray McFadden, October 31, 1967. York University Libraries, Clara Thomas Archives & Special Collections, Toronto Telegram fonds, ASC14972

Finally, Image 15 was chosen for its focus on the fun that this crowd was having. All of McFadden's photographs capture orderly, festive crowds—relatively well-dressed and diverse in terms of age—who appear to be enjoying themselves, even when closely interacting with the

patrons. That was the second-last year the event took place at Letros. Two years later, the crowd on King was disappointed to discover that the Letros parade "never materialized."[161] After a decade of rumours and false alarms, the legendary bar shuttered soon after, closing "another chapter of Toronto."[162] When asked why he was closing the "once-renowned sinbin," the owner, George, blamed the changing demographic and claimed that the "gay kids never supported him and that was the reason he closed."[163]

Gorilla Girls and the Brunswick Four: Bar-Based Cultures and Political Strategies

"THE SEAMY SIDE: Several lesbians are trying to talk The Continental management into letting them stage an elaborate male impersonator floorshow there…" wrote Tommy Bain, author of *Tab*'s "Go-Go Extra" column, prior to Hallowe'en 1968.[164] There is no record of such an event ever taking place at that mixed bar on Dundas near Elizabeth. Nevertheless, gender performance and sexual comportment were serious issues in lesbian bar-based cultures. Just as men who wore make up and dressed in "women's clothing" were refused admittance to many bars, so were women whose sexual comportment challenged contemporary standards for appropriate gender performance denied entry to drinking establishments—women who were considered too "butch" were often stopped by doormen.

The beverage room at the Continental Hotel at Bay and Dundas was the major long-term exception to this rule, since this "mixed" bar, was similar to the bars at the Corners, which allowed a range of characters who were often marginalized in the discourse of the queer counterpublic. Sometimes tabloids framed the issue of women in bars as a matter of choice, claiming that "BUTCH CIRCLES" did not "care for bar activities," only resorting to them when

[161] "The Gay Set," *Tab,* December 6, 1969, 13.
[162] "The Gay Set," *Tab,* January 23, 1971, 8.
[163] Ibid.
[164] "Go-Go Extra," Tab, September 28, 1968, 7.

it was too cold to be outside on the streets. Given that it might have been difficult to gain admittance in the vast majority of bars, however, this seems as if it might have been an overstatement of agency.[165] "Butch" women were characterized—both in contemporary scandal sheets *and* in camp discourse—as violent and territorial, which was the main reason for being refused admittance. Aside from the City Hall bars and the Continental, for a brief period of time, the Turf Club did not have a discriminatory policy against lesbians in place. That ended, however, in the summer of 1956, not long after the Elm Street bar was mentioned in connection with a sensational stabbing incident involving a party of "defiant boy-girls" and the trial of the four "gorilla girls" became front-page tabloid news, despite all charges having been dismissed.[166] The language used by the court reporter was sensationalistic and condemnatory of the women's sexual comportment—the Continental Hotel, where the women met at the beginning of the evening, was called a "well-known spot where mannish women congregate"; the women were called "she-males," were given the nicknames "Yukon Eric, Whipper Watson … King Kong and Gargantua" and the story ended with a quip that the Argos or other teams from the Canadian Football League might be interested in recruiting these "girl gorillas."[167] The football teams, it was implied, might not only be able to choose from the four on trial but, in addition, the "rooting section" in the courtroom, which consisted of "some 20-odd other she-males," who erupted in "cheers" when the charges were "curtly dismissed" by the magistrate.

This is a large show of support from a community that was often invisible or characterized as criminal vagrants. This may have stemmed from what Elise Chenier has described as a life lived in "tandem and tension" with police, courts and the prison system that

[165] "Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, July 7, 1956, 8.
[166] "Gorilla Girls' Lurid Sex Riot Finally Bared!," *Flash*, July 21, 1956, 1-2.
[167] "Gorilla Girls' Lurid Sex Riot Finally Bared!," *Flash*, July 21, 1956, 2.

produced an understanding that visibility and assertiveness was part of the community's survival.[168] Despite having been named in the courts and the stories that covered the trial, the Continental Hotel did not appear to change its policy after the stabbing incident and, in fact, it was used as a space to critique the coverage in the tabloid press: "'Butch' Gals at the Continental are complaining about the 'Gorilla Girl' tag which is being used in the local press," reported a tabloid columnist in November of that year.[169] Not that the complaints made any difference in terms of the language used to describe the lesbians at the Continental and elsewhere. In 1961, *Tab* ran a story on "Mitch the Butch" a "dirty, lazy slave-driver," who had taken over the sex trade "franchise" in Chinatown and operated out of the Continental Hotel.[170] That year, two other stories "Joygals Battle in Chinatown" and "Butch Broads Battle in Chinatown Area," ran in *Tab*, characterizing the community as one constantly engaged in turf wars and gang activity.

Even stories that fell outside of the category of yellow journalism constantly utilized tropes that denigrated women who did not conform to contemporary standards of sexual comportment for the era and played up the violent nature of the butch. One of the few mentions of women at the bar at Letros, for example, was in a story about a Hallowe'en drag ball that pointed out there was no lesbian equivalent to Miss Letros. "Several prominent Lesbians in evening clothes were on hand," looking "formidable" and sitting "close to their girls."[171] One was described as "having downed his straight rye in one gulp," and another as a "beetle-browed Butch" who was planning to go to the apartment of the "broad" who had stood him up to "knock hell out of her!"[172] One of the lead stories in the second issue of *GAY* was a piece of coming-out fiction, whose main protagonist found himself in a gay bar then, later, at a private party, where a

[168] Chenier, "Rethinking class in lesbian bar culture, 86.
[169] "Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, November 3, 1956, 8
[170] "Strong-Armed 'Butch' Broad 'King of Chinatown Vice Ring," *Tab*, Date unknown, 1961, 2.
[171] "Joe Tensee's Confidential Diary," *Tab*, Nov. 25, 1961, 12.
[172] Ibid.

fight broke out between two "lesbians" who had no sooner arrived than they got into a "hot and heavy" argument that turned into a "bloody battle."[173] The characterization of the "Dykes," one of whom wound up "partially unclothed" with a "badly gauged" (sic) face and the other with a "torn blouse and a bloody nose," is striking for being so casually and gratuitously violent and sexual.[174]

In the sensational tabloid pieces, a distinction was made between the regular "Butch" type broads who would "prowl on foot" and the "higher-class" lesbians who drove to Chinatown to pick up "prostitutes."[175] In the same tabloid two years later, a feature was devoted to the problems posed by lesbians in Chinatown, which was said to represent the "fastest-growing threat" to "law and order today," with police "virtually powerless" to do anything about it.[176] Although it was conceded that there was no reason to believe there were more lesbians in the 1960s than in any other era of history, it was argued that there was a new problem, namely, criminality in the lesbian community.[177] Again, we see the distinction between good and bad sex that fell along the lines of class and sexual comportment. Good lesbian sex, which happened "privately, quietly and with partners who are willing and capable of making rational decisions" was of no concern to the author of this article, who considered it "little or no threat to anyone."[178] However, the police had problems with the "girl homo who runs in gangs, the butch," with short hair, shirts and trousers, who "takes the male part" and to a "life of crime."[179] "These are the ones that cause the trouble," the author explained, and their "femmes" were "used ruthlessly as a source of income, usually as sex workers, often as shoplifters" and sometimes as bait to lure men

[173] "The Middle Sex," *GAY,* April 13, 1964, 12.
[174] Ibid.
[175] "Bold Lesbians Now Curb-Cruise For Tricks," *Tab,* unknown date, 1962, 2; Chenier, 86. A re-statement of the distinction between uptowners and downtowners that Chenier demonstrates was, essentially, an unsurmountable divide.
[176] "Lesbian Vermin Plagues Toronto," *Tab,* September 28, 1963, 3.
[177] Ibid. The increased visibility of lesbians was linked to women enjoying greater social and sexual freedoms in this article.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid.

into dangerous situations, where they would be robbed and/or maimed by the butches.[180] That was one of the more extreme characterizations of the "bad" sex in public that the Continental Hotel's clientele was associated with and, in this case, it was also associated with the defense of Western liberal values, since the police were in a similar position to General Pershing chasing Pancho Villa or Greek Communists hiding in Albania. Although homophobia was connected with national security in the United States and Canada, the metaphors were rarely so clearly fleshed out.[181]

Aside from the Continental (which closed in 1972), the only other bar that consistently admitted lesbian patronage was the Parkside, where there was a mix of "heterogeneous" groups and no single culture predominated the atmosphere.[182] There were other, short-lived lesbian bars and clubs that cropped up in tabloid accounts and interview subjects' recollections. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, there appears to have been the Bluejay at Gerrard and Pape; a club on St. Joseph Street; the New Orient at Spadina and Queen; another at the intersection of Howard Park and Roncesvalles and, finally, the Fly By Night, a bar in a hotel at Dundas and George that consistently tried to transcend its role as a public drinking space and be a serious place to build community.[183] Few of these, however, were open long enough to foster communities, or, indeed, licensed to sell alcohol, in contrast with the Parkside and St. Charles, which were both *relatively* open to gay patronage for roughly 20 years.[184] In the early 1970s, alternatives to those twin taverns began to open up, giving gay men more freedom of choice. This increased choice,

[180] Ibid.
[181] Kinsman, "Constructing Gay Men and Lesbians as National Security Risks, 1950-1970,"; Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 163-166.
[182] "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic*, April 1980, 27. The first mentions of the Parkside as a mixed bar that admitted lesbian patronage are in the mid-1960s.
[183] The Bluejay Club at Pape and Gerrard is often referred to as a "lesbian bar" in contemporary literature, but there is no record of it in the Ontario Archives, so it is highly likely that it was actually a private, unlicensed dance club. This may also be true of some of the others. In addition, Grad's Tavern was only mentioned in one article. Fly is open briefly—a little over one year—towards the end of the period of this study. Murphy lost her space around the time of the bathhouse raids.
[184] Liz Millward. *Making a Scene: Lesbians and Community Across Canada, 1964-84.* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 49-74. Aside from Fly By Night, Millward outlines the limited options for public drinking.

however, was not extended to women, whose public drinking options remained limited as gay bars began to institute discriminatory policies against women—an issue that became increasingly controversial in that era.

The first well-publicized incident happened at Momma Cooper's, the unlicensed club over the Parkside that replaced the August Club.[185] An article in the *Body Politic* described a history of discrimination in that second-floor space, which had "erratically" changed its policies from women not being admitted, to women being granted a special dispensation on Sunday nights and, finally, to women being allowed to patronize the establishment throughout the week, with the caveat that they be "properly dressed."[186] Although the criteria for being "properly dressed" was not clarified, it is likely this was primarily aimed at women wearing pants, specifically denim, since that was the rule most often used to deny women admission to the clubs. In 1970, for example, *Tab* reported that a new club near the St. Charles was opening and the rumour was that it would be "clean," would boast good music and, "according to the owner, girls in bluejeans will not be allowed in."[187] When Momma Cooper's opened, it began "with a policy of accepting women escorted by men," only to discover that women who wanted to be admitted would "hastily" round up "escorts from the Parkside below."[188] The following week, when those "same women" tried to gain admission, they discovered they "were barred."[189] As they were denied entry, they were "insulted and harassed," but the policy was defended by the owner since there were concerns that "bull dykes caused fights and trouble."[190]

[185] "Spring cleaning at Momma Coopers," *The Body Politic*, May/June 1972, 4. The August Club had had a discriminatory policy, as well, although it did not appear to have been protested.
[186] "Spring cleaning at Momma Coopers," *The Body Politic*, May/June, 1972, 4.
[187] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, Aug 8, 1970, 8
[188] "Spring cleaning at Momma Coopers," *The Body Politic*, May/June, 1972, 4
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.

The pressure applied by the activist journalists at the *Body Politic* got results: Momma Cooper's repealed its policy. It was only one of several clubs with policies of discrimination against women, however. At the Maygay (the disco above the St. Charles), and the Manatee (on St. Joseph), women were not admitted—period. The 511 Club permitted women but they were charged a premium cover charge.[191] The admission fee paid by transvestites was higher still. *The Body Politic* listed all of the clubs with discriminatory policies and urged its readers to boycott them all: The Manatee, was described as the "most resolutely sexist" of all of the clubs, given that women were "forbidden."[192] The story linked the Manatee's policies to "Dyke dislike," which was said to be rampant in the "gay ghetto," a prejudice that the journalists claimed was antithetical to the goals of shoring up the gay community.[193] But, judging from the success of the Carriage House, a men's-only bar on Jarvis, south of Carlton, that had "turned gay" one night in late 1973 or early 1974, this second appeal to action was not terribly successful.[194] In one item, it was reported that the Carriage House, with its spacious layout, consisting of a main-floor bar and lounge, and two "nicely decorated" basement rooms that accommodated dancing, was doing a "landslide business."[195] The Carriage House was "providing stiff competition for the Quest," which had been labeled by another writer as the "favorite drinking spot for the Toronto's upper-crust gay elite."[196] Duke Gaylord reported that people could not get into "the Carriage House after 8 p.m., but the Quest remains empty until 10 p.m."[197] That was a rapid turn of events, given that the Quest had applied to the LLBO for a licence to expand its club into the building next door in 1973, citing poor layout and problems with being over capacity as a result.[198] The request

[191] Ibid.
[192] "The Myth of the New Homosexual," *The Body Politic*, May, June 1972, 5.
[193] Ibid.
[194] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, March 23, 1974, 8.
[195] Ibid.
[196] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, February 16, 1974, 8
[197] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, March 23, 1974, 8
[198] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B401806 (Famous Door Tavern), Inspection Report, June 15, 1973.

was denied; the LLBO claimed there were already enough licensed establishments in the area.[199] The Quest, itself, had, discriminatory policies at various times: As one piece in *Tab* illustrates, some of these policies were initiated at the behest of the male patrons who did not like the fact that "MANY LESBIANS now frequent Toronto's Quest," a development that "did not exactly please the gay boy patrons who stand in line to get into the place."[200]

Support for the amendment of discriminatory policies to allow for the public accommodation of women—particularly those who did not perform their gender in conventional heterosexual ways—would become more robust after a high-profile incident in early 1974 that attracted considerable media attention and helped galvanize the gay and lesbian community.[201] In January 1974, four women, one of whom was Pat Murphy, attended "Amateur Night," a weekly music jam held at the Brunswick House, a tavern in the Annex neighbourhood that offered "Royal York flavours at Scott Mission Prices."[202] In addition to cheap draught beer, the Brunswick was known for its unusual, campy and interactive entertainments, including pickle-eating contests, jamborees, model-sketching Tuesday afternoons and an annual "Mrs. Toronto" pageant, all taking place in its sprawling beerhall-style main floor area.[203] That particular night, Murphy and her party were approached by an inebriated and aggressive man, who, after his sexual advances were rebuffed, insulted the women. The women asked a manager to respect their right to stay in the bar—he promised to eject the aggressive patron, but did not. This provoked

[199] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B401806 (Famous Door Tavern), Inspection Report, June 15, 1973.
[200] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, Oct. 13, 1973, 8.
[201] Aside from receiving wide coverage in Canadian media outlets including *The Globe and Mail, The Toronto Star* and *The Body Politic*, the incident was also written about in *The Advocate*, a Los Angeles publication that is one of the longest-running gay and lesbian magazines in North America-March 13, 1974.
[202] "Fun's not a crime at the Brunswick," *The Globe and Mail*, July 25, 1970, 23. Pat Murphy worked with Hislop to convince Momma Cooper's to change its policy of discriminating against lesbians in 1972. Later, Murphy would open Fly By Night bar at Dundas and George.
[203] Ibid.

two of the women to perform a protest song: "I Enjoy Being a Dyke," an "updated version of the South Pacific tune 'I Enjoy Being a Girl'."[204]

> When I see a man who's sexist
> And who does something I don't like
> I just tell him that he can fuck off
> I enjoy being a Dyke
> I've always been an uppity woman
> I refuse to run – I stand and strike
> Cuz I'm gay and I'm proud and I'm angry
> And I enjoy being a Dyke.[205]

The sound system was shut off as soon as the master of ceremonies heard "a four-letter word," which violated the bar's policies.[206] Half an hour later, there was another incident at the table, involving the aggressive patron and the four women, one of whom splashed "an inch of beer from a glass" at him.[207] Management asked the "Brunswick Four" to leave. They refused. When the police became involved, it appears they did not follow procedure, since the force would later be accused of forcible confinement and abuse. Courtroom proceedings spanned six months and received considerable media attention. One particularly detailed, 24-paragraph article dealt specifically with courtroom discussion of the culture of the bar and the artistic value of the song in question. At stake was the manager's claim that the song was disruptive and had "left the audience of more than 200 'seething with unrest.'"[208] To counter this assertion, a lawyer who has been in attendance at the Brunswick House was called to testify about both the crowd reaction to and the content of "I Enjoy Being a Dyke."[209] He testified that the song was "a cut above most of the usual entertainment," which, he described as "corny, bawdy, camp, semi-burlesque, controlled bad taste, bad but engaging."[210] However, the witness did take exception to

[204] "Uppity Women," *The Body Politic*, March/April, 1974, 1.
[205] Ibid.
[206] "Lawyer, pub manager disagree over reaction to song," *The Globe and Mail*, April 9, 1975, 4
[207] "Three women assaulted, taunted as lesbians, child-care worker testifies at police probe," *The Globe and Mail*, April 9, 1975, 5
[208] "Lawyer, pub manager disagree over reaction to song," *The Globe and Mail*, April 9, 1975, 4
[209] Ibid.
[210] Ibid.

one act from that night's jam—a "pantomime, depicting masturbation, performed by a man" which he felt crossed a line and was in bad taste.[211] In contrast to the pantomime artist, "I Enjoy Being a Dyke" was "sophisticated and witty," claimed the lawyer, adding that he "had never seen the audience so delighted."[212] Two other witnesses said that no one, other than the management, seemed offended and that the audience reaction was a "spirit of hardy humor."[213]

Although the Brunswick Four emphasized that the incident was entirely spontaneous, Toronto's earlier "zapping" actions are worth a mention here. "Zaps," sometimes called "zap-ins," were a short-lived, direct-action political strategy/consciousness-raising activity that targeted "straight bars" such as the Coal Bin, Commodore Tavern and Pretzel Bell.[214] An extension of the discursive camp politics that were on display on Yonge, zaps were relatively carefully planned, however, and involved men masquerading as "straight" as they entered the bar and then, at a pre-appointed time, "liberating" the dance floor with public displays of affection between them.[215] Even though the Brunswick incident was spontaneous (whereas zaps were planned), the action still fits in with the idea of resistance to discrimination via direct action, performed in a playful, campy tone. Further, the initial decision to patronize the Brunswick House, itself, was already a political act of defiance, since the bar was a highly-gendered space in which many women would have felt uncomfortable—as were most public drinking spaces in Toronto at the time.[216] Although Ontario laws since 1934 were specifically designed to accommodate women in segregated areas of public drinking spaces, management and staff of

[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid. At the time, the culture of the bar was important to establish in the court so that it could determine if the management was correct to evict the Brunswick Four. In retrospect, it is important to understand the culture of the bar in that the women's choice to enter this highly-gendered space was already an act of defiance.
[214] "Zaps" were a strategy developed in the United States and employed by some Toronto activists in the early 1970s. One detailed account of a zap at the Pretzel Bell tavern turned into a terrifying experience for the gay liberationists, who became separated from each other and were assaulted by bouncers.
[215] "The Zap of the Pretzel Bell," Guerilla, Sept 1971, 4.
[216] Millward, 46. Millward summarizes Line Chamberland's work on women's access to traditionally male spaces in the context of women trying to create lesbian spaces.

some establishments used the same "patron selection" methods and uneven enforcement of regulations to make women feel less welcome.[217] In the case of the Brunswick House incident, the existence of such methods was revealed in the instance in which the management refused to ask the aggressive male patron to leave the bar. In addition to that, the type of entertainments allowed at the Brunswick House contributed to an atmosphere that was hostile to women patrons and celebrated the aggressive performance of male heterosexuality. The testimony about the masturbating pantomime that was allowed to proceed is only one instance and it is probable that the bawdy and raucous entertainments performed on "amateur night" often included similarly offensive material. On a more formal level, the bar, itself, offered model sketching on Tuesday afternoons in the summer of 1970. One session was captured in the *Globe and Mail* in a photograph that depicted three men sketching a female model outfitted in a leotard. The caption read: "Beer or Art? The Lessons Are Free."[218]

More than all of the other entertainments, one annual event demonstrates the sideshow atmosphere and aggressive misogyny that was part of the culture of the Brunswick House, namely the "Mrs. Toronto" contest. Held in July, "Mrs. Toronto" was only open to female contestants, with a "mature figure," over the age of 40. One journalist described the 1971 winner as a woman who filled her "bathing suit the way two quarts fill a pint pot" and who would let out a "huge and toothless laugh."[219] The evening consisted of the satirical pageant and a "real fashion show," in which bikini-clad younger women paraded on stage—a feature that one waiter claimed was the real reason the event was so successful, since it appealed to the "dirty, old men" in attendance. The journalist claimed, however, that the fashion show commanded a "fleeting

[217] The segregation actually came after the initial 1934 legislation.
[218] "Beer or Art? The Lessons are Free," *The Globe and Mail*, July 16, 1970, W2.
[219] "Another Queen," *The Globe and Mail*, July 26, 1971, 5.

interest," and that it was the "older contestants—the women with grey hair, their eyes wrinkled from a lot of laughs" who got the "stomps, the whistles, the standing cheers and the free beers."[220] The juxtaposition of the two entertainments adds to the grotesque nature of the pageant and demonstrates a deep, unquestioning, casual misogyny that formed the culture of the bar, itself. Women participated in the culture—as fashion models, sideshow contestants and patrons—but they occupied an uncomfortable subject position within the misogynist bar culture. Motivated, largely, by the feminist movement, the Brunswick Four were asserting their right to contest that culture—and still patronize the drinking space—when they asked for the aggressive patron to be removed. The women were actively resisting the management's patron selection policies at that moment and, arguably, when they decided to attend the performance at the Brunswick House in the first place. The act of going to the Brunswick House was already an act of defiance.

This defiance and the Brunswick Four's assertive interactions with the bar's management, can be seen as an expression of resistance that falls in line with the increasing feminist political action in North America, as well as years of established bar-based communities that were rooted in negotiating the tensions of street and drinking cultures, which Chenier has chronicled.[221] This "downtowner" culture also influenced the women's strategies for handling the police and, later, the courts: The foursome complained of harassment and brutality while in custody; returned to the scene to find witnesses; publicized the case and enlisted the support of the community, many of whom were connected through the *Body Politic*, which then started a legal defence fund. The incident may have started as a spontaneous event, but it quickly escalated into clear political action—informed by political strategies formed by downtowners in

[220] Ibid.
[221] Chenier, "Rethinking class in lesbian bar culture," 86.

the bar communities. The series of events indicated that the women interpreted their treatment to be part of a pattern of discriminatory treatment—*both* by bar owners *and* by police—and that they were willing to challenge this discrimination.[222] *The Body Politic* concluded its story about the Brunswick Four with this observation: "Women or men who step out of traditionally accepted roles and try to choose their own, not only meet with physical and verbal abuse, but are also denied the rights enjoyed by people who behave in the traditional ways."[223]

In *Never Going Back*, Tom Warner argues that the event "indicated a radical change in the consciousness" of gays and lesbians "angrily and actively resisting police homophobia and harassment."[224] The resistance and agitation for an end to discriminatory policies—both formal and informal—would continue in the ensuing years, albeit rarely with that level of mainstream coverage. In 1974, the *Body Politic* instituted a policy of refusing to run advertisements from the men's-only bar, the Carriage House, a decision announced in a small news item, that characterized the bar's policy on "proper attire" as discriminatory. The following year, discriminatory dress code policies at both Quest and the Carriage House, prompted a woman to complain to the LLBO. The complainant asked if "a public house that is licensed by the liquor licence board of Ontario" had the "right to discriminate against the dress of their clientele according to sex."[225] Her argument was that denim-clad women were refused entrance, even though men could wear blue jeans and still be considered properly attired and demanded to know who to contact to "correct this injustice."[226] Although the LLBO responded to her query (the substance of the telephone call was transcribed in the establishment file), it did not appear to take the complaint seriously. In a phone call a month later, an inspector explained "that the

[222] "Spring cleaning at Momma Coopers," *The Body Politic*, May/June 1972, 4
[223] Uppity Women," *The Body Politic*, March/April 1974, 1
[224] Tom Warner, *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 41.
[225] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B401806 (Famous Door Tavern), Complaint of Discrimination Against Females, Sept 9, 1975.
[226] Ibid.

establishments were just enforcing their house rules" and suggested that, to pursue the matter further, she should contact "Queen's Park."[227] She responded that she would and, in addition, would notify the Toronto mayor's Committee on the Status of Women. If she did, there is no record of her complaints.

The issue was still simmering, however, since, outside of the Parkside, there were few long-lived, licensed options for the lesbian community, which was trying to create spaces. Even unlicensed clubs, like the Bluejay at Pape and Gerrard, discriminated against women who wore jeans, a policy that one *Body Politic* writer argued, was evidence of the club's "heavyhanded and self-righteous discrimination."[228] The Bluejay, open from 1972 to 1976, had apparently relaxed its policy on admissions by the time the writer encountered the policy and, at various points, it appears to have been the location for a tense exchange over the appropriate performance of gender, a performance that, at the time, was tied to both age and class.[229] This "fascist management" and the "acceptance in Toronto of such a regime," as well as a dearth of other choices, was responsible for a "lack of interest in bars" and the community's inability to create a larger lesbian/feminist social network, the writer posited.[230] "Where ARE the lesbians in this city?" she asked, ending the piece with a call to action, imploring them to "show up!"[231] Which, in fact, was happening at almost exactly the time of publication, since, on June 4, 1976, about 30 "lesbians and gay men" picketed Jo-Jo's, a disco that banned "lesbians wearing jeans" but had no "dress restrictions" for male patrons.[232] Although the picket was said to have had no influence on the bar's admission policy, the bar did reverse its stance soon after, as a result of a visit from

[227] Ibid.
[228] "Dykes, Dancing and Politics," *The Body Politic,* June 1976, 17.
[229] Becki Ross, "Dance to 'Tie a Yellow Ribbon', Get Churched, and Buy the Little Lady a Drink: Gay Women's Bar Culture in Toronto, 1965-1975," in *Weaving Alliances: selected papers presented for the Canadian Women's Studies Association at the 1991 and 1992 Learned Societies Conference*, ed. Debra Martens (Ottawa: Canadian Women's Studies Association, 1993), 25.
[230] "Dykes, Dancing and Politics," *The Body Politic,* June 1976, 17.*The Body Politic*.
[231] Ibid.
[232] Ibid.

Human Rights Commission officers who were acting in response to four separate complaints.[233] Although the activists were pleased with the results, détente did not last for long, since, soon after, Jo-Jo's was reportedly asking women to leave for the "flimsiest of reasons"—and allegations that those who resisted were "thrown down the stairs."[234] When one woman claimed her shoulder had been dislocated after police had "man-handled" her down the stairs, the Lesbian Caucus of the Gay Alliance Toward Equality began organizing a boycott.[235]

It is interesting to note that, in the same era that women were being denied access to bars based on gender performance, one woman was being celebrated in them namely, Carole Pope, lead singer of the band "Rough Trade." One music critic described Pope as the "most androgynous, overtly sexual lead singer this side of David Bowie" with a "hard-edged," masculine voice. Despite Pope's unconventional performance of gender and the lyrics from "Rough Trade" songs such as *Butch* and *True Confessions* (which included references to ball-busting women, whips and gangs of "lesbian college co-eds"), by 1976, the band had become "perhaps the premier bar band in Toronto," according to one journalist. The band was "constantly employed" and regularly appeared at Grossman's, the Colonial and the El Mocambo, playing to an enthusiastic and loyal following. This may seem like an irony, since we can conjecture that Pope, herself, clad in her black leathers, might have had trouble getting into some bars, but it is consistent with a pattern of discrimination pointed out in interviews, noting how men dressed in drag could often only gain access to bars as performers, never as patrons.[236]

[233] Ibid.
[234] "Violence at local gay bar," *The Body Politic*, October 1976, 7.
[235] "Lesbians call for boycott of discotheque," *The Body Politic*, November 1976, 6.
[236] ALOT interview with Al Maloney, Sept. 13, 2001. Elise Chenier made this observation in the interview, itself.

Conclusion

The annual Hallowe'en drag ball, which was a manifestation of the bar-based culture of the queer counterpublic, was an early expression of camp discourse and pride. It was also the greatest exposure many members of the heteronormative public sphere had to the queer community, both in physical space and in the media. Its loud and proud declaration slowly forced news outlets to acknowledge its presence, eventually leading to sympathetic coverage on CBC and in *Maclean's*—although the Katz article had been mired in civil rights discourse that normalized gays and lesbians, as opposed to camp. Bar-based camp discourse was again used in the 1970s by lesbian patrons who resisted patron selection methods that denied women who refused to dress according to heteronormative standards the right to public accommodation. Although the counterpublic was divided by gender and sexual comportment, there was significant movement towards conciliation when gay activists worked together with lesbians to assert their rights. Whether spontaneous or not, the extension of camp discourse that encouraged defying heterosexual norms and civil rights discourse finally came together in the actions of the Brunswick Four who spontaneously staged an event that satirized heterosexual bar cultures and asserted their right to public accommodation. These two manifestations of camp and bar-based satire commanded the mainstream media's attention in an unprecedented fashion and was the cause for public awareness of the lesbian and gay community.

CHAPTER THREE - "Howcum Bowles Tolerates This Kind of Nonsense?": Sex and Surveillance

Introduction

Other than camp discourse, which was given media attention on Hallowe'en, the most frequent mention of gay men in tabloids prior to the 1970s was in connection to sex in public. Stories about arrests for gross indecency were reported regularly in the tabloid press and occasionally in the mainstream dailies, which performed the function of warning the public that certain spaces were sometimes, but not always, under surveillance. This forensic gaze, a method of monitoring and maintaining public sex for the purpose of controlling it, was, itself, contentious. Critics, sometimes in the media, took exception to bathroom surveillance on the grounds that there was an expectation of privacy in this space and that, instead of monitoring the space, the state and/or managers of commercial establishments should work on preventative measures that would make engaging in bathroom sex more difficult. The intersection between bathroom sex and queer public drinking spaces produced both pronounced anxieties about the intersection of sex and spaces devoted to leisure, which led to an increased surveillance of the queer community. A number of discourses and strategies of resistance that grew out of bar-based cultures and the tight social networks established in them were employed to protect against this intrusive harassment. However, in this era, the queer community did not defend public sex as a private activity and, instead, denounced it—an early instance of a strategy to self-police and establish a discourse of community "law and order" and communicate an image that Valverde and Cirak sum up as "gays are respectable, too."[1] The community increasingly constructed a

[1] Mariana Valverde and Miomir Cirak. "Governing Bodies, Creating Gay Spaces: Policing and Security Issues in 'Gay' Downtown Toronto." *British Journal of Criminology* 43.1 (2003), 109.

discourse that distanced itself from bathroom sex and emphasized its alignment with "good," private, intimacies that mirrored heterosexual monogamy.

City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 7361

Image 16 – Bowles Lunch.
Bay Street, looking south across Queen Street from City Hall, 1928.
City of Toronto Archives, Fonds, 1244, Item 7361

Surveillance Schemes

At the tail end of the winter of 1958, a tabloid reported that a "reputable Yonge Street restaurant," the Honey Dew, was the site of "mass arrests," related to the "unusually bizarre" sexual activities of a "surprisingly large number of males, particularly in Toronto," who came

from "all walks of life" and found each other in bathrooms across the city.[2] The author of the article claimed that the management of the Honey Dew was not to blame for the problem, and that the patrons' activity in the washrooms at the Honey Dew was "not influenced by the establishment's methods of operation."[3] Hardly unique to this restaurant, bathroom sex was a common problem in a number of establishments in Toronto, according to this tabloid exposé, which also named the High Park "knot-hole club" as another hotbed of public sex. This was hardly the first incident in which the tabloids connected the bathroom of a dining or drinking establishment to sex.[4] In 1951, when two men were caught in "flagrante delicto" in a parked car, it came out in court that they had first met in a lavatory in the Royal York Hotel.[5] The bathrooms at Bowles Lunch were named so many times in the tabloid press that the spot even inspired an editorial in *Flash*, titled "Howcum Bowles Tolerates This Kind of Nonsense?"[6] In addition, over the years, the tabloids named Philosopher's Walk, Queen's Park, the B&G Coffee Shop near Sunnyside Station and the Union Station washrooms frequently—specific mentions that performed several functions. First, these stories were a de facto guide for negotiating Toronto's public sex scene. They were also an important part of the network of communication in the queer counterpublic that provided warnings to readers who hoped to steer clear of entrapment.[7] Finally, they performed a panoptical function in that the stories informed the public that covert

[2] "Mass Arrests Made of Homosexuals," *Hush Free Press*, March 22, 1958, 7; Elise Chenier. *Strangers in Our Midst, Sexual Deviancy in Post-War Ontario*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 91. Chenier suggests that the existence of stable venues that consistently allowed gay patronage made it easier for the police to engage in crackdowns. This, in turn, made it easier for the media to paint a picture of an organized network of criminal sexual psychopath predators.
[3] "Mass Arrests Made of Homosexuals," *Hush Free Press*, March 22, 1958, 7
[4] Stephen Maynard, "Through a hole in the lavatory wall: Homosexual subcultures, police surveillance, and the dialectics of discovery, Toronto, 1890-1930." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5.2 (1994): 213-215. As Maynard demonstrates, surveillance was not new. Stories about arrests appeared in the *Toronto Evening Telegram* in the early 1900s, something that Maynard connects it to city-building and the construction of a spate of public bathrooms in the early 1900s that were connected to concerns over class, morality and cleanliness.
[5] "Evidence in Morals Case Shocks Court Officials!," *Flash*, April 2, 1951, 8.
[6] "'Gay Boys' Nabbed at Bowles Lunch," *Hush Free Press*, Aug 11, 1951, 6; "Howcum Bowles Tolerates This Kind of Nonsense," *Flash*, April 26, 1952, unknown page.
[7] "Two Men Accused of Indecency Elect Trial Before Judge," *Justice Weekly*, March 3, 1956, 2; "Union Station Washroom 'Swish Boys' Love Nest," *Hush Free Press*, Aug 20, 1949, 11.

surveillance could be taking place in public bathrooms—both the ones that were specifically named as well as others, where the surveillance was still covert.

The arrests at the Honey Dew were the result of a long, sustained entrapment plot that was finally exposed in a follow-up story that described the "crack-down on the perverts" in the washroom, where police had crafted a "special lookout" in a "secreted place overlooking" the men's washroom at the Honey Dew.[8] In March, the operation led to 56 convictions for gross indecency and, in the first half of April, another 20, for a total of 76 arrests in six weeks.[9] The fine for each gross indecency conviction was $50 and, it was reported that "nearly all" were released after payment. One of the two tabloid journalists reporting this took a dim view of the police activity, critiquing the entrapment scheme for being focused on revenue, as opposed to being motivated by a genuine effort to curb "sexual depravity" in the city: "Discouraging the 'knot-hole' playmates should prove to be no problem, but apparently this is not what is wanted," argued the writer.[10] "If anything," the article argued, "the police are encouraging the perverts to continue," pointing out that the undercover officers watched the activity after initial sexual contact, instead of making an arrest immediately.[11] The writer also argued that the operation was a waste of police resources and raised the issue of privacy, taking aim at the establishment, itself, which could have renovated the washrooms and installed steel partitions, rather than putting on an air of "helplessness."[12]

[8] "Honey Dew Sex Trap for Cops," *Hush Free Press*, April 19, 1958, 8.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.

City of Toronto Archives, Series 574, s0574_fl0046_id49670

Image 17 - Yonge Street Subway Construction, 1951.
Honey Dew pictured on the right. City of Toronto Archives.

Although there do not appear to have been any further articles dealing with the situation at the Honey Dew, similar entrapment schemes existed long before and after the events at the Yonge Street restaurant. When a clerk claimed he had been unfairly arrested for gross indecency (he said he was merely fending off advances in the High Park washhouse) Ron Haggart, a *Toronto Star* columnist who was noted for being fearless and outspoken, devoted two columns to the matter in the summer of 1961, claiming that it had been monitored by the police since 1956 and had been the site of hundreds of arrests.[13] One six-month period, for example, resulted in 101 arrests, each act of public indecency caught by an officer who had to spend his shift in the

[13] "The Strange Ordeal of Malcolm Phlarb," *Toronto Daily Star*, July 19, 1961, 7; "Malcolm Phlarb's Ordeal in the Weird Washroom," *Toronto Daily Star*, July 20, 1961, 7.

uncomfortable position of "dangling his feet over a low partition in an unfinished part of the attic," to get his head over the false vent.[14] Haggart referred to the operation as an "unsaid conspiracy" and a "funny institution to have at the main entrance to Toronto's most famous park."[15] That thought, it seems, had also occurred to the parks commissioner, who, a few years earlier, had proposed closing the washroom. The chief of police however, objected to the planned closure, arguing: "When we know where they are…we can control them."[16] Aside from the fact that this was a revenue-raising operation for the police, the resistance to shutting down this "funny institution" is, arguably, the defence of a disciplinary institution that was engaged in the surveillance of bodies. The presence of such an outpost at the entrance to a public park is a manifestation of the anxiety over the park as a partially-reclaimed space for desexualized leisure—a contested reformation by both heterosexuals and the queer community who used it in ways it was not intended for, regardless of the intent.[17] However, given the media's reaction, it is clear that there was, nonetheless, still an expectation of privacy and an investment in a meaningful distinction between public and private spheres.

Public drinking spaces—and their washrooms—presented even more complicated problems for the authorities, given the public's continued unease over beverage rooms and their connection to morality. As such, the provincial authority implemented many measures designed to desexualize the space. Gender segregation and a prohibition on standing while drinking represented two of the most important licensing restrictions that were part of overall attempts at

[14] Ibid. Mariana Valverde. *Law's dream of a common knowledge*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.), 71-75. One common, recurring theme in this type of surveillance appears to be the minute details about the level of discomfort involved. This, presumably, helps to reinforce the idea that the police are not voyeurs in pursuit of pleasure. Valverde examines this aspect of the forensic gaze in reference to several cases, including the raid on Remington's Monday Night Sperm Attack event, which was the result of an undercover operation that saw the undercover agent patronize the men's strip club nine separate times and record the activity in excruciating detail.
[15] "Malcolm Phlarb's Ordeal in the Weird Washroom," *Toronto Daily Star*, July 20, 1961, 7.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Bart Sarsh, "'Disgusting' Noises, and 'Dangerous' Spaces: Tabloids, Sexualities, and Discourses of Perversion, Toronto, 1950-1962," (Toronto: Centre of Criminology, University of Toronto, 2005), 30-35. Sarsh refers specifically to the High Park wash station in his paper on polysocial spaces.

moral regulation over sexuality. At the same time that gender segregation was being considered in the 1930s, there was an additional incident that indicated the provincial authority's anxiety over leisure, alcohol and sex, when an "alleged serious situation in connection with beer parlors" started to develop on Toronto's Islands.[18] "Many citizens" were concerned that picnicking families were being exposed to "unpleasant situations" and since there were "thousands of women and children" bathing there, municipal and provincial authorities decided to monitor Toronto's islands, ultimately deciding that no more licenses could be issued for Hanlan's Point.[19] As well, there were later instances of informal dry areas near certain entertainment venues, where no establishment licenses to serve alcohol would be granted—Maple Leaf Gardens and Sunnyside, for example.[20]

Even though washroom sex in restaurants, hotels and bars was considered transgressive by many in the media, journalists did not always agree that it warranted surveillance. This posed a problem for restaurant, bar and hotel management, who, in many cases, profited from an active washroom but, simultaneously, feared acquiring too wide a reputation for having a facility used for sex. In 1961, a gossip column ran an item warning that the "King Edward Hotel's manager, Gordon Cardy, had cracked down on homos 'cruising' in the downstairs men's restroom," by giving "house dicks orders to clear them out!"[21] Jim Egan responded with a prescient letter to the editor in response: If the patrons were given "recognition and service" (as they were at, for example, the Westbury's Red Lion Room), they would not, he argued, "find it necessary to resort to 'cruising' washrooms."[22] Although Egan's distinction did not fall along class lines, his

[18] "Odette Probes Island Beer; Women to Get Own Rooms," *Toronto Daily Star*, August 10, 1934, 6.
[19] Ibid; Cameron Duder. *Awfully Devoted Women*: Lesbian Lives in Canada, 1900-65 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 233. Since there is specific mention of Hanlan's having been the gay part of the beach in the documentary film, *Forbidden Love*, it is likely that the "serious situation" was in relation to gays and lesbians.
[20] Mary Louise Adams. "Almost Anything Can Happen: A Search for Sexual Discourse in the Urban Spaces of 1940s Toronto" *The Canadian Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 19, No. 2, (Spring, 1994), pp. 217-232; *The Globe and Mail*. "Withdrawal of Hotel Bid is Promised," *The Globe and Mail*, January 31, 1938, 9. Adams outlines the anxiety over licensing in proximity to spaces used for leisure.
[21] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, November 11, 1961, 11.
[22] "Reader Defends Letros' 'Queers'," *Tab*, December 16, 1961, 2.

discourse did make a distinction between "good," private sex and bathroom sex—this time, connecting it to the management's respect for its clientele.

Surveillance – Class and Geography

Although it is likely, judging from the number of arrests reported in the tabloids over the years between 1950 and 1970, that surveillance of public sex in parks and bathrooms was ongoing, it seems there were periods in which the city stepped up its efforts. The tabloid columnists would occasionally warn of unusually active periods for police entrapment, which sometimes coincided with public events. For example, in 1959, a tabloid reporter took note of the fact that Toronto seemed to have an especially large number of gay tourists that summer, linking it to the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) which, that year, was staging a "naval battle" with the first International Navy Whaler Race, a competition between NATO navies rowing 27-foot whaler boats around Toronto harbour.[23] *Tab* charged that 2,000 "queers invaded" the city, drawn to Toronto by the prospect of 4,000 visiting sailors, who were a "magnet" for visitors looking for a "high-time fling of purple love."[24] The article continued: "These fags come from all the big cities in Canada and major points along the U.S. frontier. Halifax, Moncton, Montreal, Ottawa, Hamilton, London, Windsor, Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, were all represented. Particularly huge contingents came in from Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Rochester, Syracuse and Albany. One and all, they came to woo the visiting gobs."[25]

The daily papers focused on the spectacle that helped to build up NATO as a legitimate entity: the country's Cold War prowess was on display. With the subject of homosexuality still essentially off-limits to Toronto's mainstream daily papers, *Tab* noted the omission in the dailies and chastised them for celebrating the exhibit and failing to address the subject of queer culture

[23] "Germans, British in 'Naval Battle,'" *Toronto Star*, August 28, 1959, 1
[24] "Third Sex at the Ex," *Tab*, Sept. 19, 1959, 2, 13.
[25] Ibid.

in the navy: "Sailors being sailors (however cryptic that is), many were pleased at the influx of all these effeminate deviate boys, anxious to compare them with gay species they had met in other lands."[26] Despite *Tab*'s editorial ambivalence towards homosexuality (it frequently published incendiary homophobic pieces as well as Bettina's column), this article didn't wholeheartedly paint the invasion of the "Third Sex at the Ex," as a predatory attack upon straight men in the military. The anonymous source claimed that a French naval officer had said that Toronto queens were a match for those in Paris, and that the sailors were "thrilled" with their enthusiastic reception. Aside from extensive cruising on the Exhibition grounds, this article suggested that this activity was also taking place in private residences and a number of "Gay" bars that provided "excellent fishing waters," perhaps feeding into the well-established anxiety of the combination of licensed bars, mass amusements and sex. "Cocktail lounges such as the Royal York, Westbury, Lord Simcoe, Letros, Club 76, Park Plaza," explained the reporter, "suddenly blossomed the gay rendezvous for hordes of male magdalens stalking the dashing, handsome, multi-tongued, cosmopolitan sailors from the Nato flotilla." (sic)[27] At Letros' Nile Room, it was reported that a "nasty feline skirmish almost broke out when two envious gay interlopers tried to zero in on" … "a showoff, with her newfound sugary-salt" from a German frigate.[28]

There does appear to have been increased police surveillance at Letros around this era, which was, at least according to one tabloid report, aimed at curbing "homo summertime activity," although no article explicitly connected it to the CNE.[29] Police activity at Letros, or, indeed, any of the bars in Toronto that catered to the higher income members of the gay

[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid. Club 76 was a lounge in the Frontenac Arms Hotel on Jarvis near Carlton.
[28] Ibid.
[29] "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, July 11, 1959, 13. Nor did it focus on the bathrooms, which do not appear to have ever had any surveillance.

community was rare. None of this project's interview subjects can recall ever experiencing a raid at a cocktail lounge or beverage room or even *hearing* of a raid at one of these licensed establishments, nor are there confirmed reports of any in the tabloids or the LCBO establishment files in the Archives of Ontario.[30] Police inspections, however, were common, as were stings in bathrooms (generally of unlicensed restaurants at first but, later, in the early 1970s, taverns) and raids were common at unlicensed clubs. One interview subject, Bob, did recall a police shakedown that some Letros patrons were subject to outside the bar, in which police would sit in a nearby car and stop patrons on their way home to ask for identification. Bob said he was subject to this stop north of King Street when he left Letros one evening but, believed it happened elsewhere, too: "Outside the bars. And don't forget, there weren't that many bars then," he said.[31] He suggested that victims of this police harassment were profiled: "This was an era of suit and tie, blazer and tie … So, they could judge, I guess, who looked like they'd have some money and they'd ask you: 'Hey there, got some ID?" Bob continued: "Turn around and put your hands on the roof of that car. Take out your wallet. Just give it to us. Okay, you check out.' They'd give you your wallet back. "On you go, on your way." You'd get home and find there was no money in your wallet."[32]

[30] There was a rumour that there would be a raid at Letros once but there is no evidence of it having happened.
[31] Interview with Don, Paul and Bob, conducted by Sismondo, Nov. 25, 2014 (Bob)
[32] Ibid.

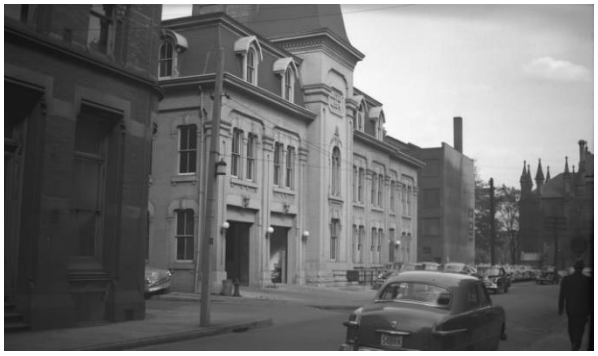

Image 18 - Court Street Station, 1952. James Victor Salmon.
The station was located on Court Street, between Toronto and Church Streets, less than 150 metres from Letros.

The bar regulars at Letros were aware of this activity, the interview subject recalled: "I told my friends and they said 'Oh, don't be so stupid. Keep your money in your sock. Keep five dollars in your wallet. And five dollars then was a lot of money."[33] More than a confirmation of entrapment, this interaction is of interest in that it is indicative of a relatively cohesive and informed group that communicated well and developed strategies to resist police harassment, similar to the ones described by Gary Kinsman at the Lord Elgin Hotel in Ottawa that thwarted the undercover surveillance operations attempted by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.[34] This interview subject also said that, the five-dollar shakedown protected him from more serious police harassment as did the address on his driver's license: "If you had a little money in that day," he said, you lived at the Arbor Glen apartment building on Rosedale Valley Road, "or in the Fontainebleu next door … with that address, the cops never bothered you."[35]

Despite the interview subjects' memories that the bars that catered to middle- to upper-income patrons were left alone by police, there are indications there was some intrusive

[33] Ibid.
[34] Kinsman and Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers*, 197.
[35] Interview with Don, Paul and Bob, conducted by Sismondo, Nov. 25, 2014 (Bob). "The Arbor Glen" has been filled in, since he had trouble remembering the name of the building and it had to be filled in later by the other interview subjects.

surveillance, particularly in the late 1950s. In reference to news that a bar in Buffalo had been raided, Bettina reported in *Tab* that the "local snake pits have been getting periodic check-ups," although "no raids as dramatic as that one have taken place."[36] Bettina pointed out that this was "probably because there isn't enough exciting activity occurring to bother with," since, during the recent "holiday period, patrons in the local dives appeared to have fallen out of a hearse!"[37] But, in the summer of 1959, there were rumours that Letros would be raided. Bettina reported that "reliable sources" had tipped them off that "the Nile Room will get a police going-over soon" and that, while it was "not expected to be shuttered," the patrons should expect to be "quizzed by the Morality Squad."[38] Although it is unclear if this ever came to fruition, the reason for that expected surveillance had to do with a "recent 2 G-plus robbery."[39] The columnist alleged that an "accomplice" to a "holdup" was thought to be a "Pit regular" and the police were being pressured to resolve this "unsolved crime."[40] Letros Tavern was not actually the target of the "holdup" but was used to gain access to an upstairs office. The perpetrators appear to have entered the restaurant about an hour before opening time and bound and gagged staff who were preparing for evening service, then used the restaurant to gain access to the office from which they took nearly $2,000 in cash.[41] *The Globe and Mail* made reference to "neatly dressed" men who used an entrance "in full view of Court Street station," a remark that might help explain why the police were under pressure to solve this crime. Although the inspections were connected to this crime, Bettina predicted the criminal investigation would be used as a pretext for the "taking of names and addresses," which would be "referred to in future when sex criminals are

[36] "Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, January 19, 1957, 13.
[37] Ibid.
[38] "Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, July 11, 1959, 13.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] "Tavern Staff Bound, Gagged During Holdup," *The Globe and Mail*, May, 19, 1959, 5.

sought."[42] Bettina continued: "As a side benefit, 'Lily' knows that word will soon pass throughout Toronto's gay world that they're on the prowl," putting members of the community on guard.[43]

Sex on the Strip – Justifying Surveillance

As the clientele from the bars formerly located at the Corners (across from City Hall) migrated to Yonge Street, anxieties connected with public sex grew more pronounced, partially as a result of sex workers becoming more visible. This helped to justify greater surveillance of the area. The Yonge strip was a far more central, public setting than some parts of the Ward, where small mixed residential and commercial streets of a west-end neighbourhood offered relative privacy and anonymity. As much of the gay community migrated to the highly-visible "Strip," which was often referred to as Toronto's "Main Street," the main bars, the St. Charles, Parkside and Red Lion, were in the midst of a busy street that attracted masses of youths drawn by the year-round midway of working-class entertainments such as arcades, honky-tonk bars, record shops, cheap spaghetti and, eventually, strip clubs. This environment fostered a culture of public performance of heterosexuality and, by contrast, "dirty teeners outside Charlies … wearing falsies in the most novel places."[44] Although there were sex workers on Yonge, the back entrance to the St. Charles also attracted solicitation in the alley immediately west of Yonge. Eventually, this lane would become a well-known artery of "Track Two," a socio-geographic label assigned by the Toronto police to the alleys and adjacent side streets to the west of Yonge in which solicitation occurred. "Track One" referred to the sex workers on the east side and this differentiation referred both to the geographical distinction and to the nature of the sex trade: The east side was associated with heterosexual sex; the west side, homosexual. This was part of a

[42] "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, July 11, 1959, 13.
[43] Ibid.
[44] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, May 15, 1965, 13.

larger sexual-geographic divide, too, since the west side, it was observed, had less foot traffic than the east side, which was home to more heterosexual strip clubs.[45]

One memoirist recalled that, if you were tired of the scene inside the Parkside, you could walk down Yonge to the St. Charles, or, "better still, walk down the back alley to the back door of the St. Charles where underage hustlers stood in the doorway and gave out come-ons or shook their asses."[46] Some, he recalled, managed to sneak into the bar and hang a "left into the can," where they would stand in the urinals and "flop it out to show you what they got."[47] Inside or out, backdoor or front, hustlers quickly became associated with the St. Charles and the Parkside. By 1966, *Bob Damron's Address Book* had started characterizing the atmosphere of its bars for readers' convenience and safety and, next to the entry for the St. Charles, the notation "(G, H)" appeared, indicating that it was gay and frequented by hustlers.[48] This must have been fairly widely known earlier than that, given the language surrounding a sensational 1963 murder in one tabloid story that linked the crime to sex workers at the St. Charles, even though there was no discernible connection between the crime and the tavern. On July 16, 1963, 30-year-old Ronald John Grigor picked up 15-year-old Glen John Seip, who claimed to have been hitchhiking.[49] The youth agreed to join Grigor for a drink in his apartment, and, once there, he claimed to have been subjected to unwanted sexual advances, which he rebuffed but then agreed to go to sleep with Grigor.[50] At some point, however, Seip went into the laundry room, found a claw wrench and, when Grigor made another "play" for him in bed, bludgeoned him to death.[51] Seip then stole the victim's money, credit cards and car and took three friends on a trip to Wasaga Beach and the

[45] "It's the Yonge Street Strip for the Saturday night action," *Toronto Star*, September 20, 1969, 1, 4. References to the different sides of the street are oblique in this story.
[46] Dedora, *A Slice of Voice*, 108
[47] Ibid.
[48] Damron. *Bob Damron's 1966 Address Book*, 152.
[49] "Seip Admitted Attack, Murder Trial is Told," *Toronto Star*, November 22, 1963, 29.
[50] "Claims he killed man to ward off advances," *Toronto Star*, November 27, 1963, 44.
[51] "Police testify murder suspect planned to kill them, self," *Toronto Star*, November 23, 1963, 41.

Riverdale Zoo, bragging that he got the money and car "from a queer."[52] Although he was charged with capital murder, Seip was only given life in prison at the jury trial and was reassured by the judge that it would not "necessarily mean" that he would "never be out of prison again" and that "everyone felt sympathy" for him.[53] Two different interpretations of the events had been submitted for the jury's consideration. The prosecution argued that Seip was a cold-blooded, violent, opportunist, whereas the defence portrayed the defendant as a victim of advances perpetrated by an older homosexual man, arguing that Seip, scared by the prospect of sexual assault, acted out of fear and rage.[54] Since the jury elected not to order capital punishment and the judge expressed sympathy for the defendant, the defence's argument seems to have been persuasive.

Several jounralists, however, reacted to the judge's sympathetic remarks. A week later, a letter to the editor at the *Toronto Star* expressed concern over the judge's sympathy for a man who committed a "violent and bloody murder" and then engaged in "full scale theft."[55] In addition, *Tab* chimed in with an article claiming that Seip had "escaped the punishment he rightly deserved," namely, "hanging by the neck until dead."[56] This article referred to Seip as a "Gazoony"—a "new breed of thug" and claimed these "guntzels" preyed upon a "mushrooming" "homosexual colony" at places like the St. Charles, where the "beasts of prey" stalked victims with "all the craft and cunning of a jungle lion."[57] The victims would then be blackmailed or violently robbed by the "trade kids,"—a new racket that had only recently come about as a result of the increasing homosexual community, said to be 40,000 in Metro Toronto, it was argued. The article suggested that the authorities were well aware of the problem and knew the "thugs by

[52] "Youth had slain man's car—pals," *Toronto Star*. November 20, 1963, 58.
[53] "Boy of 16 breaks down when sentenced to life," *Toronto Star*, November 29, 1963, 27.
[54] "Youth's murder trial goes to jury," *Toronto Star*, November 28, 1963, 3.
[55] "No sympathy," *Toronto Star*, December 3, 1963, 6.
[56] "Gazoonies & Guntzels Prey on Our Homos!" *Tab*, December 28, 1963.
[57] Ibid.

sight and name" thanks to "periodic visits" to places such as the St. Charles by the "Metro Morality Squad."[58] There was little that could be done about it, lamented the author, since the crimes typically occurred in private homes and apartments.

The Parkside and St. Charles were not the only establishments on the Strip associated with the sex trade and violence—the after-hours and unlicensed clubs were often derided as even worse, according to the tabloids. Since they did not sell alcohol, these clubs allowed under-aged members to join and, as such, became the target of many stories. The exposé connecting the Seip murder to the hustlers at the St. Charles also mentioned the "after hours 'queer' clubs in Toronto's midtown" as dangerous pick-up areas, where gay men were vulnerable to younger men who might rob or blackmail their victims.[59] These articles may have been exaggerated attempts to capitalize on the fear of urban moral decay, however, even the more sympathetic columnists seemed to frequently express concern over these clubs. The Music Room appears to have started off as a respectable club, but, by 1965, was said to have been "going downhill."[60] By contrast, the Melody Room was associated with poor conditions from the outset: "WORD IS that the Melody Room had a brawl the other nite," reported one columnist.[61] Later that year, it was called a "disgrace."[62] Not long before a fire closed the Melody Room permanently, it was reported that the club "exploded … when a bunch of motorcyclists broke in from the back and fought it out with the boys from Regent Park."[63] The columnist concluded with this quip: "The Melody Room has barred so many people that it is almost safe to go there again."[64]

[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, January 29, 1966, 13.
[61] Ibid.
[62] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, July 31, 1965, 13; "The Gay Set," *Tab*, Dec 25, 1965, 13
[63] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, February 12, 1966, 13
[64] Ibid.

There is little question that both the after-hours clubs and the taverns were unsafe at times. Not only are there frequent mentions of specific incidents, some interview subjects also recall being uneasy in the bars along the Yonge strip. One subject, who continued to patronize Letros even as it became less popular, claimed that he did so because it was a sanctuary from the rough edge that the Yonge street bars had. He recalled that he went to the St. Charles once "with three or four friends and I didn't feel safe, so I never went back."[65] Sometimes it seemed to improve and one tabloid account noted that the "bar trade at Charlies" was "not as rough" as it had been a year earlier but that there was "still room for improvement."[66] The Parkside was also linked to violence and trade: One article described a sexual assault that took place in an apartment after a night of drinking at the Parkside tavern.[67] The assailants (who had met at the bar and had drinks together) "left at the same time and walked the victim to his Jarvis Street apartment," then gained access by asking to use the telephone.[68] Once inside, the men assaulted him, punched him in the face and threatened to kill him, according to a *Tab* article with this incendiary headline: "Perverts Stage Revolting Bestiality! Makes you want to shoot them!"[69] One year later, an item appeared in a tabloid column, alluding to the business outside the tavern: "HAVE YOU ever noticed how busy it is outside the Parkside and how much money changes hands?"[70] Breadalbane Street, west of Yonge, would become well-known for solicitation—a major hub on Track Two, territory that was obviously established by the time it was observed by the columnist who asked in 1969: "I wonder what it is that they are buying…Is it a trick or trip?"[71]

[65] Interview with Don, Paul and Neil, May 26, 2015 (Neil)
[66] Ibid.
[67] "Perverts Stage Revolting Bestiality!" Makes you want to shoot them!," *Tab*, September 28, 1968, 2
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, Dec 27, 1969, 13.
[71] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, Dec 27, 1969, 13.

Since male homosexual sex had not yet been decriminalized—that change would take place in 1969 with the Criminal Law Amendment Act—the queer community was especially vulnerable to criminal activity associated with the sex trade. The peculiar internal logic of the American version of this problem, associated closely with postwar McCarthyism and the purge of gays and lesbians from the United States military and civil services, was well-documented by historian David K. Johnson in *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*.[72] In essence, the federal government was concerned with the possibility that gays and lesbians posed a possible security threat since they could be easily blackmailed and attempted to purge them from the federal civil service. As a result, fearing for their jobs, gay men and women hid their homosexuality, making them vulnerable to blackmail and other criminal exploitation, including abuse from the police force, itself. Gary Kinsman has demonstrated that a very similar culture was in place in Cold War-era Canada, particularly in Ottawa, where gay men and lesbians were constructed as security risks.[73] Even when it was not a matter of national security, however, being "outed" or charged with gross indecency could result in termination in nearly any sector. The fact that the activity, itself, was still criminal led to a hydra-like web of new criminal activities, similar to the networks of crime syndicates associated with prohibitions on vice. Between a few well-publicized sensational crimes associated with the gay community, very real threats of violence and blackmail and an association between the taverns and the sex trade, an increased police presence was easily justified. Some bars became subject to police surveillance.

Just how much surveillance, however, is difficult to know, but it was certainly frequently discussed in the tabloid columns. In one column, written by guest correspondent Desiree I,

[72] Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 67-74. These pages deal largely with foreign diplomacy and blackmail.
[73] Kinsman and Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers*, 197-202.

Empress of the Volga, it was argued that no "community on this continent" had a "faster growing gay world than Toronto" and that the city was the envy of "American visitors" who felt that Toronto had a lot more to offer than many cities in the United States, partially because of the apparent "freedom" and "respect" that was "lacking gravely in many populated areas on this continent."[74] Still, Desiree warned that there was an imminent crackdown expected and that "public places" were being watched "not to curb" activities, "but to keep them respectful and empty of the underworld element" that was increasing in Toronto.[75] Having spoken with a detective, the columnist claimed to have been convinced that the police were not "against" the gay community and only wanted to "prevent the growth of undesirables."[76] Further, the police source said that the surveillance was not a case of selective enforcement—"every bar" in Toronto was "visited by detectives whether it be gay or not." Although these gossip columns quite frequently employed irony, the treatment was serious and suggested it could be read as a sincere warning about the "rising danger" of "trade," which Desiree said was "not new," but gaining "prominence on Yonge Street."[77]

The column contained an explicit warning: "Public washrooms are not the place to experiment with one's sexual desires," a statement that represented one of Toronto the Gay's earlier discursive moves to dissociate the queer counterpublic with bad public sex and a foreshadowing of the move towards an image of respectability that Valverde and Cirak observed in the self-policing of the 1980s.[78] Desiree continued with a call to action to "remove this sour element in 1966," a move that would represent a "victory, and a step in the right direction."[79] Warnings against washroom and park sex became more common in the 1960s and 1970s in a

[74] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, Sept. 5, 1964, 13; "The Gay Set," *Tab*, Nov 6, 1965, 13.
[75] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, Nov 6, 1965, 13.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, Nov 6, 1965, 13. Valverde and Cirak. "Governing Bodies," 109.
[79] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, Nov 6, 1965, 13.

number of publications, but articles supporting the collusion between taverns and police to place customers under surveillance, however, did not. Most columnists took a position that condemned police surveillance and, in general, attempted to warn patrons of dangers associated with the taverns. Lady Bessborough asked: "Would the management of the St. Charles allow pictures to be taken of their customers without their knowledge?"[80] Question, asked *and* answered: "I'm afraid the answer is yes. I've seen some. But one must bear in mind this is a free country. Even more so if you are rich."[81] One interview subject said that it was widely believed that the Yonge Street bars were closely scrutinized by the police. "I can remember people talking about the fact that, if you went into a gay bar, that you had to assume that the police had your photograph on file," one subject recalled.[82]

One item that appeared in a daily newspaper attests to the regularly-occurring violent incidents and an emerging ambivalent relationship between the police and the patrons of gay bars. The incident involved Thomas Charles Matheson, a "40-year-old teacher" acquitted of charges of "obstructing two plain-clothes policemen."[83] After "two drinks" at the Westbury Hotel, Matheson was looking to hail a taxicab when he saw "men scuffling outside the tavern."[84] When he got closer, he witnessed "two men dragging a third man along Yonge Street" and then saw "a fourth man join the fight."[85] He intervened, trying to stop the apparent kidnapping, by "repeatedly" slamming the door of the police car "as the two plainclothes policemen tried to put their handcuffed prisoners in the cruiser," while being observed by a crowd of about 200 people.[86] When one of the police showed the "good Samaritan" his badge, Matheson apologized.

[80] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, Oct 21, 1966, 13.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Interview with Michael, conducted by Sismondo, Jan 25, 2016.
[83] "Police not abductors; Good Samaritan freed," *The Globe and Mail*, August 26, 1967, 5.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.

The policeman responded by saying "Big hero, eh?" and placing Matheson in custody, where he was kept overnight. Magistrate Robert Dneiper dismissed the charge on the grounds that "the prosecution failed to prove that the police were in the lawful execution of their duty in arresting the first two men at the St. Charles Tavern on July 29."[87] In the context of the allegations of police brutality that targeted men who frequented the Biltmore theatre and White Chef restaurant in 1961 and the complaints that persisted throughout that decade regarding beatings on Cherry Beach, it is possible this incident was some expression of resistance, especially given that the court ruled the police were not acting in accordance with proper procedure at the St. Charles.[88]

Whether Matheson knew he was interfering with police surveillance and harassment or, as he claimed, tried to intervene in random street violence, the incident speaks to the turbulent nature of the area at the time and the complicated relationship between the police and the gay community. That would become more volatile with the struggle over the right to privacy in the public washroom at the Parkside Tavern, which brought a single, ongoing issue into focus—the police entrapment scheme in the men's washroom. Aided by the management of the Parkside, police spied on men using the washroom, in the hopes of catching a sexual act that could be grounds for arrest. The surveillance scheme was possible as a result of the physical layout of the Parkside, since there was a "small storage room adjacent to the men's washroom" that had a view to the washroom through a phony ventilation grate.[89] The position of the grate—high up on the wall—required police to stand on a chair to see through to the bathroom. From there, morality squad officers had a relatively clear, overhead view of the urinals, but not the stalls.[90] Although this is the most well-known and well-documented entrapment scheme in a licensed

[87] Ibid.
[88] "Reign of Terror Unloosed Against Local Gay Set," *Tab*, May 20, 1961, p 3.; Kinsman and Gentile. *The Canadian War on Queers*, 213-214. The police took gays and lesbians to Cherry Beach in the early 1960s, where they were subjected to physical abuse. Allegations of this come not only from interviews, but also the tabloid press. *Tab*.
[89] "The View from Morality's window," *The Body Politic*, April, 1980, 27
[90] Ibid.

establishment, there may have been others. The tabloids suggested there were issues in the St. Charles in the mid-1960s and once again in 1970, when a columnist reported that the "morality squad" was having a "heydey in Charlies with the kids who don't understand what privacy means."[91] In the summer of 1970, "The Gay Set," a column that frequently offered rational arguments for tolerance and an end to discrimination, reported that the "Glory Hole at the Parkside is bigger now that the police use it to watch."[92] This is the first-known specific tabloid reference to police activity in the Parkside washrooms. The tavern's bathrooms were located in the basement and were accessible from the back door of the tavern, which made it possible for people to use the downstairs washroom without having to go through the beverage room area. This accessibility posed a problem for management, since it was relatively easy for people who were not patrons of the bar to use the facilities, including sex workers. That basement washroom was also, in a sense, a segregated facility for the gay patrons, since it was used primarily by the men in the back beer hall portion of the bar, which was mainly patronized by gay men. There was a second washroom in the ladies and escorts area.[93]

It was clear that it was not always fully private to those who were well-established in the community: One memoirist recalled that "word would pass around the bar fairly quickly if the side door can was occupied" and those in the know "took a sweeping look at the heat grate above the urinals" to catch a glimpse of "the vice cop, his face chequered from the light passing through the grill."[94] Similar to the incidents at Ottawa's Lord Elgin Hotel, in which patrons worked together to thwart surveillance activities by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the co-operation between the regular customers at the Parkside is evidence of the formation of a social

[91] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, November 7, 1970, 8.
[92] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, May 30, 1970, 8.
[93] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B109773 (Parkside Tavern), Letter from Inspector to Chief Inspector, Jan 26, 1972.
[94] Dedora, *A Slice of Voice*, 107

network resisting invasion of privacy and sexual regulation.[95] In Philadelphia, similar strategies of resistance through communication and collective action have been found by Stein, who described a community that "shared warnings" and helped each other avoid dangerous locations.[96] With the help of gay publications such as the *Body Politic*, and alternative publications, such as *Guerilla* and *Tab*, as well as the formation of more overtly political organizations, these networks began to formally resist the police surveillance of the bathrooms of the gay bars through a coherent, multi-pronged and sustained campaign of information, resistance, public outreach, protest and community meetings.

Guerilla published an item about entrapment in parks and bathrooms that claimed that police had "recently stepped up … arrests in public washrooms" and that, while most of these arrests were in subway stations, there were also entrapment schemes in "certain restaurants," which had "false grills or ventilators in the walls to enable police to observe people" as they made use of the facilities.[97] Similar to the final *Hush* article about the Honey Dew arrests, the *Guerilla* piece also questioned the motives of the authorities, which did not seem to be in line with crime prevention, since the public was not being warned of the surveillance activities. It fell, instead, to *Tab* to warn the public about the entrapment scam: "They still haven't fixed the glory hole at the Parkside," complained Duke Gaylord some six months before *Guerilla* picked up the item.[98] It was revisited in August—"The holes at the Parkside still as large as ever"—and then again in October, when this appeared: "The police sure are hanging around the Parkside Tavern."[99] At times, Duke Gaylord was blatant about the situation in the washroom and, at other

[95] Kinsman and Gentile, *The Canadian War*, 194-205.
[96] Stein, *The City of Brotherly*, 104.
[97] "U.T.H.A.," *Guerilla*, Nov 27, 1970, page unknown.
[98] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, May 30, 1970, 8
[99] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, Aug 22, 1970, 8; "The Gay Set," *Tab*, Oct 10, 1970, 8.

times, the warnings were more subtle—coded in camp discourse—such as this one in October of 1971:

> ABANDON ALL HOPE, Ye Who Enter Here!" Is it a sin to love thy fellow man? If so, fear not, for that clowning clergyman, Father Fruit, has set up a quickie Confessional in one of the stalls of the Parkside washroom. Pray tell, Your Reverence, is that glory-hole the Gateway to Heaven?[100]

Camp Discourse and Calls for Economic Agency

Camp discourse, like the example above, was used in the tabloids to organize and define the queer counterpublic as well as to express resistance to discrimination. Dissent at the Parkside had a long legacy but, prior to concerns over surveillance, it was expressed primarily in terms of treatment at the hands of the management and staff. Just as Mother Goose, J.L.E. and Bettina articulated complaints about the management at Letros, the King Edward and the Ford hotels, so, too, did the next wave of columnists help express discontent over the conditions at the St. Charles and the Parkside.[101] Many columns attempted to rally Toronto the Gay to assert its economic power and force change over a range of issues, from the patron selection methods employed by the staff to décor and from safety to the quality of the food. After the St. Charles flirted with implementing a discriminatory policy in 1964, it appears to have actively attempted to retain its clientele, even if its attempts were frequently critiqued in the tabloids for being lacklustre and inadequate. In 1966, the St. Charles dedicated its upstairs space to a "'live' drag revue," an entertainment that was likely short-lived, since most interview subjects only recall the upstairs space having been either a Chinese restaurant or the Maygay, a gay disco established in the late 1960s.[102] One letter printed in *Tab*, complained that the advertised featured attractions at the St. Charles, the "cold buffet" and "drag queens," actually "consisted of crackers and cheap

[100] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, Oct 23, 1971, 8
[101] The Letros complaints were mainly articulated prior to 1953 but there was an occasional jab in the late 1960s as well.
[102] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, February 12, 1966, 13; Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014.

cheese—and the so-called 'Drag Queens' were cheaper, infinitely cheaper."[103] Comparing this sad state of affairs to better bars that the author had visited in more cosmopolitan cities, the letter ended with a call to action: "I hope Toronto will wake up soon and have a decent gay club." Unlike the St. Charles and the Parkside, the writer craved "a place where we could meet and enjoy ourselves like human beings," instead of having to "slink into some hole."[104] He further described a "sick, disgusting and fraudulent place like the one I was in on Yonge Street."[105]

This harshly-worded letter was consistent with complaints voiced in the regular columns. In one piece, the clientele was characterized as a group of "repulsive old queens," who were "holding court," with "has-beens" and "former hustlers."[106] A few months later, "Duke Gaylord" issued a direct call to action: "When will we gay kids wise up to the fact that all they want there is our money?"[107] The column continued with a litany of complaints about the lack of care taken to make the atmosphere comfortable or inviting: "They make us sit on broken chairs, we get hustled by cheap waiters who can't speak English … and the broad on the organ can't play anything but Danny Boy."[108] Gaylord called for economic action: "Patronize the places run by Gay People!" The columnist suggested a few non-licensed clubs and, in addition, the Famous Door, which, at the time, employed a gay manager and seemed to have a non-discriminatory service policy. But, the columnist cautioned prospective patrons of the Famous Door by noting they still did not "know anything about the owners," which seemed to be the fundamental, ongoing problem with the St. Charles and Parkside, both owned by "straight people who really don't give much of a damn about us as long as the money is there."[109] In fact, the new owner of

[103] "The Gay Set," *Tab* April 20, 1968, 13.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.
[106] "The Gay Set," *Tab,* December 20, 1969, 8.
[107] "The Gay Set," *Tab,* June 6, 1970, 8.
[108] "The Gay Set," *Tab,* June 6, 1970, 8.
[109] Ibid. By 1975, they would even be owned by the same proprietor. But at this point, they were still separately owned.

the Famous Door, who would turn the bar into "Quest" was Norman Bolter's straight "next-door neighbour in Forest Hill" who bought the bar at Bolter's behest.[110]

Although Gaylord's complaint about being "hustled" by "cheap waiters" was far from the only criticism of the staff, a few of the waiters were actually recalled with a degree of fondness by some interview subjects and in the occasional article. Like the waiters at Letros and other bars, the staff was also engaging in patron selection and, as such, people's experience of the service depended largely on whether or not the patron was being encouraged to stay or being subjected to the ritual of slow, hostile service directed towards those that were not welcome. One patron, Randy Knight, who owned the unlicensed August Club upstairs said he "found a couple of waiters very rude, and service would be slow if you did not tip," adding that one particular waiter was sometimes "slow to give you your change back unless you asked for it."[111] Political activists were barred or, at least, discouraged, by waiters at the Parkside, explained Paul, who had been permanently denied service for trying to sell papers outside of the tavern.[112] Other behaviours that would get people in trouble with the servers included not spending enough money, not tipping well or engaging in unruly behaviour. Michael, who did not recall experiencing poor or discriminatory service at the St. Charles, said that "the service tended to be hostile in the Parkside."[113] A memoir contains references to a server referred to as "Fat Fuck Freddie," who would physically abuse patrons who "gave him any lip or didn't give him the tip he thought he deserved or you just pissed him off."[114] He continued, mentioning that Freddie weighed about 280 pounds: "He would grab you around the throat from behind and lift you out of your chair and drag you to the back door and throw you out while punching you in the face…

[110] "The Rise of Gay Capitalism," *Toronto Life*, September 1976, 48.
[111] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, April 15, 1972, 8.
[112] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014. Paul.
[113] Interview with Michael, conducted by Sismondo, Jan 25, 2016.
[114] Dedora, *A Slice of Voice*, 117

'You fucking faggot.'"[115] In 1970, a tabloid column reported that there was an altercation between a patron and a waiter at the Parkside and, as a result, the management was "watching the girls," since one of them had "slugged and knocked out a waiter."[116]

During interviews, Paul recalled that "not all" of the waiters were abusive but the two "main" waiters were "always abusive."[117] To his recollection, the most memorable and hostile waiter was named "Frank," who he described as being "big, surly, and heavy-set" and a part of the over-arching management efforts to make the gay clientele "think it was a privilege to be in their goddamn trash bucket."[118] Frank's attitude was consistent with the sentiment expressed by Pat, the "sad-faced" manager, who once overtly communicated his contempt for the clientele with his famous line: "You people are lucky to have a place."[119] An article in the mid-1970s also linked the sensibilities of the staff with that of the management and ownership: Owner Bolter was quoted as having said that a "gay person shouldn't own a place like this," since he would be liable to "get too emotionally involved."[120] The story continued to expound on the owner's philosophy, which extended to the waiters, who were all straight, despite the distress this caused the patrons, who were particularly bothered by the photos of naked girls pinned on a wall near the waiter station, "defiantly macho icons in a homosexual milieu."[121] An earlier article in a national monthly magazine voiced a similar complaint, in which the "depressing" and uptight gay scene in Toronto was blamed on management at gay bars, who hired only "heterosexual waiters" who were "terribly mean."[122] The anonymous source continued: "You can see the rage

[115] Ibid.
[116] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, Oct 24, 1970, 8.
[117] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014. Paul.
[118] Ibid.
[119] "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic*, April, 1980, 26.
[120] "The Rise of Gay Capitalism," *Toronto Life*. September 1976, 36.
[121] Ibid.
[122] "The Homosexual Life in Canada," *Saturday Night*, September 1969, 30

in them—they're just waiting for an excuse to punch some poor little fairy and sometimes there are terribly ugly incidents." [123]

The tabloids were often vocal on the topic of service at the Parkside: "Everybody likes that colorful waiter at the Parkside Tavern –"Teetles" Zicari," *Tab* complained in a presumably sarcastic tone.[124] "He is the epitome of courtesy and swift service," the columnist continued, voicing the community's concerns over the poor treatment many received there. A year later, *Tab* was advocating a potentially confrontational and dangerous direct action: "Do not tip the waiters at either the St Charles or the Parkside Tavern! Maybe they will smarten up and give us better service or environment."[125] That strategy, however, did not seem to be appreciated by the waiters who were described in one column as "power-tripping, low-life forms." That characterization was in response to an incident in which three Parkside waiters, threw "a speed freak customer through one of the heavy plate glass windows – just because the customer didn't leave a large enough tip."[126]

This was not the only call to action suggested by the tabloid columnist, who laid out the rationale for what seems to have been a relatively effective campaign to exercise economic power throughout 1971 and was, later, happy to report the outcome: "Business at both the St. Charles and the Parkside continues to toboggan."[127] It is possible, though, that the twin taverns lost business in this era as a result of increased competition, since the Westbury re-opened its rooftop lounge to gay patrons in the fall of 1970. In addition, the Famous Door, had re-christened itself "The Quest," arguably the first cocktail bar since Letros that could meet most of the criteria to qualify as a "gay" bar, not simply a mixed bar.[128] The columnist complained that the owners

[123] Ibid.
[124] "Go-Go Extra," *Tab*, June 20, 1970, 12.
[125] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, May 29, 1971, 8.
[126] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, May 18, 1972, 13
[127] "The Gay Set," *Tab*. August 7, 1971, 13
[128] The Quest was, incidentally, extraordinarily successful, according to tabloid accounts in 1970, 1971 and 1972.

of the St. Charles and the Parkside "simply milk the business without putting so much as a penny back into the place."[129] Again, he urged those who still patronized the two taverns to exercise their economic power: "When waiters are rude to you, don't tip them!" The waiters, it was said, were being paid good, union wages, yet they still gave "the gay person much grief, bad service, and rude language."[130] At the end of the year, the campaign to institute a boycott on gratuities was reiterated since the waiters at the "two biggest downtown gay spots" still didn't understand that "being polite" was part of the job.[131] The column concluded with the observation that abusive behaviour did not warrant tips and that the waiters, did not "deserve" gratuities until they realized that "gay people" were "not going to be walked on, or made fun of."[132] This clear expression of agency and the looming threat to exercise economic power was eventually fully realized but, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, perhaps resulting from a lack of options, had only fleeting successful moments.

The Queer Counterpublic and Political Activism

The above-mentioned boycott actions dovetailed with another campaign, spearheaded by activist George Hislop, who had been trying to help the victims of the Parkside tavern's entrapment scheme by going to the courts to help people charged with gross indecency, many of whom had been arrested there.[133] In a letter written by Hislop to Bolter, he claimed he had "monitored nearly every case, through trial of Gross Indecency that has come from this facility in the last eight or nine months," marking the beginning of this markedly different phase of activism somewhere in 1971.[134] This letter was drafted after a community meeting on January 11, 1972, organized in an attempt to force the Parkside's management to stop the entrapment

[129] "The Gay Set," *Tab,* August 7, 1971, 13
[130] Ibid.
[131] "The Gay Set," *Tab,* November 20, 1971, 8
[132] Ibid.
[133] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014. Paul
[134] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B109773 (Parkside Tavern), Letter from Inspector to Chief Inspector, Jan 26, 1972.

scheme. The meeting was attended by 150 "citizens" and the assembled community expressed its disapprobation over the "invasion of an individual's privacy" and moved to draft a letter to the owner.[135] The concerns were outlined as follows: "No attempt" was made by the police to "avert the offense" and, as such, it was not "crime prevention."[136] The letter concluded with a report that the most recent trial had ended with no conviction, an outcome that Hislop attributed to the "repugnance that the public has indicated to us that they have felt at the thought of being covertly spied upon while performing the more intimate bodily functions."[137] There appears to have been no response from the management. Hislop followed up with a letter of complaint to the Toronto police "requesting a meeting of senior public officials, the management of the Parkside Tavern, the LLBO and ourselves, in a serious attempt to remedy this situation."[138] He then copied all of the correspondence and forwarded both letters to the Liquor Licensing Board of Ontario, accompanied by another letter, outlining the situation and, in addition, calling the Board's attention to the poor conditions at the tavern, that included missing lavatory doors that meant patrons in the beverage room could see men using the urinals, unclean washrooms and a "spy hole" that was an "offence to human dignity."[139]

Within a week, Toronto Gay Action, a group formed in response to Toronto's Community Homophile Association of Toronto (CHAT)'s unwillingness to engage in direct political action, was leafletting outside the bar, warning patrons and pedestrians alike that management permitted the police to spy on people using the washrooms.[140] In return, the Parkside staff refused service to anybody involved in the group and "evicted" anybody that wore any political pins in support of gay political action. Paul, who took part in the leafletting action

[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid.
[140] CHAT was formed in December 1970 and grew out of the University of Toronto Homophile Association (1969).

recalled that the management of the Parkside "hated us" and, in fact, "hated any form of gay activism."[141] This antipathy pre-dated the washroom entrapment scheme as the subject said he had experienced problems with management and waiters earlier, dating back a few months, when early attempts to sell the *Body Politic* outside the bar's entrance on Breadalbane were discouraged. "Frank, in particular," he recalled, was militant about keeping him out of the bar, recalling that he would "try to sneak in for a drink" but, as soon as Frank recognized him, he would be "kicked out" of the bar.[142] He recalled that, in addition to the management, he also had trouble with the police who "would always try to harass" him and threaten him with a charge of obstruction if he didn't move.[143] His strategy was to "move three or four steps one way and then move back the other way" and, after that, it became standard to "hustle the paper by walking up and down maybe five or ten feet either way.[144] When he started distributing leaflets that warned people about the police entrapment scheme in the washrooms at the Parkside, the police again tried to stop him from interfering with police activity. He responded by telling the police that he was merely warning people not to "do anything that breaks the law down there" and was only trying to "prevent people from doing quote-unquote criminal acts," and, was, therefore, on the right side of the law.[145]

[141] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014. Paul.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid.

City of Toronto Archives, Series 372, s0372_ss0058_it1435

Image 19 - Hotel Breadalbane, 1937. City of Toronto Archives
Before it was called the Parkside, it was the Hotel Breadalbane. This picture of the side entrance (off Yonge Street) shows where the picketers would have distributed fliers.

One flyer made its way into the Parkside Tavern's Establishment Files in January, 1972, when the political activity came to the attention of the provincial authority. Its headline read: "CAUTION! POLICE SPIES AT WORK."[146]

> Every time you use the downstairs washroom of the Parkside Tavern, you are being spied upon. Police are stationed, out of sight, behind the air vent in the washroom, where they watch everyone who goes in and out. Every week since the beginning of this year, there have been arrests in the downstairs washroom of the Parkside. There is good reason to believe that some of the people arrested were not guilty of any crime, that they were being propositioned against their will. However, in the eyes of the police, actual participation in a criminal act is not necessary grounds for arrest. If you are merely caught in a compromising situation, you are guilty.
>
> The owners of the Parkside Tavern and the police have both been asked to post signs in the washroom stating that public sexual acts are punishable and that police

[146] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B109773 (Parkside Tavern), Letter from Inspector to Chief Inspector, Jan 26, 1972.

> are watching the room. However, they have refused! Neither the owners of the Parkside nor the police are interested in preventing crime; they merely wish to harass and persecute gays.
>
> Even if you are not gay, even if you object strongly to washroom sex, the police spying in the Parkside washroom represents an unjustifiable invasion of your privacy.
>
> What can you do about it?
>
> (MOST IMPORTANT) STAY OUT OF THE DOWNSTAIRS WASHROOM OF THE PARKSIDE.
>
> Tell the management and staff of the Parkside that you resent being spied upon.
>
> Better still, boycott the Parkside, The owners aren't interested in your welfare, so don't support them.
>
> Write the police department to protest harassment of gays.[147]

The flyer was signed "Peace and Love, Toronto Gay Action." Since George Hislop was one of the most active in resisting the entrapment scheme at the Parkside, it is likely he is one of the authors of this leaflet, if not the main one. Management refused service to anybody involved in the group that was taking the political action and "evicted" anybody who wore any political pins in support of gay political action.[148]

On January 21, the premises were inspected by the Liquor Licensing Board of Ontario. The inspector's report stated that "the washrooms, as always, were found to be very clean" and did not request that the management install doors on the men's washrooms in the Public House in the basement, even though "one or two urinals" were "visible from outside."[149] The inspector "agreed to leave the doors off in the Men's Public House washroom, being that indecent acts may be performed behind closed doors," but insisted that the washrooms that served the "Women's and Men's Dining Lounge" be fixed with a screen to shield the "men's washroom

[147] Ibid.
[148] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014.
[149] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B109773 (Parkside Tavern), Letter from Inspector to Chief Inspector, Jan 26, 1972.

doorway."[150] The owner agreed to this change. Although there is no record of leafletting action that day, the inspector did procure a "copy of a handbill that was handed out to the public" and enclosed it with his report to support his assertion that the "Gay Club (homosexuals)" had "declared war" on the establishment.[151] Although the establishment was not disciplined, it is an indication that the bar was not a good subcontractor in the policing of disorder and Hislop's letter called attention to this lapse. Rather than maintaining and monitoring the washroom area itself, the management had, abdicated this responsibility and the police were performing that task, instead.

Leafletting resumed the following day, January 22. *Guerilla* reported that the management of the Parkside called police to "remove the leafletters from the sidewalk" but the police "refused to take any action" and, concerned that the protest was bad for business, invited two police officers and four of the protestors into the office for a "confab."[152] In that meeting, Bolter insisted the morality squad had initially been called in to monitor the washrooms to prevent vandalism, not sexual activity and, through their efforts to stop the vandals, accidentally discovered that there were "homosexual acts" taking place.[153] After this, "the vandals were forgotten and the sex offenders became the prime reason for the surveillance."[154] To this explanation, the representatives from the leafletting group re-stated their objections to the surveillance, pointing out that it was an "invasion of privacy" that "in no way prevented any public sex from taking place." They backed up this assertion by pointing out that "at least ten people" had been arrested in the downstairs washroom in the three weeks since January 1—evidence that surveillance was not a deterrent.[155] Representatives from the police force denied

[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.
[152] *Guerrilla*. "Can Two Dicks Find True Love Behind An Air Vent?," Feb 2, 1972, unknown page
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid

they were permanently assigned to monitor the washrooms at the Parkside, citing manpower restrictions on such an enterprise, and agreed that a warning sign should be posted. After a discussion about the general harassment of people who sold *Guerilla* and other "Gay Liberation newspapers" on the street outside the bar, police also agreed that the activists should be allowed to sell their newspapers and then arranged a future meeting with 52 Division's Community Relations Officer.[156] If the tone sounds unbelievably conciliatory, it is possible that these officers, themselves, would have appreciated a pretext for being excused from this duty, since "the gay beat" was "not popular" with the "boys" assigned to the Parkside.[157] The night ended on a sad and ironic note, however, according to *Guerilla*: "As the group trooped out of the office full of rare optimism, the morality squad acted right on cue, and frog-marched a white-faced kid past them and out into the street."[158]

Two days later, January 24, representatives of the Community Homophile Association of Toronto, Toronto Gay Action and the *Body Politic* held a meeting, at which members decided to stage a one-day boycott of the Parkside, slated for a forthcoming Saturday (the tavern's busiest day).[159] This was followed up with a meeting between Hislop and the owner of the Parkside on January 27 at which it was agreed that the spyhole would be closed.[160] Although the management ultimately reneged on this concession, the protest, threatened boycott and negotiations *did* lead to the installation of a sign, written in "large, colorful lettering," that warned patrons the washrooms were under surveillance.[161] This was coupled with a "recent change" in "attitude" by

[156] Ibid.
[157] "The View from Morality's window," *The Body Politic*, April, 1980; Valverde. *Law's dream*, 71-75. This might also be interpreted as more of the same discourse of discomfort that Valverde outlines.
[158] "Can Two Dicks Find True Love Behind An Air Vent?," *Guerrilla*, February 2, 1972, unknown page.
[159] "The View from Morality's window," *The Body Politic*, April, 1980, 27
[160] "Headitorials," *The Body Politic*, March/April, 1972, 2
[161] Ibid.

the staff that seemed to indicate a shift in the management's sense of "accepting … responsibility" to the "gay community" that patronized the establishment.[162]

This small victory was significant, even though it did not put an end to police entrapment schemes, at the Parkside or elsewhere. Nor did it stop washroom sex or arrests at the Parkside—the surveillance continued, albeit on an even more sporadic basis. However, there *were* substantive changes, beyond the sign, including the slow establishment of community relations with the police and continued efforts to force management at the Parkside to assume "responsibility" and "patrol" its own premises, a complaint that would be repeated in the tabloids at a later date.[163] Feelings of resentment over the incident and years of poor treatment persisted: *Tab*'s "The Gay Set" declared a victory over the Parkside, calling it "dead" and expressing the hope that the lack of business was not merely temporary fallout from the dramatic events of late January, but, rather, "the dawn of a brand new day, brought about by people who had finally awakened to the "realization that" they didn't have to endure the "bullshit policies and politics of greedy money-hungry tavern owners."[164] Some of the business, it seems, had moved to the St. Charles, which, although having been painted with the same brush in the past, seems to have escaped some of the fallout from the washroom entrapment scheme. "I suspect that the St. Charles is watching events at the Parkside with more than casual interest," wrote one columnist.[165] "I've noticed that the staff at Charlie's has become much more polite, and the service has improved 100%."[166] In addition to the outrage over the washroom surveillance, at almost the exact same time, the August Club, an unlicensed dance club over the Parkside was shuttered by the tavern's owners. Its owner argued that, although his eviction was legal, the

[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid.
[164] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, March 18, 1972, 8.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid.

property seized was wildly incommensurate with the rent owed. In his letter to *Tab* that outlined his version of events, his indictment included a nod to the St. Charles, which he did not endorse but pointed out that, at least, had "supervision of their washrooms and it doesn't have peek holes."[167]

Although none of Toronto's daily newspapers covered the events at the Parkside as they occurred, it did receive national attention. George Hislop, for instance, was invited to discuss Toronto Gay Action's position on a February 4, 1972, episode of CBC's *As It Happens* called "Spying on the Public." A month later, Hislop was interviewed for a story in the *Globe and Mail*, in which he accused the police of acting as "agents provocateurs," who were enticing men in parks into committing indecent attacks. No taverns or subways stations were mentioned in this story, however.[168] One month after that, the *Toronto Star* published an article about Hislop's efforts to work with Toronto police to end public acts of gross indecency and, simultaneously, protect the rights of gay men. The police procedure was described as follows: "An officer lies in a cupboard peering through a baseboard grate" at the Yonge-Bloor subway station.[169] "There are similar peepholes at Eglinton subway station and in several downtown restaurants," it was claimed in the story, and the Deputy Chief admitted that its efficacy in preventing incidents was "debatable."[170] It was called "archaic" and an incident of "entrapment" by a lawyer who specialized in defendants facing gross indecency charges. Hislop also called public sex acts a "nuisance" that had to be eradicated, in a move that echoed Egan's rational arguments and constructed a discursive identity that marginalized bad, public sex.[171] "Toronto the Gay," the

[167] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, April 15, 1972, 8.
[168] "Policemen enticing homosexuals, spokesman says," *The Globe and Mail*, March 5, 1972, 5.
[169] "Police and homosexuals cooperate to stop offenses in parks, subways," *The Toronto Star*, April 6, 1972, 27.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.

queer counterpublic that was most active in building the discourse, had firmly defined itself as aligned with good, private sex.

This was reflected in several articles, including one feature in the *Body Politic* called "Don't Grope Strangers (Introduce Yourself First)," which also served as a warning: Although there had been no charges for gross indecency at the Parkside in February 1972, readers were still encouraged to exercise caution.[172] Uniformed police were still regularly on the premises, the "spy-hole" was still in place and "you never know if you are being watched," and readers were warned that they should never "touch anyone … in a public place."[173] It concluded with an appeal to members of the gay community to retire to a private place before engaging in sexual activity, to establish and maintain the firm boundary between public and private realms and to create a discursive identity that established the queer counterpublic in opposition to the blurring of this distinction. This self-policing was key to establishing a "civilized" and discursive identity of queer respectability.[174]

Later that year, the *Toronto Star* published one of the first humanizing articles about the gay community to ever appear in the daily, featuring Hislop and his partner, Ron Shearer, an "old married couple" of 14 years.[175] In the tradition of the discursive identity forged by Egan, that equated the majority of gay couples with average heterosexual couples, the pair was described as a couple who "bickered" over "household chores" and other things, "just like a lot of other couples."[176] This, and an earlier piece about Peter Maloney "defying the homosexual myth" that ran in the *Star* on February 1972, were some of that newspaper's first articles that framed members of Toronto's gay community as anything other than either troubled youth or

[172] "Don't Grope Strangers (Introduce Yourself First)," *The Body Politic*, May/June, 1972, 18.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Valverde and Cirak. "Governing Bodies," 109. To revisit terms established in connection to self-policing.
[175] "Ron and George Have Been Trying To Get Along For 14 Years," *The Toronto Star*, May 27, 1972, C6.
[176] Ibid.

sexual deviants, it positioned them in the context of a normative heterosexual discourse.[177] This media response represented a discursive shift—and an indication that the gay activists were correct in their assessment that the public would not be in favour of people's privacy being invaded in public washrooms, provided that the queer counterpublic distanced itself from public sex acts. Although it would only be temporary, the response from the public and media helped force the police and management at the Parkside to be more receptive to complaints of harassment by the activists. From that point on, alongside community meetings, requesting meetings with police officials and calling the media—in particular, CBC's *As It Happens*—would be one of the first lines of defence in developing strategies of resistance against discrimination. Max Allen, one of the producers at CBC's *As It Happens* was considered to be one of the first "gay allies" in the media.[178]

In the *Star* story about "Ron and George," it was noted that the pair used their apartment for "private relaxation" and entertained "mostly in one or two Toronto restaurants frequented by homosexuals."[179] Whether the two referred to here were the St. Charles and the Parkside is unclear but the fact that a community estimated, in some articles, to number 100,000 at the time, was relegated to "one or two" restaurants is an indication of how few public drinking and eating spaces were open to gay patronage.[180] This, of course, was one of the main reasons the Parkside continued to thrive, despite its poor treatment of clientele. Business might have ebbed and flowed, but the options were still extremely limited. One writer, highly critical of the Parkside, still described going back to the "corny, stable atmosphere at the Parkside" as a bit like "going

[177] "Peter Maloney Publicly Defies the Homosexual Myth," *The Toronto Star*, February 25, 1972, C6, 25.
[178] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014.
[179] "Ron and George Have Been Trying To Get Along For 14 Years," *The Toronto Star*, May 27, 1972, C6.
[180] Estimates of the gay population in Toronto crop up throughout the years in various publications. In his dissertation, "'Enough is Enough'": The Right to Privacy Committee and Bathhouse Raids in Toronto, 1978-83," Tom Hooper demonstrates that these estimates are part of a process connected to census-taking and claims for a legitimate minority group identity status.

home," even as more stylish and young options eventually began to open up.[181] Nor did the Parkside actually ever stop its bathroom surveillance entrapment scheme in co-operation with the police, although the arrests became less frequent and the signs warning patrons that the washrooms were under surveillance remained posted. Two years after the denouement of the basement washroom episode, *Tab* reported the presence of a posted sign at a Yonge Street bar that gently pushed back at the politics of respectability: "Occupancy by more than one person is illegal and immoral, but ain't it fun?"[182]

One article alleged that the reason the Parkside management stubbornly walked the fine line between alienating its patrons and insisting on allowing police to watch men through the grate had a financial motivation—that the expense of security was too much.[183] In addition, though, it was alleged that the owners did not want sexual activity in the washrooms to cease completely, since the bathrooms were a "gold mine" that "attracted paying customers."[184] The basement washrooms were one of the chief "attractions of the place," since "everyone knew it was possible to get off in the washroom of in the basement of the Parkside."[185] "Everyone," however, included the Morality Bureau, the article alleged, since it used the bar's washrooms to inflate indecent exposure arrests, fulfilling its own political mandate. Previous articles had suggested there was a financial incentive for the police, too, since officers received extra pay to testify in court.[186] Although the arrests had stopped when the political crisis and boycott took place in the early months of 1972, they resumed at some later point and persisted for at least eight years, albeit "not often enough to drive everyone away, but frequently enough, presumably,

[181] "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic*, April, 1980, 27.
[182] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, August 3, 1974, 8.
[183] "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic*, April 1980, 27.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid.
[186] "Headitorials," *The Body Politic*, March/April, 1972, 2.

to cover any dry periods at Morality."[187] In 1979, there were 28 arrests at the Parkside, representing almost 15 per cent of the 190 arrests for public indecency in Toronto. Most of the rest were in parks and subway washrooms, although there were nine in the washrooms of the Sheraton Centre and Royal York hotels that year, too.[188] There is no question that the Parkside's management was still supportive of the entrapment scheme, since one officer testified that its owners "provided a key" and supported the "intent" of the police investigation.[189] "They want us to be there, and they want us to stop that activity in the washroom," he continued.[190]

On October 3, 1979, however, officers caught a 44-year-old man, along with two other men, engaged in sexual activity in the Parkside washroom.[191] Two escaped, but the man who was taken into custody "died by choking on his own vomit after the panic of arrest apparently provoked a seizure."[192] This statement was supported by the officers' testimony at an inquest, at which it was clear the arrest had involved some force, although, how much and whether or not it was undue force, was not made clear. One of the servers at the Parkside recalled that the detainee "was hysterical" during the "pulling match" and was "pleading not to be taken in."[193] The officer put the detainee into a headlock, handcuffed him, put him in the police car and took him to the holding cell in which he died. News of the detainee's death did not become public until the following January, when an inquest was held.[194] Although officers were not disciplined, the event prompted two back-to-back cover stories in the *Body Politic*. One dealt with the Toronto police department's entrapment schemes of the gay community and urged for political action to stop the uneven enforcement of public indecency laws. A second, published in the following

[187] "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic*, April 1980, 27.
[188] "Every 46 Hours and Eight Minutes," *The Body Politic*, March, 1980, 10.
[189] "Entrapped at tavern, man dies in custody," *The Body Politic*, March, 1980, 10.
[190] "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic*, April 1980, 27.
[191] "Entrapped at tavern, man dies in custody," *The Body Politic*, March, 1980, 10
[192] Ibid.
[193] "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic*, April 1980, 27.
[194] "Jailed man felt 'sick', died." *Toronto Star*, January 22, 1980, A5.

issue, was titled "Epitaph for the Parkside" and suggested that the "shameful, sordid death" of the arrested patron might have "marked the end of the little Bolter gold mine."[195]

The "Epitaph," however, was not an appeal to boycott the tavern, but, rather, an essay outlining the history of the bar and how changes at the Parkside marked the evolution of the assertiveness of the gay community and its ability to exert power. The police, described as "hot" by the Parkside management, had asked the Bolters for two *more* spyholes in the washroom after the 1979 incident (officers wanted to be able a view inside the two private stalls in addition to the urinal area), but management refused the request.[196] Rather than acquiesce to police requests, management, aware that dwindling business could worsen if it continued to disrespect its patrons, instead, began to employ a "gay man" who kept the "washrooms under surveillance" by following suspicious patrons down to the bathroom.[197] In addition, it sealed up the original spy-hole, by adding five new fresh tiles—ones that quite obviously stood out from the rest. After a decade, management finally covered up the infamous false ventilation grate and put an end to the surveillance and entrapment scheme that had threatened distinctions between public and private space and sex.

This was, in no small part, a reaction to the new gay social scene that, by 1980, was no longer limited to two taverns, two or three hotel bars and a few dance clubs—most of the latter unlicensed. "The Rise of Gay Capitalism," a 1976 *Toronto Life* feature, outlined the burgeoning scene that included bars, bookshops and bathhouses, illustrated with a quote from Peter Maloney: "To sell services to gay people you have to be sensitive to gay people"—a simple enough notion that an increasing number of entrepreneurs were tweaking to, in part, thanks to

[195] "Every 46 Hours and Eight Minutes," *The Body Politic*, March, 1980, 10; "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic*, April 1980, 27. "Bolter" refers to Norman Bolter, owner.
[196] Norman Bolter and son.
[197] "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic*, April 1980, 27.

several decades of bar-based cultures who, in conjunction with tabloids, attempted to implement boycotts and demonstrate the queer counterpublic's economic power.[198] By the time the five new tiles sealed up the spy-hole, there were somewhere in the neighbourhood of a dozen options that welcomed gay patrons, including 18 East, the bar that some Spearhead members finally opened up as an alternative to the Parkside after years of complaining that the service, atmosphere and safety measures were substandard.[199] But the Parkside management's reaction was also the result of a hard-fought battle that insisted upon the right to public accommodation, while protesting the segregation of and discrimination against the gay community of Toronto, that grew out of bar-based cultures in which camp discourse and civil rights discourse, along with the threat of boycotts, were employed to force management to accommodate its patrons, free from discrimination. If forcing the Parkside to treat its patrons with respect appears to be a small, trivial battle, it was not—it was a clear expression of agency. Even aside from public accommodation, the patrons were also fighting for a space in which to exercise freedom of association and freedom of expression, a space in which to form social networks and engage in political organization. The battle over the bathroom in the Parkside helped galvanize the community and raise public awareness. It also helped the queer counterpublic develop a framework for future political movements that included creating protest literature, leafletting, community meetings, media outreach, public education, engaging the help of authorities and asserting its economic power in negotiations with private entrepreneurs. These actions took shape in the form that they did because of the existence of two, stable and enduring forums for communication—the taverns on Yonge and the circulating texts that organized them.

> But despite how hard the bars and clubs could be on people at times, they were nevertheless, the chief gathering places for gay males: places for drinking and

[198] "The Rise of Gay Capitalism," *Toronto Life*, September 1976, 150.
[199] Roebuck, *Spearhead*, 139. Spearhead, a group of motorcycle and leather enthusiasts, dominated the bar on Saturday afternoons when the group took over the south side of the bar.

> dancing, cruising and carousing. All things of which I was very fond. Frustrating though it often was, you could measure the progress of the gay movement, whatever the decade, by the way people in gay bars talked about gay life. –Peter Zorzi (one of the founders of *The Body Politic*)[200]

Conclusion

In the 1950s and 1960s, the tensions between "good" sex in the queer counterpublic, expressed largely through the columns penned by Jim Egan, and the "bad" sex exposed in other parts of the tabloids largely fell along lines that distinguished the public and private spheres. Sex in public—generally in public bathrooms and parks—was not only a concern in the tabloids, it was also a concern for bar managers and police. Although tabloid boycott actions and bar-based strategies of resistance were the first courses of action to protest the intrusive surveillance at the Parkside, ultimately, it also took the work of more conventional political action—stemming from civil rights discourse and media outreach to end police harassment. When the interests between the stakeholders collided and the clash became increasingly public, factions within the queer counterpublic redefined itself, clarifying its discursive identity and aligning itself with the good, private sex, while simultaneously asserting its right to privacy and to freedom from abusive police practices. This expression of the politics of respectability is, in itself, a form of resistance against police brutality and intrusions on the queer counterpublic's expectations of privacy by the state. Increasingly, however, this strategy would be questioned by activist groups with different strategies for resistance—ones that challenged the politics of respectability.

[200] Rick Bébout. *Promiscuous Affections*, 1971.

CHAPTER FOUR - "Ugly Toronto puts in its annual appearance": Sex in Public

INTRODUCTION

As Toronto the Gay became more centralized and visible in the late 1960s and early 1970s, several tensions emerged, beginning with an increasing unease over the Yonge Street commercial district by most activists—liberationists and assimilationists, alike. In addition, as a backlash against sexual liberation movements began to form, the queer community experienced frequent clashes with the police and the public. This, in turn, shaped both queer politics, which became more militant, and the culture of the queer counterpublic, in which "camp" began to fade and new discursive identities emerged. These tensions were exacerbated by the increasing public concern over the sex trade on Yonge, which was a hot topic even before the 1977 murder of Emanuel Jaques—an event that threatened to transform anxiety into a moral panic. The threat of mob violence and the police force's complicity in that threat forced the queer counterpublic to defend and re-define itself using new tactics that were more aggressive than the ones developed in the bar-based cultures of the 1950s and 1960s. The activism directed at resisting the systemic discrimination of the police force—both at the St. Charles tavern and in connection with the 1981 Operation Soap raids were a culmination of a coherent effort to form coalitions that included both liberationists and assimilationists, as well as mobilizing less politically active segments of the queer community.

Gay Liberation and Gay Capitalism

After 1970, there were a number of changes in Toronto the Gay, not the least of which was that, after the closing of Letros (1970), all but a few public drinking spaces that allowed queer patronage were located north of Dundas—the vast majority of them on Yonge. At the same

time as the physical community became more centralized and visible, so, too, did lesbians and gays become the subject of more articles in Toronto's daily papers. Unlike the news items over the previous two decades that situated lesbian and gays in the context of medical or legal discourse, the new stories followed in the footsteps of Sidney Katz's "The Homosexual Next Door" and a normalizing discourse was increasingly established. This discursive shift was the result of the civil rights arguments that had been repeatedly circulated in the tabloids, much of which written by Egan, who had worked to establish the trope of a middle-class, conservatively-dressed monogamous couple whose private life resembled a conventional heterosexual marriage, right down to "masculine" and "feminine" roles within the relationship.[1] In addition to these, newspapers such as the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* started to treat gay liberation as a serious civil rights matter and covered some events held by Community Homophile Association of Toronto and Toronto Gay Action. The *Globe* reported on the "We Demand" protest in August of 1971, at which 100 protesters urged the government to implement substantive change at a demonstration on Parliament Hill.[2] The protest marked the second anniversary of the 1969 amendments to the Criminal Code, which had decriminalized "homosexual acts" between consenting adults. Protestors would claim this had "done nothing" to improve lives, partially because, as historian Thomas Hooper argued, it was only ever a partial decriminalization, meant to legalize mononormative sexual behaviour.[3]

Along with coverage in the dailies, there was also news about gay political activism in at least one Toronto-based alternative news source, namely, *Guerilla*—a counterculture magazine

[1] In addition to Egan's writings in *Justice Weekly* and *GAY*, there was other, similar content written by other authors in *GAY*. In addition, Duke Gaylord's column in *Tab* was frequently devoted to civil rights arguments (as opposed to what was happening in the bars) throughout the 1960s. George Hislop and Peter Maloney were both profiled in daily papers.
[2] "Equality Urged For Homosexuals," *The Globe and Mail*, August 30, 1971, 3. Not the only "We Demand" protest, since there was also a simultaneous one held in Vancouver.
[3] Ibid; Hooper, "'More Than Two Is a Crowd," 53-81. Decriminalization only applied to sex in private, between no more than two consenting adults over the age of 21.

that, although not a "gay" publication, did have gay content. When Jearld Moldenhauer, owner of the newly-established Glad Day bookstore, pushed the other members of the *Guerilla* collective editorial board to take an explicit stand in conjunction with the coverage of the "We Demand" protest, he was rebuffed.[4] In addition, Moldenhauer's story on the protest, itself, had been "heavily" edited, something he and several other contributors interpreted as part of a pattern that gave short shrift to gay issues. Working at *Guerilla* was characterized as a constant fight for space for gay content, a situation that inspired Moldenhauer to form a new collective that would start a new, explicitly gay publication, *The Body Politic*, in 1971.[5] One of the first issues of the new magazine covered the "We Demand" protest and, in addition, a piece celebrating the St. Charles Hallowe'en drag ball as an expression of pride—albeit not a perfect one, given that it reinforced stereotypes about the queer community. The discursive construction of the queer counterpublic, however, was just as hotly contested as ever in the *Body Politic*, which, in both 1971 and 1972, ran ambivalent articles devoted to the event: "Even the average downtown gay disavows himself from drag night because, well, people think we're <u>all</u> like that."[6]

It was not just Hallowe'en that some segments of the queer community were distancing themselves from, since the 1970s was an era of intense political action and organization and, within that action, there was a great diversity in opinion over what, precisely, queer Toronto was supposed to look like. In his memoir, *Queer Progress*, which recalls gay activism in Toronto in the 1970s, Tim McCaskell describes the main split as nothing short of a "civil war," between the radical "liberationists" and the liberal "assimilationists."[7] On top of the fundamental divide, there was also a splintering of activist groups—an estimated 40 to 50 queer organizations, some more

[4] Rick Bébout, *Promiscuous Affections*, 1971
[5] Ibid.
[6] "The Hallowe'en Phenomenon," *The Body Politic*, Autumn 1972, 21.
[7] Tim McCaskell. *Queer Progress: From Homophobia to Homonationalism* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2016), 45-46.

political than others, were formed in the 10 years between the establishment of the first Toronto homophile group and the protests over Operation Soap in 1981.[8] Peter Zorzi cites this as evidence of the city's unique political culture, referring to Toronto's queer community as the largest and most "politically attuned" in North America.[9] No doubt, some of this political awareness and action was fostered by the *Body Politic* (and the collective that was responsible for publishing it), since this radical vehicle for activism was one of the longest-running queer publications in North America.[10] Although some of the people involved with the *Body Politic* did, on occasion, frequent the Parkside and other taverns, the bars were generally not considered to be important political centres for either organization or discussion by the people who were involved in that collective.[11] Sentiment regarding bars among activist circles fell along a spectrum that ranged between ideas that the spaces were a "necessary evil" to outright antipathy and a sense that they impeded both individual growth and possibilities for community development.[12]

To some degree, this was the result of a massive shift in drinking culture that foretold the end of the old beverage room. The modernization of Ontario's liquor laws meant a relaxation of rules regarding moral architecture and restrictions on entertainment, leading to an increase in venues that specialized in live music, dancing and other entertainment options. The Parkside and the St. Charles were relics from a time when provincial law enforced tight drinking regulations that some blamed for the uptight and paranoid culture within Toronto's gay bars. The rules were

[8] Peter Zorzi. *Queer Catharsis*, "Pride in Toronto in the 1970s," 2011, 2016. Accessed 2016, 2017 at www.onthebookshelves.com
[9] Ibid.
[10] Michael Connors Jackman. "Bawdy Politics: Remembering Sexual Liberation," (Toronto: York University, 2013), Jackman refers to the *Body Politic* as the centrepiece of queer activist history in Canada.
[11] Interview with Gerald Hannon, conducted by Sismondo, March 14, 2016; Interview with Ed Jackson, conducted by Sismondo, March 16, 2016. Both Hannon and Jackson emphasized before the interview that the bars were never their scene.
[12] Catherine J. Nash, "Consuming sexual liberation: Gay business, politics and Toronto's Barracks Bathhouse raids." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 48 (1): 82-105. I only discovered this quote and Nash's research as a result of reading Tom Hooper's dissertation. Tom Hooper. "'Enough is Enough': The Right to Privacy Committee and Bathhouse Raids in Toronto, 1978-83" (Doctoral Dissertation) York University, 2016. Accessed by contacting author.

said to have been created so that bar-goers could never be allowed to "give the impression that they might be enjoying themselves."[13] Laws like this were relaxed throughout the 1970s, which made it possible for more lively, dynamic bars to open, such as Quest, Dudes and The Barn.[14] By the end of the decade, many had stand-up licences, meaning that patrons could drink while standing up or walk around with a drink in hand—a change that altered cruising patterns. Pool tables, dart boards, sound systems and televisions were slowly installed in bars throughout this period, meaning that the spaces evolved into multi-faceted entertainment venues, which were louder, more vibrant and infinitely more suitable for cruising, but considerably less suitable for meaningful political discussions.[15] That was something Ed Jackson observed one night when he was trying to sell papers in a bar and was challenged about the *Body Politic*'s editorial decisions to publish "heavy theoretical shit" instead of pictures of boys."[16] The critic's companions laughed and Jackson opted not to take up the debate, noting that the "smoky, noisy conviviality of a bar was the last place to deal adequately with his questions."[17] This anecdote reveals how the new public drinking spaces resisted serious, nuanced political conversations, a trait in bar patrons that increased as space was increasingly claimed for leisure—entertainment and sex, primarily. The bar patron even went so far as to accuse Jackson and the other "gay lib types" of being prudes, asking if they had to "give up sex" in order to "dig gay liberation?"[18]

The entire incident is indicative of the ambivalent relationship that liberationists had with queer public drinking spaces (as well as bathhouses) in the 1970s—an ambivalence that had its

[13] "The Homosexual Life in Canada," *Saturday Night*, September 1969, 30.
[14] "Dynamic" here literally refers to freedom of movement. Ontario liquor laws came under fire in 1977, both by people who wanted Exhibition stadium to be able to sell beer at baseball games and by those who objected to topless floor staff at licensed establishments. The reforms were mixed. The Sunday "blue law" that required food be served with all beverages was repealed in 1978, for example. Standing while drinking began to be permitted in 1977 and the St. Charles got a "stand-up" license that year.
[15] "The Three Dukes." *The Globe and Mail*, November 9, 1977, F8. This article about the overdue arrival of the British pub to Toronto attributes three new openings to the modernization of liquor laws that finally allowed standing with a drink. The image accompanying the article is of people playing darts and the writer mentions the culture of standing at British pubs.
[16] "Nudity and Sexism," *The Body Politic*, November/December 1975, 12.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.

roots in a few fundamental problems with Toronto's commercial district. First, since the gay liberationists were increasingly committed to visibility, staging Pride parades on busy Saturday afternoons in the summer and picnics on Hanlan's point, spending a lot of time gathering in Toronto's extremely private bars (or bathhouses) was antithetical to the larger goals of the movement—visibility.[19] Zaps, a political protest strategy that involved staging disruptive, theatrical events designed to force people to confront their own discomfort, epitomized that strategy. On September 7, 1971, for example, 13 members of Toronto Gay Action adopted "straight mannerisms" to get past the bouncers at the Pretzel Bell tavern and, at a pre-determined time, "liberated the dance floor."[20] The group was forcibly ejected by five bouncers and some patrons in a process that, ultimately, degenerated into a violent 30-minute brawl both inside and outside the bar, probably the most violent reaction to the "zap" protests, which included at least three at Toronto bars in the early 1970s; the 1976 Kiss-In, which saw two gay couples kissing at the corner of Yonge and Bloor; and a sit-in at Queen's Park in August, 1979.[21] Camp rituals, such as the ones at Letros, which challenged people's perceptions of masculinity and femininity, were replaced with "zaps", which were more aggressively confrontational and provocative.

In addition to any kind of natural reluctance gay liberationists had in regards to invisibility, the management at both the Parkside and the St. Charles, the two main bars in which a conversation would have actually been possible, made matters worse by discouraging any kind of political activism. In addition to the incidents recalled by an interview subject, Paul, who was barred from the Parkside by waiter Frank for his affiliation with the *Body Politic*, McCaskell recalled a similar issue when trying to distribute flyers in the St. Charles.[22] The group sent half

[19] Peter Zorzi, "Pride in Toronto in the 1970s," in *Queer Catharsis*, Zorzi argues that the Pride events in the 1970s were far more disruptive and visible than the ones in the 1980s, which took place on Sundays when many Toronto residents opted to stay home or go to church. The bars in Toronto were originally designed so that patrons could not be seen by passersby on the street outside. There were no patio's either.
[20] Peter Zorzi, "The Zap of the Pretzel Bell," in *Queer Catharsis.* Men danced with men.
[21] Although the Kiss-In was not referred to as a "zap" by the participants, it is part of a pattern of provocative political actions.
[22] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014. Paul.

its members in through the back entrance, insisting on their right to free speech. As the bouncers dealt with that problem, the other half slipped in through the front and leafletted the bar. McCaskell added that these tactics did "little to improve relations between activists and businesses."[23] Improving said relations was not a high priority for the gay liberationists, however, since the prevailing philosophy in the group was about making a fundamental social change, on the grounds that the capitalist system would never accommodate gays and lesbians.[24] This gets at the root of the "civil war" between the assimilationists and the liberationists, since the far less radical assimilationists—including Peter Maloney and George Hislop—were viewed as being "aligned with business interests and middle-class respectability."[25] Neither group, however, was completely in support of Toronto's gay commercial district in the 1970s, albeit for different reasons. As historian Catherine Nash argues, liberationists wanted gays and lesbians to form social networks in non-commercial spaces, such as community centres, so that it would be easier to establish a commitment to collective action.[26] Others argued that frequenting the ghetto, especially its bars, was a degrading activity, on account of the shabby venues, at which members of the community were constantly reminded of their second-class citizenship through disrespectful treatment at the hands of management and its staff.[27]

Post-Camp – Leather and Liberation

When Letros closed, one tabloid referred to the event as the closing of "another chapter of Toronto," indicating that it was the end of an era—one in which camp reigned, both publicly and privately.[28] Inside Letros, men taught each other the camp rituals of swish, drag and bitching

[23] McCaskell, *Queer Progress,* 46.
[24] "Before Pride, There Was a Kiss: Toronto Gay Activists Look Back on 1976 Protest," *Toronto Star*, Jun 27, 2015, IN1. This is from McCaskell's quote. He added that was a mistake, give the rise of gay capitalism after this.
[25] McCaskell, *Queer Progress,* 45-46; "Peter Maloney Publicly Defies the Homosexual Myth," *The Toronto Star*, February 25, 1972, C6, 25. Maloney and Hislop were two of the first people featured in the *Toronto Star*'s pivot to normalizing discourse.
26 Nash, "Consuming sexual liberation," 82-105.
[27] Ibid.
[28] *Tab.* "The Gay Set," Jan 23, 1971, p8

and, in that sense, it was a space in which men learned how to be gay. By the end of the 1960s, Letros was losing patrons, not only for geographical reasons (in that the action had moved to Yonge) but also for cultural reasons, since younger people and gay liberationists had more options for self-expression than camp and no longer looked to those spaces to learn to be gay. McCaskell, for example, recalled finding the "bar scene and drag shows boring" and described his demeanour as gauche, shy and "awkward in a bar."[29] Gay liberation, on the other hand, provided a space in which McCaskell felt energized, comfortable and able to negotiate the contradiction between having an identity that he was "already supposed to be" and still needing to "learn *how* to be."[30]

This is not to say the bars were entirely apolitical. Journalist/activist Gerald Hannon recalled that it was common for the collective responsible for the *Body Politic* to head to the Parkside for a drink after meetings and, since he recalled that their discussions were always only about "gay lib," he thought it was safe to say that most of those discussions were political, even though he could not recall specifics.[31] In a contemporary article characterizing the culture of the Parkside, Hannon wrote of more specific, explicitly political gatherings, noting that the "York Rainbow Society for the Deaf" would sometimes meet there, and from time to time, "politicos" might push two or three tables together in the centre of the room" for "heated discussion."[32] Memoirist Brian Dedora also recalled that, throughout the 1970s, the bar was also patronized by a group of black men who had emigrated from the Caribbean—primarily Jamaica. [33] These groups shared the space with several enclaves who divided up the territory at the Parkside according to identity: In the men's beverage room, one corner was home to the "old queens," the

[29] McCaskell, *Queer Progress*, 29.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Interview with Gerald Hannon, conducted by Sismondo, March 14, 2016.
[32] "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic*, April, 1980, 26.
[33] Interview with Brian Dedora, conducted by Sismondo, July 25, 2017.

north wall of the men's beverage room was known as the "pharmacy" (a reference to the "young druggies" who drank in that space) and the south wall belonged to the "leather crowd," a group that was particularly large on Saturday afternoons, when the tavern was at its busiest.[34] In 1970, this latter group evolved into an official organization named "Spearhead," a gay leather and denim fraternity, that published a newsletter and held official outings, even though the majority of the social club's meetings took place at the Parkside.[35]

The leather crowd was a departure from the camp discourse of the 1950s and 1960s. Instead of swish and drag, the "boys" would "drip with masculinity at the Parkside in their leather jeans, boots and jackets" and then "let their hair down" later at a dance club.[36] Spearhead had a unique and ambivalent relationship with the waiters at the Parkside, in that they threw money into a communal drinking pool and let the "waiter (Big Frank or Little Steve)" help themselves to the money, picking up "the appropriate amount including a tip."[37] Despite being loyal (and having worked out a relationship that secured relatively reliable service), Spearhead members were not always enamoured of the Parkside. In its newsletter, *Phalia*, a writer explained that he had recently been to several American bars and, upon return, was struck by how "filthy and hot" the Parkside was and how you had to over-tip the "beer pushers" if you didn't "want to wait half an hour for the next round."[38] There was no way around this slow service, since patrons were not allowed to carry their own drinks from the bar to the table, in accordance with that same Ontario law that interfered with patrons' ability to cruise until 1977.[39]

[34] McCaskell, *Queer Progress*, 29; "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic*, April, 1980, 26; Interview with Don and Paul, October 28, 2014.
[35] "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic*, April, 1980, 26.
[36] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, December 26, 1970, 8.
[37] Roebuck. *Spearhead*, 6
[38] Roebuck, *Spearhead*, 140.
[39] Roebuck, *Spearhead*, 141. The St. Charles got a stand-up license in 1977.

Despite dissatisfaction with the Parkside, it proved too difficult to move Spearhead to another bar at the time so the leather club stayed put.[40]

Although the leather club was one of the most identifiable groups with a discursive identity that rejected camp's swish and drag, it was not alone, given the overall trend towards strength and conventional tropes of masculinity that was emerging in the early 1970s. This was representative of the shift in political expression, which was evolving from subtle critiques into overt demands for change, as well as practical concerns about self-defence in an increasingly volatile era and geographical area. A manager at the Maygay, the disco above the St. Charles, noted this, when he was asked if there were a lot of fights in his club. He said no, but acknowledged that, on occasion, queer-bashers would come in to "try to start something."[41] He then pointed to the couples and indicated they were also able to handle themselves when situations arose: "They may look like sissies but they work out at the Y, I want to tell you." Four years later, the cover story of an issue of the *Body Politic* dealt with the issue of self-defence.[42] It was a personal essay, in which the writer recounted an incident that began when some thugs noticed him holding hands with his partner out in public—then turned violent. After years of a "sedentary lifestyle," the traumatic brawl prompted him to join the gym and start to work out four times per week. He said he was "learning to kill," since he determined it was either that or go back to hiding. The politics of visibility had greater inherent risks than camp discourse.

Violent incidents on Yonge street outside the St. Charles Halloween Ball may also have been increasing over tensions that stemmed from an overall anxiety over moral decay, associated with the downtown core—particularly the Yonge strip as it became increasingly associated with

[40] Eventually, it did move, but not in the 1970s.
[41] "The Strip has a pastime to suit every preference," *The Globe and Mail*, July 31, 1971, 27.
[42] "Learning to Kill," *The Body Politic*. February 1976, 8

sex. In early 1972, Mayor David Crombie warned the business owners on Yonge that they had "better clean up the 'growing cancer' of smut and pornography."[43] The mayor fondly remembered a time when the strip had "just one pornographic book store, one skin show and one strip joint—just enough."[44] Aware of the fact that nothing less than "free expression versus public welfare" was at stake, the "tiny, perfect mayor" did not wish to employ any draconian measures but, rather, claimed he would focus reform on loudspeakers and unlicensed peddlers who were considered nuisances and obstructed the flow of pedestrian traffic.[45] Crombie's hope was that the industry would engage in "self-policing," motivated by the "threat of a little muscle waiting around the corner."[46] But, as historian Daniel Ross argues, a surprisingly cohesive group of municipal politicians were in agreement that the moral decay on Yonge street had to be reversed—through policy initiatives—to avoid "downtown decline," a problem that was being discussed in urban centres throughout North America.[47] Articles dealing with moral decay on Yonge appeared regularly in the *Toronto Star, Globe and Mail* and *Toronto Sun*, ranging from exposés of the strip clubs and "extras" that could be procured at the nude body rubs, to allegations that the sex trade on the strip was run by the mafia.[48] Other pieces suggested the changes were only cosmetic, arguing that vice had always reigned on Toronto's main street.[49] As Ross points out, however, there was something "fundamentally different" about the postwar sex industry, in that it was advertised in bold neon letters, which attracted attention from both consumers, concerned citizens and media.[50]

[43] "Single strip show enough for Yonge, mayor says," *The Globe and Mail.* January 5, 1973, 1
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Daniel Ross. "Remaking Downtown Toronto: Politics, Development, and Public Space on Yonge Street, 1950-1980, 119
[48] *The Toronto Sun* was a tabloid established in 1971, immediately after the demise of *The Toronto Telegram*. Since many of the writers moved from the defunct broadsheet to the new tabloid, it is considered to be something akin to a later incarnation of the same newspaper.
[49] "The Strip: A peek behind the neon signs," *The Toronto Star*, May 10, 1975, A 12; "Nothing stays the same on Yonge St. Strip," *The Globe and Mail*, April 17, 1975, 43; "Vice probers demand: Get Mob off Yonge St.," *The Toronto Sun*, June 7, 1977, 2. There are others but this is a representative sample of a range of angles from 1975-1977.
[50] Ross, "Remaking Downtown Toronto," 123.

Although Toronto is not associated with a particularly influential evangelical right contingent, "Renaissance Canada," an evangelical anti-gay organization founded by Ken Campbell in 1974, was active in that era, successfully recruiting converts to this branch of Christianity, as well as mobilizing his followers to take action on the municipal and street level. Ross cites a co-ordinated effort between 10 local evangelical churches that mobilized citizens to protest the increased sex trade on Yonge, for example.[51] This movement was an outgrowth of the nascent American revival that grew out of the Jesus movement and wove together anti-communist politics, national security, biological arguments for rigid gender roles and compulsory heterosexuality, and religious duty in a particularly personal and emotionally-charged campaign.[52] In part, its growth—in both the United States and Canada—was a reaction to the political movements and protests against the Vietnam War, discrimination against African-Canadians and African-Americans, as well as gender discrimination. At issue was not only the debate over the political dissent but, in addition, the appearance and comportment of the people involved in the civil disobedience, who appeared to buck convention for gender and class performativity, all of which were signifiers for involvement in the cultural and sexual revolution. Heterosexual monogamy as a natural form was being challenged by several separate, but related, movements—feminism, gay liberation and sexual liberation, including groups that advocated opting to be single, no-fault divorce and engaging in open marriages, in opposition to the notion of heterosexual monogamy as a fundamental building block for society.[53]

The volatile and visible rise of several political, cultural and social movements sparked a backlash that manifested itself in an aggressive campaign to re-establish gender norms. One of the first texts was James Dobson's *Dare to Discipline* (1970), which argued against Dr. Spock-

[51] Ibid.
[52] Stephen P Miller. *The Age of Evangelicalism: America's Born-Again Years.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 27-28.
[53] Nena and George O'Neill's 1972 book *Open Marriage: A New Lifestyle for Couples*, for example, was a best-seller.

styled permissive parenting and endorsed corporal punishment for children who strayed outside conventional normative behaviour as a prophylactic antidote to the culture of rebellion. The connection between soft parenting, societal decay and an increase in homosexual behaviour was not only the province of Americans and evangelicals, either. Canada had its own pundits, such as Dr. Daniel Cappon, an Environmental Studies professor from York University, who argued that homosexuality was a lifestyle fad that was a sign of the coming fall of a debauched and decadent society and the result of "confused liberalism and gutless permissiveness."[54] Cappon was one of many who helped link sexual "aberration" with social and environmental decay. They also naturalized ideas of normal gender roles by linking them to scientific discourse, which was then used in arguments for subservient femininity and a return to heteronormative gender roles, which were put forth as better for both societies and for individuals who would no longer be fighting their own biological destiny.

The most successful expression of that philosophy was probably the *Total Woman* movement that, through books and seminars, taught millions of women in the early 1970s that the path to fulfillment was to surrender their lives and serve their husbands.[55] The flip side of this blueprint for subservient femininity was "militant masculinity," two halves of the evangelical argument that relied on a social, religious and biological basis for rigid gender roles that emerged in the early 1970s. Although the main figures—James Dobson, Phyllis Schlafly, Anita Bryant, George Gilder and Marabel Morgan—were from the United States, Canadians had plenty of exposure to this type of rhetoric, through its own evangelical movement, its own scientific pundits (such as Cappon), as well as cross-border media consumption. In 1975, for example, the Feb 1 edition of CFTO's *The Norm Perry Show* hosted both George Gilder, who was there to

[54] "The homosexual hoax: This aberration is not a right." *Toronto Star*, January 10, 1973, 6
[55] Miller, *The Age of Evangelicalism*, 24-26.

discuss male superiority, as well as an advocate for the *Total Woman* movement.[56] Later that year, James Dobson visited Toronto to give two talks at the People's Church, (which had a 2,500-seat auditorium), and the *Toronto Star* devoted a full page to the "Total Woman" phenomenon.[57] This assault on activist groups that were perceived as eroding fundamental family values took the form of personal attacks that, increasingly, associated homosexuality with societal decay, threats to the family and child rape. Tina Fetner argues that the increasingly "oppositional, yet symbiotic" relationship between the religious right and lesbian and gay activism shaped gay liberation politics, ratcheting up the politics of anger on both sides, while increasing the public profile of both anti-gay evangelicalism and queer activism.[58] This would become increasingly ugly on Yonge Street, which had already been established as an important battle ground for battling moral depravity.

Toronto the Ugly: Hallowe'en and the Strip

With Letros closed, the drag ball at the St. Charles quickly became Toronto's most important Hallowe'en party. Its size, alone, was enough to ensure that it continued to host the event throughout the 1970s, despite its other shortcomings. Although it was "more upscale" than the Parkside, it was neither hospitable nor well-maintained.[59] One columnist observed that the St. Charles was eager to take money from its gay clientele but felt no compunction to provide a comfortable setting: "So how about a paint job in OUR room, Mr. Greenspan?" asked Lady Bessborough.[60] In addition, others stayed away because of the clientele. One interview subject, Neil, who frequented Malloney's, Letros and the Westbury's rooftop piano bar and once competed in the Miss Letros pageant (and won), said he refused to go to the St. Charles and

[56] "Sat. Feb. 1," *Toronto Star*, February 1, 1975, 21.
[57] "Advertisement in the Evangelical section of the Church advertisement page," *Toronto Star*, August 23, 1975, A13; "Sex and Old Time Religion Make a Best-Seller," *Toronto Star*, August 16, 1975, A9.
[58] Tina Fetner. *How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), xxii, 23.
[59] McCaskell, *Queer Progress*, 29.
[60] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, December 14, 1963, 13.

Parkside because of the clientele, which he called "trash."[61] Another columnist pegged the Golden Nugget (on Yonge, just south of Bloor) and Malloney's (Grenville, west of Bay, north of College), as the two bars that were frequented by higher-income patrons, where, even though a "huge percentage of the patrons at either M's or the GN" were "homosexual," they were not likely to "advertise the fact."[62] Patrons at Malloney's and the Golden Nugget were characterized as "professional people with good jobs, professional jobs," who tended to fit in if they were "heterosexual looking, quiet, well-mannered, and reasonably good looking."[63] By contrast, the "pseudo" class, that thought of themselves as "Dior Model(s)" and liked to sit in "absolute elegance," went to the Park Plaza Roof Lounge or the Sky Lounge at the Westbury.[64] And the final segment of Toronto's gay population, the "scum of the Gay Set" drank at the St. Charles.[65] This guide concluded with the advice that people should not try to rise above their stations: "RATHER THAN cheer yourself and run to the nearest bar that is a notch or two above your level, you must first be truthful and realistic. Look at your last pay cheque. If you earn below $5000, then you had better stick to the St. Charles."[66]

[61] Interview with Don, Paul and Neil, conducted by Sismondo, May 26, 2015 (Neil)
[62] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, June 5, 1965, 13.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid. The Snake Pit here does not refer to Letros, but, rather, the Westbury's basement bar. Although confusing, a close reading of this column reveals that it is a new nickname for the Westbury. Letros is entirely left out of this second article, indicating the geographical shift.

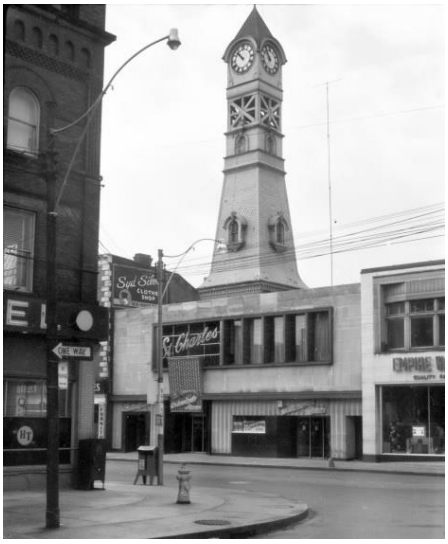

Image 20 - The St. Charles Tavern, 1955. James Victor Salmon. Toronto Public Library.

The main floor at the St. Charles was dominated by "a U-shaped bar" in the middle of the large room, with the bottom of the "U" close to the rear door of the bar.[67] The rear entrance, by which patrons could enter from the alley west of Yonge (now known at St. Luke's Way), was the alternative entrance for patrons who did not want to be spotted on Yonge. "That's why the St. Charles was popular … because of the back laneway entrance," said Paul, in an interview.[68] It also had a "lounge and a small stage to the left" of the U-shaped bar and a beer parlour to the right (on the north side of the building).[69] Since patrons were not allowed to walk around with drinks in the St. Charles until 1977, it was common to leave a drink on the table in the lounge or beer parlour and "cruise the U to see who was around and who might give you the eye."[70] This same memoirist included a description of a regular customer he described as "an old queen who sat down by the jukebox against the wall." This patron would undo his shirt to "show a line of

[67] Dedora, *A Slice of Voice*, 111
[68] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014. (Paul)
[69] Dedora, *A Slice of Voice*, 111
[70] Ibid.

tape wrapped around his body just under his nipples which he played with while he mumbled into his beer."[71] One article described the clientele as "no different from the customers sitting around the Men's Beverage Room of some hotel in outer Scarborough."[72] An interview subject described the St. Charles as a "place that was actually very comfortable," for a person who had experience drinking in the beverage rooms of rural Ontario at the time, remarking that the "downstairs of the St. Charles was just like any small-town hotel bar."[73]

It was a different crowd than the one at Letros, however. In an account of the 1969 Hallowe'en ball, a tabloid columnist claimed that he had never "seen such a large crowd on Yonge," characterizing the spectators as "hooligans," who were, fortunately, held back by "Toronto's finest," who ensured there were no "ugly incidents to report."[74] In the ensuing years, the crowds started to swell, with one obviously flawed account from 1970 claiming there were over 50,000 "drag watchers."[75] Again, the police were credited with being out in "full force," and with doing a "great, great job" at crowd control.[76] That year, the camera crews were on Yonge covering the event for local television, prompting one writer to claim this represented a "breakthrough," since it was the first time that "Toronto's biggest non-event had been recognized by the media," and declared the "press blackout had come to an end."[77] The writer was in error, of course, since television crews had been at Letros in previous years and the event had been covered by the *Telegram,* a mainstream daily. This year, however, might have marked the first time the media had covered the Yonge Street version of Hallowe'en, which would become a very different scene.[78]

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[71] Dedora, *A Slice of Voice*, 109.
[72] "Send no Psychiatrists to Leo," *Saturday Night*, August 1972, 25.
[73] Interview with Michael, conducted by Sismondo, Jan 25, 2016.
[74] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, December 6, 1969, 13.
[75] "The Gay Set," *Tab*, December 12, 1970, 8. The crowd estimate of 50,000 cannot be correct. However, 5,000 seems plausible.
[76] Ibid.
[77] "The Hallowe'en Phenomenon," *The Body Politic*, Autumn 1972, 21
[78] Ibid.

Most accounts consistently describe the crowd on Yonge as a degenerating force morphed from "jeering straights" into a mob scene where "all the hard work, shopping for wigs and jewellry and all of the labour involved in "stitching and beading" would be "destroyed and spoiled by a shower of sliming eggs."[79] Within a year or two of the St. Charles having its monopoly on the Hallowe'en ball, the ever-growing crowd started to become a political issue for gay activists, as the mob became more menacing and drag performers grew less willing to tolerate the harassment. Although the contestants could have gone in the back laneway entrance, they continued to stage the Hallowe'en parade "up and down Yonge into the St. Charles" even though there was a "crowd on the east side of Yonge Street, being rather abusive and pelting" contestants with both tomatoes and eggs.[80] In either the late 1960s or the early 1970s, a group of activists began leafletting the crowds, at first, "sort of discretely," according to interview subject, Paul, since they were afraid of being attacked themselves but wanted "to tell them that it was not really all that cool."[81] That year's leafletting "didn't have much of an effect," Paul recalled and, the following year, the group initiated a move to enlist the help of CBC radio.[82] In anticipation of the news coverage, the group planted some "gay activists" in the crowd, so that the CBC team had a range of people to interview.[83] The *Toronto Star* first covered the Hallowe'en drag parade in 1971 with a brief article describing a crowd of between 5,000 and 8,000 people, tight control by the police and no real incidents other than "hoots and shouts" from the crowd.[84] Traffic slowed "to a crawl" from 10 p.m. to 1 a.m., "side streets were closed off to automobiles," as was an entire block of sidewalk, so that police could allow tavern admission only to "admitted and

[79] Dedora, *A Slice of Voice*, 110.
[80] Interview with Don and Paul, conducted by Sismondo, Oct. 28, 2014. (Paul)
[81] Ibid
[82] Ibid
[83] Ibid
[84] Paul was born in 1946. He recalls selling *the Body Politic* in 1971, 1972 and 1973. It is possible that his recollection is from 1970 (or earlier) but he is unsure of the exact dates.

obvious homosexuals." The fact that "members of the University of Toronto Homophile Association" were in the crowds, passing out "leaflets urging understanding of homosexuals" was also noted in the article.[85]

That same day, the first issue of the *Body Politic* was published. The new magazine had splintered off from *Guerilla*—an alternative magazine with some gay content.[86] The new magazine's lead story was "Unmasquerade," an essay about the significance of the Hallowe'en drag ball, in which the author argued the ball was a "small but significant skirmish" in the "wars of sexual liberation."[87] Although the article expressed ambivalence connected with the event, he described a "sense of elation" at the blatant display—the first time he had "ever seen gay people revealing themselves publicly as gays."[88] This feeling was eclipsed by the "jeers" and "contemptuous laughter" and a feeling of hatred for the drag queens that confirmed the "straight belief that all faggots were limp-wristed and effeminate."[89] Struggling with the meaning of these ambivalent interpretations, the writer ultimately concluded that, although the Hallowe'en parade was not representative of the wider community and played on hackneyed stereotypes, it was still an event that empowered some members and fostered a sense of pride. This type of ambivalence was not new. More than half a decade earlier, *GAY* magazine ran a piece about a conversation overheard in a "crowded bar" in which one patron asked another how "straight people" were ever expected to "understand the homosexual" when he "parades in shocking clothes and is obviously feminine?"[90] "Not all homosexuals are obvious," another patron said, to which it was countered that the "obvious ones," were the "worst representatives of the group" and,

[85] Stein, *The City of Brotherly*, 109. This group was formed in October of 1969 and would eventually foster CHAT, a spin-off group. Stein notes that Philadelphia's Hallowe'en parades came to an end in 1972.
[86] *Guerilla* had gay content but it was not a gay publication.
[87] "Unmasquerade," *The Body Politic*, November/December 1971, 1.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] "The Biased I," *GAY*. August 15, 1964, 4. *GAY* was a short-lived Toronto magazine that aimed for a bi-monthly publication schedule.

unfortunately, these were the ones that seemed to define and characterize homosexuality in the larger sphere.[91] The conversation alludes to, not only the ambivalence within the gay community about sexual and gender performance, but also, the class distinction between the two camps.[92]

One commentator foresaw how dangerous the camp ritual was becoming as early as 1971, observing that the moment the "drag queens" went inside, "the mood of the crowd" turned "surly and vicious," as "gangs of tough adolescents, egged on by their girlfriends" began scanning the streets, "looking for 'queers' to beat up."[93] At the 1971 event, a 16-year-old in "semi-drag" was "tied to a post and left there until morning."[94] It was "potentially explosive" and "on its way to becoming a confrontation between a large gay subculture and a city that pretends it doesn't exist."[95] This, the writer argued, was endemic to this kind of "campy interchange," claiming that it did not subvert the power dynamic but, rather, reinforced the most extreme aspects of the sexual violence inherent in the audience interaction.[96] This was in direct opposition to the aims of the key stakeholders in the gay liberation movement, which was "working towards the removal of the fear and hatred that cause these tensions."[97] Despite the *Body Politic* collective's very best efforts at being inclusive, camp discourse, which fell along class lines, was marginalized and treated with ambivalence in the queer counterpublic.

As the potential for violence and confrontation escalated, so, too, did media interest. In 1973, CBC television devoted an eight-minute news segment to the events taking place at the St. Charles (and, to a lesser degree, the Manatee), in which spectators and participants alike were interviewed about the event.[98] Images included the crowd going wild over two contestants

[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] "The Hallowe'en Phenomenon," *The Body Politic,* Autumn 1972, 21
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.
[98] "Weekend," *CBC Television*, Oct 30, 1973. Accessible on digital archives at www.cbc.ca

kissing; reactions to two grand entrances; a jeering man critiquing the "queers"; a small clutch of men leafletting the crowd and another small group holding a stack of copies of the *Body Politic*. "How many gay men are drag queens?" asked the CBC reporter, and the interview subject responded with a response that demonstrated solidarity and cohesion: Percentages did not matter, he said, since all of the activists in attendance "fully embraced the drag queens."[99] This expression of inclusivity was an optimistic statement, given that the larger community was actually ambivalent—if not outright divided—towards the drag queens and the annual event, judging by the contemporary articles. Regardless, statements such as these helped to position the drag ball as an expression of pride.

In 1976, one *Body Politic* article referred to Hallowe'en on Yonge as a "yearly festival of homophobia," designed to "remind us where our place is and what can happen if we are to leave it."[100] Two years earlier, it took "forty policemen, eight cruisers and two officers in a hotel room overlooking the street to maintain order" amongst the thousands of people who went out that year.[101] "It is an ugly mob, made uglier" by the fact that there is so little to see … if anyone dared to show his face outside the St. Charles, he was pelted with eggs.[102] This is in reference to a change in the way the event was staged, since, at some point around 1975, the parade on Yonge was suspended and contestants began to use the tavern's rear entrance.[103] Incidentally, this is roughly the same time that the owners of the Parkside bought the St. Charles, meaning that both controversial taverns on Yonge were owned by the same family in the second half of the 1970s.[104] In his column in the *Globe*, sports writer Dick Beddoes wrote that the harassment

[99] Ibid.
[100] "Learning to Kill," *The Body Politic*. February 1976, 8
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] "Cops meet with gay community, say they'll halt Hallowe'en mob," *The Body Politic*, November 1979, 11. Although it appears to have been 1975, it could have been one or two years earlier. In "Cops meet," it was stated that it ended five or six years before this was published in 1979.
[104] "Epitaph for the Parkside," *The Body Politic*, April, 1980, 26.

escalated in 1976 and that "a certain ugliness" had developed as "curious onlookers" pelted the "so-called drag queens with eggs, paint and ripe tomatoes."[105] Beddoes claimed that Toronto had never "inspired" any "particular trouble with heterosexual gawkers" prior to this, especially when it was held across from the King Edward Hotel.[106] This is supported by a story about the drag ball that appeared in *The Toronto Star*, which reported that it had been a very quiet Hallowe'en for the police, except for being called to a "Yonge St. tavern to disperse a crowd that had been tossing eggs at transvestites attending the club's annual 'drag ball'."[107]

Although almost every interview subject and newspaper source asserted that the drag ball devolved from a carnival atmosphere event into a hate-fest over time, it is difficult to fix a precise date for when the drag ball was consumed by said ugliness. There is no question, however, that the media attention to the annual confrontation increased after 1976, even going so far as to preview the 1977 event and speculate that violence would be much worse than usual.

There were several reasons for the trepidation over Hallowe'en, 1977, some of which were related to a rock concert at the nearby Maple Leaf Gardens was scheduled to end and release thousands onto Yonge at about the same time as some of the drag queens would be arriving at the St. Charles. As well, Truxx and Mystique, two gay bars in Montreal, had recently been raided and, after several charges for gross indecency were laid, a demonstration of between 1,500 and 2,000 people congregated on Rue St. Catherine to protest. These were minor, however, compared with the local tensions, some of which could have been predicted early in the year when Anita Bryant launched the "Save Our Children" movement that aggressively pushed and promoted existing associations linking societal decay and the queer community, specifically gay

[105] "Swim bill, bitter pill," *The Globe and Mail*, October 28, 1977, 8.
[106] Ibid. Obviously there had been some trouble on Yonge prior to that, despite Beddoes either being ignorant of it or playing it down. At any rate, given the *Star* story, it seems that 1976 represented an increase in conflict.
[107] "Hallowe'en a Treat for Police," *The Toronto Star*, November 1, 1976, C1.

men and child rape. Queer activists reacted quickly to the threat, by forming a coalition to block Bryant's anti-gay message, even staging two protests at City Hall that summer—one in June, another in July. In reaction to the heightened tension, that summer, there was an uptick in articles about vice in Toronto, with a particular focus on Yonge Street, which Mayor Crombie calling "terrible" in the context of 386 charges laid against 47 premises over the previous 12 months.[108] Mere days after the protests and Crombie's comments, however, the city was rocked by a tragedy that seemed to confirm everybody's worst fears: missing 12-year-old Emanuel Jaques's body was found. He had been sexually assaulted and murdered by four men, including one Saul David Betesh, the accused ringleader, in an apartment above a body-rub parlour on Yonge, an event that polarized the city, threatened some of the gains gay liberationists had won over the previous five years and prompted calls for a crackdown on the "Sin Strip."

Although the Jaques tragedy did appear to set up the moral panic, anxieties were already high prior to the murder and the trial. One strange aspect to the story that seems to frequently escape notice is that Betesh was responsible for some of the heightened anxiety even before he killed Jaques, since he was the primary source for a *Sun* story about the under aged sex trade, that was likened to "white slavery."[109] George Hislop testified that the identity of the informant was common knowledge in the queer community, within which it was well-known that Betesh was not only the source but, in addition, the "instigator" of the article.[110] Betesh went on to become a "media celebrity," interviewed on CBC and CHUM, and was asked to find under aged boys involved in the sex trade for the media to interview.[111] Betesh's identity and participation in this media activity, which was casting a negative light on the queer community, became widely-

[108] "Yonge Street Strip: Bare bosoms, big bucks, and bound-up boys in blue," *The Globe and Mail*, July 25, 1977, 5.
[109] "Sex for sale in dial-a-boy ring," *Sunday Sun*, June 5, 1977, 12.
[110] "Jaques posed for photos before, tape of defendant says," *The Globe and Mail*, February 11, 1978, 5.
[111] Ibid.

known "on the street" and, as a result, he was subject to "verbal and physical attacks by street people downtown."[112] This came out at the murder trial (Betesh, one of four tried for sexually assaulting and killing the 12-year-old boy, was singled out as the most culpable of the four defendants). Betesh fed the media frenzy and moral panic, then, himself, committed the most shocking crime of the era—one that invoked old ideas about the criminal sexual psychopath and confirmed the public's fears about the sex trade.

Although Betesh and Hislop did not know each other well, Betesh sought Hislop's advice before Jaques' body was found on the rooftop of the body-rub parlour. Hislop advised Betesh to get legal representation and go to the police, which he did. The body was discovered on August 1. The following day, about 100 people marched on Yonge and at City Hall, carrying placards that read "Tar and feather them," "Hang them" and "Kill the dirty pigs."[113] At a closed meeting at City Hall, municipal and provincial officials met to discuss legislation to clean up the sex industry on Yonge.[114] Hislop, asked for comment, warned of the possibility of a backlash against the gay community and rebuked the media for putting emphasis on the fact that it was a "homosexual murder," when the "gay community" was "as appalled by this murder as any other group in the city."[115]

That same day, the *Globe and Mail* ran a story that drew the connection between gay bars, sex work, police surveillance on Yonge and the forthcoming Hallowe'en drag ball. It featured an interview with two sex workers at the St. Charles, that claimed police surveillance was not invasive in the area: "Five years ago the police used to hassle gays on the strip," said one interview subject.[116] "But not now," said the second, adding that police harassment had not been

[112] Ibid.
[113] "Mourning friends of Emanuel parade their anger on the strip," *The Toronto Star,* August 3, 1977, A1.
[114] "Province drafts bill to clean up Yonge strip," *The Toronto Star,* August 3, 1977, A3.
[115] "Homosexual backlash feared," *The Toronto Star,* August 3, 1977, A3.
[116] "Police no longer hassle gays on strip, homosexual says," *The Globe and Mail,* August 3, 1977, 5.

a problem in the four and a half years he had been working in the area.[117] The reporter, relating a conversation he had with a taxi driver, remarked that, even though Toronto took pride in its liberal sensibilities, the gay community—in particular, its sex workers—was not "popular" in the wake of the sensational murder.[118] The article concluded with a quote from the sex workers: "You know every Hallowe'en, we have a big party here…The police are always outside making sure no straights are allowed in."[119]

Beddoes reported in his *Globe and Mail* column that Metro police "did it right" at that year's Hallowe'en ball.[120] For those unfamiliar with the ritual, he explained that "Homosexual Hallowe'en frolics" were traditional at the St. Charles, since it was the only night the "boys" could "play Mrs. Dress-Up without fear of being pounced upon by angry platoons of straight-thinking, tunnel-visioned Anita Bryants."[121] Beddoes said that 140 constables were on duty in the Yonge-Carlton area—enough, apparently, to control the mob, an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 that "clotted the street across from the St. Charles, most of them there to gawk, several to throw garbage, some to call homosexuals unchaste names."[122] The columnist contrasted this with the scene inside the St. Charles, which he described as "sedate," mostly involving the customers talking together and drinking beer, with some, uninterested in the show, watching a football game.[123] Another report claimed that, inside the bar, the "drag show goes on without a hitch."[124] Outside, about 40 people were taken into custody—one of whom tried to assault "a gay" but "missed, and smashed his fist through an unoffending window."[125] A photo of the event made the front page of the *Sun*, which estimated the crowd at only 2,200 gawkers. Two more items

[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] "Let's hear it for the police," *The Globe and Mail*, November 2, 1977, 8.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.
[124] "Straight Hate on Hallowe'en," *The Body Politic*, December 1978/Jan 1979," 8.
[125] "Let's hear it for the police," *The Globe and Mail*. November 2, 1977, 8.

appeared in that Toronto paper that Hallowe'en—an image of an egg being thrown from a passing car and a brief item about the arrests.[126] *The Toronto Star* reported that 17 were arrested in addition to those merely held until the end of the event to "prevent a breach of the peace."[127] Still, despite the arrests and claims that the police attempts to keep the crowd away from the St. Charles entrance had been successful, the *Body Politic* reported that some members of the mob managed to rush the front door to rip it open while the police looked the other way.[128]

Since the police could not be relied upon to keep the community safe, the Gay Alliance Toward Equality (GATE) had already been hard at work, organizing defensive measures drawing on community resources, which were beginning to be well-developed, since self-defence classes and gym culture had become a fixture of the queer counterpublic. In 1977, GATE launched "Operation Jack-O'-Lantern," a defence action designed to deal with a possible escalation of violence and harassment that was expected to be "worse than ever."[129] Aside from warning members of the gay community to avoid the area on that possibly dangerous evening, GATE sought help from lawyers, two aldermen and the mayor, who, in turn, pressured the police to "provide adequate protection" to the gay community.[130] Management of the St. Charles was also asked to participate in Operation Jack-O'-Lantern, but refused.[131] Some 50 volunteers patrolled the area and "succeeded in rescuing a number of gay men from violent attacks," as well as having an officer "who was harassing gays" removed from his post by superiors "after his misconduct was reported."[132] In addition to those involved in the "ad hoc" "gay activist group," there were people in the crowd who acted independently. One witness reported being with a

[126] "56 gawkers charged at homosexual ball," *Toronto Sun*, November 2, 1977, 9; Photos also on pages 1 and 2 of the Nov. 1, 1977 edition.
[127] "17 arrests follow Hallowe'en dance," *The Toronto Star*, November 1, 1977, A1.
[128] "Straight Hate on Hallowe'en," *The Body Politic* December 1978/January 1979," 8.
[129] "Hallowe'en: Pressure gets action," *The Body Politic* December 1977/January 1978," 8; Mariana Valverde. *Law's dream of a common knowledge*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 105. Valverde suggests this might be the first organized self-policing group established in Toronto's queer community. It would later be referred to as The Gay Community Patrol.
[130] "Hallowe'en: Pressure gets action," *The Body Politic*, December 1977/January 1978," 8.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.

woman who saw a "straight creep with eggs hidden under his shirt" and took action by "accidentally" smacking into him at "belly level."[133]

Although most of the patrons in attendance at the St. Charles avoided trouble by using the tavern's back door, there were a few "hets" who gathered in the alley around the time the drag show was ending and the drag queens were leaving.[134] There was also one incident involving a "squad of pimply-faced inferiority complexes" who chased a pink chiffon-wearing queen into an intersection, which Allen Sparrow, an alderman in attendance, stopped with help from officers in a passing police cruiser.[135] Fifteen dozen eggs were confiscated, all of which were given to charity organizations that used them in soup kitchens the following day.[136] Beddoes signed off with a personal appeal to Torontonians: "The festivities of any minority group—blacks, gays, Pakistanis—should not require the policing that was evident this Hallowe'en," he argued. "Because we are not civilized enough to accept differences in color and sexual persuasion, such policing is needed … this time the police merit applause."[137] The column elicited a sarcastic letter to the editor from a reader who claimed that the paper's pleas for tolerance were akin to asking the public to "don sackcloth and ashes and bring gifts to the new holy temple, which is the St. Charles Tavern, and humbly lay them at the feet of the homosexuals that abide there, reveling in the ecstasy of their favourite debauchery."[138]

There was no shortage of vitriolic and hyperbolic anti-gay discourse in that era, which, clearly, was not limited to the adolescents at the annual St. Charles drag ball—enough to support a visit from Anita Bryant, in January 1978, that elicited numerous letters of support in the

[133] "Straight Hate on Hallowe'en," *The Body Politic*, December 1978/January 1979," 8.
[134] "Let's hear it for the police," *The Globe and Mail*, November 2, 1977, 8; "Straight Hate on Hallowe'en," *The Body Politic*, December 1978/January 1979," 8.
[135] "Let's hear it for the police," *The Globe and Mail*, November 2, 1977, 8.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] "Equality often just a word," *The Globe and Mail*, November 22, 1977, 8.

Toronto Star and other papers.[139] A coalition of activists worked to counter the anti-gay hate message that Bryant would be delivering at the People's Church, a large evangelical venue located in North York, by organizing protests both downtown and in the suburbs. Some attempted to mobilize members of the community in advance of the protests by distributing literature outside the Parkside Tavern. Two activists were questioned by police, followed into the bar and arrested inside the tavern, an incident which immediately became a separate issue that was protest-worthy in and of itself. At the People's Church protest, one sign read "Postering is not a crime." Despite protests, the sold-out event was full of people who were "moved to tears" listening to Bryant's anti-gay message, in which she warned that Canadian society could be destroyed by the threat posed to the fabric and family by the "drunkards" and "abusers of the self."[140]

Image 21 - Masked assailants driving up Yonge Street to hurl eggs and obscenities at St. Charles Tavern patrons, October 31, 1978.
Courtesy of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives. Copyright Gerald Hannon, 1978.

[139] "Anita Bryant should be commended, reader says"; "Their children are listening"; "Give Anita Bryan unequivocal support"; "More power to Anita Bryant," *The Toronto Star,* January 10, 1978, A9.
[140] "Anita urges 'bible' morality as protesters chant outside," *The Toronto Star,* January 16, 1978, A1.

As the anti-gay rhetoric escalated in the evangelical community, gay coalitions continued to form between various organizations, including GATE and the Right to Privacy Committee (RTPC). Operation Jack-O'-Lantern resumed for the 1978 Hallowe'en ball and the group's efforts to work with the police led to 95 arrests—a record. In preparation for the 1979 event, however, there were still concerns that the police force was involved in "institutionalized queer-bashing," since officers were accused of not having done enough to control the mob.[141] This analysis of the police as complicit in homophobia was, in part, fuelled by lingering anger over the recent raid of a bathhouse called the Barracks, in which Hislop had a small financial interest. He was arrested as a "keeper" of the alleged common bawdy house and this was interpreted as an event in a larger pattern on abuse of power.[142]

Image 22 – Crowds lining up to see the St. Charles Tavern patrons, October 31, 1978. Courtesy of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives. Copyright Gerald Hannon, 1978.

[141] "Straight Hate on Hallowe'en," *The Body Politic*, December 1978/January 1979," 8.; "Cops meet with gay community, say they'll halt Hallowe'en mob," *The Body Politic*, November 1979, 11.
[142] "Toronto Cops Raid Gay Bath, Charge 28 Men," *The Body Politic*, Feb 1979, 12.
This December, 1978 event foreshadowed the later bathhouse raids. Contemporary articles question the choice of the Barracks, which appeared to be singled out – possibly for political reasons. There were other gay bathhouses operating in Toronto at the time..

Far greater space in the daily newspapers was devoted to the 1979 event than previous years, the *Toronto Star* devoted twice as much space, for example, as it had to Hallowe'en 1977.[143] Some of that attention was the result of media outreach that had stemmed from planning meetings involving activists from several organizations, including the recently-formed Gay Liberation Union (GLU) and the Right to Privacy Committee (RTPC). Also on hand were several aldermen, the mayor's community liaison officer, the police and, for the first time, the management of the St. Charles.[144]

In general, as a result of a more inclusive discourse, direct action and community organization, the stakeholders were more prepared for the 1979 ball than they had been in earlier years. Aside from media outreach, extra police manpower, volunteer escorts and patrols from the community, the bar owners took the precaution of locking the front door of the bar. All patrons (not just the drag contestants) only used the back entrance, which was "heavily patrolled by policemen"—at least at the outset of the evening.[145] These preventative measures, however, did nothing to calm down the crowd, which turned on itself, "lobbing" eggs, "milkshakes, soft drinks and other objects" at "each other, the police … at passing cars" "and in all directions."[146] "Broken eggs dripped from the front of the building," reported one paper.[147] Inside, the 400 attendees (divided over two floors) were oblivious to the outside world and, with the "music blaring … couldn't even hear the … shouts, noisemakers and firecrackers" out there.[148] On the street, however, "Ugly Toronto" was putting in its "annual Hallowe'en appearance," as the lead to one story phrased it.[149] A 21-year-old woman was quoted as follows: "It's great, because

[143] "Hallowe'en Barrage brings 103 arrests," *The Toronto Star*, November 1, 1979, A19
[144] It is striking that the St. Charles management turned a corner this year, given that the death of one of its patrons (as a result of the entrapment scheme) at its other tavern, the Parkside (which would also lead to better conditions) had happened immediately before this meeting. That would not have been widely known outside police circles and the bar's management, however.
[145] "Yonge Street mob shells out eggs," *The Globe and Mail*, November 1, 1979, 5.
[146] "Hallowe'en Barrage brings 103 arrests," *The Toronto Star*, November 1, 1979, A19
[147] "Yonge Street mob shells out eggs," *The Globe and Mail*, November 1, 1979, 5.
[148] "Hallowe'en Barrage brings 103 arrests," *The Toronto Star*, November 1, 1979, A19
[149] "Yonge Street mob shells out eggs," *The Globe and Mail*, November 1, 1979, 5.

everybody's so friendly, right? Except if you're a faggot—that's different."[150] To some involved, that year's crowd seemed to be particularly angry: "You know, I can remember when the people would arrive (for the costume party) in their costumes and dresses in limousines," the doorman of the St. Charles was quoted as saying. "And people would line the street and applaud them and look at them. It was nice. Like Mardi Gras. But now? Insane."[151] Another story related general memories from earlier years, when "men in drag would wander up the street to the St. Charles from some of the other bars along the strip" and "straight passers-by would whistle and cheer" at the drag queens who "would bask in the attention."[152] By the end of the 1970's, "Kill the queers" was commonly heard.[153]

Image 23 – Crowds lining up to see the St. Charles Tavern patrons, October 31, 1978. Courtesy of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives. Copyright Gerald Hannon, 1978.

[150] Ibid.
[151] "Hallowe'en Barrage brings 103 arrests," *The Toronto Star*, November 1, 1979, A19
[152] "Just like last year: cops fail to stop violent Hallowe'en mob," *The Body Politic*, December 1979/January 1980, 14.
[153] Ibid.

Charged with having done nothing to stop an angry mob of 2,000 from terrorizing the patrons at the St. Charles in 1979, the police claimed they were, essentially, powerless to get the mob to disperse. "I doubt very much whether you could move that crowd out of there without using a fair number of policemen," one officer was quoted. "You might create a situation worse than you have now."[154] One officer answered a reporter's question with this rhetorical statement: "What do you want me to do, go over there and start beating people?"[155] It was well understood by all parties that dispersing the mob was next to impossible, but gay liberationists were frustrated with the lack of proactive work on the part of the police, who might have stopped the mob from forming in the first place. When questioned about this oversight, the police superintendent who "spearheaded police operations" defended the department's actions by arguing that, whereas the preceding year the mob had formed by seven in the evening, in 1979 the police had managed to keep a crowd from gathering until eight or "8:10."[156] Criticism of the police that year would also have been informed by the controversy over an article in the March issue of *News & Views*, the Metropolitan Police Association's newsletter, that used inflammatory language when describing the gay community and reiterated the rhetoric of both evangelist Bryant, regarding societal decay, and Cappon, who promoted the disease theory of homosexuality. The article was taken as evidence of a culture of discrimination in the department.[157] In addition, activists complained that the policing was inconsistent, since the superintendent and the other "big brass" disappeared, seemingly decamping to the office in the upstairs at the St. Charles, a fact that was discovered when a defence squad leader from

[154] "Yonge Street mob shells out eggs," *The Globe and Mail*. November 1, 1979, 5
[155] Ibid.
[156] "Just like last year: cops fail to stop violent Hallowe'en mob," *The Body Politic*, December 1979/January 1980, 14
[157] Hooper, "Enough is Enough." Hooper demonstrates how the public discussion of the culture of policing in Toronto revealed how reluctant the media was to frame Toronto's queer community as a minority group that deserved special considerations, since much of the media attention focused on ethnic minorities, who were the subject of another article in another publication that came out at the same time.

Operation Jack-O'-Lantern could not find an officer at a critical moment.[158] The majority of the police force departed prematurely, one activist complained, leaving a "scene in the back alley at closing time" that was "really ugly."[159] He said it "was a miracle something didn't happen."[160]

There was a marked change in the preamble to Hallowe'en 1980, with reports that 52 Division would, for the first year, prevent anti-gay mobs from forming outside the St. Charles.[161] Early meetings were organized at the behest of Peter Maloney "and other representatives of the gay community" who asked the police to meet to discuss safety measures for Hallowe'en, while also considering a range of complaints against the force, including entrapment in parks and general safety.[162] Stakeholders agreed on a plan of action and it was understood that all parties would communicate a consistent message to the public, namely, that the "entire community" would not "tolerate suburban punks" coming down to get their "jollies" at the expense of the patrons at the St. Charles.[163] Elected city officials publicly denounced the activity as "hooliganism" and warned that no violence would be tolerated. The politicians, together with the activists, put pressure on the police, who finally put up metal barriers on the east sidewalk, narrowing it to half its normal width, so that the crowd could not form.[164] Officers were then deployed to keep pedestrians moving: "The police were extremely aggressive about keeping people on the go—nobody was allowed to stop at all for any reason."[165] The police also paid "visits to local merchants, urging them not to sell eggs to any but their regular customers on Hallowe'en night" and the Westbury Hotel closed off the 120 rooms that overlooked Yonge (and

[158] "Just like last year: cops fail to stop violent Hallowe'en mob," *The Body Politic*, December 1979/January 1980, 14
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid.
[161] "Cops to meet gays on Hallowe'en issue," *The Body Politic*, October 1980, 12.
[162] Ibid. Maloney was an important figure in the RTPC and well-known as an assimilationist, businessman and part of a group working on legal challenges, as opposed to gay liberationists.
[163] "Community pressure prods police to act, and Hallowe'en hate-fest comes to end," *The Body Politic.* December 1980/January 1981, 13.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.

the St. Charles).[166] On another front, media outlets received letters from an alderman and calls from the police "urging them to discourage their listeners from going downtown."[167] CHUM-FM was identified as one of the worst for inciting violent crowds and, while it is not known whether or not that station co-operated, "several radio and television stations" certainly did.[168] A "combination of political and community pressure" finally put an end to the "ritualized homophobia" that had become a terrifying tradition in Toronto.[169] This was accomplished with no increase in the number of policemen assigned to that night's duty and arrests were significantly down—from over 100, the previous year, to a mere 13 people charged in 1980. Gerald Hannon, writing in the *Body Politic*, concluded his story about Hallowe'en, 1980, with a note that the real "test" would come the following year.[170] Hannon speculated that gay liberationists had more political traction in 1980, since mayoral candidate John Sewall publicly endorsed gay rights and George Hislop's bid for city council in that year's municipal election.[171]

Before that test would take place, however, an event that would far overshadow the Hallowe'en drag ball took place, namely, Operation Soap, which saw Toronto police raid four bathhouses. A reported 160 police were involved in the four raids that took place on February 5, 1981, demonstrating that 52 Division did have more significant manpower available to it, despite its claims to having insufficient resources to deal with the riotous crowds at the St. Charles. The details of Operation Soap are well-documented elsewhere, but, briefly, with 286 people arrested under the bawdy house provision in the Criminal Code, that night's raids represented the largest mass arrest in Canada since the 1970 October Crisis—an event that took place in conjunction with the War Measures Act. Operation Soap targeted businesses owned by several prominent

[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Both lost. Sewall's association with Hislop and gay rights was considered by some analysts to have been a liability.

members of the gay community, including bath houses owned by Peter Maloney and George Hislop, both of whom had been heavily involved in forcing the police to quell the mobs on Yonge and end the ritual of institutionalized mob terror. This is not to suggest that there was some kind of literal, conspiratorial payback that targeted the gay assimilationist community active in fighting for legal and civil rights, but, rather, that it was one more incident in an escalating war between two camps that saw increased activity beginning in the fall of 1977, not long after the Emanuel Jaques murder.

A selective list of events from that era includes: *The Body Politic* charged with publishing obscenity in the fall of 1977 (in response to Gerald Hannon's controversial article "Men Loving Boys Loving Men"); the protest over Anita Bryant's visit in January, 1978 (at which she voiced her opposition to gay rights); the raid on the Barracks bath house (owned by George Hislop) in December of that year; a renewed and over-zealous interest in monitoring the washrooms at the Parkside and a refusal to properly police the St. Charles Hallowe'en drag ball as it became increasingly dangerous between 1977 and 1979. In addition, although there is little in the LLBO establishment files to suggest it was involved in any harassment in the 1970s, one item towards the end of the decade suggests there may have been some pressure from other levels of government. Katrina's Tavern, a gay bar on St. Joseph, just west of Yonge, applied for an extension on its liquor licence to expand into the second floor but was refused on the grounds that the additional licence was "not in the public interest."[172] The City of Toronto had requested that the provincial authority stop granting new licences for "interior streets bounded by Wellesley, Charles, Bay and Yonge"—a very small and specific area to isolate for a moratorium.[173]

[172] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B104083 (Katrina's Tavern) Letter from Dept of the City Clerk to LLBO Chairman, June 5, 1978.
[173] AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B104083 (Katrina's Tavern) Letter from Dept of the City Clerk to LLBO Chairman, June 5, 1978. No evidence that the city's request to the LLBO was a formal municipal resolution has been found. This information is only in the LLBO file. If

One of the four bath houses, the Richmond Street Health Emporium, was so damaged during Operation Soap that it never re-opened. Between the four locations, there was an estimated $35,000 in damage (adjusted for inflation, that would be close to $100,000 today), a result of doors being kicked in, mattresses "shredded" and "mirrors smashed."[174] The raids were brutal and demeaning for the "found-ins," who were "lined up naked, their room numbers gouged into their hands with pens," wrote one man who chronicled the event, adding that the bathhouse patrons' "genitals were examined" and each was "made to turn and spread his cheeks."[175] While they were being photographed, the police made "Vaseline jokes," verbally abused them with epithets, such as calling them "fucking faggots," and, scaring those who may have been closeted by saying, "You'll wish you stayed at home with your wife tonight, you fucking queer."[176] Finally, in the twice-raided Barracks bath house, men were rounded up into a shower room, where one policeman said: "Too bad these pipes aren't hooked up to gas."[177] Gay activists such as George Hislop referred to the raids as a fascist exercise in authority, with overtones specifically recalling the Nazi death camps. Hislop referred to it as a "Gestapo mentality" of humiliating people.[178] "Thank you," said one detainee to a police officer that evening, "For you have started the political movement."[179]

The political movement began long before that, however, evidenced by the We Demand protest, the existence of the *Body Politic*, the protest against Anita Bryant's visit, the pushback over surveillance in the washrooms at the Parkside and the community's crusade to put a stop to

based on discrimination, this would have represented a new tack for the provincial authority, which, only one year before had been very careful to avoid the appearance of selective licensing: When a former Alberta restaurant manager applied for a license to open a bar in Toronto, the authority did a background check with police in Banff, who alleged he was a homosexual, who had run a problem bar called "The Dungeon." Hand-written in the margins are instructions to dismiss this allegation, which was characterized as "libellous." AO, RG 36-8 (Establishment Files), File B338138 (Pimblett's), Application: From a Banff Detachment, May 10, 1977.

[174] Bébout, *Promiscuous Affections*, 1971

[175] Ibid.

[176] Ibid.

[177] Ibid.

[178] "Sunday Morning," *CBC*, February 15, 1981. (CBC Digital Archives http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/the-toronto-bathhouse-raids)

[179] Ibid.

the annual angry mobs at the St. Charles. Early political networks were being formed at Letros as early as the 1950s, where some members of the queer counterpublic had fully understood the value of a gay-owned bar with gay staff—a sanctuary in which camp discourse could be practised, refined and disseminated. Although the activism in the 1970s in no way resembled the discourse of resistance developed through the postwar bars and tabloids, it had deep roots in the methodical development of community and social networks at Letros and elsewhere. Those years of political organization (stemming largely from decades of dialogue between gay publications and gay bars) were in evidence when the seemingly spontaneous protests took place outside the bathhouse raid sites in 1981. "Spontaneous" is not the correct word, since it was, in fact, a public demonstration of what the queer counterpublic had been establishing through discourse—camp and civil rights—for those 30 years prior. In fact, the night of the protests after the raids was an intense, fast-motion microcosm of the previous 30 years of empowerment, organization and relationships between bars and political publications: *The Body Politic* printed 4,000 fliers urging people to protest the raids and these were distributed to the people at every gay bar in Toronto.[180] The flier read: "Enough is enough. Protest. Yonge and Wellesley. Midnight tonight." Marshals from Operation Jack O'Lantern were enlisted to ensure the safety of the protesters. By midnight, a few hundred had congregated at the intersection; within an hour, as the patrons from the bars spilled out and joined, the crowd swelled to a size that would rival the mob that used to gather outside the St. Charles every year. "The bars empty into the streets," writer Burke Campbell was quoted as having observed, following with this quip: "Thousands of well-dressed faggots have had enough."[181] The crowd was full of barely-contained rage, some of whom, following the crowd towards 52 Division, urinated on a police car.[182] In another incident, a small group rocked

[180] Interview with Gerald Hannon, conducted by Sismondo, March 14, 2016.
[181] "Taking it to the Streets," *The Body Politic*, March 1981, 9.
[182] Ibid.

a police car so violently that the out-of-uniform officer "clung to the dashboard in fear."[183] Three thousand protesters headed south on Yonge Street, towards their ultimate destinations—Queen's Park, via 52 Division. CBC radio reported that, at its height, the crowd was nearly 5,000.[184]

In addition to the CBC coverage, the *Toronto Star* ran front-page stories about the events on February 6 and 7.[185] On February 9, *The Globe and Mail* denounced the police raids.[186] Even CHUM-FM's news director, Dick Smyth, called it an invasion of privacy, calling the police "pigs" and accusing them of "brutality," "vandalism" and creating a "polarization" that will be a problem in Toronto for years to come."[187] Ken Campbell, the chairman of "Renaissance Canada," who had been involved in bringing Anita Bryant to Toronto, said he was worried about "any form of gay-bashing" and would "fight for the human rights of any group, no matter how disgusting we find their particular lifestyle.[188] The *Toronto Sun* was alone in its support of the police action, while the vast majority of media outlets, community leaders and politicians agreed that Operation Soap had been a waste of police resources, an invasion of citizens' privacy, an exercise in discrimination and intimidation and an unwarranted and reckless destruction of private property. From the *Globe*: "The Metro Toronto Police claim to be understaffed," and yet, "they have been able to waste men on six months of investigation, on a 150-man raid, on policing the ensuing reaction, on the court work that will result."[189] Interviewed on *CBC* radio, George Hislop seemed to have understood the disconnect between the police and the public: "Cops talk a lot to themselves and they believe there's a lot of public support for this sort of

[183] Ibid.
[184] "Sunday Morning," *CBC*, February 15, 1981. (CBC Digital Archives http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/the-toronto-bathhouse-raids)
[185] "Police Arrest Hundreds in Steam Baths," *The Toronto Star*, February 6, 1981, A1; "3,000 Go On Rampage in Metro Riot," *The Toronto Star*, February 7, 1981, A1
[186] "Heavy hand of the law," *The Globe and Mail*, February 9, 1981, 6.
[187] "Taking it to the Streets," *The Body Politic*, March 1981, 10.
[188] Ibid.
[189] "Heavy hand of the law," *The Globe and Mail*, February 9, 1981, 6.

thing, because you hear young kids on the street putting down the fags. Well they found out they guessed horribly wrong—there isn't public support for it."[190]

The following Hallowe'en, in 1982, Hannon reported that "for the second consecutive year, efforts by the police and the gay community prevented an ugly, homophobic crowd from forming and laying siege to the gay tavern" and the result was almost a "carnival atmosphere."[191] Thousands of spectators still flocked to Yonge, but, since police prevented them from stopping and confiscated eggs, the crowds just streamed up and down the sidewalks.[192] Most remarkable was the number of arrests—zero.

CONCLUSION

The St. Charles, itself, closed in 1987. Attempts, from within, to reform its abusive management and customer service philosophies had come too late. By the middle of the 1980s, it was a relic of a past era, established before the rise of gay capitalism, and no longer able to compete with the many options for dancing and drinking, most of those located one city block east, on Church Street. Although this did not close the chapter on police harassment or queer-bashing, it still remains a potent historical anecdote and symbol of a particularly volatile era for Toronto's queer community. As the evangelical anti-gay message became more strident and aggressive, so, too, did gay activism. The battle led to unprecedented media attention for both sides and, in response, both also became increasingly media-savvy. The St. Charles drag ball, which was really something of a relic from the old camp days of swish and drag became one of the key battlegrounds that shaped the gay community, which re-fashioned itself into a defensive, assertive coalition that joined together assimilationists, who worked on legal and political angles, and liberationists, who tried to work on zaps, protest and changing peoples' minds. The St.

[190] "Sunday Morning," *CBC*, February 15, 1981. (CBC Digital Archives http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/the-toronto-bathhouse-raids)
[191] "Controlled crowd a Hallowe'en treat," *The Body Politic*, December 1981, 11.
[192] Ibid.

Charles might have been a necessary evil and the drag ball a thing of the past, but, in the end, it played an important role, by giving the coalition its first winnable battle against a backlash of mob violence and police brutality.

CONCLUSION

Postwar Toronto was home to a large, vibrant, connected and visible queer community with well-established public rituals, social spaces, modes of communication and discourses of resistance. Although it was not written about in the daily newspapers, it would have been well-known amongst large segments of the city's "straight" population, some of whom were on relatively friendly terms with a queer counterpublic that, thanks to the circulation of the tabloids, was, essentially, hiding in plain sight. Since Toronto had no homophile associations in that era, this subaltern public was partially situated in commercial spaces, such as coffee shops and public drinking spaces, where people formed social networks and developed strategies to cope with the conditions imposed by the closet. Toronto's postwar bars were not only sanctuaries, they also provided a network of spaces, physical and discursive, in which a range of rituals and identities were formed that challenged heteronormativity, resisted systemic discrimination and helped individual members of the community avoid police harassment and surveillance. This bar-based camp discourse existed in tension with the civil rights and assimilationist discourses that adopted mononormative rhetoric and acted as a mechanism to discipline the community.

This tension has been fleshed out in this dissertation primarily, through a close analysis of the evolving, decades-long conversation between the bars and the tabloids, two of the primary organs of the counterpublic. In the 1950s and 1960s, the tabloids often sold papers with fear-mongering exposés that fed people's fears over an insidious increase of effeminate men and aggressive lesbians "taking over" Toronto's coffee shops, public parks and cocktail bars, fuelling the moral panic that was connected to heightened anxieties over eroding gender roles.[1] At the same time, though, tabloids featured columns that made the case for tolerance, understanding and

[1] "'Pansies' Bloom in Cocktail Bar," *Hush Free Press*, March 17, 1951, 6. One of many.

accommodation within bars—sometimes within the very same issue of a specific tabloid. [2] The existence of these assimilationist arguments in the same publication is evidence of both ambivalence and anxiety over Toronto's queer counterpublic, as well as a mechanism of discipline. The latter was possibly best exemplified in a single line from one of the Egan columns, which argued that bars were better outlets for queer socializing than parks, since the bars, at least were "under the eyes of the authorities."[3] Egan's civil rights arguments depicted the majority of the queer counterpublic as respectable, middle-class citizens, most of whom were involved in monogamous relationships. That narrative, of which Egan wrote dozens of different versions in tabloid columns and letters to the editor, ultimately culminated in the 1964 *Maclean's* story, "The Homosexual Next Door," which is generally celebrated as the first positive depiction of a queer community in any major Canadian publication.[4] Although Egan was not the author, he was practically the ghost writer for certain sections and should be credited for shaping the narrative that would be an influential model for future articles about gay life in other Canadian publications.

This narrative deliberately omitted stories that did not fit in with Egan's idealized version of the queer community, since his arguments were designed to provide a counter-narrative to the derogatory stories about "limp-wristed" "she-males." However, there was another recurring discursive identity found in the pages of those tabloids, namely, camp discourse. A range of personas chronicled the camp politics of the queer counterpublic, circulating the various conflicts within the community in columns such as "Fairy Tales are Retold," "A Study in Lavender," "The Gay Set" and "Fairy-Go-Round."[5] The tone was often sarcastic and reflected the private

[2] Alison Jacques, "The Newspaperman and the Tabloid: Recovering the History of Philip H. Daniels and *Justice Weekly*" (Doctoral Dissertation) McGill University, 2014.
[3] Homosexual Concepts, By "J.L.E.," *Justice Weekly*, February 13, 1954, 13.
[4] Egan, *Challenging the Conspiracy*, 79-83.
[5] Mother Goose's Fairy Tales ran in *The Rocket* in the early 1950s, roughly at the same time as "A Study in Lavender" ran in *True News Times*. The other two were in *Tab*, between 1956 and 1974.

language and coded, ritualized discourse of the city's bar culture. Like civil rights discourse, camp discourse also demanded accommodation and equal treatment within public drinking spaces, but rarely invoked assimilationist discourse or contemporary science that was beginning to establish non-heterosexual monogamy as a regularly common feature of sexuality, as opposed to an abnormality.[6]

The tabloid gossip columns were not the only public expression of camp resistance, since they were actually media extensions of rituals such as the weekly bitching sessions and drag parties, including the best-known and most public one, the Miss Letros Hallowe'en drag pageant. Tabloid coverage of this particular event was distinct from the other editorial line those publications generally employed when writing about the queer counterpublic, in that these articles did not apply a forensic gaze to Miss Letros.[7] Instead, the drag pageant was often celebrated as a sign that Toronto was becoming cosmopolitan enough to have entertainments similar to those found in the cabarets of Paris and Montreal or on the streets of the French Quarter in New Orleans.[8] Although the annual drag ball shared common ground with Mardi Gras and cabaret culture, the Letros Hallowe'en ball evolved it own specific subversive character, since it was a parody of the postwar era's gender norms. It was a subversive critique of pageant culture, as well as a challenge to binaries like public and private and, of course, male and female. This ritual was not only a flagrant public display of camp discourse, it was also, to many, the social event of the year and an opportunity for tremendous collaborative creative work and network formation, since preparations for the event were elaborate, costly and required the

[6] Egan's columns often invoked historical precedents, psychology studies as well as civil rights arguments. The general tack was also used in Duke Gaylord's "Gay Set" columns throughout the 1960s, which often strayed from bar gossip into polemic.
[7] "Lavender Lads Make Woo! Woo! Hallowe'en Eve," *Flash*, Nov 15, 1949, 5 is the first-known by Joe Tensee, who went on to write about it enthusiastically. Feature stories, written by Joe Tensee, ran in his own magazine, *Tab* in 1959, 1961 and 1963.
[8] "Confidential Diary: Choose Miss Letros" *Tab*, Nov. 21, 1959, 12

combined resources of the entire community.[9] It was out of these bar-based cultures that the queer counterpublic helped develop strategies for resisting discrimination and applying pressure to management and staff to respect the rights of the community to assemble and demand equal treatment.[10]

Still, there is a lingering question regarding how subversive the Letros Drag Ball actually was, given that it was, at its core, rooted in male economic privilege. The venue in which is was held was accused of racial discrimination and, since "Blaze," the African-Canadian drag contestant was referred to as a first in 1961, it is clear that the pageant was racially segregated in its first decade. There were barriers to participation based in ethnicity and gender, given that the presence of women was rare enough to warrant a special remark in the tabloid coverage of the annual events. Although the Letros Hallowe'en event challenged contemporary gender roles, it did not appear to extend the critique to racial segregation, something that almost certainly limited its lifespan and longevity and potential to be an agent for substantive political change. Younger members of the queer community and activists tended to avoid "sweater queen" bars such as Letros, recoiling from both the formality of the place, as well as the feeling that it was a members-only club of sorts. That reflects a larger tension inherent in both the politics of respectability and camp discourse—the former is mononormative and excludes non-conventional gender comportment and the latter is, by definition, exclusive, since it is based in a secret language shared by a group of insiders who are versed in the camp code. Its power resides in its exclusivity, which is paradoxically a limit on its power to expand and become a dynamic force for political change and subversive activity.

[9] Popham, "Working Papers on the Tavern," 39.
[10] "Toronto Fairy-Go-Round," *Tab*, October 13, 1956, 6. The Ford Hotel incident might be the most striking but there were several rallies organized by Mother Goose, who encouraged people to return to King street after the "clean-up," as well as Duke Gaylord, who encouraged people to resist poor treatment at the St. Charles and Parkside.

Discourses would clash in the 1970s over a number of contentious issues, namely, the semi-public sex in the bathrooms at various places, including, most notably, the Parkside tavern, and public sex in city parks. While bar-based cultures developed systems of communication through non-verbal gestures and coded camp discourse in the tabloid columns, assimilationists objected to intrusive state surveillance in places where citizens had an expectation of privacy and, simultaneously, encouraged the queer counterpublic to self-police and stop having public sex. By contrast, the gay liberationists pushed boundaries with "zaps" and other political actions that grew out of the 1960s "happenings" culture, such as the Kiss-In at Yonge and Bloor, that deliberately put sex in the public sphere, challenging the politics of respectability.[11] The Hallowe'en drag ball at the St. Charles Tavern was, similarly contentious. Columns in the *Body Politic* made the argument that the annual event reinforced the idea that "gay" always meant feminine clothing and gestures, which was a damaging stereotype.[12] The institutionalized hate-fest—the homophobic mob that was tacitly encouraged by the police who did nothing to prevent it—helped to galvanize the queer counterpublic into adopting a politics of inclusion that was demonstrated in the Right to Privacy Committee's actions on Hallowe'en Hate and, later, the raids on the four gay bath houses.

The question remains, though: Why did the scene change so profoundly—from the relatively friendly crowds outside Letros in the 1950s and 1960s to the violent mobs on Yonge in the mid- to late-1970s? For that, it seems that George Chauncey's *Gay New York*, can provide the framework for starting to formulate answers, in particular, the final chapter, "The Strange Career of the Closet," a reference to the ground-breaking work on Jim Crow laws in the United

[11] Before Pride, There Was a Kiss: Toronto Gay Activists Look Back on 1976 Protest," *Toronto Star*, Jun 27, 2015, IN1.
[12] "The Hallowe'en Phenomenon," *The Body Politic*, Autumn 1972, 21

States by C. Vann Woodward. [13] This work revealed that laws restricting the rights of African-Americans were not enacted immediately after the Civil War ended but, rather, several decades later, in response to African-Americans' actual economic gains and burgeoning urban middle classes. Chauncey references Woodward to make sense of the imposition of a "closet" (which involved isolation, invisibility and internalization) on a visible queer community with rich social interactions and rituals that existed in 1920s Manhattan and seemed to become less visible afterwards. Although the situations are not analogous, since queer Toronto did not disappear but, instead, became more visible, the idea of an apparent reversal in progress, seems to apply to "Toronto the Gay," since a violent backlash did occur in the 1970s. Prior to that, despite a general feeling that the 1950s and 1960s was a repressive time for lesbians and gay men in Toronto, the city housed a rich queer side, in plain view of major police stations, municipal buildings, as well as some of the best hotels and bars. Although it was never acknowledged in Toronto's major daily newspapers, it was widely reported upon in the tabloids, throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The Municipal, the King Edward, the Continental and, of course, Letros, would have been well-known to anybody who worked in media, the legal profession, municipal politics, law enforcement and the arts, not to mention the many who read the tabloids. By the 1970s, the dynamic had changed. The daily newspapers' silence had ended and the relationship between the queer community and the "straight" population was transformed—to the point that it might have seemed unrecognizable to those who regularly attended the Hallowe'en drag ball, a degeneration confirmed by tabloid accounts, memoirs, interviews and photographic evidence.

Where did all the good will and playful interaction go? It was subsumed into a backlash, similar to the one experienced by African-Americans between 1890 and 1950. Since the changes

[13] George Chauncey. *Gay New York: Gender, urban culture, and the making of the gay male world, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994.), 355-361. C. Vann Woodward. *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955).

in Jim Crow United States happened over decades, by comparison the backlash against Toronto the Gay was a fast-moving regressive movement, and one that was aggressively resisted by a politically assertive gay activist community that effectively organized and fought both legal encroachments on human rights and the breakdown in civil society experienced as queer-bashing outside the bars. In an attempt to recriminalize homosexuality—in contravention to the spirit of the 1969 "out of the bedrooms of the nation" bill—law enforcement agencies looked for ways to continue to make arrests for gross indecency, largely through entrapment schemes, such as the bathroom spyholes at the Parkside Tavern. These fit in with a larger pattern that targeted cruising in parks, sex between more than two people in private homes, strip clubs and bathhouses—all, essentially efforts to re-criminalize and disenfranchise the queer community, much like Jim Crow laws. [14]

The other component of the backlash, however, was the terrorism waged by members of the Toronto public. Although violence against lesbians and gays was not new in the 1970s, the mobs of angry queer-bashers outside of the St. Charles represented an increase in hate crime and socially acceptable hate speech. The level of ugliness—and potential for serious mob violence—was so pronounced that even the daily newspapers began to treat it as a serious issue. There is certainly a relationship between attitudes of local law enforcement and municipal officials, both of which signaled disdain for the queer community through a refusal to respect its rights but, in addition, the growth of the evangelical and pseudo-scientific discourse on deviance and social decay had successfully generated anger. Inspired by a range of social changes—gender comportment, the sexual revolution, women's liberation—the backlash was powerful, in part,

[14] Tom Hooper, "Enough is Enough." Mariana Valverde, *Law's dream of a common knowledge*. Hooper demonstrates that incidents such as the arrest of Don Franco for having a dungeon, as well as the bathhouse raids were, essentially, end-runs at the law—attempts to re-criminalize homosexuality. The Sperm Attack incident that Valverde describes is another instance of this.

because it was about personal relationships and appealed to people's ideas about normalcy and the natural order, as well as religion, inspiring anger and violence, particularly amongst people who were of an age where they were anxious to engage in rite-of passage rituals to perform their own gender roles. Young people flocked to Yonge Street to gawk, posture, cruise and publicly choose a side of the street—east or west, to indicate straight or gay. That is what happened to the one-time jovial conviviality of the Hallowe'en drag ball, which initially saw crowds celebrating the arrival of the drag queens. The backlash engulfed civility, however, and the vicious replaced the vibrancy, as the queer counterpublic established social networks, public rituals and discourses of resistance.

What happened to the cultural memory of the vibrant, postwar queer counterpublic is another story, however. Losing track of this period of history performs two ideological functions. First, it helps to naturalize queer-bashing, making it an ahistorical and eternal condition of humanity that is posited as having always existed or, as Chauncey refers to it, the "inevitable elaborations of an age-old antipathy." [15] Evidence that complicates this narrative is often misplaced, since it undermines the question of a universal, natural homophobia and draws attention to the social construction of different types of historically-specific gender performativity. In addition, this type of history disrupts our deeply-rooted ideas of social progress and evolution towards equality and human rights. None of this is to suggest that Toronto's story of gay activism followed some kind of a backwards progression, either. Rather, that this lesser-known, partially forgotten chapter tells a different story than the one that is frequently told, namely, that gay activism began at the 1971 "We Demand" protest in Ottawa or,

[15] Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 355.

in more popular history, after Operation Soap in 1981.[16] Prior to that, it was thought, Toronto was so repressed that there was little to no sense of community, a sentiment found in Tom Warner's *Never Going Back*, which suggests that the gay commercial district had taken over "tiny territories" in Toronto prior to the 1970s and Gary Kinsman, who refers to bars in this era as negative and alienating.[17] This research complicates that narrative by demonstrating that Toronto's gay social geography spanned from Hanlan's point to Yorkville in some eras, as well as demonstrating that camp discourse of the 1950s and 1960s should be given some recognition in the history of queer resistance in Toronto.

Which is precisely why it is so important to focus on this period, since it reveals so much about our assumptions regarding timelines of progress. Instead of mere repression and isolation, this era was characterized by a robust community that was maintained through a network of stable public drinking spaces, one of which was gay-owned. In that space, people established ways of being gay and, in turn, taught them to others through a highly ritualized and hierarchical bitching session. These camp rituals were simultaneously methods of identity construction, self-defence tactics, a form of secret communication, methods for resisting discrimination and, through their mimicry of gender roles, a biting satire that was a subversive challenge to the existing mononormative heterosexist binaries of Cold War culture. [18] Gender-bending, cross-dressing, drag and satire may not appear to be terribly subversive or effective compared with other types of activism but (as has recently been demonstrated with women impersonating male political figures from the American White House) when figures are invested in a specific view of

[16] As an example, Miriam Smith's *Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada: Social Movements and Equality-Seeking, 1971-1995*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).
[17] Warner, *Never Going Back*, 52-53. Kinsman, *The Regulation of Desire*, 145. In addition, a number of popular resources, including the Historica Canada's Canadian Encyclopedia entry on "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights in Canada," University of Western Ontario's *History of Gay Liberation* page and Zorzi's *Queer Catharsis*.
[18] Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990)

gender norms, deconstructing it and calling attention to its fluidity is, in fact, an extremely potent gesture of subversion.

That was not the only form of gay activism that existed in the postwar era, either. The tabloids which maintained camp discourse were simultaneously major outlets for the civil rights arguments, most of which were written by Jim Egan and promoted normalizing discourse that advanced a mononormative image of gay men who were constructed as middle-class, conventionally-dressed, average-looking men in monogamous relationships who were similar to heterosexual couples in every way except for one—choice of partner. These arguments were given space in nearly every tabloid in Toronto at one point or another (usually in the form of occasional features or special series' that would run in several issues in a row) and were circulated widely and frequently enough to eventually become one of the daily newspapers' main narratives, countering the image of the criminal sexual psychopath. This paved the road for the assimilationists, who, although uncomfortable with the conditions of the gay commercial district on Yonge Street, ultimately wanted to reform and improve the restaurants, theatres and bars, not shun them.

This stands in sharp contrast to the gay liberationists, many of whom had no interest in the camp culture that thrived in bars like Letros. Even if the King Street institution had survived into the 1970s, its rituals would have had less relevance in an era when swish and drag was replaced by muscles and leather and discursive sarcasm was replaced with provocative zaps that forced "straight" Toronto to confront queer culture. The politics of respectability was increasingly challenged, not just within the divided camps of queer Toronto, but also by feminist critiques and a wider youth movement that questioned mononormative heterosexual conventions. Satire and subversion was increasingly replaced with overt political action in direct, inverse,

proportion to the increasingly angry and hateful rhetoric of the evangelicals, whose anti-gay agenda made homosexuality the top signifier of all the many movements that were posited as a threat to traditional society and the family. Nothing less than the future of a healthy society was at stake from the perspective of the burgeoning evangelicals and, as such, no fight was too nasty. As Tina Fetner has argued, gay activism responded in kind, becoming more provocative and better at mobilizing in a reverse mirror image of the evangelicals. [19]

This strength and organization did not arise out of nowhere, magically materializing in 1971, when activists went to the We Demand protest in Ottawa. Nor did it, however, come from homophile associations, which Toronto was sorely lacking in the postwar era. The social networks, commitment to resistance and awareness of a community with a will to challenge discrimination grew out of the queer counterpublic, which was mired in bar-based cultures in the 1950s and 1960s. Although it is true that the activism and culture in no way resembled the postwar queer counterpublic, that was, in large part, where the community learned to walk. In heels.

Image 24 - "Hallowe'en: Letros (not used)," by Ray McFadden, October 31, 1967. (Also Image 9, used previously on page 127.)

[19] Tina Fetner. *How the Religious Right Shaped*, xxii, 23.

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