

THE LABOUR FEMINISM TAKES

THE LABOUR FEMINISM TAKES: TRACING INTERSECTIONAL POLITICS
IN
1980s CANADIAN FEMINIST PERIODICALS

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A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Doctorate of Philosophy

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McMaster University DOCTORATE OF PHILOSOPHY (2019) Hamilton, Ontario (English and Cultural Studies)

TITLE: The Labour Feminism Takes: Tracing Intersectional Politics in 1980s Canadian Feminist Periodicals

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NUMBER OF PAGES: vii, 297

Lay Abstract

What is feminist labour history, and whom does it include? In a study of feminist periodicals published during the 1980s, I consider how feminist writing contributes to the project of women's liberation. In particular, I explore debates between feminists over race, class, and sexuality. I claim that feminist periodicals offer a window into the ideas animating feminists in the 1980s, and document the ways in which women's household labour, paid domestic work, prostitution, and pornography were taken up—or ignored—by feminists. I show how everyday practices of race, class, and sexual supremacy have created narratives where white, middle-class women's experiences appropriate and stand in for diverse feminist histories.

Abstract

This dissertation turns to recent feminist history of the 1980s to consider feminism's relationship to class, economics, and labour. Challenging the idea that feminism is an inclusive project, I look at how feminist ideology produces commonsense forms of racism, classism, and sexual normativity. To demonstrate this argument, I evaluate two important moments in 1980s Canadian feminism: the development of feminist political economy and the debates of the feminist sex wars. In tracing the ways in which these histories unfold to value some feminist subjects more than others, I show how feminist narratives appear cohesive through quotidian practices of exclusion. I claim that the resistance of marginalized subjects is integral to these narratives, particularly when this resistance has been made to appear invisible or absent. I first turn to feminist political economy to show how a white feminist discourse about gendered domestic labour emerged while simultaneously omitting analyses of the experiences of women of colour and migrant domestic labourers. This white feminist discourse is imbued with commonsense racism, and imagines migrant domestic workers as located elsewhere to feminism. Subsequently, I examine how the feminist sex wars pursued a line of inquiry into sexuality that privileged a framework of danger. Feminist theorizing of violence against women as intrinsic to prostitution and pornography had dire consequences for understanding sex work and the diverse women employed in the industry. In promoting a white, middle-class perspective on sexuality, feminists appropriated sex workers' experiences of violence and sought state support for abolishing commercial sexuality, in turn contributing to the heightened state surveillance of sexual minorities. In looking to and for marginalized women's experiences within an archive of women's publishing, this project insists on the integral place of sex workers and migrant domestic workers within Canadian feminist labour histories.

Acknowledgements

This doctoral research was generously supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada through a Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship.

I have been privileged to undertake this project at McMaster University, which recognizes and acknowledges it is located on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the “Dish With One Spoon” wampum agreement.

I am forever grateful to the staff at Delisle Youth Services from 2000-2002, in particular Deborah, Gail, Eric, Alfred, and Kelly: thank you for your enduring support in those years. Deborah, I am here today because of your care. To my Delisle roommate Melissa Stanley—we are still in this together. My teachers and support staff at the City School, thank you for reminding me of the relationship between creative freedom and studious discipline. Louise, my OAC teacher at S.E.E.D., who opened my eyes to the possibility of teaching women’s and gender studies, and encouraged me to direct my feminist politics into scholarship. My OAC teachers at Subway Academy, where I proudly completed high school: your encouraging words, unrelenting trust in my independence, and welcoming carafes of coffee, baking, and crock-pots of soup will never be forgotten.

My numerous mentors throughout my undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto who encouraged, inspired, and challenged me—thank you. Judith Taylor, who cracked feminist knowledge apart in breathless ways. Jacqui Alexander, who with grace challenged me to really read and write. Elana Basile, who animated lectures with a vivid passion about the text. Djanet Sears, who guided my stories apart and helped me reassemble them anew. Maureen Fitzgerald, who offered me a quiet room to listen to the past. And Richard Wassersug at Dalhousie University, who one summer let my prose loose in a biology lab.

All my mentors in graduate schools who have guided me through—thank you. At the University of British Columbia, Becki L. Ross, for teaching me about feminist archives. Deena Rymhs, my MA supervisor, for helping me write the project I needed to. At McMaster University, Daniel Coleman, Rick Monture, Chandrima Chakraborty, Susie O’Brien, Sarah Brophy, and Peter Walmsley; I have benefitted so much from your pedagogies, presence, and warm check-ins over the years.

The administrative staff in the English and Cultural Studies Department, thank you for your patience and organization, including Antoinette Somo, Aurelia Gatto, and Sophie Goellnicht. Ilona Forgo-Smith, thank you for your warmth and knowledge—you hold the key to the department. Angela Zaya, for your kindness, humour, and supporting me through 3AA3.

Heartfelt thanks to my committee of brilliant women, Lorraine York and Nadine Attewell—your encouragement, support, and insights have been invaluable to shaping this project. Thank you for believing in this work, and for sharing your insights, ideas, and energy with me. And Amber Dean, my supervisor: it is rare to find a kindred spirit as a mentor but thank you for being mine. I

am so grateful for the compassion, attention, and generosity you have given me over the past six years.

I am indebted to Benita Bunjun and Rebecca Tsang, who provided me with a warm welcome, good conversation, and administrative support during my 2015 research visit to the Vancouver Status of Women. I am also grateful for the Edna Elizabeth Ross Reeves Fellowship for supporting this research trip.

Thank you to my colleagues who have become dear friends: Clorinde Peters, Kascindra Shewan, Sarah Wahab, Evan Johnston, Nisha Eswaran, Shamika Shabnam, and Margaret Boyce, as well as many others whom I have learned from and with during this degree.

Particular gratitude to Clorinde Peters and Alex Napier, for your care, conversation, and friendship the past six years. My sister, because of everything, but especially for always encouraging me, from across the country on the phone or across from me on a couch. My brother, for being himself, and helping me to prioritize things. My mom, for working so hard for her education, and teaching me to love reading and writing. My father-in-law, for his support and conversation. And of course, all of the gratitude to my husband, Noel Iverson, the steadiest light, and a generous reader. We don't yet know one another outside of this process, but I am so grateful for having met you along the way.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: Critique, Inheritance, and the Making of a Feminist Archive, 1-51

Chapter 1: Doing All the Work? Canadian Feminist Political Economy, Whiteness, and the Domestic Labour Debate, 52-95

Chapter 2: Working Elsewhere: Placing Migrant Domestic Work in Feminist History, 96-141

Chapter 3: “Living the Politics of It”: Feminist and Sex Worker Discourses on Prostitution,
142-190

Chapter 4: Feminist Fault Lines: Theorizing Pornography as Violence Against Women, 191-259

Conclusion: The Labour Feminism Takes, 260-270

Bibliography: 271-297

Introduction: Critique, Inheritance, and the Making of a Feminist Archive

“Historical study is a particularly effective form of feminist critique.”—

Joan Wallach Scott¹

In her 2004 essay “Feminism’s History,” Joan Wallach Scott surmises, “What makes—has made—Feminism’s History so exciting is precisely its radical refusal to settle down, to call even a comfortable lodging a ‘home.’”² Scott’s appeal to the “passion” of “Feminist History” intervenes in two tensions she identifies in the academic pursuit of women’s history.³ The first tension Scott addresses concerns the institutionalization of feminism within academia, where the “radical” energy of feminist historians transformed the discipline of history in the 1970s and 1980s to include women historians and new histories of women. As Scott points out, this successful institutionalization of feminist history has also resulted in feminist historians becoming “disciplinarians” in their own right.⁴ Scott identifies a kind of lament amongst contemporary feminist historians that the discipline has become “fragmented” and “dispersed,” as decreasing attention paid to analyses of “women as a singular category” (notably due to interventions by “queer, postcolonial, and ethnic studies”) has made it difficult to construct a “cohesive” women’s history.⁵ Scott contends that in the pursuit of establishing and maintaining a unified discipline of women’s history, the discipline has become “profoundly conservative” in its “impulse to reproduce what is already known.”⁶ In resisting a preoccupation with the “woman-oriented moment of recent feminist history,” Scott advocates for a critical feminist historical

¹ Joan Wallach Scott, “Feminism’s History,” *Journal of Women’s History* 16, no. 2 (2004): 26.

² Ibid., 21.

³ Ibid., 16. Note Scott’s use of “the term ‘Feminism’s History’ here to mean not only the history of feminism and the history written by feminists, but also as a colloquial insinuation, as in ‘well, you know, that woman has a history,’” (Scott, 18).

⁴ Ibid., 13, 12.

⁵ Ibid., 13, 17.

⁶ Ibid., 21.

practice that “exposes the contradictions in systems that claim to be coherent”—including feminist history itself.⁷ To Scott, feminism is “a restless critical operation,” for critique enables feminism to be inspired by and inspired to pursue women’s history.⁸

I am guided by Scott’s insights on the pursuit of critical feminist history for what they do and don’t make explicit. In advocating for a feminist historical practice that is “itself” a kind of “critique,” Scott reflects that academic women’s history has “heeded the criticism of women of colour, of Third World women, and of lesbians in the 1980s.”⁹ In naming women of colour, “Third World women,” and lesbians as destabilizing academic women’s history, Scott leaves undifferentiated the privileges of those very women who “refined” their scholarship in light of “critique.”¹⁰ Admonishing the inability of some feminist historians to think beyond the category of “women,” Scott suggests that “to restrict *our* view to sexual differences is thus to miss the always complex ways in which relations of power are signified by differences.”¹¹ Although Scott is explicitly interested in the place of “difference” in feminist history, she doesn’t go far enough in naming whiteness, heteronormativity, and class power as productive of the discipline’s politics. In order to make the claim that critique “was then and is now the defining characteristic of feminism,” Scott risks downplaying the overwhelming forces that have historically determined

⁷ Ibid., 21, 20.

⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁹ Ibid., 19, 17.

¹⁰ See Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, preface to *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), ix. No longer in common parlance, the term “Third World women” was a political identification that gained prominence in the 1980s: “While the term *third world* is a much maligned and contested one, we use it deliberately, preferring it to *postcolonial* or *developing* countries (of Asia, Africa, and Latin America) whose economic and political structures have been deformed within the colonial process, and to Black, Asian, Latino, and Indigenous peoples in Europe, North America, and Australia,” (ibid.).

¹¹ Scott, “Feminism’s History,” 21 (emphasis added).

which women get to claim the status of “subjects and objects of their own history.”¹² Indeed, what happens if feminist historical critique isn’t congenial, or collegial, or collaborative, but rather, risks its own legitimacy to explicitly name feminisms’ hegemonic impulses? Can critique that begins from an interrogation of the intersections of race, class, sexuality, and gender be compassionate while it also questions what counts as feminist history, and by whom and how feminist histories are remembered, mobilized, and transformed in the present moment?

Angela Y. Davis joins Scott in her assertion that feminism possesses the “exciting” and “radical” “capacity” to “embrace more and more complexity in response to historical circumstances.”¹³ In the difficult task of grappling with history, Davis generously ascribes to feminism the capacity to learn from and through complexity. As both Scott’s and Davis’s comments elucidate, it is not only the history of feminism that generates new insights, but feminist history’s potential to imagine anew that which sustains feminism as an indispensable political project. Indeed, the opportunity of “learning not only *about*, but *from* past lives and events” is a “remembrance practice” of “critical learning” that feminist history can embody.¹⁴ A feminist practice of critical history requires “a continual unsettling and an interminable asking of pedagogical questions regarding what it means to be taught by the experience of others.”¹⁵ Inspired by the complexity, multiplicity, and difficulty of feminism’s past, present, and future, this project turns to the 1980s to learn from and through the inheritances of Canadian feminism.

¹² Ibid., 21, 17.

¹³ Angela Y. Davis, *The Meaning of Freedom and Other Difficult Dialogues* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 2012), 193.

¹⁴ Roger I. Simon, Sharon Rosenberg, and Claudia Eppert, *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 5.

¹⁵ Ibid.

This project endeavors to explore feminism's recent history through a collection of narratives that, explicitly or obliquely, tell a particular story about feminism that takes on a kind of common sense. I trace the processes by which certain ideas about gender become common sense within feminism, and how, simultaneously, they are resisted. Thus, this dissertation questions twenty first century invocations of feminist stories about the recent past to unsettle their hegemony. In particular, I trace the development of "feminist political economy" and "the sex wars" as discrete feminist discourses that gained prominence in 1980s Canada, and make connections between these dominant narratives and the politics and labour of subjects frequently left behind in prevailing feminist memory of them. I highlight counter-hegemonic gendered narratives from the 1980s, which resist both a common sense practice of silencing racially, economically, and sexually marginalized voices, and a commonsense knowledge of what "qualifies" as feminism. As this dissertation explores, making "absent presences" visible is an ethical practice of complicating the feminist historical project by attending to the contributions made by those subjects too often deemed unimportant or peripheral in dominant feminist imaginings as part of their claims to dominance.¹⁶

This project takes up the challenge posed by Clare Hemmings in *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* to practice "telling stories differently" about feminism.¹⁷ In her discussion of the ways in which Western feminists tell the history of feminism's "recent past," Hemmings wryly remarks,

You may know without me telling you that "the past" most often refers to the 1970s, that reference to identity and difference denotes the 1980s, and that the 1990s stands as the decade of difference proper, as that which must be returned from in the noughts. The

¹⁶ Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 15.

¹⁷ Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 2.

stories [...] are thus “common stories.” Implicitly or explicitly too, each decade is understood to house particular schools of thought and particular theorists, irrespective of whether or not their work spans much longer periods. Thus, Marxist or radical approaches give way to identity politics, which give way to deconstructivist critiques, which are replaced in turn by (new) materialism. And no doubt we have not seen the last shift. Whether positively or negatively inflected, the chronology remains the same, the decades overburdened yet curiously flattened despite each story’s unique truth claims.¹⁸

In enacting a discourse review of American and European Anglophone feminist periodicals and the “pervasive” and “general” anecdotes published therein between 1998-2007, Hemmings persuasively argues that feminist stories of feminism’s recent past are constructed along three mutually reinforcing slants, which she describes as loss, progress, and return narratives.¹⁹

Hemmings maintains that each narrative relies on an affective and temporal association of a particular decade with a particular kind of feminist orientation, broadly narrated as feminist thought moving from radicalism, to identity, to poststructuralist, and back to materialist politics.

These feminist narratives appeal to the emotions of the reader in their “mobilization of affect.”²⁰

Loss narratives suggest that feminism has lost its radical potential by becoming overburdened first by identity politics and then by deconstruction; progress narratives suggest that feminism has followed a progression of nascent understanding of difference to expansive concepts that, through awareness of racism and heteronormativity, have skillfully grappled with the complexity of women as a category; and return narratives, which rely on a sort of reconciliation between loss and progress narratives, lament a prior time when feminism knew what it was up against, had clear objects and enemies, and can come to the shared—if compromised—conclusion that gender inequality remains a present-day priority.²¹ Hemmings is particularly attentive to how race and sexuality are folded in or extracted out of these “common stories,” and the kind of discursive

¹⁸ Ibid., 5.

¹⁹ Ibid., 18, 3.

²⁰ Ibid., 20.

²¹ Ibid., 3-4.

work that goes into situating race and sexuality as precursors to or disruptive of the advancement of contemporary feminist thought.

My project has been influenced by Hemmings's attention to the place of race and sexuality told in feminist loss and progress narratives about the 1980s. In Hemmings's argument about the ways in which feminism is remembered, she defines progress narratives about the 1980s as characterized by an important step away from the gender essentialism that is presumed to have marred the 1970s, serving "as a catalytic decade rather than as a decade of arrival."²² In Hemmings's analysis of how the 1980s are remembered—and demonstrated in Scott's recollection—the 1980s become overburdened with the weight of identity politics.²³ On the one hand, this association of the 1980s with identity politics credits black and lesbian feminist subjects for their insistence on race and sexuality as critical indices of feminist analysis and activism.²⁴ Ironically, Hemmings observes that this characterization secures lesbian and black feminist subjects in the 1980s and therefore stagnates their claims in the 1990s and beyond. In this way, black and lesbian feminist politics are seen as part of a developmental stage of feminism that, although important historically, has served its pedagogical and political purposes. Similarly, Hemmings describes how "sexual identity" and "the sex wars" are also "transcended" and "displaced" by a free-floating interest in "difference" by the 1990s.²⁵ In these imaginings, identity politics, particularly examinations of sexual and racial "difference," led to thorough feminist investigations of race and sexuality, but they need not be rendered a priority in the

²² Ibid., 40, 41.

²³ Scott, "Feminism's History," 21. Scott's essay registers as a kind of progress narrative in her emphasis on critique as something that has been there all along: those (white, professional) feminists caught up in a generational battle over what counts as feminist history simply need to be reminded of the utility of critique, even if it is turned against them.

²⁴ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 43.

²⁵ Ibid., 51.

contemporary for fear of further feminist “fragmentation.”²⁶ Rather, feminist progress narratives position themselves as moving from a time of “exclusion” to one of “inclusion,” which forestalls contemporary critiques of racism, and, to a lesser extent, heteronormativity.²⁷ In progress narratives, as Hemmings elucidates, race and sexuality continue to matter to feminism as evidence of feminism’s ability to transform its biases and expand its collective reach.

Hemmings describes loss narratives as structured by a sense of concern and grief over the “death of feminism.”²⁸ Loss narratives are imbued with a generational anxiety, a belief that prior feminisms were more politically active, unified, and radical.²⁹ Characterized by a projection of contemporary concerns onto the failings of earlier feminist subjects who took feminism off course is a twinned skepticism and criticism of the formation of academic women’s studies, known as the institutionalization of feminism.³⁰ In particular, loss narratives are structured by a shared lament that the cultural turn has superseded what is remembered as a vibrant political moment: in short, a belief that attention to difference has replaced attention to “empirical, material realities.”³¹ Concomitantly, Hemmings observes how loss narratives are particularly cautious to account for “black feminist or lesbian critiques of essentialism” in an effort to ward off criticism that they share the racist or heteronormative perspectives of earlier feminisms, particularly those associated with the 1970s.³² To safeguard this position, loss narratives must pay lip service to the achievements of identity politics associated with the 1980s, all the while criticizing the politics of the 1990s for abandoning feminism’s radical agenda. Hemmings notes

²⁶ Ibid., 44, 41.

²⁷ Ibid., 45.

²⁸ Ibid., 73.

²⁹ Ibid., 6.

³⁰ Ibid., 84.

³¹ Ibid., 91.

³² Ibid., 67.

that the 1980s are “textually managed” in loss narratives either by being left out altogether, or by being referenced as a drawn-out extension of 1970s radicalism.³³ The consequence of how loss narratives work is that black feminism and lesbian feminism are again remembered as stepping-stones on the way to the “poststructuralist turn to difference in the 1990s and beyond.”³⁴ In turn, queer, trans, and post-colonial theory become positioned as antagonistic to feminism in their insistence on destabilizing subjectivity and proliferating differences. In loss narratives, race and sexuality matter to feminism as evidence of its radical roots, but also of the danger of giving either too much attention.

While Hemmings’s project is interested in how stories about race and sexuality are circulated in feminist narratives, Sara Ahmed, in her recent book *Living a Feminist Life*, reflects that “... explaining phenomena like racism and sexism—how they are reproduced, how they keep being reproduced—is not something we can do simply by learning a new language. It is not a difficulty that can be resolved by familiarity or repetition, in fact, familiarity and repetition are the source of difficulty; they are what need to be explained.”³⁵ For Hemmings and Ahmed, thinking through the “familiarity or repetition” of how gender/sex, race, and sexuality come to have meaning and consequence is not only a “difficulty,” but what begs exposition; indeed, I also share their perspective. And yet, neither scholar addresses how class also poses such a difficulty—particularly in its relationships to gender, race, and sexuality. Why is class so often dropped out of feminist projects striving for complexity? The feminist tendency to focus on gender and race, or gender and sexuality, imagines feminist subjects as, through negation, subjects for whom either race or sexuality is a priority and, in failing to imagine class at all,

³³ Ibid., 67.

³⁴ Ibid., 90.

³⁵ Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 9.

registers class as irrelevant. Of course, all subjects are classed subjects, but class privilege enables class to be imagined as neutral, or as not there at all, as opposed to productive of either opportunity or oppression. In addressing this gap, the narratives that unfold in this project are united by my desire to trace how feminist articulations of gender/sex to class, race, or sexuality tends to obscure at least one of these other relations—a pattern that I too am wary of reiterating in what follows. I am fascinated by the question of what kind of work is required to grapple with all of these categories at once, and I wonder: to what extent is this work even tenable in a feminist project?

Inheriting Intersectionality

As I have outlined above, feminist projects often struggle with attending to the complexity of not only gender/sex, but race, class, and sexuality. In contemporary feminist theory, I have noted a tendency to leave out class while attending to race and sexuality. Hemmings herself identifies a feminist tendency to move away from multiplicity and towards duality in her discussion of the place of race and sexuality within progress narratives. She argues that in progress narratives told about the 1980s, there is a citational separation of black feminism from lesbian feminism, with troubling effects for who gets remembered as part of feminist history.³⁶ This separation is achieved in two ways. First, she reflects that “at no point” in her review of progress narratives in periodicals does lesbian feminism appear as a corrective to the exclusions of black feminism; rather, “framed in sequence rather than coextensive,” lesbian feminism is remembered as “anachronistic” while black feminism is recalled as progressive.³⁷ Simultaneously, the critiques of lesbian feminism’s exclusionary politics are ensconced as

³⁶ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 53.

³⁷ Ibid.

emerging from feminists of colour, and not from lesbians of colour. In both moves, black lesbians and lesbians of colour are eclipsed from these histories, their politics curiously flattened into a story “prioritizing a singular, racialized aspect of critical identity.”³⁸ For Hemmings, this compartmentalizing of complex histories into simple stories falsely represents all lesbian feminism as “white and/or racist as well,” and by extension, I would add, black feminism as heterosexual feminism. A residual effect of this progressive, generational story is the dismissal of lesbian feminist politics as useful in a more anti-racist contemporary moment, “the perfect alibi for implicit or explicit homophobia” in feminism.³⁹

I have a similar story to recount. The propensity to collapse feminist histories into stories about a dualistic identity was routinized in my own feminist education, where Women’s Studies curricula followed discrete lines that directed readers towards feminism and gender, feminism and race, feminism and sexuality (and rarely feminism and class). Women’s Studies is the institutional home of feminist stories, and my academic training in the discipline has both disrupted and affirmed a sense that the politics of race, sexual identity, *and* class were integral to the 1980s.⁴⁰ For instance, the text that most clearly articulated these relations was Angela Y. Davis’s *Women, Race, and Class*; I recall reading an excerpt of this book in a second-year feminist theory course, and that summer I borrowed a library copy and read the entire text.⁴¹ This was one of the first feminist theoretical books I read in its entirety outside of school, and I recall feeling both pleasure and panic that there was so much I didn’t yet know about feminist history!

³⁸ Ibid., 53.

³⁹ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 5.

⁴¹ Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (Toronto: Random House, [1981] 1983); see also, Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1970); and Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1963).

The following year, I read excerpts from Dorothy Allison, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, and Joan Nestle, and subsequently sought out their writing.⁴² Taken together, these texts sketched out a kind of framework for feminist politics that insisted on complexity, as the authors worked through the knottiness of gender in relation to race, class, and sexuality, arguing for a feminism that was grounded in multiplicity.

Each of the foundational 1980s American feminist texts I cite above articulated a kind of intersectional feminism *prior* to the coining of the term in 1989 by Kimberle W. Crenshaw. However, besides Davis's text, these authors were not taught as part of the genealogy of intersectional feminism, but as Hemmings also attests, as part of the establishment of discrete identity politics (black feminism and lesbian feminism). For instance, Lorde's work—which explicitly locates Lorde as a working-class black lesbian—was routinely situated as an example of black feminism, occasionally lesbian feminism, but never working-class feminism. Nestle's work was remembered as an example of lesbian feminism, and not for her contributions in anti-racist feminism, working-class feminism, and sex worker feminism. Likewise, Allison was recalled as the sole example of poor/working-class feminism, sometimes lesbian feminism, but never critical race feminism. hooks, in turn, was taught as black feminism, and not working-class feminism. Thus, the irreducibility of each of these author's politics was, in the process of encountering them in Women's Studies, reduced. Critically, what strikes me now is how glossing over the intricacies of each author's politics in order to achieve narrative coherence minimized the extent to which Lorde, Nestle, hooks, and Allison articulated class politics with the politics of race and sexuality. Thus, while each of these texts was “about” race and sexuality, these texts

⁴² Dorothy Allison, *Trash* (Toronto: Penguin Books Canada, [1988] 2002); bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre* (Boston: South End Press, 1984); Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (Freedom: The Crossing Press, [1984] 2001); Joan Nestle, *A Restricted Country* (Ithaca: Firebrand Books, 1987).

were also always already “about” class. While this is just one small archive of 1980s American feminist theory, what difference would it have made to my own thinking if those texts had been introduced, examined, and organized as texts not only “about” gender, race, and sexuality, but also “about” class? What does placing them into my personal genealogy of intersectionality do differently? While they were not registered as such during my undergraduate degree, it is telling that my memory has invariably bound them together as *affirming* the integral place of class in an intersectional feminist project.

In *Where We Stand: Class Matters*, bell hooks draws on her own experience to recall the incorporation of race and class into American feminist struggle of the 1970s. She remembers that lesbian feminists “of all races and classes” were “the first” to draw attention to class in feminist consciousness-raising, as their sexuality had marked them as “outside the domain of heterosexist privilege and protection, both in the home and in the workplace.”⁴³ Confronting the economic realities of patriarchy became a priority for lesbian feminists who sought to make class-consciousness and solidarity “accessible” to all women, challenging the “academic-jargon” of “well-educated leftist straight women.” Distinguishing between the place of lesbian feminism within radical and reformist feminist movements, hooks recollects that women facing class and racial oppression shared their “assertiveness skills and constructive ways to cope with conflict” with more privileged radical feminists, while white and middle-upper class reformist women “made it clear...their [own] needs would determine the agenda.” hooks laments that radical feminism was eclipsed by a reformist feminist agenda that increasingly dovetailed with white supremacy and capitalism, and in so doing, gained traction as popular feminism.

⁴³ bell hooks, *Where We Stand: Class Matters* (Routledge: New York, 2000), 104.

In advancing her own kind of loss narrative, hooks cites “the class-based academization” of feminism as creating a “context” for feminism to lose its revolutionary focus on social change.⁴⁴ hooks argues that both “upwardly mobile” white women and women of colour took advantage of academic feminism as an opportunity to gain prestige, status, and wealth through “struggles for gender justice.” She writes,

Ironically, focus on race and racism was one of the new directions in feminist thought that deflected attention away from issues of class. While many feminist white women slowly became more willing to talk about race and confess racism in the eighties, they did not speak about their classism, their fear, condescension, and outright hatred of the poor and working class. By the nineties, white women had managed to incorporate race comfortably into existing gender studies without linking this academic work to any organized feminist movement challenging white supremacist capitalist patriarchy.

For hooks, the ascendance of some women to the status of professional feminists is timed with a widespread reduction in feminism concerned with social transformation, and not social reform.⁴⁵ However, it seems to me that hooks is also drawing attention to the ways in which white feminist attention to race is amenable to white supremacy, prompting a consideration of how histories of academic exclusion of women of colour in particular benefit from white women’s taking up of race. As hooks gestures to in her discussion of institutional feminism, feminisms’ attentiveness to more than just gender can become what Sara Ahmed calls a “non-performative,” which describes speech acts that “‘work’ precisely by not bringing about the effects that they name.”⁴⁶ In particular, Ahmed draws attention to how the academic institution appropriates the labour of racialized, queer, and women scholars to provide evidence of institutional equity, diversity, and

⁴⁴ Ibid., 105.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 105; Nancy Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*, (New York: Verso Books, 2013). Fraser makes a similar argument that feminism has not only aligned itself with conservative agendas, but in its turning away from political economic issues, has “served to legitimate a structural transformation of capitalist society that runs directly counter to feminist visions of a just society” (ibid., 211).

⁴⁶ Sara Ahmed, “The Nonperformativity of Anti-Racism,” *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 7, no. 1 (2006): 105.

inclusion. Indeed, both race and class analyses can be amenable to consolidating, rather than undermining, institutional racism and/or classism, and both might be financially rewarded for their demonstrations of academic merit. To the extent that class analysis serves a larger intellectual purpose—as in the contribution to political economy—it is a legitimate academic pursuit. But in the context of, say, advocating for mandatory retirement, forfeiting salary increases to reduce tuition fees, unionizing tenured professors, or supporting precarious university workers on the picket lines, class politics are discouraged in the academy. At the same time, critical race analysis has a more recent, and persistently less funded, place in the academy. It is one thing to criticize racism as an institutional practice, and even to lend one's voice to demands that it changes; it is quite another to put one job's on the line to protest incidences of racism or demand representation in hiring practices. For either race and class politics, the academy as an institutional space demands a tacit form of respectability politics that draws the line at actual redistribution; in this way, white academic feminists, for instance, can be seen as working *towards* institutional diversity without necessarily having to *give up* class or race power.

While not naming intersectionality as such, hooks' observations about the politics of race and class within 1980s academic feminism draws attention to how the emergent concept of intersectionality in the 1990s takes on a kind of common sense as feminist analyses attempted to think together gender, race, class, and sexuality. As Vivian M. May has thoughtfully interrogated in *Pursuing Intersectionality: Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries*, how intersectionality is deployed, theorized, and critiqued demonstrates that intersectionality is not a coherent politic, theory, or methodology, but is rather a contested domain of knowledge production within

feminist scholarship.⁴⁷ May proposes that intersectionality is a powerful concept precisely because it represents many things at once: it is “an *epistemological practice*,” “an *ontological project*,” “a radical *coalitional political orientation*,” and “a kind of *resistant imaginary*.”⁴⁸ May’s capacious rendering of intersectionality suggests that even in its description it evades simplification, demanding nuanced and complex approaches to its application. In feminist scholarship, however, the use of intersectionality as a descriptor can easily come across as lip service to the concept, and not as a committed attention to intersectional politics.

Intersectionality captures the potential to pursue research across multiple points of social locations, yet the promise of intersectional analysis is not necessarily achieved by simply invoking the term. The non-critical invocation of intersectionality as a feminist political framework appropriates the concept while distancing its origins and strategies from black, lesbian, and working-class feminist criticism.⁴⁹ But what might intersectionality offer to a project about the difficulties of 1980s feminism in Canada? As the concept of intersectionality emerges outside of and after the feminist archive under review here, it is useful to sketch out the conceptual underpinnings that led to the coining of the term and its significant influence in

⁴⁷ Jasbir Puar, “I Would Rather Be a Cyborg than a Goddess,” *PhiloSOPHIA* 1, no. 2 (2012): 63. Puar’s prefers the concept of assemblage, arguing that “the heuristic of intersectionality has produced a tremendous amount of work on women of color while concomitantly excusing white feminists from this work, re-centering gender and sexual difference as foundational and primary—indeed, this amplification of knowledge has in some sense been at the cost of women of color” (ibid.); Shahrzad Mojab, *Marxism and Feminism*, ed. Shahrzad Mojab (Winnipeg: Zed Books, 2015), 5. Mojab argues, “Dialectics predicts that such a system will be fraught with contradiction, with the two genders [sic] existing in relations of conflict and dependence. Class, race, and religion, among other social formations, also endure only if they reproduce themselves. It happens that these dynamics of producing and reproducing, indispensable in any system, cannot be adequately accounted for by the idea that class, gender, race, or sexuality ‘intersect’” (ibid.).

⁴⁸ Vivian M. May, *Pursuing Intersectionality: Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 34 (emphasis in original); Puar, “I Would Rather Be a Cyborg,” 59. Puar is critical that intersectionality is too focused on methodology and not on ontology, reproducing the notion that the subject has a fixed identity.

⁴⁹ May, *Pursuing Intersectionality*, 107.

informing my own analysis. Moreover, as an inheritor of intersectionality as a useable feminist framework, this archival project benefits from intersectional feminist work by women who have demonstrated ways of thinking through feminist struggles over and about race, class, and sexuality. In particular, I argue that a review of this genealogy demonstrates the conceptual maneuvers that Crenshaw and her predecessors undertook to grapple with multiplicity, and the advances made in pushing the feminist project beyond a singular focus on gender justice for a white, middle-class, and heterosexual subject. Turning to these earlier essays that come to inform intersectionality also indicates how gendered analyses of class, race, and sexuality require a conceptual juggling that does not always achieve equal attention to each index.

As a starting point, I turn to the pivotal 1970 essay, “Double Jeopardy: to be Black and Female,” wherein Frances M. Beal meditates on the relations between capitalism, racism, and sexism in North America.⁵⁰ Despite the title’s suggestion that Beal prioritizes the relations of race and gender, her essay in fact subordinates these terms to the regime of capitalism—which she describes as “the main enemy.”⁵¹ Beal argues that “the system of capitalism (and its afterbirth, racism)” is the primary mechanism through which all people experience oppression.⁵² However, while Beal argues that “the oppression of women acts as an escape valve for capitalism,” she emphasizes that “there are certain differences” between black and white women that drastically determine their material and therefore political issues.⁵³ Beal charges that racism and imperialism, as extensions of capitalism, are central to the subordination of black people and all

⁵⁰ Frances M. Beal, “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female,” *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 8, no. 2 ([1970] 2008): 166-176; Beal’s essay is the first to use the concept of “jeopardy” to explain oppression.

⁵¹ Beal, “Double Jeopardy,” 174; Christine Delphy, “The Main Enemy,” *Feminist Issues* 1, no. 1 (1980): 23-40. Delphy’s foundational socialist feminist text locates patriarchy, not capitalism, as the principle feminist issue whilst occluding race and racism in her analysis.

⁵² Beal, “Double Jeopardy,” 166.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 170, 171.

women; therefore, any feminist analysis that “does not have an anti-imperialist and anti-racist ideology has absolutely nothing in common with the black women’s struggle.”⁵⁴ The subjection of black women to “extreme economic exploitation” renders white women’s middle-class preoccupations with the “common bonds” of gender politically futile for black women. In particular, Beal resists the white feminist preoccupation with men’s sexual “consumption” of women’s bodies, taking great pains to point out the particular reproductive rights struggles (enforced sterilizations, access to birth control) that black women face.⁵⁵ At the time of the publication of “Double Jeopardy,” Beal was serving as the New York Coordinator of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee’s Black Women’s Liberation Committee, demonstrating her coalition with other political movements organizing against capitalism, imperialism, racism, and sexism.⁵⁶

The concept of jeopardy gets taken up nearly two decades later in Deborah K. King’s “Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology.” This return to the concept of jeopardy in 1988 to try and convey the multiplicity of power and identity shifts “black feminist ideology” towards the concept of intersectionality by advocating for an “interactive model” of understanding oppression.⁵⁷ King argues that both the “double-” and “triple jeopardy” models developed by Beal and the Third World Women’s Alliance perpetuate

⁵⁴ Ibid., 174.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 171-175.

⁵⁶ Beal, “Double Jeopardy,” 176n1; Delia D. Aguilar, “From Triple Jeopardy to Intersectionality: The Feminist Perplex,” *Comparative Studies of South Africa, Asia, and the Middle East* 32, no. 2 (2012): 421. In New York City in 1970, the Black Women’s Alliance joined with Puerto Rican women to establish the Third World Women’s Alliance, publishing a newsletter throughout the 1970s, *Triple Jeopardy: Racism, Imperialism, Sexism*.

⁵⁷ Deborah K. King, “Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 14, no. 1 (1988): 47, 72.

an idea that “the relationships among the various oppressions are merely additive.”⁵⁸ King asserts that the effects of gender, race, and class “constitute three interdependent control systems,” and that the concept of “multiple” best captures the ways in which oppressions exist as “several” and “simultaneous.” King notes that liberation movements habitually focus on a single issue of liberation, imagining an idealized subject of the movement: in turn, this ideal subject is represented as a white male within the Leftist struggle, a black male within the black liberation movement, and a white woman within the women’s movement.⁵⁹ Black women “and/or poor women” are therefore rendered as “invisible,” “marginal,” or become “tokenized,” scapegoated as the cause of incommensurability between different radical politics. King also wages a critique against liberal and radical feminisms, arguing that both strands of feminism view gender as the overarching category of oppression, failing to evaluate how class works as a system.⁶⁰ Together, King and Beal’s essays demonstrate their contributions to intersectionality in their committed attention to thinking patriarchy, racism, capitalism (and, to a lesser extent, sexuality) together.

Building on the work of Beal and King, Kimberle W. Crenshaw set out to “develop a black feminist criticism” to address issues of black women’s marginalization in the law, political theory, and social movements.⁶¹ Crenshaw echoes Beal and King in her assessment that black women face difficulty in addressing their oppression within dominant understandings of oppression, both within the law and within liberation movements and discourses, precisely

⁵⁸ Ibid., 47.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 52.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 61; I emphasize the significance of this aspect of King’s critique here because it is precisely what gets glossed over in recollections of this text. For instance, King’s efforts to think through the silence about race in heterodox Marxism is interpreted later by Aguilar as a “hackneyed assault on a caricature of Marxism,” see Aguilar, “From Triple Jeopardy to Intersectionality,” 425.

⁶¹ Kimberle W. Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1 (1989): 139.

because their “claims of discrimination” are interpreted as resulting from a “unidirectional” or singular “exclusion.”⁶² Black women, Crenshaw argues, experience oppression “as a unique compoundedness” that is multi-directional, layered, and “intersecting.”⁶³ Crenshaw conceives of the idea of “intersecting oppression” through the metaphor of injury within a traffic intersection; when bodily injury is a result of a car accident occurring within a traffic intersection, treatment of the injury and justice for the victim are what matter, regardless of which or from how many directions the injury occurred.⁶⁴ She explains, “Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated.”⁶⁵

Significantly, unlike Beal and King who maintained the significance of class for black women, the issue of class is subordinated to Crenshaw’s delineation of the interaction of race and gender within legal and liberatory discourses.⁶⁶ There is a salutary reference to the concept of class in Crenshaw’s description of how “otherwise-privileged members of the group” become the idealized subjects of discrimination law, which she describes as the prioritizing of “sex-or-class privileged Blacks” and “race-and-class privileged women.”⁶⁷ Otherwise, her class analysis is hard to trace, although it can be read as implicit throughout Crenshaw’s discussions of remediation and redistribution. However, Crenshaw addresses class and sexuality more explicitly as a problem in “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against

⁶² Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection,” 149.

⁶³ Ibid., 150.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 149.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 140.

⁶⁶ Beal “Double Jeopardy,” 66. Consider, for instance, Beal’s argument that “the system of capitalism (and its afterbirth, racism),” is the primary mechanism of oppressive power (ibid.); King, “Triple Jeopardy,” 47. King asserts that the effects of gender, race, and class “constitute three interdependent control systems,” and that the concept of “multiple” best captures the ways in which oppressions exist as “several” and “simultaneous” (ibid.).

⁶⁷ Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection,” 140.

Women of Color.” In this follow-up essay, Crenshaw clarifies that she is not aiming to provide “a new, totalizing theory of identity,” but to problematize how the mobilization of identity politics tends to “conflate” and “ignore” “intragroup differences.”⁶⁸ The most compelling parts of Crenshaw’s essay that engage class and sexuality as important aspects of intersectionality appear in a substantial footnote. In this note, Crenshaw expands on how she imagines the usefulness of the concept of intersectionality for thinking through the relationships of gender, race, class, and sexuality to one another. She writes:

In mapping the intersections of race and gender, the concept does engage dominant assumptions that race and gender are essentially separate categories. By tracing the categories to their intersections, I hope to suggest a methodology that will ultimately disrupt the tendencies to see gender and race as exclusive or separable. While the primary intersections that I explore here are between race and gender, the concept can and should be expanded by factoring in issues such as class, sexual orientation, age, and color.⁶⁹

Crenshaw recognizes that her attempts to think through race and gender are prioritized over efforts to discuss class or sexuality. Nonetheless, she asserts that both class and sexuality “are *often* as critical in shaping the experiences of women of color,” and that her dualistic focus on race and gender points to the need for other scholars to “account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed.”⁷⁰ This gesture towards the potential for including class and sexuality as indexes of analysis, despite Crenshaw’s muted attention to either, demonstrates an important tension in utilizing the concept of intersectionality, particularly in that it speaks to Crenshaw’s own consciousness of the difficulty in formulating an analysis that encompasses not only gender and race, but also class and sexuality at once. Crenshaw’s own

⁶⁸ Kimberle W. Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no.6 (1991): 1244, 1242.

⁶⁹ Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins,” 1244n9.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1245n9 (emphasis added).

uncertainty about how to move forward with thinking through gender, race, class, and sexuality simultaneously remains an ongoing difficulty in mobilizations of the term.

The preceding discussion of intersectionality provides a glimpse into the struggle with which feminists make sense of history, identity, oppression, privilege, agency, and resistance. As a feminist scholar trained to think intersectionally, I have inherited not only the uneven struggles of feminist subjects to give voice to these complexities, but a shared—if contested—language through which to do so. Ahmed describes “inheritance” as “both bodily and historical; we inherit what we receive as the condition of our arrival into the world, as an arrival that leaves and makes an impression.”⁷¹ My own arrival into this project has been conditioned by bodily histories, familial histories, and social histories, an intersection between at least “whiteness [a]s an orientation that puts certain things within reach” and poverty’s determination of “social boundaries and material constraints.”⁷² Raised in the 1980s by a single mother, I felt concretely the effects of shifting economic policies that penalized poor women and their children, lacking a community, a vocabulary, or an ideology through which to share and collectively confront our isolation. I initiated this project in order to better understand the relationship of class to feminism in Canada in the 1980s, and I discovered in the process something that I knew all along: that the question of class was irreducible to questions of race, sexuality, and gender. As Amber Dean advises, a critical part of developing ethical “practices of inheritance” requires “finding ways to be in relation with others beyond the constrictions of identity but never forgetful of the way

⁷¹ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 125.

⁷² Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 126; Roxanne Rimstead, *Remnants of Nation: On Poverty Narratives by Women* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 7.

identity matters.”⁷³ While the politics of identity and social location have informed this project, I have been eager to push my understanding of feminist history beyond my own subjective experience. In the stories that I elect to tell differently in what follows—and in the telling of different stories about feminist history that is also sometimes required—I intend this project to inhabit “a mode of staying in relation across difference *through the very act of address itself*.”⁷⁴ This address moves beyond my own subjective experiences of labour to consciously struggle through two inter-connected problems I have identified in feminist theory: the challenge of keeping class within the frame of analysis, and the difficulty of sustaining feminist analyses that are simultaneously attentive to gender, race, class, and sexuality.

Methodology: Feminist Periodicals as an Archive

“I think of feminism as a fragile archive, a body assembled from shattering...an archive whose fragility gives us responsibility: to take care.”—Sara Ahmed⁷⁵

I turned to the 1980s as the decade of inquiry for this project as I had experienced first-hand growing up within a poor, single-mother family under neoliberalism. The cuts to social spending following the 1984 federal election of a Conservative government led by Brian Mulroney drastically affected women, especially those who were already socially, racially, and economically marginalized.⁷⁶ The 1980s marked the Canadian state’s transition from a Keynesian, welfare-based political economic model to a neoliberal framework enforcing “deregulation, privatization, regressive tax reforms, [and the] erosion and dismantling of social

⁷³ Amber Dean, *Remembering Vancouver’s Disappeared Women: Settler Colonialism and the Difficulty of Inheritance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 7, 146.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 146 (emphasis in original).

⁷⁵ Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, 17.

⁷⁶ Sylvia Bashevkin, *Living Through Conservative Times: Women on the Defensive* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 13.

services.”⁷⁷ I was interested in how the ramping up of neoliberal ideology within social policy and institutional practices in the 1980s influenced the scope and tone of feminist issues. While I had a sense that an integration of economic analyses—particularly those relating to accessible reproductive health services, forced sterilizations, equal wages, and affordable childcare, food, and housing—had been a mainstay in some feminist activism and theorizing prior to the 1980s, I set out to query how feminist politics had changed shape in the midst of economic restructuring, and what kinds of class issues were attended to in feminist analysis.

As one discursive site among many for the proliferation of feminist narratives about its past, present, and future, the feminist periodical can provide insight into what Hemmings calls “views that are general rather than only individually held.”⁷⁸ Building on Hemmings’s methodology, I developed an archive of feminist periodicals in order to understand what those “common stories” about Canadian feminism in the 1980s were *as they were told during the 1980s*. In other words, I undertook a historical analysis of Canadian feminist political writing by reading “along the archival grain,” examining publications between 1980-1989 in *Kinesis: News About Women That’s Not in the Dailies*, *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme*, and *Atlantis: A Women’s Studies Journal/Revue d’études sur les femmes*.⁷⁹ These periodicals represent an engagement with urban feminist politics across Canada (from Vancouver, Toronto,

⁷⁷ William K. Carroll and Murray Shaw, “Consolidating a Neoliberal Policy Bloc in Canada, 1976 to 1996,” *Canadian Public Policy/Analyse de Politiques* 27, no. 2 (2001): 196.

⁷⁸ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 20.

⁷⁹ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009). Stoler notes how alternative knowledge can be found by first following the texture and structure of the archive (in her discussion, the Ministry of Colonies located in the Netherlands, documenting the Dutch occupation of Indonesia). Counter-hegemonic stories are “not outside of the archival field. Nor are they outside the grids of intelligibility, in which those documents are lodged, but rather the subjacent coordinates of and counterpoints within them. Such confusions and ‘asides’ work in and around prevailing narratives as they push on the archive’s storied edges” (Stoler, 24).

and Halifax) and across genre (I read news items, book reviews, opinion papers, reader letters, interviews, debates, and academic articles). In addition, the periodicals were either grassroots (*Kinesis* was published by the Vancouver Status of Women between 1974 and 2001) or institutional (*CWS* began publication in 1978 by Centennial College, now a division within York University, and is currently published by Inanna Publications; *Atlantis* was originally published by Acadia University in 1975, and in 1980 moved to Mount Saint Vincent University). Throughout the 1980s, each of these publications was distributed nationally, and represented national and local/regional feminist politics. Situated within community or academic feminist collectives, these periodicals participated in the development of narratives on and about feminism's recent history and contributed to the cultural development of the Canadian women's movement during the 1980s.

As Ann Laura Stoler advises, "archivists are the first to note that to understand an archive, one needs to understand the institutions that it served."⁸⁰ As an archive of Canadian feminist writing, these periodicals also helped to legitimate feminism as a political discourse. By publishing feminist theory within a particular cultural and political framework, feminist periodicals contributed to the institutionalization of feminism as a political orientation committed to gender and sexual liberation. As the following chapters explore, feminist subjects used the periodical format to develop feminist discourses that would later be parlayed with the state, the media, and the public, enshrining particular forms of feminism as worthy of broader engagement. From its outset, my archive has been structured by an investigation of explicitly feminist periodicals, theory, and debates. In turn, the majority of the texts I analyze throughout this project contributed to the institutionalization of feminism, as I limited the scope of my research to those

⁸⁰ Ibid., 25.

themes that “served” to validate feminism as a political ideology and movement. In this way, my archive of feminist periodicals provides a snapshot not only of feminist discourse of the 1980s, but reiterates the significance of these discourses in the contemporary moment. At the same time, in reading for counter-hegemonic narratives, this project also attends to narratives that resisted and undermined feminism’s authority. My methodology represents a struggle through and against hegemony as I endeavor to pursue a critical feminist history.

In producing the archive for this project, it became clear that my “methods of archival labor” were profoundly political in directing the course of inquiry.⁸¹ My own methodology of organizing, reading, cataloguing, note taking, and returning to particular arguments, articles, and authors reflects this. For instance, I initially framed this project as beginning in January 1980 and ending in December 1989 for logistical purposes; for a dissertation project, it made good sense to bracket a set of primary texts chronologically.⁸² That the scope of my research has gone beyond these dates is evidence of the inability of a “decade” to contain the debates, discussions, and difficulties this research has raised, reflecting the very problem of attempting to achieve a coherent historical narrative. Although two of the three journals were available online, I obtained hard copies of each periodical for my cursory readings, which involved purchasing one set for personal use, ordering one set for McMaster’s library archives, and photocopying the contents of the third from the university library.⁸³ To make sense of the bulk of the content I read, I

⁸¹ Ibid., 9.

⁸² Dissertations are time intensive and extensive projects, and I wanted to ensure my own had a clear beginning and ending. See Dionne Brand, *Theory* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2018). *Theory*’s narrator struggles to set boundaries on their dissertation due its profoundly personal and political nature: “My life’s work, I call it, and I suppose it’s come to be just that, the work that will take me a lifetime to complete” (Brand, 157).

⁸³ *Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme* and *Atlantis: A Women’s Studies Journal/Revue d’études sur les femmes* published both English and French submissions. My

developed a catalogue of dominant stories and themes through an indexing system that logged when individual articles mentioned race, class, sexuality, as well as an array of other key words to map the scope of feminist discussions during this time period.⁸⁴ Upon reading through the first journal, *CWS*, I found that my questions were changing, and that this system of note taking was altogether too time-consuming and demanding. For the reading of the second periodical, *Atlantis*, I transitioned to summarizing each journal issue overall and focused primarily on individual articles that discussed race, class, and/or sexuality. By the time I had arrived at the third publication, *Kinesis*, I had a clearer sense of what the debates of the decade were. I found that within the pages of *Kinesis*, the debates that interested me were attended to differently than in *CWS* and *Atlantis*, mainly through the use of first-person prose styles, a lack of specialist language, passionate polemics, and a letters section for reader contributions. I manually organized my readings of *Kinesis* through a similar coding of issue/date/page number, noting moments that dealt not just with race, class, or sexuality, but with conflicts over the politics of labour, racism, classism, whorephobia, homophobia, and sexual violence. The more academic and abstract discussions that I encountered in *CWS* and *Atlantis* took on a new shape in the accessible prose of *Kinesis*. In a sense, the contributions of *Kinesis* writers and readers brought the archive—and its difficulties—to life, allowing me to better understand the labour politics of these histories. For these reasons, *Kinesis* occupies a more significant role throughout the project, as I draw evidence from *Kinesis* of migrant domestic worker activism in Chapter 2, and focus on

research covers the English content; when possible, I translated from French into English article titles that were about race, class, or sexuality to contribute to my understanding of the journal.

⁸⁴ The full list included the following terms: abortion, affirmative action, childcare, choice, discourse, diversity, domestic work, economy, equality, family, feminization, freedom, gender, Indigenous, immigration, labour, multiculturalism, nation, neoliberal, pay equity, poverty, professionalization, race, sexuality, social assistance, state, unions, welfare state, work. Notably, sex work was not something I initially set out to investigate in this project.

Kinesis in Chapter 3's discussion of sex worker activism and Chapter 4's attention to anti-pornography feminism.

In my reading practice, I also discovered there was something of a feminist political economist discourse emerging across the journals. I observed that a strand of feminist analyses concerned with women's work and the place of women in the economy privileged a more formal economic ideology, theory, and method. This discourse routinely engaged the concept of class, and clearly articulated economic politics in relationship to gender and the state (but not necessarily race or sexuality, I noted). These observations led to the realization that a field of *feminist* political economy was newly developing in the 1980s, and I turned to the periodical *Studies in Political Economy* to further examine its progression. As *Studies in Political Economy* is loyal to a Marxist perspective, the feminist contributions were accordingly Marxist. Notably, I did not read this journal in full, but rather read each of the articles that named "feminism," "women," "sex," "race," "class," and "sexuality" between 1980-89. As Ahmed notes, "critical theory is like any language; you can learn it, and when you learn it, you begin to move around in it."⁸⁵ In order to address the difficulty of examining feminism's relationship to class in this period, it became clear that I would also need to become literate in Marxist academic thought. Prior to this project, I was neither exposed to nor trained in Marxist thought, and my thinking throughout betrays my commitment to an intersectional feminist—not a Marxist feminist—framework. This lack of prior exposure to Marxism, and to economic concepts more generally, sparked in me a curiosity about the ambivalent place of Marxism within contemporary feminist theory. These observations underpin my research in the first and second chapter.

⁸⁵ Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, 9.

Barbara Godard argues that “a high point in the recognition of feminist culture in Canada appears now to have been 1985-1986,” when the sheer volume of feminist periodical production warranted the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women’s (CRIA-W) creation of the *Canadian Women’s Periodical Index*.⁸⁶ Godard attributes this publishing peak of the mid-1980s to the “upsurge of energy at the beginning of the Second Wave feminist movement,” resulting in an estimated 300 feminist publications.⁸⁷ Godard’s speculation is augmented by Tessa Jordan’s more recent archival research in the Canadian Women’s Movement Archives in Ottawa: Jordan notes that since the 1960s, over 900 feminist long and short-form periodicals have been produced.⁸⁸ Jordan situates this groundswell in the production of feminist periodicals in Canada during the 1970s and 1980s as part of the “international women-in-print movement,” which she considers an intrinsic element of feminist cultural production characterized by “increasing numbers of women [who] began to establish feminist presses, publishing houses, periodicals, and bookstores as ways of countering women’s exploitation in the mainstream media and as a reflection of the common belief, despite ideological differences among feminists, in the power of the printed word.”⁸⁹ As both Godard and Jordan document, feminist periodicals were primary vehicles for academic and activist feminists to communicate ideas, politics, and theory with the women in the broader women’s movement outside of small, localized collectives.⁹⁰

Godard ascribes to feminist periodicals an oppositional and radical agenda, located “outside the dominant mode of capitalist publishing, on the margins and in opposition, both

⁸⁶ Barbara Godard, “Feminist Periodicals and the Production of Cultural Value: The Canadian Context,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 25, no. 2 (2002): 209.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁸⁸ Tessa Jordan, “Branching Out: Second-Wave Feminist Periodicals and the Archive of Canadian Women’s Writing,” *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 36, no. 2/3 (June/September 2010): 74.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 64, 65.

⁹⁰ Godard, “Feminist Periodicals,” 212; Jordan, “Branching Out,” 73.

through their borderline position with respect to the marketplace and their commitment to contestatory ideology.”⁹¹ For Godard, these publications develop a “feminist counter-discourse” positioned as a critique of market capitalism, government policy, and normative gender ideology.⁹² In their heyday, feminist periodicals had the power to convey a feminist counter-discourse that captured the viability and necessity of feminist political thought as anathema to mainstream politics. Jordan in particular focuses on the historical contributions of the Edmonton-based feminist periodical *Branching Out*, a magazine that focused on art, literature, and political articles.⁹³ As both Godard and Jordan describe, through writing, publishing, and disseminating feminist perspectives, feminist periodicals were essential components of the formation of the Canadian women’s movement in the 1970s and 1980s as a visible and broad-reaching collective with transformative potential. Feminist writers possessed discursive power: “feminist periodical producers were not simply communicating with and on behalf of the women’s movement; they were constructing this movement by writing and publishing their work.”⁹⁴ Thus, both Godard and Jordan emphasize the essential place of feminist periodicals in feminist history. As my research demonstrates, the debates of the women’s movement were elaborated within, among other places, the pages of feminist periodicals.

My project, however, is interested in how the feminist periodical is one site of discursive cultural production that contributes to the production of a common sense understanding of feminist history. I argue that beyond defining what structures, policies, and ideologies feminism opposes, feminist periodicals also contributed to defining which feminist objectives were priorities for the women’s movement. As a site of discussion, contemplation, and conflict, the

⁹¹ Godard, “Feminist Periodicals,” 212.

⁹² Ibid., 213.

⁹³ Jordan, “Branching Out,” 65.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 73.

feminist periodical has the capacity to capture a range of feminist voices. However, the extent of what is included in the individual feminist periodical is influenced by a confluence of factors, including: the overarching philosophy, interests, and relationships of particular editorial boards and collectives; the external mandates and expectations of bureaucratic or institutional funders; and the responses of readers. Due to the frequency of their publication and their regional or national scope, periodicals also provide a sense of feminist issues that are timely and local. Unlike full-length monographs or pamphlets, periodicals present a range of opinions or topics for inciting interest in a reader. However, their accessibility to a broad audience of readers is affected by both style and content; too much or too little academic jargon or political content might appeal to or repel some readers. Thus, I assert that the content of feminist periodicals is not only relational but changing, both reflective of and productive of grassroots, academic, and popular feminist politics.

Without disputing the gains made by feminist periodicals in Canada, I argue that it is important to be critical of how feminist publishing has historically reinscribed gendered relations of race, class, and sexuality. This approach recognizes the significance of feminist culture in influencing and being influenced by feminist discourses, and aims to examine how race, class, and sexual normativity take shape in and are shaped by the interactions between feminist subjects within and between different feminist sites. Scholarship by women of colour on the oppressive effects of a white feminist movement prioritizing its own feminist agendas is instructive here. For instance, in her 1993 reflection on the frustrating paucity of publishing by and about women of colour during the 1980s, Vijay Agnew describes a progression “from being absent to being

marginal” that, nonetheless, signals the ongoing marginalization of women of colour within Canadian feminist publishing as elsewhere.⁹⁵

This project is guided by Benita Bunjun’s recent research on the feminist organization Vancouver Status of Women—the organization that published *Kinesis*—as Bunjun identifies processes of racialization and racism as significant factors in the creation and maintenance of “feminist hegemony.”⁹⁶ Bunjun maintains that “hegemonic feminism” perpetuates Western and white “dominance” through “assumptions” which downplay “race, class and other intersecting positionalities.”⁹⁷ Bunjun locates feminist organizations “within the larger power relations and hegemonic formations of patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism.”⁹⁸ Contra Godard, Bunjun argues that rather than necessarily upsetting or subverting these ideologies, feminist organizations are themselves “sites of organizational colonial encounters” where social inequalities are regularly repeated and reinforced.⁹⁹ In the effort to come to common or shared conclusions about what counts as a feminist priority, Bunjun suggests that feminist organizations tend to enshrine a “*rightful* feminist of the nation” who embodies the nation-building project in her reinforcing of whiteness, heterosexuality, and class elitism as normative values of feminism.¹⁰⁰ Rather than upsetting these power relations, feminist collective sites are composed of complex and motivated feminist subjects who are as likely to reproduce as undermine these relations. Bunjun’s

⁹⁵ Vijay Agnew, “Canadian Feminism and Women of Color,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 16, no. 3 (1993): 223.

⁹⁶ Benita Bunjun, “Feminist Organizations and Intersectionality: Contesting Hegemonic Feminism,” *Atlantis* 34, no. 2 (2010): 117.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁹⁸ Benita Bunjun, “Organizational Colonial Encounters: A Critical Intersectional Analysis of Entitlement and Nation Building,” *The International Journal of Organizational Diversity* 13 (2014): 2.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 6, emphasis in original.

description of hegemonic feminism—and the “rightful” feminist subject it legitimizes—has significantly informed my archival reading of *Kinesis*, *Atlantis*, and *CWS*.¹⁰¹

Indeed, as Sarita Srivastava emphasizes, “Western second-wave feminist organizations” embody “historical and gendered representations of racial innocence and superiority”: within the Canadian nation state, feminist organizations represent both “feminist ideals of justice and egalitarian community and national discourses of tolerance, benevolence, and nonracism.”¹⁰² The twinned assumptions of racial innocence (whiteness as neutral) and superiority (whiteness as benevolent) espoused by feminist organizations that are either predominantly white or where only white women are in positions of power reflects the overarching white supremacy of the state, a state which through contradictory policies of multiculturalism, immigration restrictions, and colonialism organizes all people of colour and Indigenous peoples as “outsiders” to the national project.¹⁰³ Positioned as “national subjects” through the exclusion of non-white “others,” white women’s preferred status in the nation-state is generally extended to participation in feminist organizations and institutions, both academic and grassroots, where white women (dependent on other privileges, particularly class and sexuality) are often the unquestioned gatekeepers of not

¹⁰¹ Bunjun, “Feminist Organizations and Intersectionality,” 116. Bunjun describes hegemonic feminism “as the dominance of white Western, “north” or “First World” assumptions about what it means to be a feminist and what women need to be liberated. It is most often grounded in Second Wave Liberal feminist paradigms and de-emphasizes race, class and other intersecting positionalities” (ibid.).

¹⁰² Sarita Srivastava, ““You’re calling me a racist?” The Moral and Emotional Regulation of Antiracism and Feminism,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 31, no. 1 (Autumn 2005): 34.

¹⁰³ Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 21.

only feminism, but of feminism's engagement with race, class, sexuality, dis/ability and gender.¹⁰⁴

The dominant narratives about feminism I encountered in my archive drew my attention to what—and to whom—these narratives were simultaneously obscuring; as a consequence, my storytelling follows these omissions down a different line. Ahmed describes history as what is “reachable,” a “process of domestication” whereby “objects” must first be known in order to “enter” into history.¹⁰⁵ Likewise, to intervene in feminist history is to follow what is not known, or what is out of reach. For these reasons, my archive did not always contain the feminist histories I came to look for, requiring that I move outside of the feminist periodical in order to find evidence of obscured narratives. In beginning this project with a review of feminist political economy in 1980s Canada, in Chapter One I draw out how this discourse was attentive to analyzing the kinds of women's work that kept intact the category of “woman” as predominantly white and heterosexual. The woman of the domestic labour debate that so preoccupied feminist political economy in the 1980s was engaged in reproductive labour for the white, male-led household. The coherence of this feminist story about domestic work is undermined by the category of paid domestic work, in particular domestic labour performed by migrant women of colour. In shifting to a focus on the history of migrant domestic labour schemes in Canada, a feminist political economy developed by women of colour takes centre stage in Chapter Two. In the second part of the dissertation, I again insist on the importance of telling a different story about women's labour by turning to how sex work was both ignored by feminist political economists and subordinated to feminist narratives about violence against women within the so-

¹⁰⁴ Trans liberation, including the politics of trans identities, trans inclusion, and trans activism are important sites of struggle within feminism that are not taken up in this project.

¹⁰⁵ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 117.

called feminist “sex wars.” Thus, in Chapters Three and Four, I argue that feminists exploited women’s labour within the industries of prostitution and pornography to advance an agenda critical of sexual and gendered violence.

The following chapters explore an epistemological practice of telling *particular* feminist stories—both telling stories differently and telling different stories. Many of the common usages of “telling” are meaningful in relation to tracing feminist narratives and histories. For instance, “to tell” can indicate the communication of information or facts. To tell might be cautionary, delivered as a warning. To tell (off or on) may also be disciplinary, as in a denouncement of someone or something. To tell can signify the beginning of a narration or a story. Telling may also suggest recognition or certainty; something may become “telling,” as in becoming visible or seen. In relation to the feminist histories I take up in what follows, I invoke telling in all of these aforementioned ways. Attending to feminist stories about the 1980s is a political project that requires theoretical consideration; the politics of reading, citation, recitation, and writing are all components of what this project hopes to reveal, to reconsider, and to reimagine about feminism.

Reading Feminist Histories

“The moment, that snapshot of the discursive dissonance that makes up feminist history, might operate instead as a reminder that all histories are selective and motivated histories, even if they can make plain their ‘contested authorization.’” —Clare Hemmings¹⁰⁶

Reading history is a practice of learning about the past, as told by historians; correspondingly, writing history is a practice of teaching about the past, about documenting its complex unfolding. In this project, I envision reading historically as a methodological approach to pursuing a combined archival, historical, and theoretical feminist project with political stakes

¹⁰⁶ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 16.

in the past, present, and future, asking particular questions about which narratives we are bound to care about. Roger I. Simon, Sharon Rosenberg, and Claudia Eppert reflect that the “task” of “remembering well” requires a “reflexivity” to “work through one’s own affiliations with and differences from the ‘original’ narrative.”¹⁰⁷ Thus, doing feminist history as a critical learning practice is “not only a repetition (a retelling) of the story of another but also the *story of the telling of the story*.”¹⁰⁸ Thus, I am explicitly “motivated” in this project to intervene in feminist histories about the 1980s, “despite” Hemmings’s sage observation that “we know that history is more complicated than the stories we tell about it.”¹⁰⁹ This project does not endeavor to tell the truth about the past, but it takes seriously the hopeful possibility that “remembering well” through historical narrative can be of use in the present.

Hope, an ambivalent affect, has an appropriately ambivalent place in this feminist project. Ahmed comments that hope belongs to feminist history in that hope is generative of political struggle:

Where there is hope, there is difficulty. Feminist histories are histories of the difficulty of that we, a history of those who have had to fight to be part of a feminist collective, or even had to fight against a feminist collective in order to take up a feminist cause. Hope is not at the expense of struggle; hope gives us a sense that there is a point to working things through. Hope does not only or always point toward the future, but carries us through when the terrain is difficult, when the path we follow makes it harder to proceed. Hope is behind us when we have to work for something to be possible.¹¹⁰

Ahmed’s framing of hope is a reminder that hope is often heavy with “difficulty.” Hope is tethered to “struggle” and illuminates what requires “work,” an extension of desire towards what might be “possible.” The heaviness of hope provides support, a kind of buoyancy that “carries us through when the terrain is difficult.” Significantly, Ahmed describes how hope can be mobilized

¹⁰⁷ Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert, *Between Hope and Despair*, 7.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 16.

¹¹⁰ Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, 2.

in multiple directions: it is “not only” or “always” forward-looking, but drawn on in the present when “the path we follow makes it harder to proceed.” Hope is also “behind us” as feminist work builds on the hopes—the embodied and discursive expressions of feminist struggle and difficulty—of prior feminist subjects. Ahmed’s capacious renderings of hope provide a backdrop to my intentions to unsettle hegemonic feminist histories with the stories of “those who had to fight” for legitimacy in the narratives constructed about “political economy” and “the sex wars.” My approach to reading historically offers a deliberate borrowing of these hushed narratives, an exploration of their tensions in an effort to trace their persistent shapes and contours in the vexed contemporary, in pursuit of political possibility.

In what ways do feminist histories obscure more than they reveal? The contradictory messages of common sense phrases like “history repeats itself” or “the past is in the past” gloss over how some histories are readily available in dominant memory, while others are denied and minimized. As Ahmed writes, history is not simply “passed down” but is inherited “*through the work or labor of generations*.”¹¹¹ The “work or labor” of how history is remembered has particular bearing on a political project like feminism that, in the process of seeking gender justice, has just as readily colluded in the oppression of women marked as racially, sexually, economically, physically, or geographically “other.” I take as a given that all feminist subjects do not receive equal attention in the stories told and taught about feminisms’ recent pasts. By extension, I ask if the stakes of feminist history can matter evenly to all subjects, or if the weight of occlusion presses more intensely on some subjects than on others.

In *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, Avery Gordon is attuned to how “the living effects” of women’s narratives are “charged with the occluded and

¹¹¹ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 125 (emphasis in original).

forgotten past.”¹¹² She describes these effects as “seething presences,” signals of “what seems over and done with, the endings that are not over.” For Gordon, knowledge production that begins from “perceiving the lost subjects of history” is a critical step in “any project trying to find the address of the present.” It not only matters to the diverse subjects of the then and now of feminism what forms of injustice feminism may be complicit with, but it is critical to consider the narrative processes whereby some feminist histories are secured as dominant at the expense of subordinated others. Building on these insights by Gordon, my project is conscious of how common sense feminist histories about “political economy” and “the sex wars” remain unfinished; the implications of their narratives, and the political problems they address, persist in the present. Although my research for each chapter began with a “striking impression” that the stories told about these themes were cohesive, I quickly discovered the “seething presence” of feminist subjects whose voices did not resound as loudly within the periodicals. This project is a result of following these other voices; reading historically can be a practice of following through on discord, pinpointing the moments and the sites where stories go off track, reminders that these histories are still open to new interpretations.

A feminist practice of reading historically can be conceived of as a way of organizing what is already known alongside what is yet to be discovered. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick is cautious of the tendency of queer criticism to develop from the practice of “paranoid reading,” what she describes as a methodology of narrative interpretation that begins from a place of paranoia.¹¹³ This “hermeneutics of suspicion” is a “tracing-and-exposure project,” where a critical project “can’t help or can’t stop or can’t do anything other than prove the very same

¹¹² Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 195.

¹¹³ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 124.

assumptions with which it began.”¹¹⁴ Trapped in this self-fulfilling negative relation to the text, paranoid criticism, Sedgwick remarks, fails to offer anything innovative to readings of texts beyond further “evidence of systemic oppression.”¹¹⁵ As an alternative form of critique, Sedgwick develops a reparative reading strategy as essential for imagining queer possibility, as the reparative reading practice welcomes the possibility of both “good” and “terrible surprises.”¹¹⁶ What I find most useful for my purposes here is the way in which reparative reading is a critical tool for feminist pedagogy. When practiced by a feminist subject, reparative reading enables an acknowledgement that “the future may be different from the present,” making it “possible for her to entertain such profoundly painful, profoundly relieving, ethically crucial possibilities as that the past, in turn, could have happened differently from the way it actually did.”¹¹⁷ This possibility resonates with a feminist project seeking answers to troubling questions by tracing dominant and subordinated narratives of feminism’s past. That things could have gone another way in terms of racial, colonial, economic, and sexual justice is a sobering realization. Indeed, my interest in how feminist stories about “political economy” and “the sex wars” developed was ignited by a curiosity about how they might have developed otherwise. What reparative reading can offer to this feminist practice of reading historically is an opening for something new to happen in the process of return; and yet, I caution that whether this possibility is felt in the present as a disappointment, a triumph, an injury, or as hope is also an issue for consideration.

For projects like feminism that are desirous of social justice, adopting the reparative position can provide an “empathetic view of the other as at once good, damaged, integral, and

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 124, 135.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 126.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 146.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

requiring and soliciting love and care.”¹¹⁸ Sedgwick’s approach aligns with Scott’s, as both discussions of critique suggest that a gesture of compassion and empathy for the experiences and politics of previous feminist subjects might be considered an ethical responsibility. As Scott suggests, a critical feminist practice reflects a willingness “to revise, always to reach beyond our grasp for new knowledge, new stories to tell.”¹¹⁹ Reparative reading as a practice of feminist critique signals a possibility for creative knowledge practices that may be engendered through providing “love” and “care” to past feminist narratives, through revision and renewal. Indeed, Wendy Brown shares Sedgwick’s sense that critique is a “call to rethink something” that might offer “a way of caring for or even renewing the object in question.”¹²⁰ Put another way, Victoria Hesford advises that “a critical curiosity and accountability toward what is neither especially appealing nor alluring about the past” can provide “an engagement with what has been done, as well as what has been desired or anticipated in the past.”¹²¹ Collectively, the feminist scholars explored in this section propose a kind of critical intentionality towards feminist history; this is something that this project explicitly grapples with as I have sought to extend an empathetic gaze towards the narratives I encounter and develop here. At the same time, I have been worried about which feminist subjects are bound to receive this love and care. Are feminist histories equally positioned for reparative readings, and which narratives are entitled to repair?¹²²

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 137.

¹¹⁹ Scott, “Feminism’s History,” 26.

¹²⁰ Wendy Brown, *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), x.

¹²¹ Victoria Hesford, *Feeling Women’s Liberation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 257.

¹²² I am conscious that repair implies a sort of benevolence on the part of the writer that might amount to little else, and for this reason I want to leave room for the necessity of critique that is frustrated, angry, and *not* desirous of repair. To expect that critique be reparative might also become an injunction for marginalized subjects to continue to do the work of critique for free, or that a condition of critique becomes an *a priori* forgiveness of the harms caused by others. I don’t

While learning through and with my historical archives, I was struck by the sheer volume of feminist efforts undertaken to develop a more hospitable social and political world in Canada in the 1980s. I was moved by the vastness of the ephemera left behind by women as they struggled in material and discursive ways to articulate and to document their desires for political transformation. And yet, my reading practice was inevitably pulled sideways, moved to look to the margins of what was written for glimmers of what was missing or erased. Gordon describes this shifting of awareness as “a socio political-psychological state” that becomes attuned to how archives are structured not just through what is visible or known, but through the “repressed or unresolved social violence” that is “haunting” them.¹²³ She writes, “haunting raises specters, and it allows the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, and the future. These specters or ghosts appear when the trouble they represent and symptomize is no longer being contained or repressed or blocked from view.” Within my archive of feminist periodicals, race, class, and sexual difference are specters that haunt the kinds of narratives that feminists have told about “political economy” and “the sex wars.” These specters continue to haunt the present moment, and continue to drive the inquiries of many feminist projects, including this one. To recall Sedgwick, I was certainly not “surprised” to discover that the very marginalized subjects I set out to find were in fact marginalized in these feminist histories, yet I was struck by the violent banality with which feminist narratives reproduced these injuries.¹²⁴ More generally, this project has been a private practice of building awareness of how my own readings—from the archives I initially selected to the narratives I examine here—are bound to perform certain elisions. In one sense, reading historically is a process of noticing “those singular yet repetitive

want to make those demands of anyone else, nor do I want to gloss over the frustration and anger that at times has inspired my own critical practice.

¹²³ Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, xvi.

¹²⁴ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 146.

instances” of haunting, “when what’s been in your blind spot comes into view.”¹²⁵ In turn, what seems politically necessary to me is that this project might be a kind of critical address, a narrative engagement with the “something-to-be-done” of these hauntings through the still-urgent work of disrupting at least racism, classism, whorephobia, and homophobia in feminism.

Writing Reparatively: Citation and Recitation

“Citation is feminist memory”—Sara Ahmed¹²⁶

In each chapter that follows, I strive in some way to think together feminist histories that have not frequently been remembered as part of the same story through what I consider to be an ethical practice of writing reparatively. Hemmings speaks to how her “ambivalent/corrective impulses” guide her consideration of citation and recitation as practices that might register as valuable in “the politics of the present.”¹²⁷ As Hemmings describes, feminist scholars are implicated in the “narrative strands” of both reading and writing, bound up in commonsense iterations even as we work against reproducing them. Hemmings herself performs a reparative reading and writing practice that is cognizant of her own implicated place in feminism’s narrative process and seeks to “intervene” in stories at the level of grammar.¹²⁸ She describes a reflexive practice of “recitation” as that which “seeks to disrupt dominant narrative grammar and open up multiple readings of the present” by beginning “from what is precluded in dominant citational practice” in an effort “to fold these hauntings back into the political grammar of Western feminist theory to produce a set of potential feminist realignments.”¹²⁹ In reciting the very narratives that

¹²⁵ Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, xvi.

¹²⁶ Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, 15.

¹²⁷ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 23.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

have come to be taken as the common sense of feminism's history with an attention to how it is through citational practices of repetition that these narratives sediment as truth, Hemmings throws into relief both the dominant narratives and what haunts them. The first mode by which she does this is by exposing what she calls repetitive "glosses" in citation practices; that is, how certain theorists are repeatedly associated with certain ideas and time periods.¹³⁰ Repetitive glosses foreclose the possibility of newness, disruption, and alternatives from within each of these decades and their attached discourses, suggesting that decades or orientations of feminism are separate and not in fact overlapping and continuous. As Hemmings describes, recitation is a strategy of reimagining feminist narratives that have been remembered as "separate" but "that could as easily be cited as co-extensive."¹³¹ To get at the common sense of feminist stories, and the ways in which these glosses are rehearsed, she develops a methodology of what she calls "deauthorization," wherein she cites only the year and journal, and not the author, of the excerpts she analyzes.¹³² This deauthorization enables a reparative engagement with the glosses in question, as Hemmings depersonalizes them and ascribes their contributions to discursive "patterns" and habitual and collective inclusions "in the establishment of feminist (and broader academic) knowledge practices."¹³³ Thus, Hemmings locates each in-text citation—and not its respective author—as either productive of or resistant to hegemony in feminist thought, made cogent through the repetitive glosses and citations of particular feminist theories as belonging to a particular decade. This practice of deauthorization is powerful in its reflection of the similarities between the common stories feminist subjects authorize about feminism's recent history.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 16.

¹³¹ Ibid., 22.

¹³² Ibid., 20, 23.

¹³³ Ibid., 21. In particular, Hemmings is conscious of the collective nature of periodicals, including the perspectives of "editors, boards, peer reviewers," and "publishing conventions and expectations" (ibid.).

Hemmings's methodology of citation and recitation is instructive about how to implement a "reflexive" feminist engagement with feminist texts in the development of a more "accountable historiography."¹³⁴ In drawing attention to how each particular feminist textual archive is developed as a "selective" and "motivated" process, Hemmings asserts that both the texts that are cited and those that are identified as absent are an effect of that initial scaffolding process, as well as limited by the "original frames of engagement." From the outset of my own archival project, the establishment of my dissertation archive delimited the kinds of materials I would encounter in my research. By prioritizing Canadian feminist periodicals as my primary historical archives, I privileged a range of discursive and published accounts of feminist theory and history. My selection process therefore both reifies and questions relations of dominance in feminist publishing in Canada during the 1980s, reproducing the discourses of predominantly white, heterosexual, middle-class women while requiring me to engage primarily with their accounts of feminist politics at the time. Concomitantly, I was consistently inspired by how the counter-hegemonic narratives I discovered along the way disrupted this hegemony and raised the possibility of repair.

Inspired by Hemmings, I too wanted to "fold these hauntings back into the political grammar" of feminist history, but my citational approach departs from hers. Indeed, when I initially began tracing the narratives in my feminist archive, I mirrored her methodology, as I developed my own "deauthorization" citation system through a code that contained only an abbreviation of the journal in question, the year and month, and the page number. As I discovered in the process of writing and discussion with my mentors, leaving out the names of authors refused them the responsibility for their ideas. This refusal went both ways—it anonymized

¹³⁴ Ibid., 23.

lesser-known voices in the periodicals, and it allowed prominent feminist writers a comfortable distance from controversial ideas. A politics of accountability became salient: what effects would a citational gloss have on the feminist subjects who will encounter this project? I wanted to ensure that the gesture of repair—the direction of my “love” and “empathy”—reflected an orientation toward those women who have had to struggle for legitimacy within feminism, a process repeated within the exploration and exposition of this selective feminist archive.

I am encouraged by Ahmed’s commitment to “how we acknowledge our debt to those who came before; those who helped us find our way when the way was obscured because we deviated from the paths we were told to follow.”¹³⁵ As I have been suggesting thus far, my archives became pedagogical sites, encouraging and provoking thought through both what was present and what was absent. This project went off track in the sense that I remained curious and pursued the narratives that were unfamiliar; sometimes deliberately, and at other times with apprehension, this project followed through on the seething reminders of what was missing. Contra Hemmings’s vast discourse review of Western feminist periodicals, citation as a practice of authorization became politically integral to my particular project as I endeavored to unsettle dominant feminist narratives of “political economy” and “the sex wars” in Canada. As Ahmed suggests, “Citations can be feminist bricks: they are the materials through which, from which, we create our dwellings. My citation policy has affected the kind of house I have built.”¹³⁶ To conceive of citations as bricks is a reminder that citations are heavy, consequential, and concrete. Citations are powerful in who they hem in and in who they keep out. In building a feminist

¹³⁵ Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, 15.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 16. Ahmed’s “citation policy” turns away from the methods of her previous scholarship, where she explored the work of dominant philosophy through anti-racist, queer, and feminist critiques. In her recent project of citing only marginalized scholars, Ahmed places these scholars in the foreground of her epistemology.

archival project that looks to the future as much as to the present or the past, the politics of who speaks, who is represented, and who is afforded legitimacy matter. My own citation and recitation practice moves between dominant and marginalized narratives, insisting that each are integral parts of the same stories. Overall, they contribute to a critical feminist history that seeks to proliferate the narratives of the recent past.

While Scott is inspired by the fact that feminists have not yet “written all the stories,” I am guided by Hemmings’s sense that approaching the same stories differently might provide a more ethical engagement with historical injuries.¹³⁷ Yet, I again depart from Hemmings in her sense that the practice of “feminist recitation” does not argue for an “alternative history.”¹³⁸ Instead, this project betrays my motivation to also attend to different feminist stories “for thinking past and present differently,” not simply for a “reflexive approach,” but because remembering these histories as feminist matters. Thus, this project strives to locate as feminist history discrete forms of women’s labour not conceptually remembered as central to the debates of “feminist political economy” and “the sex wars” in Canada. In particular, I argue that the labour of migrant domestic workers and sex workers offers not only important histories of women’s work, but of feminist politics. Turning to these subordinated histories within the common sense stories of “feminist political economy” and “the sex wars” demonstrates the efforts through which domestic workers and sex workers strove, on their own terms, to establish their place in feminist movements and in feminist history. It is my hope that in each narrative I return to and reassemble here, I foreground the ongoing difficulty of sustaining critical complexity within feminism, all the while attempting to grapple with how race, class, gender, and sexuality intersect within particular feminist historical narratives. While I routinely characterize

¹³⁷ Scott, “Feminism’s History,” 11.

¹³⁸ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 190.

these histories as “about” a particular race, class, or sexual politic, my interest is in tracing how feminist investments and ideologies in gender, race, class, and sexuality coalesce around particular histories; therefore, I am not claiming to know “about” the complex identities of the women involved.

Telling Feminist Histories

In Chapter One, I examine the history of “feminist political economy” in Canada. Turning to a recent debate over the place of race within Canadian Marxist feminist history, I contemplate and build upon challenges to the narrative that Marxist feminism was anti-racist in the 1980s. Through a discourse review of white Marxist feminist writing across four periodicals—*CWS*, *Atlantis*, *Kinesis* and *Studies in Political Economy*—I examine the development of feminist political economy as an academic field in Canada. As a project to stretch Marxism to account for gender/sex, white Marxist feminists sought to expose Marxist concepts to feminist critique, and to critique the sexism operating in the socialist Left. Within the domestic labour debate, white Marxist feminists privileged an analysis of social reproduction and the private forms of labour of the domestic sphere. Amidst these theoretical maneuvers, I argue that race signifies as an “absence” in this discourse that reveals white Marxist feminists’ investments in whiteness. I argue that whiteness was a unifying strategy amongst white socialist feminists (and amongst the white Left more broadly). In articulating a Marxist feminist politic that sought to establish gender/sex as on par with class, Marxist feminists subordinated analyses of race privilege, racism, racial oppression, and the racial politics of labour. In the establishment of a feminist political economic discourse as a legitimate field of scholarly inquiry, white Marxist feminists drew from and reified their racial loyalty to white men.

In Chapter Two, I deepen this analysis of common sense racism in the history of white feminist political economy. I critique the superficial engagement with race displayed in feminist political economy's reluctance to examine racialization as an index of labour, labour markets, and labour trends. I argue that securing the domestic labour debate within the framework of white feminism relied on an exclusion of women of colour as political economic theorists while obscuring the racialized politics of paid domestic work. Turning to the history of migrant domestic labour schemes since the 1950s in Canada, I situate this history as integral to feminist political economy even though it has seldom, if ever, received attention within scholarship widely recognized as 'of' the field. Through the scholarship of racialized feminists, I examine how migrant working-class Caribbean women accessed international employment through state policy organized to maintain gendered, racial and economic inequality locally and globally. In the context of changes to immigration policy in the 1970s, the maintenance of migrant domestic labour schemes forestalled black and brown Caribbean women's rights to citizenship. In order to access this history, my research moved outside of my primary archive in order to find the scholarship and activism of women of colour who established migrant domestic labour as a political issue in the 1980s, animating the organizing and alliance-building between black and brown migrant, immigrant, and Canadian women. Women of colour's theorizing of paid domestic work examined the interlocking oppressions of globalization, racism, classism, and sexual violence that migrant domestic workers faced. Despite an awareness of migrant domestic workers' struggles within the feminist periodical *Kinesis*, white feminists did not prioritize solidarity with either black and brown feminists, or black and brown migrant workers in the 1980s. In neglecting to expose the domestic labour debate to the racialized dynamics of paid migrant labour schemes, white feminist political economy failed to challenge the state's solution

to the crisis of social reproduction; instead, this global care hierarchy has served to reinforce white women's race, class, and citizenship privilege.

The feminist inattention to paid domestic work is mirrored in the neglect of sex work as a political economic and labour issue, as both forms of work are based in a corporeal relation to capital. The physicality of the body employed in care work is under-theorized in 1980s feminism, where the corporeality of these forms of intimate labour tethers them to one another while at the same time distancing them from feminist concern. Care work—to apply the body to work, to base work within the body, to be paid for the labour of the flesh—is derided by bourgeois sensibility. The sheer physicality of care work—both domestic work and sex work—can be both unthinkable and unknowable to those privileged enough to exchange labour for capital otherwise. This illegibility of care work as seen with paid domestic work is also exemplified by an inattention to sex work within a labour framework in feminist preoccupations with sexuality in the 1980s.

Thus, in Chapter Three, I consider the history of the feminist “sex wars,” in particular how it played out in Vancouver, B.C., and was recorded in *Kinesis*. Examining the discursive framing of the sex wars according to the parameters of “pleasure and danger,” I question the limits of these terms for thinking about the debates on sexuality that have attracted feminist inquiry since the late 1970s and 1980s. In particular, I am interested in how sex work was theorized in this discourse, and the importance of sex worker contributions (or lack thereof) within it. I argue that the yoking of sex work to danger both naturalizes and appropriates sex workers' experiences of actual violence. To explore these concerns, I trace one story of the sex wars through an archival analysis of *Kinesis* and archival data from its publisher, the Vancouver Status of Women. Charting the emergence of a white, middle-class feminist theory of prostitution and pornography in 1978, I explore how Vancouver feminists active in *Kinesis* and VSW developed an analysis of prostitution that situated prostitution as an economic outcome for the

most “victimized” women of patriarchy. In advocating for the short-term decriminalization of laws against women working in prostitution, some feminists sought to strike a balance between their overarching goals of abolishing the commercial sex industry and supporting women working within it. In seeking an end to prostitution, feminists refused prostitutes’ agency to define their own bodily integrity, labour, and economic priorities. However, prostitutes working in Vancouver resisted this inscription of victimhood and developed their own discourse on prostitution and violence, in their activism and in the pages of *Kinesis*. This sex worker discourse asserted a political analysis of their sexual labour, the material realities of poverty and racism, the specificity of male violence against prostitutes, and their distrust of feminists. As this chapter documents, feminist agitation against commercial sexuality emboldened the state’s interest in controlling prostitution. Changes to the criminal code, local by-laws, and police surveillance increased the criminalization of women working as prostitutes, and their exposure to male violence. The white, middle-class feminist abolition agenda has haunted the systematic murder of poor, racialized, and disproportionately Indigenous, street-based sex workers in Vancouver and across Canada.

Finally, in Chapter Four, I evaluate the development of a white, middle-class feminist theory of pornography as emergent in *Kinesis* and the Vancouver Status of Women’s archives. As the central theme of contestation in the Vancouver incarnation of the feminist sex wars, writing about pornography in *Kinesis* far outstripped feminist attention to prostitution, and exhibited a lack of interest in women working in pornography. I argue that feminist theorizing of pornography developed through a framework of pornography as violence against women that enshrined white, middle-class feminists as citizen-subjects worthy of and entitled to state protection. To support this claim, I trace the development of the feminist anti-violence movement in Vancouver as reported in *Kinesis*, in particular the movement’s work to situate rape as a form

of violence against women. In establishing rape as a form of violence and sexual oppression, anti-violence feminists developed action-strategies of legal reform and rape crisis centres. Concomitantly, the proliferation of video pornography became evidence of the kinds of abuse women were experiencing in their lives, as feminists connected sexism, sexual objectification, and sexual violence with the images in pornography. In naming pornography as both a cause and effect of violence against women, feminists determined that the eradication of pornography was a precursor to their liberation. The anti-violence movement shifted its focus to the action-strategy of anti-pornography theorizing and activism. Feminist anti-pornography activism in Vancouver explored a range of tactics, including protests, direct action, forums, and appeals to the state through demanding police, legal, legislative, and state action. These feminist incursions were controversial, and the issue of state censorship began to dominate the discourse. Feminist pornography analysis and activism increasingly bifurcated as feminists scrambled to protect their own rights to create, access, and share feminist—and particularly lesbian and queer—representations of sexuality. As feminist concerns over censorship mounted, the state ramped up its targeting of sexual minorities.

As the following chapters recount, the narrative of marginalized women as somehow disruptive to feminism's coherence is a common story that disguises anxiety about thinking with and through difficulty and difference. The stakes of reading historically are high; tracing detours in dominant feminist narratives for evidence of something else, something more, and something different offers an opportunity for repair. This project is caught up in the ambivalent possibility of hope: the regret for historical injustices, the grief over contemporary inequalities, the desire for redistributive justice for marginalized women, and the promise of collective solidarity. Without dismissing the dominant narratives, or denouncing the contemporary urgency of feminism, this project seeks to understand how difficult it is to attend to race, class, gender, and sexuality

together while sustaining an interest in the politics of labour. In the interactions between the known and the unfamiliar that I narrate here, the arguments that follow reflect my own learning anew, recitations of a fumbled gesture of empathic critique.

Chapter One

Doing All the Work? Canadian Feminist Political Economy, Whiteness, and the Domestic Labour Debate

In the fall of 2014, a fraught conversation erupted in the Canadian journal *Studies in Political Economy* concerning the history and the future of Marxist feminism. Sparked by a provocative article by the white Marxist feminist scholar Meg Luxton—renowned for her work in building a feminist political economic analytic in Canada—this debate captures an enduring problematic that I argue remains salient within contemporary feminist politics: is it possible to theorize gender, race, class, and sexuality together, without one taking precedence over the other? And perhaps more specifically, can Marxist feminism take up that task? Luxton is confident that it can, and claims that while the socialist politics of the second wave women’s movement have either been “ignored” or “distorted,” Marxist feminism has in fact achieved “an expanded analysis of class that integrates gender and race and is focused on social reproduction” through a framework that explains how “capitalist economies depend for their existence on the unpaid care work” of most women.¹

Luxton’s remembering and retelling of the story of Canadian socialist feminism presents a narrative of feminist loss and return; she implies that there is something fragile about contemporary feminism that requires a return to the questions, strategies, and unifications of prior feminism in order to skillfully counter the allure and cooptation of capitalism. As Hemmings describes, loss narratives “tell the story of feminism’s demise” while they must also “take care not to dismiss” the interventions that identity politics posed.² This maneuver is demonstrated by

¹ Meg Luxton, “Marxist Feminism and Anticapitalism: Reclaiming our History, Reanimating Our Politics,” *Studies in Political Economy* 94, Autumn (2014): 137, 153.

² Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 67.

Luxton's reflection that white women learned from women of colour, through a shared feminist "struggle," how to deepen *their* analyses of gender and class to include race.³ Thus, in superficially including the work of women of colour in the "reclaiming" of white socialist feminism's historical project, Luxton folds women of colour's labour—physical, intellectual, and affective—backwards into the origin story of white feminist political economy. However, this sentiment performs a double movement of both writing women of colour into white women's political development while also positioning white women as benevolently receptive to the "challenge" of race raised by women of colour. For instance, Luxton frames anti-racist interventions as antagonistic to Marxist feminists in Canada and the UK, who "developed sophisticated analyses of gender and class, but offered little on racialization *until* antiracist feminists challenged them. While such uneven developments *may* invite productive exchanges, *they can also reinforce misunderstandings and political differences, undermining solidarity among activists from different places.*"⁴ Luxton's retelling of feminist history solely from her perspective as a white socialist feminist academic casts women of colour as oppositional to white women in the recent history of Canadian feminism's socialist project. Luxton recirculates what Vron Ware describes as a colonial gendered, raced, classed, and sexualized trope of white woman as the reasonable "symbol of civilization" and the racialized subject as unruly and disruptive; white women's receptivity to critique becomes a measure of their goodwill, and not of the force of the critique waged against them.⁵ Thus, the creation of this conflict within feminism gets ascribed to women of colour for raising racism as an issue, as opposed to white women refusing

³ Luxton, "Marxist Feminism and Anticapitalism," 141.

⁴ Ibid., 145, emphasis added.

⁵ Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (New York: Verso, 1992), 11. Ware provides an astute discussion of this colonial trope of white womanhood.

to see racism as an issue. This trope establishes women of colour as the source of conflict within feminist history, as opposed to white women's resistance to and refusal of that critique.

Luxton's article drew ire from both white and black feminist scholars, as Susan Ferguson and Linda Carty weighed in on what they saw as indelible oversights in Luxton's retelling of the Canadian Marxist feminist story. In particular, Ferguson and Carty critique Luxton's narrative for how it "downplays the theoretical gaps and lags" Marxist feminism demonstrated in relation to race, reproducing a "fundamental neglect" of colonialism and racism that ignores the contributions of women of colour and Indigenous women to feminist theorizing and organizing.⁶ Reverberating throughout Carty's essay in particular is a sense of disbelief, of felt injury, not only in the absences and oversights of another's memories, but in the willingness to reify this version of history as a kind of truth. In remembering Marxist feminism as marking a significant cultural and political turn in feminist and Marxist theorizing, Luxton expresses the importance—and attendant devaluation—of its goals as a political orientation since the 1960s, based in "Marxist principles of historical materialism and Marxist critiques of class societies, especially capitalism, while insisting on theorizing and developing politics that put women's oppression and liberation, class politics, anti-imperialism, antiracism, and issues of gender identity and sexuality together at the heart of the agenda."⁷ However, this apparent harmony between diverse political movements is not necessarily the "heart" or the truth of Marxist feminism's discursive project. Carty responds that despite giving "lip service to the discourse of intersectionality," Luxton's personal scholarship has proceeded without "any recognition that the Canadian working class has

⁶ Susan Ferguson, "A Response to Meg Luxton's 'Marxist Feminism and Anticapitalism'," *Studies in Political Economy* 94, Autumn (2014): 164; Linda Carty, "A Genealogy of Marxist Feminism in Canada," *Studies in Political Economy* 94, Autumn (2014): 183.

⁷ Luxton, "Marxist Feminism and Anticapitalism," 144.

always been raced” and without integrating “the work of women she claims have been left out.”⁸ Carty claims that this kind of superficial engagement with race exemplifies the ways in “which white Canadian feminists such as Luxton were generally unconcerned with the struggles being waged by women of colour.”⁹ What Carty’s counter-genealogy asserts is that white feminists have practiced a “fundamental neglect” of race in the development of feminist political economic theory in Canada.¹⁰

At stake here is how feminist narratives about recent histories of economics and labour contribute to feminist knowledge about gender, race, class, and sexuality. Which history is taken at face value, and which histories are circumscribed? This question was taken up by Carty and other distinguished black feminist scholars in their 1994 reflection on the second wave women’s movement in Canada. As the co-authors of an important study on black women’s history in Canada, they argued that “race is neglected” in the burgeoning discipline of [white] women’s history since the 1960s: “Even though the white middle-class bias in women’s history has partially been redressed in recent years by studies of working-class and immigrant women, Canadian women’s history remains primarily that of white women.”¹¹ Two decades later, Carty’s response in *Studies in Political Economy* charges Luxton with repeating the same “omission” of women of colour again, specifically by sidelining their labour, activism, writing and theory to the margins of women’s movement history.¹² How to account for Luxton’s feeling of historical

⁸ Carty, “A Genealogy of Marxist Feminism,” 177, 180, 181.

⁹ Ibid., 179.

¹⁰ Ibid., 183.

¹¹ Peggy Bristow, Dionne Brand, Linda Carty, Afua P. Cooper, Sylvia Hamilton, and Adrienne Shadd, introduction to *We’re Rooted Here and They Can’t Pull Us Up: Essays in African Canadian Women’s History*, eds. Peggy Bristow, Dionne Brand, Linda Carty, Afua P. Cooper, Sylvia Hamilton, and Adrienne Shadd (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 4, 7.

¹² Carty, “A Genealogy of Marxist Feminism,” 178.

injury from the Left and contemporary feminism, and then do justice to Carty's critique that white women's Marxist feminist scholarship repeats similar damages against women of colour?

In her pivotal book *Thinking Through: Essays on Feminism, Marxism, and Anti-Racism*, Himani Bannerji attends to the commonsense racism that white feminists in Canada engender:

These white progressive activists may have dealt with the overtly political, ideological dimension of their own racism, but not with their common sense racism. It is perhaps for this reason that the racism of the left feminists is always of omission rather than that of commission. They probably truly cannot see us or why it is that racism and "ethnicity" are integral to the study of women in Canada—even when they study the area of labour/capital relations, i.e. class. And those feminists who do see us or that racism is an issue very often deal with it in the spirit of Christian humanism, on the ground of morality and doing good, or in the spirit of bourgeois democracy, which "includes" or adds on representatives from the "minority" communities.¹³

In Bannerji's assessment, it is not "obviously racist" actions that require theoretical analysis and resistance, but the summation and sedimentation of quotidian forms of commonsense racism.¹⁴

In this chapter, I echo Bannerji's concern for how white women's racism appears in forms of "omission," in the silences and absences of what is left out of the feminist political economy discourse that grew in significant ways in the 1980s. I build on Carty and Bannerji to consider how the Canadian discourse of feminist political economy has historically achieved recognition of the link between gender and class at the expense of silencing or downplaying the significance of race.

As the above discussion illuminates, how feminist political economy is remembered matters. Feminist histories of economics and labour, and histories of how feminists do or do not take up these issues, are also histories of racial privilege and subordination, class formation and sedimentation, and citizenship and immigration. This chapter proceeds through a practice of

¹³ Himani Bannerji, *Thinking Through: Essays on Feminism, Marxism, and Anti-Racism* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1995): 46.

¹⁴ Ibid., 45.

reparative reading with the intention to understand, and make cogent, how feminist political economic discourse developed in Canada during the 1980s as a complexly gendered, classed, sexual and racial project, and queries what the consequences of this retelling are for the present moment. My approach of reading historically has first turned me towards a tracing of the dominant narratives about feminist political economy in the 1980s. The first section of this chapter unravels my reading of white feminist political economy's preoccupations and interests, which I argue develop a particularly white and heteronormative imaginary of domestic labour. I examine how white socialist feminists in Canada worked to stretch Marxism to encompass not only class relations, but gender relations as well. Their project was primarily accomplished through an articulation of the domestic sphere as reproductive; that is, of how the home and the family are a site of social reproduction. Concomitantly, I acknowledge the intellectual, affective, and embodied work involved in changing minds, changing relationships, and interrupting the gendered and heterosexual status quo. I recognize that the affective and academic labour of white socialist feminists in challenging sexism and male supremacy within Marxist and socialist thought, publishing, and organizing was a transformative force.

In retelling my own story of reading for the dominant narratives of feminist political economy in Canada, I then return to the exchange between Meg Luxton and Linda Carty that opened this chapter. Contrary to Luxton's insistence that race—as well as sexuality and gender identity—has been “at the heart” of the socialist feminist project; I work to further confirm Carty's sense that white feminists in the 1980s were largely unconcerned with race and women of colour's experiences of racism.¹⁵ In particular, I argue that the discourse of white feminist political economy reflects a lack of interest in and disengagement with the economic and labour

¹⁵ Luxton, “Marxist Feminism and Anticapitalism,” 144; Carty, “A Genealogy of Marxist Feminism,” 179.

conditions faced by racialized women in Canada. Building on Bannerji's assessment of the "absence" of race this discourse engenders, I demonstrate how feminist political economy in the 1980s is a discourse dominated by white women, and that this domination is neither benign nor accidental.¹⁶ Rather, white women's strategies of transforming sexism on the Left in the 1980s were accomplished precisely through arguing that gender was the coequal of class. I contend that the subordination of race, achieved through practices of unexamined whiteness, the reluctance to consider racism and white supremacy, the comfort of citizenship, and the omission of women of colour, was not simply an *effect* but rather a *unifying strategy* of white feminist political economy.¹⁷

Privileging Work: White Feminism and the Domestic Labour Debate

As I trace in what follows, an aspect of the "work" of feminist political economy has been to both reveal and to conceal the very conditions of its project. In this section, I chart the central theoretical debates taking place between white feminist scholars of political economy during the years 1980-89, reading historically across the periodicals *Studies in Political Economy*, *Kinesis*, *CWS*, and *Atlantis*, as well as three edited volumes linking feminism with socialism and political economy published between 1980-89. This section aims to capture how the rather homogenous composition of the field of feminist interlocutors influenced the relative consensus exhibited by

¹⁶ Bannerji, *Thinking Through*, 75. "'Racism' and 'race,' as well as non-white women as producers of theory or politics, are generally absent from the textual world of 'Marxist/socialist feminism.' This absence is not only a matter of disappointment and acrimony for non-white women, but even more fundamentally it throws the whole theoretical and political project of Marxist feminism into question" (Bannerji, 75).

¹⁷ Ibid., 47. My argument of whiteness as a unifying strategy builds on Bannerji's argument: "It is not surprising then that both in its omissions and commissions racism is an essential *organizing device* of European (white) feminist discourse—as much as of any other type of discourse" (Bannerji, 47 [emphasis added]).

Marxist feminist thinkers published during this period; despite their engagement in debate with one another, the majority of authors cited below participated in a rather heterodox approach to political economy that stretched—but nonetheless retained—Marxist principles and language.

What is feminist political economy in Canada, and what were its contributions to political economic theory in the 1980s? Like other feminist political economic projects globally, the discourse in Canada can be characterized as an intellectual project to expand Marxist political economy to account for gender.¹⁸ Sparked in the 1960s, developed in the 1970s, and gaining momentum throughout the 1980s, white socialist and Marxist feminists sought to transform the heterodox, class-first approach of Marxist political economy to include relations of gender.¹⁹ The framework of Marxist feminism was accomplished by insisting that the sexual and gendered division of labour is an integral constituent of capitalist class formation and contributes surplus value to the economy. This section aims to show the development of the feminist political economic tradition in Canada, and to highlight its primary theoretical preoccupations as evidenced in academic publishing in feminist and political economic texts of the period. Critically, this chapter charts how the domestic labour debate was constructed and revised throughout the 1980s, concluding with a conscious—yet superficial—gesture towards the politics of intersectionality by the end of the decade. My overview of feminist political economic theory charts a progression from a white working-class feminist interest in suturing Marxism and

¹⁸ In Canada, Marxist, socialist, Leninist, and Leftist movements were influenced and inspired by radical socialist movements in other geopolitical contexts, including Italy, China, Russia, Germany, and Chile.

¹⁹ Heather Jon Maroney and Meg Luxton, “From Feminism and Political Economy to Feminist Political Economy,” in *Feminism and Political Economy: Women’s Work, Women’s Struggles*, ed. Heather Jon Maroney and Meg Luxton (Agincourt: Methuen Publications, 1987), 17. A paper delivered in 1967 to the Student Union for Peace Action “became a key document for the Canadian women’s liberation movement” in its development of a Marxist feminist lens; the paper was delivered by Judy Bernstein, Peggy Morton, Linda Seese, and Myrna Wood, entitled “Sisters, Brothers, Lovers...Listen...” (ibid.).

feminism, to an analysis of the primacy of capitalism and patriarchy, to an evaluation of domestic labour as the site of the sexual/gendered division of labour, to theorizing domestic production as social reproduction, and to the development of the reserve army of labour thesis to include women's economic roles. In an effort to strategically uplift gender to be on the same level as class in a white masculinist, Marxist framework, race and to a lesser extent non-normative sexuality are subordinated.

Feminist political economy in Canada has its roots in a Canadian political science tradition of Marxist political economy. Marxist political economy builds on several interrelated aspects of Marxist thought that argue that the economy and economic institutions are historical processes that require critique and analysis; that class is the primary contradiction in capitalist society; and that class struggle will be accomplished through a concerted and militant organization of the working class. As prominent Marxist scholars Peter Meiksins and Ellen Meiksins Wood insisted in 1985, the traditional methodology of Marxist political economy is historical materialism: "The burden of historical materialism has been to show why and how production relations, exploitation, and class struggle have been central to social experience and historical processes."²⁰ A more recent reflection on the contributions of feminist political economy asserts that while researchers in the field "recognize the critical stance they share with other political economists, they also assert that feminist analyses provide unique contributions to economic and social theory."²¹ In emphasizing the relevance of gender to social formations, feminist political economists launched a gendered critique against these foundational tenets of

²⁰ Peter Meiksins and Ellen Meiksins Wood, "Beyond Class? A Reply to Chantal Mouffe," *Studies in Political Economy* 17 (1985): 162.

²¹ Ellen Mutari, "Feminist Political Economy: A Primer," in *Political Economy and Contemporary Capitalism: Radical Perspectives on Economic Theory and Policy*, eds. Roy Baiman, Heather Boushey, Dawn Saunders, and M.E. Sharpe (New York: Armock, 2000), 29-35.

Marxist political economy. Critically, they challenged Marxism to consider “the woman question.” Indeed, in her comparative review of the place of women across traditional schools of economic theory—neoclassical, radical (Marxist), and institutional—feminist political economist Martha MacDonald drily observed in 1984 that economics had “fallen short of other disciplines on all levels relevant to feminism.”²² Nonetheless, Marxist political economics appealed to feminists because of its overarching theory of domination, its analysis of the division of labour under capitalism, and its conceptualization of the reserve army of labour—all of which have proved amenable to gendered analyses.

Feminist political economy emerged in Canada as a project to stretch Marxism to account for gender. Inspired by white socialist feminists in both Europe and the United States, the project was developed across many fronts as different theorists sought to engage, expand, complicate, or suture feminism to Marxism.²³ Influencing the direction of gendered critiques into the 1980s, these early feminist critiques of the economy drew analogies between women’s subordination in the labour market and their subordination in the domestic sphere; by extension, male domination was theorized as a powerful force across both the public and private spheres.²⁴ In articulating class to gender as practices of domination oppressive to women, feminist political economists sought to utilize the revolutionary rhetoric and logic of Marxism in developing a socialist feminist project. In 1979, the publication of American feminist Heidi Hartmann’s scathing declaration that for Marxism “the woman question has never been the ‘feminist question’” was a

²² Martha MacDonald, “Economics and Feminism: The Dismal Science?” *Studies in Political Economy* 15 (1984): 156.

²³ See, for instance, Silvia Federici, *Wages Against Housework* (Bristol: The Power of Women Collective and Falling Wall Press, 1975).

²⁴ Delphy, “The Main Enemy”; Margaret Benston, “The Political Economy of Women’s Liberation,” *Monthly Review* 21, no. 4 (1969): 13-27.

watershed moment for this burgeoning analysis.²⁵ Positing that Marxist analysis is “sex-blind” but that radical feminist theory is also “insufficiently materialist” and “blind to history,” Hartmann strove to fuse together historical materialism with the radical feminist theory of patriarchy to convey both as intertwined structural processes.²⁶ Hartmann’s essay spawned many feminist responses and rebuttals in America, including a lengthy 1981 edited book that grappled with the question of whether gender “equality” was possible “in a left/progressive movement whose dominant ideology is Marxism...[or] in a future society which is organized around Marxist theory and practice?”²⁷ White feminists also dominated the American debate, with the intermittent inclusion in edited volumes of essays addressing race or sexuality.²⁸ When white Marxist feminists took up interventions by lesbians and women of colour, these responses often reinforced and revealed deep-seated prejudice.²⁹

²⁵ Heidi Hartmann, “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union,” in *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, ed. Lydia Sargent (Boston: South End Press, 1981), 3.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁷ Lydia Sargent, “New Left Women and Men: The Honeymoon is Over,” in *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, ed. Lydia Sargent (Boston: South End Press, 1981): x.

²⁸ Christine Riddiough, “Socialism, Feminism, and Gay/Lesbian Liberation,” in *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, ed. Lydia Sargent, (Boston: South End Press, 1981), 71-89. Riddiough argues that socialist feminism has neglected lesbianism and sexuality (Riddiough, 73); Gloria Joseph, “The Incompatible Ménage a Trois: Marxism, Feminism, and Racism,” in *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, ed. Lydia Sargent, (Boston: South End Press, 1981), 91-107. Joseph insists that “racism must be addressed specifically and consistently as an integral part of any theory of feminism and Marxism” (Joseph, 93).

²⁹ Angela Miles, “Dissolving the Hyphen: From Socialist-Feminism to Feminist Feminism,” *Atlantis* 9, no. 2 (1984): 88. Miles’s review of three socialist feminist volumes, including *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, leads her to charge Riddiough and Joseph—the sole authors of articles linking socialism with lesbianism and blackness—of being theoretically insufficient. Indeed, her reading of Joseph slips into a patronizing racism when she says, “She did not outline the kind of realizations that Black revolutionaries would have to come to about women’s oppression in order to make this

In Canada, white feminist political economic discourse emerged to amend Marxism by integrating sex differences “in all levels of theory and analysis.”³⁰ As occasional contributors to the periodical *Studies in Political Economy*, feminist political economic theorists also held court in both *Atlantis* and *CWS*. In a 1983 contribution to *Studies in Political Economy*, Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong reflect “the ‘fathers’ of political economy” were “unable to incorporate the conflicts between women and men, and between households and capital into [Marx’s] dialectical analysis.”³¹ Critical of Marx’s “partial and flawed” understanding of this “struggle,” Armstrong and Armstrong observe that Marx was limited in his inability “to perceive the contradiction in the free compulsion facing women, who cannot often be full participants in capitalist society unless they are wives and mothers, and cannot often be full participants if they are.”³² In the subsequent issue of *Studies in Political Economy*, Angela Miles’s 1983 contribution expresses her desire for a “universal analysis of domination that can encompass both class and gender oppression,” and the development of a feminist political economic discourse working towards “the end of domination and alienation” and its expression in gender and class forms.³³ Feminist political economists in the early 1980s sought to make explicit that they were nurturing feminism and Marxism into complementary frameworks for understanding the specific oppression of women in capitalist society. This nurturing took significant maneuvering and conceptual effort, not only because it traversed what at that time were uncharted theoretical waters, but also because feminist political economists challenged the economic determinism of orthodox Marxist political

‘marriage’ anything but a disaster for both white and black women each in their own specific ways” (Miles, 88).

³⁰ Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong, “Beyond Sexless Class and Classless Sex: Towards Feminist Marxism,” *Studies in Political Economy* 10 (1983): 7.

³¹ Ibid., 7, 11.

³² Ibid., 11.

³³ Angela Miles, “Economism and Feminism: Hidden in the Household, A Comment on the Domestic Labour Debate,” *Studies in Political Economy* 11 (1983): 204.

economy; Marxist feminists could not simply “add” gender to this methodology.³⁴ Rather, Marxist feminist political economists sought to apply a gendered lens to areas of society that had hitherto been conceived of as purely institutional and economic spheres, or in contrast, apply an economic lens to areas that had been conceived of as private or cultural domains.

Building on Armstrong and Armstrong and Miles’s contributions, Patricia Connelly speculated in 1983 that Marxist feminist analysis should be directed towards “the level of the capitalist social formation.”³⁵ In turning to the social formation, Connelly echoed Armstrong and Armstrong and Miles that it was possible to retain Marxist concepts but to apply them to the unique conditions of women under capitalism. In specifying that the relations of production produced distinct classes, and that gender is “determined by principles other than those of the relations of production,” Connelly sought to emphasize that “the point of this approach is not to reduce every relationship to economic terms (as at the level of the capitalist mode of production) but rather to disclose the relationship between the economic structure and these other structures (at the more concrete and empirical level of social formation).”³⁶ She explains,

An analysis at this level examines how the capitalist mode of production, as it operates in specific societies, determines or redefines particular social, political and ideological forms. At this level the focus is on how the relations of production intersect, combine and conflict with the relations of gender in different classes and in different historical periods within one society, and in different societies. The analysis also raises the question as to how class and gender structures combine, intersect, and conflict in social formations dominated by other modes of production.³⁷

Conceptualizing class and gender as discrete social forms that have the potential to coalesce, to overlap, and to clash, Connelly thereby elevates social structures to analytical importance on par with economic structures. As this excerpt from Connelly’s influential essay elucidates, the two

³⁴ Armstrong and Armstrong, “Beyond Sexless Class,” 9.

³⁵ Patricia Connelly, “On Marxism and Feminism,” *Studies in Political Economy* 12 (1983): 158.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

poles of analysis in feminist political economy concerned the relationship between class and gender. It is interesting that Connelly's use of the term "intersects" here pre-dates Crenshaw's coining of the term "intersectionality" in 1989, and in Connelly's 1983 usage the concept "intersect" is applied to convey a dualism. In emphasizing the influence of capitalism on the social formation, Connelly privileges gender and class, and forecloses the possibility of conceptualizing race or sexuality in the formation of gender and class relations. Connelly's use of this dualism is a common strategy of Marxist feminists, duplicating rather than multiplying the pillars of domination theorized by Marxism.³⁸ Yet this duplication highlights what is in fact a contested cleavage in white Marxist feminist political economy: are patriarchy and capitalism equally deterministic, and which one is the originary source of domination?

This conceptual issue is addressed by white feminist political economists in the 1980s in their discussion of dual systems theory, which is characterized by the argument that there are two primary and coequal systems of domination in society, both capitalism and patriarchy. Significantly, as Janet McKee reflected on the debate in *Atlantis* in 1989, dual systems theory preoccupied the domestic labour debate as feminist political economists endeavored to unpack the historical development of the classed and gendered division of labour prior to and under capitalism.³⁹ Of shared concern was how and why both systems enact relations wherein women are subordinated, if neither patriarchy nor capitalism is to be seen as universal or natural. However, while working toward documenting how capitalism and patriarchy are both exploitative relations that required a merged analysis, white feminist political economists in

³⁸ Armstrong and Armstrong, "Beyond Sexless Class," 11. "While the working class may or may not be differentiated by race, ethnicity, religion, occupation, industry or whatever, it is invariably differentiated by sex" (ibid., 11).

³⁹ Janet McKee, "The Effect of Domestic Labour and Gender on the Relationship Between Class and Political Attitudes," *Atlantis* 14, no. 2 (1989): 63-66.

Canada regularly debated which domination came first. Some proponents of dual systems theory during the 1980s postulated that patriarchy created a division of the sexes, and capitalism sustained it, as Mary O'Brien argued in *Atlantis* in 1983.⁴⁰ In a similar vein, Miles's 1983 *Studies in Political Economy* paper argued that gendered labour was institutionalized in the segmenting of domestic work from waged work during the industrial revolution, thus privileging gender inequality as *a priori*.⁴¹ As Connelly also insisted in 1983, the dual systems thesis had "obvious implications for the women's movement" as it was a stern reminder to feminists that "...since gender divisions preceded capitalism we cannot expect them to disappear necessarily or automatically with the demise of the capitalism mode of production."⁴² However, in accepting that gendered divisions of labour predated capitalism, Connelly nonetheless insisted that it was capitalism that exploited gendered labour; in arguing that this exploitation was not a necessary development or condition of capitalism, Connelly left room for both relations to be undermined.⁴³

In contrast, Armstrong and Armstrong sought to "distinguish" themselves from the dual systems approach: "While acknowledging that the subordination of women pre-dates capitalism, we find that the term patriarchy tends to conceal more than it reveals about the many forms of this subordination. More light can be shed on the subordination of women by understanding it as inherent to the capitalist mode."⁴⁴ To Armstrong and Armstrong, the reproduction of the workforce organized along the subordination of the roles of childbirth and childrearing lent credence to the perspective that capitalism has historically been more heavy-handed than

⁴⁰ Mary O'Brien, "Reproductive Labour and the Creation of Value," *Atlantis* 8, no.2 (1983): 4. "There is, as there has been throughout recorded history, a gender struggle going on which is both related to and independent of class struggle" (ibid.).

⁴¹ Miles, "Economism and Feminism," 203.

⁴² Connelly, on Marxism and Feminism," 159.

⁴³ Ibid., 158.

⁴⁴ Armstrong and Armstrong, "Beyond Sexless Class," 10.

patriarchy in the subordination of women.⁴⁵ In particular, Armstrong and Armstrong point to women's historical-present agency in resisting, choosing, or limiting childbirth, arguing that it is women's classed experience that determines the outcome of their childbearing practices.⁴⁶ Writing in 1986, Jane Jenson also "rejected" the dual systems approach, arguing, "the notion of an autonomous patriarchal system which produces itself along side of capitalism is impossible to sustain."⁴⁷ Jenson argued for the specificity of analyzing individual capitalist states' relations to women across different historical and geographical moments, arguing that women are not necessarily subordinated by the capitalist state "in the same ways or to the same extent."⁴⁸ In her examination of the shifting norms of "the family and motherhood" within the capitalist-state, Jenson's perspective more closely aligns with Armstrong and Armstrong's in her situating of capitalist relations as the primary contradiction that works on and produces gender differences as secondary.⁴⁹ As these arguments demonstrate, the Marxist feminist evaluation of the weight of the concept of patriarchy was inconsistent. Yet in a clear departure from radical feminist thinking that saw women's primary oppression as patriarchal and embodied through sex difference, through the development of socialist feminism in Canada, white feminist political economists demonstrated a shared desire to emphasize the value of reproduction in economic—not biological—terms.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁷ Jane Jenson, "Gender and Reproduction: Or, Babies and the State," *Studies in Political Economy* 20 (1986): 10.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 15, 10.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 41. Jenson's discussion is a comparative analysis of these issues between Britain and France since the turn of twentieth century. "To recognize that men oppress women, and that oppression is not reducible to the workings of capitalism is not to require that the relationship of gender-unequal power be granted the same theoretical status as class power" (ibid., 24).

⁵⁰ For the foundational expression of this argument in radical feminist thought, see Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*.

Thus, making domestic labour matter to political economy was the central framework through which feminist political economic theory proceeded in the Canadian context during the 1980s. Within the Marxist framework upon which this discourse builds, the production process was central to examining relations of class domination and subordination, and under what conditions labour comes to have value and surplus value.⁵¹ Feminist political economists appropriated and expanded the Marxist analysis of surplus wage labour to examine how domestic labour in the nuclear family home was a form of unpaid labour that reproduced and sustained capitalistic relations of production. By focusing analyses of gendered oppression under capitalism on the domestic labour debate, feminist political economists were centrally concerned with “the question of whether domestic labour creates surplus value, and if so, for whom.”⁵² In problematizing the relation of women’s “burden” of housework in the home with the increasing employment of working and middle-class white, heterosexual, married women with children in the formal economy, feminist political economists drew parallels between women’s paid and unpaid work.⁵³ Indeed, Meg Luxton was particularly instrumental in mobilizing the concept of the “double day” in 1981 to probe the power relations sustaining and linking the gendered division of labour in the pink-collar economy and the home.⁵⁴ Arguing in 1985 for dissolution of the belief that the formal economy and the domestic realm were “separate spheres,” Armstrong and Armstrong seized upon the relationship between paid work in the market and unpaid work in

⁵¹ The scholars discussed throughout this section refer to their own paradigms as Marxist, and do not generally explore in detail the conceptual contributions of others, including Engels.

⁵² Mutari, “Feminist Political Economy,” 30.

⁵³ Meg Luxton, “Two Hands for the Clock: Changing Patterns in the Gendered Division of Labour in the Home,” *Studies in Political Economy* 12 (1983): 27.

⁵⁴ Meg Luxton, “Taking on the Double Day: Housewives as Reserve Army of Labour,” *Atlantis* 7.1 (1981): 12-22.

the household as a critical site of interrogation.⁵⁵ In demonstrating how the subordinate position of women's work within the domestic sphere was interdependent on her subordinated position of work in the public sphere, Armstrong and Armstrong shared Luxton's view that "until the exclusive identification of women with domestic labour is broken, there is no possibility of achieving any kind of equality between women and men."⁵⁶ Collectively, white feminist political economists also raised the issue that this division of labour was "material and ideological," and that gender inequality was psychologically reproduced through the intimate relations of the nuclear family unit.⁵⁷ As a necessary corollary, the roles of mothering and fathering were denaturalized and were also examined as unequal labour relations of care-work.⁵⁸

The domestic labour debate produced an analysis of reproduction—both social and biological—that expanded Marxist political economy to include the household as a site of political economic relevance. In asserting, "that social reproduction, defined as the daily and intergenerational renewal of human resources, is also integral to the economy," white feminist political economists sought to understand the historical processes through which practices of social reproduction became differentially valued.⁵⁹ This discourse developed in parallel fashion along two conceptual paths: social reproduction as related to domestic and biological reproduction, and social reproduction as contributing to the capitalist mode of production. In

⁵⁵ Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong, "Political Economy and the Household: Rejecting Separate Spheres," *Studies in Political Economy* 17 (1985): 167.

⁵⁶ Luxton, "Two Hands," 43.

⁵⁷ Ann Duffy and Wendy Weeks, "Women Part-Time Workers and the Needs of Capital," *Atlantis* 7, no.1 (1981): 24; Roberta Hamilton, "Does Misogyny Matter? Its Reproduction and its Consequences for Social Progress," *Studies in Political Economy* 23 (1987): 136. "In analyzing both macro and micro economic relations, an analysis of the household—both in its integration with the rest of the economic/political system, and in its interrelated internal dynamics—must be included" (ibid.).

⁵⁸ Meg Luxton, "Motherwork: More than a Labour of Love," *Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme* 2, no. 1 (1980): 31-34.

⁵⁹ Mutari, "Feminist Political Economy," 30.

reference to the former, Armstrong and Armstrong in 1983 mobilized the biological distinction (that women give birth) to theorize how women's roles in economic production are mediated by whether the capitalist mode of production controls or rewards their reproduction.⁶⁰ Again in an article in 1984, they extended their analysis that reproduction in 1980s Canada rendered women subordinate through the capitalist state's mechanism of punishing women for their retreat from the labour market during maternity and childrearing, as "free-wage labour entails the separation of a public, commodity-production unit from a private, subsistence unit."⁶¹ Jenson also weighed in to insist that biological reproduction, as "the material basis" of women's oppression, is at different historical moments organized in a particular relation to "the need of capital for reproduction of the labour force, and the state's activities to create and maintain the nation."⁶² As Ronnie Leah argued in 1981, the state's unwillingness to subsidize childcare has been one determinant of women's employment, particularly for poor, immigrant, and working-class women; as women's reproductive role is acted upon by the capitalist state, the classed experience of reproduction becomes the primary source of gendered economic inequality.⁶³ Moreover, as developments in reproductive technology proliferated in the early 1980s, some socialist feminists raised critical questions about technology's potential to increase or exacerbate women's reproductive and economic autonomy.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Armstrong and Armstrong, "Beyond Sexless Class," 32.

⁶¹ Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong, "More on Marxism and Feminism: A Response to Patricia Connelly," *Studies in Political Economy* 15 (1984): 179.

⁶² Jenson, "Gender and Reproduction," 23, 41.

⁶³ Ronnie Leah, "Women's Labour Force Participation and Day Care Cutbacks in Ontario," *Atlantis* 7, no. 1 (1981): 36-44; Shelagh Wilkinson, "Mother's Rights," *Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme* 2, no. 1 (1980): 58-59. Wilkinson discusses how childbearing delimits the possibilities of work-force participation for poor women.

⁶⁴ Armstrong and Armstrong, "Beyond Sexless Class," 37; O'Brien, "Reproductive Labour," 8.

In comparison, a complementary strand of this theoretical interest in social reproduction clarified how domestic production was shaped by flexibility and shifts in some sectors of Canada's formal economy during the 1980s. While the domestic labour debate sought to explain how white women and men's contributions to the home were divided through unpaid domestic work and work force stratification, some feminist political economists extended this analysis to problematize the multiple ways in which women's surplus labour in the home was both productive and exploited. For instance, in 1987, Marilyn Porter charged that individual husbands do not strategically exploit the surplus labour of their wives but rather that domestic work "operates to reduce the value of both male *and* female labour power," arguing that class position and proximity to labour markets are greater indicators of the degree to which both "husband and wife are exploited by capitalist relations of production."⁶⁵ A few years prior, in 1983, Patricia Connelly and Martha MacDonald also posited that working-class households in particular have been dependent on women's diverse practices of production, either "by intensifying their domestic labour in the home, by earning money through an informal economy, or by participating in the labour force and earning a wage themselves."⁶⁶ In tracing white women's over-representation in some "unskilled" labour markets—for example, clerical work—Jane Gaskell demonstrated in 1983 a pattern of streaming working-class women into a sector of employment where gendered inequality, labour devaluation, and the lack of possibility for advancement contributed to women's financial dependency on men in the home.⁶⁷ Thus, this strain of feminist

⁶⁵ Marilyn Porter, "Peripheral Women: Towards a Feminist Analysis of the Atlantic Region," *Studies in Political Economy* 23 (1987): 54.

⁶⁶ Patricia M. Connelly and Martha MacDonald, "Women's Work: Domestic and Wage Labour in a Nova Scotia Community," *Studies in Political Economy* 10 (1983): 46.

⁶⁷ Jane Gaskell, "Conceptions of Skill and the Work of Women: Some Historical and Political Issues," *Atlantis* 8, no. 2 (1983): 11-26.

political economic analyses contributed to the social reproduction discourse through an emphasis on peripheral, underdeveloped, and unskilled labour markets.

Alongside these analyses of social reproduction, white feminist political economists borrowed and revamped yet another Marxist concept, the reserve army of labour. The reserve army of labour thesis has been used to extrapolate women's labour force "segmentation" at historically specific moments, and explains how women—"despite their childbearing activities"—have been unevenly absorbed into labour market arrangements as a surplus workforce.⁶⁸ As Bonnie Fox described in 1981, Marx's idea of the "industrial reserve army" specified that in the capitalist mode of production there was a "general tendency for the process of capitalist accumulation to generate a relative surplus population of workers," wherein competition for employment would ensure that the cost of wages remained below the level of profits.⁶⁹ Feminist political economists pursued the reserve army thesis along two strands of analysis, examining how housewives entering employment were a source of market regulation for keeping wages low in sectors dominated by women, and how women as a whole constituted a check against the entire labour market.⁷⁰ As a reserve army for the entire workforce, the recession of the 1980s saw white women overrepresented in unsatisfactory labour market arrangements that governed "wage deflation"—particularly part-time and precarious contracts in "feminized" sectors of industry.⁷¹ Just as the reserve army thesis enabled Pamela H. Sugiman, Marjorie

⁶⁸ MacDonald, "Economics and Feminism," 161; Connelly, "On Marxism and Feminism," 158.

⁶⁹ Bonnie Fox, "The Female Reserve Army of Labour: The Argument and Some Pertinent Findings," *Atlantis* 7, no. 1 (1981): 45.

⁷⁰ Duffy and Weeks, "Women Part-Time Workers," 24; Pamela H. Sugiman, "The Sales Clerks: Worker Discontent and Obstacles to its Collective Expression," *Atlantis* 8, no. 1 (1982): 13-33; Fox, "The Female Reserve Army," 47.

⁷¹ Marjorie Cohen, "Economic Barriers to Liberation," *Canadian Woman Studies/ Les cahiers de la femme* 3, no. 4 (1982): 8; Pat Armstrong, "Unemployed and Underemployed: Not to Mention

Cohen, Armstrong and others to demonstrate how most employed married white women received wages lower than their male partners, Fox also described how as a reserve army of low-paid workers, women's low wages also served to reduce the wages of men by keeping overall wages low.⁷² Furthermore, in expanding Marx's concept of the reserve army to include a gendered analysis, feminist political economic theorists specified how working-class women in particular were vulnerable to economic downturns, emphasizing that class differences between women influence their decisions to enter the labour force—and their agency within it.⁷³

There was occasional acrimony in the development of the central tenets of white feminist political economy perspectives within Canada, and some challenges that went unremarked. Notably, these alternative opinions surfaced in periodicals focused on women's issues, and not primarily in *Studies in Political Economy*. For instance, the credibility of the reserve army of labour thesis was disputed by Lynda Yaz and David Smith in 1986, who argued that women were not reserve but *essential* labourers for the Canadian economy, as by the mid-1980s women had become "permanently installed in the workforce."⁷⁴ Indeed, the marked increase in white married women's labour market participation that so captivated white feminist political economy was expanded upon and challenged by women of colour writing in *CWS* and *Atlantis*. In her 1981 discussion of the role of state-subsidized daycare in determining women's status as a reserve army of labour, Leah specified that immigrant, single, and widowed women had long been

Underpaid and Overworked," *Canadian Woman Studies/ Les cahiers de la femme* 3, no. 4 (1982): 41-43.

⁷² Fox, "The Female Reserve Army of Labour," 54.

⁷³ Porter, "Peripheral Women," 46; Luxton, "Taking on the Double Day," 14; Sugiman, "The Sales Clerks," 26, 32.

⁷⁴ Lynda Yanz and David Smith, "Women as a Reserve Army of Labour—Some Questions Raised," *Canadian Woman's Studies/Les cahiers de la femme* 3, no. 4 (1982): 86.

integral labour market participants.⁷⁵ Leah's intervention nuanced the category of "women" put forward by the conventional thesis that there was a steady increase in the "demand for women as workers in the labour force."⁷⁶ In a 1982 article in *Atlantis*, Roxana Ng demonstrated how the Canadian economy is stratified not only by gender and class, but also by citizenship statuses, arguing that immigrant women in particular have much to reveal about the capitalist mode of production in Canada from "the standpoint of labour."⁷⁷ Ng's intervention sought to reveal how working-class immigrant women experienced obstacles to paid labour that set them apart from working-class women with Canadian citizenship. In particular, Ng pointed out that many immigrant women entered Canada through the immigration category of "dependent," which marked poor immigrant women as ineligible for government training programs in education, language, and skill development and enforced "economic dependence on her family."⁷⁸ Ng described how immigrant women's domestic labour intensified upon arrival in Canada due to an immersion in a "money economy": immigrant working-class men labouring for low-wages outside of the home put an increased demand on material forms of women's contribution to sustenance within the home, conditions that were further exacerbated by the privatization of housework and childcare in Canada.⁷⁹

Judith Ramirez's 1981 discussion of the international Wages for Housework movement offered an alternative—and global—framework for examining women's double day and

⁷⁵ Leah, "Women's Labour Force Participation," 37.

⁷⁶ Armstrong and Armstrong, "Beyond Sexless Class," 35.

⁷⁷ Roxana Ng, "Immigrant Housewives in Canada: A Methodological Note," *Atlantis* 8, no. 1 (1982): 112.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 114, 115.

addressing the gendered division of labour in the home.⁸⁰ As the founder of the Toronto Immigrant Women's Centre and the spokeswoman for the Canadian Wages for Housework movement, Ramirez's analysis represented the unique kind of "standpoint" that Ng argues is required for a more reflective political economy of women in Canada; that is, a feminist political economy that would attend to the needs of immigrant women.⁸¹ Drawing upon the political organizing of "Third World women" in 1980, Ramirez's article reflects a transnational perspective for examining how women's unpaid "second shift" excludes women from development programs and contributes to high rates of women's illiteracy and malnutrition.⁸² As a broad-based movement with various international manifestations, the central tenet of the Wages for Housework analysis argued that women should receive state-funded wages for their domestic contributions, as women's domestic labour is indispensable to capital accumulation. In insisting that women's reproductive work is not only valuable but should receive economic remuneration, the Wages for Housework strategy sought to decrease gender inequality via the redistribution of wages.⁸³ While this socialist feminist demand for waged domestic work in the 1970s contributed to a framework for theorizing care work as an economic issue in later years, white feminist

⁸⁰ Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, [Third Edition] 1972). The Wages for Housework movement is attributed to the work of Dalla Costa and James; Judith Ramirez, "The Global Kitchen: A Speech on the Value of Housework Debate*," *Canadian Woman Studies/Les Cahiers de la femmes* 3, no. 1 (1981): 11-15.

⁸¹ Ng, "Immigrant Housewives," 112, 115.

⁸² Ramirez, "The Global Kitchen," 11.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 14. Ramirez describes a statement given by a group identified as "Third World women" at the 1980 mid-decade NGO Forum: "Western women's liberation movement had fallen into the sexist trap of undervaluing the role of the woman in the home. In an effort to secure rights in the paid labour force, they said, the movement had inadvertently sabotaged its own chances of building a mass base both in the industrialized countries where the majority of women are still working full-time in the home, and internationally, where the majority of women, especially in the Third World, are working 17-hour days in the home just trying to ensure bare subsistence for themselves and their families" (*ibid.*).

political economists in Canada tended to veer away from the Wages for Housework strategy by the 1980s. As a reflection of a moment of global politicization of women in 1980, Ramirez's discussion of Wages for Housework stands out as an attempt to connect women's unpaid domestic labour in Canada with women's unpaid domestic labour internationally.

It is important to note that both Ng and Ramirez's positions as researchers engaged in grassroots and front-line work with immigrant women in Toronto differentiated their research samples, and the stakes of their research, from the majority of white feminist political economists pursuing community-based research during the 1980s. In contrast with Luxton's research on the white working and middle-class community of Flin-Flon, Manitoba, or Connelly and MacDonald's exploration of two white working-class fishing communities in Nova Scotia, for example, Ng and Ramirez were engaged with heterogeneous groups of women who faced economic barriers connected to citizenship, immigration, language, and racism.⁸⁴ Thus, Ng and Ramirez advanced theoretical perspectives that sought, in their inclusion of immigrant and global south women, resolutions for the inherent inequalities of domestic work that went beyond gender or class dimensions. In this process, Ng and Ramirez's contributions to the domestic labour debate can be recollected here as early attempts to move feminist political economy past a gender and class dualism. Ng declared, "It is not a question of whether sex, ethnicity, or class is a determinate factor in organizing the experiences of immigrant women. It is that their experience takes on a determinate form because it is determined by their relation to a particular form of

⁸⁴ Luxton, "Taking on the Double Day"; Connelly and MacDonald, "Women's Work"; Carla Lipsig-Mumme, "Organizing Women in the Clothing Trades: Homework and the 1993 Garment Strike in Canada," *Studies in Political Economy* 22 (1987): 41-71. Lipsig-Mumme's essay is notable for her discussion of gender, class, and race in the organization of homeworkers and subsequent union activism in Montreal.

capitalist development as women and as immigrant women.”⁸⁵ Ng argued that attention to the lived experience of immigrant women would reveal not only the material nature of women’s work, but also how the value of immigrant women’s work in particular was “integral” to the “social organization” of Canada.⁸⁶

My reading of the domestic labour debate in feminist political economy in Canada demonstrates the scope of the discourse in positing gender and class as analytical priorities. As the disagreements about dual systems theory reveal, white Marxist feminists varied in their assessment of whether patriarchy was the precursor to, effect of, or coequal of capitalism. What is striking about this discussion is its reflection of a theoretical narrowness, or incapacity, of either Marxism or feminism on its own to accommodate more than “one” structure of domination having priority at any one time. More than that, and what is important for my project overall, is that the *struggle to flex* feminism, or Marxism, to account for both gender and class also becomes a *struggle to preserve* gender and class as priorities by Marxist feminists. In arriving at a discursive hegemony wherein gender and class both came to matter by the early 1980s, Marxist feminism occluded race and sexuality. Indeed, Ng reflected that within “the recent and continuing debate on sex, ethnicity (or race) and class...there has been a tendency to rank order these categories and attempt to determine which is the most crucial determinant in people’s experience.”⁸⁷ Ng’s statement highlights the difficulty of attending to more than gender or class or ethnicity/race at once, as well as foreshadows the knottiness of this tension in the decades to come in the pervasiveness of the feminist problematic of “hierarchies of oppression.” At the same time, Ng’s bracketing of race within parentheses behind the less political term “ethnicity”

⁸⁵ Ibid., 116.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

demonstrates the barriers Ng and other women of colour faced in their efforts to bring a critical race analysis into Marxist feminist thinking; this bracketing of race stands out as a seething presence in the dominant discourse of feminist political economy of the 1980s.

White Women and the Left: Checking Class, Elevating Gender, and Strengthening Racial Ties

As my preceding discussion has shown, recognizing women's labour as a form of surplus labour and social reproduction represented attempts to symbolically render women's domestic work as important, rather than to remunerate her for her efforts. As the following chapter will take up, white feminist political economy's reticence to theorize *women being paid for* domestic work is mirrored by its reticence to theorize *women paying for* domestic work. An examination of the primary concepts and debates in feminist political economy in the 1980s highlights that the thrust of this discourse is to elevate gender to a level of inquiry equal to that of class in Marxist political economy. Simply put, the priority of white Marxist feminists in this period was to transform Marxism to include gender. In this section, I demonstrate a critical practice of reparative reading to argue that white feminists developed relational strategies contra white men in order to gain legitimacy for their project; in raising the issue of gender, they simultaneously remained largely silent on the issue of race. Whiteness served as a unifying strategy that enabled white socialist feminists to enter into discourse with white socialist men; without questioning or challenging the economic context of white supremacy, white feminists were able to bring forward the woman question in ways that strengthened the racial privilege and racial ties of white Marxist political economy.

White women on the Left faced an intellectual, sexual, and emotional terrain that was inhospitable to an analysis of gender as a political priority.⁸⁸ In order to elevate gender relations to the political equivalent of class relations, feminists seized on the available theoretical Marxist premises and infused them with feminist values; to gain legitimacy for gender as a theoretical concern, Marxist feminists applied Marxism as a theoretical lens to gender. Professionally and politically, there were material and practical reasons for retaining Marxism as an overarching framework for understanding the world, as white males remained the gatekeepers of academic and political legitimacy within the Canadian context. Thus, white Marxist feminists in Canada affirmed Marxism as a political framework, but enjoined it to explicitly feminist concerns. As the preceding section elucidated, this involved Marxist feminists developing a politicization of the domestic sphere; domestic relations and domestic labour were scrutinized through dual analyses of patriarchy and capitalism to theorize how gender inequality was produced, reproduced, and sustained under the capitalist mode of production. As white feminist political economists demonstrated their theoretical skill in the expansion of Marxist concepts to explain gender disparities, their scholarly writing also demonstrates the affective labour this political project required. A review of three Canadian collections—two books and one journal issue—published in the late 1980s highlights white women’s emotional effort contra white men in the development of feminist political economy in Canada.⁸⁹ I argue that this gendered emotional labour is

⁸⁸ Ellen Willis, *Social Text* 9/10 Spring-Summer (1984): 94. Willis offers a personal reflection on feminists’ struggles to transform the American Left in the late 1960s: “It’s hard to convey to people who didn’t go through that experience how radical, how unpopular and difficult and scary it was just to get up and say, ‘Men oppress women. Men have oppressed me. Men must take responsibility for their actions instead of blaming them on capitalism. And yes, that means you.’ We were laughed at, patronized, called frigid, emotionally disturbed man-haters and—worst insult of all on the left! —apolitical” (ibid.).

⁸⁹ Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin, and Margaret McPhail, *Feminists Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women’s Movement in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988);

underscored by a commonsense identification with whiteness that distances itself from analyses of racial privilege and racial supremacy. Feminist political economy as a field of inquiry is marked by the reluctant inclusion—and consequent subordination—of efforts to examine race as an index of oppression perpetuated by white women and white men.

The white feminist movement in Canada gained momentum alongside the new Left in the 1960s-1970s. This movement laid the intellectual foundation of feminist political economy in the academy in the 1980s as feminists increasingly entered the academy as advocates of Marxist principles. At the same time, socialist feminism was a strong political force that operated outside of political science, and outside of the academy altogether, as feminists united by interests in class and gender oppression engaged in diverse methods of social and political activism. For instance, in a co-authored book written by “socialist-feminists” active in Women’s Studies curricula the Canadian Women’s Movement Archives, and day-care and trade-union organizing, Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin, and Margaret McPhail provide an activist account of socialist feminism in Canada as distinct from but tied to the goals of Marxist feminist political economy. Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail reflect that the struggle for socialist feminism was an affective struggle for women who identified as both socialists and feminists to articulate their common theory of oppression to their peers in the Left and in the feminist movement: “In some parts of the women’s movement, when socialist feminists raised the issue of class they were seen as being ‘too sympathetic to men’ and thus selling women out. And when they tried to raise women’s issues among Marxists they were accused of being ‘bourgeois feminists.’”⁹⁰ Notably, Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail describe white socialist feminism as being “derived from [M]arxism,”

Heather Jon Maroney and Meg Luxton, eds. *Feminism and Political Economy: Women’s Work, Women’s Struggles* (Agincourt: Methuen Publications, 1987); “Feminist Political Economy,” Special Issue of *Studies in Political Economy* 30, Autumn (1989).

⁹⁰ Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail, *Feminists Organizing for Change*, 67.

developing a distinct intellectual and activist strand of the white women's movement and Left activism that argued for "a historical-materialist approach to understanding *women's* oppression, which is rooted in particular historical modes of production such as patriarchal capitalism."⁹¹ Beyond noting the significance of Marxism to the socialist feminist method of historical materialism, Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail do not dwell on Marxism nor provide further examples of Marxist concepts that influenced socialist feminism. In specifying patriarchy and capitalism as historically specific and interactive phenomena, socialist feminists sought to move these concepts out of "abstraction" and "generality" towards an understanding of "the ways that domination is organized and reproduced, and to discover the ways to challenge it."⁹² In the process of politicizing quotidian life, white socialist feminists also endeavored to change their subordinated positions to white men in new Left organizing.

Undermining the ubiquity of sexism in the white Left was a primary goal of the development of socialist feminism in Canada. The intimate and affective struggles of white women contra white men in activist or intimate relationships were the very preconditions and obstacles through which socialist women articulated a political theory of women's economic and gendered subordination. As Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail observe, socialist feminists organized into a distinctive force that "grew out of a simple practical need to separate from men so that women could develop their own skills and leadership abilities, rather than get the coffee and type."⁹³ As felt accessories to—but not agents of—new Left male radicalism, white women confronted the expectation that they would sustain subordinate and supportive positions to white men in the Canadian socialist revolution, voicing their growing resistance to misogyny, sexism,

⁹¹ Ibid., 118 (emphasis added).

⁹² Ibid., 119.

⁹³ Ibid., 218.

and homophobia within white Leftist organizations.⁹⁴ Socialist feminists were subject to contempt, ridicule, hostility, and even distinct forms of sexual harassment.⁹⁵ Fed up with their cursory status in Left organizing and their degraded status in sexual and domestic relationships, socialist feminists crystalized their theory into a vernacular that appropriated and transformed their unequal relations with Leftist men through Marxist political economy. Thus, in turning their attention to domestic work and social reproduction, white socialist feminists mined their own experiences of sexual and economic inequality in the private and public sphere.⁹⁶ These

⁹⁴ Maureen Fitzgerald, "Toronto International Women's Day Committee," *Canadian Woman's Studies/Les cahiers de la femmes* 2, no. 2 (1980): 33. Fitzgerald, a white feminist academic, writes of the difficulty of developing an identity of "socialist feminist lesbian" on the Left in the late 1970s in Toronto. According to Fitzgerald, a feminist meeting about whether or not men should be included in the 1978 march of the Toronto International Women's Day Committee (TIWDC) led to a fracturing of the women's group along socialist feminist and radical feminist lines. When it was voted that men would be permitted to march, "a third of the meeting and most of the lesbians left the room," resulting in a "win" for the socialist feminists who took leadership of the group. Fitzgerald remained in the room, but was struck by the "emotional intensity" of the skirmish and of learning about the ongoing history of this friction between these different feminist perspectives; Judy Rebick, *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2005), 119. In Rebick's text, Susan G. Cole—a white lesbian feminist anti-pornography activist—recounts the same IWD meeting. Unlike Fitzgerald, Cole sought to put her lesbian politics first. Cole describes the socialist feminists as "the most sophisticated political people" who were advocating "a single-issue approach," one that "saw lesbianism as bad for feminist organizing." As a radical lesbian feminist, Cole recalls that the IWD meeting on male inclusion was "the first time lesbians were demanding to be heard," and although she felt like they "were the backbone of the movement," she also reflects feeling as if they "were invisible." When the vote was cast in favour of male inclusion, Cole recalls leaving the meeting with other radical lesbian feminists, many of them from Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW); "this was a time of confrontation politics, and we wanted to do something different" (ibid.).

⁹⁵ Sargent, *Women and Revolution*, xiii. "Early attempts to confront sexism were met with derisive sexual name-calling: 'bitch, lesbian, castrator.' Early attempts to speak about sexism at meetings or demonstrations were turned into circuses by men catcalling, whistling, and shouting for women to get off the stage and 'have a good fuck.' Later when men saw that they could no longer engage in the more blatant forms of sexism... men developed an intricate set of more subtle, sexist behavior" (ibid.).

⁹⁶ Lorna Weir, "Socialist Feminism and the Politics of Sexuality," in *Feminism and Political Economy: Women's Work, Women's Struggles*, eds. Heather Jon Maroney and Meg Luxton (Agincourt: Methuen Publications, 1987), 69. "During the late 1970s and early 1980s, socialist

observations contributed to the development of feminist political economic theory that sought to think across these superficial divisions in order to combat “everyday” forms of gendered inequality.⁹⁷

By the 1980s, white socialist feminism in Canada had a place in the academy in the burgeoning—though contested—field of feminist political economy, developing across the disciplines of Political Science, Sociology, History, and Women’s Studies. The affective labour of white feminists to transform the intimate relations of gender and sexual inequality in the academy dovetailed with the efforts of white feminists to produce and publish critical work in the field. In 1987, the first edited collection of feminist political economy in Canada was released, announcing the project as a legitimate field of inquiry and marking co-editors Heather Maroney and Meg Luxton as founding scholars of the subject. In their introduction to the book, Maroney and Luxton reflected that the groundswell of feminist political economic analysis since the late 1970s indicated a tension between the volume of feminist economists completing PhD theses combined with a paucity in tenured positions for women.⁹⁸ The authors charged that the

feminists in Canada for the most part regarded sexual politics, that is, organized resistance to dominant social forms of sexual regulation, as outside the terrain of socialist feminism, or at best as an afterthought,” precisely “[b]ecause sexuality and sexual regulation are not directly managed and controlled by capital, they cannot be interpreted *solely* on the basis of class-theoretical or capital-theoretical analysis.” Weir argued that in order for socialist feminists to develop a theory of sexuality, they would need to “address a tension in socialist feminism between its class and non-class ‘popular democratic’ aspects” and to recognize that “such forms of oppression are not exclusively determined by exploitation arising from production relations” (ibid.).

⁹⁷ Dorothy Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic* (West Hanover: Northeastern University Press, 1987), 17. For a foundational and sociological approach to this political undertaking, consider Smith’s argument, “Being excluded, as women have been, from the making of ideology, of knowledge, and of culture means that our experience, our interests, our ways of knowing the world have not been represented in the organization of our ruling nor in the systematically developed knowledge that has entered into it” (ibid.).

⁹⁸ Heather Jon Maroney and Meg Luxton, preface to *Feminism and Political Economy: Women’s Work, Women’s Struggles*, eds. Heather Jon Maroney and Meg Luxton (Agincourt: Methuen Publications, 1987), ix.

exasperation and frustration of enduring chauvinistic encounters in the Left and in the academy had spurred their personal desire to plow ahead with the project of merging feminism and Marxism into a usable theory for women; lamenting their experience at a 1980 conference –“Left in the 1980s” –in Vancouver, Maroney and Luxton described the lack of gender analysis visible in Canadian political economy, both in the absence of gender in the majority of papers authored by men and in the paucity of men present at a talk on feminism and politics.⁹⁹ In foregrounding their own gendered experience of feeling marginalized by mainstream political economy, Maroney and Luxton contended that a central task for feminist political economy in the years to come would be to launch a critique of the “sexism” of Canadian political economy, “both in its classical developmental phase” and also “in its more recent revival, represented by the journal *Studies in Political Economy*, among others.”¹⁰⁰ In evaluating the publication record of *Studies in Political Economy* up to the mid-80s, Maroney and Luxton concluded that the majority of articles authored by men that mentioned gender at all did so in the absence of a complex theoretical analysis, but rather reiterated a practice of “adding women on,” which overall contributed to a stasis in the inclusion of women’s issues within Canadian political economy.¹⁰¹ As neither Luxton nor Maroney were regularly published within *Studies in Political Economy* in the early-to-mid 1980s, their critique speaks to a personal sense of exclusion from the discipline.¹⁰²

While feminist contributions to *Studies in Political Economy* in the 1980s were indeed marginal to its overall scope, when paired with feminist political economic writing in other

⁹⁹ Ibid. “The choices that men made confirmed the conviction of many feminists that there is no point in even trying to talk to “the boys” as they just won’t listen and that one more failure of political economy to address “women’s issues” confirmed its incapacity to ever do so. When some of us protested that the division between political economy and feminism was conjunctural and not fundamental, we were told to “put your pen where your mouth is” (ibid.).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 9, 11.

¹⁰² See Luxton, “Two Hands,” for her 1983 publication in *Studies in Political Economy*.

feminist periodicals, collectively those texts nonetheless coalesce into a coherent feminist political economic project. Notably, the 1989 “Special Issue” of *Studies in Political Economy*, “Feminist Political Economy,” raised “intersectionality” as a key feminist issue that would come to animate feminist discourse in the decade to come. In beginning to consider the place of race in feminist political economy, contributors to the Special Issue made modest strides towards thinking critically about race alongside class and gender. However, I suggest that a close reading of the Special Issue demonstrates the reluctance of white feminist political economists to append race to their analyses of gender and class. The publication of “Feminist Political Economy” demonstrated that, at least for the time being, feminist political economy had achieved some legitimacy in political science. Thus, feminist efforts to establish gender as the coequal of class in Marxist analysis had by the end of the decade come, at least by some measures, to fruition. While this was no guarantee that male economists would extend their analyses to feminism, “Feminist Political Economy” demonstrates that feminist expansions of Marxism to include gender had achieved a degree of acceptability both methodologically and ideologically. Thus, Maroney and Luxton’s frustrated challenge to future Canadian feminist political economists to account for the process by which economic and sex/gender systems are “codetermined” had gained some legitimacy within the pages of Canada’s most influential political economic journal in its decennial edition.¹⁰³

At first glance, “Feminist Political Economy” rehearsed already established themes in the field; that is, white feminist scholars argued for the utility of feminist political economic approaches to industry alongside historical case-studies of working-class activism and labour

¹⁰³ Maroney and Luxton, *Feminism and Political Economy*, 27.

activism.¹⁰⁴ Weaving through the collection, however, is a noticeable anxiety about race and how to account for it. This is striking for at least three reasons: first, race is superficially gestured to as an analytic on par with gender and class; second, few of the authors thoroughly examine race, racialization, or racism; and third, none of the authors included in the Special Issue are women of colour or Indigenous women. The manner in which race is taken up in the Special Issue builds on a growing acknowledgement by white feminist women of abstract forms of racial supremacy and racism, alongside a discomfort and reluctance to engage with race on a structural or individual level. Thus, “Feminist Political Economy” serves as a snapshot of the simultaneous hegemony and vulnerability of gender and class as primary relations in feminist political economy, as manifested in the apprehension displayed by white feminist theorists navigating how best to secure their analytical and affective grip on the discourse.

The ways in which white women attended to race in the 1989 issue were not novel, as white socialist women in the 1980s increasingly perceived race as a “challenge” within their ranks¹⁰⁵:

Women’s organizations in the 1970s almost always included on their agendas some mention of the concerns of black and native as well as immigrant women. Although more research needs to be done, it seems that the women of colour actively involved in feminist organizations were few. The reasons are complex: the origins of the women’s movement, the definition of “women’s issues,” and racism. It was not until the early 1980s that the women’s movement began, at the insistence of organizations of women of colour, to incorporate an analysis of racism in Canada into their politics.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Martha MacDonald and M. Patricia Connelly, “Class and Gender in Fishing Communities in Nova Scotia,” Special Issue, *Studies in Political Economy* 30, Autumn (1989): 61-85; Susan Prentice, “Workers, Mothers, Reds: Toronto’s Postwar Daycare Fight,” Special Issue, *Studies in Political Economy* 30, Autumn (1989): 115-141; Ruth A. Frager, “Class and Ethnic Barriers to Feminist Perspectives in Toronto’s Jewish Labour Movement, 1919-1939,” Special Issue, *Studies in Political Economy* 30, Autumn (1989): 143-165.

¹⁰⁵ Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 83.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

In reflecting on demographic shifts in the women's liberation movement, and white women's relationships to women of colour, Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail suggest that white feminists "felt" the demands of inclusion and charges of racism as a "splinter[ing]" off and "breaking" down of the movement.¹⁰⁷ As white women "struggled with the fear" they were losing control of the feminist agenda, they strove to incorporate "the challenge of *these* groups of women to *our* definition of feminism," registering that "the success of the women's movement depends on our dealing successfully with this challenge, and understanding and incorporating an anti-racist position into our feminist politics."¹⁰⁸ Indeed, the "diversification" of the women's movement required analysis of race as a system of power, which white women took up through an optic of "difference" that gestured to, though seldom undertook, an examination of racial relations.¹⁰⁹ For instance, while Maroney and Luxton mention the relevance of "difference"—particularly race and sexuality—to feminist political economist analysis, both race and sexuality remain subordinated to the twinned poles of gender and class in their discussion.¹¹⁰ Thus, this gesture of inclusion becomes a gesture of dismissal, as Maroney and Luxton remind readers that "Feminists and the women's movement cannot speak for all women. Instead, *our* task is to empower all

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 61.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 61, 84-85 (emphasis added).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 61.

¹¹⁰ Maroney and Luxton, "From Feminism and Political Economy to Feminist Political Economy," 27; Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 84. Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail discuss the need for socialist-feminism to develop not only an "anti-racist politic," but to include sexuality, in particular to foster inclusion of lesbian women and lesbian issues: "The experience of lesbians in the women's movement, while different from that of women of colour, is in some ways similar...Initially lesbians found it imperative to organize autonomously within the women's movement in order to understand how lesbian oppression operates...Through the process of separation and challenge, lesbian issues were integrated into the women's movement, and we now view them as necessary for the liberation of all women. The struggle to get to that point was a long and difficult one, but ultimately all feminists have benefited from it," (ibid.). Note that while women of colour and lesbian women are compared, they are also bifurcated; lesbians of colour are rendered invisible in this imagining.

women so that *they* can speak for themselves.”¹¹¹ In these excerpts, the borders of socialist feminism and Marxist feminist political economy are carefully enforced as the primary terrain of heterosexual white women who—while denying they are doing so—extend an imperialist gaze outward to the marginalized “others” whom they acknowledge but nonetheless do not manage to meaningfully take seriously.

At the outset of the introduction to “Feminist Political Economy,” Pat Armstrong and M. Patricia Connelly affirm political economy as the foundation through which “class and gender relations” proceed.¹¹² Yet Armstrong and Connelly amend this central tenet of feminist political economy to argue that “race/ethnicity and regionality/nationality” are also significant indexes of power, “with one being more salient than another at different points in time.”¹¹³ They proceed to claim that “the problem for socialist feminism” is to advance economic theory that can interpret and explain “these different types of oppression and the relations between them.” The authors’ insistence that “women experience the intersection of class, gender, race/ethnicity and regionality/nationality” in “complex and often contradictory processes” appears to raise the importance of race/ethnicity and region/nation to the level of gender and class. However, I suggest that the inclusion of region/nationality and race/ethnicity in this analogy doubles, rather than multiplies, the indexes of power under review, making analysis once again reducible to gender and class; rather than gender and class being re-evaluated as primarily constitutive of women’s experience, these positions remain “exalted” but are potentially conditioned by either

¹¹¹ Maroney and Luxton, introduction to *Feminism and Political Economy*, 3 (emphasis added).

¹¹² Pat Armstrong and M. Patricia Connelly, “Feminist Political Economy: An Introduction,” *Studies in Political Economy* 30 Special Issue: Feminist Political Economy (Autumn 1989): 6.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 6.

race/ethnicity or region/nationality.¹¹⁴ While Armstrong and Connelly initially flag race/ethnicity and region/nationality as significant factors in women's experience, "Feminist Political Economy" does not take up the challenge of resolving these "problems." The content of "Feminist Political Economy" reveals that the addition of these two clauses actually performs a gesture of securing whiteness as the norm in feminist political economic analysis. As the overall scope of the collection does not move much beyond whiteness, the inclusion of "race/ethnicity" or "region/nationality" affirms this dominance rather than subjecting it to critique, as analysis proceeds along a logic that "*whether or not* race and ethnic relations assume dominance also depends on the issue, on the conditions, on the time and place"; for most of the contributors selected for the publication, neither race nor nationality is an obvious determinant of classed and gendered experience, opportunities, or barriers.¹¹⁵

A few prominent white feminist theorists do attempt, in limited ways, to append race to their discussions of class and gender. For instance, the most compelling exploration of race and racism in "Feminist Political Economy" emerged out of Dorothy Smith's return to an earlier methodology for examining the "everyday" relations of governance within institutions.¹¹⁶ In her contribution to the collection, Smith applied her framework of institutional analysis to a review of feminist political economy, arguing that feminist theorists have taken for granted "the objectified and objectifying practices" of male stream political economy, and have replaced the "concealed standpoint" of white men with that of white women; this "invisible center" is yet

¹¹⁴ Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*. Thobani's critical analysis of the ways in which white Canadians are exalted in a triangulated relationship to subordinated non-white immigrants and Indigenous peoples has informed my thinking on whiteness throughout this project.

¹¹⁵ Armstrong and Connelly, "Feminist Political Economy," 7 (emphasis added).

¹¹⁶ Smith, *The Everyday World*, 107.

another reproduction of the “standpoint of ruling.”¹¹⁷ Building on the 1987 article by Himani Bannerji I discussed at the outset of this chapter, Smith appears to acknowledge the limitations of her previous work, arguing that racialization is a strategy of capitalism and that racism works as an endemic “barrier” against people of colour within capitalist states.¹¹⁸ While she concludes that the necessary next step in developing feminist political economic theory will proceed through an examination of the relations of ruling from “the standpoint of women of colour” and a theoretical “ground in that experience,” it is unclear how she will take up that task in her own research.¹¹⁹

Indeed, in a co-authored review of Smith’s 1987 theory of institutional ethnography as developed in her book, *The Everyday World as Problematic*, Meg Luxton and Sue Findlay expressed mixed feelings about Smith’s approach to revealing the standpoint of women.¹²⁰ At the outset of their review, Luxton and Findlay strive to “acknowledge” and to “make visible in the milieu of political economy” the influence and the “opportunity” Smith afforded a generation of feminist students whom she mentored in the 1970s.¹²¹ However, they are critical of Smith’s lack

¹¹⁷ Dorothy E. Smith, “Feminist Reflections on Political Economy,” Special Issue, *Studies in Political Economy* 30, Autumn (1989): 55.

¹¹⁸ Himani Bannerji, “Introducing Racism: Notes Towards an Anti-Racist Feminism,” *Resources for Feminist Research: A Canadian Journal for Feminist Scholarship* 16 Special Issue on Immigrant Women (March 1987): 10-12. Smith is referring to this essay, and the reprint of Bannerji’s essay in *Thinking Through* informs my analysis throughout this project.

¹¹⁹ Smith, “Feminist Reflections,” 55; While Smith’s discussion of Bannerji and race/racism takes up under two pages of the twenty-two-page article, she nonetheless universalizes “women” and women’s experiences throughout. Given Smith’s influential status in the fields of sociology and political science, and her position in the feminist political economic discourse, I am left to wonder about her own efforts to challenge “the concealed standpoint” and to include the scholarship of women of colour in, at minimum, “Feminist Political Economy.” For instance: her article could have been co-written with Bannerji, she might have advocated for a dialogue with Bannerji, or she might have suggested in her place the names of recent graduate students of colour who were in need of publication opportunities.

¹²⁰ Note Sue Findlay is also a co-author of *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 1988.

¹²¹ Meg Luxton and Sue Findlay, “Is the Everyday World the Problematic? Reflections on Smith’s Method of Making Sense of Women’s Experience,” Book Review, *The Everyday World as Problematic*, by Dorothy Smith, Special Issue *Studies in Political Economy* 30, Autumn

of engagement with other feminist work, in particular scholarship produced by her students taking up her methodology, as well as “feminists using different methodologies.”¹²² Luxton and Findlay are interested in evaluating Smith’s book’s intervention in “contemporary debates within feminism,” and consider, amongst other questions, whether “her method of inquiry” might “be used to explicate the relationships between gender, class, and race?”¹²³ Yet in their assessment, Luxton and Findlay—like Smith—reproduce class and gender as constitutive of women’s standpoint, once again dropping race (and sexuality) out of the discussion. In conceding that Smith’s approach is useful in “how it makes visible not only the everyday work of women, but the way in which our work is organized so that we are part of a process that reproduces *class* and *gender differences*,” Luxton and Findlay conceptualize “the everyday work of women” as conditioned by class and gender.¹²⁴ Despite Luxton’s skepticism of institutional ethnography’s capacity to “‘deconstruct’ the category of ‘women,’” her own discussion does little to specify how women’s experiences—particularly feminist experiences—are anything but homogeneous.¹²⁵ While Smith’s “uncomfortable” admission of “her own difficulties in articulating how race, class, and gender intersect in the practices of the ruling apparatus” is not resolved in an “inquiry rooted in our everyday lives—as for example, black women, poor women, lesbians,” Luxton produces no viable alternative.¹²⁶ Rather, Luxton expresses a “wish” that Smith had provided concrete “illustrations of how her method could help feminism in its

(1989): 183. The article is co-written, but sections of the text are single-authored, signified by either “Meg” or “Sue” and a first-person reflection. I am referring to Luxton and Findlay when I am discussing the full body of text, and to either Luxton or Findlay when I am discussing their personal views.

¹²² Ibid., 193; Luxton and Findlay ask what Smith might have to say about their personal scholarship, in particular their contributions to *Feminism and Political Economy*, *ibid.*, 191.

¹²³ Ibid., 184.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 187 (emphasis added).

¹²⁵ Ibid., 192.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 189.

attempts to integrate class, gender, and race,” thereby distancing her own work from attending to the difficulty of this task.¹²⁷

In a more explicit appeal to retain the gender and class dualism as a primary theoretical framework, Linda Briskin’s contribution to “Feminist Political Economy” also critiques subjective experience as the ground for Marxist feminist analysis, arguing that feminist identifications along racial or sexual lines have created a “dilemma” of “dealing with difference” that “has translated into both a competitive hierarchy of oppressions and an opposition to any kind of ‘theory.’”¹²⁸ In a gesture of minimization long wielded by white male Leftists against white women, Briskin shifts race and sexuality into the realm of “identity,” limiting their utility in political organizing around the shared goals of socialist-feminism (read: gender and class).¹²⁹ In a particularly telling footnote, she laments that “the recognition of difference between women has not only challenged the notion of shared oppression for the category of women as a whole, but has, at the same time, reinforced bonding on the basis of ‘shared victimization’ for particular groups of women to the exclusion of building effective political alliance.”¹³⁰ While recognizing the difficulty in enacting solidarity politics across difference, Briskin nonetheless charges racially and sexually marginalized women with disrupting the unity of socialist feminist practice in their efforts to draw attention to inequalities beyond gender and class. In this worried assessment, it is heterosexual white women who are at risk of “exclusion” from racial and sexual others, and who have the most to lose in the expansion of the Marxist feminist framework to a meaningful consideration of race and sexuality.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 192.

¹²⁸ Linda Briskin, “Socialist Feminism: From the Standpoint of Practice,” Special Issue *Studies in Political Economy* 30, Autumn (1989): 90; Note that Briskin is also a co-author of *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 1988.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 91.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 111.

Conclusion

Collectively, the anxious attention given to race in “Feminist Political Economy” at once indicates a reluctance to take race seriously and an aversion to addressing how racial privilege and white supremacy benefit white women. Once gender had been established as a legitimate coequal of class analysis by the end of the 1980s—as the 1989 Special Issue of *Studies in Political Economy* demonstrates—it became more difficult for white feminists to deny that race was also amenable to an equivalent analysis. If gender was a structural relation, it could no longer be ignored that race was, too. As criticisms from women of colour mounted against white feminists, the hegemony achieved in the newly developed dichotomy of class and gender became vulnerable to triangulation.¹³¹ But who was to do this work of examining race?¹³² And what would the inclusion of that work mean for the foothold in the white, male stream discipline of political economy that white Marxist feminists had recently achieved? To recognize race would be at once to recognize racial superiority and racial subordination; white women would be required to change. Thus, legitimizing race as an index of power would require that white

¹³¹ Bannerji, *Thinking Through*, 77.

¹³² Pat Connelly and Marilyn Keddy of the Women’s Action Coalition of Nova Scotia, “Interview with Madeleine Parent,” Special Issue *Studies in Political Economy* 30, Autumn (1989): 30. Commentary by Madeleine Parent, a white working-class socialist feminist activist, provides an insight into the efforts of some white women to attempt the work of anti-racist praxis. At the same time, the assumed whiteness of both the readership of the journal and the women’s movement are made salient in her discussion: “We must consider the fact that many women face the effects of racism and racial discrimination in a way that *we* cannot appreciate fully because *we* do not live under those conditions. *We* must learn from *them* about the injustices *they* face and the needs *they* have. When *we* have learned about the issues that *they* are fighting for, then *we* should support *them* to the hilt. For this, *we* must make *them* welcome in *our* ranks. This is not always done. As Anglophone or francophone white women, *we* are inclined to think that *we* know what *other* women’s lives are like and what *their* needs are. *We* do not really know this unless *we* know how the most highly exploited women live. *We* can only learn that from *them*; book-reading is not enough,” (Parent, quoted in Connelly and Keddy, 30 [emphasis added]).

feminists not only comprehend their white privilege, but that they acknowledge the contributions of women of colour to their organizing, theorizing, and publishing. White feminists would be required to transform the spaces of privilege they occupied, both in the women's movement and in male-dominated institutions. White women would also be obliged to examine how it was not only class privilege, but also race privilege that enabled professional white women to leave the gendered burden of domestic labour in the home behind them; it would be imperative to understand how, in their wake, poor women of colour were left to do the dirty work.

To emphasize how the subordination of race was a unifying strategy for white feminist political economy in the 1980s, in the following chapter I turn to the racialized dimension of the domestic labour debate. I consider how what Bannerji describes as an “absence” of race in this 1980s discourse is also evidence of what Avery Gordon describes as a “seething presence.”¹³³ Rather than scholarly attention to race being foundational to the white feminist domestic labour debate, I show how white academic Marxist and socialist feminists repetitively elided the significance of racial politics to domestic labour. I suggest that race “force[s] a confrontation” between the dominant story of feminist political economy in Canada and the “living effects” of the gendered, racialized, classed, geographic, and sexualized labour relations of paid domestic work.¹³⁴ Indeed, Luxton's sense that Marxist feminism has been at the forefront of theorizing the “unpaid care work of *most women*” is indicative of who is imagined as “most women” and what kinds of labour constitute “unpaid care work.”¹³⁵ Through turning to an archive of women of colour's scholarship on *paid care work by some women*—in particular the paid domestic labour of migrant working-class Caribbean black and brown women—I argue that we can trace race as

¹³³ Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 195. “Seething, it makes a striking impression; seething, it makes everything we do see just as it is, charged with the occluded and forgotten past” (ibid.).

¹³⁴ Ibid., xviii, 195.

¹³⁵ Luxton, “Feminist Marxism and Anticapitalism,” 153 (emphasis added).

an “absent presence” in feminist political economic discourse on domestic work, highlighting the ways in which unquestioned and unexamined exertions of white privilege and dominance delimit the story of Marxist feminist theorizing in 1980s Canada.

Chapter Two

Working Elsewhere: Placing Migrant Domestic Work in Feminist History

As the previous chapter elucidated, the establishment of Marxist feminist political economy in 1980s Canada demonstrated a kind of commonsense racism. As recently described by Linda Carty, this “fundamental neglect” of race and women of colour is not exceptional, but rather a testimony to the banality of commonsense racism in white feminist movements.¹ Indeed, contrary to Meg Luxton’s recent assertion that Marxist feminism has historically been an anti-racist project, my preceding discourse review of the 1980s joins Carty’s sense that white socialist and Marxist feminist engagements with race did not move beyond the superficial.² Writing from the perspective of a racialized academic and activist, Himani Bannerji’s 1995 *Thinking Through* spoke to the “disappointment and acrimony” she personally felt as she faced the overwhelming lack of recognition white Marxist feminists gave to race, racism, and women of colour as “producers of theory or politics” in the previous decade.³ Noting a turn towards *naming* race within Marxist feminist texts, Bannerji was skeptical of what a rehearsal of “the litany of ‘gender, race and class’” within feminist political economy actually meant, asking “but why is racism still at the level of being named rather than an integral part of the economic analysis?”⁴ Bannerji charged that feminist political economy did not integrate race into gender and class analyses, neglecting to theorize the social and structural relations of race, racialization, and racism. Rather, as I discussed in the previous chapter, the “gender, class, and race” triad nodded to the criticisms and scholarship of women of colour, but immediately collapsed once white feminist political economic analyses behaved as though race/ethnicity was outside of the scope of study.

¹ Carty, “A Genealogy of Marxist Feminism,” 183.

² Luxton, “Marxist Feminism and Anticapitalism,” 153.

³ Bannerji, *Thinking Through*, 75.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

Bannerji's critique joined a movement of anti-racist and Indigenous feminist scholars publishing in the late 1980s and 1990s who demonstrated the centrality of race to the organizing of the Canadian nation-state.⁵ Practices of racialization and racism in Canada, as a white supremacist settler colony, have been integral to the relationship of political economy to the law, geography, and to citizenship practices of inclusion and exclusion.⁶ While white feminist political economy in the 1980s had "achieved" the inclusion of domestic labour into Marxist analyses of capitalism, this systematic attention to gender and the household did not likewise encourage white feminist political economists to consider the ways in which racialization was central to capital.⁷ In turn, neglecting attention to the economic and labour conditions facing women of colour secured feminist political economy as a discourse dominated by white women.⁸

⁵ There was a proliferation of publishing in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s by Indigenous women and women of colour in Canada, including the formation of Sister Vision: Black Women and Women of Colour Press in Toronto in 1985. For a small sample of edited volumes, see, for example, Janet Silman, *Enough is Enough: Aboriginal Women Speak Out* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1987); The Telling It Collective, *Telling It: Women and Language Across Cultures* (Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1991); Veronica Strong-Boag, Sherill Grace, Joan Anderson, and Avigail Eisenberg, *Painting the Maple: Essays on Race, Gender, and the Construction of Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998); Enakshi Dua and Angela Robertson, *Scratching the Surface: Canadian Anti-Racist Feminist Thought* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1999); for sole-authored texts, see Patricia Monture-Angus, *Thunder in My Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks* (Ann Arbor: Fernwood Publishing, 1995); Lee Maracle, *I am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism* (Vancouver: Press Gang, 1996).

⁶ See Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007); Sherene Razack, *Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002); Bonita Lawrence, *"Real" Indians and Others: Mixed Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism, and Gender* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2000).

⁷ Bannerji, *Thinking Through*, 76.

⁸ Margaret Simms, "Preface," *The Review of Black Political Economy* 14, no. 2-3 (1985): 5. In the United States, *The Review of Black Political Economy* regularly published articles that simultaneously addressed race, class, and gender, in particular highlighting the political economy of racism in housing, the labour market, and education. Notably, the scope of *The Review of Black Political Economy* was neither Marxist nor socialist, but rather, anti-racist. Significantly, the 1985 Special Issue, encompassing two volumes of the journal, focused specifically on black

In this chapter, I draw on a critical practice of reparative reading to trace how an “omission” of the racialized politics of paid domestic work was one mode by which this hegemonic whiteness of feminist political economy was achieved during the 1980s.⁹ Through schemes of immigration, migration, and deferred citizenship, Canada has historically managed the migrant labour force by producing domestic workers as distinct raced, classed, gendered, and sexual subjects.¹⁰ Since the 1980s, racialized feminist scholars in particular have been developing analyses of paid domestic work, examining how “migration is a survival strategy for women” within a global capitalist circuit of capitalism defined by “economic restructuring.”¹¹ Turning to scholarship on migrant domestic workers during the 1980s highlights both the political engagements of women of colour around issues of political economy, and the simultaneous reluctance of most white Marxist and socialist feminists to prioritize these concerns. I argue that the discourse of white feminist political economy is haunted by the “absent presence” of both

women’s economic conditions, demonstrating an emergence of black feminist political economy. In a preface to the journal, black political economist Margaret C. Simms commented that the Special Issue arose out of the recognition that “black women have too often slipped through the cracks when the focus is on blacks (mostly male) or women (mostly white)” (ibid.). While a close reading of this journal is outside the scope of this project, it is significant to note that a brief review of the Special Issue suggests that none of the articles included took up the issue of paid domestic work; Rhonda Williams, “Getting Paid: Black Women Economists Reflect on Women and Work,” in *Sister Circle: Black Women and Work*, eds. Sharon Harley and the Black Women and Work Collective (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 84-99. See Williams for a review of black women’s political economic scholarship and a first-person reflection of pursuing a PhD in Economics as a black woman. During the 1980s, white feminist political economists in Canada do not seem to have been influenced by this emergent discourse – at least, they were not citing the special issues of the *Review of Black Political Economy* in their publications.

⁹ Bannerji, *Thinking Through*, 46; Carty, “A Genealogy of Marxist Feminism,” 178.

¹⁰ Bannerji, *Thinking Through*, 77.

¹¹ Sedef Arat-Koc and Wenona Giles, introduction to *Maid in the Market: Women’s Paid Domestic Labour* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1994), 9.

racialized migrant domestic workers and the racialized academics and activists who sought to make migrant domestic workers' struggles matter to the state and to feminism in Canada.¹²

Significantly, Sedef Arat-Koc's 1989 contribution to *Studies in Political Economy*, "In the Privacy of Our Own Home: Foreign Domestic Workers as Solution to the Crisis in the Domestic Sphere in Canada," put domestic work on the map as an important *feminist* political economic topic.¹³ However, neither Arat-Koc's analysis nor the theme of domestic work were revisited in the subsequent *Studies in Political Economy* "Special Issue: Feminist Political Economy" (discussed in the previous chapter). Arat-Koc's essay on the linked relations of gender, class, and citizenship in the migrant domestic work force marked the first instance of a feminist perspective on the issue in the periodical.¹⁴ Drawing on labour market statistics of the late 1980s, Arat-Koc demonstrated how domestic workers had become a private-market solution for middle-high income families facing a "crisis" in childcare and housework.¹⁵ The majority of domestic workers filled a labour gap in dual-income families with small children; their low pay, live-in requirement, and unregulated work hours were seen as incentives to employers. While domestic workers have enabled a shift of the burden of domestic and care work from mothers and wives onto paid employees, Arat-Koc insisted that the "mistress-servant" relation perpetuated a "division" between women marked by differences in rights, class, race, and citizenship.¹⁶

¹² As discussed in the introduction, in *Ghostly Matters* Gordon traces "presences" as "absent" (15), "seething" (195), and "ghostly" (77); Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 23. Hemmings describes how "identifying absent presences" requires a "reflexive" practice of "recitation" (ibid.).

¹³ Sedef Arat-Koc, "In the Privacy of Our Own Home: Foreign Domestic Workers as Solution to the Crisis in the Domestic Sphere in Canada," *Studies in Political Economy* 28 (1989): 54.

¹⁴ Ibid., 34. "The conditions of this group best demonstrate the complex articulation of gender issues with those of class and citizenship" (Arat-Koc, 34).

¹⁵ Ibid., 34, 35. In the late 1980s, forty-three percent of the labour force was composed of women, with sixty-five percent of women with pre-school children employed.

¹⁶ Ibid., 36, 39.

Significantly, Arat-Koc intervened in the domestic labour debate by insisting that paid domestic work was “a feminist question” precisely because it posed “a question of women’s oppression and liberation,” as the subordinated labour relation reveals the distinct class *and race* “differences among women” that fracture the shared category of gender.¹⁷ As Arat-Koc pointed out, “class, race, and citizenship” all impacted how “visible minority women” from the “Third World” would experience the nuances of exploitative domestic work.¹⁸ Arat-Koc’s essay signifies a slow shift toward the inclusion of paid domestic work as a feminist political economic issue, and the attention that domestic work would increasingly receive in the decades to come.¹⁹

The reluctance of white feminist political economists to address race alongside gender and class is demonstrated by an inattention to paid domestic work in the 1980s. The theoretical downplaying of paid domestic work in Canada serves as an example of how white privilege and white supremacy organized the discourse of white feminist political economy through commonsense racism. In suturing gender to class, white feminist political economy minimized racialized labour and economic relations. Asserting the primacy of gender and class to economic analyses of the nuclear domestic unit meant that white dominance in the labour force was taken

¹⁷ Ibid., 52.

¹⁸ Ibid., 36, 39.

¹⁹ Sedef Arat-Koc, “Immigration Policies, Migrant Domestic Workers and the Definition of Citizenship in Canada,” in *Deconstructing a Nation: Immigration, Multiculturalism, and Racism in 90’s Canada*, ed. Vic Satzewich (Halifax: Fernwood Press, 1992), 229-242; Geraldine Pratt, *Families Apart: Migrant Mothers and the Conflicts of Labour and Love* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Abigail B. Bakan, “‘Systemic Discrimination’ in the Canadian Context: Live-In Domestic Care, Employment Equity, and the Challenge of Unfree Labour Markets,” in *Unfree Labour? Struggles of Migrant and Immigrant Workers in Canada* eds. Aziz Choudry and Adrian A. Smith (Oakland: PM Press, 2016), 55-70; Kendra Strauss and Siobhán McGrath, “Temporary Migration, Precarious Employment and Unfree Labour Relations: Exploring the ‘Continuum of Exploitation’ in Canada’s Temporary Foreign Worker Program,” *Geoforum* 78 January (2017): 199-208. Feminist research on domestic work as an exploited labour relation and domestic workers’ experiences in Canada has proliferated in interdisciplinary studies since the 1990s.

for granted and the home was envisioned as a racially neutral space.²⁰ This assumption about the primacy of gender and class resulted in an under-theorization of the market of paid domestic work, and how gender, class, *and* race politics conditioned the employment of domestic workers.²¹ As a workforce largely composed of poor and working-class migrant women of colour, paid domestic workers troubled white feminist political economy's conception of women's unpaid labour in the home. Paid domestic workers drew attention to the racial politics of domestic labour, and the racial inequalities that drew women of colour into performing domestic work *for others* outside of their own homes, and often, nation-states. In the absence of theoretical attention to paid domestic workers as a racialized work force, white women's uncompensated labour in the home—the productive and reproductive value women contribute—was assumed to create surplus in relation to white men, to a white labour force, and to a white nation state.²² These assumptions simultaneously “exalted” the labour of white women while concealing forms of domestic labour—both paid and unpaid—undertaken by women of colour.²³ Critically, the increasing incorporation of white middle-upper class women in the professional

²⁰ Connelly, “On Marxism and Feminism,” 156, 157. Connelly emphasized that “the central contradiction” between “the forces of production” and “the relations of production” in advanced capitalism takes place within “the social formation,” which is characterized by “the prevalence of the nuclear family form, the ownership of household property overwhelmingly by men, the performance of domestic labour overwhelmingly by women” (ibid.).

²¹ Luxton, “Two Hands for the Clock”; Connelly and MacDonald, “Women’s Work.” Luxton and Connelly and MacDonald discuss the gender and class dynamics of unpaid domestic work.

²² Sharon Harley, Francille Rusan Wilson, and Shirley Wilson Logan, “Introduction: Historical Overview of Black Women and Work,” in *Sister Circle: Black Women and Work*, eds. Sharon Harley and The Black Women and Work Collective (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002). The text provides a historical description of the economic disparity between black women and white women’s labour force participation in the United States. “From the 1950s through the 1980s black married women had the highest labor-force participation rate, while white married women had the lowest, making black families more dependent on women’s income than white families were,” (Harley, Wilson, and Logan, 8).

²³ Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, 9. Thobani explains the exalted status of whiteness in Canada.

labour force relied on a shifting of unpaid gendered domestic duties into privatized economic relationships that were structured by inequalities in class, race, and citizenship.²⁴

The Canadian state's decision to combat its ongoing crisis in child care, caregiving, and domestic work with imported and indentured labourers from the Caribbean and the Philippines is now well documented in social policy and feminist studies.²⁵ However, beginning in the early 1980s, this discourse was spearheaded by immigrant women and women of colour.²⁶ This was not only intellectual work, but affective work as well, calling on primarily black and brown feminist scholars to build relationships with migrant domestic workers and to combat the ignorance of the white feminist movement.²⁷ As my archival research reflects, some white feminists were also involved in raising awareness of the barriers facing domestic workers and

²⁴ Harley, Wilson, and Logan, "Introduction," 9. It was explicitly white Canadian women who were making economic gains in the 1980s. In the American context, racial stratification of the labour market persisted in the 1980s, as "...most black women were neither executives nor stay-at-home moms but still worked in the lowest-paying sectors of the economy" and "...the 1980s saw no progress in eliminating wage discrimination for black workers in general as earning ratios between blacks and whites did not change at all between 1979 and 1991" (Harley, Wilson, and Logan, 9).

²⁵ Rachel K. Brickner and Christine J. Straehle, "The Missing Link: Gender, Immigration Policy, and the Live-In Caregiver Program," *Policy and Society* 29, no. 4 (2016): 309-320; Judy Fudge, "Global Care Chains, Employment Agencies, and the Conundrum of Jurisdiction: Decent Work for Domestic Workers in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 23, no. 1 (2011): 235-264; Jarrah Hodge, "'Unskilled Labour': Canada's Live-In Caregiver Program," *Undercurrent* 3, no. 2 (2006): 60-66.

²⁶ Wenonan Giles and Ilda Januario, "The Lone Woman: The Migration of Portuguese Single Women to Montreal and London," *Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme* 8, no. 2 (1987): 43-46. Giles and Januario discuss a history of Portuguese women's migration to Canada as domestic workers; Isabel Kaprielian, "Refugee Women as Domestics: A Documentary Account," *Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme* 10, no. 1 (1989): 73-79. Kaprielian analyses the resettlement to Canada of Armenian refugee women through state domestic worker schemes.

²⁷ Judith Ramirez, "Domestic Workers Organize," *Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme* 4, no. 1 (1982): 89-91.

challenging explicit and implicit forms of racism within the white women's movement.²⁸

However, as discussions about paid domestic work were limited within feminist periodicals (and almost absent in feminist political economy publications, save for Arat-Koc's contribution), I broadened my archive to include a collection of contemporary monographs written by women of colour that explicitly theorized domestic work.

Between 1983 and 1993, the publication of three pivotal books written by black feminist scholars put domestic work on the map as an important feminist and labour issue structured by race, gender, and class inequalities. Makeda Silvera's 1983 *Silenced* used oral history to convey the intimate effects felt by Caribbean domestic workers labouring under precarious and privatized economic conditions in Canada. Building on her community engagement as a graduate student, journalist, and activist, Silvera documented the complex challenges domestic workers in Toronto faced as they struggled against employers and the state to negotiate basic human rights, citizenship status, and labour issues.²⁹ Judith Rollins's 1985 *Between Women: Domesticity and their Employers* combined a sociological approach of interviews with domestic workers and their female employers with Rollins's first-person observations as a paid domestic worker. Documenting her own undercover experience as a domestic worker in the homes of ten employers, Rollins' text achieves ground-breaking insights into the ideologies, circumstances, and privileges that structure and sustain the unequal relationships between women employers and

²⁸ Rachel Epstein, "I thought there was no more slavery in Canada: West Indian Domestic Workers on Employment Visas," *Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme* 2, no. 1 (1980): 22-25; Rina Cohen, "The Work Conditions of Immigrant Women Live-in Domesticity: Racism, Sexual Abuse and Invisibility," *Resources for Feminist Research* 16, no. 1 (1987): 36-38; see also my discussion of *Kinesis* in the following section, in particular notes 145, 146, and 152-154.

²⁹ Makeda Silvera, *Silenced: Talks With Working Class Caribbean Women About Their Lives and Struggles as Domestic Workers in Canada* (Toronto: Sister Vision: Black Women and Women of Colour Press, [1983] 1989).

domestic workers in urban settings in the United States.³⁰ Patricia Daenzer's 1993 *Regulating Class Privilege: Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940s-1990s*, was the first book to provide a comprehensive study of the Canadian state's efforts to recruit and regulate immigrant women's labour in domestic work. Undertaking a historical review of the policies governing immigrant women's paid domestic labour, Daenzer charts the various manifestations of the state's domestic worker programs to reveal the steady erosion of citizenship rights as the migrant labour force shifted from the recruitment of white European women to black and brown Caribbean women.³¹ Collectively, these texts assert the significance of paid domestic work for a feminist political economic discourse developed by women of colour.³²

To take up Hemmings's practice of "telling stories differently" in this case also requires telling different stories; writing by women of colour clarifies the context of political economy in Canada in the 1980s. The commonsense racism of white feminist political economy becomes visible when read alongside a parallel history of women of colour's scholarship on nation building, immigration, and the state-enforced domestic worker project.³³ Turning to an alternative archive that attends to the political economic conditions facing migrant women workers yields a different narrative, one where race, ethnicity, and citizenship matter in what counts as feminist political economy. Drawing from Katherine McKittrick, I consider how a "spatial" understanding of black women's labour helps to deconstruct the commonsense racism behind white Marxist

³⁰ Judith Rollins, *Between Women: Domesticity and Their Employers* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985).

³¹ Patricia Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege: Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940s-1990s* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1993).

³² Davis's *Women, Race, and Class* can also be included in this discourse, as she discusses how paid domestic work was an economic reality for black women in the USA following abolition; See also, Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride: Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, [1988] 2010).

³³ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 2.

feminists' imaginary of what counted as women's or domestic "work."³⁴ The historical ongoingness of women of colour's over-representation in domestic work in North America—from the enforced labour of slavery to modern transnational paid domestic work arrangements—paradoxically casts racialized domestic workers as doubly invisible workers and as racialized non-citizens in the homes of their employers.³⁵ In the white Marxist feminist logic I traced in the previous chapter, paid domestic work is neither waged productive labour nor unwaged reproductive labour; as neither "productive" nor "unpaid" workers, domestic workers are paradoxically not captured by Marxist feminism. In order to include paid domestic workers in the Marxist feminist imaginary, paid domestic workers first had to become visible as workers and as feminist subjects. In 1980s (white) feminist political economy, domestic workers were neither.

To challenge this occlusion, I borrow from McKittrick a spatial theory of how white supremacist ideology works by "placing" black people as "elsewhere," in locating black women, women of colour, and Indigenous women "elsewhere," white feminist political economy in the 1980s was reluctant to examine how race—as always already *here*—influences the kinds of work and the sites of work available to women.³⁶ Indeed, in her 1986 study on women in the Canadian garment industry, Charlene Gannage argued that the inability of Marxist feminism to grasp how the labour market is segmented not only by gender and class, but also by "ethnicity," marked a

³⁴ Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

³⁵ Harley, Wilson, Logan, "Introduction," 2, 4, 7. Harvey, Wilson, and Logan provide a brief history of black women's domestic work as enslaved, "freed," and enfranchised citizens in America; Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Domestica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, [2001] 2007). Hondagneu-Sotelo examines the migrant domestic work force in the United States. In particular, Hondagneu-Sotelo points to the proliferation of migrant Latina domestic workers: "Since the early 1980s, thousands of Central American women and Mexican women in increasing numbers" have migrated to the United States "in order to earn wages by providing child care and cleaning for others" (ibid., 25).

³⁶ McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, xvii, 96, 99, 102.

theoretical impasse in the discourse.³⁷ This lack of attention to the structural dynamics of racism and racial privilege in the public sphere extended, and intensified, the failure of white socialist and Marxist feminists to develop a political economy of paid domestic work performed by women of colour. It is in turning to an archive of scholarship by feminists of colour that domestic work becomes visible as an exploited labour relation, wherein these authors reveal the intersections of gender, class, race, sexuality and citizenship that underpin paid domestic work. In what follows, I relay women of colour's insistence on the relevance of the political economic conditions of paid migrant domestic work to women's labour history. The following section demonstrates how Canada's domestic worker policies have established race, class, and gender as central criteria not only for the admission of migrant workers, but also for the selective permission of some migrant workers to be granted citizenship. In the final section, I will return to the question of race within feminist political economic discourse. There I explore select white feminist responses to this archive of women of colour's scholarship on domestic work to demonstrate how white socialist and Marxist feminists exhibited or resisted commonsense racism in the production of white feminist political economy.

Historicizing Migrant Domestic Work as a Feminist Political Economic Issue

The history of the migration of Caribbean domestic workers to Canada needs to be situated in the context of post-war changes to immigration, the economy, the household, and the experiences of decolonization in the Caribbean, and the intersections of race, class, gender and

³⁷ Charlene Gannage, *Double Day, Double Bind: Women Garment Workers* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1986), 14, 18, 19. Note that Gannage used the term "ethnicity," not race, to characterize diverse immigrant garment workers.

sexuality to each.³⁸ Indeed, a political economy of domestic work requires an untangling of how a decade of changes to immigration policy between 1966 and 1976 affected not only immigration practices, but also the ideological construction of immigrants by Canadian settler-citizens, and subsequently, the affective experiences of female migrant labourers in relationship to Canadians. For black and brown domestic workers migrating to Canada in the late 1970s and 1980s, these relationships were exacerbated by the legally enforced subordination of their labour within the private homes of (mostly) white middle-class and wealthy Canadians and the ways in which regulations around citizenship were utilized to control their mobility.

As a colonial state, Canada's nation building has historically been dependent upon an embedded relationship between the economy and immigration, expressed in explicit policies of racial preference and exclusion.³⁹ Periods of economic growth, stagflation, recession, and geopolitical conflicts—in particular the Cold War—between the 1950s and 1970s corresponded with revisions in immigration policy over this period and the directing of immigrants into particular labour market sectors. In 1958, Canada faced an economic downturn that led to a

³⁸ See, for example, Rina Cohen's "'Mom is a Stranger'": The Negative Impact of Immigration Policies on the Family Life of Filipina Domestic Workers," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 32, no. 3 (2000): 76-88. For the sake of brevity, the bulk of my discussion is focused on scholarly research on Caribbean women, primarily black and brown women, migrating from the Caribbean prior to and during the 1980s. Caribbean women were the first wave of non-white women selectively included for migration as domestic workers. Since the late 1980s, the Philippines has become the other main source of migrant domestic labour in Canada. Where possible, I generalize and attempt to include all migrant domestic work forces.

³⁹ Consider, for example, the *Indian Act*, 1876; the *Chinese Immigration Act*, 1885; the *Continuous Passage Act*, 1908; the *Immigration Acts*, 1906 and 1910; the *Exclusion Act*, 1923; the *Citizenship Act*, 1946; and so on. For a discussion of these, see Thobani, 88-90. Since Confederation, Asian Canadians in particular have been targeted by immigration policies and racist state interventions. During World War II, Canada forced 21,460 Japanese Canadians living in British Columbia into internment camps for 9 years, where many families were forcibly separated; For a fictional account of one family's state-enforced move to a Japanese internment camp, see Joy Kogawa, *Obasan* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, [1981] 2003); For a recent study, see Mona Oikawa, *Cartographies of Violence: Japanese Canadian Women, Memory, and the Subjects of the Internment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

decrease in immigration; by 1962, the economy began a decade-long upswing and Canada began to revise its immigration policy in earnest.⁴⁰ The removal of explicit racial conditions on immigration in 1962 was at once a reflection of growing labour market demands, shifting relations between nation-states, and a hallmark of Canada's turn towards a strategy of multiculturalism in 1971.⁴¹ As the 1960s progressed, immigration policy changed in political economic terms, emphasizing the "values" of both family reunification and a preference for "independent immigrants" with a high contributive potential to the deficits in the labour market, converging with the introduction of the points system in 1967.⁴² Following the recommendations of a White Paper on immigration commissioned by the Liberal government in 1966, the points system ascribed cumulative value to potential migrants based on their skill levels and congruence with the circumstances of the labour market.⁴³ Superficially appearing to disregard the applicant's country of origin, race, or gender, in practice the points system has been fraught with discrimination from its outset as immigration recruitment offices are disproportionately located in first world countries, where individual immigration officers possess gatekeeping power relative to personal biases.⁴⁴ Simultaneously, the amalgamation of the Departments of Citizenship and Immigration and Labour into the single Department of Manpower and Immigration exemplifies the sedimentation of the relationship between the needs of the labour market and migration trends during this period.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 346.

⁴¹ Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, 144.

⁴² Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 18.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 348.

⁴⁴ Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, 97.

⁴⁵ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 349.

The mid 1970s were marked by another economic recession in Canada, erupting in 1973 with rising rates of unemployment, the oil crisis, and stagflation.⁴⁶ During this time, an increasingly diversified labour force characterized immigration, with intensified employment in specialized, professional, and skills-based sectors.⁴⁷ Between 1961 and 1970, 725,000 immigrants joined the work force; whereas in 1962, 78% of the immigrant population was of European origin, by 1976 white Europeans represented 38% of the immigrant population, with increasing numbers of Asian and, to a lesser extent, Caribbean immigrants.⁴⁸ However, the economic downturn prompted the tightening of immigration quotas, with the introduction of mandatory employment visas for non-immigrants seeking employment in Canada, available only for in-demand jobs; as I will discuss in more detail shortly, this introduction of temporary work visas resulted in the tightening of immigration from less wealthy countries like Mexico and the Caribbean that supplied Canada with agricultural and, significant for my purposes here, domestic labour.⁴⁹ A pernicious anti-immigration sentiment was mobilized with further revisions to immigration policy with the release of the Green Paper on immigration in 1974, which blatantly advanced a pessimistic view of immigration.⁵⁰ Publicly debated in the midst of mounting economic deficit and state expenditure, the Green Paper linked increasing unemployment and racial tension with the expansion of immigration in the previous decade. Responding to the controversy the Green Paper provoked, the input of racialized communities, businesses, labour unions, and religious groups helped shape the incumbent policy to reflect a more expansive

⁴⁶ Ibid., 346.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 347, 348.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 348.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 360-1.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 372.

approach to immigration and refugee protection.⁵¹ The *Immigration Act* of 1976 solidified three classes of immigrants—independents, families, and refugees—that would define future Canadian citizens based on exalted assumptions of gender, race, class, and sexuality.⁵²

The “liberalizing” of Canada’s immigration policy throughout the 1960s and 1970s occurred alongside two other parallel phenomena: the increase of both refugee claims and deportations. Imperial and decolonizing violence in the late 1970s saw a growing population of migrants, in particular Czechs, Tibetans, Ugandan East Indians, Chileans, and South East Asians, seeking refugee status in Canada.⁵³ As these refugee crises gained popular and media attention, pernicious fears of refugees posing a “threat” to Canada and a concern over border security proliferated.⁵⁴ These fears were profoundly racialized and racist, as both immigrants and refugees became increasingly constructed as non-white racial others. As Thobani explains, “Nationality and citizenship coexist in an overlapping manner, so that some citizens can claim nationality while others are denied such claims, even when they share the legal status of citizenship.”⁵⁵ Multiculturalism, Thobani ventures, has worked precisely to “reconstitute” whiteness as the racial signifier of Canadian citizens, expressed through “a culturally ‘tolerant’ cosmopolitan whiteness” that is more “politically acceptable” in a globalizing neoliberal economy.⁵⁶ In the organization of immigrants and refugees into discrete groups of cultural, racial, and ethnic marginalized others, Canada’s white settler population secures itself as a tolerant and benevolent center that maintains dominion of the political and economic organization of the nation.⁵⁷ The state’s official policies

⁵¹ Ibid., 350.

⁵² Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, 97.

⁵³ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 347.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁵ Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, 100.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 148.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 149.

of immigration and refugee protection often operate in tandem with deportations. Historically, systematic deportations have served the state's investment in securing the hegemony of whiteness, in particular during moments of economic instability.⁵⁸ As Kelley and Trebilcock describe, changes to immigration policy in the 1960s and 1970s were accompanied by nearly a tripling of deportations compared to previous years.⁵⁹

The process of regulating citizenship in Canada, indelibly tied to political and economic conditions, has also been a process of consolidating whiteness and white supremacy. Domestic workers from the Caribbean were targeted in 1975 for deportation as the anti-immigrant sentiment mobilized by discussions like the 1974 Green Paper, combined with an economic recession and stagflation, drew racist characterizations of immigrant labourers as employees privileged over Canadian citizens.⁶⁰ This racist ideology surfaced in stark contrast to the reality of the exploitative conditions facing immigrant labourers. Increasingly from the “global south,” immigrant and migrant workers entered the Canadian work force to accommodate labour market shortages in low wage sectors as precarious forms of “cheap labour.”⁶¹ Embedded in colonial

⁵⁸ Barbara Roberts, *Whence They Came: Deportation from Canada 1900-1935* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 1988), 9. “Deportation, both formal and informal, helped to create a hidden system of migrant labour that functioned much like a “guest worker” system, even though stated policy was that immigrants were to be permanent settlers. It was a concealed but necessary regulator of the balance between labour demand and labour supply, which was in itself a critical determinant of Canadian immigration policy and practice between 1900 and 1935” (ibid.).

⁵⁹ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 348. Between 1966 and 1971, a total of 11,766 people were deported from Canada.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 372; Silvera, *Silenced*, 88. Primrose, a Jamaican mother of five who migrated to Canada in 1976 to undertake domestic work, reflects: “Canadians have the feeling that we are coming here to rob them, to take away their jobs, yet we are the ones who clean up all their mess, pick up after them. We take the jobs that they wouldn’t take, and yet they hate us so much” (quoted in Silvera, 88).

⁶¹ Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, 146; Silvera, *Silenced*, vii.

relations, domestic work in Canada has historically been one such grueling kind of labour.⁶² The Canadian state has consistently enacted exploitative schemes to ensure that domestic workers are precarious workers lacking basic labour rights.⁶³

As a poor, racialized, and gendered workforce, black and brown Caribbean domestic workers were vulnerable to the state's anti-immigrant show of force in the late 1970s. For instance, in 1976, a group of Jamaican women already employed in Toronto were threatened with deportation following a random review of their applications. As some domestic workers involved in the legal battle recollected, one condition for their employment prior to migrating to Canada was that they were single; yet if the women had children, as many of them did, they were encouraged by both the Jamaican government and Canada High Commission representatives to omit this information from their applications.⁶⁴ This official preference for single women reflects the state's interest in forbidding Caribbean women's progeny from claiming future rights to Canadian citizenship.⁶⁵ In a cruel turn of face, the state accused a group of Caribbean women with children abroad—deemed the “Seven Jamaican Mothers”—of fraud in an effort to publicly penalize these women for this long-standing practice.⁶⁶ The government's abrupt attempt to deport employed domestic workers *despite their landed status* seized on the mounting anti-black

⁶² Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angelique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montreal* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2006). Domestic work was often the forced labour of black slaves in Canada; Zainab Amadahy and Bonita Lawrence, “Indigenous Peoples and Black Peoples in Canada: Settlers or Allies?” in *Breaching the Colonial Contract: Anti-Colonialism in the U.S. and Canada*, ed. Arlo Kempf (Toronto: Springer, 2008), 115. Indigenous peoples in Canada, and Black-Native peoples, have also been forced into domestic labour.

⁶³ Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege*, 2. Daenzer asserts that “the exploitation of many immigrant female labourers, carried out in private homes by a privileged class, is analogous to colonization and is aided and abetted by the Canadian state” (ibid.).

⁶⁴ Silvera, *Silenced*, vi.

⁶⁵ In addition, the state's official preference for single women highlights how the gendered burden of uncompensated productive and reproductive labour within the nuclear family is shifted from citizen-subjects onto domestic workers.

⁶⁶ Ibid., vii.

racism within Canadian society and attempted to use their removal as a warning to other racialized subjects of the state's force, as well as to persuade a disgruntled Canadian public that the government was acting on their racist anxieties about a porous border.⁶⁷

Silvera reflects that the overturning of these deportation orders was a direct result of domestic workers telling their stories at public rallies, marking an important moment in community building across political, economic, and cultural fronts; yet notably absent from the ranks of public support were feminist organizations.⁶⁸ This political organizing and the important scholarly contributions it engendered haunt the white feminist political economy discourse as “seething presences.”⁶⁹ The lack of solidarity from white socialist and Marxist feminists in the late 1970s reverberates in their lack of attention to paid domestic work in the political economic discourse of the 1980s.⁷⁰ To omit the issue of paid domestic work was to simultaneously omit the ways in which race and citizenship—not only class and gender—have historically produced domestic work as a site of social reproduction and paid private production.⁷¹ Situating paid

⁶⁷ McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 102. McKittrick describes how the policing of Jamaican Canadians in Toronto is an ongoing historical process whereby “blackness is publicly collapsed, a criminal and suspect category, which belongs elsewhere, is ahistorical, is invading Canada, and is described as “spilling over” onto the streets of Toronto and the city-nation” (ibid.).

⁶⁸ Silvera, *Silenced*, vii. “These organizations and groups included The International Committee Against Racism, Canadians Against the Deportation of Immigrant Women, the Universal African Improvement Association, the Canadian Labour Party, teachers, trade unionists, church leaders, and the Sikh community” (ibid.). Absent from the protests of the domestic workers were local socialist women’s organizations; Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail, *Feminists Organizing for Change*, 75. Adamson, Briskin, McPhail note that Organized Working Women and the Equal Pay Campaign were two Toronto-based socialist women’s groups active in 1976.

⁶⁹ Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 195.

⁷⁰ See Epstein, “I Thought There Was No More Slavery in Canada,” and Cohen, “The Work Conditions of Immigrant Women Live-in Domestics,” as exceptions to the inattention of white feminists to paid migrant domestic work.

⁷¹ Roxana Ng, “A Modest Beginning: My Work On and For Immigrant Women,” *Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme* 4, no. 2 (1982): 61-63. In contrast to white socialist and Marxist feminists, Ng reports organizing alongside domestic workers as intrinsic to her research

domestic work in 1980s Canada as a part of the feminist political economic story demands reckoning with how the importation of migrant paid domestic work from the global south was an important part of Canada's nation-building project, and consequently, an important part of the story of white women's economic and professional gains.⁷² In freeing up the unpaid domestic labour demands of wealthy and white Canadians through the underpaid labour of migrant women, Canada's domestic worker schemes served to bolster an image of Canada as a global leader in both gender equality and racial tolerance.

The Canadian state has endeavored to exalt the labour and domestic life of middle-upper class white women through its long history of domestic worker programs. As Daenzer describes, race and ethnicity have been central criteria for who would be invited into Canada to perform domestic labour. Prior to the 1950s, poor and working-class white women—particularly from Europe—were the “prefer[ed]” group to fulfill Canada's demand for domestic workers.⁷³ Composing a class of workers in high demand regardless of labour market fluctuations, domestic workers have maintained special treatment by the state reflected in the policies governing their

and activism, in particular with Toronto's INTERCEDE and The Montreal Household Workers Association.

⁷² Daiva K. Stasiulus and Abigail B. Bakan, *Negotiating Citizenship: Migrant Women in Canada and the Global System* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 25. “Given the increased demand on female citizens who must juggle paid employment with domestic responsibilities, some are turning to poorer and more vulnerable populations to help them carry out their obligations in the private sphere while continuing to participate in the public sphere. Some female citizens are thus able to attain greater equality with men as citizen-workers because they are accompanied by the ‘ghostly, often racialized figure of the domestic worker/nanny/caregiver,’ who is positioned on the other side of the globalized citizenship divide” (ibid.).

⁷³ Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege*, 11. In the early 1920s, the state briefly experimented with employing Black women from the United States as domestic workers; Afua Cooper, “Constructing Black Women's Historical Knowledge,” *Atlantis* 25, no. 1 Fall/Winter (2000): 43. Between 1896-1920, approximately two thousand African Americans settled as farmers in the prairies in Canada, prompting vociferous anti-black racism by white settlers and the Immigration Department.

migration.⁷⁴ The state's inability to retain white women immigrants for domestic labour from Europe led the Canadian government to admit 100 black and brown women from the Anglophone Commonwealth Caribbean into Canada in 1955 in a simultaneous attempt to address a labour shortage and to expand trade with the Caribbean.⁷⁵ The sole right granted to this preliminary group of workers was immediate landed status; however, unlike their white counterparts, Caribbean women would be deported back to the Caribbean if upon arrival they were found to be "unsuitable."⁷⁶ In striking this deal with the impoverished Caribbean, Canada fulfilled "its market needs at no cultural, bureaucratic or class expense to Canada" as domestic workers were not entitled to inclusion in the Canadian Unemployment Insurance Plan, or provincial minimum wage legislations.⁷⁷

Migrant domestic worker schemes in Canada have been structured to sustain hierarchies of nation, race, class, gender, and sexuality, demonstrating their position within global and local political economy. Throughout the 1960s, Caribbean domestic workers were the only domestic workers migrating to Canada as a "special force movement"; however, as discussed above, following the 1967 introduction of the points system and the de-emphasis of "unskilled labour,"

⁷⁴ Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege*, 20. Domestic workers and farm labourers were the only groups of workers whose prospective immigration overrode 1929 Immigration Regulations that forbade entry of Continental Europeans into Canada during the depression.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 49, 53. As Canada struggled to meet its quota of foreign domestic workers, including adjusting to an embargo from Germany between 1950-54, an international survey of domestic workers' labour conditions was published that placed Canada's wages and conditions far below Europe and the United States.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 54. As one example of the racist, sexist, and classist treatment of Caribbean domestic workers by the Canadian state, women arriving from the Caribbean were subjected to non-consensual syphilis tests; R. Bruce Shephard, *Deemed Unsuitable: Blacks from Oklahoma Move to the Canadian Prairies in Search of Equality in the Early 20th Century Only to Find Racism in Their New Home* (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1997). Shephard provides a comprehensive history of the racialized and racist use of the term "unsuitable" to circumscribe the movement and opportunities of black people in Canada, see

⁷⁷ Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege*, 55, 54, 69.

the Caribbean group movement was cancelled in 1968.⁷⁸ In this move, Caribbean domestic workers lost their right to landed status, and were only granted temporary status through Temporary Employment Visas.⁷⁹ Throughout the 1970s, the eroding status of domestic workers can be understood within a global economic project of late stage capitalism marked by a shift “from a movement of people to a movement of labour power.”⁸⁰ By mid-decade, domestic workers arriving to Canada as non-immigrants with employment visas outstripped those with landed status four to one, and by 1978, the ratio was five to one.⁸¹ Changes to the *Immigration Act* in 1976 worsened the status of Caribbean domestic workers in Canada, denying them even the “privilege” to apply for landed immigrant status from within Canada, thus requiring them to either obtain subsequent work contracts or to leave Canada immediately upon termination of their contract.⁸² In 1981, following an internal review of its domestic workers policies, the Ministry of Employment and Immigration rebranded the program the Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM), stipulating that workers would continue to enter Canada on employment visas but could apply for permanent residence status after 2 years of employment.⁸³ As Silvera argues, the discriminatory ideologies and intimidation tactics of individual immigration officers arbitrarily determined whether or not applicants displayed “an ‘aptitude for learning,’ ‘an adaptability to Canadian

⁷⁸ Ibid., 72, 89.

⁷⁹ Silvera, *Silenced*, 8.

⁸⁰ Arat-Koc, “In the Privacy of Our Own Home,” 47.

⁸¹ Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege*, 92. Daenzer’s research shows that in 1976, Canada Employment and Immigration registered the entrance of 2, 200 domestic workers as landed immigrants versus 5, 657 on employment visas; in 1978, that number had increased to 4, 639 versus 25, 668.

⁸² Ibid., 97. In addition, the inclusion of domestic workers in the 1971 Unemployment Insurance Act was a negligible protection for the workers as they were not entitled to the benefits of the program once they left Canada (ibid., 100).

⁸³ Ibid., 110; Silvera, *Silenced*, 11.

lifestyle,’ and ‘personal suitability.’”⁸⁴ Through differential citizenship privileges *vis à vis* other labourers, the gendered, raced, and classed specificities of the Foreign Domestic Movement program maintained a subordinated, isolated, and exploited work force of predominantly black and brown working-class immigrant women.

By the time Arat-Koc had brought the issue of paid domestic work into *Studies in Political Economy* in 1989, the state had effectively consolidated migrant Caribbean and Filipina black and brown women as a gendered and racialized impoverished class of workers who “lack[ed] basic political rights.”⁸⁵ Obscuring and sustaining the deplorable labour conditions of domestic work has been integral to alleviating state responsibility for childcare, housework, and care for the sick and elderly. As one of the only labour forces situated outside of the norms and regulations of the labour market, domestic workers’ employment within the private home regularly subjects them to wage theft, exploitation, overwork, abuse, and sexual assault.⁸⁶ This exploitation and the “dependency” it engenders are particularly exacerbated by the fact that domestic workers are required to live in the homes of their employers, unless granted written permission to live independently.⁸⁷ As black and brown migrant workers lacking citizenship status and subject to the whims and routines of their live-in mainly white employers, domestic workers are uniquely positioned in the private sphere as indentured servants. Policy changes to ameliorate the vulnerability of domestic workers to exploitation and abuse have been superficial: for instance, in 1976 recommendations were made to include domestic workers in minimum wage requirements without putting into place any state “mechanism...to monitor the equity of

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Arat-Koc, “In the Privacy of Our Own Home,” 39.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 12.

⁸⁷ Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, 99.

wages paid to domestic workers subsequent to their hiring.”⁸⁸ Rather, as Silvera’s interviewees attest, these minimum standards guidelines are immediately undermined once domestic workers enter their place of employment, as “duties, hours of work and salaries are often changed unilaterally by the employer.”⁸⁹ Taking advantage of the fear, dependency, and isolation of their domestic workers, some domestic employers knowingly exploit the vulnerability and precarity of their workers through the looming threat of deportation.⁹⁰ Historically, employers of domestic workers have played a significant role in putting internal pressure on the Canadian state to sustain this classed, gendered, and racialized labour relation as unregulated and private.⁹¹ Rather than shoulder some of the responsibility for the household and caregiving needs of its domestic work force, the Canadian state has crafted this migrant labour relation to free up its own middle-upper class population from domestic work and to contribute as little to the resources, skills, or health of this migrant work force as possible. Simultaneously, the state has managed and restricted “the permanent migration of Third World working class women to Canada.”⁹²

The scholarship on domestic work developed by women of colour situates paid domestic work—and its racial organization— firmly within the domestic work debate that preoccupied white feminist political economy throughout the 1970s and 1980s—despite being omitted at the time from the formal discussion. As Daenzer describes, changes to the 1981 FDM policy “negated the legitimacy and value of housework to Canadian production and the contribution of domestic workers to human and social development.”⁹³ Precisely through evaluating domestic workers’ suitability for Canadian residency through evidence of skills upgrading in labour

⁸⁸ Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege*, 98.

⁸⁹ Silvera, *Silenced*, 9.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 10.

⁹¹ Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege*, 22, 128; Silvera, *Silenced*, 105.

⁹² Silvera, *Silenced*, 10.

⁹³ Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege*, 121.

markets other than domestic work, the state viewed domestic work as separate from and subordinate to other forms of industry.⁹⁴ Thus, domestic work, cast into the realm of the private and individual home, became entrenched as a kind of “non-work” that through its dissolution and privatization limits those doing such work from exercising the rights or protections of other labourers.⁹⁵ While all domestic work may be “invisible” to the state through its private and indirect contributions to capital, this archive of anti-racist scholarship demonstrates how domestic work is *made* to be invisible as an economic relation by sequestering domestic workers in the employers’ home and stripping them of citizenship rights.⁹⁶ Concomitantly, the reduction in status by domestic workers is paralleled by an increase in status by employers, in particular white women employers. White middle-upper class women gain prestige, freedom, race and class status through the employment of racialized domestic workers.⁹⁷ Freed up for the labour market, for leisure time, and for self-actualization, some white middle-upper class women in Canada have secured and reinforced their class and race dominance through establishing a racial, gendered, and class hierarchy within their own homes *vis à vis* immigrant black and brown women’s labour.⁹⁸

Indeed, the intimate relationship between white women employers and black domestic workers offers critical insights into the maintenance of class and race domination in the private

⁹⁴ Ibid., 122.

⁹⁵ Ibid.; Silvera, *Silenced*, 105.

⁹⁶ Arat-Koc, “In the Privacy of Our Own Home,” 38.

⁹⁷ Rollins, *Between Women*, 102.

⁹⁸ Silvera, *Silenced*, 107. While it is outside the scope of this study to address white feminist political economists’ private relationships to brown and black domestic workers, it is fair to reflect that this intimacy has not been explored by those whom Silvera describes as the white “feminist woman-as-mistress,” (ibid.).

sphere.⁹⁹ As Arat-Koc explains, domestic labour encompasses not only “physical,” but “mental and psychological work.”¹⁰⁰ This work goes both ways, as it takes distinct forms of affective labour by both women to perform the dynamic of the domestic worker and domestic employer relationship. For instance, Rollins’s research demonstrates that white female employers preferred hiring “foreign-born help” instead of the “impersonality” of a cleaning service, and that employers expected “some forms of deference” and “outward signs of subservience” from their domestic employees.¹⁰¹ Domestic workers are psychologically and materially affected by their interpersonal relationships with their female employer, and part of their ongoing work is negotiating the complex affective needs of their employers and balancing the monetary power the employers wield over them.¹⁰² Due to the expectation that the tasks of caregiving and housework are a “labour of love,” the kinds of work domestics perform are easily disregarded and delegitimized.¹⁰³

While domestic workers are expected to perform roles as if they were a part of the family unit, employers often invoke class and race differences to maintain their separation and dominance.¹⁰⁴ Rollins’s research suggests that this racism and classism is learned and inherited,

⁹⁹ Stasiulus and Bakan, *Negotiating Citizenship*, 25. “Women of Color have not had the benefit of the economic conditions that underlie the public/private distinction... There is no such thing as a private sphere for people of color except that which they manage to create and to protect in an otherwise hostile environment” (Aida Hurtado, quoted in Stasiulus and Bakan, 25).

¹⁰⁰ Arat-Koc, “In the Privacy of Our Own Home,” 38.

¹⁰¹ Rollins, *Between Women*, 130, 147.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁰³ Arat-Koc, “In the Privacy of Our Own Home,” 38.

¹⁰⁴ Silvera, *Silenced*, 17. See Noreen, a black domestic worker from St. Vincent, and her description of how she is expected to work at all hours of the day, every day, for \$260.00 a month: “I am never going to live-in again after I get those papers. I want something where I can go home to my house at night. Close my door and pray to my God in peace. I want to know that when I go to bed at night, I don’t have to listen out for people shouting at me to come and look after their food or to come and change diapers” (quoted in *ibid.*); Rollins, *Between Women*, 99.

passed down from employers to their children, who continue the cycle of employing and mistreating working-class black and brown women.¹⁰⁵ An excerpt from Silvera's interview with Irma, a black domestic worker from Jamaica, is revealing of the intimate ways in which racism, classism, sexism, and nationalism intersect in the lives of domestic workers in Canada:

That first week she really got her money out of me. The next day, she told me I had to cook the dinner and also clean the house. The children had no manners to me. They use to call me Blackie all the time and laugh. When I complain to her, she ask me if I wasn't Black. But it's not that you know, it's not that I is not Black, but I know that they was making fun of me. I stick out the job for one year and a half. And even when I make up my mind to leave it, I felt that Immigration might deport me, but it was just a chance I had to take. That woman was driving me like a slave.¹⁰⁶

The convergence of state and structural oppression—from the threat of deportation, intimate racist abuse, exploitative hours and working conditions—constrict Irma's subjectivity. And yet Irma's reflection demonstrates the ways in which domestic workers exert agency against the oppressive conditions of their labour. Her resistance to the abuse takes the form of at first an effort to "stick it out," and later "to leave" in an effort to be free from being treated "like a slave." Irma's other bold act of resistance is in describing her experience to Silvera, and having it documented as oral history. Irma's story also reveals how histories of racial, gendered, sexual, and class oppression are reanimated and made anew in the domestic worker-employee relationship. Indeed, across volatile and even violent circumstances, domestic workers are subject to and resist racist, classist, and sexual abuse that is seldom prevented nor challenged by their

Rollins argues that class and race supremacy is learned and generationally repeated by children as they "model" their mother's behavior (ibid.).

¹⁰⁵ Rollins, *Between Women*, 100. Rollins quotes a reflection by a young white man who had grown up taken care of by a live-in domestic worker and his perspective on his unwillingness to ascribe "love" to his feelings for her: "To be frank, I think it was because she was a maid therefore had a certain stigma attached to her—which I understood even then, in some primitive way. And I understood that she was from a different social [class]. And, of course, she was black and that had to do with it" (quoted in ibid.).

¹⁰⁶ Silvera, *Silenced*, 83. Irma, a black domestic worker from Jamaica, reflects on her first employer in Canada.

female employers.¹⁰⁷ As Silvera argues, these intimate labour conditions undermine the feminist assumption of “sisterhood” between women and reveal the race and class exclusions of the feminist principle that the “personal is political.”¹⁰⁸

I suggest that Katherine McKittrick’s work helps to conceptualize racialized women’s paid domestic labour in spatial terms, which provides a critical opportunity for rethinking the exclusion of paid domestic work from white feminist political economy. In her discussion of the politics of mapping black Canada, McKittrick writes,

If black geographies are, according to Canadian nationalism and its citizens of white and European descent, irrelevant and elsewhere, then the active production of black spaces in Canada is necessarily bound up with a contradiction: black Canada is simultaneously invisible and visibly non-Canadian. This contradiction demonstrates the subtle ways in which domination shapes what has been called “the absented presence” of black Canada and black Canadian geographies: black people *in* Canada are geographically un-Canadian—their bodies (and therefore their histories) tell us so. This also suggests...that historical and contemporary geographic dominations can be relatively comfortable processes because the domination is of something and someone that/who is not really Canadian, or is not really here/there at all.¹⁰⁹

McKittrick’s conceptualization of black Canada as an “absented presence” resonates with my analysis of white feminist political economic discourse. As the previous chapter indicated, the domestic labour discourse in 1980s white feminist political economy developed along a seemingly racially “neutral” agenda that secured and maintained whiteness as the norm through a bifurcated attention to gender and class. The emphasis on racially homogenous work forces and

¹⁰⁷ Silvera, *Silenced*, 57. See Hyacinth, a domestic worker from St. Lucia, and her description of the reaction of her white female employer when she is informed by Immigration of the ongoing sexual assaults her husband committed against Hyacinth: “When I go in I get one big cussing from his wife. She call me ungrateful-jealous-slut-black-bitch. I can’t even remember some of the words... I was scared. Before I know it his wife just come into my room, open the door without knocking and started slapping me up, telling me that is me bring sex argument to her husband... and asking me if I like it when her husband have sex with me. I was crying the whole time, because I wasn’t used to this treatment. Then she tell me I had to leave her house” (quoted in *ibid.*).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁰⁹ McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 99.

communities in Canada inscribed the domestic labour debate in racially neutral terms that made racial differences and inequalities invisible.¹¹⁰ This assertion of whiteness as natural to the discourse of the domestic sphere imagines that people of colour are either not located in the domestic sphere as workers, or are not the faces of the exalted nuclear family unit of the nation—a trope that has a long history in racist state practices of family separations.¹¹¹ The migrant domestic worker scheme embodies this trope on an international scale, as poor and working-class women of colour in need of employment migrate to global centers, leaving behind their homes, dependents, and communities in exchange for poorly remunerated care work.¹¹²

The case of the attempted deportation of Caribbean domestic workers in the late 1970s exemplifies not only the state-enforced separation of migrant domestic workers from their children, but also how racialized domestic workers are doubly cast as invisible, produced as at once “not really here/there at all”: despite their landed citizenship, the “Seven Jamaican Mothers” were labeled as Jamaican, and therefore not as Canadian, ultimately casting their belonging

¹¹⁰ Meg Luxton, “Two Hands for the Clock”; Patricia M. Connelly and Martha MacDonald, “Women’s Work”; Marilyn Porter, “Peripheral Women.”

¹¹¹ Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, 112. Popular and state discourses produce the white nuclear family as representative of Canada; Thobani describes a “very intimate relationship” between the family and colonial discourses, as the family is the “core institution of nation-formation” (ibid.); Agnes Grant, *Finding My Talk: How Fourteen Canadian Native Women Reclaimed their Lives After Residential School* (Markham: Fifth House Publishers, 2004). This collection provides first-person reflections by Indigenous women on the legacy of residential schools in Canada; Robin Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2017). Maynard provides a history of how the state forces of police, immigration, and child welfare services converge to abuse, criminalize, and separate black families; see also, Gordon Pon, Kevin Gosine, and Doret Phillips, “Immediate Response: Addressing Anti-Native and Anti-Black Racism in Child Welfare,” *International Journal of Child, Youth, and Family Studies* 2, no. 3-4 (2011): 385-409; Cindy Blackstock, Terry Cross, John George, Ivan Brown, and Jocelyn Formsma, *Reconciliation in Child Welfare: Touchstones of Hope for Indigenous Children, Youth, and Families* (Report: First Nation Child & Family Caring Society of Canada, 2006); and Cindy Blackstock, “Wanted: Moral Courage in Canadian Child Welfare,” *The First People’s Child and Family Review* 6, no. 2 (2011): 35-36.

¹¹² Pratt, *Families Apart*.

“elsewhere.” In “placing” racialized women as “elsewhere,” despite their material presence “here,” migrant women of colour were cast against subject-citizens of Canada as “temporary” or “illegal.” Indeed, the state-enforced rule that migrant domestic workers were required to live in the houses of their employers “placed” racialized women in “concealed” labour relations that exacerbated their exploitation and sought to discourage community building amongst migrants.¹¹³ This spatial concealment (of poor migrants, of Caribbean black and brown women, of paid domestic labour) served to bolster a national story about Canada’s improved gender equality, as white, married women increasingly entered the work force in the 1970s. But this national story is only possible if it is expropriated from its colonial, racial, and classed context, where domestic worker schemes facilitated freed-up labour time for predominantly white and middle-upper class women to enter the formal economy and enrich their skill set, earning power, and prestige.¹¹⁴ Critically, Canada’s domestic worker programs have dovetailed with feminist goals, exalting white middle-upper class women as productive and generative representatives of the nation through an emboldening of their race, class, and citizenship power.¹¹⁵ While the migrant domestic work force might have shifted the responsibility of domestic labour from women with race, class, and citizenship privilege, the burden of domestic labour remains; what has changed is “the identity of the woman doing the ‘women’s work.’”¹¹⁶

¹¹³ McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 93.

¹¹⁴ Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege*, 128. “Within this state-managed private-market arrangement, there evolved a sanctuary within which woman-driven classism was both revered and reproduced” (ibid.).

¹¹⁵ Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, 113. Thobani illustrates how women have maintained “a central role in the symbolic and material reproduction of the family, and through this, of the race and nation” (ibid.).

¹¹⁶ Audrey MacKlin, “On the Inside Looking In: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada,” *Maid in the Market: Women’s Paid Domestic Labour*, eds. Sedef Arat-Koc and Wenona Giles (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1994), 35.

White Feminist Engagement with Race, Women of Colour, and Paid Domestic Work

Writing that situated race in relation to gender and class, in particular in the discourse devoted to analyzing paid domestic work, was spearheaded by immigrant women and women of colour in 1980s Canada. As the previous section discussed, this scholarship was also attentive to how domestic work was tied to Canada's goals of nation-building; formal policies governing immigration and citizenship simultaneously contributed to the capturing of a subordinated migrant workforce stratified by race, gender, and class inequalities, whilst fostering an image of Canada as a benevolent, advanced, and multicultural nation. Since the 1970s, the "historical and contemporary geographic dominations" of Caribbean domestic workers did not make white socialist and Marxist feminists "uncomfortable" enough to prioritize solidarity with domestic worker struggles.¹¹⁷

Indeed, the responses of white feminists to women of colour's scholarship and activism on domestic work reified their commonsense racist assumption that the problems facing migrant black and brown women were "elsewhere," and were not problems that had a place in the domestic labour debate led by white Marxist feminists. While it is difficult to trace white feminists' personal or subjective responses to the harsh and exploitative labour conditions facing immigrant domestic workers in Canada in the 1980s, it is possible to trace in these overlapping stories an absence of serious scholarly attention by white feminist scholars to this discourse by feminists of colour. This absence registers, in the present moment, at best as obliviousness and at worst as indifference. In particular, I argue that these "omissions" reflect an unwillingness to think through how race mattered not only to paid domestic labour but to all the forms of paid labour that preoccupied white Marxist feminists in Canada. Paid domestic work, in its stark

¹¹⁷ McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 99.

assertion of waged social reproduction, certainly reads as an important—because productive—labour relation for Marxist feminists to theorize. However, the commonsense racism of unexamined whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy legitimized a discourse by white feminists seemingly uncertain of how to take up race or, in early 1980s terms, ethnicity. If white feminists can imagine blackness, race, and people of colour as “elsewhere,” then the problems of racism, racial subordination, and racial inequality can also be imagined as “not here.” In silencing, omitting, or resisting discussions of race, white Marxist feminists maintained the terrain of feminist political economy on gender and class terms.

In my archival research, I have identified four different moments where white feminists in the 1980s responded to women of colour’s concerns about the exploitative conditions facing migrant domestic workers. First, I discuss how a white feminist political economist operationalizes what I describe as reluctance, a common affective reaction of white feminists urged to consider race. A lengthy 1985 review of Rollins’s *Between Women* in the periodical *Labour: Canadian Journal of Labour Studies* by Pat Armstrong, a prolific Canadian white feminist political economist, demonstrates how reluctance to engage with race is a commonsense strategy of white supremacy. Reluctant engagement with race serves to demonstrate the benevolence of white subjects willing to think beyond their own experience, but is undermined when race is proven not to “really” matter to the discussion at hand. In a feminist context, this commonsense practice delegitimizes the claims of racism or racial inequality raised by women of colour.

In her 1985 review of Rollins’s book, Armstrong admits that Rollins asks some “crucial” questions about the influence of class and race on the relationship between female employers and female domestics, but insists that “Rollins offers little help in sorting out the relative importance and interaction of race, sex, and class, or, as she also promises, of material conditions and

consciousness.”¹¹⁸ This is a striking assessment of a 230-page groundbreaking study!

Armstrong’s main dissatisfaction, it seems, is with Rollins’s argument (“typical of her style”) that maternalism is at work in the relationships of white women and hired black domestic workers, a somewhat central metaphor of Rollins’s book that she uses to explain how women can laterally oppress other women through the exploitation of class and race privilege. Indeed, Armstrong routinely discounts Rollins’s insights into the intertwined workings of racism and classism by countering that her research cannot be universalized to include *all* women, for instance in “the particular nature of female-female relationships,” the “change in ideas about women’s place,” and how actual mothers and daughters relate in doing unpaid housework.¹¹⁹

It is precisely the racially focused nature of Rollins’s work, and her reframing of the domestic labour debate to include race, that Armstrong resists. In denouncing Rollins’s book as unable to “provide answers” in the critical field of “women’s work,” Armstrong concludes: “We indeed need to know whether women are different kinds of employers, whether women as employers are different in the home than they are in the labour force, and whether race and maternalism are central to relations between women.”¹²⁰ However, in disregarding Rollins’s contribution to theorizing these exact questions, Armstrong trivializes Rollins’s study as if it were an amateur exploration and not a carefully vetted, edited, and published book. This routinized dismissal of the insights of a black feminist scholar by a white feminist scholar highlights the centrality of race to this conversation on domestic work, and to the intellectual and affective work it takes both to reveal and to obscure it. I suggest that Armstrong’s response to Rollins’ book is representative of the reluctance of some white Marxist feminists to see race as anything more

¹¹⁸ Pat Armstrong, Review of *Between Women: Domesticity and Their Employers*, by Judith Rollins, 1985, in *Labour: Journal of Canadian Labour Studies* 21e (1988): 311.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 312.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 312, 313.

than a minor inconvenience on the way to re-establishing class and gender as primary oppressions.

In contrast to Armstrong's review of Rollins, I argue that a discussion of Silvera's text in the feminist periodical *Kinesis* by the working-class white feminist writer Cy-Thea Sand reflects another discursive response by white feminists to interventions by feminists of colour in the domestic labour debate: reflection and engagement. Sand's more reflexive response to the challenge raised by Silvera might be related to her identification as working-class, and not as Marxist feminist; as a non-academic white feminist, Sand has different stakes in the domestic labour discourse and its allegiance to Marxist frameworks. Instead, Sand's response signals an interest in the development of anti-racist praxis in Canada during the 1980s, which is also important to register here. Clearly, not all white socialist feminists in the 1980s were indifferent to racism and racial inequality; that is not the claim I am making. Rather, I am critical of and conscious of the ways in which whiteness is a unifying strategy that, in the academic field of political economy or the social political world of socialist feminism, nonetheless bonds white feminists along the grain of shared experience as white women primarily subordinated by class and gender through an unwillingness to recognize the structural and social relations of white supremacy and white privilege.

In Sand's 1984 review of Silvera's text, Sand builds on Silvera's insights for further investigation of white privilege and racism in an effort to forge anti-racist alliances.¹²¹ Taking an altogether different approach from Armstrong's review of Rollins, Sand heralds Silvera's text as

¹²¹ See, for example, Cy-Thea Sand, "Black Women Writers," Review, *Kinesis* (February 1985): 29; Cy-Thea Sand, "Getting Clearer on Class Issues," *Kinesis* (November 1985): 27; Makeda Silvera and Cy-Thea Sand, "Racism: Two Feminists in Dialogue," *Kinesis* (March 1985): 10-11. Silvera and Sand deliver a compelling reflection about race, class, and gender, and the affective toll of enduring racism and classism.

of “paramount importance” precisely because it examines “the issue of class *vis à vis* women’s relationships with one another.”¹²² Recognizing the racism that Caribbean domestic workers face upon their arrival “within a system which thrives on the labour of women of colour from Third World countries,” Sand echoes Silvera’s analysis to consider what this exploited labour relation means for white feminists.¹²³ Critiquing the white feminist preoccupation with gender inequalities in cross-gender labour arrangements, Sand reflects: “The enemy we witness is composed of women getting a bigger piece of the pie while underpaid, overworked sisters clean up after them. It is a disquieting imaging and an indication of the limitations of racial feminist theory.”¹²⁴ Sand draws two parallel conclusions from Silvera’s text: first, that the labour conditions facing domestic workers require “radical changes” in federal policy, and second, that the women’s movement needs to “probe deeper into the roots of women’s solidarity—or lack of it.”¹²⁵ Sand writes admiringly of both Silvera and her interviewees, and insists that Silvera’s “intelligence and integrity” are “vitalizing” to feminist thought.¹²⁶ Silvera’s *Silenced* serves as a transformative text for Sand, reflected in her ongoing efforts to develop an anti-racist consciousness in *Kinesis*. Taking up Silvera’s challenge that racism matters to white feminists, Sand demonstrates an engagement with race as an index of oppression that is as important as gender and class, initiating both anti-racist reflection and ideological conflict with other white

¹²² Cy-Thea Sand, “A Little Night Reading,” *Kinesis* (February 1987): 19. Sand’s review of Judith Rollins’ *Between Women: Domestic Workers and their Employees* assesses the text as “a provocative and fascinating study of race and class issues between women” that is “accessible and interesting and a significant contribution to feminist thought” (ibid.); Cy-Thea Sand, “Domestic Workers Break the Silence,” *Kinesis* (March 1984): 24.

¹²³ Sand, “Domestic Workers Break the Silence,” 24.

¹²⁴ Ibid.; Sand’s use of this phrase “racial feminist theory” indicates an awareness of the burgeoning field of critical race feminism but also an uncertainty about how to explain it.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

feminists.¹²⁷

Another instance of white feminist engagement with the labour conditions facing migrant domestic workers can be examined through the reportage of domestic worker issues in the feminist journal *Kinesis*. Throughout the 1980s, *Kinesis* sustained a marginal interest in reporting on the labour and legal struggle of domestic workers. This attention reveals efforts by the producers of *Kinesis* to adopt an intersectional and transnational feminist lens and to investigate gendered labour conditions and relations, at the same time as functioning as a discursive site “of organizational colonial encounters” where class, race, and sexual inequalities between women were both contested and sustained.¹²⁸ Between 1980-89, approximately twenty columns—encompassing analyses and news items—examined the oppression of domestic workers across Canada and their corresponding activism.¹²⁹ While providing an important historical record of the politics and conditions of domestic work, the annual publication of one or two news items on domestic work demonstrates that the plight of domestic workers was not portrayed as a political

¹²⁷ Jane Wharfe-kin, “Review Sparks Realizations,” *Kinesis* (September 1984): 31-32; See, for instance, a conflict between white feminists about race and racism, in the following *Kinesis* texts: Cy-Thea Sand, “Room of One’s Own,” *Kinesis* (June 1984): 24. In this review, Sand charges the editors of a special issue titled “Room of One’s Own” from the Quebecois feminist journal *Tessera* as “dismissive and condescending” to women of colour. She argues that the editors develop “a competitive, linear framework” of women’s writing that is “distasteful and dishonest” in its evaluation of Black and Indigenous women’s writing as proceeding at slower “stages of development” than white—particularly Quebecois—women (Sand, 24). See Daphne Marlatt’s response to Sand, and her defense of the *Tessera* statement, “*Tessera* Editor Responds to Review,” *Kinesis* (July-August 1984): 33. See also Cy-Thea Sand, “Reviewer Responds to *TESSERA* Editor,” *Kinesis* (September 1984): 31. Sand reflects on her “attempt to articulate my rage and despair at what I perceived to be insensitive and racist remarks made by white women” (Sand, 31). Finally, see Barbara Godard, Daphne Marlatt, and Kathy Mezie, “*TESSERA*,” *Kinesis* (February 1985): 31-32. They defend their approach to “differences” (*ibid.*).

¹²⁸ Bunjun, “Organizational Colonial Encounters.”

¹²⁹ See, for instance, Rachel Epstein, “I Thought There Was No More Slavery in Canada!” *Kinesis* (December/January 1980-1981): 10; Frances Allen, “DWU Takes Action,” *Kinesis* (July-August 1983): 11; *Kinesis* Staff Writers, “Domestics to Pay,” *Kinesis* (April 1986): 8; *Kinesis* Staff Writers, “Fed Up With Unpaid Overtime,” *Kinesis* (June 1988): 6.

priority for the majority white and middle-class readership of *Kinesis*.¹³⁰ When put into context with the bulk of *Kinesis*' reporting on "women's issues" during the 1980s, there is sustained evidence of some *Kinesis* writers—like Sand—attempting to trouble white supremacy and middle-class hegemony.¹³¹

Kinesis's marginal reporting of domestic workers' labour struggles and activism by feminists of colour nonetheless contributes to tracing a dynamic history of resistance by women of colour in Canada that demonstrates the importance of paid domestic labour to feminist political economy despite the exclusivity and indifference of the hegemonic discourse of the academy in the 1980s. Activism around domestic work has primarily been the domain of women of colour, many of them immigrant women and migrant domestic workers themselves. Indeed, immigrant women have been at the forefront of establishing much needed community and social services for themselves since the 1960s.¹³² Immigrant women's "grass roots" and "community

¹³⁰ Allisa McDonald, "Kinesis Survey Results Now In," *Kinesis* (October 1988): 3. This 1988 membership survey of *Kinesis* readers reflects that the majority of respondents were white, middle-class women, with a median age of 39 years.

¹³¹ This is the case for the majority of Canadian feminist periodicals in the 1980s. As class and race became increasingly interrogated alongside gender in the mid-late 1980s, white and middle-class dominated feminist periodicals were likely to support either a Section of the periodical or a Special Issue devoted to either working-class women or women of colour. For instance, *Kinesis* experimented with a "Class Supplement" September (1985) and a "Supplement on Racism" December-January (1984-85). More radical, however, were the appointment of Guest Editorials where collectives of working-class women, women of colour, immigrant women, or Indigenous women were in control of the content of the Special Issue. See, for example, "Women of Colour" *Fireweed: A Feminist Quarterly* 16 & 17 (1983); "Native Women" *Fireweed: A Feminist Quarterly* 22 & 23 (1986); "Class is the Issue" *Fireweed: A Feminist Quarterly* 25 (1987) and "This is Class Too" *Fireweed: A Feminist Quarterly* 26 (1987); *Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme* began this practice in the late 1980s as well, with the Special Issue "Mediterranean Women" 8, no. 2 Summer (1987); followed by "Refugee Women" 10, no. 1 Spring (1989); "Native Women" 10, no. 2-3 Summer/Fall (1989); and "Soviet Women" 10, no. 4 Winter (1989).

¹³² Tania Das-Gupta, "Involving Immigrant Women: A Case of Participatory Research," *Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme* 8, no. 2 (1987): 14-16. Gupta notes the first Ontario Immigrant Women's Forum was held in Toronto, August 28-30, 1985; Carmencita R.

organizing” has identified and met the needs of immigrant women in advance of government action.¹³³ Immigrant women’s services and activism have historically organized to challenge the “social construction of immigrant women” and the multiplicity of oppressions facing immigrant women of colour in particular.¹³⁴ As the conditions of migrant domestic work exemplify, immigrant women of colour have historically been exploited as a class of labourers directed into the lowest paid and physically demanding sector of the market, receiving little support from the organized labour movement.¹³⁵ Since the late 1970s, domestic workers have been organizing as distinct labour unions advocating for basic labour rights, including minimum wage protections and paid overtime.¹³⁶

The concerted mobilization of domestic workers, immigrant women, and women of colour—in particular women from the Toronto Immigrant Women’s Centre—led to the establishment of the International Coalition to End Domestic’s Exploitation (INTERCEDE) in 1979, a Toronto-based domestic worker advocacy group that remains politically active in the

Hernandez, “The Foundation of NOIVMWC (The National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada),” *Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme* 8, no. 2 (1987): 17.

¹³³ Tania Das-Gupta, *Learning from Our History: Community Development by Immigrant Women in Ontario, 1958-1986, A Tool for Action* (Toronto: Cross Cultural Communication Centre, 1986), 16.

¹³⁴ Roxana Ng, *The Politics of Community Services: Immigrant Women, Class and State* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1988), 15.

¹³⁵ Das-Gupta, *Learning from Our History*, 36.

¹³⁶ Susan Hoeppner, “Domestic Workers Organize, Demand Equal Status,” *Kinesis* (February 1982): 8. The Domestic Workers Union in British Columbia formed on December 20, 1981, composed of 40 international migrant domestic workers. The first elected president of the DWU was Daphne Williams, a Jamaican domestic worker, who had her deportation order overturned in early 1980; Kinesis Staff Writers, “Domestic Slavery is Still in Full Force Throughout Canada,” *Kinesis* (May 1981): 9. The Montreal Household Workers Association won labour protections for domestic workers in Quebec in 1980; in July, 1980 domestic workers in British Columbia received basic labour protections of minimum wage; in Ontario, domestic workers won paid vacation and public holidays but remain exempt from other labour protections.

present.¹³⁷ INTERCEDE contributed to important federal policy changes in the mid-1980s, including the removal of the language of “self-sufficiency” as a criterion for attaining landed status in 1985, and the granting of funding rights to domestic worker organizations in 1986.¹³⁸ While domestic worker advocacy continued throughout the 1980s, and *Kinesis* maintained sporadic coverage of it, a report by INTERCEDE in 1989 demonstrated that domestic workers continued to face the same deplorable labour conditions they had for decades.¹³⁹ Despite a thorough internal review of the Foreign Domestic Program in 1989, subsequent changes to the policy—including its renaming to the Live-In Caregiver Program in 1992—did little to alter the inequalities embedded within the twinned economic and labour policy of importing non-immigrant migrant domestic workers to Canada.¹⁴⁰ Through the affective, discursive, intellectual, and physical labour of women of colour, the plight of domestic workers has become slightly more visible as a feminist issue in recent decades. However, the urgency of resolving the exploitative gender, race, and class conditions of paid domestic work remains an important

¹³⁷ Kinesis Staff Writers, “Protection for Domestic,” *Kinesis* (June 1985): 5. Under the leadership of Judith Ramirez and others, INTERCEDE achieved formal coverage for domestic workers under the Workers Compensation Act in Ontario in 1985.

¹³⁸ Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege*, 122.

¹³⁹ Noreen Howes, “Domestic Workers Challenge the Constitution,” *Kinesis* (June 1987): 6. In 1987, the Domestic Worker Association was represented by the Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) in a Constitutional Challenge claiming sex discrimination for domestics not receiving overtime payment; Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege*, 125. INTERCEDE’s survey indicated that the granting of temporary status contingent on employment in their employer’s home remained the greatest determinant of oppression, as domestic workers were subject to sexual harassment and assault, unpaid overtime, alienation from peers, and lacked the freedom and security to ensure that their basic needs of adequate food, housing, and rest were being met.

¹⁴⁰ Diane Breti, “Good Enough to Work—and to Stay,” *Kinesis* (December 1989): 8; Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege*, 126. By the 1990s, the majority of migrant domestic workers were Filipina women. The 1992 policy imposed enhanced educational requirements, including the equivalent of a grade 12 Canadian education and “six months formal training in household service work”; the policy requirement for a letter from employers to change jobs was scrapped.

problem for feminist political economy to attend to.¹⁴¹

The achievements of domestic worker activism in Canada have in part been dependent upon the solidarity activism of non-domestic workers, predominantly immigrant women and women of colour working to combat racism, sexism, and classism mobilizing alongside domestic workers.¹⁴² In identifying with the shared barrier of and struggle for resistance to racial inequality in Canada, immigrant women and women of colour have been at the fore of solidarity action with domestic workers.¹⁴³ As Teresita Racal, the B.C. Domestic Worker Union President, lamented in 1984, coalition building with non-domestic workers was wanting: “I have tried hard with the union, but unless there is more outside help, I do not see how we can go on.”¹⁴⁴ Emphasizing the risks of labour activism to migrant domestic workers’ livelihoods and precarious immigration status, Racal called for support from women’s organizations and unions. Critically, this help would require not only immigrant women and women of colour to build coalitions with domestic workers, but white women’s organizations and collectives as well.

A reflection by the prolific black feminist writer Dionne Brand offers insight into the task of raising white women’s consciousness to migrant domestic workers’ issues.¹⁴⁵ Brand’s memory

¹⁴¹ Cynthia Wright, “Nowhere at Home: Gender, Race and the Making of Anti-immigrant Discourse in Canada,” *Atlantis* 24, no. 2 (2000): 46-47. Consider, for example, the 1992 attempted deportation of May Baker, a Jamaican domestic worker who while working in Canada also bore four children. A Supreme Court of Canada ruling in 1999 struck down the deportation order, permitting May to apply for residency on humanitarian grounds as a mother—notably, May was not granted status as a permanent-resident despite working in Canada for twenty years.

¹⁴² Silvera, *Silenced*, 109. Silvera notes the activism of the Domestic Workers Group, which formed in the early 1980s, and became known as Domestic Workers United; and Labour Rights for Domestic Workers, which originated in the early 1980s; and the Immigrant Women’s Job Placement service and the Immigrant Women’s Centre as acting as resources for domestic workers.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, vi.

¹⁴⁴ Teresita Racal, quoted in Susan O’Donnell, “Domestic Workers Union,” *Kinesis* (February 1984): 14.

¹⁴⁵ Dionne Brand, quoted in Rebick, *Ten Thousand Roses*, 132.

of her experience demonstrates another moment of white socialist feminists' reluctant engagement with the domestic labour debate in terms that were meaningful to feminists of colour. This reluctance extends to a larger unwillingness of white socialist feminists to think critically about race, racism, and race privilege, in particular in white feminist resistance to black women's strategies of anti-racist organizing. Following her move from Trinidad to Toronto in 1970, Brand recalls striving to build community and resistance across black liberation and women's liberation movements.¹⁴⁶ In response to the 1975 attempted deportations of Caribbean domestic workers discussed above, Brand and two other black women started the Committee Against the Deportation of Immigrant Women in 1978.¹⁴⁷ Brand's decision to enter into coalition with white socialist women who were members of the Toronto International Women's Day Committee (IWD) reflected her sense that "feminists needed to organize around this issue, too"; however, she recalls initially joining their meetings "in coalition mode, rather than to become part of the meeting," as she felt "nervous" about the collaboration and uncertain about the white socialist group's interests.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, by 1983, Brand and other black feminists organized a Black Women's Collective that sought to strategically organize in both the black community and the women's movement on black women's terms.¹⁴⁹

When IWD announced in 1986 that its theme was "Women Against Racism from Toronto to South Africa," the Black Women's Collective began attending the IWD meetings in earnest, with the intention to bring anti-racism, from black women's perspective, to the fore. Brand recalls that this period was "transformative," and that while some white women were "allies,"

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 131.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 121.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 132, 122.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 122.

still others “withdrew their goodwill.”¹⁵⁰ She reflects,

When we went into IWD, we said that the racism thing is not like an issue that you can do and then go away. It’s how some people live, and there needed to be radical change in thinking to figure that out. The general society was also going through this guilt thing. We hated the guilt... I thought what the coalition needed to do was some workshops for white women about racism. Not where the black women and women of colour come in and say what racism is, but white women sitting down with each other and talking about how it works in their lives. We suggested that, and it was a no no. We thought if white women could see racism as structuring their lives, though not in the same way it does for women of colour, then that’s the moment in which they could embrace the experiences of women of colour. I always hope for that moment. It didn’t happen in 1986, but I am sure it happened between two people somewhere...¹⁵¹

In this excerpt, Brand recalls nearly a decade of attempting to get white socialist feminists to recognize race and racism as important feminist concerns. Significantly, it is through solidarity activism with migrant domestic workers—and their struggle for labour and citizenship rights—that Brand and the members of the Committee Against the Deportation of Immigrant Women first attempted to raise the issue of solidarity with white socialist feminists on the grounds that the domestic worker struggle is a *feminist* issue. Thus, Brand’s personal experience with the politics of this fraught moment traces a broader history of black feminists articulating the gender, race, and class dimensions of migrant domestic work as a feminist labour issue, and the corresponding reluctance of white socialist feminists to prioritize that struggle.

In considering racism only through a lens of white “guilt,” some white feminists in IWD organizing were reluctant to engage with racism as a structural issue. Moreover, their own feelings of guilt stood in for meaningful reflection on either their behaviors or the feelings of women of colour. As Sarita Srivastava argues, interventions by women of colour often erupt into “anger, fear, and tears” as anti-racist challenges force a reckoning with white women’s ideals about “what counts as a good feminist, a good person, a good woman, and a good national

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 123.

¹⁵¹ Brand, quoted in *ibid.*, 123-124.

citizen.”¹⁵² Indeed, Brand’s reflection on working within white feminist organizations speaks to not just a reluctance, but an unwillingness—the “no no”—of white socialist feminist activists to take up black feminist activists’ methods for social transformation, namely, reflecting on their own racial identities as white women; critically, this work demanded a resistance to whiteness, in particular examining the structures and effects of white privilege, superiority, and supremacy within the white women’s movement. The 1986 IWD Coalition’s raising of the banner of “Women Against Racism from Toronto to South Africa” conveyed a moment of anti-racist politics in transition; rather than capturing a sense of solidarity amongst the diverse groups of women it claimed to represent, this moment speaks to the ambivalent place of anti-racist feminism as a political goal in the decades to come.

Conclusion

Historically, white feminists have seldom taken up the challenge to resolve the inequalities of paid domestic work in Canada. Feminists of colour, particularly black feminist scholars, have developed and sustained a critical analysis of paid domestic work that examines the intersections of race, gender, and class, as well as sexuality, motherhood, and citizenship. Despite the labour contributions of Caribbean domestic workers to the Canadian economy and private homes since 1955, migrant domestic workers were vulnerably repositioned as non-immigrants alongside racist and sexist changes to the *Immigration Act* in the 1960s and 1970s. As awareness of the subordination of domestic workers as a racialized, classed, and gendered precarious work force was raised by punitive deportation charges in 1975, Caribbean domestic workers and their allies pushed paid domestic work into white feminist consciousness in the

¹⁵² Srivastava, “You’re calling me a racist?” 30.

1980s. As this discussion has shown, white feminists expressed varying degrees of indifference, defensiveness, and concern about what paid domestic labour meant for the domestic labour debate, and for relationships between women positioned unequally by race and class hierarchies.

Contrary to Luxton's sense that white feminist political economists have welcomed critique by women of colour, my discussion of feminist political economy in the 1980s in the last two chapters has instead shown multiple moments in which white socialist feminists have sought to skirt race as an important political and theoretical problem.¹⁵³ Indeed, recalling Carty's observations about white feminism's "fundamental neglect" of race, the structural, material, and affective experiences of racism have been borne by women of colour at the same time as white women have struggled for legitimacy alongside white men.¹⁵⁴ The establishment of Marxist feminist political economy in Canada developed *and* benefitted from a dual systems approach that sought –and largely succeeded, by the end of the 1980s—to argue for a theory of gender and class as coequals in constituting social and economic relations. This omission of race as a determinant of ruling relations is a form of commonsense racism that structured feminist political economic discourse; an intersectional and historical analysis of paid domestic labour reveals that the feminist perception of who is "doing all the work" is dependent upon what version of the story is being told.

Thinking together the struggles for labour and citizenship rights by a racialized migrant domestic work force alongside the discursive production of the Marxist feminist domestic labour debate registers in the present as a kind of haunting. As Gordon describes, haunting is "distinctive" for revealing "when things are not in their assigned places, when the cracks and

¹⁵³ Luxton, "Marxist Feminism and Anticapitalism," 145. Luxton reflects that white women responded positively to the "challenge" of race raised by women of colour (ibid.).

¹⁵⁴ Carty, "A Genealogy of Marxist Feminism," 183.

rigging are exposed, when the people who are meant to be invisible show up without any sign of leaving.”¹⁵⁵ The scholarship on domestic workers spearheaded by immigrant women and women of colour is a form of resistance to the commonsense racism of white feminist political economy in Canada during the 1980s. This scholarship asserts that migrant black and brown domestic workers belong as integral subjects in the story of the feminist domestic labour debate. In bringing together this tracing of the omission of race from the white feminist political economy archive with a political economic archive by women of colour that recognizes race as a structural index of gendered and classed labour, I have endeavored to tell the story of Marxist feminism in Canada differently. This is not a story about how anti-racism was “at the heart” of Marxist feminism in the 1980s, but rather, of how the specter of race was more like an anxious flutter in the heart of white socialist feminism.¹⁵⁶

As the following two chapters explore, sexuality also produced an anxiety amongst feminists in Canada that became dramatized in “the feminist sex wars.” Moving from this case study of feminist history and domestic work to a case study of feminist history and sex work, I show how sexuality, unlike race, explicitly captivated the feminist movement in 1980s Canada. Critically, I demonstrate how this feminist preoccupation was conditioned by the hegemony of a white, middle-class ideology of sexuality, labour, and violence. Broadly defined, “the feminist sex wars” refers to a period of intense feminist theorizing of sexual practices, identities, orientations, and representations, as feminists grappled with one another over what, if anything, could be defined as “the” feminist theory of sexuality. As I take up in the remainder of this project, feminists were perturbed by the proliferation of the sex industry, and sought strategies to

¹⁵⁵ Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, xvi.

¹⁵⁶ Luxton, “Marxist Feminism and Anticapitalism,” 144. As discussed in the previous chapter, Luxton recalls anti-racism as central to Marxist feminist history.

eradicate both prostitution and pornography within an overarching agenda of women's liberation. In linking both prostitution and pornography to forms of violence against women, feminists produced analyses of sexuality that were vehemently opposed to the commercialization of sex. While critical of selling and purchasing sex, feminists nonetheless lacked a labour framework for theorizing prostitution and pornography; in the absence of a politics of sex work as work, prostitution and pornography were decontextualized and abstracted to bolster a feminist gender agenda that imagined women working in the sex industry as always already victims of patriarchy.

My interest in remembering the feminist sex wars in the next two chapters is motivated by a desire to both tell the story differently, and to tell different stories, arguing that sex work, diverse sex workers, and their politics are also integral to the history of feminism, and of feminism and its relationship to class politics. In turning to the history of sex worker mobilizing in Vancouver, I privilege the insights made by women working as prostitutes over the perspectives of feminists about prostitution. Highlighting the triumphs, difficulties, and tragedies facing sex workers in their daily work and political organizing, I demonstrate the efforts of sex workers to insist on the politics of race, class, and labour in their own analyses of prostitution. Letters, interviews, and columns by sex workers in *Kinesis* provide an archive of resistance to the feminist appropriation of their labour in the feminist project of eradicating gender and sexual violence. Examining the history of feminist organizing against pornography in Vancouver yields a different narrative, as in the final chapter I work against a lack of sex worker voices in the feminist archive to draw out my argument. In tracing the evolution of anti-violence against women feminism to anti-pornography feminism, I show how pornography becomes imagined as a patriarchal symbol causing gendered and sexual violence. In their efforts to do away with pornography, feminists asserted their rights to protection from the state as worthy citizen-subjects and developed a range of strategies to garner state action on pornography, downplaying the

political economic context of pornography as a labour industry. As state intervention hardened into discrete forms of censorship, feminist communities recalibrated their perspectives on the representation of sexuality. As the following two chapters again take up, the history of feminism varies according to who is granted legitimacy as feminist subjects.

Chapter Three

“Living the Politics of It:” Feminist and Sex Worker Discourses on Prostitution

In her editorial introduction to the 2016 *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture* Special Issue, “Pleasure and Danger: Sexual Freedom and Feminism in the Twenty-First Century,” Suzanne Walters argues that there is a persistent need for feminist theory to grapple with both sexual “pleasures and dangers.”¹ In the shadow of “long-standing debates and animosities” between feminists over sexuality, the *Signs* Special Issue revisits the “feminist sex wars” in an effort to “revel” in the “messiness” of these skirmishes “rather than to divide” feminists “into neat and tidy categories of pro-sex and anti-sex.” As Western feminists struggled to define what a feminist theory and practice of sexuality might look like in the 1970s and 1980s, sexual violence, prostitution, pornography, sadomasochism, and lesbianism became particularly contentious issues.²

In the United States, this debate over sexuality came to a head at the 1982 Barnard Women’s College conference, *The Scholar and the Feminist IX: Towards a Politics of Sexuality*; the Barnard conference sought to provide a forum for women to further problematize “pleasure and danger” as aspects of sexual desires, sexual practices, and sexual identities.³ Yet from the

¹ Suzanna Danuta Walters, “Introduction: The Dangers of a Metaphor—Beyond the Battlefield in the Sex Wars,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 42, no. 1 (2016): 2.

² Joan Nestle, *A Restricted Country*, 158-159. Nestle reflects that the “shared territory” of lesbians and prostitutes as social outsiders “broke apart” in the politics of radical lesbian feminism: “Whores and women who looked like whores became the enemy, or at best, misguided oppressed women who needed our help. Some early conferences on radical feminism and prostitution were marked by the total absence of working women in any part of the proceedings. The prostitute was once again the other, much as she was earlier in the feminist purity movements of the late nineteenth century” (ibid.).

³ Alice Echols, “Retrospective: Tangled Up in Pleasure and Danger,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 42, no. 1 (2016): 12. The concept of “pleasure and danger” was suggested by Carole S. Vance, the Barnard conference organizer; Carole S. Vance, *Pleasure and Danger*:

outset, the conference was met with criticism and censure, as the Barnard administration confiscated the event's program, *Diary of a Conference on Sexuality*, and the New York City faction of Women Against Pornography (WAP) boycotted the conference for its "unfeminist" content. Members of WAP picketed the building wearing t-shirts that read, "For A Feminist Sexuality/Against S/M," and distributed a leaflet to conference participants that explicitly targeted the "pro-pornography" sexual politics of speakers, in particular lesbians who identified as butch and femme and/or were involved in sadomasochism.⁴ This ideological struggle at Barnard in 1982 over who would control American feminist discourse on sexuality is often remembered as the moment where tensions between feminists over sexuality, sexual violence, prostitution, pornography, and censorship erupted into the full-scale debate that would continue to animate feminist discourse in the years to come.

A lesser known conference held in Toronto in 1984 grappled with similar concerns, as approximately four hundred participants—including feminists, sex workers, and those who identified as both—gathered at *Challenging Our Images: The Politics of Pornography and Prostitution*.⁵ The Toronto conference marked the first successful organizing effort between feminists and sex workers in the midst of the Canadian context of the feminist sex wars. Like the fervor surrounding sexuality within American feminist circles, feminist theorizing on sexual liberation and oppression were also central issues in Canada, particularly from the mid 1970s into

Exploring Female Sexuality (Boston and London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984). This edited collection emerged from the conference and the debates that ensued

⁴ Rachel Corbman, "The Scholars and the Feminists: The Barnard Sex Conference and the History of the Institutionalization of Feminism," *Feminist Formations* 27, no. 3 (2015): 62, 63.

⁵ A note on terminology: in general, when referring to subjects employed in the sex industry, I will attempt to use the term sex worker. This term was not in popular use during the 1980s, and is not generally present in the texts from this period. My use of the terms sex work, sex workers, and sex worker activism are therefore alternated with the terms prostitute, prostitution, pornography, pornography workers, stripper and exotic dancer to specify or generalize the subject within the particular discourse I am discussing.

the early 1990s. Rebecca Sullivan describes this moment in feminist history as characterized by a preoccupation with unveiling “the sexist values inherent in much pornography, including the stigmatization of homosexuality and the glamorization of sexual violence against women,” sedimenting into a very public and state-sanctioned “debate between those who defined themselves as anti-pornography and those who defined themselves as anti-censorship.”⁶ As Sullivan’s recent scholarship explores, the complexities of feminist engagements with pornography, prostitution, and sex workers became minimized as feminist conversation polarized into an ideological battle about state censorship by the mid-1980s.

How the story of the Canadian sex wars is remembered is significant, as it can affirm, resist, or upset commonsense imaginings of not only white, middle-class feminist approaches to sexuality, but of the insights on sexuality developed by sex workers, queers, lesbians, and Indigenous, racialized, poor and working-class women. The feminist sex wars vociferously focused on commercialized forms of sexuality, and the effects of commercial sexuality on the representation and treatment of all women. Though state and feminist attempts to control prostitution have a long genealogy in the West, in the late 1970s and 1980s feminists and the state again joined forces to draw a clear line between legitimate and illegitimate expressions of sexuality.⁷ In the following two chapters, I intervene in the dominant history of the feminist sex

⁶ Rebecca Sullivan, *Bonnie Sherr Klein’s Not a Love Story* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 5.

⁷ For a history of prostitution, and Britain’s Contagious Diseases legislation in its colonies since the 1860s, see: Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003). Levine provides a comparative of Hong Kong, India, Queensland, and the Straits Settlements; in Canada, Constance Backhouse, “Nineteenth-Century Canadian Prostitution Law: Reflection of a Discriminatory Society,” *Social History/Histoire sociale* 18, no. 36 (1985): 387-423; in Britain, see Nina Attwood, *The Prostitute’s Body: Rewriting Prostitution in Victorian Britain* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2011); in Australia, see Raelene Frances, “The History of Female Prostitution in Australia,” in *Sex Work and Sex Workers in Australia*, ed. Roberta Perkins (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1994), 27-

wars in Canada to insist on the importance of sex worker analyses and narratives to these discourses, and to examine how sex workers have been cast as the reluctant subjects of feminist theoretical debates over sexual agency and coercion.

The 2016 Special Issue of *Signs* documents a renewed interest in these histories, and is notable for its intention to provide “a more nuanced and grounded assessment of the negotiations of sexual subjectivity in a world not conducive to it.”⁸ Indeed, ranging from reflections on sexual violence to anti-pornography feminism to sex work, the collection makes available a broad swath of feminist ruminations on transnational, historical, digital and commercial sexualities. According to Walters, a concerted departure from the “polarization” of the sex wars still requires feminist theorizing of sexuality to “enable pleasures and disenable dangers.”⁹ She argues that feminist theory should continue to provide an “enduring attention to the stunning regularity of sexual (and other forms of) violence against women’s bodies” while “equally” holding on to “the emancipatory vision of sexual freedom so crucial to feminism’s future.”¹⁰ Walters’s insistence that feminism “can’t really do its job if it’s not talking about both” pleasure *and* danger advocates for a “simultaneity” that, I suggest, slips into a kind of relativism that distances some feminist politics from critique. For instance, in her discussion of prostitution, she admits: “Feminists advocating for the criminalization of pimps and traffickers may have strategies and even underlying ideologies that many (myself included) find problematic, but they may also—simultaneously—have deep and abiding commitments to enabling women and girls to live lives

52; Gayle Rubin, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality,” in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole S. Vance (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 267-319. Rubin described the state’s interest in sexual normativity through the concepts of “charmed circles” and “sex hierarchies,” noting how feminists also contributed to reinforcing these norms (Rubin, 281, 282).

⁸ Walters, “Introduction: The Dangers of a Metaphor,” 9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

free from violence and coercion.”¹¹ Certainly no one is questioning whether or not “abolitionist” feminists have good intentions; what is at stake is whether or not the deep-seated “commitments” of some feminists to women’s “freedom from violence and coercion” overrides the agency, knowledge, and autonomy of the very women they are purporting to liberate.¹²

I find Walters’s assertion that achieving sexual freedom is unimaginable without also achieving freedom from sexual violence striking not for its exceptionality, but for its rehearsal of the fundamental principles of sexual politics feminists have struggled to articulate since the late 1970s, in particular in the establishment of a feminist position on sex work.¹³ Despite offering a “nuanced” reflection on the persistence of these issues in contemporary feminisms, the Special Issue’s reinvocation of the “pleasure and danger” framework nonetheless reasserts the boundary of patriarchal violence as a limit to thinking about sexuality, with particular consequences for theorizing sex work.¹⁴ Thus, I suggest that the *Signs* Special Issue reestablishes feminist theory’s authority to expose as natural the relationship between prostitution, pornography, and violence.

¹¹ Ibid., 2.

¹² Kamala Kempadoo and Nicole McFadyen, *Challenging Trafficking in Canada: Policy Brief* (Toronto: Centre for Feminist Research at York University, 2017). Throughout the 1990s, “abolitionist” (anti-pornography and anti-prostitution) feminists shifted their discourse on prostitution into a transnational focus on human sexual trafficking. For a comprehensive intervention into this feminist discourse and its role in the increased marginalization and criminalization of sex workers, particularly those who are Indigenous, people of colour, and migrants.

¹³ Christine Overall, “What’s Wrong with Prostitution? Evaluating Sex Work,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 17, no. 4 (1992): 723. “It therefore makes sense to defend prostitutes’ entitlement to do their work but not to defend prostitution itself as a practice under patriarchy” (ibid.).

¹⁴ Angela Jones, “‘I Get Paid to Have Orgasms’: Adult Webcam Models’ Negotiation of Pleasure and Danger,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 42, no. 1 (2016): 228. Jones struggles to assert her argument within the framework of the Special Issue: “My analysis here is guided by the polymorphous paradigm, or the theoretical standpoint that the experiences of sex workers are fluid; workers in any field are likely to have varied experiences of exploitation and job satisfaction. *That is, they will have experiences with both pleasure and danger.* Camgirls have found employment that is oftentimes exploitative and enacted within patriarchal systems,

Without claiming to offer a way out of this dynamic between sexuality and violence, I am interested in tracing the ways in which feminist discourses have come to frame prostitution and pornography through a lens of violence against women. As these overlapping histories of prostitution and pornography are distinct yet have shared narrative “repercussions,” I have elected to tell this story in two parts.¹⁵ In this chapter, I offer one version of how the connection between prostitution and violence is established in 1980s Canadian feminist discourses; in the following chapter, I turn my attention towards the Canadian feminist analysis of pornography as cause and effect of violence against women. In both instances, I argue that the feminist framework of “pleasure and danger” that preoccupies theories of sexuality tends to gloss over how class and race condition not only sexuality, but also sexual labour. Through a conviction of women’s entitlement to freedom from sexual violence and sexual objectification, the dominant feminist position on prostitution and pornography engenders an ideology of whiteness and middle-class femininity as feminists become citizen-subjects entitled to sexual liberation and state protection. Paradoxically, this implicit investment in whiteness and middle-class sexual norms gets taken up and reproduced by an array of feminist subjects of diverse sexual orientations, races, and classes who throw their energies behind eradicating prostitution and pornography as a stepping-stone to women’s liberation. Still, feminist approaches against

but this work also allows them to subvert antiquated ideas about female sexuality and thus produces empowerment,” (Jones, 228, emphasis added). Jones’s argument moves from a “polymorphous” position on the irreducibility of sex work to exploitation, to an admission of “danger,” to an assertion of “exploitation” under patriarchy, affirming a fundamental link between prostitution and patriarchal violence.

¹⁵ Hesford, *Feeling Women’s Liberation*, 2. Feminist history is not discrete, and it emerges from and overlaps with other histories. As Hesford describes, the women’s liberation movements’ “upsetting eventfulness has had repercussions for how its archive has since been read by those within and without the so-called second wave of feminism” (ibid.).

commercial sexuality come to benefit those in greatest proximity to race and class privilege, privileges that make claims to citizenship rights tenable.

Given the urgency of contemporary feminist concerns with sexual, racial, economic, colonial, and gendered violence, the ongoing precarity of diverse sex workers' rights serves as a reminder that histories of feminist theorizing and activism on sex work are critical to mine for lessons.¹⁶ Feminist historian Victoria Hesford asks, "How do we keep the knotty achievements, as well as the difficulties and failures, of a movement like women's liberation...in critical sight while paying it the kind of loving attention needed to conjure up its complex eventfulness?"¹⁷ Through a practice of reparative reading, I propose that it is possible to be both generous and critical towards the efforts of feminist subjects to abolish commercial sexuality in the 1980s while also insisting that sex workers not only "have a history" of their own, but are an integral part of feminist histories.¹⁸ Sex workers figure as the "seething presences" of the sex wars, the central—yet often omitted—subjects of feminist theorizing on sexuality.¹⁹ As the terms of these

¹⁶ See Cecilia Benoit and Alison Millar, *Dispelling Myths and Understanding Realities: Working Conditions, Health Status, and Exiting Experiences of Sex Workers* (Victoria: University of Victoria, 2001). In particular, it is critical to point out that while sex work cuts across race, class, gender, and sexuality, sex workers in Canada are disproportionately Indigenous. According to Benoit and Millar's community-based research project, which interviewed 201 sex workers and former sex workers in Victoria, B.C., "Our respondents do not stand out in regard to visible minority status, but do stand out in terms of Aboriginal status (Status and Non-Status Indians, Métis and Inuit people). Nearly 15% of respondents placed themselves in this category, half of whom identified as Métis" (Benoit and Millar, 18).

¹⁷ Hesford, *Feeling Women's Liberation*, 14.

¹⁸ Nestle, *A Restricted Country*, 158. Nestle's approach to history is instructive here: "Whores, like queers, are society's dirty joke. To even suggest that they have a history, not as a map of pathology but as a record of a people, is to challenge sacrosanct boundaries. As I read of the complicated history of whores, I realized once again I was also reading women's history with all its contradictions of oppression and resistance, of sisterhood and betrayal. In this work I will try to honor both histories—that of the woman whore and the woman queer" (ibid.).

¹⁹ Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 195; See Frederique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander, *Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1987); Laurie Bell, *Good Girls/Bad Girls: Sex Trade Workers and Feminists Face to Face*, ed. Laurie Bell (Toronto: The

debates have taken on new dimensions and frames of reference in the current moment, this historically fraught relationship of feminism to prostitution, pornography, and sex work within the Canadian context continues to inform the way in which contemporary concerns over sex work and sex worker subjectivity unfold in present legal, discursive, economic, and social frameworks that remain governed by colonial, sexually conservative, and neoliberal structures.²⁰ Indeed, one fatal overlap between feminist and state efforts to intervene in prostitution and pornography has been an increase in the violent murders of sex workers since 1985, disproportionately affecting Indigenous women working in the outdoor sex industry across the country.²¹ As an inheritor of “what lives on” from these overlapping histories, I strive to enact a critical practice of remembrance as I trace feminism’s propensity to value some subjects more than others.²²

In the following two chapters, I demonstrate how Canadian feminist engagement with prostitution and pornography took on a life of its own as feminists demonstrated forms of cooperation and complicity with the state in their work against commercial sexuality. As Hemmings warns, feminist gender agendas become “amenable” to a “broader institutional life”

Women’s Press, 1987); Emily van der Meulen, Elya M. Durisin, and Victoria Love, *Selling Sex: Experience, Advocacy, and Research on Sex Work in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013).

²⁰ Elya M. Durisin, Emily van der Meulen, and Chris Brucket, *Red Light Labour: Sex Work Regulation, Agency, and Resistance* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018).

²¹ Becki L. Ross, “Sex and (Evacuation from) the City: The Moral and Legal Regulation of Sex Workers in Vancouver’s West End, 1975-1985,” *Sexualities* 13, no. 2 (2010): 211; Sarah Hunt, “Decolonizing Sex Work: Developing an Intersectional Indigenous Approach,” in *Selling Sex: Experience, Advocacy, and Research on Sex Work in Canada*, eds. Emily van der Meulen, Elya M. Durisin, and Victoria Love (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 82-100; Sherene H. Razack, “Gendering Disposability,” *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 28, no. 2 (2016): 285-307.

²² Dean, *Remembering Vancouver’s Disappeared Women*, 4; Dara Culhane, “Their Spirits Live Within Us: Aboriginal Women in Downtown Eastside Vancouver Emerging into Visibility,” *The American Indian Quarterly* 27, no. 3-4 (2003): 593-606. Following the murder of another woman in 1991, the February 14th Women’s Memorial March in Vancouver, Coast Salish Territories, was organized by Indigenous women’s organizations and their allies as “an occasion to protest against racism, poverty, and violence against women, and to celebrate resistance, solidarity, and survival” (Culhane, 594).

precisely through the “structures and techniques” of the claims being made.²³ I argue that instead of attending to the political economic context of sex work on sex workers’ terms, feminists theorized prostitution and pornography through their own liberal political economic context; as citizen-subjects entitled to state protection from forms of violence, feminists turned to the state as a benevolent and trustworthy ally.²⁴ In privileging an overarching theory of male violence against women, I suggest that feminists pursued analyses of prostitution and pornography that downplayed the economic context of sex work as a kind of labour, overwriting sex workers’ own prioritizing of class, race, and labour issues. Theorizing prostitution and pornography as cause and effect of women’s oppression under patriarchy allowed feminists to occupy a white, middle-class sense of legitimate subjectivity that relied on a belief in sex workers’ victimhood.

In this chapter, I argue that feminists appropriated prostitutes’ experiences of violence in order to advance their campaign against commercial sexuality. Feminists struggled to acknowledge sex workers’ agency in determining their own economic, sexual, and political priorities, undermining their efforts at solidarity with prostitutes. In the following and final chapter, I examine how anti-violence feminist activism seized on pornography as the object of women’s oppression and liberation. Feminists collaborated with the state in pursuing an anti-pornography agenda, contributing to state efforts to increase the surveillance and criminalization of sex workers and sexual minorities. In telling these stories together, I reveal how the feminist sex wars were, from the outset, not simply a story about feminist sexual ideologies, behaviors,

²³ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 139.

²⁴ Lorna Norman Bracewell, “Beyond Barnard: Liberalism, Antipornography Feminism, and the Sex Wars,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 42, no. 1 (2016): 40. Bracewell argues that anti-pornography feminist theory moved from a critique of liberal values in the 1970s—in particular, the public/private divide, free speech, and notions of subjective harm and injury—to a reinvocation of liberal values in the 1990s in defense of the carceral state as a corrective to forms of sexual violence.

and identities, but also a story about sexual labour and the sex workers who radically defined their own politics against feminists and the state.

Kinesis: Archiving the Feminist Sex Wars

Recent work by Canadian sex work scholars Becki L. Ross and Rebecca Sullivan argues that the feminist response to prostitution in Vancouver between 1975 and 1985 was “limited,” displaying “no evidence of sustained cooperation” with sex worker activists.²⁵ As Ross elucidates elsewhere, “vocal feminists...prioritized campaigns and firebombings against the ‘scourge’ of commercial pornography throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, leaving sex workers without access to the organized support of second-wave women’s liberation.”²⁶ In order to flesh out these critical observations on feminism’s relationship to sex workers and to the sex wars, I have undertaken an archival analysis of feminist theory on prostitution and pornography within the Canadian feminist publication, *Kinesis: News About Women That’s Not in the Dailies*, and a review of archival data of the organizational activities of *Kinesis*’s publisher, the Vancouver Status of Women (VSW). In what follows, I highlight *Kinesis* and VSW’s own efforts to archive prostitution and pornography as feminist issues, demonstrated by the breadth of materials on pornography and prostitution collected in these archives.²⁷ On their own, these archives tell a particularly benign story about feminism: feminists in Vancouver and across Canada were increasingly concerned with the impact of pornography and prostitution on women’s welfare in the 1980s. In applying a critical reparative reading practice to these materials, however, I argue

²⁵ Ross, “Sex and (Evacuation from) the City,” 208; Becki L. Ross and Rebecca Sullivan, “Tracing Lines of Horizontal Hostility: How Sex Workers and Gay Activists Battled for Space, Voice, and Belonging in Vancouver, 1975-1985,” *Sexualities*, no. 15.5/6 (2012): 617.

²⁶ Ross, “Sex and (Evacuation from) the City,” 207.

²⁷ For example, VSW collected and organized files on both pornography and prostitution throughout the 1980s.

that the discursive proliferation of writing about prostitution and pornography was a way for feminists to have a hand in determining the parameters of sexual legitimacy. As a corollary, and what is glossed over in remembering feminist theories of prostitution and pornography as only about sexuality, is that feminists were also invested in determining what forms of women's labour were valid, valued, and worth defending. While omitted from the official story of the feminist sex wars, the history of feminist engagement with prostitution and pornography in Canada during the 1980s is a history of labour struggle. Thus, in order to give voice to the politics of labour that also characterized this history, and to disrupt the discursive dominance of *Kinesis* writers, at times I will move outside of the *Kinesis* and VSW archive to think through other pivotal texts in the decade. More often than not, these texts provide further opportunity to either access sex workers' experiences, or to demonstrate feminist assumptions about sex worker experience, as sex worker perspectives were under-represented in the archives. Moreover, the majority of the secondary materials that I explore in the following two chapters were documented by *Kinesis* or VSW in their own historicizing of prostitution and pornography, and, in revisiting them here, I argue for their place within both feminist and sex worker histories.

To contextualize *Kinesis* and VSW, it is helpful to turn to a 1980 letter to Vancouver City Council documenting VSW's receipt of financial support through a membership of 1000 women, three-quarters of whom resided in Vancouver.²⁸ As a 1988 membership survey of *Kinesis* subscribers reported, the majority of *Kinesis* readers were white, middle-class women in their late 30s.²⁹ In turn, white, middle-class women composed the majority of paid positions at *Kinesis* and

²⁸ Debra J. Lewis on behalf of VSW, Correspondence to Vancouver City Council, Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage, File: Correspondence, January 1980, Personal Collection of Becki L. Ross.

²⁹ McDonald, "Kinesis Survey Results Now In," 3. In tabulating 100 out of 260 responses, *Kinesis* staff put together a composite of the "typical" survey respondent: "The typical

VSW in the 1980s; as Bunjun's archival and qualitative research at VSW documents, prior to the introduction of an Affirmative Action Policy at VSW in 1992, "women of colour and Indigenous women only held part-time/contract positions that were marginal and precarious."³⁰ Building on these insights by Bunjun, Ross, and Sullivan, I argue that race and class privilege pervaded the way in which white, middle-class norms of sexuality and bodily integrity were reproduced in feminist discourses of prostitution and pornography in VSW and *Kinesis*; in the Canadian context of the sex wars, diverse feminists and sex workers grappled for political legitimacy through and against a backdrop of class, race, and sexual normativity.

The foundation for what would become a preoccupation with commercial sexuality by feminists active in VSW and *Kinesis* was laid during the 1970s.³¹ Before 1972, prostitution had been criminalized through the Vagrancy Laws of the Criminal Code, Section 164.1, which disproportionately targeted women unable to provide "a good account" of their activities.³² The ideals of the 1960 Bill of Rights led to the 1972 dismantling of the Vagrancy Laws, when prostitution was "immediately reincorporated into the Criminal Code under a new provision that prohibited public solicitation for the purposes of prostitution." In order to clarify what counted as solicitation for prostitution, on February 7, 1978, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled to amend

respondent is a 39-year old, white woman, university educated, earning around \$22,000/year. If she is employed (we didn't ask) she's either a professional or involved in some kind of artistic or creative work. She lives in a large city—most likely Vancouver. She is probably a tenant but has a good chance (44 percent) of owning her own home. She shares her home with one other adult and has no dependents" (ibid.).

³⁰ Bunjun, "Organizational Colonial Encounters," 5.

³¹ On September 5, 1974, and October 16, 1974, VSW's television show "Woman Alive" on Cable 10 aired two episodes on prostitution. See the VSW Index of Annual Reports 1974, Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage, Box: Annual Reports, File: Index of Annual Reports, 1974-1986, Personal Collection of Becki Ross.

³² Leslie Ann Jeffrey, "Prostitution as Public Nuisance: Prostitution Policy in Canada," in *The Politics of Prostitution: Women's Movement, Democratic States, and the Globalization of Sex Commerce*, ed. Joyce Outshoorn (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 85.

the Criminal Code to criminalize solicitation if it could be found to be “pressing and persistent.”³³ The Hutt decision brought the question—and the visibility—of street prostitution into public discourse.³⁴ Throughout March of 1978, the Parliamentary Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs held public forums to discuss Criminal Code amendments to pornography. From 1978 onwards, VSW members, and by extension *Kinesis* publications, were piqued by the potential for the enhanced criminalization of pornography and prostitution. Indeed, on September 26, 1978, Debra J. Lewis, a local anti-violence activist, writer, and VSW member, prepared and delivered to Parliament a brief on Pornography and Prostitution that would set the tone of the discourse in *Kinesis* in the decade to come.³⁵ This brief was the touchstone for Lewis’s interview on Radio-Canada on November 1, 1978, and for the concomitant publication of two interconnected papers in *Kinesis*.³⁶

Both of Lewis’s 1978 *Kinesis* position papers, “Pornography: Developing Feminist Perspectives” and “Prostitution: A Difficult Problem for the Movement,” posited a causal link between violence against women and prostitution and pornography. Lewis theorized pornography as not only harmful in its unrealistic representation of women, its overt sexualization of violence, and the promotion of rape as a form of male fantasy, but also for its potential to effect real

³³ Deborah R. Brock, *Making Work, Making Trouble: Prostitution as a Social Problem* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 45.

³⁴ Kinesis Staff Writers, “Prostitution: Supreme Court Rules On Prostitution Case,” *Kinesis* (March 1978): 4.

³⁵ Between 1978-1981, Lewis was employed as a staff member of VSW and *Kinesis*, and was the co-author of an influential book on sexual violence, Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage. Box: Minutes, File: Minutes to be sorted, Personal Collection of Becki Ross. See also Lorene M. G. Clark and Debra J. Lewis, *Rape: The Price of Coercive Sexuality* (Toronto: The Women’s Press, [1977] 1982).

³⁶ Ibid.

violence against women.³⁷ Pornography was described as “a threat” to all women’s sexualities, relationships, and bodily integrity, which “made acceptable the use of coercion and violence towards women and children in the name of individual male rights.”³⁸ On behalf of VSW feminists, Lewis proposed changes to the obscenity clause of the Criminal Code that reflected a feminist definition of pornography: “It is our contention that the standards used to define obscenity should be simply that the material so classified presents a real harm to a designated group (women or children) and should be banned precisely because they reinforce or condone unacceptable behaviour.” In advocating for the government’s “restriction” of pornography representing “the presence of the threat or use of physical coercion,” Lewis and VSW feminists imagined state intervention as a stepping-stone in the anti-pornography movement.³⁹

Prostitution, on the other hand, posed a “problem” for feminists as it “reflect[ed]” a “sexist society” where prostitutes were “the most blatantly exploited victims of sexism.”⁴⁰ Lewis presented the feminist struggle over prostitution as a desire for the complete “eradication” of prostitution alongside the recognition that prostitution would persist until women were “truly the social, economic, and sexual equals of men.” In accepting an “economic explanation of prostitution,” Lewis advocated for short-term solutions to encourage women to leave prostitution, including the allocation of state funds towards “communal living situations, training opportunities, street workers and other resources.” Critically, Lewis asserted that prostitutes faced the “dangers” of violence, sexual assault, and murder “everyday,” and that “the prostitute must accept such risk as simply a hazard of the trade.” Lewis emphasized that the law had done

³⁷ Debra J. Lewis, “Pornography: Developing Feminist Perspectives,” *Kinesis* (October 1978): 10, 12, 13.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁰ Debra J. Lewis, “Prostitution: A Difficult Problem for the Movement,” *Kinesis* (November 1978): 6-7.

“nothing” to protect women in prostitution, but rather acts as a “pimp” to encourage other “pimps” to “keep women under their control.” While critical of laws directed at prostitutes, Lewis spoke on behalf of VSW in “full support” of legislative changes to prosecuting rape, pimps, and johns.⁴¹

As a representative of VSW and *Kinesis*, Lewis situated prostitution and pornography within feminist discourses on sexual oppression, violence, and liberation.⁴² By suturing feminism to legal, state, and media discourses, VSW and *Kinesis* feminists sought to install feminism as an authoritative voice in the conversation on commercial sexuality emerging in Canada.⁴³ In advocating for state intervention into prostitution and pornography, Lewis’s 1978 articles established parameters for the struggle in the decade to follow.⁴⁴ As the following analysis explores, feminists pursued the eradication of commercial sexuality as a necessary step in freeing

⁴¹ Ibid., 6.

⁴² Kinesis Staff Writers, “Pressing and Persistent Harassment of Prostitutes,” *Kinesis* (March 1979): 17. VSW and *Kinesis*’ position on prostitution argued for the quasi “decriminalization” of prostitutes, but not of prostitution, demanding that the state enact “laws directed towards pimps” and “control all forms of ‘pressing and persistent’ harassment—not only of prostitutes to clients but of men to women in general” (ibid.); Kinesis Staff Writers, “Pornography: Fighting Back,” *Kinesis* (March 1979): 17. Also in 1979, the British Columbia Federation of Women (BCFW) established a Women Against Violence Subcommittee, which hosted a forum on pornography in Vancouver, February 17, 1979. The first organizing effort of the BCFW Women Against Violence Subcommittee established five priorities for addressing pornography: “pressure for legal change, consciousness raising, direct action against producers and distributors of pornography, direct action against consumers, and economic action” (ibid.). Lewis was the contact member for the group.

⁴³ VSW Annual Report 1978-1979, Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage, File: Annual Reports 1974-1986, Personal Collection of Becki Ross. A 1978-1979 VSW membership document states, “Our legal research, particularly in the area of pornography and prostitution, has made an important contribution to the development of feminist perspectives” (ibid.).

⁴⁴ VSW Annual Report 1981-1982, Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage, File: Annual Reports 1974-1986, Personal Collection of Becki Ross. Between 1981 and 1982, Debra J. Lewis was on the Executive Board of VSW; during that time, VSW held meetings on prostitution with the National Advisory Council on the Status of Women’s Justice Committee and the B.C. Law Women’s Caucus.

women from patriarchal violence. During the 1970s, feminist theorizing of sexuality expressed ambivalent attitudes towards the state and sex workers, fostering relationships of convenience with both. In turns minimizing, appropriating, exaggerating, and decontextualizing sex workers' experiences of violence, feminists seized upon the sex industry as a decried product of patriarchy. In pursuing its abolition, however, feminists privileged their own liberation over that of the marginalized women working in the sex industry. In turn, sex workers developed a politics of labour that both exposed and resisted the white, middle-class standpoint of feminism all the while demanding solidarity from feminists for their unique and shared struggles.

Solidarity Behind the Scenes? VSW, Kinesis, and Prostitution

The white, middle-class feminist perspective on prostitution that unfolded in *Kinesis* admitted that prostitution was an economic option for poor women in a sexist society, although the degree to which feminists accepted prostitution as a legitimate form of labour will be discussed in more detail below. Despite an initial recognition of prostitution as an economic exchange, the feminist perspective on prostitution as developed in *Kinesis* and in VSW elevated non-commercial sexual exchanges, thus relegating the exchange of sex for money in prostitution as always already inferior to other, non-commoditized sexual acts. As Ross and Sullivan reflect, while feminists were sex workers' "logical allies," they were stymied by an "ambivalence toward, if not outright opposition to, the exchange of sexual services for money as they strove to sort out a range of moral, economic, and legal positions and practices."⁴⁵ As this chapter endeavors to show, a range of feminist actions to "sort out" a feminist position on prostitution led to moments of both unity and discord with prostitutes. Rather than simply being "coopted" by the

⁴⁵ Ross and Sullivan, "Tracing Lines of Horizontal Hostility," 605.

state, VSW and *Kinesis* feminists were in fact driven by the “hegemony of ‘gender equality’” that saw the abolition of prostitution as a means to the eradication of the overarching issues of gendered and sexual violence.⁴⁶ In downplaying the material realities of work, racism, and classism, feminists privileged a framework of sexuality and sexual violence that undermined their ability to support a group of racially, gendered, and sexually diverse prostitutes.⁴⁷

Reflecting this tension, feminists involved in VSW and *Kinesis* demonstrated a variety of methods to support the quasi-decriminalization of prostitution throughout the early 1980s. For instance, in the wake of the 1978 Hutt decision, VSW made strides to provide other feminist organizations, the media, and the state with a feminist perspective on prostitution that emphasized decriminalization of the women involved and argued that prostitution was an effect of social, economic, and sexual inequality. This position was articulated in a brief written in 1978 by Jillian Ridington and Barb Findlay, entitled “Prostitution: The Visible Bargain,” developed for VSW members to correspond with the media and other individuals seeking information on prostitution.⁴⁸ Subsequently published in a five-page spread in *Kinesis* in 1979, the tone of this

⁴⁶ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 12.

⁴⁷ Jamie Lee Hamilton, “The Golden Age of Prostitution” (Keynote Speaker, Sexuality Studies Association, Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences Conference, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. June 4, 2019). Hamilton’s lecture reflected on her life, in particular working as a trans Indigenous sex worker in Vancouver in the 1980s. Hamilton recalls that there were three distinct commercial strolls for selling sex in Vancouver’s West End between 1980-84; while the sections overlapped and sex workers would organize together, (for example in the Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes, ASP), trans women, cisgender women, and male hustlers separated themselves geographically; Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage, File: Transsexual, Personal Collection of Becki Ross. In general, *Kinesis* and VSW feminists were concerned with the effects of prostitution and pornography on cisgender women. However, in 1978, VSW attempted to host a transsexual support group; “Transsexual Group Forming,” *Kinesis* (December 1978), 27. An ad was placed in the back of *Kinesis* inviting participation by anyone “who has gone through or” is “going through any phase of sexual reassignment surgery (sex-change)” (ibid.).

⁴⁸ Jillian Ridington and Barb Findlay, “Prostitution: The Visible Bargain,” see Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage, File: Counter-Hegemonic Media-File: *Kinesis*, Personal

brief emphasized a legal perspective on decriminalizing prostitution that sought to draw similarities between heterosexual women's economic dependence on men through marriage and the temporary economic contract between a prostitute and her male client, emphasizing that prostitution was subject to stigma whereas marriage was socially sanctioned.⁴⁹ Critically, in advancing the view that "The prostitute is a worker, but the nature of her work causes her to be oppressed even more than other workers," Ridington and Findlay at once acknowledged prostitution as a kind of labour, but nonetheless yoked prostitution with victimization in ways that foreclosed prostitutes' agency—including economic agency.⁵⁰

Ridington and Findlay continued to spearhead an analysis of prostitution in VSW and *Kinesis* that advocated for decriminalization, presenting "The Visible Bargain" on behalf of VSW to the CRTC Task Force on Women in the Media February 20, 1980.⁵¹ Provided with a Legal Services Grant in February 1981, VSW revised its cumulative research to date on pornography and prostitution.⁵² This research resulted in Ridington and Findlay's November 1981 publication of a 27-page informative booklet on Pornography and Prostitution, advocating for the abolishment of both, but for decriminalizing soliciting in the short term.⁵³ On April 20, 1982, two additional VSW staff, Hilarie McMurray and Gayle Raphnael, prepared an additional brief on

Collection of Becki Ross. Note that Jillian Ridington served as the Vice-President of VSW in 1978, and was on the Board of Directors and the Constitution Committee between 1980-1981, thus playing a pivotal role in the way in which the feminist analysis of prostitution was advanced during these few years.

⁴⁹ Jillian Ridington and Barb Findlay, "Prostitution: The Visible Bargain," *Kinesis* (April-May 1979): 13-17.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵¹ Ridington and Findlay, "Prostitution: The Visible Bargain," in Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage, File: Correspondence/Briefs, Personal Collection of Becki Ross.

⁵² Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage, File: VSW Board Meeting Minutes, April 78/79-May79/80, Personal Collection of Becki Ross.

⁵³ Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage, File: VSW-Prostitution-1982, Personal Collection of Becki Ross.

prostitution, which was subsequently presented to a variety of local and federal organizations, including members of Vancouver's Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW); the Vancouver Association of Women Lawyers; a working group for the National Advisory Council on the Status of Women; and the Research Officer for the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.⁵⁴ McMurray and Raphnael's brief also critiqued the mounting criticism of prostitution as a "public nuisance," arguing that the already circumscribed zoning and traffic municipal by-laws could adequately deal with the issues of street harassment and noise.⁵⁵

VSW and *Kinesis* continued to advocate for the decriminalization of prostitution in the early 1980s. As the efforts of the federal state to increase the criminalization of street prostitution were mirrored in municipalities across Canada, state and civil intervention took on a particular fervour in Vancouver. As Lorri Rudland reported in *Kinesis* in 1984, the criminal targeting of prostitutes in Vancouver was not a new phenomenon, as in 1975 the Vancouver City Council had already removed business licenses from bars admitting prostitutes.⁵⁶ Indeed, as Ross's research describes, by "1979, after decades of soliciting clients indoors [...] a heterogeneous, racially diverse community of sex workers—some of whom were queer themselves—was forcibly pushed by the police department's Vice Squad onto the streets of Vancouver's West End."⁵⁷ The effect of this forced expulsion was the creation of a lively outdoor stroll where "approximately

⁵⁴ Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage, File: VSW Staff Meeting Minutes, April 1/82-March 31-83, Personal Collection of Becki Ross.

⁵⁵ John Lowman, *Identifying Research Gaps in the Prostitution Literature* (Ottawa: Department of Justice Canada, Research and Statistics Division, 2001), 3. As Lowman describes, prostitution was framed as a "public nuisance" in Canada into the late 1980s, replaced in the 1990s by a concern for the "sexual exploitation of children and youth" (ibid.). It is important to note how both discourses erased the adult women actually engaged in sex work; as well as, see "VSW Meeting, August 11, 1982," Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage, File: Minutes to be Sorted, Personal Collection of Becki Ross.

⁵⁶ Lorri Rudland, "Views Change on Prostitution," *Kinesis* (February 1984): 3.

⁵⁷ Ross, "Sex and (Evacuation from) the City," 199.

200 female, male, and male-to-female transsexual prostitutes endeavored to live, work, and foster a pimp-free community within a 25 block zone.”⁵⁸ Within a few years, this visible community of independent prostitutes in Vancouver’s West End became the target of wealthy “concerned citizens”—including Concerned Residents of the West End (CROWE)—who collaborated with the City to increase sanctions against prostitutes.⁵⁹

Yet in January 1983, the Supreme Court of Canada declared that Calgary’s recent injunction against prostitution was unconstitutional. The municipal government of Calgary had argued that soliciting qualified as a public nuisance, and therefore could be controlled under municipal jurisdiction.⁶⁰ Within Vancouver, a secret and controversial anti-prostitution by-law was being developed that was forcibly stayed following the result of the Supreme Court versus Calgary; while an appeal was being prepared, Vancouver police were discouraged from prosecuting prostitutes.⁶¹ Part of the state’s anti-prostitution discourse was a proclaimed concern for the safety of prostitutes *and* women from men’s street harassment, signified by a letter from Vancouver Mayor Mike Harcourt to the Vancouver sex worker organization the Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes (ASP) in February 1983.⁶² This growing sentiment continued to figure prostitution as a threat to public morality and civility, in particular blaming prostitutes for attracting male violence and creating unsafe streets for (non-prostitute) women.⁶³

As 1983 wore on, mounting pressure from representatives of Vancouver’s City Council and West End community groups increased efforts to demand an end to the “problem” of

⁵⁸ Ross and Sullivan, “Tracing Lines of Horizontal Hostility,” 605.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 608-609. Ross and Sullivan document how white gay men sought out legitimate citizenship through positioning themselves in opposition to street level sex workers.

⁶⁰ Rudland, “Views Change on Prostitution,” 3.

⁶¹ Kinesis Staff Writers, “Vancouver Prostitution By-Law Destroyed,” *Kinesis* (March 1983): 2.

⁶² Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage, File: VSW Correspondence, January 1983-December 1983, Personal Collection of Becki Ross.

⁶³ Ross, “Sex and (Evacuation from) the City,” 202.

prostitution.⁶⁴ Spearheaded by Mayor Harcourt, and supported by Alderwomen May Brown and Marguerite Ford, concerted attempts were made to influence public discourse against prostitution and to amend the Criminal Code to further prohibit it. Demonstrating their opposition to the proposed amendments and their political response to the encroachment of their legal rights, ASP organized a protest at City Hall on April 20, 1983, which was attended by approximately one hundred sex workers and sex worker activists and allies.⁶⁵ ASP representative and protest organizer Sally De Quadros addressed those gathered, predicting that prostitutes would face increased violence if the recent Criminal Code amendments and proposed zoning by-laws were enacted. Reading from Mayor Harcourt's letter to ASP requesting a meeting between ASP and the newly formed Sexual Offences Squad of the Vancouver Police, De Quadros expressed dismay that this meeting had in reality never been arranged. Rather, linking escalating violence from pimps, johns, and police with the anti-prostitution rhetoric of the City Council, De Quadros expressed how prostitutes were putting into place self-defense strategies of their own, including ASP's circulation of a "bad trick sheet" to warn prostitutes of violent clientele. As the rally closed, sex workers and their allies demanded that Mayor Harcourt come outside and address the crowd, crying out "We want Harcourt, we want Harcourt, we want our pimp!"⁶⁶

Archival data reflect that some VSW and *Kinesis* feminists sought to challenge this mounting pressure to increase the criminalization of prostitutes in Vancouver in 1983. For instance, in the same issue as the description of the ASP rally, *Kinesis* writer Cole Dudley interviewed ASP co-founders Sally De Quadros and Marie Arrington in an attempt to translate to feminist readers the politics of prostitution according to prostitute activists themselves. Printed

⁶⁴ Ibid., 203.

⁶⁵ Kinesis Staff Writers, "Prostitutes March on Vancouver City Hall," *Kinesis* (May 1983): 1.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

across a two-page spread, the interview clearly articulates De Quadros and Arrington's positions on escalating street violence, police harassment, and the need for decriminalization, arguing that prostitute women must be in "control" of their labour, from choosing the hours and place in which they work, to maintaining control over who they work with.⁶⁷ Arrington and De Quadros also spoke out against legalization, insisting that in cases of legalization the government "becomes the pimp": "As long as the government or some man in any way, shape, or form has that control, the women do not have the power to work the way they want, or it ends up abusive."⁶⁸ Prompted by Dudley's question about how to develop a "dialogue" between feminists and prostitutes, ASP reflected,

We think that has to start as an education and we think we can provide the means for feminists to educate themselves and each other, about the reality of the women working on the street. *Having an analysis of violence against women and sexism is not enough.* There has to be more; there has to be an understanding of their situation, a concrete analysis to include these women into feminism. They are very sensitive to the moralizing, judgmental, and patronizing attitudes.⁶⁹

De Quadro and Arrington resisted the feminist framing of prostitution solely through a lens of violence against women and patriarchy. When Dudley inquired whether feminists "working along the same lines" could "work together" with sex workers, De Quadros and Arrington replied: "They are *saying* the same things but they are not asking the prostitutes for their input. They speak from a white, middle-class, educated background."⁷⁰ As De Quadros and Arrington reflected, they initially formed ASP to create an alternative women's group to the "white, middle-class" feminist perspective on prostitution they encountered when they attended a 1982 meeting

⁶⁷ Cole Dudley, "The Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes," *Kinesis* (May 1983): 14.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁶⁹ Ibid. (emphasis added).

⁷⁰ Ibid. (emphasis in original).

by CROWE—a meeting that had explicitly not invited prostitutes.⁷¹ Despite initial harmony in ASP, a “class struggle” soon emerged in the group, with only Arrington and De Quadros remaining, as the other women couldn’t reconcile the feminist politic of abolition with supporting the decisions of prostitutes to continue their work. Indeed, organizing with and as street women took a “lot of work” and required a shared “language,” as Arrington and De Quadros not only had to “prove” themselves, but also had to “prove” that they “were there for the women.”⁷² In recognizing the limits of feminist analyses of “violence against women and sexism” to understand prostitution, this excerpt demonstrates how ASP promoted a sex-worker focused politic that invited feminists to do the same, provided they could challenge feminism’s white, middle-class view on labour, sexuality, and violence.⁷³

VSW and *Kinesis* feminists again took action in support of prostitutes when representatives of Vancouver City Hall, including Alderwoman May Brown, immediately followed up ASP’s important sex worker demonstration by hastily calling an April 21, 1983 meeting with local women’s groups.⁷⁴ *Kinesis* writers rebuked both the meeting and its apparent barring of feminist organizations; suspecting their exclusion from the meeting because of their known position on decriminalization, VSW responded with an open letter to City Hall, publicly denouncing the mounting attacks on prostitutes.⁷⁵ As Lorri Rudland and Cole Dudley reported in *Kinesis* the following month, on May 17, 1983, Alderwomen Ford and Brown introduced a

⁷¹ Ibid., 14.

⁷² Ibid., 14.

⁷³ Ibid., 15.

⁷⁴ Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage, File: VSW Correspondence: January 1983-December 1983, Personal Collection of Becki Ross.

⁷⁵ *Kinesis*, “Prostitutes March on Vancouver City Hall,” 1; Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage, File: VSW Correspondence: January 1983-December 1983, Personal Collection of Becki Ross. A corresponding letter on behalf of NAC was also sent to Vancouver City Hall.

motion calling for Vancouver City Council to support the federal government to expand legislation against prostitution, including the creation of a new criminal law to charge both parties involved in prostitution, to extend public places to include vehicles, and to enact specific sanctions against the purchasing of sexual acts from persons under 18 years of age.⁷⁶ In their description of the “heated five hour debate,” Rudland and Dudley disapproved of the motion and its supporters, reflected in Rudland’s address to City Council: “These recommendations are expedient, simplistic, and not designed to deal with the complexity of prostitution or even with the nuisance problems that prompted their creation.”⁷⁷ While Mayor Harcourt, CROWE, the police, and both the Progressive Conservative and Liberal Women’s Association spoke in favor of the motion, ASP led a vocal opposition to the motion that was explicitly supported by VSW and other local feminist groups.⁷⁸

Speaking against the increased criminalization of women working as prostitutes, this 1983 Vancouver City Council meeting captured a moment when sex workers, sex worker allies, and feminists rallied together to articulate prostitute rights. In this moment, the feminist perspective on prostitution included prostitutes as subjects worthy of state protection, in particular the right of prostitutes to work without further criminalization and the right to be free from violence. However, as articulated by Arrington and De Quadros above, and evidenced by Rudland and Dudley’s report on some feminist speakers, for many feminists the defense of prostitutes was also

⁷⁶ Lorri Rudland and Cole Dudley, “Prostitution Recommendations Spark Heated Debate,” *Kinesis* (June 1983): 10.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Women’s groups who spoke against the motion to support amendments to the Criminal Code to further criminalize prostitution and its associated acts included: Vancouver Status of Women, Vancouver’s Women’s Health Collective, Women Against Nuclear Technology, Vancouver Rape Relief, B.C. Federation of Women, NDP Women’s Rights Committee, Carnegie Centre, National Action Committee on the Status of Women, Lesbian Conference Committee, Vancouver Association of Women and the Law (ibid.).

sutured to an anti-violence politic that relied on locating prostitutes as victims of male abuse that undermined analyses of sex work as forms of sexual labour and economic agency. The feminist theorization of prostitutes as victims of male violence was demonstrated by the “many” speakers who emphasized how “violent and sexual abuse” led to prostitution, and correspondingly, the assertion by Joni Miller of Vancouver Rape Relief that it was “time” for the “blame” for male sexual abuse to be “put squarely on the men who perpetuate it.”⁷⁹ While these appeals to understanding sexual violence as an index of sex work are certainly important, their effect was to highlight a shared context of patriarchy between all women that would eventually overshadow the specificity of sex workers’ legal, labour, and economic issues. This feminist focus on the violence inherent in prostitution was in turn used to bolster the anti-prostitution agenda of the conservative government, in particular by those in positions of government and organizational leadership who trafficked in women’s fear of patriarchal violence, demonstrated by the creation of the June 1983 “Task Force on Violence/Women’s Protection Committee” enacted by Vancouver City Council.⁸⁰ Indeed, by June 23, 1983, the Liberal Federal Justice Minister Mark McGuigan tabled amendments to the Criminal Code that mirrored those of Vancouver City Council; come the fall of 1983, these amendments would increase the punitive damages against both prostitutes and their clients.

Feminist Ambivalence and State Intervention

At a point where the rights of sex workers were being carefully eroded, an insistence on the labour, legal, and economic rights of prostitutes—as opposed to the bodily rights of all

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage, File: VSW Board Meeting Minutes: June 1-1983-May 31, 1984, Personal Collection of Becki Ross.

women—remained an underexplored feminist position. As the thrust of activism and theorizing by feminists involved with VSW and *Kinesis* in 1984 and 1985 demonstrates, feminists displayed an increasingly “ambivalent” relationship to the state’s efforts to further entrench sanctions against prostitution.⁸¹ On the one hand, VSW feminists continued to insist—behind the scenes and in the pages of *Kinesis*—that prostitution itself should be decriminalized in the short term, while on the other hand, feminists progressively privileged their own analyses of the abolition of prostitution as part of their broader activism in theorizing sexuality and violence against women. Thus, these significant efforts of feminists to support prostitutes in the immediate future become fractured when read against their efforts to abolish prostitution in the long term.

For instance, in the spring of 1984, some business owners, politicians, and libertarians began toying with the potential for creating a red-light district in Vancouver, which would re-open bars and brothels to the business while simultaneously ushering sex workers indoors. The prospect of legalization was not a strategy welcomed by sex worker activists, evidenced by ASP’s critique of legalization for the lack of control prostitutes would have over their work.⁸² This shift in Vancouver’s business community towards legalizing prostitution did not feel like a victory to local feminists, either, but not because it would infringe on sex workers’ autonomy. Rather, Lori Rudland opposed legalization for its entrenching of prostitution as the status quo. She wrote,

The acceptance of the *fact* of prostitution, however, presents feminists with another difficulty. Where most speakers accepted it as a fact of our culture now and forever, feminists accept it as a fact only in a sexist society. The sexual commoditization of women through advertising for a product and through pornography where women are the product (humiliated, beaten, abused, snuffed) sees its ultimate, logical conclusion in prostitution. This coupled with the economic inequality women face in a society in which men are the only legitimate workers, forces women into prostitution for economic

⁸¹ Ross and Sullivan, “Tracing Horizontal Lines of Hostility,” 605.

⁸² Dudley, “The Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes,” 14-15.

survival. (The Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes—ASP, a Vancouver group, noted an increase in the numbers of women on the street as the economic depression deepened).⁸³

Rudland saw the potential creation of a zoned district for commercial sex to be a capitulation to the patriarchal “commoditization of women” precisely because it legitimized sex work.⁸⁴ In Rudland’s perspective—and what she claims is *the* feminist perspective—moving away from the stigmatization and criminalization of prostitution towards the “acceptance” of prostitution failed to transform “sexist society.” Rather, prostitution would remain the “logical conclusion” for the objectification, commodification, and abuse of women, particularly in a context where women’s labour is not “legitimate.” What is striking about this excerpt is that it sums up the “difficulty” white, middle-class feminists had in both articulating a position on prostitution and sustaining a politics of solidarity with prostitutes. Rudland’s comments—in particular her use of parenthesis to register the observations of sex workers—captures the commonsense feminist approach to prostitution in *Kinesis* and VSW in the 1980s: prostitution is first an issue of sexual objectification and violence against all women, secondarily an issue of economic need threatening all women, and finally, a sexual and economic issue that affects working prostitutes. In privileging the feminist perspective over sex workers’ perspectives, this was yet another example of how an immediate opportunity for feminists to meet sex workers on their own terms was undermined by the overarching feminist goal of eradicating prostitution in general.

The historical record of accelerated street harassment and violence against prostitutes in Vancouver during 1984 was accompanied by a waning of feminist direct action to stand with prostitutes. For instance, emboldened by the intimidation tactics of CROWE, in early 1984 a vigilante group of residents of Vancouver’s West End formed under the heading Shame the Johns

⁸³ Rudland, “Views Change on Prostitution,” 3.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

(STJ). Together, CROWE and STJ enacted regular “street patrols” of the West End, photographing johns and writing down the license plates of their vehicles, and even picketing outside of their homes.⁸⁵ STJ and CROWE did not simply enact a campaign of street harassment against johns and prostitutes, but also lobbied the government to demand action on prostitution; indeed, West End sex worker Jamie Lee Hamilton reflected that they “worked day and night to disrupt our business and our lives. They antagonized us beyond belief.”⁸⁶ Following the forced expulsion of prostitutes from the West End on June 21, 1984, feminists reporting in *Kinesis* recognized that the conditions facing prostitutes were becoming increasingly violent.⁸⁷ Armed with B.C. Attorney General Brian Smith’s injunction against “public nuisances” and “persons unknown”—despite the fact that most sex workers lived within the West End and 30 women were named on a legal writ—police escorted sex workers en masse from the West End in a “war on prostitution,” resulting in their relocation to a nearby industrial area. Hamilton painfully reflects that this injunction led to her violent arrest by the police: “I was not allowed to go home...having no choice, I was forced to relocate out of my community, just as other sex workers were. The law was being used selectively against us, an obvious abuse of power by the police and the state.”⁸⁸ What resonates in Hamilton’s experience is her disbelief that while “there were many feminist lawyers, none came forward to assist us during this turbulent time.” Her comment is important for capturing the injury she experienced not only at the hands of the state, but also in the lack of action taken by feminists with access to the resources accrued through class and race privilege.

⁸⁵ Ross and Sullivan, “Tracing Lines of Horizontal Hostility,” 611.

⁸⁶ Jamie Lee Hamilton, “The Golden Age of Prostitution: One Woman’s Personal Account of an Outdoor Brothel in Vancouver, 1975-1984,” in *Trans Activism in Canada: A Reader*, ed. Dan Irving and Rupert Raj (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2014), 30.

⁸⁷ Rosemarie Rupp, “Injunction on Hookers,” *Kinesis* (July-August 1984): 1, 3.

⁸⁸ Hamilton, “The Golden Age,” 30.

Yet VSW and *Kinesis* feminists exhibited some opposition to the anti-prostitution actions occurring in Vancouver, particularly in the West End, throughout 1984. *Kinesis*'s coverage of the 1984 West End Injunction against prostitutes reported on the increased criminalization, incarceration, and forced relocation of street level sex workers across Canada.⁸⁹ The organized resistance of ASP and other sex worker activists to the West End Injunction led to the occupation of the downtown Christ Cathedral Church on July 21 and 22, 1984.⁹⁰ The two-day protest sponsored by ASP, prostitutes, and their allies drew attention to the targeted oppression of West End prostitutes and their fear that their forced removal to a desolate location made them increasingly vulnerable to violence from pimps, johns, and police.⁹¹ In the midst of this spike in police and state attacks on prostitutes, throughout the fall of 1984 VSW also attempted to influence West End community groups with their feminist perspective, advocating for decriminalization through both Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Action and the Mount Pleasant Committee on Street Prostitution.⁹² By the end of 1984, a report issued by the Mount Pleasant Committee on Street Prostitution reflected the impact of VSW and *Kinesis* feminists in its denouncement of the vigilante actions against prostitutes, as well as its advocacy of the feminist position of assigning "street workers" to liaise with local prostitutes. However, the culmination of these feminist actions to support prostitutes may have been too little, too late. As Hamilton expressed, by the end of 1984 many Vancouver sex workers required more than occasional

⁸⁹ Kinesis Staff Writers, "Calgary: Street Women Organize," *Kinesis* (September 1984): 2.

⁹⁰ Marianne van Loon, "ASP in God's House," *Kinesis* (September 1984): 3. Located downtown Vancouver, the Anglican Christ Church Cathedral was located in the area where prostitutes frequently worked. In 1976, the diocese ordained two women priests, and has aspired to be a LGBTQ and queer affirming church offering same-sex marriage blessings.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Vancouver Status of Women Archives, File: VSW Board Meeting Minutes, June 1 1983-May 31 1984, Personal Collection of Becki Ross.

committee work: they were in desperate need of economic and legal support at the municipal, provincial, and federal level of the state.

Indeed, prostitution had become a hot button issue at all levels of government; reflecting the ramping up of an anti-prostitution sentiment across Canada and its suturing to feminist anti-pornography discourses, Federal Justice Minister Mark McGuigan appointed the seven member Fraser Committee on Pornography and Prostitution in 1983.⁹³ Between late 1983 and early 1985, The Fraser Committee visited 22 Canadian cities and heard from hundreds of organizations. Despite this range of organizations, sex workers' perspectives were barely included in the hearings.⁹⁴ Given the opportunity to advance their viewpoint against further criminal sanctions of prostitutes, VSW and *Kinesis* feminists submitted a brief to the Fraser Committee on Prostitution on January 13, 1984, demanding the repeal of Sections 193 (communication in public for the purpose of prostitution) and 195.1 (keeping of a bawdy house) of the Criminal Code.⁹⁵ Significantly, the position on prostitution advanced by VSW and *Kinesis* feminists in the Fraser hearing advocated for the removal of criminal sanctions against prostitutes' labour rights, in particular their right to communicate with clients in public and their right to work out of their own home. In advocating for the unique labour needs of prostitutes to advertise and sell their sexual services in environments free from harassment, violence, and police intervention, this feminist intervention echoed at least some of the politics of ASP articulated in *Kinesis* a year prior.⁹⁶

⁹³ Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage, File: VSW Board Meeting Minutes, June 1-1983-May 31, 1984, Personal Collection of Becki Ross.

⁹⁴ Emily van der Meulen, Elya M. Durisin, and Victoria Love, "Introduction," 9.

⁹⁵ Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage, File: Correspondence/Briefs, Personal Collection of Becki Ross.

⁹⁶ Dudley, "The Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes," 1, 15.

The public release of the Fraser Report on April 24, 1985, was reported on in *Kinesis* the following month.⁹⁷ Remarking that they and other women's groups had "yet to be provided with either the full report or a summary," the *Kinesis* writers nonetheless made an effort to summarize what they deemed the Fraser Committee's "controversial recommendations." These suggestions generally advanced an effort to move prostitution indoors, advocated for a specific law against street prostitution, while arguing for the state regulation of brothels, the ability to set up and work out of one's home, and the striking down of the prohibition against "living off the avails" of prostitution. Notably, the Committee sought to reduce the stigma and targeting of women working as prostitutes by reflecting the feminist argument that it was economic disparity between men and women that caused prostitution, and advocating for government funding "to community groups helping with social, health, employment, educational, and counseling services to prostitutes and ex-prostitutes."⁹⁸ In this news item, *Kinesis* writers demonstrated an effort to keep readers informed of the state's efforts to transform legislation governing prostitution; however, in contrast to a two-page critique of the Fraser Committee's recommendations on pornography in the subsequent issue of *Kinesis*, staff writers did not undertake a similar critique of the Fraser Committee's recommendations on prostitution.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Kinesis Staff Writers, "Fraser Committee Reports on Porn and Prostitution," *Kinesis* (May 1985): 1.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ van der Meulen, Durisin, and Love, "Introduction," 9. The authors discuss how the Fraser Committee report also recommended the extension of organizing rights to sex workers, particularly by allowing them to develop collective working environments within residences or commercial buildings.

Sex Worker Activisms

In the wake of the 1984 federal election, the Fraser Committee Report on Pornography and Prostitution fell into the hands of the newly elected Mulroney Conservative government, which overrode the Liberal recommendations of its members, ramping up state action against prostitution and pornography and further criminalizing sexual minorities and sex workers.

Kinesis's coverage of prostitution reached a peak between 1985 and 1986, with a dozen articles devoted to it, the majority of which were news articles reporting on four intertwined issues: the increasing violence against and murder of Vancouver prostitutes, the West End Injunction, the introduction and passing of Bill C-49, and the corresponding activism of sex workers.

While *Kinesis* continued to document sex worker activism in 1985, prostitution as a feminist issue was increasingly consolidated through a white, middle-class ideology of sexual violence. For instance, on February 27, 1985, 300 sex workers and allies gathered in Vancouver to protest and mourn the death of Linda Joyce Tatrai, an 18-year-old woman working as a prostitute who had been murdered in an east end parking lot.¹⁰⁰ Speaking at the rally, ASP representatives De Quadros and Arrington both implicated the West End Injunction in Tatrai's murder. As Arrington expressed, prostitutes demanded their right to safe work conditions "until such time as we have equality, until such time as men do not control our economic lives."¹⁰¹ However, a subsequent speech given by Lee Lakeman, a feminist representative of Vancouver Rape Relief, argued that poverty led Tatrai into prostitution, and that she was "trapped" there by a system of "pornographers," who included the "drug dealers," the Attorney General, and the government—"the men who bought and sold her body."¹⁰² While initially giving recognition to

¹⁰⁰ Patty Gibson, "Prostitution: Murder Exposes Rising Violence," *Kinesis* (March 1985): 1.

¹⁰¹ Arrington, quoted in *ibid.*

¹⁰² Lakeman, quoted in *ibid.*, 9.

“poverty” as an index of oppression for women working in prostitution, the feminist perspective articulated by Lakeman obscured the economic context by indicting “the pornographers.” This shifted the immediate material circumstances of sex work—in this moment, the particular violence directed against street level sex workers, the increased state surveillance of their labour, and their economic inequality—to a level of abstraction that yokes all women together as more or less equivocal victims of “pornography.”

In this imaginary, *all women* are potential victims, and the *real victim* of murder is concealed. As Sara Ahmed emphasizes, notions of shared pain are a “problematic foundation for politics.”¹⁰³ The articulation of women’s experience of gendered or sexual violence as commonalities between women facilitates “a way of reading pain as structural rather than incidental violence,” enabling feminist collectivities to form around shared injustices.¹⁰⁴ Yet Ahmed rightly cautions against the “fetishization” of the “wound into an identity” which tends to simplify the effects of “complex histories”—like colonialism, racism, and poverty—and universalizes women’s experiences.¹⁰⁵ Wendy Brown, similarly, advises that instead of forming “identity at the site of the wound,” it might be more productive to articulate identity “in motion, as temporal, as not-I.”¹⁰⁶ This shift in the direction of feminist identification—from identification with the *general* violence threatening women to the *particular* violence threatening sex workers—appropriates the injuries and struggles of sex workers to be used in promoting a feminist gender agenda.

¹⁰³ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press [2004] 2014), 32.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 172.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 173.

¹⁰⁶ Wendy Brown, “Wounded Attachments,” *Political Theory* 21, no. 3 (August 1993): 407.

Indeed, in expressing a kind of empathy via shared pain with sex workers and sex worker activists at the February 1985 demonstration, Lakeman's comments demonstrated another moment when a feminist attempt to support prostitutes on sex workers' terms was weakened by the feminist belief that sexual labour is always already caught up within a relation of gender and sexual violence. As Arrington so cogently stated in a letter to *Kinesis* later in 1985,

We don't need saving, we need what all women need, decent and affordable housing, money, jobs, food to cook and a way out of the everlasting circle of poverty...the meaningful and fundamental change that needs to be made is *money* to survive. An end to our poverty and hopelessness. That will not be accomplished by well-meaning and well fed, white middle class women who only know about our lives by observation and by hanging out in bars, who are able to return to their own homes out of the area.¹⁰⁷

Arrington resisted this ascription of victim-status in her assertion that women working in prostitution "don't need saving." Arrington's letter insisted that the critical difference between the economic analyses of poor women working on the street and those of feminists theorizing about these same women is a matter of *survival*, where finding "*money* to survive" is an act of agency, not victimhood. Arrington challenged the universalizing and fetishizing of street women's experiences, insisting on the violence of "the everlasting circle of poverty" as what required immediate change.

Reflected in a string of news articles in *Kinesis* in 1986, feminists continued to pay close attention to the increasing violence facing outdoor sex workers, and at the same time, documented sex workers' organized resistance to the violence. Shortly after the release of the Fraser Report—and disregarding all of its recommendations—the Progressive Conservative Minister of Justice, John Crosbie, introduced Bill C-49.¹⁰⁸ Bill C-49 became known as the anti-communication law, seeking to make illegal all forms of communication relating to prostitution,

¹⁰⁷ Marie Arrington, "Ask the Street Women What *They* Need," *Kinesis* (September 1985): 36, emphasis in original.

¹⁰⁸ van der Meulen, Durisin, and Love, "Introduction," 9.

to extend the notion of a public place to include vehicles, and to criminalize both prostitutes and their clients. By the end of 1985, Bill C-49 was passed with a majority vote of 111 to 35 and became entrenched in the Criminal Code as section 195.1 (later section 213).¹⁰⁹ Emboldened by the new anti-solicitation law, police across Canada began arresting prostitutes—and some johns—in record numbers.¹¹⁰

In February 1986, *Kinesis* reported on the local effects of Bill C-49, contrasting the championing of the new law by Vancouver Mayor Mike Harcourt and the vigilante Mount Pleasant Action Group with the impact of Bill C-49 on local prostitutes, in particular the intensified violence prostitutes were experiencing.¹¹¹ *Kinesis* feminist writer Gretchen Lang interviewed Arrington, who emphasized that Bill C-49 was a concerted attack on prostitute women by the state. Arrington described an alarming spike in the arrests of prostitutes, the intimidation and dishonest tactics used by police, the stigma of accruing criminal records, and, as a result of these factors, the intensified violence prostitutes faced nightly as they attempted to work. Lang also reported that following the passage of Bill C-49, in January of 1986 ASP had organized a women's "wave in" on the street to draw attention to the misogynistic, classist, and racist scope of the law, exacerbating police efforts to arrest women "communicating" in the streets of Vancouver's West End.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ For discussions of the effects of Bill C-49 in major cities across Canada, see the following chapters in *Selling Sex*: Joyce Arthur, Susan Davis, and Esther Shannon, "Overcoming Challenges: Vancouver's Sex Worker Movement," 130-146; Anna-Louise Crago and Jenn Clamen, "Ne dans le Redlight: The Sex Workers Movement in Montreal," 147-164; and Gayle MacDonald, Leslie Ann Jeffrey, Karolyn Martin, and Rene Ross, "Stepping All Over the Stones: Negotiating Feminism and Harm Reduction in Halifax," 165-180, in *Selling Sex: Experience, Advocacy, and Research on Sex Work in Canada*, eds. Emily van der Meulen, Elya M. Durisin, and Victoria Love (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013).

¹¹¹ Gretchen Lang, "Hookers Face Greater Dangers as Police Sweep the Streets," *Kinesis* (February 1986): 3.

As two more women working as prostitutes were reported missing or murdered in February 1986, *Kinesis* writer Esther Shannon argued that “it was obvious” that Bill C-49 was forcing prostitutes to move from their established working areas into more remote and dangerous locations to avoid arrest.¹¹² Shannon interviewed Arrington, who emphasized, “I’m putting the blame for the violence directly where it belongs, onto the police who passed this law. They did not take what would happen to prostitutes seriously, and they are still not taking it seriously.”¹¹³ In an effort to resist this new wave of state, police, and perpetrator violence, Arrington informed Shannon of a new sex worker organization, P.O.W.E.R. (Prostitutes and Other Women for Equal Rights) with the goal to repeal Section 195.1 of the Criminal Code. As Vancouver prostitute Michelle Lee unsuccessfully brought a constitutional challenge to the B.C. court on her charges of soliciting in a public place, P.O.W.E.R. created a Hookers Defense Fund to organize funds for women charged with these newly enshrined criminal offences.¹¹⁴

Kinesis feminists continued to document the intertwined state surveillance and violence directed against prostitutes and their corresponding activism. At the provincial level, in the spring of 1986 the B.C. provincial court determined that the anti-communication law was too vague, and that a vehicle was not a public place.¹¹⁵ On behalf of ASP and P.O.W.E.R., Arrington informed *Kinesis* that yet another prostitute, Lisa Marie Morrison, had gone missing. Meanwhile, the vigilantism against prostitutes in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood escalated with threats of increased violence against prostitutes if they remained working outdoors. By the fall of 1986, the combined efforts of the B.C. Attorney General to impose area restrictions and curfews on

¹¹² Esther Shannon, “Prostitution Law: First Victims,” *Kinesis* (April 1986): 1.

¹¹³ Arrington, quoted in *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Kinesis* Staff Writers, “Court Weakens Prostitution Law,” *Kinesis* (April 1986): 3. Note that Lee’s lawyer Tony Serba was not considered to be a feminist lawyer.

¹¹⁵ *Kinesis* Staff Writers, “Anti-Soliciting Law Running Into Barrier After Barrier,” *Kinesis* (May 1986): 3.

prostitutes, coupled with the spike in tourism to Vancouver for Expo '86, led to the increased vulnerability of and violent attacks against street-level prostitutes.¹¹⁶ In another interview with Shannon, Arrington lamented that the August 1986 murder of Donna Marie Kiss while working as a prostitute was again an effect of state violence against prostitutes, in particular the West End Injunction and Bill C-49. By December, Arrington reported to *Kinesis* writer Sonia Marino that Vancouver area correctional centres were being flooded with the “influx” of women being arrested on prostitution charges.¹¹⁷ Meanwhile, *Kinesis* reported that Vancouver lawyer Birgit Eder was working with P.O.W.E.R. to repeal Section 191.5 of the Criminal Code as a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Marino reported that P.O.W.E.R. was “asking women to lobby their members of Parliament to review C-49 and to stop the incarceration of women,” again advertising the Hookers Defense Fund as an avenue for feminist readers to support local prostitutes facing criminalization.

Feminist Abolitionism and Sex Worker Resistance

As sex worker activists feared, Bill-C49 immediately increased the surveillance, criminalization, and violence against sex workers, as well as criminalizing their political organizing with one another.¹¹⁸ The intention of these changes to the Criminal Code, now known as Section 213, were “to control the trade and keep it as invisible as possible” while legitimizing “moral judgment on women’s sexual conduct.”¹¹⁹ Despite *Kinesis*’s attention to the violent

¹¹⁶ Esther Shannon, “Vancouver Prostitutes Fear Increasing Violence,” *Kinesis* (September 1986): 3.

¹¹⁷ Sonia Marino, “Hallway Justice for Hookers,” *Kinesis* (December-January 1986-1987): 5.

¹¹⁸ Valerie Scott, “C-49: A New Wave of Oppression,” in *Good Girls/Bad Girls: Sex Trade Workers and Feminists Face to Face*, ed. Laurie Bell (Toronto: The Women’s Press, 1987), 100-103.

¹¹⁹ Brock, *Making Work, Making Trouble*, 7.

effects of Bill C-49 in its news coverage in 1986, a two-page position paper in September 1986 undermined the agency of sex workers in its argument that prostitutes were victims of their circumstance and “prostitution as an institution” needed to be abolished.¹²⁰ Megan Ellis, a prominent anti-violence activist and vocal anti-pornography organizer, challenged feminist readers to “re-think” their position on decriminalization, not simply for its effects on prostitutes, but, again, for women in general. Ellis claimed that the truth about prostitution was an “ambivalence in the women’s movement” that feminists had “been reluctant to confront.” In initially expressing empathy with women working as prostitutes to the “extent” that it was “a question of economics,” Ellis nonetheless viewed prostitutes as “exploited” and lacking agency. While prostitutes did not have much of a “choice” in Ellis’s mind, feminists did: they could do the work to ensure that the feminist position on prostitution became “a reality.” She wrote:

For this reason we cannot examine the labour performed by prostitutes as something separate from the industry of prostitution. And while it is important to work to increase protection against *dangers* faced by women who do that labour, that is not the same thing as working to protect their jobs. The issue of prostitution is not just about conditions of work, it is also about the nature of the work, and the consequences of the work for all women.¹²¹

In invoking the “pleasure and danger” framework for thinking about prostitution, Ellis reminded feminists that the mere existence of prostitution exposed all women to the dangers of commercial sex. Ellis challenged feminists to put pressure on the state to ensure that “buying or offering to buy ‘sex’ becomes a crime” as a way to ensure that “freedom for women does not mean freedom for men to buy women’s bodies.” Clearly, Ellis’s vision of women’s freedom did not include the freedom to sell sex. This abolitionist approach to prostitution blatantly disregarded sex workers’ autonomy, agency, dignity, and desires, as Ellis not only considered sex work illegitimate, but

¹²⁰ Megan Ellis, “Prostitution and Men: Is the Demand for Sex or Power?” *Kinesis* (September 1986): 12, emphasis added.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 13, emphasis added.

also sought to make it illegal for men to access sex workers. Ellis conveyed an approach to prostitution that refused to see sex work from the position of sex workers, overriding their insistence on labour rights and economic security. In inviting *Kinesis* readers to lobby the state to criminalize men paying for their desires, Ellis imagined her feminist readers as equally positioned to address the state, be protected from violence, circumscribe sexuality for others, and determine what kinds of work were acceptable for other women. Privileged by race, class, and sexual normativity, the exalted feminist subject made her claims to bodily integrity contra the heightened surveillance and criminalization of prostitutes. As the only theoretical article on prostitution published in *Kinesis* that year, the article took on a kind of authority on prostitution that undercut sex worker activists' contributions to recent news items.

As general reporting on prostitution waned in the following year, a three-page publication of an interview between Laurie Bell, a feminist writer, and Amber Cooke, a stripper, provided an important opportunity for the advancement of sex worker politics in the periodical.¹²² Excerpted from the book *Good Girls/Bad Girls*, which archived the 1985 conference proceedings from *Challenging Our Images: The Politics of Pornography and Prostitution*, the interview broached familiar feminist questions about sex work within a context that enabled a sex worker to respond on her own terms.¹²³ This approach granted Cooke authority over the dialogue, and she challenged point-by-point feminist myths, misconceptions, stereotypes, and assumptions about sex workers, in particular about strippers and prostitutes. One important aspect that Cooke

¹²² Laurie Bell, "Sex Trade Workers: Fitting Politics and Survival Together," *Kinesis* (November 1987): 10-12.

¹²³ Amber Cooke and Laurie Bell, "Sex Trade Workers and Feminists: Myths and Illusions," in *Good Girls/Bad Girls: Sex Trade Workers and Feminists Face to Face*, ed. Laurie Bell (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1987), 190-203.

stressed was the economic privilege that feminists had to theorize the politics of prostitution, while sex trade workers were “living the politics of it.”¹²⁴

Survival and politics are two different things. Engaging in politics is a luxury, but if you’re really, really busy just having to make your money, to keep your ends together, you’re going to take all the hours you can to make your money. You’re not going to be taking great huge gaps of time for meetings. If you went... and found ten sex trade workers you wanted to talk to, number one, you’d pay them because their time is money. No one’s come up with that one yet... It’s horrible to come and listen to what people have to say, and their attitudes, and struggle through all that. Especially when it’s taking up your time and money. It’s a lot easier to walk out the door and go back to doing what you’re doing with people that know what you’re doing. Where everyone isn’t standing around analyzing what you’re doing and talking about it for hours.¹²⁵

Cooke explained that this alienating feminist “talk” about sex work was not being met with political action to support sex workers, which would require “working with” sex workers on “practical maneuvers.” The concrete strategies Cooke asked feminists to engage in were actions that addressed the legal, labour, and economic context of sex worker’s lives, and not abstract questions about sexuality and violence. In requesting feminist solidarity on material issues (attending sex workers’ court trials, actions to repeal Bill C-49, agitating for health standards for dressing rooms in strip clubs), Cooke stressed that sex workers wanted what all workers want: good working conditions and payment for their work. Cooke specifically challenged feminists to shift their politics from a theoretical preoccupation with prostitution and the concepts of “choice,” “victims,” and sexual “morality,” to practical, legal, and economic-based actions that would improve sex workers’ working conditions in the present and future.

Cooke’s challenge to feminists set the stage for a handful of representational conflicts that erupted in 1988 that saw prostitutes defending themselves against the white, middle-class perspective on prostitution shared by some *Kinesis* writers and readers. As one *Kinesis* reader,

¹²⁴ Cooke, quoted in Bell, “Sex Trade Workers,” 12 (emphasis added).

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Helen Forsey, declared in a letter in February 1988, the feminist struggle against the “sex trade” was a struggle against “the phenomena themselves, not the women who work in them,” although she held sex workers accountable for their supposed ability to “bring in their wake countless harmful effects on the images and self-images of girls and women and the way we are treated in our everyday lives.”¹²⁶ Speaking on behalf of all feminists who share the abolitionist perspective, Forsey claimed, “we see harmful effects resulting from the very existence of these industries” and “envision a society where these phenomena would have no place.” In response to the possibility of feminists supporting sex workers, Forsey mused: “we wish to work with *them* wherever possible to develop better alternatives which can meet their needs without sacrificing *our* vision.” In defending her feminist “rhetoric” as grounded in the “reality” of all women being both “victim” and “survivors” of “real life in a patriarchal society,” Forsey asserted that the feminist perspective on sex work trumps that of sex workers, particularly because feminists “choose” to defy the patriarchal script that defines women as “commodities.” Yet in April of 1988, Kairn Mladenovic replied in another letter that “as a prostitute,” she found “Forsey’s letter extremely insulting” for her “assumptions” about sex workers.¹²⁷ Demonstrating a fatigue with the unrelenting work of defending sex workers to “opportunistic feminists,” Mladenovic “once again” asserted that “prostitution is not about sexuality, it’s about work, economics, and survival.” She firmly prioritized “sexism, racism, class oppression” as affecting sex workers’ labour and the particular kinds of violence they faced. Mladenovic demanded that feminists “quit blaming sex trade workers for men’s sexism” and “for men’s violence,” and that they look to their own behavior, actions, and politics for how they can “educate” themselves, take “direction” from, and

¹²⁶ Helen Forsey, “Sex Trade: Let’s Consider ‘Conversation’ Efforts,” *Kinesis* (February 1988): 17 (emphasis added).

¹²⁷ Kairn Mladenovic, “Reader Insulted,” *Kinesis* (April 1988): 21.

develop “accountability” to sex workers, beginning with a move on the part of feminists “to make us welcome.”

In the summer of 1988, sex workers again utilized *Kinesis*’ letters section to resist white, middle-class assumptions about prostitution. In June, *Kinesis* published an article by feminist writer Nora Randell who had attended a demonstration organized by sex workers in Vancouver’s downtown eastside. Rather than address the issues of poverty, racism, and violence against sex workers that the organizers prioritized, Randall made disparaging remarks about the clothing, hairstyles, and sexualities of the activists and allies.¹²⁸ P.O.W.E.R. responded in July with an expression of “absolute rage” at Randall’s “racism, whorephobia, and whatever else?”¹²⁹ P.O.W.E.R.’s collective voice articulated the pain of being stereotyped, caricatured, and depoliticized by acts of feminist “horizontal hostility.” In their address to *Kinesis* readers, the sex worker activists demanded that “all of you” feminists begin “to take responsibility for this whorephobia,” felt in either “silence” or “judgmental attitude[s]” towards sex workers. The women from P.O.W.E.R. lamented that “it is little wonder sex trade workers don’t trust feminists,” as “it has been with hard work and great difficulty that we attempt to form alliances or ask for support from the women’s movement, as we get trashed while spilling our guts.” The affective tone of P.O.W.E.R.’s letter expressed a painful awareness of the emotional work required to counter feminists’ objectifying and trivializing perceptions of sex workers and their issues. The publication of sex worker letters, however, reflects a willingness on the part of some *Kinesis* editorial staff to engage sex worker perspectives—and their challenges to feminists—in the periodical.

¹²⁸ Nora Randell, “A Night in the Streets,” *Kinesis* (May 1988): 10.

¹²⁹ P.O.W.E.R., “Horizontal Hostility,” *Kinesis* (June 1988): 20.

Sex worker activists continued to communicate with *Kinesis* writers as the numbers of murdered women in British Columbia reached devastating heights. In the spring of 1988, the murders of Rose Peters and Margaret Bedan in April brought the recent spate of women murdered to 21, the majority of them sex workers and many of them women of colour.¹³⁰ Speaking on behalf of P.O.W.E.R. to *Kinesis*, Jan Brown and Arrington noted that sexual assaults had also escalated in the past year. Reflecting on the impediment of growing violence to sex workers' ability to control their working conditions, Brown commented, "sex-trade workers can only organize so much" due to direct repercussions from the state, the police, and men in the industry. For instance, following a protest and memorial organized by P.O.W.E.R. in April of 1988, Stannard interviewed an anonymous exotic dancer who was subsequently fired from the Nelson Hotel for having attended the protest. John Pelleck, the owner of the hotel, told the dancer "those women got what they deserved": two of her co-workers, Darlinda Richie and Karen Baker, had also been murdered in 1986.¹³¹ Objecting to the treatment of the exotic dancer, P.O.W.E.R. activists launched a picket of the hotel demanding the owner fulfill his contract and follow through on money owed to the dancer. Sex workers' labour rights and conditions were increasingly precarious as men in positions of power were emboldened by the anti-prostitution discourse of the state; as Brown asserted, "It's not the paid work I have a problem with...it's being treated as disposable women that I won't accept."¹³² As articulated by both Brown and Joy Thompson, a feminist representative of the Women's Health Collective, the state's refusal to see prostitutes as entitled to "human rights" was being mirrored by male employers and customers

¹³⁰ Claire Stannard, "Prostitutes Organize Against Murders," *Kinesis* (May 1988): 4.

¹³¹ Anonymous, quoted in *ibid.*

¹³² Brown, quoted in *ibid.*

who decreasingly feared persecution, as it was prostitutes, not johns, who received the bulk of criminal charges.

The murder of Lisa Marie Gavin in August 1988 brought the number of women disappeared since the passing of Bill C-49 to 25.¹³³ Attending a protest and memorial for Gavin in August, *Kinesis* writer Cynthia Drum captured the anger and grief sex workers and their allies demonstrated at the loss of yet another one of their co-workers, friends, and community members. Mladenovic, who had worked as a prostitute for seven years, reported at the rally that sex workers had been keeping their own statistics, unbeknownst to the police, and that over the previous two years alone, “877 men attacked, raped, and beat up prostitutes.”¹³⁴ Given the one percent conviction rate for violent offenders, Mladenovic argued that rather than trying to solve the murders, police were using the murders as a “scare tactic to get women off the street and back in line.” This same tactic was reflected by the state in its use of legislation to criminalize women, equating their work with the violence they were increasingly subjected to. Mladenovic opposed this equation, arguing that it wasn’t the job that was inherently dangerous, but rather violent men. Arrington, speaking on behalf of P.O.W.E.R., asserted: “Lisa was more than a prostitute. She was a woman, a friend, a daughter, a sister, a lover, and a work-mate. She did not deserve the violence, just as no prostitute deserves the violence she is subjected to by the police, tricks, vigilantes, as well as the injustice system.”¹³⁵ As these statements reveal, sex workers resisted an analysis of prostitution as inherently harmful to women. Contra the convergence of feminist and state discourses of violence against women in the tragic murder of sex workers, sex workers developed analyses of violence against prostitutes as not simply acts of violence against women

¹³³ Cynthia Drum, “Another Death: No Help From “Injustice” System,” *Kinesis* (September 1988): 3.

¹³⁴ Mladenovic, quoted in *ibid.*

¹³⁵ Arrington, quoted in *ibid.*

in sexist society, but specific acts of violence that were epistemic, colonial, geographic, structural, and material.

The tendency for feminists and the state to naturalize violence as a condition of prostitution as opposed to an effect of intersecting oppressions and state, legal, and social discourses of disposability, was countered in one of the only position papers in *Kinesis* written by a sex worker and activist from P.O.W.E.R. in 1988. Painfully aware of how prostitutes were “treated as disposable women,” Mladenovic accurately predicted that prostitution “will continue to be a ‘hot’ feminist issue and debate for a few years to come.”¹³⁶ She wrote:

Unfortunately, feminists have had more of a say about our lives than we have had. Often the theories have been based on assumption, with no direction from or accountability to women working in the sex trades. Far too often this leaves us in separate corners, fighting each other, while men are literally getting away with murder. It is crucial that we build on our commonalities. It is also crucial that our differences are not ignored and explained away by the common myth that we are ignorant women playing into men’s sexism. Poverty and racism are the realities for women working the streets...¹³⁷

The uniqueness of this position paper draws attention to the absence of first-person editorial space given to sex workers in *Kinesis*, alongside a feminist preoccupation with what prostitution means for feminism. Mladenovic shared a real concern with feminists that violence against women was an important issue, but she theorized that violence is specific to sex workers, particularly those who are poor and racialized as non-white, by reporting on the ways in which the state, the police, and the court system targeted prostitutes and refused to protect them from assault. At the same time, Mladenovic emphasized the economic difficulties facing poor women and women of colour as significant factors in their daily lives, regardless of whether or not they were working in the sex industry. As a rebuttal to this collapsing of prostitution into a framework

¹³⁶ Kairn Mladenovic, “Many More Women Will Be Working the Streets,” *Kinesis* (July-August 1988): 8.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

of patriarchal violence against women, Mladenovic clearly listed the structural changes that all poor women require, with an end to sexual violence being only one index requiring transformation. She stated that women needed “decent, affordable housing; affordable universal daycare; job training programs, with good paying jobs afterwards; welfare rates increased above the poverty line; decriminalize prostitution; end violence against all women” and finally, the abolition of “racism and class oppression.”¹³⁸ Echoing the sex worker feminist discourse made legible in other contributions and interventions in *Kinesis* in the previous years, Mladenovic prioritized an anti-racist economic analysis for sex work that accounted for intersecting forms of oppression, and located prostitution as a specific form of labour that was targeted by the state, the police, and feminists for intervention. Critically, Mladenovic emphasized that the “differences” between women should not be absorbed into shared “commonalities,” insisting that forms of violence against women are both general and specific. In drawing attention to the political economic context wherein poor women labour in varying conditions of state-sanctioned colonial, racist, sexist, and classist violence, Mladenovic and P.O.W.E.R. resisted the feminist perspective that privileged gender and sexual violence.

Conclusion

In 1980s Vancouver, sex worker activists were at the forefront of the struggle for sex workers’ rights as they tirelessly worked to politicize the complex oppression of sex workers. Critically, tracing sex worker discourse in *Kinesis* reveals a political theory that challenges the feminist limits of “pleasure or danger,” asserting instead a politics of “living” and “survival” that

¹³⁸ Ibid., 12.

demands economic, labour, and legal independence.¹³⁹ Against a feminist theory that sought to eradicate prostitution as a stepping-stone in women's liberation, sex workers insisted on the material realities of racism and classism as conditioning their experiences of sexual violence within a context of resisting poverty. In defining prostitution as a gendered, classed, and racialized labour practice, sex workers contested a white, middle-class feminist lens that viewed prostitution as a "dangerous" problem for sexuality. Sex worker analyses and activism throughout the 1980s consistently demonstrated their desire to labour on their own terms, free from state, police, or civil intervention. However, the ratcheting up of state, police, and civil surveillance and harassment of sex workers increased their vulnerability, precarity, and illegitimacy as citizens. The more criminalized prostitution became, the more difficult it was for prostitutes to access police or legal protections. Concomitantly, the discourse of disposability the state and media produced about prostitution exacerbated sexual, gender, racist, colonial, classist, homophobic, transphobic, and whorephobic violence. Cast as illegitimate citizen-subjects, the women working in prostitution were abjected from the community and the state, emboldening violent predators within a context of legal impunity.

This chapter has provided an alternative story about the feminist sex wars, one in which "a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known."¹⁴⁰ In bringing into focus prostitutes' activism, theorizing, and resistance in *Kinesis* during the 1980s, I have insisted on the importance of sex workers and their political thinking about labour, race, and class to the history of the sex wars. As the "seething presences" of feminist engagement with prostitution, turning to sex workers' politics, writing, and testimonies is a reminder of the "something-to-be-done" about the ways in which sex workers' experiences, activism, and labour are remembered and responded

¹³⁹ Walters, "Introduction: The Dangers of a Metaphor," 1.

¹⁴⁰ Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, xvi.

to. Perhaps more critically, sex worker discourses resist feminists' appropriation of their experiences, activism, and labour to prove the overwhelming existence of sexual violence. In insisting that sexual violence is one amongst many other issues that shape their lives—including racism, colonialism, poverty, and classism—sex worker discourses oppose the reduction of their lives, labour, and losses to victimhood.

Feminist subjects at *Kinesis* and VSW demonstrated a range of efforts to intervene in increasing forms of state surveillance against prostitutes in the 1980s. Taken together, the activism by VSW feminists towards supporting the decriminalization of prostitution, and *Kinesis*' reporting of prostitution oppression and resistance, reflects an ambivalent recognition of the particular vulnerabilities facing prostitutes as often racially, economically, and sexually marginalized subjects at greater risk of criminalization than non-prostitute women. As the archival data on VSW I was fortunate enough to access was available only up to 1985, I cannot speculate about what actions VSW feminists pursued beyond the scope of *Kinesis* to support prostitutes in the late 1980s.¹⁴¹ Fortunately, the public record left behind by *Kinesis* writers has provided a valuable archive for assessing how feminists working at *Kinesis* and VSW considered the struggles of prostitutes to be significant women's issues. However, the hegemony of a white, middle-class ideology of sexuality, labour, and violence in *Kinesis* and VSW privileged feminists' own visions of equality over sex workers' desires and priorities. In the process, feminists established a theory of prostitution that was indelibly tethered to sexual violence and

¹⁴¹ In 2015, I undertook a brief archival research trip to the Vancouver Status of Women and was able to access VSW files on pornography and prostitution. Due to my time constrictions at the archive, I focused on reading and copying files clearly labeled as about pornography and prostitution, which amounted to a bulk of materials from the early 1980s, mostly attending to pornography. I also undertook original research on this topic as a Research Assistant to Becki L. Ross' *West End Sex Work Project* in 2010-11. I am grateful for Becki L. Ross's permission to revisit these materials, which have enriched my reading of this archive.

economic oppression, refusing sex workers' agency to circumvent both. As the following chapter reveals, the feminist preoccupation with pornography consolidated a framework of violence against women that ultimately overshadowed and undermined these efforts to work with prostitutes. In their overarching agenda to abolish all commercial forms of sexuality, feminists struggled to legitimize prostitutes on prostitutes' terms. The feminist insistence on prostitution as a kind of victimized subjectivity under patriarchy in turn objectified and subordinated sex workers to feminist visions of gender justice, forcing sex workers to become the unwilling subjects of the sex wars.

Chapter Four

Feminist Fault Lines: Theorizing Pornography as Violence Against Women

As I argued in the previous chapter, the feminist tendency to view sexuality, and in particular, sex work, within a framework of “pleasure and danger” naturalizes a link between prostitution and violence against women. In this chapter, I turn to how the link between violence and sex work is also established through the dominant feminist discourse on pornography in the 1980s, in particular in *Kinesis*. An effect of this link is to eschew the economic agency of sex workers and women in pornography as performing sexual labour. In adopting an anti-sexual commercialization agenda, most feminists in Vancouver struggled to meet prostitutes on their own terms as labourers exerting agency over their working conditions. Indeed, feminist discourses in the archive of *Kinesis* and VSW demonstrate how feminist theorizing and activism on prostitution were complicated by a simultaneous solidarity with and antagonism towards sex workers, an ambivalence that was exacerbated by the goals of the feminist anti-pornography movement.

As this chapter demonstrates, an important aspect of feminists’ inability to support prostitutes in their struggles against the state were feminists’ overarching desires for the abolition of all forms of sexual commodification, and, as a consequence, all forms of sex work. In turning to the anti-pornography movement in Canada, I show how feminists concerned with violence against women determined that video pornography was a turning point in women’s oppression *and* liberation in the late 1970s. In viewing gender-based violence as the primary index of women’s subordination, feminists in the early 1980s saw video pornography as both an effect of this sexist violence and a cause of it. By extension, they theorized all forms of commercial sexuality as inherently oppressive. In order to eradicate sexist oppression and gender violence overall, feminists active in *Kinesis* and VSW advocated for the immediate abolition of

pornographic materials as a stepping-stone towards women's freedom and equality. In their understanding of overarching patriarchy, the creation and dissemination of pornography were one source of violence against women, meaning that the control and elimination of pornography would be one solution to ending violence against women.

Through a critical practice of reparative reading I intervene in *Kinesis* and VSW's own archiving of pornography, examining the ways in which this feminist archive constructed pornography as an issue of sexuality and violence, and not as an issue of women's labour. The total exclusion of pornography workers voices, experiences, and perspectives in this archive speaks to the dominance feminists exerted over the emergent anti-pornography discourse. In imagining pornography as a two-dimensional representational space, feminists active in *Kinesis* and VSW glossed over the politics of labour inherent to women's participation within pornography as models and actors. In this imaginary, feminists analyzed women's participation in pornographic media as the forced objectification and non-consensual consumption of women's bodies, as opposed to yet another site of women's paid labour. Feminist theorizing about pornography manifested in a refusal to include women working in pornography as agentic subjects, emboldening anti-pornography feminists to take on a kind of authority about sexuality that enshrined them as the "*rightful* feminist[s] of the nation."¹ Perhaps better able to identify with the images of women in pornography—who were overwhelmingly white, thin, and able-bodied—than with the frequently poor, racialized, and queer women working as street-level

¹ Bunjun, "Organizational Colonial Encounters," 6 (emphasis in original). As Bunjun insists, the capacity for feminists to be legitimized as the "*rightful* feminist of the nation" is dependent on (at least) shifting relations to forms of class, race, and sexual privilege (ibid.). Bunjun's analysis is specifically attentive to the ways in which whiteness has dominated the Vancouver Status of Women since 1971. Her research has been integral to my analysis of the power imbalances and racial, economic, and sexual inequalities that have been endemic to the organizations of the Canadian women's movement.

prostitutes, feminist organizing against pornography bolstered an imagined “we” of feminism.² This “we” consolidated and reproduced an ideology of feminists as exalted citizen-subjects, predominantly benefiting white, middle-class women who prioritized freedom from male sexual aggression and dominance, felt entitled to state protection from abuse, and believed they were qualified to develop and reinforce sexual norms for others.³ In defining commercial sexuality and sexual transactions as illegitimate, anti-pornography feminists legitimized white, middle-class ideals about sexuality that cautioned there were limits to sexual freedom, silencing porn workers’ own narratives of their labour. Asserting the prevalence of “danger” in sexual practices outside of the “hierarchical system of sexual value,” feminists struggled to draw “a line...between sexual order and chaos.”⁴

To feminists organizing in opposition to pornography—presumably some of whom were economically, sexually, and to a lesser extent, racially diverse—the “woman” of pornography signified as far less complicated than the “woman” of prostitution; for one thing, the subject of pornography was objectified, frozen in the gaze of the viewer, her subjectivity literally paused, rewound, or fast-forwarded over. For another, she lacked context; unlike street-level prostitutes, she was visible only within the manufactured scene of the film or image.⁵ The “woman” of

² Mireille Miller-Young, “Putting Hypersexuality to Work: Black Women and Illicit Eroticism in Pornography,” *Sexualities* 13, no. 2 (2010): 219, 226. Miller-Young analyses the “labor marginalization of black female performers within the pornography industry” (Miller-Young, 219).

³ Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*. Thobani theorizes the exaltation of white womanhood in Canada.

⁴ Rubin, “Thinking Sex,” 279, 282.

⁵ Devin Faraci, “Why California is Porn’s Home State,” *Birth.Movies.Death.*, last modified August 23, 2011,

<https://www.birthmoviesdeath.com/2011/08/23/why-california-is-porns-home-state>.

Women working in pornography were most likely to be living in cities where they could get work in the industry. The majority of pornographic films in the 1970s and 1980s were filmed in American urban centers, like New York and Los Angeles. By the late 1980s, the majority of pornography was filmed in the San Fernando Valley, also known as Silicone Valley.

pornography became readily identified as a victim of male domination—either through her “forced” participation in the scene, or her representational subjection to verbal, physical, or sexual violence. I suggest that for the feminist subject “unwillingly” exposed to pornography—particularly those subjects who were white and middle-upper class—it became possible to project one’s perception of the self as a victim of gender violence onto the image of the “woman” working in pornography. In turn, this representation of “woman” became a harbinger of the threat of sexual violence posed to all women—particularly women who were not also burdened by the intersecting violence of poverty, racism, colonialism, homophobia, and so on.

Overall, the feminist analysis of pornography in the *Kinesis* and VSW archive failed to situate pornography as a media industry, with internal norms, rules, and conditions of labour. This is characteristic of what pornography scholar Allan McKee describes as an “exceptionalist approach” where, precisely because of its sexual content, pornography is seen as “somehow qualitatively different from other forms of culture” under capitalism.⁶ This white, middle-class feminist proscription of commercial sexuality fed into the state’s logic of moral hygiene, particularly as their demands for state intervention were recycled by the media into catchy bylines that distilled feminist concerns over violence against women into concerns about sexual morality.⁷ In concretizing feminist anti-violence theorizing into anti-pornography strategies, feminist discourses were easily collapsed into anti-sexual tracts. This oversimplification of feminist politics would not be granted nuance by legislative, business, or state interests; rather,

⁶ Allan McKee, “Pornography as a Creative Industry: Challenging the Exceptionalist Approach to Pornography,” *Porn Studies* 3, no. 2 (2016): 107.

⁷ Linda Hossie, “Porn: Women’s Anger is Justified,” *The Vancouver Sun* (Vancouver, B.C.), November 26, 1982; Keith Morgan, “Porn Man Fears for His Life,” *The Province* (Vancouver, B.C.), November 24, 1982; “Red Hot Plays Hide ‘n’ Seek,” *The Vancouver Sun* (Vancouver, B.C.), December 13, 1982. All accessed in Vancouver Status of Women Files, Off-Site Storage, File: Pornography.

feminist anti-pornography politics would be mobilized as anti-sex politics and utilized by the carceral state to justify the further surveillance and criminalization of sexual minorities. In retelling this history here, I hope to make apparent the ways in which sex workers—in particular, pornography workers—are the silenced yet seething presences within a feminist discourse of pornography as a form of gendered and sexual violence.

Sexuality, Violence, and Rape

The theoretical link between violence and sexuality was theorized in the high profile publications of white American feminist authors, including Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will* (1975), Andrea Dworkin's *Woman Hating* (1974), Susan Griffin's *Rape: The Power of Consciousness* (1979), and Lenore E. Walker's *The Battered Woman* (1980).⁸ In Canada, the 1977 publication of *Rape: The Price of Coercive Sexuality* positioned authors Lorene M. G. Clark and Debra J. Lewis as experts in the field, as demonstrated by Lewis's regular contribution to both the anti-prostitution and anti-pornography discourse generated in *Kinesis*.⁹ On the ground in Canada, feminists organized to support women experiencing gendered and sexual violence by establishing women's shelters, transition houses, and rape crisis centers in the early 1970s.¹⁰ By 1982, approximately 146 services for abused women had been created across Canada.¹¹ As Nancy Janovicek describes, anti-violence against women theorizing did important work in

⁸ Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movement in America's Second Wave* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Roth discusses how white women prioritized different issues than women of colour in the American context.

⁹ Clark and Lewis, *Rape: the Price of Coercive Sexuality*.

¹⁰ Margo Goodhand, *Runaway Wives and Rogue Feminists: The Origins of the Women's Shelter Movement in Canada* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2017).

¹¹ Judy Rebick, "End Violence Against Women," *Rise Up! A Digital Archive of Feminist Activism*, accessed May 30, 2019, <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/activism/issues-actions/violence-against-women/>.

moving analyses of gendered violence outside of the “gender-neutral analysis of family violence,” drawing attention to the patriarchal nature of violence against women in sustaining relations of dominance.¹² In advocating for, building, and sustaining services for women fleeing violence, this movement challenged the commonsense notions that the home and the family were safe or protective sites for women and children.

However, as Janovicek’s research reflects, a reticence to engage with the relation of racism and poverty to gendered and sexual violence contributed to the feminist anti-violence movement’s “vigilance” and “exclusivity” in promoting white, middle-class norms.¹³ In contrast, Indigenous women’s anti-violence activism directly exposed the intergenerational effects of colonial violence, in particular the assimilation policies of the Indian Act, residential schools, and the sixties scoop.¹⁴ Indigenous women and women of colour experienced and confronted these issues of racism and classism as they worked in white-dominated feminist organizations in the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁵ As Sarita Srivastava explains, feminist organizations in Canada embody “historical and gendered representations of racial innocence and superiority,” as feminist organizations enact both “feminist ideals of justice and egalitarian community and national discourses of tolerance, benevolence, and nonracism.”¹⁶ Positioned as national subjects through the exclusion of Indigenous and non-white “others,” white women’s legibility in the nation-state

¹² Nancy Janovicek, *No Place to Go: Local Histories of the Battered Women’s Shelter Movement* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 9.

¹³ Ibid., 14.

¹⁴ Kate Baxter, with Eliza Sasakamoose, Darlene Little, and Jean, “Ducking Bullets: Women from Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation Work to End Violence,” in *Listening to the Thunder: Advocates Talk About the Battered Women’s Movement* (Vancouver: Women’s Research Centre, 1995), 281-297.

¹⁵ Agnew, “Canadian Feminism,” 221; See also, C., “You’re Here Now, So What Are You Going to Do?” 71-76; Amrit, “White Racism: Power + Prejudice = Racism,” 77-81; Ninu Kang, “Being Many,” 83-91, in *Listening to the Thunder: Advocates Talk About the Battered Women’s Movement* (Vancouver: Women’s Research Centre, 1995).

¹⁶ Srivastava, ““You’re Calling Me a Racist,”” 34.

extends to their participation in feminist organizations, where white women become the gatekeepers of not only feminism, but of feminism's engagement with race, class, sexuality, and dis/ability.¹⁷ Benita Bunjun reflects that while some white, middle-class women "played a profound systemic role in shifting hegemonic feminism and hierarchies within organizations," these changes were nonetheless reflective of "white national entitlements which facilitated the *welcoming* and *inclusion* of the Other."¹⁸ As I argue in this chapter, this white, middle-class framework of the anti-violence movement also underscored feminist theory and activism on pornography.

In Canada, feminists expressed a burgeoning interest in theorizing pornography as evidence of patriarchal domination and violence in the late 1970s, responding in particular to the growth of the commercial pornography industry in magazines, film, and video. Following the development of the VHS tape in 1977, video pornography emerged as an updated form of sexual representation that became increasingly available for individual consumption.¹⁹ In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a new market for pornographic films developed as the films moved out of public theaters and into private homes. Pornography scholar Jennifer C. Nash describes the 1970s as the "golden age" of pornography, a period characterized by feature-length narrative films shown in public spaces to diverse crowds, including taboo interracial scenes.²⁰ In order to avoid criminal

¹⁷ Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, 21. Thobani discusses how hierarchical citizenship in Canada is triangulated between white citizens, people of colour, and Indigenous people.

¹⁸ Bunjun, "Organizational Colonial Encounters," 9.

¹⁹ Georgina Voss, *Stigma and the Shaping of the Pornography Industry* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 29.

²⁰ Jennifer C. Nash, *The Black Body in Ecstasy: Reading Race, Reading Pornography* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 62; Linda Williams, "Skin Flicks on the Racial Border: Pornography, Exploitation, and Interracial Lust," in *Porn Studies*, ed. Linda Williams (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 271-308. Williams analyzes the subgenre of interracial porn and its subversion of racial stereotypes; Daniel Bernardi, "Interracial Joysticks: Pornography's Web of Racist Attractions," in *Pornography: Film and Culture*, ed. Peter Lehman (New Brunswick:

charges of “obscenity” and to increase profit margins, pornographers in the 1970s developed an aesthetic that mirrored that of Hollywood films.²¹ In contrast, due to the new technology of home video and cable television, as the films were more frequently produced for viewing in the private home, the 1980s devolved into the “silver age” of pornographic films, typified by less linear plot lines, less narrative, lower budgets, as well as a change in tone that included more humour and more violence.²² One of the effects of this privatization of pornography was the production of niche films, resulting in the proliferation of films representing sexual and gender-based violence against women in the 1980s.

Interpreted as evidence of the violence women were encountering in the streets, in their relationships, and in their crisis work with other women, this spike in violent films dovetailed with the strengthening of the feminist anti-violence movement, providing a tangible object for feminists to oppose in both Canada and the United States. For instance, in October 1977, a film entitled *Snuff* debuted at a local theater in Rochester, New York. The poster for *Snuff* featured a pregnant woman being stabbed to death; central to the film’s appeal—and the emerging genre of “snuff” films—was the premise that the film depicted a real-time murder.²³ White feminists in Rochester created a Rochester chapter of Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) and began picketing the film, resulting in their decision to organize an “action” that was more

Rutgers University Press, 2006), 229. Bernardi critiques how Williams and other porn theorists have neglected analyzing how interracial porn reproduces racism.

²¹ Nash, *The Black Body in Ecstasy*, 62. The development of the golden age films in the USA directly corresponded to the Supreme Court decision *Miller vs. California* (1973), which defined obscenity “as materials that cultivate ‘prurient interest’ and lack ‘redeeming’ scientific, artistic, or cultural importance” (ibid.).

²² Ibid., 108.

²³ Carolyn Bronstein, *Battling Pornography: The American Feminist Anti-Pornography Movement, 1976-1986* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 87. *Snuff* premiered in the USA in 1975, and was met with controversy, high-ticket sales, and widespread feminist opposition; in New York City, the District Attorney led a criminal investigation into the film, which determined the woman “snuffed” was in fact an actress who was alive.

confrontational than the picket itself. One of the feminist organizers, Martha Geever, an independent filmmaker, documented this white, middle-class chapter of WAVAW's organizing in her 1979 film *A Crime Against Women*. Geever's film captured the fervour and energy of this anti-pornography politics in process, documenting feminist pickets, discussion groups, and ultimately, their vandalism of the theater—WAVAW spray-painted the building, chained the doors shut, and smashed the window where the poster was kept—for which they were arrested and subsequently acquitted.²⁴ WAVAW activism against *Snuff* ushered in a new era of feminist direct action against pornography; it also signified a moment where feminists recognized the utility of new media in proliferating their anti-pornography perspective as an antidote to gendered and sexual violence. Indeed, *A Crime Against Women* became a touchstone of burgeoning feminist anti-pornography analysis in Vancouver, Canada, as feminists presented a screening of the film at VSW, and heralded the film as “an important document” in a subsequent issue of *Kinesis*.²⁵ In resignifying *Snuff* from a product of patriarchal oppression into an action for women's resistance, feminists began experimenting with how to retool pornography for their own liberatory purposes.

The links between sexuality and violence, in particular the commodified sexuality of pornography, were established in *Kinesis* by 1980. Indeed, the very first publication of *Kinesis* in 1980 reflected on a National Action Committee on the Status of Women conference held in Vancouver in the fall of 1979, entitled “Women in Jeopardy.”²⁶ As the *Kinesis* writers express,

²⁴ Martha Geever, *A Crime Against Women* (1979; Rochester, New York: Home Video, 1979), DVD.

²⁵ Kinesis Staff Writers, “February Media Night Focussing [sic] on Women and Violence,” *Kinesis* (February 1980): 26; Jillian Ridington, “Crime Against Women: How Feminists Took on a Snuff Movie,” *Kinesis* (August 1980): 13.

²⁶ Kinesis Staff Writers, “Women Gaining Strength to Confront Violence of Women Abuse,” *Kinesis* (December-January 1979-1980): 8.

theorizing and speaking about women's vulnerability to sexual violence was a central theme of the event. In another instance of appropriating pornography to advance the feminist liberation project, Jillian Ridington and Peg Campbell provided a slide show of the sexual imagery depicted in commercial advertising, erotica, and pornography.²⁷ In their reflection on Ridington and Campbell's presentation, the authors argued for situating pornography within the context of "woman abuse," asserting that "violent, coercive images of women and pornography are the theory, rape, battering, and sexual harassment are the practice."²⁸ For *Kinesis* writers, the importance of pornography as a women's issue was "clear," as women were more "easily" able to distinguish between erotica—which "celebrates mutualistic sexuality"—and pornography—that "which coerces and degrades women."²⁹ In the analysis presented by VSW feminists and subsequently reproduced in *Kinesis*, pornography was imagined as both cause and effect of sexual and gendered violence against women.

In Vancouver, this preoccupation with pornography was precipitated by an increased focus on violence against women, in particular resistance to rape.³⁰ In articulating a feminist politic against rape, feminists theorized rape as a form of abuse within a continuum of violence against women.³¹ Since its establishment as the first rape crisis centre in Vancouver in 1972,

²⁷ Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage, File: Counter-Hegemonic Media-File: *Kinesis*, Personal Collection of Becki Ross. Recall that Jillian Ridington served an important role in VSW and *Kinesis* in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1978 Ridington was the Vice-President of VSW, between 1980-81 she was on the Board of Directors and the Constitution Committee. In 1979, Ridington also co-authored "Prostitution: The Visible Bargain," which was subsequently published in *Kinesis*.

²⁸ *Kinesis* Staff Writers, "Women Gaining Strength," 8.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Mary Winder, "Women Against Violence: Violence Against Women is the theme for UBC women's week," *Kinesis* (February 1980): 27; *Kinesis* Staff Writers, "Rape Victim's Right to Privacy Challenged by Justice Minister," *Kinesis* (July-August 1982): 4.

³¹ *Kinesis* Staff Writers, "Rapists Can Have Honest Belief in Consent Without Reasonable Cause?" *Kinesis* (July 1980): 5.

Vancouver Rape Relief was at the helm of theorizing rape and violence against women in *Kinesis*.³² Krin Zook, a member of Rape Relief, wrote in 1979 that the work of crisis centres was not only immediate rape crisis support, but to impart “an overall ideology and strategy for liberating women.”³³ One aspect of this intertwined action-strategy was an unprecedented belief in women’s experiences of rape, a radical act that “validates her reality that he, not she, was responsible for the rape.” Against a backdrop of sexual violence where a “spousal exemption” determined that men could not be held criminally culpable for raping their wives, the early 1980s rape crisis movement sought to empower women to hold men responsible for their violent actions.³⁴

Significantly, Vancouver Rape Relief radical feminists were skeptical of the ability of legal routes to achieve justice for survivors of rape, observing, “Women call the criminal justice system their second rape.”³⁵ Feminist rape crisis workers expressed resistance to seeking legal remedies for rape, naming this kind of feminist strategy “reformist.”³⁶ A reformist approach to rape, Rape Relief worker Deb Friedman argued in 1980, did little to eradicate rape but sought instead to “reduce” instances of it. In failing to examine the overall context of violence against women, Friedman claimed rape reforms would leave rape intact as a condition of women’s

³² Rebick, “End Violence Against Women”; Kinesis Staff Writers, “Rape Relief Takes Us on a Tour of the Local War Zone,” *Kinesis* (April 1980): 18.

³³ Krin Zook, “Rape Relief Debate: Why Institutions Do Nothing to Stop Rape,” *Kinesis* (December-January 1979-1980): 12.

³⁴ Constance Backhouse and Lorna Schoenroth, “A Comparative Survey of Canadian and American Rape Law,” *Canada-United States Law Journal* 48, no. 6 (1983): 48; Lucinda Vandervort, “Honest Beliefs, Credible Lies, and Culpable Awareness: Rhetoric, Inequality, and Mens Rea in Sexual Assault,” *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 42, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 632-640. Vandervort discusses two controversial cases in the early 1980s—*Pappajohn v. The Queen* (1980) and *R. v. Sansregret* (1983)—which tested the use of the “honest belief” in consent as an accepted legal defense.

³⁵ Zook, “Why Institutions Do Nothing,” 12.

³⁶ Deb Friedman, “Rape Relief Debate: Should We Increase Convictions, or Lower Expectations?” *Kinesis* (February 1980): 14.

existence. Friedman also noted that the legal system was “classist” and “racist,” and its criminal convictions—or lack thereof—would reflect these biases. Rape Relief’s political strategy of crisis counseling was to empower women through radical feminist analysis, arguing that, “Anger is what is needed, anger at the conditions of an oppressive society and at the people who keep it that way. Without anger there won’t be any change.”³⁷ In advocating a shift in women’s ideologies of sexual norms and sexual violence, radical feminist analysis encouraged women to access anger as a personal resource in the fight to end violence against women. Within this logic, an analysis of pornography became one facet of the action-strategy of eliminating rape.

The establishment of a causal relationship between pornography and gendered violence reflected a narrowing of the anti-violence against women movement into the anti-pornography agenda within some Vancouver feminist communities. For instance, in 1980, the Vancouver feminist activist chapter of WAVAW undertook “a federally funded project focusing on pornography, violence in the home and sexual harassment in the workplace,” resulting in their slideshow “Reclaiming Ourselves: A Feminist Perspective on Pornography.”³⁸ A position paper drawn from this research was subsequently published in *Kinesis* in June of 1980, which linked male domination with men’s propensity for the sexual victimization of women, arguing: “Not only have men frequently defined and used their genitals as weapons but they have glorified its shape in symbolism.”³⁹ In examining the exaggerated “phallus” as a symbol of power in society, the authors drew a parallel between pornography’s expectation that women “glorify” and express an “eager” desire for the penis and the social expectation that women be submissive and

³⁷ Zook, “Why Institutions Do Nothing,” 12.

³⁸ Kinesis Staff Writers, “WAVAW Completes Research Project, Holds Open House,” (March 1980): 24.

³⁹ Marion Barling, Mickey McCaffrey, Suzanne Perreault of Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW), “Reclaiming Ourselves: A Feminist Perspective on Pornography,” *Kinesis* (June 1980): 8.

subservient to men. The authors argued that pornographic images of women “bound, gagged, beaten and forced into all kinds of sexual acts” correlated with women’s subordination, debasement, and victimization in real life.⁴⁰

In their efforts to eradicate rape, feminists active in the anti-violence movement in Vancouver also drew on American feminist frameworks of violence against women in establishing “danger” as a limit for sexual liberation. For instance, during Kate Millett’s well-attended keynote speech at the University of British Columbia’s Women’s Week in February of 1980, Millett lamented that heterosexual relationships are irreducibly reminiscent of a “master-slave relationship,” and that women in relation to men inevitably experience “rape of one form or another.”⁴¹ This essentialist assumption about violence as an inherently male capacity—not to mention the uncritical appropriation of a historical relationship of white supremacy—was part and parcel of the American radical feminist tradition, a perspective that also governed some sectors of the anti-violence against women movement in Canada.⁴² In Vancouver, this association of men with inevitable violence was contentious, and feminists differed in their perspectives on the responsibilities of women and men to be accountable for rape and contribute to anti-rape activism.⁴³ As the feminists of WAVAW sought to distinguish their politics from the radical feminists of Rape Relief, resulting in the establishment of WAVAW’s rape crisis centre, debate over feminist responses to rape would contribute to a fissure in the anti-violence

⁴⁰ Ibid., 20.

⁴¹ Janet Reche, “Women Against Violence: Kate Millet Speaks of Violence Against Women in *The Basement*,” *Kinesis* (March 1980): 24.

⁴² Alice Echols, “Cultural Feminism: Feminist Capitalism and the Anti-Pornography Movement,” *Social Text* 7 (1983): 37.

⁴³ Margo Dunn, “Is There a Place for Men Inside the Women’s Movement?” *Kinesis* (November 1980): 9.

movement.⁴⁴ When rape legislation was federally recoded as sexual assault with the passing of Bill C-127 in the fall of 1982, it also admitted for defense the inclusion of victims' previous sexual history and the "honest belief" shield.⁴⁵ Feminists expressed prescient concerns that the new legislation would fail to understand rape as a form of violence, and would inevitably lead to a "second rape" for women.⁴⁶

To prove that pornography was a tangible symbol of rape and of violence against women, feminists active in the anti-violence movement in Vancouver had to look no further than the pornography outlets cropping up in their neighborhoods. Lee Lakeman, an advocate at Rape Relief since the 1980s who was also active in defining prostitution as a feminist issue, recalls that the opening of Red Hot Video in Vancouver meant that women "had to walk up the street everyday going to the rape crisis center, going past this hate machine on our block."⁴⁷ The ubiquity of pornography was testament to the kinds of violence women were reporting to one

⁴⁴ See, WAVAW/Rape Crisis Group, "Vancouver Feminists Withdraw Support from Rape Relief," *Kinesis* (May 1982): 18; Kinesis Staff Writers, "WAVAW/RCG Plans Rape Crisis Service," *Kinesis* (June 1982): 16; Kinesis Staff Writers, "WAVAW Reports Plans for Crisis Centre," *Kinesis* (July-August 1982): 25; Vancouver Rape Relief, "Rape Relief Reiterates Commitment to Stay Open," *Kinesis* (June 1982): 17; "Readers Respond to WAVAW/RCG Letter," *Kinesis* (June 1982): 18; Vancouver Status of Women Staff, "Caught in the Crossfire: A View from Within," *Kinesis* (June 1982): 19; Rose-Marie Larson, Inessa Ormond, Sharon Lund, "WAVAW Meeting One-Sided, Unprincipled," *Kinesis* (July-August 1982): 27.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth A. Sheehy, "Legal Responses to Violence Against Women in Canada," *Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme* 19, no. 1-2 (1999): 65. The new sexual assault legislation was connotative of "a three-tiered offence, with higher sentence ceilings as the offence involves more violence and/or injury" (ibid.); see also, Kinesis Staff Writers, "Bill C-127 Passes," *Kinesis* (September 1982): 1; Hilarie McMurray, "Rape Bill: No Victory for Women," *Kinesis* (October 1982): 1.

⁴⁶ Kinesis Staff Writers, "Bill C-127: How Did We Get Here? Where Do We Go From Here?" *Kinesis* (October 1982): 10-11; Joanne Ranson, "Past Sexual History: The Victim on Trial," *Kinesis* (November 1982): 5.

⁴⁷ Lee Lakeman, "Lee Lakeman on Red Hot Video, the Wimmin's Fire Brigade and the Struggle Against Pornography," Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter, accessed May 30, 2019, <https://www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/learn/resources/podcast-lee-lakeman-red-hot-video-wimmins-fire-brigade-and-struggle-against-pornography>.

another, graphic depictions of the violence, coercion, and abuse they were experiencing in their lives.⁴⁸ In a moment where the state refuted women's authority on their own experiences of rape and assault, pornography provided necessary evidence; pornography was a visible record of the kinds of abuse women endured. Yet in focusing on the ways women were depicted in pornographic media, anti-violence feminists ignored, belittled, and discriminated against the actual women working in pornography. As one woman employed at a Red Hot Video Store in 1982 blatantly stated to a feminist protester, "You don't understand the industry."⁴⁹ In the following section I trace feminist theorizing that saw pornography as a kind of violence against women, a perspective that relied on and reified the refusal to recognize sexual labour as a legitimate form of work.

Pornography as Violence Against Women

The white, middle-class perspective that dominated the anti-violence feminist movement theorized pornography as a form of violence against women, as demonstrated by the bulk of writing on pornography in *Kinesis* during the early 1980s. In viewing pornography as both a cause of women's oppression and, through its eradication, a precursor for women's liberation, the development of anti-pornography theory sought to draw women together through a shared identification as "victims" of male violence. Debra J. Lewis, an advocate at the Vancouver Battered Women's Services who also contributed to the VSW and *Kinesis* feminist perspective

⁴⁸ Gail Peain, "Video Chain Expands Despite Outcry," *Kinesis* (October 1982): 1. In 1982, twelve Red Hot Videos opened in Vancouver, and one opened in Victoria.

⁴⁹ Steve McClure, "The Heat is On at Red Hot," *Vancouver Courier* (Vancouver, B.C.), December 15, 1982, 6.

on prostitution, understood pornography as “the ideological arm of violence against women.”⁵⁰ Lewis emphasized that violence against women is used to control women in general, and “all sexual exchanges between men and women are potentially coercive,” including “virginity, monogamy, and marriage.”⁵¹ Lewis theorized pornography as a hyper-real rendition of this context, where women are forced to use their bodies and sexualities as a form of “bargaining power” with men.

This view that pornography causes sexual violence was echoed by Regina Lorek, a member of Rape Relief and the British Columbia Federation of Women’s Committee to Stop Red Hot Video.⁵² Lorek asserted that women’s participation in pornography was non-consensual, and she disclosed being coerced into taking nude photos as a 16 year-old trying to become a model.⁵³ In making a leap from this nonconsensual experience of nude-modeling to the consensual acting of women in the pornography industry, Lorek claimed that pornography legitimized and encouraged sexual violence: “Most of the violence done to women is not done in the making of pictures or movies. It is done by men who rape women, men who pressure women into sexual acts as a result of pornography, and men who less and less frequently see rape as aberrant anti-social behavior. I’m sure some men are encouraged to rape by watching or using pornography.”⁵⁴ In assessing that “most of the violence” women experience is not in the pornography industry, but rather is an effect of pornography’s promotion of rape, Lorek establishes pornography as a wider social problem that affects *all* women, at once making assumptions about and obscuring the actual experiences of women working in pornography. In establishing pornography as

⁵⁰ Debra Lewis, “Pornography: A Feminist Analysis, Misogyny, Pornography, and Violence Against Women,” *Kinesis* (April 1983): 6.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Regina Lorek, “Porn: Who’s Hurt? Who Benefits?” *Kinesis* (April 1983): 8-9.

⁵³ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 9.

evidence of violence against women, both Lewis and Lorek credited pornography with the prevalence of rape, abuse, and coercion in women's everyday lives.

This representation of an anti-pornography feminist perspective in *Kinesis* located all women as the victims of pornography, as "objects" that are "for sale" as "commodities" within a representational frame where "the surveyors are men" and "the surveyed are women."⁵⁵ The analysis of women as objects available for male consumption was extended into a critique of the pornography industry as both profiting from women and promoting violence against women through the economic "possession of the woman."⁵⁶ For instance, Vancouver WAVAW members Megan Ellis and Jan Barnsley claimed that women's empowerment through the women's liberation movement had led to a rise in pornography as a vindictive outlet for male violence and domination.⁵⁷ They wrote: "What is being sold is power; for a mere \$29.95, one acquires control of the product and the masculine potency to gain possession of the woman. Possession of the woman is acquired by the sexual taking of her. So the ad promises gratification on two levels, economic and sexual."⁵⁸ According to Ellis and Barnsley, pornography had enabled a commercial mode for men to exercise domination over women.

Anti-violence feminist perspectives on pornography occasionally engendered a critique of capitalism by attempting to examine pornography as a commercial industry. As Rape Relief advocates Lee Lakeman and Joni Miller argued in 1985, "porn is also a way to make violence against women turn a profit."⁵⁹ Lakeman and Miller invoked the specter of rape to mobilize

⁵⁵ Barling, McCaffrey, and Perreault of (WAVAW), "Reclaiming Ourselves," 7.

⁵⁶ Megan Ellis and Jan Barnsley of the Working Group on Sexual Violence, "What Can We Do About Pornography?" *Kinesis* (March 1983): 3.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Lee Lakeman and Joni Miller, "Who Is This Man? And Why Is He Trying to Rape Us?" *Kinesis* (June 1985): 14.

feminists as potential victims into a collective force opposing pornography. Lakeman and Miller stated that in 1984, Canadians spent \$500 million on pornography, with a total of \$64 million spent on “illegal” pornography. In their attempts to theorize how men financially profit from pornography, Lakeman and Miller endeavored to expose the commercial interests of Jim Pattison, a local wealthy businessman, politician, and the incumbent head of Vancouver’s EXPO 1986. They detailed Patterson’s investment in a telecom business that sold pornography, and his role in agitating for the West End Injunction, which forcibly removed sex workers from the streets of Vancouver’s West End in the summer of 1985.⁶⁰

While offering insight into one aspect of the political economic context of the pornography industry in Vancouver, Lakeman and Miller nonetheless neglect an analysis of the labour involved in making pornography, casting women working in pornography as sexual objects without agency: “Pornography is a great improvement on the age old scam of pimping, because a man can now vastly increase the potential for profits by selling one woman's body many more times to a much bigger market. He pays her only once, if at all.”⁶¹ In framing commercial sex as indelibly tied to coercion and violence, pornography takes on a life of its own that far exceeds political economic frames. In this imaginary, pornography is linked to prostitution as interlocking systems of the overall violent, sexual exploitation of women, where men—not women workers—profit from the sexual labour of women. Lacking a labour perspective, the effect of their argument denies sex workers’ consciousness and their abilities to exert control over their sexual, economic, and labour conditions. Indeed, in a subsequent article

⁶⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁶¹ Lakeman and Miller, “Who Is This Man?” 14.

by Lakeman and Miller, they claimed that “prostitutes” (not actresses and models) were “*forced* to star in hard-core films or pose for publications.”⁶²

In emphasizing a causal link between sexual violence and pornography, the feminist position on pornography that dominated *Kinesis* in the early 1980s sought to emphasize that pornography’s inherent threat of violence against women was the central issue at stake in the debate. As the cause-effect theory of sexual violence became the touchstone of anti-pornography feminist analysis in the early-mid 1980s, this perspective assumed that representation is equivalent to actual material harm.⁶³ In yoking together all feminists under the assumed category of “women” who were potential “victims” of the violence of pornography, feminists exploited the emotion of fear. The feminist emphasis on fear as a reaction to the threat of violence acted to inspire anger at the assumed subordination of women as objects and victims and emphasized the material harm associated with pornography. Indeed, the dedication of the influential American collection *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography* succinctly captures this ideology: “To the thousands of women in this country and abroad who recognize the hatefulness and harmfulness of pornography, and who are organizing to stop it now.”⁶⁴ Not only are these feelings of fear and anger assumed to be shared by all women encountering pornography—the “recognition” that pornography produces both “hate” and “harm” against women—but that it is through this shared recognition that a specific feminist “emotional community,” warranting particular feminist actions, is formed.⁶⁵

⁶² Ibid., 14 (emphasis added).

⁶³ Miller-Young, “Putting Hypersexuality to Work,” 223.

⁶⁴ Laura Lederer, *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1980), 5.

⁶⁵ Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions,” *Passions in Context* 1, no. 1 (2010): 11.

But who is entitled to feel fear? And what, exactly, does this fear entail? Sara Ahmed analyses how “fear is overdetermined,” specifically in how it is unevenly felt and mobilized by different bodies.⁶⁶ Fear of “others” strengthens the bond of communities with shared gender, racial, economic, or sexual identities. Racism, for instance, is created and reinforced through circuits of fear that privilege the bodily integrity and emotional safety of those subjects who already possess greater racial privilege in affective encounters. In effect, this creates a binary between subjects who experience fear (in a settler-colony like Canada, those who are racialized as white), alongside those who are imagined as objects of fear (under colonialism and white supremacy, this extends to those subjects who are racialized as non-white). Ahmed’s reading of feminist discourses suggests that feminists have tended to interpret fear less as “an immediate body response to an objective danger,” but as a “response to the *threat* of violence.”⁶⁷ This divergence in the value of fear responses privileges certain narratives of violence over others, particularly from those widely viewed as entitled to protection from danger.

Within feminist discourses on pornography, feminist concerns gained precedence over the insights, feelings, and experiences of women working in pornography, prostitution, peep shows, and strip clubs. I suggest that the fear of sexual or gendered violence cannot solely be responsible for the feminist preoccupation with pornography. As Amber Cooke, a sex worker and sex worker activist reflected in a conversation with Laurie Bell, some feminists were also afraid of *women* working in the sex industry for a variety of reasons, including their race, class, gender and sexualities, as well as their status in the industry.⁶⁸ Feminist theorizing of pornography was not only harnessed to a fear of violence but also to a fear of the sexualization of women in the public

⁶⁶ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 62, 68.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 69, 70 (emphasis in original).

⁶⁸ Cooke and Bell, “Sex Trade Workers and Feminists,” 197.

sphere taking place in an exchange for money. This anxiety about commercial sexuality, and the colonial, racist, classist, whorephobic, homophobic, and transphobic fears about women who do the work, influenced the ongoing reluctance of feminists to address pornography as a labour industry.⁶⁹

I consider the history of Take Back the Night to be an important example of the ways in which anti-violence activism narrowed into a project to eradicate not only pornography, but also the entire commercial sex industry, through forming feminist community around shared subjects of fear and anger. In the United States, the first Take Back the Night March was “staged through San Francisco’s pornography district,” an action inspired at the Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media Conference in November 1978.⁷⁰ This was followed in 1979 by the New York chapter of Women Against Pornography’s bi-weekly pornography “tours,” where feminists led groups of twenty women through Times Square to “expose” them to “the thriving pornography industry.” In Canada, Rape Relief’s “Fly By Night Collective” also organized events to “take back the night” in 1978 and 1979.⁷¹ The following year, the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres, attended by 100 women representing 33 organizations, prioritized developing a feminist perspective on abolishing pornography and establishing a national action, Women Take Back the Night, on August 2, 1980.⁷² The feminist concept of “women taking back the night” sought to resist the cultural common sense that women were not only more vulnerable at night, but that women were also responsible for ensuring their own safety from violence.

⁶⁹ Clarissa Smith and Feona Atwood, “Anti/Pro/Critical Porn Studies,” *Porn Studies* 1.1-2 (2014): 15.

⁷⁰ Lederer, *Take Back the Night*, 15.

⁷¹ Rebick, “End Violence Against Women.”

⁷² Kinesis Staff Writers, “August 2: Women Took Back the Night Across Canada,” (August 1980): 4. The Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres also prioritized supporting abortion resources and client anonymity in crisis centres.

While feminists collectively sought to challenge the belief that a woman out in the streets at night would be perceived as asking for trouble, their criticism reinforced the cultural whorephobia that women should feel ashamed or offended to be mistaken for a prostitute. In turning to the strolls for their activism, anti-violence feminists simultaneously descended on the workplaces of sex workers—women who were already “taking back the night” on their own terms, so to speak. Marie Arrington, a founding member of Vancouver’s sex worker activist group the Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes (ASP), insisted that the women who were employed in the public sex industry in effect felt these kinds of feminist tours through Vancouver as “intimidating or degrading.”⁷³ Made to endure criticism, moral condemnation, and a patronizing concern about their livelihoods while they were working, sex workers were shamed and humiliated by the feminist appropriation of their workplaces for political agitation.⁷⁴ Indeed, the Women Take Back the Night march on Friday, September 17, 1982, led by Rape Relief and also attended by WAVAW/RCG, was explicitly focused on abolishing commercial sexuality, with two of three stops on the march occurring at pornographic video stores.⁷⁵ Alongside anti-violence feminist efforts to draw attention to and end sexual violence, Take Back the Night’s preoccupation with the sex industry as a site of violence also signified the white, middle-class, and settler-colonial sense of entitlement that feminism possessed in its wrestling of ownership of the streets from poor, racialized, Indigenous, and queer sex workers and street women.

Another feminist cultural object that galvanized anti-pornography organizing in Canada and established sex workers as extrinsic to feminism was the release of the National Film Board

⁷³ Marie Arrington, “Community Organizing,” in *Good Girls/Bad Girls: Sex Trade Workers and Feminists Face to Face*, ed. Laurie Bell (Toronto: The Women’s Press, 1987), 106.

⁷⁴ Priscilla Alexander, “Interview With Nell,” in *Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*, eds. Frederique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1987), 54.

⁷⁵ Hawley Neuert-Shields, “Women Protest, ‘Take Back the Night,’” *Kinesis* (October 1982): 3.

(NFB) of Canada documentary *Not a Love Story* in the fall of 1981. As one of the sole engagements with actual sex workers produced by feminists, *Not a Love Story* is an important text that captures the ambivalence that feminists had towards commercial sex, as well as a fumbling towards creating solidarity with sex workers that was ultimately undercut by abolitionist goals. It is instructive to examine *Not a Love Story* here not simply for its celebrated place in the *Kinesis* and VSW archive, but also for its contribution to contemporary remembering of the feminist sex wars. In reading *Not a Love Story* reparatively, there is space to interpret the film as more complex than simply anti-pornographic propaganda. Indeed, the film's backstory discloses a less linear trajectory that grants nuance to the intentions of the film. For instance, in 1979, the Montreal feminist film collective "Foreplay" attempted to create "an erotic film for and by women," but struggled to produce a shared representation of women's eroticism that actually felt erotic.⁷⁶ One member of Foreplay, Bonnie Sherr Klein, who was also an employee at the NFB women's unit, *Studio D*, shifted these ideas into a *Studio D*-funded documentary about women's relationship to sexuality and pornography in 1980.⁷⁷ Originally, Klein recalls that she set out to provide "a balancing portrait of explicit sex that was woman positive," and recruited a local sex worker activist and stripper, Lindalee Tracey, to co-star in the film.⁷⁸ In terms of representing pornography, the film included images from pornographic magazines and films, giving particular attention to fetish images that represented violence against women, while also

⁷⁶ Sullivan, *Not a Love Story*, 23. Sullivan's measured analysis has been instrumental in my own thinking about *Not a Love Story* and its place in this history.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 10. As Klein reflects, "It can be readily conceded that most of the leaders in the women's movement, as well as those inside Studio D, were white, straight, and middle-class. At times, this privilege overwhelmed debate as recognitions of racial, class, and sexual inequities within the women's movement were taken as personal accusations" (Klein, quoted in Sullivan, 10).

⁷⁸ Ibid., 24. As Sullivan reports, Lindalee Tracey negotiated with Klein and the NFB to be paid for her participation in the film, a rare occurrence in documentary film at the time. Tracey received \$3,000 for her time, compared to the annual salary of NFB filmmakers in 1980 as between \$28,000-\$36,000 (ibid., 26).

interviewing women performing live sex, women working in peep shows, a group of male and female pornography actors, as well as Suze Randall, the photographer for *Hustler*, and Althea Flynt, *Hustler's* CEO.⁷⁹ In contrast, Klein also interviewed members of the anti-pornography movement, including Men Against Male Violence, Women Against Pornography, an anti-porn academic named Ed Donnerstein, and high profile feminists like Robyn Morgan, Susan Griffin, and Andrea Dworkin.⁸⁰ Despite Klein's initial attempt "to strike a balance in her perception" of pornography in the film, the film inevitably reinscribes a dichotomy between sex workers and feminists that granted agency, privacy, and autonomy to feminists *vis a vis* sex workers, demonstrated by Klein's filming of sex workers in their workplaces and feminists in their homes.⁸¹ As Klein's interest in showing the "worst excesses of pornography" overtook her interest in exploring women's sexuality, "the need to reveal the degradations of pornography thus came more from a concern for the innocent viewer than from a concern for the on-screen worker."⁸² This tension resulted in the dissolution of Klein's relationship with Tracey, and Tracey's public charge that Klein had "betrayed and exploited" her.⁸³

Not a Love Story was met with celebration and controversy as the film galvanized both the anti-pornography movement and a growing anti-censorship feminist contingent.⁸⁴ From the outset of the film's release, municipal and provincial governments oscillated in their rating of the

⁷⁹ Ibid., 28, 29, 32. Note that in the interview with pornography workers, only men speak, and the actress doesn't contribute to the conversation.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 52, 28.

⁸¹ Ibid., 31.

⁸² Ibid., 33, 32.

⁸³ Sandra Martin, "Lindalee Tracey, 49," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto, ON), October 19, 2006; Lindalee Tracey, *Growing Up Naked: My Years in Bump and Grind* (Madeira Park: Douglas & McIntyre, 1997). In her memoir, Tracey denounces the film and the producers.

⁸⁴ Sullivan, *Not a Love Story*, 91.

film and whether it was suitable for “public” screenings.⁸⁵ Feminist organizations across B.C. conceded that there should indeed be “some discretion” in where and how *Not a Love Story* was shown, claiming that the graphic sexual and violent imagery contained in the film was “upsetting” and “intensely disturbing” and ground for cautionary viewing. Feminists at VSW seized on the release of *Not a Love Story* as an important opportunity for consciousness-raising about the violence of pornography, and applied to the Secretary of State for funding to create a Media Kit to support feminist discussion at local film screenings. As part of the VSW Media Kit, Gayla Reid and Pat Feindel developed a half-hour video that reflected their “feminist bias” to “expand and clarify some of the points raised in the film.” The VSW video, *Pornography: A Women’s Issue?* briefly explored a range of women’s reactions to pornography before settling into a panel discussion on *Not A Love Story* by local anti-pornography activists. Available on loan from VSW to help women understand “pornography and its dangers,” *Pornography: A Woman’s Issue?* also aired three times on Vancouver Cable 10 in July 1982.⁸⁶ The second component of the Media Kit that VSW feminists developed was a 24-page booklet, *Not A Love Story: A Discussion Guide*, to prime other feminists on methods for facilitating film screenings and responding to questions about pornography.⁸⁷ As these organized responses to *Not A Love Story* depict, VSW and *Kinesis* feminists expressed enthusiasm for the feminist appropriation of pornography as a means for its eradication. Simultaneously, feminists at VSW and *Kinesis* positioned themselves as the authorities on pornography, neglecting to include women working in pornography in either their organizing efforts or in their media production. Images of sex workers’ bodies and labour were consumed, reproduced, and circulated as feminist propaganda of

⁸⁵ Kinesis Staff Writers, “Resources: Video Aids Porn Discussion,” *Kinesis* (September 1982): 9.

⁸⁶ Kinesis Staff Writers, “Pornography: A Women’s Issue?” (July-August 1982): 28.

⁸⁷ Kinesis Staff Writers, “Resources,” 9.

pornography's inherent danger, while the possibilities of pornography's pleasures and redistributive economies were ignored.

Despite anti-violence feminists' preoccupation with commercial sexuality in Vancouver, feminist discourses in *Kinesis* demonstrated the disconcerting lack of attention given to the actual women working in pornography. The contraction of the anti-violence feminist perspective into a crusade to abolish pornography ignored the ways in which sex workers experience agency and financial gain through their labour. By equating women with victims and objects, and men with pimps and pornographers, the material conditions of poverty, racism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, etc., are obscured. Moreover, the "woman's body" that is "sold" in pornography becomes a metonymy for all women, everywhere, subject to omnipresent male violence, which both universalizes and obscures the particular conditions of sex work. Taken out of the context of a commercial exchange of services for capital, sex workers' labour ceases to matter on its own terms.

The Making of a Feminist Priority: Tracing Feminist Activism on Pornography in Kinesis

As suggested by the attention given to *Not a Love Story*, the coverage of feminist activism against pornography was a central feature of *Kinesis* in the summer of 1982. In VSW and *Kinesis*' archiving of pornography as a feminist issue, *Kinesis* writers were committed to documenting the range of anti-pornography activism surfacing in Vancouver and beyond. By 1982, eradicating pornography had become a powerful symbol of women's liberation and a feminist priority in not only Vancouver, but also in most North American anti-violence feminist movements.⁸⁸ Archival data from VSW and *Kinesis* suggest that the feminist response to

⁸⁸ See Bracewell, "Beyond Barnard."

pornography in Canada ranged from grassroots protests to state lobbying. In examining the breadth of these activities, I argue that the sheer magnitude of feminist engagement with the state was the most sustained, if not controversial, feminist tactic of this discourse. Indeed, in promoting a “feminist perspective on pornography,” feminists contributed momentum, research, and pressure to the pornography issue, influencing public and state discourses on pornography.⁸⁹ As a result of ambivalent relations with state representatives, by 1985, however, feminists vacillated in their confidence in state reform as a solution to pornography, ultimately shifting feminist discourse from a fight against pornography to a debate about censorship.

Records from *Kinesis* and VSW in 1982 reflect the heightened energy and determination of Vancouver-area feminists struggling for state recognition of pornography as a form of violence against women as they sought civil, political, legal, and criminal intervention into the distribution of pornography. Picketing distributors of pornography, for example, was a feminist activist tactic premised on the anti-violence feminist theory of pornography that men profit from the commodification of women. In directing their anger and fear into confrontational action at movie theaters and video stores, feminists sought to obstruct clientele and to slow the flow of capital between the hands of men. In one instance, on August 4, 1982, feminists organized a picket of the Vancouver East Cinema to protest the theater’s decision to start showing pornographic films on the weekends.⁹⁰ Prior to the first screening of the evening, fifty women and some male supporters surrounded the theater, demanding that the theater immediately remove the pornographic films. The theater manager conceded to their requests, swallowing the economic

⁸⁹ Jillian Ridington, *Confronting Pornography: A Feminist on the Front Lines* (Ottawa: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women/Institute Canadien de Recherches Sur Les Femmes, 1989). Ridington provides a compelling elaboration her role as a *Kinesis* and VSW feminist in the proliferation of “the feminist perspective on pornography” linking violence with sexual imagery.

⁹⁰ *Kinesis* Staff Writers, “Van. East Picket Halts Porn Line-Up,” *Kinesis* (September 1982): 1.

loss of the evening and admitting that the Vancouver East Cinema was, after all, a “community theater.” Heralded as a “victory” for the feminist community, future actions were coordinated that would implement direct action as an anti-violence feminist strategy, clearly articulating what kinds of women—and women’s labour—were to be defended by feminist principles.

Fueled by a mounting and shared anger, Vancouver-area anti-violence feminists also “brought their pens, their paper, and their rage” to the tasks of lobbying the state for change, exalting the white, middle-class ideology of anti-pornography feminism.⁹¹ For instance, Jancis Andrews, a representative of the North Shore Women’s Centre and the newly formed Concerned Citizens of the North Shore, sent the provincial and federal government numerous telegrams denouncing the rise of Red Hot Video in Vancouver, urging the state to lay criminal charges against Red Hot Video for its promotion of “hate propaganda” against women.⁹² However, much to the frustration of a growing anti-pornography feminist contingent, in mid-1982, video pornography existed as a kind of legal ambiguity across Canada as various levels of government debated the utility of the criminal code in controlling video distribution.⁹³ In the feminist

⁹¹ Kinesis Staff Writers, “Letter Lobby Night,” *Kinesis* (September 1982): 1.

⁹² Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off Site-Storage, Box: General Info, File: Pornography. Telegrams also document discussion between George Ann Durand, Acting City Solicitor, Victoria; Allan Williams, the Attorney-General of British Columbia, and Mark McGuigan, the British Columbia Minister of Justice and the Attorney-General of Canada. Correspondence between Lucie Pepin, President, and Eileen Hendrie, Vice President, of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, also reveal their active lobbying of Allan Williams and Mark McGuigan.

⁹³ North Vancouver City Council minutes, 24 September 1982, 63, Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off Site-Storage, Box: General Info, File: Pornography. On September 24, 1982, the City of North Vancouver unanimously passed a resolution, “B48 Control of Hardcore Pornographic Material,” asking Attorney General Allen Williams “to invoke legislation prohibiting the distribution of all material which can be classified under the title ‘hardcore pornography’” and to request that the Federal Minister of Justice, Jean Chrétien, “investigate the validity of the alleged loophole” to ensure “that charges be laid against those who have contravened the law,” as well as advocating for a harmonizing of proposed provincial laws with existing federal laws (ibid.); Province of British Columbia, 4th Session, 32nd Parliament, Official

interpretation that this legal loophole was permitting the circulation of violent imagery, they did not consider how this ambiguity around pornography was simultaneously an opening in the market for more demand—and more jobs—for women working in the industry.

In the midst of these legislative debates, *Kinesis* writers continued to represent pornography as an issue of gendered violence requiring state intervention.⁹⁴ Despite Attorney General Allan Williams's assurance that pornography retailers were "removing from their shelves the offending videotapes," feminists decried the proliferation of new Red Hot Video stores across the lower mainland.⁹⁵ To the exasperation of feminist activists already in the habit of reporting Red Hot Video to the authorities, Williams recommended that concerned citizens continue to "bring to the attention of the police that information."⁹⁶ These civil recommendations from the provincial government encouraged feminists to consider laying criminal charges against pornographers a logical route to eradicating pornography. In response, a month later Gail Peain published in *Kinesis* an explanatory summary of "the relevant sections" from the Criminal Code of Canada, including section 281.1 defining "Hate Propaganda" and section 159.1 outlining "Offences Tending to Corrupt Morals."⁹⁷ Despite the lack of charges brought against Red Hot

Report of the Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 4 October 1982, 17.45, "Pornographic Films," 9549, Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off Site-Storage, Box: General Info, File: Pornography. The following month, Attorney General Allan Williams spoke to the B.C. legislature about the limits of current legislation to include the "emerging technology" of VHS and Pay-TV. Significantly, Williams was wary of the potential for criminalization to create both the "issue of censorship" and "a constitutional problem," opting instead for a new "code of conduct" adhering to the guidelines of the Criminal Code (ibid.).

⁹⁴ Susanne Gerard, "Porn is Winning," *Kinesis* (September 1982): 19, 22.

⁹⁵ Gillian Shaw, "Take Porno Tapes to Police, A-G Tells Upset Residents," *The Vancouver Sun* (Vancouver, B.C.), June 23, 1982; Peain, "Video Chain Expands," 1.

⁹⁶ Letter from Allan Williams, the Attorney General of British Columbia, to Jancis Andrews, 13 September 13 1982, Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off Site-Storage, Box: General Info, File: Pornography.

⁹⁷ Peain, "Video Chain Expands," 18.

Video thus far, *Kinesis* feminists increasingly considered the Criminal Code as a legitimate option for criminalizing commercial pornographers.

The *Kinesis* record demonstrates that feminists continued to petition the police and the province to address “the blatant violence directed toward women” through pornography, state action temporarily stalled.⁹⁸ “The quiet removal” of a dozen videotapes depicting violence against women, and the reappearance of many of the same videos a few weeks later, did not sit well with Vancouver feminists who sought either the criminalization or total closure of Red Hot Video and other pornography video stores. In response to this perceived state neglect, some feminists turned to a more explicit form of activism: direct action. In her own recollection of this pivotal moment in anti-pornography activism, Vancouver area anarchist feminist Ann Hansen describes carrying out a plan of sabotage on the Red Hot Video chain in her memoir *Direct Action: Memoirs of an Urban Guerilla*.⁹⁹ From an anarchist perspective, the state and the law impede rather than create social change, and direct action—in particular the sabotage of property—is a mode of seizing power for the oppressed. United by this political conviction, a group of nine feminists banded together as the Wimmin’s Fire Brigade and staged a set of simultaneous firebomb attacks on three different Red Hot Videos on the night of November 21, 1982.¹⁰⁰ While one set of jerry cans failed to ignite, the women managed to destroy two rooms in one of the shops, as well as completely burn down the third store and its neighboring commercial buildings. An excerpt of the Wimmin’s Fire Brigade statement, mailed earlier that evening to the media, reads as follows:

⁹⁸ Pat Feindel, “Women Step-Up Anti-Porn Action,” *Kinesis* (November 1982): 1, 2.

⁹⁹ Ann Hansen, *Direct Action: Memoirs of an Urban Guerilla* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2001).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 339.

Red Hot Video sells tapes that show wimmin and children being tortured, raped, and humiliated. We are not the property of men to be used and abused. Red Hot Video is part of a multi-billion dollar pornography industry that teaches men to equate sexuality with violence. Although these tapes violate the Criminal Code of Canada and the B.C. guidelines on pornography, all lawful attempts to shut down Red Hot Video have failed because the justice system was created and controlled by rich men to protect their profits and property. As a result, we are left no viable alternative but to change the situation ourselves through illegal means. This is an act of self-defense against hate propaganda. We will continue to defend ourselves.¹⁰¹

In destroying two of the retail stores as well as several adjacent buildings, the Wimmin's Fire Brigade undertook the most confrontational feminist act of sabotage to date against pornography retailers in Canada. Of the nine women who took part in the action, only Ann Hansen and Julie Belmas, also founding members of the militant anarchist group Direct Action, were ever caught and convicted.¹⁰² Despite a lack of consensus in *Kinesis* over the criminal tactics the Wimmin's Fire Brigade employed, the action clarified that anti-pornography theory, activism, and lobbying was a feminist priority.¹⁰³

Following the fire-bombings, feminist discourse in *Kinesis* demonstrates that the "struggle against Red Hot Video intensified" in the Vancouver area.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, emboldened by the Wimmin's Fire Brigade action, on November 25, 1982, thirteen BC women's groups lodged a

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 487.

¹⁰² Emma Kisivid, "Activists Sentenced," *Kinesis* (July-August 1984): 1. Julie Belmas received a conviction of 20 years for her participation in the bombings of the Litton Hydro Plant and three Red Hot Videos, and Ann Hansen received a life sentence for her organizing of the bombings of the Litton Hydro Plant, the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir nuclear sub-station, and three Red Hot Video stores.

¹⁰³ Barbara Valder, "Did Kinesis Censor Wimmin's Fire Brigade?" *Kinesis* (February 1983): 29; Kinesis Staff Writers, "Editor Note: Kinesis Did Not Censor Wimmin's Fire Brigade," *Kinesis* (February 1983): 29; Pat Feindel, "Positive Steps: BCFW Convention," *Kinesis* (December-January 1983-1984): 4. Reporting on the British Columbia Federation of Women's annual meeting, Feindel relayed a resolution following the update of the BCFW Red Hot Video Committee: "Specific policy passed included a position on civil disobedience, recognizing that non-violent civil disobedience can be a necessary and effective political tool. (A qualifier stipulated, however, that no individual group could undertake CD in the name of BCFW)" (ibid.).

¹⁰⁴ Emma Kisivid, "Anti-pornography Organizing Boosted By Police Raids," *Kinesis* (February 1983): 1.

complaint to police against the circulation of the videotape *Filthy Rich*, which dramatized the rape of a domestic worker. Despite these complaints, there were no charges laid against the retailer, Vancouver's Tricolor Video. In response to this state inaction, another coordinated anti-pornography picket was organized across B.C. for December 11, 1982, with Vancouver protestors to picket Red Hot Video.¹⁰⁵ This wave of pickets garnered public and media attention to anti-pornography feminists' resistance to Red Hot Video, and on January 7, 1983, twelve video rental stores across the province were raided by police, with criminal charges being leveraged against select Red Hot Video outlets in Vancouver and Victoria.¹⁰⁶ As the legal storm kicked up around Red Hot Video, in particular in Victoria, the company released a statement to the press insisting on their right to sell pornography as a kind of "freedom of speech." The protection of freedom of speech, and the rights to protections against hate speech, would become central issues in the censorship battle between feminists and pornographers, and indeed between feminists with differing views, by 1985.

Kinesis continued to rank pornography as a first-page feminist issue throughout 1983, marking anti-pornography activism a priority and leaving little room for alternative perspectives on the industry. In March 1983, the British Columbia Federation of Women (BCFW) declared pornography a priority, and coordinated a picket of Red Hot Videos across the province.¹⁰⁷ That same month, VSW held a "porn forum" in downtown Vancouver, where 200 women attended to discuss feminist anti-pornography strategies. Jancis Andrews gave a presentation on the range of feminist legal strategies concerning pornography and the state, outlining the benefits and

¹⁰⁵ Feindel, "Women Step Up," 2.

¹⁰⁶ Kisivid, "Anti-pornography," 1.

¹⁰⁷ Kinesis Staff Writers, "Porn Forum Toughens Fightback," *Kinesis* (April 1983): 1.

limitations of each.¹⁰⁸ In a manuscript from her talk subsequently published in *Kinesis*, Andrews recommended that the term obscenity be removed from the Criminal Code, and be replaced with pornography, with a definition to emphasize its difference from erotica. Andrews also argued that feminist lobbyists were “demanding of the Law Reform Committee that Section 281.2, subsection 2, the hate propaganda section change its definition of ‘identifiable group’ which at present ‘meant any section of public distinguished by colour, race, religion or ethnic origin only,’ to have that magic little phrase ‘or sex’ included.” Andrews also reflected on the potential maneuver to include “sex” in the Broadcasting Act’s anti-discrimination policy. In seeking the inclusion of “sex” as a category worthy of protection by the state, Andrews drew on and reinforced a liberal model of citizenship to engage in political transformation. Arguing that women compose an “identifiable group” eligible for state protection asserted women’s right to be free from discrimination and hate propaganda.

But which women were imagined as deserving of state and feminist protection? An emergent coalition of feminists and their supporters—People Against Pornography—highlights the total absence of, and disregard for, women working in pornography. When the men, women, and children of People Against Pornography sustained a weeklong picket of Vancouver’s Red Hot Video Main Street store in May 1983 to draw public attention to the Victoria trial, their goals were to challenge the belief that pornography was acceptable to the broader community.¹⁰⁹ With an attendance of over 200 protestors that week, the persistent opposition of the feminist organizers took advantage of the street as an opportunity for “outreach and education” of passersby. As Pat Hercus and Jean Bennett reflected on the protest in *Kinesis*, “We saw the picket as one way of emphatically stating our belief that there is a direct connection between the

¹⁰⁸ Jancis Andrews, “Pornography: The Legal Fight,” *Kinesis* (April 1983): 7, 8.

¹⁰⁹ Pat Hercus and Jean Bennett, “Red Hot Video Picket: An Analysis,” *Kinesis* (June 1983): 8, 9.

pornographic image and the real-life violence against women.”¹¹⁰ In harnessing “fear” and “anger” into a shared public opposition to pornography, the organizers felt a collective “sense of solidarity” in their oppression and in their liberation. They explained:

As women, we especially fear being out on the street after dark. Picketing at night, in front of a store that directly promotes violence against women, galvanized our determination to fight back. While it was frightening at times, we stayed, and the Red Hot Video staff were the ones who hid behind blinds and locked doors. The night is still not safe for women, but for awhile a chunk of it was taken back.

In opposing the manufacturing and distribution of pornography, the protesters expressed a deep sense of satisfaction that the store’s business had been interrupted. In proudly recounting the Red Hot Video employees’ discomfort, fear, or agitation, Hercus and Bennet again demonstrate anti-pornography feminism’s blatant disregard and antagonism towards workers in the sex industry. Indeed, Hercus and Bennett also recalled a lack of consensus over feminist tactics of obstructing customers from entering the store, as some feminists used physical and verbal intimidation, admitting that some feminists “destroyed chances for meaningful discussion.”¹¹¹ Together, these tactics emphasized the broader goal of the anti-pornography movement—the abolishing of commercial sex in general. In targeting individual consumers of pornography for intervention, feminists asserted a belief in their right to define the boundaries of legitimate sexuality. In the process of claiming that pornography caused violence against women, they declared that commercial sexuality was illegitimate, including in their sweeping judgment all those who acted in, produced, circulated, bought, and sold sexual imagery. Critically, the bodies of sex workers, the clients who desired them, and the men and women who worked on the front lines of the industry were categorically abjected from this vision of feminist liberation.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 8.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 9.

While the Main Street Vancouver store also faced 12 charges under the Criminal Code for possession of obscene material, the trial date was stayed until June 1983 pending results of the Victoria trial.¹¹² In Victoria Provincial Court, Red Hot Video was convicted on three counts of obscenity under Section 159 of the Criminal Code on May 31, 1983.¹¹³ Despite the conviction, representatives of the Victoria chapter of WAP warned that the verdict was not a victory for feminists against pornography, and expressed dismay that the Crown had in fact ignored feminist perspectives on pornography's inherent violence. Rather, they saw the verdict as indicative of evidence that the use of the obscenity law as a tactic against pornography might become a form of control against the artistic production of women, gay men, and lesbians. Indeed, a Toronto feminist lawyer and artist, Lily Chiro, had already been charged with obscenity for distributing representations of violence against women: the images were invitations to attend a feminist screening of *Not a Love Story*.¹¹⁴ WAP argued that the verdict reflected the failure of the state to conceptualize pornography as an issue of violence against women: "Given our concern with the violent, degrading, and exploitative nature of pornography, Sect.159 has proven an ineffective weapon with which to fight back. We are convinced that, not until the link with sexuality is broken, not until porn is recognized and treated as a form of hate propaganda, will the justice system contain real justice for women."¹¹⁵ In acknowledging the probability that the obscenity clause would be wielded as a tool for oppressing—not liberating—women, WAP's analysis demonstrated an increasing worry amongst feminist groups about the role of the state in women's protection from gendered and sexual violence.

¹¹² Kinesis Staff Writers, "Picket Puts Pressure on Red Hot Trial," *Kinesis* (May 1983): 1.

¹¹³ Women Against Pornography (WAP), "Red Hot's Trial: 3 Ring Circus," *Kinesis* (July-August 1983): 6.

¹¹⁴ Kinesis Staff Writers, "Ontario Woman Faces Obscenity Charges," *Kinesis* (October 1982): 4.

¹¹⁵ WAP, "Red Hot's Trial," 7.

However, WAP's recommendation of criminalizing pornography and "pornographers" via Section 281.2, subsection 2, the hate propaganda section of the Criminal Code, highlights their interest in legal solutions to pornography.¹¹⁶ In casting pornography as a kind of hate material, some feminists attempted to highlight the violence underscoring pornographic images of women, de-emphasizing that pornography was a medium for sexual production and consumption. As this argument gained momentum, it had the effect of sanitizing all forms of representational sexuality, making explicit the feminist desire to abolish commercial sexuality in an effort to eradicate violence. In so doing, the sexual content of such "hate propaganda" was overwritten by its violence, thus subordinating the sexual desires, sexual behaviours, and sexual exchanges for money that went on in, around, and beyond the representational frame. Feminist petitioning for the inclusion of "sex" in Section 159 of the Criminal Code adhered to a state-defined framework for understanding what representations of violence against women could mean. In insisting on the overarching nature of violence contained within pornographic sexual imagery, and subsuming sexual expressions of fantasy, play, and pleasure in this realm, feminists added their voices to the nation-state's cacophony of reproductive and sexual norms.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Pat Feindel, "Feminists Step Up Anti-Porn Fight Back," *Kinesis* (September 1983): 3. Earlier in 1983, WAP also published a letter in the *Times Colonist* protesting a pornographic film shooting in Victoria. According to WAP, one of the six performers in the film later contacted WAP to say that she was suing the films' producers. This is the only mention of communication between a woman working in pornography and feminists I encountered in either VSW or *Kinesis*.

¹¹⁷ Gillian Rodgeron and Lee Waldorf, "Censorship as a Civil Right," *The Body Politic* 113 (April 1985): 11. In Ontario, feminist anti-pornography activist Susan G. Cole sought to use the Ontario Human Rights Code to address pornography as a kind of "sex discrimination against women" (ibid.).

Joining Forces: Feminist and State Responses to Pornography

The *Kinesis* and VSW archive document how feminist activism against pornography encouraged state responses that were multi-pronged and diffuse, looking to the state as an ally in the exposure of pornography's danger to women. As Hemmings reflects, feminist discourses are not naively "coopted" by the state, but are in fact "used knowingly and strategically" to bring about a desired outcome.¹¹⁸ I suggest that the feminist analysis of pornography as harmful to women exemplifies what Hemmings calls a "gender discourse," a narrative maneuver that articulates the feminist claim as both "objective" and "neutral" and therefore an "alibi" for state intervention.¹¹⁹ In circulating a gender discourse of violence against women, anti-pornography feminist lobbying of the state sought citizenship protections based on gender, promoting an image of an ideal feminist citizen subject with class, race, and sexual privilege.¹²⁰

An early state intervention into the pornography debate was testing whether municipal by-laws could adequately control—but not abolish—the sale of pornographic materials, a protection that did not go far enough for many anti-pornography feminists. For instance, in February 1983, the Vancouver City Council instructed the Director of Social Planning to examine the potential for enforcing the pre-existing "Zoning and Development by-law to place conditions on new retail outlets selling or renting sex-oriented products."¹²¹ As of May 1983, a total of 14 retail outlets in Vancouver were selling "sex-oriented products," all licensed as "adult entertainment" stores, with some having "conditional use permits." Vancouver City Council determined that they would consider whether or not to issue future permits, but they lacked a resolution on stores already

¹¹⁸ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 12.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 10. Hemmings argues, "that subject is not only Western, capitalist, and democratic, but also heterosexual and feminine" (*ibid.*).

¹²¹ *Kinesis*, "Picket Puts Pressure," 1.

granted permanent licenses. From the perspective of feminists ardently opposed to the commercialization of sexuality, the state's willingness to permit "adult" stores at all promoted the objectification of women. This feminist perspective delegitimized the place of sex stores in establishing community for sex workers and their clientele, and the importance of accessing sexual resources, including sexual paraphernalia for sexual labour. As "sexual spaces," adult stores facilitated not only entertainment, but also sexual education and exploration.¹²²

By early 1984, the B.C. Supreme Court ruled to uphold the Vancouver City by-law "prohibiting the sale of sex-oriented products within the city."¹²³ Feminists active against pornography did not view the by-law as a victory, and remained committed to getting the state to take pornography as a kind of violence more seriously. However, Vancouver feminists' concerns over the appropriate channel for state involvement became increasingly bifurcated. For example, in *Kinesis*'s May 1984 issue, Pat Feindel expressed criticism of pursuing legal action to support feminists in their fight against pornography, arguing that the law's intent is to protect men and their profits.¹²⁴ Feindel urged feminists to reconsider direct action as a mode to demonstrate their opposition to pornography's danger. The following month, *Kinesis* writer Esther Shannon informed readers of Vancouver City Council's decision to put in place municipal by-laws to limit the sale of all "sexually explicit materials," issuing thirty-day warnings to stores selling sexual products without a valid permit.¹²⁵ Shannon described Vancouver alderwoman Libby Davies's assurance to feminists that the city was "intent on acting within the powers available to it on the

¹²² Ian Jarvis, Panelist, "Gender, Sexuality, Sex Work and Gentrification: Impacts, Experiences and Resistance" (Gathering on Art, Gentrification, and Economic Development (GAGED) in Hamilton, ON, November 10, 2018).

¹²³ Kinesis Staff Writers, "Porn Update," *Kinesis* (February 1984): 5.

¹²⁴ Pat Feindel, "Pornography: Is a Law the Solution?" *Kinesis* (May 1984): 6.

¹²⁵ Esther Shannon, "Council Acts on Porn," *Kinesis* (June 1984): 1.

pornography issue and is prepared to fine retailers in the city by-law court and remove retail licenses if necessary.”¹²⁶

The *Kinesis* archive demonstrates that a growing awareness that sexual resources and materials from a feminist perspective might be included in the state’s definition of “sexually explicit materials” led feminists to articulate updated responses to the legislation. Again, Pat Feindel, on behalf of VSW, presented a brief to Council declaring that the state action’s were “failing” to address feminists’ primary concern about pornography: its promotion of sexual and gendered violence.¹²⁷ Taking a different approach, Jancis Andrews of the North Shore Women’s Centre reminded Council that the offending stores were in clear contravention of Section 159 of the Criminal Code, and that the state was simply refusing to prosecute accordingly. In an attempt to propose alternatives to the municipal by-laws, Vancouver feminists set up a meeting to develop future recommendations for Council.¹²⁸ They hoped their efforts “to define pornography in terms of misogynistic images” would clarify to Council what counted as pornography, thereby sidestepping the prosecution of women and feminist sexual resources. Once again inspired by the anti-pornography analysis of the American movement, feminists active in VSW and *Kinesis* drew on the controversial Indianapolis Ordinance developed by the high-profile anti-pornography theorists Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin. In seeking to define pornography as a civil offense, not a criminal offense, MacKinnon and Dworkin believed an ordinance would shift power into the hands of women—despite relying on the courts for ruling. By the summer of 1984, *Kinesis* reported that Vancouver feminists were drafting a similar document.

¹²⁶ Libby Davies, quoted in *ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Kinesis Staff Writers, “Women Fight Law,” *Kinesis* (July-August 1984): 3.

In order to prove their legibility to the Canadian state, some feminists increasingly distilled their opposition to pornography as a cause and effect of violence against women into an anti-sex discourse that was “amenable” to “conservative mobilizations.”¹²⁹ To establish their ideological difference from those representatives of the sex industry seeking an unfettered market for producing, buying, and selling pornography, some feminists joined forces with religious groups also intent on eliminating commercial sexuality.¹³⁰ Without a clear definition of what counted as “sexually explicit,” Vancouver City Council proposed a 6-month trial by-law to put all commercial forms of “adult entertainment” behind opaque glass by January 1, 1985.¹³¹ As Council refused to engage with the feminist definition of pornography, feminists continued to seek out legal channels for prosecuting pornography that further entrenched their activism within anti-sexual discourses. For instance, in September 1984, feminist groups active in the anti-pornography fight—the Vancouver Council of Women, the Northshore Women’s Centre, the Canadian Coalition of Media Violence, and the B.C. Federation of Teachers’ Women’s Council—joined representatives of the Church of Latter Day Saints, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Anglican Church in a meeting with the B.C. Attorney General Brian Smith, and his assistant, Ted Hughes.¹³² Together, the group demanded that Smith extend B.C. regulations on film to video pornography. They requested in particular that Smith seek prosecution of pornographers under the Motion Picture Act, and that members of the Film Classification Board be replaced every two years to avoid desensitization to violence from long-term exposure. Both feminists and church representatives raised the ongoing issue of Red Hot Video and their

¹²⁹ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 159. Hemmings discusses how feminist discourses are “amenable” to “conservative mobilizations” (ibid.).

¹³⁰ Kinesis Staff Writers, “Porn Update,” 5. Red Hot Video distributors also organized a collective response to Council to challenge the scope of “sexually explicit materials.”

¹³¹ Pam Tranfield, “By-Law Puts Porn Under Glass,” *Kinesis* (November 1984): 1.

¹³² Kinesis Staff Writers, “Women, Churches, Meet AG,” *Kinesis* (October 1984): 3.

circulation of violent pornography, particularly tapes advertised under “rape and gang rape” and “incest.” As this collaboration between feminists and religious groups suggests, some feminists appended their anti-pornography agenda to the sexual conservatism of religious organizations in the interest of maintaining a leading voice in the conversation. Critically absent from these conversations were the perspectives of pornography workers themselves.

Indeed, some feminists independently took up any opportunity to evince a feminist perspective on pornography as the state became more involved in the pornography issue. For instance, in December of 1984, the Periodical Distributors Association of Canada created a Periodical Review Board (PRB), with input from the Minister of the Attorney General, to ascertain whether pornographic materials violated Section 159.8 of the Criminal Code.¹³³ Two vocal feminists in the anti-pornography movement, Jillian Ridington and Gwenith Ingram, and Graeme Waymark, were appointed as paid board members to review incoming periodicals and assess their compliance with Provincial standards. The PRB members were to be compensated between \$650.00-\$850.00 monthly out of a Distributors trust fund. As *Kinesis* reported, most feminist groups active in the anti-pornography movement in Vancouver were vehemently opposed to the inclusion of feminists on the PRB, including VSW, WAVAW, Vancouver Rape Relief, and the North Shore Women’s Centre. Christina Willings, a member of WAVAW, warned that feminist participation in the board was “a *dangerous* position for women to be in,” as feminists would inevitably “be seen to be legitimating most pornographic material in an effort to pull the extreme worst of it off the stands.”¹³⁴ Linda Kelly of the North Shore Women’s Center insisted that the PRB was shifting responsibility to comply with the Criminal Code from

¹³³ Patty Gibson, “Porn Review Board Angers Women’s Groups,” *Kinesis* (December-January 1984-1985): 1.

¹³⁴ Willings, quoted in *ibid.* (emphasis added).

pornography distributors to women.¹³⁵ Regina Lorek of Rape Relief echoed Kelly, arguing that the creation of the board was “a sleazy political move” to take “the heat” off of “pornographers” and put women into conflict with one another.¹³⁶ Patty Moore of VSW emphasized that in consenting to limit a fraction of their profits, the pornography industry was pretending to acquiesce to feminists in an effort “to silence the pornography debate.”¹³⁷ Despite these concerns from her community, Jillian Ridington insisted that her presence on the Periodical Review Board was contributing to the overall feminist goal to abolish pornography; while other feminists were struggling to make the Criminal Code “more specific” moving forward, Ridington insisted she wasn’t “compromising anything,” but rather “working” to “enforce” the current Criminal Code.¹³⁸

The formation of the Periodical Review Board became a site of contention amongst feminists in the pages of *Kinesis*, with one reader responding to the news in a letter with a warning cry of feminist “compromise and co-optation.”¹³⁹ Critical of feminists endorsing “soft core” pornography in their attempts to remove violent pornography, Maureen Bostock questioned the integrity of Ridington’s place in a movement that was supposed to eradicate all pornography for its contribution to “the exploitation and objectification of women,” not just violent pornography. She wrote, “The pornography movement, (if I can call it that) has been primarily a reformist struggle, focusing on changing the law, demanding stricter censorship from existing bodies, etc. However the fight against pornography is a fight against sexism which is a fight for

¹³⁵ Kelly, quoted in *ibid.*

¹³⁶ Lorek, quoted in *ibid.*, 5.

¹³⁷ Moore, quoted in *ibid.*, 5.

¹³⁸ Ridington, quoted in *ibid.*, 1.

¹³⁹ Maureen Bostock, “Concern Over Porn Reviewers,” *Kinesis* (December-January 1984-1985): 36.

women's freedom. It would be foolish for us to forget that."¹⁴⁰ Yet as Hemmings reminds us, gender discourses aren't simply "coopted," but made amenable according to different political goals.¹⁴¹ Indeed, in a letter the following month, Ridington rebuked *Kinesis* for not publishing an interview in which she had taken pains to address the complexities of the issue, complexities which Bostock had also raised.¹⁴² In her letter, Ridington asserted the need for multiple methods of anti-pornography activism—including her board membership—as "one small step in an ongoing crusade" in "our shared, long term goal of eliminating the hate-literature which is pornography." Ridington pointed out that since her appointment to the Periodical Review Board six weeks prior, 50 of 125 periodicals had been removed from circulation.

Demonstrating the splintering of feminist perspectives on pornography in the *Kinesis* and VSW community, Ridington's letter was supported by two additional letters to *Kinesis* that month. In the first, Ridington and a group of women accused *Kinesis* of failing in their "responsibility" to provide "fully representative journalism" on the pornography debate, arguing that the women who work on pornography as a feminist issue "have widely differing points of view" on the strategies required to eradicate it.¹⁴³ Donna Stewart, the Chair Person of the Vancouver Coalition Against Pornography, echoed their sentiment in another letter, reminding *Kinesis* that many feminist groups supported the use of "government regulation" in the "regulation of pornography."¹⁴⁴ Stewart reflected that two years of "feminist work against pornography in B.C." had led to this recent "experiment in feminist-government dialogue," an experiment in which "no one had any expectation" the Board would do more than "hinder

¹⁴⁰ Bostock, "Concern Over Porn Reviewers," 36.

¹⁴¹ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 12.

¹⁴² Jillian Ridington, "Ridington Disagrees With *Kinesis*," *Kinesis* (February 1985): 30.

¹⁴³ Starla Anderson, Betty Baxter, Brenda Kilpatrick, Hilary Mackey, Joan Meister, Jillian Ridington, and Tova Wagman, "Disapproves of *Kinesis* Bias," *Kinesis* (February 1985): 30.

¹⁴⁴ Donna Stewart, "Reader Protests MRB Article," *Kinesis* (February 1985): 30.

circulation of the worst material” and at the same time “provide documentation of the ways the present systems operate against women’s concerns.”¹⁴⁵ Stewart stressed the need for *Kinesis* to represent a diversity of anti-pornography tactics, including the perspective that feminist participation in the Periodical Review Board was a useful anti-pornography strategy. As these internal debates amongst feminists reveal, by early 1985 the anti-pornography perspective was becoming less cohesive, as feminists struggled to measure the effectiveness of their diverse engagements with the state in achieving their shared goal.¹⁴⁶

These feminist interventions in the state reflect how feminist gender discourses are “highly mobile,” utilized by the state’s pursuit of its own gender agendas.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, the feminist desire to criminalize pornography dovetailed with the state’s overall interest in controlling sexuality—in particular prostitution, as I discussed in the previous chapter—as manifested in the establishment of the Fraser Committee on Pornography and Prostitution. The Fraser Committee visited Vancouver from April 3-7, 1984, and VSW, North Shore Women’s Centre, Port Coquitlam Women’s Centre, and the Working Group on Sexual Violence presented briefs defining their position on “pornography’s promotion of hatred and sexual violence towards women.”¹⁴⁸ On behalf of VSW, on April 3 Pat Feindel presented a brief that challenged the idea that amending the current obscenity law, Section 159 of the Criminal Code, would fully abolish pornography in the absence of structural changes regarding women’s equality.¹⁴⁹ Feindel recommended that the Criminal Code be augmented with the inclusion of “gender” and “sexual

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 31.

¹⁴⁶ Pat Feindel, “Province Moves on Video Porn,” *Kinesis* (March 1985): 6. By early 1985, the Vancouver by-law to restrict video materials was quashed in the B.C. Court of Appeal.

¹⁴⁷ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 1.

¹⁴⁸ Feindel, “Is a Law the Solution?” 6.

¹⁴⁹ Pat Feindel, “Brief on Pornography to Fraser Committee on Pornography and Prostitution,” 14, Vancouver Status of Women Archives, Off-Site Storage, File: Correspondence/Briefs, Personal Collection of Becki Ross.

orientation” as identifiable groups under Sections 281.1 (hate propaganda) and 281.2 (human rights).¹⁵⁰ While Feindel felt it was important to offer a feminist perspective to the Fraser Committee, in an article the following month she expressed skepticism that engaging with the state was a worthwhile use of feminist energy.¹⁵¹ Feindel urged that the more “overwhelming” and “empowering” action-strategy of grassroots activism against the pornography industry would resist the paternalism of the state for “protection” and keep the feminist struggle on feminist terms.

The release of the Fraser Committee Report in April of 1985 confirmed state “recognition” of feminist actors as political subjects, and an interest in paying lip service to their view that “representation” implicated gender inequality.¹⁵² In reviewing the briefs submitted by feminists to the Fraser Committee in advance of its Report, Jillian Ridington argued that there was consensus amongst feminists “that violent pornography, extremely degrading pornography and child pornography are forms of violence against women and children, and promote and encourage acceptance of other violence.”¹⁵³ The Report did endeavor to describe this feminist definition of pornography as follows:

The position of most feminist groups, and some church organizations, was that erotica, which they described as sexually explicit material which contains no violence or coercion and in which participants were there by choice, was acceptable. They were totally opposed however, to violent pornography, which they defined as material with a sexual content combined with violence, degradation and abuse, with men shown as the aggressor and women as the subordinate or victim.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 19, 24.

¹⁵¹ Feindel, “Is a Law the Solution?” 6.

¹⁵² Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism*, 219.

¹⁵³ Ridington, *Confronting Pornography*, 5.

¹⁵⁴ Minister of Supply and Services, *Pornography and Prostitution in Canada: Report of the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution* (Ottawa: 1985), 63.

As the Fraser Report described, the “majority” of presenters expressed a desire for increased government intervention into violent pornography, while a “minority” of presenters demonstrated opposition to the state censorship of pornography; among those included in the minority perspective were civil liberties groups, the Periodical Distributors Association and Video Retailers Association, and gay and lesbian organizations.¹⁵⁵ Significantly, the Fraser Committee hearings, and its final Report, document another moment when feminists and religious organizations mobilized alongside one another to eradicate the shared problem of pornography.¹⁵⁶ Despite an insistence that feminist activism against pornography was neither “prurient” nor “moralistic,” feminists joined their voices to the anti-sex discourses of the Church and the state in their opposition to pornography.¹⁵⁷

To emphasize this point, it is telling that neither sex workers nor sexual minorities felt represented in the hearings. For instance, the Fraser Report states that along with the public submissions, the board members also conducted “important” private interviews with “prostitutes, former prostitutes, performers, parents of young prostitutes, social workers, community workers and many others who shared the benefit of their experience and personal insights.”¹⁵⁸ However, sex worker histories suggest otherwise, claiming instead, “the committee heard from only a small number of sex workers.”¹⁵⁹ As Chris Bearchell described in *The Body Politic*, the Fraser Committee was an “old fashioned travelling road show” intent on criminalizing sexual

¹⁵⁵ *Pornography and Prostitution in Canada*, 64.

¹⁵⁶ Feindel, “Is a Law the Solution?” 6; *Pornography and Prostitution in Canada*, 63.

¹⁵⁷ Feindel, “Is a Law the Solution?” 6.

¹⁵⁸ *Pornography and Prostitution in Canada*, 10. The Fraser Report states that it conducted private interviews with “prostitutes, former prostitutes, performers, parents of young prostitutes, social workers, community workers and many others who shared the benefit of their experience and personal insights” (ibid.).

¹⁵⁹ van der Meulen, Durisin, and Love, “Introduction,” 9.

minorities, all the more “alarming” given the stamp of approval it had received from feminist anti-pornography activists.¹⁶⁰ Bearchell wrote,

[A]s I sat in the Toronto hearing surrounded by gay journalists and activists, hookers, hustlers, and strippers—a collection very much the object of hostility for other observers and participants—and as most other deputants to the committee made their pleas for more laws, greater control, and more power, one palpable feeling grew hour by hour: that our very existence was threatened by this charade, and by the larger process it is a part of.

For sex workers and sexual minorities, the Fraser Committee signified as a threat to sexual freedom, yet another instance of the state encroaching on the precarious but growing liberation of queers. Meanwhile, the very subjects of the sex wars, sexual minorities—in particular sex workers—were not included as worthy citizen-subjects in the perspectives expressed by either “community standards” or “the majority.”¹⁶¹ Indeed, the bulk of the recommended changes made by feminist organizations to the Fraser Committee endorsed amendments to the Criminal Code, the Customs Act, and the Broadcasting Act, as well as an increase in the scope of control afforded to provincial classification boards and municipal by-laws.

¹⁶⁰ Chris Bearchell, “Pornography, Prostitution, and Moral Panic,” *The Body Politic* (March 1984): 7.

¹⁶¹ Throughout 1983, numerous groups undertook research studies to determine “community standards” within regards to pornography: see Donna Holmes, Carmen Rachelle Blan, Lois Giacinti, Katherine Popaleni, and Anne Srdic, *Community Standards on Pornography in Hamilton: A Report Prepared for the City of Hamilton Status of Women Sub-Committee* (Hamilton: McMaster University, 1983). This report claimed that 81.2% of respondents supported government intervention into pornography, with the remainder opposed; see also Mercia Stickney, *Women’s Community Standards on Sexually Explicit Material Publicly Available and Promoted as Entertainment*, B.C. Public Interest Research Group (Vancouver: Simon Fraser University, 1983). This report suggested that categorized by age and education, 95% of women surveyed felt that representations of sexual coercion should not be available “in the community,” (Stickney, 5a), while in comparison, 81.4% of respondents felt that non-coercive “homosexual intercourse” was unacceptable, whereas 66.2% felt that non-coercive “heterosexual intercourse” was unacceptable (6). While an analysis of this content is outside the scope of this project, this study provides a fascinating exploration of women’s sexual norms, particularly as relayed in the comments section (13-29).

The release of the Fraser Report also coincided with the election of the federal Conservative government in early 1985; in turn, the legitimacy afforded to the feminist position within the document had important implications for the ways in which the feminist pornography issue would become framed by the Canadian state.¹⁶² For instance, the *Kinesis* feminist community reacted with mixed feelings to the Fraser Report on Pornography.¹⁶³ To Megan Ellis, a member of WAVAW and the Working Group on Sexual Violence, the Fraser Report recommendations were a superficial gesture towards feminist work on pornography in their failure to see pornography as a cause and effect of violence against women. Although the Report alleged that feminists lacked evidence to prove the link between pornography and sexual violence, the Report nonetheless acknowledged that pornography causes “harm” to individuals who “are involuntarily subjected to it” and “broader social harm” in “undermining the right to equality which is set out in Section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.”¹⁶⁴ Ellis pointed out that the “new era of gender neutrality ushered in” by the Charter glossed over the fact that it was specifically women and girls who would disproportionately experience “harm,” as women and girls were the primary victims of sexual violence. Ellis warned, “Legal changes which do not embody a recognition of pornography as ‘the graphic, sexually explicit subordination of women’ will not only fail to address our concerns, but will also have serious consequences for the images we produce.”¹⁶⁵ To Ellis, the Fraser Report was yet another missed opportunity for the state to take seriously feminist analyses of sexual and gendered violence.

¹⁶² Lisa Gotell, “Shaping *Butler*: The New Politics of Anti-Pornography,” in *Bad Attitude/s on Trial: Pornography, Feminism, and the Butler Decision*, eds. Brenda Cossman, Shannon Bell, Lise Gotell, and Becki L. Ross (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 66-67.

¹⁶³ Megan Ellis, “Fraser Committee: A Masterpiece of Compromise,” *Kinesis* (June 1985): 6.

¹⁶⁴ Fraser Committee Recommendations, quoted in *ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

Ellis's concerns echoed those of American feminists Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon, who had been developing a civil by-law that would allow women to sue pornographers. In December 1984, and March 1985, first Catherine MacKinnon and then Andrea Dworkin visited Vancouver to promote this feminist action-strategy.¹⁶⁶ As Jean Fitzgerald described in *Kinesis*, the ordinance asserted the feminist definition of pornography as the “graphic, sexually explicit subordination of women by pictures or words” with representations of degradation, abuse, and violence.¹⁶⁷ American and Canadian feminists who supported a civil by-law argued that it would avoid outright censorship but hold pornographers accountable in ways similar to defamation and personal injury suits. In spite of its controversial approach to anti-pornography activism, Dworkin emphasized that the ordinance had the potential to empower women to confront pornographers head on: “The situation that we’re in now is that we’re so powerless and we spend so much time worrying about how we would be corrupted by power and how we would misuse it that we simply remain powerless.”¹⁶⁸ In fact, the Fraser Report had even included this feminist strategy as an additional recommendation.¹⁶⁹ However, this kind of ordinance would never see the light of day in Canada, and it soon after lost credibility in America. In the autumn of 1985, Andrea Dworkin unsuccessfully sought \$50 million in a libel suit against *Hustler* magazine, and by February 24, 1986, the US Supreme Court ruled the Indianapolis ordinance unconstitutional.¹⁷⁰ What feminist and state supporters of the ordinance disregarded were whether women working in the pornography industry would even desire—or

¹⁶⁶ Jean Fitzgerald, “U.S. By-Law Defines Porn,” *Kinesis* (December-January 1984-1985): 4; Barb Findlay, “These Are Life and Death Issues: Interview With Andrea Dworkin,” *Kinesis* (April 1985): 6, 7, 13.

¹⁶⁷ Fitzgerald, “U.S. By-Law,” 4.

¹⁶⁸ Andrea Dworkin, quoted in Findlay, “Life and Death Issues,” 6.

¹⁶⁹ Ellis, “Fraser Committee,” 29.

¹⁷⁰ *Kinesis* Staff Writers, “Dworkin Seeks \$50 Million From *Hustler*,” *Kinesis* (October 1985): 3; Nancy Pollack, “USA Supreme Court Quashes Anti-Porn Bylaw,” *Kinesis* (June 1986): 7.

use—a civil by-law for addressing their labour concerns. The ordinance stands out in the historical record as yet another moment where feminists privileged their own subjectivity and perspective over the actual conditions, issues, and inequalities facing sex workers.

Feminist Support and Opposition to State Censorship of Pornography

As the feminist appeal for a legislative alternative to outright censorship failed to gain traction both in Canada and the USA, a series of government interventions were already underway, in particular the proposal of British Columbia's new *Motion Picture Act*. The revised Motion Picture Act, recommended by both feminists and religious groups and introduced by Attorney General Brian Smith in early 1985, intended to restrict "sexually explicit 'adult entertainment'" by extending the Act's purview over films to include videotapes, with a focus on imagery including either sex and violence, or sex and children.¹⁷¹ Pat Feindel described the anticipated Act as the "first concrete action" of the Attorney General since the seizure of pornography from Red Hot Video in 1983. Donna Levin, Smith's advisor on women's issues, claimed that the *Motion Picture Act* would empower B.C.'s Film Classification Director to determine the suitability of videotape for circulation according to obscenity guidelines in the Criminal Code. According to the province, through a classification system for video similar to films, recommendations would be made for a video's release or prohibition, the removal of certain scenes, or the issuing of a content warning.

The prospect of the *Motion Picture Act* brought conflicting feminist ideologies on censorship to the fore. Initially lacking any input from the public on what types of films would be subject to censorship, the government sponsored a community forum in Vancouver in November

¹⁷¹ Feindel, "Province Moves on Video Porn," 1.

1985 to discuss its implications.¹⁷² *Kinesis* reported that the majority of organizations and individuals at the forum offered “overwhelming support” for the Motion Picture Act, and again present were both feminist and Christian advocates linking pornography with gender and sexual violence. Emboldened by Smith’s proposal, North Shore Women’s Centre representative Jancis Andrews spoke in support of the Act in her claim that “Canadians simply refuse to accept some images in porn.”¹⁷³ While WAVAW representative Corrine Murray reiterated the WAVAW position that no one “should have access to pornography,” she expressed skepticism that the Act would hinder pornography, arguing instead that the hate provisions of the Criminal Code were the appropriate legislation for eradicating pornography.¹⁷⁴ One of the only dissenting voices at the forum, Sara Diamond, a feminist activist and representative of the Vancouver Artists League (VAL), articulated opposition to the Act in her statement that “in the past... censorship has arisen out of classification and censorship has most often been used against the gay and feminist and political groups.”¹⁷⁵ Countering Diamond’s concerns with an insistence on the causal relationship of pornography to violence, Andrews replied that “using the word censorship implies that someone’s freedom of speech is being repressed, which, in this instance, is not the case.”¹⁷⁶ Neither Andrews nor Diamond’s analyses considered how repressing pornography would also infringe on women’s freedom to labour within the pornography industry, as the invisibility of women’s sexual labour was taken for granted in both arguments. Rather, as the state ramped up its interest in controlling pornography, some feminists willingly ceded power over representation to its administration, while a growing minority balked at the reach of government legislation. As

¹⁷² Kinesis Staff Writers, “Video Regulations Backed,” *Kinesis* (December-January 1985-1986): 1.

¹⁷³ Andrews, quoted in *ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁷⁵ Diamond, quoted in *ibid.*, 1.

¹⁷⁶ Andrews, quoted in *ibid.*, 1.

public energy was harnessed into support for state intervention on pornography, Smith taunted his critics with a promise to “override the Charter of Rights and Freedoms” in his commitment to regulate pornography. The proposed *Motion Picture Act* merged the discourses of state authority, anti-pornography feminism, conservative Christianity, and sexual normativity into an effort to define, control, and censor “sexually graphic” materials; the effect of this collaboration was the consolidation of a state-enforced anti-sex discourse targeting commercial sexuality.

The use of censorship as a government tool for controlling pornography compelled feminists across Canada to redefine their positions in the debate. In particular, conflict between feminists over the appropriate definition of pornography erupted as different groups of feminists grappled for authority over the discourse. Within *Kinesis*, this eruption was captured by reader responses to the 1985 publication of *Women Against Censorship*, which signified an emergent collective of feminist responses to pornography that neither sought its abolition nor accepted its causal relationship to violence against women.¹⁷⁷ The collection captured a range of feminist, lesbian, and artists’ perspectives arguing against state intervention in the distribution and availability of sexual images. In particular, Varda Burstyn’s essay, “Political Precedents and Moral Crusaders: Women, Sex, and the State” rejected the cause-effect premise of anti-pornography feminism. Burstyn’s chapter stands out for her insistence on the importance of the economic issues facing women in the 1980s, arguing “women’s attention has been diverted from the *causes* to the *depictions* of their oppression.”¹⁷⁸ In advocating for a historical, political, and economic analysis of sexual inequality, Burstyn situated pornography as a reflection of the structural oppressions already facing women. In returning to this collection to insist on its place

¹⁷⁷ Varda Burstyn, ed., *Women Against Censorship* (Vancouver & Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985).

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 26, emphasis added.

in the archive of feminist responses to pornography, I argue that *Women Against Censorship* is a striking example of the similarities between anti-pornography and anti-censorship feminists in their neglect to include pornography workers in their discourse. Standing in for sex workers in the volume was yet another white, middle-class feminist ideology of sexual representation; while advocating for the freedom to produce and circulate erotic art, the book nonetheless did not capture the urgency of censorship as a political issue for the economic and bodily independence of women engaged in sexual labour.

Women Against Censorship was ill received by some *Kinesis* writers and readers, not for its neglect of sex workers' perspectives, but rather for what Pat Feindel described as its "distortions" of the issue of censorship in the anti-pornography movement.¹⁷⁹ In reflecting on her own position of being "on the fence" on censorship, Feindel pointed out that both VSW and WAP Victoria had long recommended alternatives to censorship. Critical of the book's focus on Ontario—with the "strictest" censorship laws in Canada—Feindel questioned the book's "narrow" understanding of either the pornography industry or anti-pornography activism across Canada. Feindel was "stupefied" by the book's tendency "to minimize, discount or entirely dismiss the effects of pornography," and its outright dismissal of the relationship of pornography to violence against women. In a letter a few months later, Jancis Andrews echoed Feindel's critique, and charged the authors of *Women Against Censorship* with representing a conservative politic in their defense of government inaction and freedom of speech.¹⁸⁰ With the accusations of "divisive, insulting, patronizing, and quasi-American" animating her prose, Andrews's letter dramatized her frustration with the different approaches to anti-pornography feminist organizing. As the issue of violence against women was eclipsed by feminist debates over censorship, who

¹⁷⁹ Pat Feindel, "Book Is Exasperating," *Kinesis* (May 1985): 30.

¹⁸⁰ Jancis Andrews, "Censorship Book Cold, Abstract," *Kinesis* (October 1985): 31.

had control over the anti-pornography discourse was increasingly uncertain despite *Kinesis* and VSW feminists' efforts to prioritize anti-pornography politics.

Without a consensus in the broader feminist community on the dangers or harm of pornography, anti-violence and anti-pornography feminists increasingly lacked a cohesive action-strategy to abolish it. Despite the place of opposition these positions are recalled as occupying in commonsense feminist history, both the anti-censorship and anti-pornography feminist perspectives exhibited a shared disregard for the politics of labour—and the labourers—of pornography. As censorship became contested ground between feminists opposing violent imagery at all costs and feminists unwilling to cede control over representation to the state, the effects of censorship as legitimizing the surveillance, intervention, and criminalization of sex work were under-examined. Neither feminists intent on abolishing pornography once and for all, nor feminists interested in protecting the rights of women artists, were overly concerned with what increased legislation would mean for women working in the pornography industry.

As outlined in the previous chapter, 1985 marked a pivotal point in the discussion of pornography *and* prostitution within feminist discourses as *Kinesis* continually adapted to the politics of pornography in the broader feminist community. In November 1985, *Kinesis* writers reported on conferences held in both Vancouver and Toronto that sought to broaden what had become dominant feminist responses to pornography. Held in Vancouver at the end of November, *The Heat is On: Women, Sex, and Art Conference* aimed to unsettle the feminist pornography discourse by shifting the focus to women's explorations of their own sexualities in relation to artistic representation. In an interview with *Kinesis* prior to the event, Sara Diamond, the conference organizer and member of the anti-censorship Vancouver Artists League, articulated the organizers' desires for the event to provide an opportunity for thinking differently

about women's sexual representation.¹⁸¹ Diamond's comments reflected political and intellectual fatigue over "the old debate on pornography which has become, essentially a pro-censorship or anti-censorship debate. We do expect that debate will surface at the conference...but we also want to break some new ground on women and sex issues."¹⁸² In positioning art—and not pornography—as the focus of the conference, *The Heat Is On* hoped to expand the discussion of sexual imagery and to imagine alternatives where women and their sexual desires, fantasies, and images were considered on their own terms, outside of and away from the increasingly restrictive language attached to feminist thinking about pornography.

The following month, *Kinesis* writer Cy-Thea Sand lauded *The Heat Is On* conference as successfully moving the feminist sex wars in a new direction.¹⁸³ Sand admired Diamond's keynote address as challenging the binary between "anti-pornography" and "pro-sex" feminism, and invoking a "spirit of honest inquiry" that was channeled throughout the weekend. Open to men and women, the conference sought to create a space for sex education and "progressive" sexual imagery through showcasing feminist art alongside "theoretical, activist, and sex radical approaches" to sexual imagery. Esther Shannon, on the other hand, reflected a few months later that the conference had yielded a "striking...absence of debate," and was dominated by "advocates of a particular point of view on sexuality, imagery, and yes indeed, censorship."¹⁸⁴ Shannon charged the conference with reproducing the "differences between feminists on sex issues" as "irreconcilable," and accused the organizers and panelists of representing "another blatant attempt by the extremes to widen the gap between us." In emphasizing her position as "resolutely in the middle" of the pornography debates, Shannon insisted that feminists needed to

¹⁸¹ Kinesis Staff Writers, "The Heat Is On," *Kinesis* (November 1985): 3.

¹⁸² Diamond, quoted in *ibid.*

¹⁸³ Cy-Thea Sand, "The Heat Is On!" *Kinesis* (December-January 1985-1986): 12.

¹⁸⁴ Esther Shannon, "Women, Art, Sex, Fear," *Kinesis* (February 1986): 26.

work through their differences together in the overall effort to reimagine “feminist thought on sex in all its dimensions.”¹⁸⁵ Evidently, while the nuances of feminist approaches to pornography, sexuality, and censorship were deepening, the proliferation of a feminist “pro-sex” discourse increasingly cast abolitionist feminists as “hopelessly uptight” and “old-fashioned” in its wake.

Despite these differences in perspectives amongst *Kinesis* feminists, the dominance of white, middle-class women at the weekend’s events maintained the parameters of the feminist discourse on pornography as governed by a white, middle-class ideology. As Emma Kisivid noted in *Kinesis*, a talk delivered by Himani Bannerji—the only working-class woman of colour to present at the conference—“exacerbated...the glaring scarcity of women of colour in the audience.”¹⁸⁶ Indeed, Bannerji’s talk at the conference not only critiqued sexual representations of South Asian women, but addressed white supremacy in Canada, critiquing the concept of “visible minority” as a strategy to make people of colour “seen, but not heard.” Bannerji’s analysis of the organization of racial supremacy in Canada was mirrored by the organization of the conference; as Kisivid reflects, “as a consequence, the issues raised in her paper, important and power [sic] questions about racism, imagery, and sexual images of women of colour, were not integrated into the general conference discussion.” As the only speaker to examine racism, Bannerji’s talk—and Kisivid’s subsequent reflections on the *The Heat Is On*—highlight how women of colour, and concerted analyses of race, racism, and racial privilege, were tokenized—if at all present—within white feminists’ discussions on pornography and sexuality.¹⁸⁷ Kisivid and

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., (emphasis in original).

¹⁸⁶ Emma Kisivid, “Women On Art and Sex!” *Kinesis* (December-January 1985-1986): 13. Note that Himani Bannerji is misspelled as Hamani Banerjee.

¹⁸⁷ Makeda Silvera, Sharon Fernandez, Michele Paulse, and Stephanie Martin, “Racism Stops Women and Words,” *Kinesis* (February 1986): 27. Whiteness—white privilege and white supremacy—is a unifying strategy of white feminism across many domains of the women’s movement. See, for instance, an open letter on the withdrawal of black women and women of

Bannerji's insights on the conference drew attention to how the norms of white, middle-class feminism secured the border of feminist sexuality discourse as racially "neutral" in order to sustain dominance over the pornography debate.

Indeed, the ineffectual "integration" of race and class analyses into feminist organizing and theorizing on pornography correlated with a refusal to see the political economic context of sex work, which was also a feature of the Toronto conference *Challenging Our Images: The Politics of Pornography and Prostitution* in November 1985. While the theme of the conference affirmed the political urgency of both pornography and prostitution to feminism, feminist organizers did not readily concede sex workers' authority over their own realities. The Toronto conference emerged out of a political clash between the Canadian Organization for the Rights of Prostitutes (CORP) and the Toronto International Women's Day Coalition (IWD) over WAVAW's intention to lead the IWD march to pornography video stores on Yonge Street; in opposing the feminist perspective that pornography was harmful to women, prostitutes resisted an appropriation of commercial sexual spaces for feminist agitation.¹⁸⁸ Central to their resistance was the politicization of sex work as a kind of labour entitled to safe working conditions, dignity, and respect, in particular free from moralistic harassment by a white, middle-class feminism. In striking their opposition to the anti-commercial sex scope of the IWD organizing committee, CORP activists also declared their solidarity with labourers in the pornography industry.

Evolving out of the Toronto conference was the 1987 publication *Good Girls/Bad Girls: Sex Trade Workers and Feminists Face to Face*, a collection of papers and presentations given at

colour from the organizing committee of Toronto's Women and Words Conference in 1986 due to experiences of racism: "Any woman's conference that does not seek to address a diversity of issues affecting the lives of women serves only women of the dominant race and class" (ibid.).

¹⁸⁸ Bell, "Sex Trade Workers," 11.

the conference.¹⁸⁹ Later that year, *Challenging Our Images* is subsequently discussed and a lengthier excerpt of *Good Girls/Bad Girls* is published in *Kinesis*, folding the conference and the proceedings into *Kinesis* and VSW's pornography archive.¹⁹⁰ In this narrative retelling, I return to *Good Girls/Bad Girls* for its important contribution of first-person sex worker narratives to this history, arguing that the conference and the book continue to tell us much about the hegemonic impulses of feminism and the resistance of marginalized feminist subjects. Even the title of the book uncomfortably reasserted the divide between feminists and sex workers, while also drawing attention to how the Madonna/whore dichotomy unevenly elevates, isolates, and stigmatizes different groups of women. Overall, the collection captures an important historical moment in sex worker and feminist organizing on pornography and prostitution in Canada, particularly through the inclusion of sex workers' perspectives, theorizing, and reflections. *Good Girls/Bad Girls* provides a glimpse into the politics of sex work in 1985, bringing to the fore diverse sex workers' struggle to assert control over the discourse of commercial sex hitherto dominated by a white, middle-class feminist ideology. Indeed, the text demonstrates a thread of solidarity forged between sex workers across the sex industry, as they strove to resist the assumptions, judgments, and condemnation of feminists opposed to the commercialization of sexuality. This tension is captured in a statement from a sex worker activist responding to a feminist's insistence on the violence engendered by pornography:

I listened to you talk and use the fact that we are violated in our work environment to give some sort of legitimacy to your argument. You've made it very clear that you don't want to talk to politicized whores or politicized porn workers. You only use the gutter stories to back up your position. Let's stop the victim shit...we're not crippled as women

¹⁸⁹ Laurie Bell, ed., *Good Girls/Bad Girls: Sex Trade Workers and Feminists Face to Face* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1987).

¹⁹⁰ Esther Shannon, "Feminism Challenged," *Kinesis* (1987): 10-11. In particular, *Kinesis* published an excerpt of an interview between Amber Cooke, a stripper, and Laurie Bell, the conference organizer and editor of the book.

in this industry. We are capable of exercising a healthy control over our own environment.¹⁹¹

The conference marked sex workers' organized resistance to feminist perceptions of the sex industry, insisting on sex workers' agency over their bodies, sexualities, and labour. In defending the legitimacy of their own political analyses over those of feminists, sex workers exposed the white, middle-class biases pervading feminist action-strategies to abolish commercial sex.

While race and class were ineffectually integrated into feminist anti-violence, anti-pornography, and anti-censorship perspectives, it is crucial to insist that the work of women of colour naming whiteness a problem within these movements is an integral part of this history. For instance, a presentation at *Challenging Our Images* by the feminist collective Lesbians of Colour drew attention to the issue of racism in the women's movement and the lack of analysis of race in the dominant feminist anti-pornography position. Calling for the "long overdue" inclusion of an anti-racist perspective in white women's theorizing on pornography, Lesbians of Colour emphasized that white women "make" race, racism, and women of colour "invisible" in their analyses.¹⁹² Lesbians of Colour asserted that women of colour experience not only sexism but racism in pornography, and that racism works in pornography by making "operative" racial stereotypes, encouraging feminist pornography analyses to begin "with race because that's where the power of pornography as a method of domination stems from."¹⁹³ Lesbians of Colour challenged the whiteness of the dominant feminist perspective on pornography by insisting on racism as an index of violence and oppression.

By the end of *Challenging Our Images*, another conference participant spoke out against the "lack of analysis of racism as a central component of pornography and prostitution by the

¹⁹¹ Participant, quoted in *ibid.*, 181.

¹⁹² Lesbians of Colour, quoted in *ibid.*, 66 (emphasis in original).

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 58, 62.

women who did speak at the forums and workshops,” and argued for the necessity of “women with privilege and influence” exerting their “resources to challenge racism in the sex trade and in society.”¹⁹⁴ Subsequently, a representative of Lesbians of Colour also issued a statement “in solidarity” with Indigenous women because of an instance of anti-Indigenous racism at the conference, lamenting the “blatant acceptance of racism” by audience members and demanding an apology from the conference organizers.¹⁹⁵ Laurie Bell immediately publicly apologized for the incident of racism Lesbians of Colour described, and she encouraged audience reflection on the “many, many layers of racism and classism and other ‘isms’” felt throughout the conference.¹⁹⁶ Collectively, these statements suggest that the dialogue fostered between feminists, sex workers, feminist sex workers, and allies at *Challenging Our Images* was politically fraught across identity and experience. Despite the active presence of sex workers, sexual minorities, Indigenous women, women of colour, and poor women at the conference, class, race, and sexual normativity exerted a powerful hold on anti-violence, anti-pornography, and anti-censorship discourses.

By the spring of 1986, the anti-pornography movement in Vancouver was grappling with the disparate effects of state censorship. In another example of feminists joining state-appointed pornography review boards, Jancis Andrews was appointed to the Canadian Customs Advisory Committee to help “expedite” its processing of imports.¹⁹⁷ As the sole woman on the twenty-two member Committee, Andrews’s official role was to support Customs in applying its pornography policy to imported books and videos. Emboldened by the “sodomy” clause in the Criminal Code, Customs increasingly seized “obscene” gay and lesbian materials in Toronto and Vancouver—

¹⁹⁴ Participant, quoted in *ibid.*, 154.

¹⁹⁵ Lesbians of Colour, quoted in *ibid.*, 154.

¹⁹⁶ Bell, quoted in *ibid.*, 154-156.

¹⁹⁷ Gretchen Lang, “Can One Woman Stop Customs Homophobia?” *Kinesis* (March 1986): 4.

including the withholding of the book *Lesbian Sex* from Vancouver's Little Sister's Bookstore in December 1985. With the stated intention to bring a "community" perspective to state censorship, Andrews leveraged her appointment on the Customs Advisory Committee to appeal to the Minister of Revenue to remove the "sodomy" distinction from the Customs guidelines. At the same time, where anal sex was depicted alongside violence—for instance, in consensual acts of sadomasochism—Andrews's fundamental opposition to violent sexual imagery joined the state in screening out gay and lesbian materials. Despite taking a stance against outright homophobia, Andrews's feminist action-strategy of aiding Customs censorship strengthened the anti-sex agenda of the state, and adversely affected the distribution of sexual materials that fell outside the value scale of normative and procreative sex.

Other feminists in Vancouver developed a more concerted effort to ally with lesbian and gay activists in the new movement of "fighting censorship."¹⁹⁸ In early 1986, artists, feminists, and gay and lesbian communities in anticipation of the B.C. provincial legislature's Motion Picture Act formed the Coalition For the Right to View (CRTV). CRTV's primary goal was to raise awareness that impending video regulations would limit and restrict artistic and educational materials, all the while leaving "most mainstream anti-woman imagery untouched." Led by Sara Diamond, the group's members also included other groups adamantly opposed to state censorship, including the B.C. Civil Liberties group, Vancouver Lesbian Connection, Vancouver Artists League, and Little Sisters Bookstore. With an overarching concern for artistic freedom, the CRTV's opposition to video regulations was fostered by a belief in an unfettered right to produce, purchase, and distribute art, film, and books; this was not an opposition to censorship of

¹⁹⁸ Gretchen Lang, "Fighting Censorship: Activists Say Valuable Video Work in Danger," *Kinesis* (March 1986): 4. The increasing replacement of the word pornography with censorship in *Kinesis* titles reflected the shifting terms of this feminist discourse.

pornography per se, but the effects that censorship laws would have on artistic and educational sexual materials produced by and for artists and lesbian and gay communities. The CRTV's ethos is a reminder of the class and race politics that circumscribed the discourses of pornography and censorship; while supporting the artistic right to create and access sexual representations, the CRTV was not explicitly acting in solidarity with sex workers or in support of sex workers' rights to commercial sexual spaces, transactions, and materials.

In the spring of 1986, an opinion piece in *Kinesis* marked a growing critique of anti-pornography feminism and troubled the distinction between “art, pornography, or erotica.”¹⁹⁹ Jill Pollack's “Taking A Stand on Censorship” expressed exasperation and exhaustion from the feminist discourse on pornography, as Pollack admitted to being “so tired” of being told “what to do and what to think around the question of censorship.” She queried, “Who is to say whether or not I should have access to ideas and imagery? The government? You? How can there ever be a consensus on what is ‘right’ and what is ‘wrong’, and how can those decisions be enforced?” Demonstrating an increasingly ambivalent middle ground within the pornography cum censorship debate, Pollack advocated for a ban on “snuff” films and child pornography, all the while admitting that any intervention of the law has “a double edge to it.” In taking a moderate position on government intervention, Pollack advised that feminists move toward the action-strategy of “self-censorship”—setting personal limits and standards on viewing images and sexuality.

As feminist analyses of pornography shifted—some perspectives broadening, and others hardening on opposite ends of the debate—government intervention into the censorship of pornography also escalated as the federal Progressive Conservative government vowed to revisit

¹⁹⁹ Jill Pollack, “Taking A Stand On Censorship,” *Kinesis* (May 1986): 26.

its obscenity laws in the fall 1986 legislature. At the provincial level in British Columbia, 1986 also saw the rise and fall of the controversial Motion Picture Act, Bill 30. The Motion Picture Act was intended to create a licensing system for video distributors, making videos subject to approval from the Film Classification Branch of the Attorney General's office.²⁰⁰ Feminists in support of the bill—including the Vancouver Council of Women and the North Shore Women's Centre—were pleased action had been taken on their recommendations. Yet in a press conference in opposition to Bill 30, a representative from CRTV warned that the Act would give the Attorney General "sweeping powers...to define sexuality, suggestive or explicit, and to change the criteria for what is to be classified and censored." As Bill 30 failed to pass at the provincial legislature, federal legislation against pornography loomed on the horizon.

Years of cumulative feminist agitation against pornography, as well as more recent feminist debates over censorship, dovetailed with the state's increasingly conservative approach to sexuality. Indeed, federal Justice Minister John Crosbie's tabling of Bill C-114 in June 1986 dramatically expanded the reach of what the state considered pornography, seeking to amend the to prohibit virtually all representations of "sexual activity."²⁰¹ The extremism of Bill C-114 was met with a "public backlash," and the bifurcated responses of different feminist groups intensified.²⁰² Megan Ellis of the Working Group on Sexual Violence worried about the broad anti-sex scope of the Bill, reiterating her belief in a civil ordinance and a revamping of laws around sexual violence. Jancis Andrews, on the other hand, considered Bill C-114 to be a publicity stunt, and hoped it would be rejected in favour of the more moderate recommendations made in the Fraser Report. In an open letter to the feminist community later that year, Victoria's

²⁰⁰ Kinesis Staff Writers, "Video Control Bill Tabled," *Kinesis* (June 1986): 1, 2.

²⁰¹ Dany Lacombe, *Blue Politics: Pornography and the Law in the Age of Feminism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 99.

²⁰² Elaine Littman, "New Porn Bill Escalates the Censorship Debate," *Kinesis* (July 1986): 1, 8.

WAP folded, citing their decision to move on from the fight against pornography.²⁰³ Reflecting on their years of work against violent pornography, against censorship, and recently working with prostitutes, WAP shut down not in “defeat” but from a sense of having succeeded in their goal of providing society with “a greater understanding of pornography and broadening its definition to include other forms of sexist media.” WAP Victoria’s closure signaled their recognition that the terms of the debate were no longer the same as when they initiated their anti-pornography activism as an extension of anti-violence organizing in the late 1970s. Indeed, feminist critique against Bill C-114 was not only directed at its scope, but at the government’s failure to once again address the issue of violence against women that pornography represented; instead, Bill C-114 was steeped in the Conservative rhetoric of “pornography as a threat to family values.”²⁰⁴

With Bill C-114 failing to pass, some feminists were “outraged” as Justice Minister Ray Hnatyshyn tabled its successor, Bill C-54, in May 1987.²⁰⁵ The new Progressive Conservative Bill purported to “strike a balance between the necessity to protect people and the right to freedom of expression.” In proposing more moderate legislation still inclusive of Conservative, religious, and some feminist perspectives on normative sexuality, Bill C-54 again exemplifies the amenability of feminist discourses to the state. Bill C-54 explicitly made use of feminist arguments about the inherent harm in pornography in order to extend the state’s reach over the

²⁰³ Pam Black Stone, “Won’t WAP Porn Anymore,” *Kinesis* (November 1986): 25.

²⁰⁴ Joan Bercovitch and Ginette Busque, “A Critique of Bill C-114 as Proposed Legislation on Pornography: Principles and Clause-By-Clause Analysis,” (Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1986), 2. The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, for instance, sought to amend Bill C-114 to include their perspective that “the harm to women caused by pornography must be analysed in the context of the larger issue of violence against women” (ibid.); Lacombe, *Blue Politics*, 101.

²⁰⁵ Kinesis Staff Writers, “New Bill Confuses Pornography, Erotica,” *Kinesis* (June 1987): 8.

control of sexual imagery.²⁰⁶ Specifically, Bill C-54 incorporated feminist language of pornography's danger into its definition of obscene materials as "dehumanizing and degrading" to women.²⁰⁷ However, when a book order by the Vancouver Feminist Bookstore was seized and detained by Customs in the summer of 1987, the warnings of feminists opposed to censorship gained legibility.²⁰⁸ Even Jancis Andrews, a champion of provincial and federal legislative action against pornography, felt her position on the Customs Advisory Committee to be compromised by her powerlessness to prevent the targeting of feminist literature. The RCMP raid of Calgary's Alberta Coalition Against Pornography (ACAP) office, and the seizure of 42 slides depicting local pornographic materials, drove home the reality that the state was a blunt instrument.²⁰⁹ Marking a major shift in the dominant feminist position on pornography in Canada, the National Advisory Council on the Status of Women also withdrew support from Bill C-54 on the grounds that pornography was imbricated in social and economic relations of inequality, and instead recommended legislative changes against "violence."²¹⁰ A range of other feminist organizations retained cautious support for Bill C-54, including NAC's Committee Against Pornography, and together they lobbied for the passing of the legislation.²¹¹

²⁰⁶ Lacombe, *Blue Politics*, 117-136.

²⁰⁷ Brenda Cossman and Shannon Bell, introduction to *Bad Attitude/s on Trial: Pornography, Feminism, and the Butler Decision*, eds. Brenda Cossman, Shannon Bell, Lise Gotell, and Becki L. Ross (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997): 19.

²⁰⁸ M. McPherson, "Customs Seizes Feminist Books," *Kinesis* (July-August 1987): 4.

²⁰⁹ Marianne van Loon, "RCMP Runs Amok," *Kinesis* (November 1987): 3.

²¹⁰ Lacombe, *Blue Politics*, 120-122.

²¹¹ Ibid., 122. Feminist organizations in support of Bill C-54 included: the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW), the Canadian Coalition Against Media Pornography (CCAMP), Resources Against Pornography (RAP), the Metro Toronto Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC), and the Canadian Committee Against Violent Entertainment (CAVE).

While Bill C-54 would never see the light of day, “anti-pornography feminists, losing in the legislative round, regrouped and shifted their attention to the courts.”²¹² Inevitably, “the anti-pornography, pro-censorship forces had done their work”: the state drew on the anti-pornography feminist perspective to aggressively pursue already-existing obscenity provisions, a move that would increasingly target and criminalize sexual minorities.²¹³ Lacombe elucidates:

In February 1992, the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously declared in the *Butler* case that while the obscenity provisions of the Criminal Code violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, they were a reasonable and justifiable limit prescribed by law. The most significant aspect of this ruling is the new test the Supreme Court elaborated to determine obscenity—a test that by incorporating the feminist position that pornography harms women brought the feminist campaign to proscribe pornography to an end.²¹⁴

By 1992, the feminist perspective on pornography as inherently harmful to women was officially folded into the Criminal Code, supporting the state in the regulation of normative sexuality. As the production and circulation of pornography proliferated, criminal sanctions against sexual minorities increased.²¹⁵

Conclusion

Collectively, the efforts by feminists to abolish pornography initiated a relationship with the state that authorized certain feminists as knowing subjects on sexual norms. In demanding state action on pornography—from policing video stores, classifying and regulating videotapes,

²¹² Cossman and Bell, “Introduction,” 20.

²¹³ Lacombe, *Blue Politics*, 104; Becki L. Ross, “‘It’s Merely Designed for Sexual Arousal’: Interrogating the Indefensibility of Lesbian Smut,” in *Bad Attitude/s on Trial: Pornography, Feminism, and the Butler Decision*, eds. Brenda Cossman, Shannon Bell, Lise Gotell, and Becki L. Ross (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 193.

²¹⁴ Lacombe, *Blue Politics*, 134.

²¹⁵ Brenda Cossman, “Censor, Resist, Repeat: A History of Censorship of Gay and Lesbian Sexual Representation in Canada,” *Duke Journal of Gender Law & Policy* 21 (2013-2014): 56, 57. The 1987 seizure of the gay magazine *The Advocate* en route to Little Sister’s Bookstore in Vancouver led to their two-decade battle with Canada Customs in the Supreme Court of Canada, a challenge they eventually lost in 2007.

suing pornographers, expanding the Criminal Code's hate provisions, revising the Criminal Code's obscenity clauses, to censoring types of imagery—predominantly white, middle-class feminists asserted their liberal democratic rights to state protection from pornography's danger. In the process, feminists active in the anti-pornography movement affirmed the place of feminist ideology in the nation-state as feminists defined their goals through the framework of liberal citizenship.

Through a reading of VSW and *Kinesis* as an archive of pornography, this chapter has traced how feminist theorizing and activism on pornography in Vancouver in the 1980s moved from a discourse concerned with violence against women into a campaign against all forms of commercial sexuality. In an attempt to make cogent how pornography was both a cause and effect of violence against women within an overarching structure of patriarchal domination, feminists decried pornography as the most pressing symbol of women's oppression. In order to move towards women's liberation, feminists with varying ideologies, identities, and life experiences were united against pornography through a common goal: the eradication of pornography as a tool, a system, and an industry profiting from the objectification, subordination, and victimization of women. As evidence of the ubiquitous oppression women faced in their daily lives, pornography took on a life of its own, capturing in its definition all forms of sexist and sexual imagery, literature, objects, and media, as well as sexist and sexual demands, ideologies, assaults, and commercial exchanges. As the great cloak of patriarchy, pornography seeped into the corners of society and claimed every woman as its next victim. According to such an extensive logic, the state, the media, and the Church easily reduced pornography to simple and enforceable categories of offence: obscene, harmful, degrading, perverted. The feminist concern over the danger of sexual violence—the core of the feminist anti-pornography position—was muted in the cacophony.

The feminist framework of anti-pornography activism privileged danger over pleasure as a limit to sexual freedom. In locating pornography within a world of danger—dangerous desires, dangerous effects, and dangerous men—the possibility for pornography’s pleasures was foreclosed.²¹⁶ The opportunity for women to consent to pornography—as workers, producers, or consumers—was unfathomable within anti-pornography discourse. Critically, this denial of pornography as a space for fantasy and pleasure was paired with a refusal to see pornography as a labour industry where women earn a living. As a site of remunerated labour, pornography has enabled many women to circumvent poverty, to escape low-wage work, and to become professionals without educational credentials; for diverse poor and working class women, it is racial capitalism that is a constant danger, a physical threat, and a social limit. The almost total absence of pornography workers in this archive is a testament to the dominance feminists possessed over the anti-pornography discourse in Canada in the 1980s.

These necessarily partial histories of the Canadian feminist sex wars attest to the ways in which feminist discourses have a “broader institutional life” that can become easily utilized by the state for its own agenda.²¹⁷ Relying on the mechanisms of a regulatory structure like the state to transform gendered inequality for some risks reinforcing the domination of others. In retelling these overlapping stories of feminist engagement with prostitution and pornography in the 1980s, I have demonstrated how feminist theorizing of sexuality and violence failed for the most part to imagine sex workers as agentic subjects. As excerpts from sex workers reported in the previous chapter attest, racism and classism impose conditions on women’s liberation that are not easily undone by theorizing sexual danger. Sex workers have resisted feminist theorizing of sex work as

²¹⁶ Amber Hollibaugh, *My Dangerous Desires: A Queer Girl Dreaming Her Way Home* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000). Hollibaugh’s memoir provides further insight into how a poor, queer sex worker negotiated these feminist debates.

²¹⁷ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 139.

inherently dangerous and insisted on the specificity of not simply a gendered, but a raced and classed analysis of sexual violence as a tool for domination. The feminists who sought out, enjoined, and emboldened the state in its anti-commercial sex carceral reach attest to Hemmings's insistence that the "presence of a feminist subject" does not necessarily translate into an emancipatory project.²¹⁸ At once a history of fiery activism, new forms of collectivity, and the development of foundational feminist theory, these overlapping histories of feminist engagement with prostitution and pornography are also about sexual normativity and morality, racial superiority and privilege, and economic inequality and refusal. The politics of sexual liberation are intimately tied to the politics of labour, yet whose labour—and whose liberation—comes to matter in feminist political memory depends on who is telling the story.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 12.

Conclusion: The Labour Feminism Takes

My commitment to reading reparatively the histories of feminist political economy and the feminist sex wars has required a critical reading and writing strategy that strives to call attention to the commonsense workings of race, class, and sexual dominance in feminist politics. However ambivalently we occupy the position of critic in our texts, I share in the sense that feminism's capacity for delivering and sustaining critique might be its central strength.¹ Indeed, the urgency of addressing how feminist histories are haunted by marginalized, omitted, and repressed narratives requires not only critique, but also care and accountability. Despite the discomfort that drawing attention to the feminist production of race, class, and sexual normativity might produce in readers—a discomfort we all experience at different moments—it has been important for me that the direction of repair is oriented towards those subjects who have experienced forms of historical injury or disappointment. An ethical commitment to empathetic engagement with feminism is made all the more reflexive by a willingness to address what is painful, in our self and in others. As Gordon insists, “To imagine beyond the limits of what is already understandable is our best hope for retaining what ideology critique traditionally offers while transforming its limitations into what, in an older Marxist language, was called utopian possibility.”² Thus, to even consider that inequality might be resolved, to work towards transforming our reality into something unlike the present, requires more than just the recognition of what is already there, however difficult it can feel to admit to or be called on to witness the effects of inequality.

A feminist project of reading historically and reparatively is a “remembrance practice” that demands a shift from simply learning “*about*” to learning “*from*” the gaps and occlusions in

¹ Scott, “Feminism’s History,” 19.

² Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 195.

dominant feminist history.³ I have been oriented towards uncovering the multiplicity of narratives within two distinct feminist histories: the development of the field of feminist political economy and the debates of the feminist sex wars. In writing these narratives together, as part of the same project, I have sought to demonstrate the place of “absent presences” in feminist historical memory.⁴ Read alongside one another, it becomes plain that the commonsense stories about feminist political economy and the feminist sex wars in Canada during the 1980s are indeed part of the same history. Both overlapping histories demonstrate how a white, middle-class femininity becomes exalted contra women of colour, Indigenous women, poor women, sex workers, and migrant domestic workers. In pursuing legitimacy *vis a vis* white middle-class men and the Canadian state, feminist subjects routinely sought to elevate their political, professional, and personal statuses. The feminist discourses generated about political economy, domestic work, violence, and sex work all proceeded along a line of racial, classed, and sexual normativity that enshrined white, middle-class norms of womanhood as imperatives for embodying the privileges of the “rightful feminist of the nation.”⁵ In telling together these dominant feminist histories and the narratives that haunt them, this research has worked to expose and unsettle the race, class, and sexual normativity that undergird Canadian feminism.

It is one thing to identify the omissions in feminist history: it is another to trace the labour that went into those omissions, and to trace the labour of the subjects who worked against their own erasures. My project has pursued a line of inquiry committed to following both commonsense feminist narratives and their corresponding narratives of resistance. As Himani Bannerji asserts in “Politics and the Writing of History,” writing history is neither “innocent” nor

³ Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert, *Between Hope and Despair*, 5.

⁴ Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 15.

⁵ Bunjun, “Organizational Colonial Encounters,” 6.

“transparent,” but is grounded in an “ideological-political dimension.”⁶ Rather than simply acknowledging the omission of racial, gendered, classed, and sexual “others” in the scholarship of “progressive historians, feminists, Marxists, and nationalists,” Bannerji finds it “much more interesting” to “explore” how these discursive patterns unfold within a “context of domination,” remarking that “erasures, silences, and oversights are most often not a matter of actual, purposive acts of antagonism.”⁷ In linking discriminatory practices within feminist periodicals to commonsense racism, classism, and whorephobia in broader society, I have aimed to show how feminism is yet another site where social inequalities are not simply present, but are both produced and undermined. Indeed, this dissertation has experimented with one method of bringing “the absent to the present, the invisible into visibility” by asserting that hegemonic narratives are bound to their own narratives of resistance.⁸ In speaking back to the silences within history, Bannerji writes,

And when and how...and through whose agency, does this silence break? Who enters through the fissures of hegemonic discourse, from the ‘outside,’ to make their absence visible, their silence audible? The answer is only too obvious—the excluded themselves, in their own social substantiveness and agency, in the course of their struggles, create this epistemological corrective and *change*, not just expose, the politics of discourse.⁹

As this dissertation has argued, the labour of politics and the politics of labour waged in the margins of dominant feminist discourses transformed the politics of feminism in Canada. Migrant domestic workers, sex workers, and their allies produced knowledge that drew attention to the hegemony of feminist theory all the while articulating politics on their own terms, and for their own political agendas.

⁶ Himani Bannerji, “Politics and the Writing of History,” in *Nation, Empire, Colony: Historicizing Gender and Race*, eds. Ruth Roach Pierson and Nupur Chaudhuri (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 290.

⁷ Ibid., 290, 291.

⁸ Ibid., 287.

⁹ Ibid., 291 (emphasis added).

Bannerji's identification of these resistant narratives as a "corrective" also identifies a tension that I have been working through in this project. Hemmings is quite explicit that her own project does not see "corrective redress as the most appropriate means to address the problem of omission."¹⁰ Indeed, she aims to keep in the foreground of her project the knowledge that "history is more complicated than the stories we tell about it," this "fact" in itself a kind of corrective against an impulse towards "plugging the gaps" of feminist history. For Hemmings, "experimenting with how we might tell stories differently rather than telling different stories" describes a conscious strategy of tracing how feminist narratives are constructed, circulated, and interpreted through commonsense affective and citational modes. That her intentions are to expose these modes—but not necessarily their omissions—is a key difference in our projects. For one thing, my own narrative has not stopped short at identifying commonsense discourses in my archive. These commonsense narratives were instead an opening—however small—to think through not only how they came to be hegemonic discourses "about" political economy and the sex wars, but how they were simultaneously openings into narratives that were imagined as elsewhere, or part of another story altogether. My work therefore has departed from Hemmings's through my interest in revealing not only how these other stories were omitted, appropriated, or delegitimized as a practice of discursive dominance, but why: I have argued that feminist political economy needed to omit paid domestic work in order to substantiate claims about women's domestic labour, while anti-violence feminists needed to show the violence of sex work in order to prove the ubiquity of violence against women. In both dominant stories, the labouring bodies of women marginalized by race, class, and sexuality were not taken at face value. It is precisely in remembering, retelling, and reciting the evidence of women's labour on the margins that their

¹⁰ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 16.

work becomes visible as work that enables feminism. My interest in tracing the labour of domestic workers and sex workers within these dominant narratives speaks back to an abstract and abstracting feminist theory on economics, labour, violence, and sexuality, asserting embodied physicality and social location as crucial indexes of feminist politics, “in a world so severely divided in classes, on mental and manual divisions of labour.”¹¹

Indeed, the *kinds* of labour I have taken up as outside of dominant feminist narratives are not only manual, but are imbued with a corporeality and a kind of care-giving that marks them as outside of most conceptualizations of work or labour. For instance, a comparative history of labour studies would no doubt yield a similar story of neither sex workers nor domestic workers being included in labour unions and labour organizations in the 1980s. As emphasized throughout this project, the conditions of labour, and the intersections of class, race, gender, and sexuality have produced as commonsense the omission of sex worker and domestic worker histories, a practice of elision repeated in movement histories by the ongoing in/visibility of domestic workers and sex workers. As this project has demonstrated, sex workers and domestic workers stand out as the seething presences in two pivotal feminist ideological developments in the 1980s, their enforced invisibility central to securing the boundaries of the discourses of political economy and the sex wars. In tracing these politics within and alongside feminist periodical production, a particular story of political struggle was exhumed. The stories I have told here have been at once facilitated by, and delimited by, the archive I chose for this project. But what would another archive have generated?

The genres of fiction or memoir are alternative starting points for getting at the questions and conditions of domestic work and sex work. For instance, two recent memoirs provide

¹¹ Bannerji, “Politics and the Writing of History,” 292.

insights into these kinds of labour in much more detailed and analytical ways than I encountered in my periodicals, precisely because the authors are provided the authorial space to develop their perspectives. Yasuko Thanh's *Mistakes to Run With* offers a gripping and beautiful portrayal of working as an adolescent prostitute in Victoria and Vancouver in the late 1980s.¹² A meditation on poverty, race, sexuality, mental health, and the drive to become a writer and mother, Thanh's memoir gives an account of sex work that is fleshed out, whole, and never deterministic. Resisting the ascription of "victim"—at one point she throws a book on adolescent prostitution against the wall in disgust—Thanh probes new depths in sex worker subjectivity. Stephanie Land's *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive* conveys the struggle to navigate poverty following childbirth and domestic violence.¹³ In a seemingly endless procession of government programs that hold her well below the poverty line, Land reflects on the web of institutions and social inequalities that put—and keep—poor single moms in poverty. When Land manages to secure work as a maid, she creates a window into the competitive world of for-hire domestic workers, documenting the struggle of wage insecurity, precarious conditions, and the impact of the job on disability and illness. Both Land and Thanh's memoirs capture the range of emotional and physical affects of their stigmatized and repudiated physical labour, providing important documentation of these persistently marginalized workforces. It is significant that some voices—note that Land is American and white, and neither a migrant nor a woman of colour domestic worker—are breaking through the assumptions and omissions about domestic work and sex work to reveal their first-person experiences, analyses, and insights.

¹² Yasuko Thanh, *Mistakes to Run With* (Toronto: Penguin Random House, 2019).

¹³ Stephanie Land, *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive* (New York: Hachette Books, 2019).

However, these histories of domestic work and sex work weren't the reason I started my project: they were what spoke to me from within the archive as I pursued questions of feminism's historical relationship to class. Without the experience of reading through the feminist periodicals in my archive, I wouldn't have identified these themes as those that needed to be fleshed out. At the same time, the project was limited by the structure of my archive, and the questions that prompted its inception. In turning to three established, institutionalized feminist Anglophone periodicals as the basis for this project, from the outset this research has privileged the perspectives and experiences of white, middle-class feminists as a way into feminist history of the 1980s. As other scholars in the field of critical feminist history have demonstrated—whether through reading a single journal in its entirety, or in interviewing subjects involved in particular feminist organizations—white, middle-class, heterosexual, and able-bodied feminisms have exerted particular dominance over feminist histories in Canada.¹⁴ In starting from the place of marginalized feminist subjects through literature, memoir, or first-person interviews, however, these stories might have come together differently.

Indeed, this project is heavy with its own set of “absent presences” that beckoned at me in the research process but that, in the end, did not make it into this project as it currently stands. It was impossible to attend to the full scope of my curiosities, and unanswered questions direct the way for further research, both my own and that of others. In particular, I acknowledge that this project has not evenly attended to important political questions raised in the 1980s by Indigenous women, lesbian women, disabled women, and women on welfare and single mothers. These histories weave through the narratives I have described above, but I recognize that I did not

¹⁴ Jordan, “Branching Out”; Bunjun, “Organizational Colonial Encounters”; Becki Ross, *The House That Jill Built: A Lesbian Nation in Formation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

specifically unpack the interaction of movements for Indigenous, lesbian, disabled, and welfare rights with dominant feminism. The archives—both the one I have assembled here and future possible arrangements—are rife with histories of these women and their political struggles. I look forward to the chance to revisit my archive in my post-doctoral work in order to tease out more subordinated narratives within 1980s Canadian feminist history.

I have been moved and challenged by this research to question the contemporary ways in which women's marginalized care work is connected, inspiring me to direct the insights gleaned from this project into further research that prioritizes the agency and politics of racial and sexual minority poor and working-class women working at the margins of the labour market. In a new investigation, I would like to consider the historical and contemporary relationship between the frontier discourses of wealth, leisure, and tourism and race, class, sexuality, citizenship and migration in Niagara Falls, Ontario. Starting with a place instead of an archive, I want to open up in advance the kinds of texts and ephemera available for study. In particular, I am curious about the development of women's service work within a tourist destination that thrives on the elaboration of classed, raced, and sexualized experiences. As Karen Dubinsky states in her own historical work on Niagara Falls, "tourism is about difference": since the early nineteenth century, the area has been a site of encounter between wealthy white tourists and local poor/working class Indigenous, racialized, and white subjects employed in the tourist industry.¹⁵ While Dubinsky's work provides a useful background for thinking about Niagara Falls, she does not look at sex work as a part of this economy.¹⁶ I intend to examine this important aspect of

¹⁵ Karen Dubinsky, "Vacations in the 'Contact Zone': Race, Gender, and the Traveler at Niagara Falls," in *Nation, Empire, Colony: Historicizing Gender and Race*, eds. Ruth Roach Pierson and Nupur Chaudhuri (Indiana University Press, 1998), 251, 252.

¹⁶ See also Karen Dubinsky, "Local Colour: The Spectacle of Race at Niagara Falls," in *Gender, Sexuality, and Colonial Modernities*, ed. Antoinette Burton (London: Routledge, 2005), 65-77.

Niagara Falls, seeking to link the service economies of servers, cleaners, escorts and strippers to the development of a commercialized frontier fantasy. Given the importance of first-person experiences to this project, I am keen to learn from other scholars doing collaborative research with unionized and non-unionized service workers and sex workers. This future project will combine critical feminist theories of race, colonialism, class, globalization, violence, sexuality, domestic work and sex work; economic analysis; archival data of city planning, tourism, and business licensing; media; court records; and interviews with servers, exotic dancers, and hotel housekeepers. I will attempt to locate Niagara Falls as a local site of globalized service work, privileging the agency and experiences of the women who are employed therein. I hope that this project will contribute to a growing field of intersectional feminist studies on women's marginalized labour practices.

My thinking, reading, and writing throughout this project are inflected by my position as a researcher and writer. As Bannerji suggests, transparency about the "social location of the knower in the production process of knowledge" is not simply about "identity," but what people are "ascribed as in the context of domination."¹⁷ As a white settler graduate student, I have had the ongoing privilege of experiencing the education system as a legitimate source of knowledge through my race location. In this way, I entered into graduate school and historical research with a curiosity that, through my white privilege, takes for granted that I will recognize myself in the histories I encounter, and that I am authorized to not only encounter them, but to counter them. Concomitantly, learning "about" the history of poor and working-class peoples is not at all the same thing as learning "from" that history.¹⁸ As a poor/working-class woman, it is essential to me that my knowledge production works in service of destigmatizing and valuing

¹⁷ Bannerji, "Politics and the Writing of History," 289.

¹⁸ Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert, *Between Hope and Despair*, 5.

reflections on poverty. Throughout, I have insisted on the integrity of diverse poor and working-class subjects to this project, and I not only value but also privilege the knowledge and agency generated by poor and working-class subjects. Within a culture that sees poverty and physical labour as vestiges of weakness, decay, and moral inferiority, being a poor/working-class person within the academy is an ongoing act of resistance.

Becoming educated is not simply an asset; for the poor, it has a cost.¹⁹ At the same time as I hope my work will have some value to other poor and working-class subjects, graduate school is a form of alienation from working-class community, sensibilities, and struggle; this project bears the marks of that alienation. As Roxanne Rimstead reflects on her own complicated relationship to academic work, “I am sometimes afraid that the community of opposition which I imagine is one of ghosts from my past more than of the people living poverty today, since I have grown so far from that community.”²⁰ I too am driven by my own experiences to understand the strictures economic insecurity places on the possibility of the good life; in my pursuit of domestic worker and sex worker histories within the struggle for women’s liberation, I have broadened my understanding of the labour it takes to count as feminist. I offer this project as a gesture of solidarity with those who have been marked as too much for feminism, publishing, or academia; I write from and towards the place where lack is not a guarantor of legibility.²¹ This is privileged work—but it is also critical, hopeful, and heavy.

Telling feminist histories is an ethical project that positions the narrator in close proximity to the injuries and allegiances produced within commonsense narratives. In insisting on the

¹⁹ Tara Westover, *Educated* (New York: HarperCollins, 2018).

²⁰ Rimstead, *Remnants of Nation*, 63.

²¹ Johanna Hedva, “Sick Woman Theory,” *Mask Magazine*, last modified January 2016, Hedva’s essay is a moving meditation on negotiating academia, feminism, and writing as a poor woman of colour experiencing chronic illness.

political integrity of the narratives abandoned by or foreclosed in recollections of feminism's recent past, this project has been committed to thinking through and with the difficulty, multiplicity, and complexity of feminist history. I have sought to intervene in a cohesive feminist narrative by speaking different histories together and insisting on their shared relations to racism, classism, and sexual normativity. As a gesture of repair to the narratives denied their place within feminist history, I hope that telling these stories differently, and telling different stories, will imbue them with useful purpose. As this dissertation has shown, the work we do becomes our history. In the critical practice of remembering individual and collective feminist politics, this project enters the feminist historical record—humbled by the labour, and open to interpretation.

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