

5-2023

Community in the Cell: Queer Women's Space and Place in New Orleans

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Community in the Cell: Queer Women's Space and Place in New Orleans

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
History
Concentration in Public History

By

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B.A. California State University, San Bernardino, 2018

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Abstract

This thesis examines queer women's history and space/places of community in New Orleans using spatial analysis and feminist theory to fill the silences. The Special Citizens Committee for the Vieux Carré laid the foundation for regulating queer women and transmasculine people starting in the 1950s. Even after the committee ended, New Orleans Police Department and the Vice Squad had the power to invade and harass places of community for queer women and transmasculine people. Despite this hostility, queer women and transmasculine people resisted and made a place for themselves in New Orleans. As a result of their persistence through visibility in New Orleans, many queer women and transmasculine people shared the experience of being arrested and placed in jail. This paper aims to show that queer women's resistance continued into the various spaces of incarceration in New Orleans.

Keywords: LGBTQ, Women, Resistance, Spatial, Incarceration, Community

Introduction and Thesis

On February 20, 1959, Mary D'Amico went to Cathy's Bar, where she worked as a barmaid, unaware she would be arrested for the fourth time in four years by New Orleans Police Department. That morning she selected what was then considered men's clothing that likely included a pair of slacks that zipped up the front, a button-up shirt, and black loafers. She then styled her short hair, probably to look like James Dean, smooth and with a little volume.¹ Finally, she slid a heavy ring on her right ring finger. Feeling the weight of her clothes, she likely felt her confidence swell as she stepped outside to begin her commute to the French Quarter.² Cathy's Bar (514 Ursuline) was on the edge of the Quarter, which far enough away from Bourbon to be quiet but close enough to other bars with women who bartended, so Mary was not alone.³ That early afternoon two police officers walked into the bar in what they felt was a routine check of looking for "undesirables." It was not even lunch yet, and Mary was already going to have a bad day.

1. "Bureau of Identification, Police Department, New Orleans, LA." 1959, Papers of Mary Meeks and Jacob Morrison Box 102, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA (Hereafter Mary and Jacob Morrison Box, MSS 553) The exact clothing worn on the day of her arrest in 1959 is unclear. Details for the clothing potentially worn are pulled from a photo from when NOPD arrested her for the first time in 1955.

2. Det. Rene Sabrier to Superintendent of Police Provosty A. Dayries, February 24, 1959, Papers of Mary and Jacob Morrison, Box 102, MSS 553. N.O. Police Department Arrest Books Bl. A518 1st Dist. 1/16/69- 2/27/59, New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, LA. It is unclear between the letter and arrest records whether Mary lived at the 514 Ursuline recorded in the letter or at 8202 Burgundy in the arrest book. It was common for women to lie about their addresses when arrested to protect themselves because newspapers published their names and addresses along with the charges.

3. Third Precinct Station reports to Superintendent of Police, August 7, 1950, Box 5, Folder 46, William Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA (hereafter cited as Foster Civic and Community Papers).

The two men approached Mary and identified themselves as officers Tabary and Philips. The officers asked if Mary was wearing men's clothes, she possibly matched their masculine energy by answering that it was the clothes she was accustomed to wearing. The officers arrested Mary for wearing clothes of the opposite sex, loaded her into police wagon 19, and took her less than a mile toward the lake to First District Police Station on North Rampart. There she was booked on Ordinance 828, section 63-18: "Regulation of Conduct and Clothing in Places of Public Entertainment."⁴ Three days later, Mary appeared before Judge Garofalo; it is unclear if she spent all three days in the First District police station before she appeared before the judge. He looked at the officers in court as witnesses, as was the custom, and told them that section 63-18 on wearing clothes of the opposite sex was limited to entertainers, and Mary was a barmaid. He explained to the officers that Mary, while obviously lesbian, did not meet the parameters of the ordinance, and the police had no proof she was a lesbian. The judge had to dismiss her case.⁵

Records of queer women and transmasculine people from the 1950s to the late 1960s are limited. Mary's name never appeared in the newspaper. Instead, her detailed arrest in 1959 was documented in a letter between Superintendent of the Police Provosty A. Dayries and Detective Rene Sabier the day after Judge Garofalo dismissed the case. For the writer of the letter, Detective Sabier, Mary represented the loophole in Ordinance 828. She and many other people who did not adhere to the heteronormative expectations of gender and sexuality were the focus of the ordinance beyond the section that placed Mary in jail. Even though these officers likely knew the ordinance did not pertain to Mary, they still used their power and authority to remove

4. "Committee on Sex Deviates Reports" Papers of Mary and Jacob Morrison, Box 102, Mss 553.

5. Det. Rene Sabier to Superintendent of Police Provosty A. Dayries, February 24, 1959, Papers of Mary and Jacob Morrison, Box 102, Mss 553.

her from her community and work, to place her in a space intended to hide and punish her for rejecting gender and sexual norms. Mary's story is a linking experience for queer women and transmasculine people in New Orleans due to regulations becoming more specific when she was arrested. While the letter details how NOPD transported and incarcerated Mary, this letter erases Mary's experiences as a transmasculine person in the police wagon, the possible three days in the cell, and the day in the courtroom. As said before, this was not the first-time the NOPD arrested Mary. She was arrested two years earlier for wearing disguises in public, an older version of the same law, likely created during World War I.⁶ In spite of her previous experiences in the cell, Mary, like many other queer women and transmasculine people, found a way to persist and resist.

In New Orleans, lesbian women wanted a safe space for community and love. Bars, for many, were a place of reprieve in a space that largely pushed them to follow gender and sexual norms. However, even as these women expressed joy in the found places, they also described the bar as the place they were frequently met with hostility. As in many other cities in the United States, the policing of sexuality in New Orleans focused on sexual spaces. During World War II, French Quarter bars began catering to service men's appetite by advertising women as the sexual fantasy in these spaces. For members of the Special Citizens Committee for the Vieux Carré, any woman in the bar was considered sexually promiscuous. Even though the group disbanded after two years, the regulation of gender and sexuality continued. In January of 1959, New Orleans

6. N.O. Police Dept. Arrest Books 1956-1957, BK. A464 1st District 12/8/56-5/3/57, New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, LA. Clare Sears, *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law and Fascination in Nineteenth Century San Francisco*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015) 3. Mary was arrested at 1:25 am on March 9, 1957. NOPD records the arrest at Ursuline and Decatur, near Cathy's Bar. Mary is still recorded as a barmaid; she was likely was just getting off work when the 3 officers made the arrest. She paid a 25-dollar cash bond to be released.

passed an ordinance limiting gay men and lesbian women's access to sexual spaces, employment, and housing.⁷ This ordinance was the culmination of nearly a decade of surveillance of gender and sexuality that began in the French Quarter but bled into the larger New Orleans area. While every oppressed community strives to create safe spaces, the power and control exercised by men in various points in the city infiltrated these visible places for lesbians, transmen, transwomen, and any person who did not represent what Audre Lorde called the “Mythical Norm.”⁸ However, despite the invading hostility into the essential bar life, queer women and transmasculine people persisted. This paper argues that the queer women’s efforts to make a place of community through resistance continued into spaces designed to reenforce gender and sexual norms, including spaces of incarceration. Queer women and transmasculine people resisted by finding each other and offering comfort in incarcerated spaces—from the paddy wagons to the courtrooms—and making them a place for the community.

The choice to focus on queer women beginning in 1950 is partially due to limited sources and a desire to queer New Orleans history. Many organizations surfaced in the fight for Gay Liberation after the Stonewall Uprising, causing a narrative that a visible queer identity and community only emerged in modern America. However, historians and activists have worked tirelessly to demonstrate that queer people have been visible throughout history. This paper will examine placemaking as a form of resistance while also highlighting a place of community beyond the bar and women’s organizations. As George Chauncy highlighted in his work *Gay New York*, “the history of gay resistance must be understood to extend beyond formal political

7. Ordinance 828 63-18, January 30, 1959. Papers of Mary and Jacob Morrison, Box 102, Mss 553.

8. Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*. (New York: Ten Speed Press, 1984) 123-124. To Lorde, the norm in America is white, male, young, financially stable, Christian and heterosexual.

organizing to include strategies of everyday resistance that men devised in order to claim space for themselves in the midst of hostile society.”⁹ This resistance is not limited to men. Women in New Orleans did not just survive the hostility in the French Quarter, they thrived despite it. They laid the foundation for gay life in New Orleans in the post-Stonewall world and did it in various ways.

Various sources illuminate the history of queer women and transmasculine people in the New Orleans gay community. Sources include meeting minutes from the city, local newspapers, oral histories, print media, and fictional stories. Many accounts of queer women and transmasculine people emerge from newspaper articles announcing arrests of individuals or found in arrest records. The oppressors created these documents and worked to criminalize people based on their gender and sexual identity with the added layer of race. These archives of arrests are filled with violence that redefine queer women and transmasculine people as criminals to dehumanize them. The records and the people who created them ignore queer women and transmasculine people’s identity and perpetuate violence beyond the labeling of their crime, in part by misgendering them. When newspapers used legal names, likely pulled from arrest records and a requirement, we lose another part of the person in the archive. The reason being for queer women and transmasculine people, particularly transgender people, they might go by a name that better reflects their gender. This prevents historians from ever knowing if these individuals reclaimed their gender and sexuality by going by a new name and once again takes agency from these individuals. This study follows historians like Saidiya Hartman, who addresses the violence of the archive in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Hartman represents the

9. George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994) 5.

names of enslaved women's experiences as a counter history and argues that by being speculative and fashioning a narrative about enslaved women outside the violence of slavery she amplifies impossible stories.¹⁰ The lack of archival material requires reading against the grain to tell these individual stories. Marissa Fuentes, another historian of slavery also deals with the production of power in the archive. She challenges that the very call for more sources adds to the erasure of under-documented voices.¹¹

Following these historians' legacy, I hope to narrate a fuller history of the people who called New Orleans home. For example, Calvin Clark, a Black queer woman, was only identified for this thesis due to her numerous arrests in the 1960s. Based on her arrest, I identify her as a queer woman whose existence queered spaces outside of the French Quarter. Mary D'Amico was only found in a letter and arrest records; her voice is silenced by NOPD's focus on criminalizing her existence. While she is labeled a lesbian in the letter due to her butch appearance, she might have also been a transgender man. By identifying her as transmasculine I attempt to represent the fluidity of her gender, rather than define it with in the binaries of gender.

The few oral histories studied, identified, and collected add to the depth of the experience of being queer in New Orleans. This paper leans heavily into the experiences of Doris Lunden (an oral history published in *Conditions Six* with a copy located in New Orleans Public Library), Shane (located and digitally accessible in the Lesbian Herstory Archive located in New York), and Jackie Jones (located in GLBT Historical Society) to highlight other places. To add to the archive, I conducted an oral history with Bonnie "Bode" Noonan, a lesbian woman who was

10. Hartman, Saidiya. "Venus in Two Acts." *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1-14. muse.jhu.edu/article/241115.

11. Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1c5chbv>.

primarily in the gay life in the late 60s to 80s. Her descriptions of arrest and incarceration in New Orleans jails fill the silence many gay and gender non-conforming women experienced. This oral history will be deposited in the LSU archive in partnership with LGBTQ+ Archive Project. From these scarce records, we can gather information about these individuals' gender and sexuality and how they resisted heteronormative society in various ways. Unless the individual states their identity, I will use queer to refer to people who rejected heteronormative sexuality and gender expectations. Queer women include lesbians, transwomen, and people arrested for prostitution. Transmasculine refers to women who present as masculine, butch, or transmen. To further fill the silences, a spatial analysis will demonstrate how queer women and transmasculine people like Mary D'Amico, Calvin Clark, Doris Lunden, and Shane queered spaces in New Orleans.

For this paper, space is a physical and conceptual location. Place is a space personalized by meaning and interaction. Geographer Tim Creswell defines place as space saturated with meaning and places have spacing in between. In the past, western societies defined place through a colonialist lens, usually meaning a more formal process of placemaking is through physical development or the naming of spaces. Creswell deviates from this by explaining that a place does not have to be a developed or manipulated environment like cities. Place is a way of seeing and navigating the world. By looking at places, we resist seeing cities like New Orleans as a space or a landscape with no meaning. Instead, New Orleans is filled with places that have varying meaning for each community, and they can do it formally or informally.¹² As queer women and transmasculine people make a place for themselves, they resist their oppressors, primarily NOPD's, idea of what a place means.

12. Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Introduction* (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 19.

Placemaking for queer women and transmasculine people involves resisting the gendered spaces they are forced to occupy. Often when looking at gender, women are placed in private or domestic spheres. These spheres defined women based on the expectation imposed on them, which heavily influenced where women were allowed or expected to be in the 1950s.¹³ As women entered the public sphere, they resisted the gender and sexual norms imposed on them by a heteronormative society that ruled they must be straight, feminine, and non-working mothers and wives. Chauncy's spatial analysis shows that the making of the gay world could occur in almost any setting.¹⁴ As queer women and transmasculine people moved and developed communities, they queered heteronormative spaces to make them queer places for the intersecting meaning of sex, gender, and sexuality. This act of place-making happened in the bars but also occurred in the most hostile spaces, like spaces of incarceration, such as jails, prisons, police wagons, and the courtroom.

My positionality in this research is as a white cis woman who identifies as asexual and straight. Additionally, I have family members who are correctional officers in the California prison system. These blood ties presently make me reluctant to call for the abolishment of prisons. It however does not prevent me from being critical of the past and present violence inside America's prisons and jails. While I identify as queer, I am an outsider, but my identity has shaped my understanding of gender and sexuality.

Besides personal experiences informing this understanding of gender, sex, and sexuality, my work is rooted in feminist theory. When starting this research, the focus began on lesbian

13. Linda K Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History." *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (1988): 9–39. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1889653>.

14. George Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 276.

women. However, initial research revealed that focusing on the lesbian identity and community became too limiting. The term lesbian in the historical analysis restricts people's identities and there is not one true defining experience for womanhood. Rather queer women and transmasculine people's experiences overlapped, and queer women often shared their spaces. Judith Butler argued that gender is not informed by biology; gender is a series of acts that are reaffirmed, revised, and reinforced over time.¹⁵ People should not be limited to the labels ascribed to them at one point in their life, and identity is essential to understanding how people experience space. Therefore, we cannot limit the analysis of the body in these spaces just to gender and sexuality. As Black feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw and womanist Audre Lorde pointed out, defining woman and sisterhood universalizes the experiences of gender from the perspective of white women and men.¹⁶ It ignores the intersecting identities when looking at the sources. Oral histories and written sources from Black queer women and transmasculine people in New Orleans are limited. Using the approach of intersectional feminism enhances our understanding of how overlapping inequalities changes the experiences of space and place.¹⁷ With all this in mind, feminist ethnography has developed from these feminist and womanist theories. When I

15. Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40 (1988): 519–31. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893>.

16. Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*. (New York: Ten Speed Press, 1984); Catharine A. MacKinnon, "Intersectionality as Method: A Note," *Signs* 38, no. 4 (2013): 1019–1030, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/669570>; Kimberle Crenshaw, (1989) "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum*: Vol. 1989, Article 8.

17. Catharine A MacKinnon. "Intersectionality as Method: A Note." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38 (2013): 1020. <https://doi.org/10.1086/669570>.

examine fictional stories like *Stone Butch Blues*, I follow feminist anthropologist Faye Harrison, who argues that anthropologists can read fiction for its insight into race, gender, and class.¹⁸

Historiography

In the revolutionary book *Gay American History* Jonathan Katz says in his first paragraph, “For long we were a people perceived out of time and out of place- socially unsituated, without a history- the mutant progeny of some heterosexual union, freaks. Our existence as a long-oppressed, long-resistant social group was not explored.”¹⁹ With no formal history training, Katz compiled a herculean book of primary sources proving gay men and lesbian women were always present in history. The queering of United States history was and is an act of resistance. Before and after the Stonewall Uprising, gay people were treated either as sexual deviants, mentally ill, or criminals. This forced people into the closet, making them the “invisible” minority. For some, Stonewall was seen as a turning point for visibility and marking the beginning of true activism and social organizing for gay rights. However, historians and activists have pushed back on this narrative.

Historians and people from various disciplines argued and proved through careful analysis that gay people and their history did not begin in 1969. Katz knew his work was not an analysis, but he did call for careful citations so other historians could build on each other’s work. Geographically, much of the recorded gay history written focuses on urban places, especially New York and San Francisco. It also focused on white cis gay men and lesbian women. While New Orleans is seen as a gay city, there is still more LGBTQ history to explore. Works written

18. Faye Harrison, “Writing Against the Grain” *Critique of Anthropology* 13 (1993): 403. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X9301300407>

19. Jonathan Katz, *Gay American History*, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1976), 1.

about women are primarily about lesbians in spaces like bars, social organizations, or schools. There is a gap in other spaces and ways queer women and transmasculine people made a place for themselves in New Orleans. When Jonathan Katz pulled together the sources proving the existence of a gay American history, he kick-started the efforts of people from various disciplines and backgrounds into the queering of history.

Not long after Katz's publication, historians began to investigate gay history. When talking about women within LGBTQ history in the mid-20th century, early works focus on their dual identities and the bars that gay men and lesbian women occupied. like John D'Emilio's *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*, was one of the earliest works to be published about gay and lesbian history. This book's study centers on gay politics in the broader discussion of gay and lesbian identity and the subcultures that sustained urban gay men and lesbian women. D'Emilio does use a chapter to explore lesbian history. D'Emilio states that while lesbian bars are limited, they were the "identifiable collective manifestation of lesbian existence."²⁰

D'Emilio states that lesbian bars in towns and cities do not reach the numbers that male bars did. He offers gendered reasons, such as taverns and bars were male spaces too disreputable for women and marriage restricted lesbian life.²¹ However, lesbian bars brought lesbians into the public sphere. These bars also allowed gendered expression for lesbians like the Butch and Femme.²² This subculture is the center of Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis's book *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community*, published in

20. John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of the Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 99.

21. D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 98.

22. D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 99.

1993. This work focuses on working-class lesbians in Buffalo, New York, bar culture. In examining butch and femme relationship dynamics, the lesbian bars were essential to developing a distinct sexual identity. Their methodology is an ethnohistory, using oral histories to examine the lesbian community as the feminist movement.²³ The Butch Femme subculture pushed back on the binary of gender in America that defined men and women as oppositional. Butch lesbians dressed masculine, femme women remained feminine, and these masculine vs. feminine attributes continued into the sexual relationship. As a result, the 'younger' lesbian community rejected butch femme because they saw the dynamic as mimicking heteronormative sexual relationships.

This discourse is evident in a local interpretation of New Orleans lesbian bar culture. Caroline Olsson wrote "Not All That Easy: Survival Strategies in Lesbian Bar Life in New Orleans, 1950-1970," a thesis for her master's at the University of New Orleans in 1999. Her analysis of lesbian bars in New Orleans highlights women's need for survival strategies and lesbians' attribution to the community through lesbian bars. Olsson agrees with D'Emilio that lesbian bars were less prevalent than gay male bars. She also agrees that class determines who frequents these public spaces.²⁴ While she discusses strategies to avoid harassment, she explains that femme women adhered to women's gender presentation, and butches could pass as men. Olsson states that Butch women did not wish to become men. Somewhat, they lacked a model to follow, and the butch femme lesbian mirrored the heterosexual relationships around them.²⁵

23. Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis. *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community*, (New York: Routledge, 2014).

24. Caroline Olsson, "Not All That Easy: Survival Strategies in Lesbian Bar Life in New Orleans, 1950-1970," M.A. Thesis, University of New Orleans, 1999, 5.

25. Olsson, "Not All That Easy: Survival Strategies in Lesbian Bar Life in New Orleans, 1950-1970," 13.

Davis and Kennedy see the butch-femme dynamic as being essential to the erotic relationships of lesbians, and these relationships were a form of resistance: "the roles also transformed those models and created an authentic lesbian lifestyle."²⁶ Davis and Kennedy pushed back against the 1970s minimization of women's contribution to the feminist and LGBTQ movement.

As the feminist movement developed, feminist both straight and gay pushed back on patriarchy and gender roles to build a sisterhood. In *Transgender History*, Susan Stryker places transgender social activism within the feminist framework.²⁷ In her analysis, she uses intersectional feminism, which insists that no essential woman exists and that oppression has intersecting privileges and experiences of marginalization. Intersectionality informs her transfeminism framework that reconciles the relationship between transgender and feminist politics.²⁸ In her examination of the butch identity, the transmasculine gender and sexual identity became criticized by lesbian feminists. Feminists were calling for the rejection of traditional gender roles and the embracing of womanhood. Lesbian feminists' call for woman-identifying-woman caused the rejection of Butch Femme.²⁹ Stryker resists the dominance of lesbian feminists and cisgender gay men by placing transgender people at the center of gay civil rights.

When looking at cities and their LGBTQ history, there is a distinction between when the community became visible, organized, and able to find and define safe space. The division was Stonewall, the riot that was credited for making gay men and lesbian women visible and their organizations more radical. D'Emilio proves that gay men and lesbian women were organized and active before Stonewall. Davis, Kennedy, and Olsson's work also places gay life outside of

26. Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*, 6.

27. Susan Stryker, *Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution* (New York: Seal Press 2017) 3.

28. Susan Stryker, *Transgender History*, 4-5.

29. Susan Stryker, *Transgender History*, 126.

New York and San Francisco, places central to gay history and seen as gay meccas. George Chauncey's *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay World* is an extensive social history of the gay community in New York before World War II. His methodology of sexual topography identifies distinct gay spaces but pays more attention to how gay men claimed and remapped the heteronormative city.³⁰ He does not focus on lesbian remapping because "As in many societies, for instance, gay men in New York developed a more extensive and visible subculture than lesbians did, in large part because men had access to higher wages and greater independence from family life."³¹ However, historians have identified women who demonstrated romantic interest in other women before World War II as being in romantic friendships.

Historians discuss women's romantic friendships in private versus public spheres. The spheres are central to Katy Coyle and Nadine Van Dyke's analysis in "Sex, Smashing and Storyville in Turn-of-the-Century New Orleans," by Katy Coyle and Nadine Van Dyke. This chapter from *Carryin' on in the Lesbian and Gay South* focuses on lesbian sexuality at the turn of the 20th century in New Orleans by comparing upper-middle-class white women and Storyville prostitutes. The goal is to expand the definition of lesbian to include more women. They argue that the historiography of lesbians uses romantic friendship strictly for Victorian women, but because there is no evidence of genital touching, these women are not lesbian.³² Storyville prostitutes participated in public sexual acts that included sex with other women.

30. Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994) 23.

31. Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 27.

32. Katy Coyle and Nadine Van Dyke "Sex, Smashing and Storyville in Turn-of-the-Century New Orleans." In *Carryin' on in the Lesbian and Gay South*, ed. by John Howard (New York and London: New York University Press, 1997), 57-58.

They, however, are excluded from the definition of romantic friendship. Coyle and Van Dyke demonstrate that women were queering space in public and private spheres. The visibility of gay men and their distinct ability to navigate space has placed lesbian history within the boundaries of bars or social movements in New Orleans after World War II.

Much of gay New Orleans history is written by people who are outside of academia. This follows the legacy of Allan Bérubé, a community historian, who wrote *Coming Out Under Fire*. As a community-based historians he wrote this book with no support from universities. He also had no formal training from a university to study history and still he produced a well-researched and accessible book that placed gay people at the center of World War II in U.S. History.³³ Frank Perez and Jeffrey Palmquist's *In Exile: The History and Lore Surrounding New Orleans Gay Culture and its Oldest Gay Bar* is a history of New Orleans' oldest-running gay bar and the gay community.³⁴ *Tinderbox: The Untold Story of the Up Stairs Lounge Fire and the Rise of Gay Liberation* was written by Robert Fieseler, a journalist who examined the history of the Upstairs Lounge Fire. His work weaves the history of the arson that claimed the lives of 31 gay men and 1 woman in 1973 while also discussing the history of the Metropolitan Community Church, a religious organization that welcomed gay members.³⁵ Both *In Exile* and *Tinderbox* reflect Bérubé's community history by drawing from local accounts and making New Orleans gay history accessible to a wider audience.

33. Allan Bérubé, *Coming out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990) Kindle.

34. Frank Perez and Jeffrey Palmquist, *In Exile; The History and Lore Surrounding New Orleans Gay Culture and its Oldest Gay Bar* (United Kingdom: LL-Publications, 2012).

35. Robert Fieseler, *Tinderbox: The Untold Story of the Up Stairs Lounge Fire and the Rise of Gay Liberation* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2018) Kindle.

Traditional historians, like Alecia Long, a professor at Louisiana State University, wrote an article in *New Orleans: Beyond Exceptionalism and Authenticity* that argues that most histories of sexuality in New Orleans focus on heterosexuality or prostitution. In her essay, “Queers, Fairies and Ne’er-Do-Wells,” she focuses on homosexuality through the lens of regulation.³⁶ She then says that the campaign that emerged was far-reaching and changed how the entire state regulated homosexuals proving that New Orleans is not an exceptionally sexually accepting city. The gay and lesbian community developed in the French Quarter, and this caused the harassment strategies to focus on the Quarter. In a dissertation, Ryan Prechter wrote “Gay New Orleans” in 2017 which covers New Orleans’ gay and lesbian history. Beginning in 1917-1990. It also looks at the regulations by municipalities. Prechter identifies that New Orleans gay men and women subverted these regulations to develop a queer culture through the city’s obsession with Carnival and Mardi Gras culture.³⁷ Prechter’s work goes beyond the 1950s and 1960s moral crusades that Dr. Long’s article does by looking at the vice squad during World War II and the much later gay liberation movement in New Orleans, which was only galvanized when Anita Bryant, a woman who led the anti-gay rights campaign “Save Our Children,” came to the city.

For lesbian women in the South, much of the history focuses on women's social movements. In the book *Remapping Second Wave Feminism*, Janet Allured discusses the women's movement in Louisiana. Allured argues that, unlike northern women's organizations, Louisiana women shared space regardless of race, class, and sexuality. Further, lesbian women

36. Alecia Long, “Queers, Fairies and Ne’er-Do-Wells” in *New Orleans: Beyond Exceptionalism and Authenticity*, ed. Thomas Jessen Adams and Matt Sakakeeny (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2019)

37. Ryan Prechter, “Gay New Orleans” Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2017.

heavily shaped the women's movement in New Orleans.³⁸ In space and placemaking for lesbian women, Jamie Harker's analysis in *The Lesbian South* of southern lesbian women community and print culture. She argued that southern lesbians have been more intersectional in their creation of queer space.³⁹ Both works show how lesbian women in the South were integral to the women's rights organization. But unlike Prechter, Allured argued that lesbian women were less involved with the gay liberation movement because they felt the issues gay men called attention to did not affect them as much. While gay men and lesbian women share space in New Orleans, in other cities, we see lesbians sharing space with prostitutes.

LGBTQ history in New Orleans has focused mainly on lesbians in spaces like schools, spaces of sex work or bars. More recent scholarship reconsiders terminology and spatial analysis. In *Wide Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965*, Nan Alamilla Boyd answers why San Francisco is seen as a gay city. Building on scholarship done by D'Emilio, Davis and Kennedy, Boyd is distinct in her long examination of queer history, including not just gay men and women to the development of the identity, but trans people, prostitutes, and racial minorities. Through her methodology of social geography and connecting these histories, she demonstrates these communities shared space and developed a sexual culture in tension with urban and vice reform in San Francisco. She argues that lesbians do not have a concentrated geographic space, and their community is reflected in ideological boundaries rather than geographic ones.⁴⁰ Boyd shows that the lesbian community is tied to women who did sex work due to their rejection of heterosexual monogamous relationships.

38. Janet Allured, *Remapping Second Wave Feminism* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2016).

39. Jamie Harker, *The Lesbian South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 167.

40. Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 70.

The history of queer women and transmasculine people shows they live outside the boundaries of heteronormative society, but many are arrested for this act of resistance. There has been very little research into the spaces of incarceration. The work that has been done focuses on prisons. Estelle Freedman discusses lesbian women in prison in “The Prison Lesbian: Race, Class, and the Construction of the Aggressive Female Homosexual, 1915-1965.” As a case study, Freedman focuses on sexual relationships, race, and the construction of the angry lesbian in the Massachusetts Reformatory for Women.⁴¹ Prisons are also a space of resistance. The Women's House of Detention, located in Greenwich Village, New York was a space where queer women rioted the night of the Stonewall Riot in 1969. Hugh Ryan's *The Women's House of Detention: A Queer History of a Forgotten Prison* reconstructs the experience of women and transmasculine people incarcerated in prison. Ryan focuses on undoing the silences of prisons and the individual experience rather than the collective. Using various sources but especially social workers' documents, he covers the extended history of the institution. Prison, according to Ryan, impacts queer people and queer people impact prison history. Looking at the space and women and transmasculine offers insight into a system that largely oppressed people yet offered queer people a chance to find each other and become the center of the community.⁴² There has not been an extensive study on queer women and transmasculine people's experience, community, and resistance in New Orleans's spaces of incarceration. Nor has there been an extended look at other places of incarceration like the police vehicles that transported the women and the court room that handed down sentencing.

41. Estelle B. Freedman, “The Prison Lesbian: Race, Class, and the Construction of the Aggressive Female Homosexual, 1915-1965,” *Feminist Studies* 22, no. 2 (1996): 397–423.

42. Hugh Ryan, *The Women's House of Detention: A Queer History of a Forgotten Prison* (New York: Hachette Book, 2022) Kindle.

Clean up the Quarter: Regulation of Gender and Sexuality

The French Quarter was the heart of New Orleans's rejection of sexual containment and gender norms, but it was also the focus of regulation in the early 1950s. Cities are sexual spaces because they offer anonymity, exhibition, and the consumption of the erotic.⁴³ For queer women and transmasculine people, New Orleans offered them a chance to live a more visible sexual life because the French Quarter offered them anonymity. During World War II, many of the service members passed through the city, and the sexual landscape developed during the war reshaped the streets of the French Quarter. Mary Morrison, the wife of Jacob Morrison, both prominent preservationists in the city, remembered that the war increased the number of nightclubs on Bourbon Street. Tourists would be emersed in the French Quarter's Spanish architecture with significant brick buildings and cast iron. An exotic place saturated in modern sexual appeal as neon signs and images of nude women on Bourbon enticed men into night clubs.⁴⁴ As a result, the nightlife in the space of the Quarter focused on appealing to heterosexual men's fantasies through sexually available women and tourist nostalgia.⁴⁵ Beneath this heterosexual appeal was a growing community that rejected heteronormative society. However, as this community grew in numbers and visibility, New Orleans, like the rest of the country, became concerned with containing the sexuality of gay men and all women.

The national discourse on homosexuality became a central concern when Senator Joseph McCarthy began his crusade against communism, and gay people were fired from their federal jobs because their sexuality was presented as a national security threat. The linking of

43. Lawrence Knopp, "Sexuality and Urban Space" in *Mapping Desire* Edited by David Bell and Gill Valentine (London: Routledge, 1995).

44. Mark Souther, *New Orleans on Parade: Tourism and the Transformation of the Crescent City* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006) Kindle.

45. Souther, *New Orleans on Parade*, Kindle.

communism and "sexual deviants" inevitably made its way to the local level as local governments became increasingly interested in shaping laws against gay people.⁴⁶ In New Orleans, the crusade was a slow drip that began with the election of Mayor deLesseps Story "Chep" Morrison. New Orleans citizens elected Mayor Morrison in 1946. In the promises made during his election, he explicitly wanted to clean up the Quarter while keeping the city open to tourists.⁴⁷ Mayor Morrison appointed a Special Citizens Committee for Vieux Carre (SCCVC) to clean up the French Quarter in New Orleans. The group consisted of 13 members, with some regular guests, and meetings began on March 31, 1950.⁴⁸

The SCCVC had various members on the committee and guests who offered their opinions on how to clean up vice. Regularly there was a businessman, religious leader, police officers, and judges recorded in the meeting minutes. Some examples of the men documented included chairman Richard Foster and vice chairman Owen Brennan owner of the famous Brennan's restaurant on Bourbon Street.⁴⁹ Both would become members of the Metropolitan Crime Commission, a watchdog organization started by businessmen to deal with the corruption of NOPD in the 1950s and still in existence today.⁵⁰ Reverend Robert Jamieson, a Methodist minister, secretary for the committee, and chairman of the subcommittee on prostitution. Jacob Morrison, preservationist and half-brother to Mayor Morrison, a consistent figure concerned with sexual and gender regulation. Police Captain Joseph Sonnenberg from the third precinct and

46. John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

47. Souther, *New Orleans on Parade*, Kindle.

48. Long, "Queers, Fairies, and Ne'er-Do-Wells," 182.

49. Meredith Bethune, "The Sweet Success Of Bananas Foster Has An Unsavory Past," *NPR*, September 30, 2016, sec. The Salt, accessed March 10, 2023.

50. "HISTORY," *Metropolitan Crime Commission*, n.d., accessed March 10, 2023, <https://metrocrime.org/history/>.

Major Albert Blancher of the New Orleans Police Department. Municipal Court Judges Harold Moore was one of many Judges to offer insight into the court's ability to prosecute individuals who were to be regulated by the ordinances.⁵¹ Even as they offered ways to regulate the French Quarter, they needed to establish a specific authority to be their hand to sweep the streets of those they felt did not belong.

The SCCVC felt the best way to clean up the Quarter was to rely on law enforcement. On April 4, 1950, a letter was written to the chairman, Richard Foster, by the Young Men's Business Club. In this letter, they listed goals for the committee to accomplish in the effort to clean up the French Quarter, including the re-establishment of the vice squad. The vice squad's history is rooted in the regulation of women. In a news report from 1913, the *Times-Democrat* reported that the vice squad comprised officers and detectives whose assignments were to rid the city of immoral houses and women.⁵² Immoral translating to people or places associated with sex work. The letter continued and they suggested the police reported all arrests related to b-drinkers (an employee of an establishment solicits drinks from customers in the hopes of increasing revenue), prostitutes, homosexuals, and other lewd entertainment. The police would report this to the Alcohol Control Board and hoped this agency would reject the alcohol licenses of establishments tied to arrests.⁵³ On April 10, 1950 less than a month after the first SCCVC meeting, the newspaper announced that the vice squad would be active, and the only actual directive was to crack down on vice.⁵⁴ The reinstatement of the vice squad in New Orleans shows that the city was not all that exceptional from other major cities. The same was seen in San Francisco as the

51. Long, "Queers, Fairies, and Ne'er-Do-Wells," 184-85.

52. "Vice Squad may be Police Adjacent" *The Times-Democrat*, September 16, 1913, 9.

53. Correspondence, April 4, 1950, Foster Civic and Community Papers.

54. "Vice Squad," New Orleans States, April 10, 1950, Newsbank.

city established its ordinances on prostitution and B-Drinking and reported them to the Alcoholic Beverage Board.⁵⁵ Following the vice squad announcement, the SCCVC sharpened city ordinances that focused on regulating women in the Quarter. The legal regulations were a source of constant discussion for the SCCVC meetings.

Members of the SCCVC enhanced the power of the police with ordinances and recommendations on how to use them. In a letter dated April 18, 1950, Judge Moore explained that police officers could stop anyone who looked suspicious in bars, taverns, or the streets to question the individual. If the police find the response from the person they stopped unsatisfactory, an arrest could be made on the charges of vagrancy. As Judge Moore wrote the ordinance on vagrancy, "while it is an old one contains any good provisions that could be invoked when the police deem it necessary."⁵⁶ Vagrancy was a catch-all ordinance that only went so far as to ensure you could put people in jail, to hold people more permanently, and more specific laws needed to be crafted. As the SCCVC continued to develop ordinances, they increasingly demonstrated their focus on regulating women. In December of that same year, Reverend Jamison, chairman of the subcommittee on prostitution, reported to the newspaper that women found as second offenders shall face mandatory jail time. According to the Reverend, this new prostitution ordinance would tighten up loopholes in previous ordinances.⁵⁷ This focus on containing sexuality in the French Quarter made women more vulnerable.

In the French Quarter, the gendered regulation of women by police began to equate any who worked in that space as sexually promiscuous. SCCVC welcomed Mr. Johnson, President of

55. Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965*, (Berkeley: the University of California Press, 2003), 86.

56. Correspondence, April 18, 1950, Foster Civic and Community Papers.

57. "Anti-Vice Ordinance get Unanimous Council Okay" *Times-Picayune*, December 23, 1950, 19.

the Bartenders Union, to speak about women as bartenders. He believed that the ordinance on B-Drinking moved women from the bar stool to behind the bar. He continued, "A woman bartender is more poisonous behind a bar than in front of one..." and "The Union is interested in saving the jobs for the men as bartenders, bartending is strictly a man's job." This sentiment of bars as men's institute needed to be protected at all levels from sexually dangerous women. These formal minutes lack the boys club nature of these comments seen when Mr. Goll agreed with Mr. Johnson and said, "these girls can't mix a decent drink...." ⁵⁸ Weeks later Mr. Huber, a committee member, suggests that "places employing as many as six barmaids can only be a front for a house of prostitution."⁵⁹ When the Third District police went ward by ward of the French Quarter to document every barmaid, no establishment had more than four working in one place.⁶⁰ Mr. Huber likely stated an arbitrary number that represented what he saw as too many women in a bar. The surveillance by the Third District Police District, combined with the comments made by members and guest demonstrates that at its inception, the SCCVC placed women at the center of its conception of moral corruption in the French Quarter.

While SCCVC focused on regulating women at the beginning, they quickly shifted to include gay men and women. The *Times-Picayune* published an article as a warning to the homosexuals of the French Quarter from Chairman Richard Foster of the SCVCC. Foster publicly claimed that parents were going to "the police begging to save their children" from gay people and places. The newspaper quoted his claim that the people in gay bars enticed children to enter, resulting in young people developing "homosexual tendencies."⁶¹ Months before the

58. Meeting Minutes, August 4, 1950, Foster Civic and Community Papers

59. Meeting Minutes, August 23, 1950, Foster Civic and Community Papers.

60. Third Precinct Station reports to Superintendent of Police, August 7, 1950, Foster Civic and Community Papers.

61. "Curb Advocated on Homosexuals" *Times-Picayune*, April 28, 1951.

article was published, Jacob Morrison made similar claims about his informal conversation with a concerned mother. She had gone to Jacob Morrison after she had read her daughter's diary, and the 16-year-old girl had written about her visit to the Starlet Lounge.⁶² The Starlet Lounge was a known gay bar in the French Quarter, and Jacob Morrison worked to get the bar shut down well after the SCCVC came to an end.⁶³ It became clear to Jacob Morrison and the SCCVC that bars were among the most visible places to find people who did not adhere to gender and sexual expectations.

The SCCVC lasted approximately two years. During that time, they established the foundation of regulating all women. Their regulations centered on their understanding of gender and what spaces women and gay people should be allowed to socialize, work and live in. While the individuals on the committee were still interested in this crusade, many queer women and transmasculine people made a place for themselves in New Orleans despite the growing hostility. Understanding this group's regulated gender and sexuality gives context to the layers of oppression and hostility queer women and transmasculine people faced. The SCCVC laid the foundation for the explicit ordinances that would place queer women and transmasculine people in spaces of incarceration. Despite the social and legal regulations queer women and transmasculine people face, they still resisted in the various spaces in New Orleans.

A Place for Community: Spaces in New Orleans

When Mary D'Amico moved to New Orleans in 1955 from Tampa, Florida, the SCCVC had already been dissolved. However, the legacy of ordinances and law enforcement continued to make New Orleans hostile to queer women and transmasculine people. Judge Moore would

62. Meeting Minutes, February 28, 1951, Foster Civic and Community Papers.

63. Long, "Queers, Fairies, and Ne'er-Do-Wells," 187.

use the courtroom to demand better regulations of gender in 1953. The police would raid bars that lesbian women danced that same year. By the time Mary arrived, vagrancy would not be enough to place queer women and transmasculine people in jail. Concerns about “sexual deviants” became a central issue when the New Orleans city council appointed Jacob Morrison to lead another special committee July 22, 1958. Simultaneously, efforts to end segregation in the city caused NOPD, an already brutal and violent organization, to become the protectors of white privilege.⁶⁴ Regardless of the hostility, many moved to New Orleans to resist gender and sexual norms. Resistance in New Orleans occurred at two levels, the shaping of oneself and the making of place with community in hostile spaces. Queer women and transmasculine people's places of community were shaped by laws regulating gender, sexuality, and race. Nevertheless, queer women and transmasculine people persisted in making a place for themselves in New Orleans.

Even after the SCCVC ended, some members continued to fight for more effective tools to regulate people. Harold Moore, the municipal court judge that was a guest of the SCCVC, vocalized his frustration at the limits on prosecuting people who did not follow gender norms. *Jet Magazine* reported that the Judge demanded a law when he had two queer Black women in his court in 1953. George Ferrand and Joe Louis wore blonde wigs, slippers, and girdles in the courtroom. In what was probably a tongue-in-cheek response to the question about said girdle, Louis insisted that “the straps were tucked in.”⁶⁵ Judge Moore comes off in the report as angry that he is forced to dismiss Louis and Ferrand because there was not an official ordinance to limit

64. Leonard Moore, *Black Rage In New Orleans: Police Brutality and African American Activism from World War II to Hurricane Katrina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010)

65. “Nab 2 Men Dressed as Women in New Orleans,” *Jet Magazine*, July 9, 1953, 22.

how people dress. In his rant, he says, "The average person will not be able to distinguish the sex of many persons roaming the French Quarter."⁶⁶ NOPD picked up Louis and Ferrand because they were Black in a white space and walking the streets as women who did not represent the masculine expectations of the police, who determined they were biologically male.⁶⁷ Judge Moore used the court room as a place to verbalize the fears these SCCVC meetings implied. As queer and transmasculine women continued to walk the streets of New Orleans, they challenged the American ideal of genders being biologically determined and oppositional. Besides Judge Moore's call to create better ordinances, in 1958, Jacob Morrison was an advocate and member of another committee focused on rooting out "sex deviants."

From the 1950s to the 1960s NOPD used every tool in their arsenal to place women in carceral spaces. As stated previously, Judge Harold Moore told the SCCVC that police officers have the "right to stop at any time and question any person who is loitering or looks suspicious while in bars, taverns, or on the street itself as set out by ordinance," with the express intent to place them in before the court.⁶⁸ Judge Moore's call for better laws when George Ferrand and Joe Louis stood before him proved that the SCCVC did not do enough to protect gender and sexual norms. So, he used his court room as a place to express his own anxieties while also shaming the women in his court room.

It was becoming increasingly clear that the city council needed to create a special committee on this specific issue. Once again, Jacob Morrison continued the effort to root out homosexual in New Orleans. This new committee did extensive studies of how other urban

66. "Nab 2 Men Dressed as Women in New Orleans," *Jet Magazine*, 22.

67. Elijah Anderson "The White Space"

68. Correspondence, Richard Foster Papers, April 18, 1950.

places throughout the country were handling the growing LGBTQ community in each city.⁶⁹ The result, amendments were made to Ordinance 828 that explicitly limited or punished gay men, lesbian women, transgender and prostitutes' access to spaces in New Orleans or punished owners of places that hosted the undesirables. For example, Ordinance 828 section 63-18, the one that placed Mary in jail in 1959, also states that no patron shall engage in "lewd or lascivious conduct or in continued or excessive kissing, fondling, or embracing of an adult person of the same sex." Section 5-66 is explicit in the reporting of establishments for employing people who are homosexual, lesbian, b-drinkers, or prostitutes and not allowing such people "to congregate in such places."⁷⁰ These ordinances increased the likeliness that queer women and transmasculine people would be placed in jail. But the police control did not begin or stop in the jail. They hoped to place queer women and transmasculine people in the courtroom. To get them there, they needed to remove them from their places of community by using a police wagon. NOPD would then place them in a holding cell until they are released. Even with the potential for brief freedom, they are still expected to return to the courtroom before Judges who hoped to remove them from the rest of society. In spite of the evolving ordinances that tried to criminalize these people, they found ways to find community and openly resisted the attempts to use carceral spaces as a tool to force them out of the city.

For queer women, the movement from one place to another allowed them to live out and identify with the gender that best suited them. Shane, a transmasculine lesbian from Buffalo, New York, took the train to New Orleans to escape threats in their hometown.⁷¹ Shane explained

69. "Exhibit B" Mary and Jacob Morrison Box, MSS 553.

70. "Ordinance 828" Mary and Jacob Morrison Box, MSS 553.

71. For this paper, they/them pronouns will be used for Shane. The archive uses she/her pronouns for Shane's tape description. Also, at one point, while explaining their passing, Shane does explain they did not look the same in the past as they did during the interview. However, in

that even in their youth, they always knew they were attracted to women. They also presented as more masculine from a young age. Even when Shane's father sent them to an all-girls school to make them a lady, the opposite happened. Shane felt the school affirmed their masculine appearance and sexuality. One morning, with no explanation, Shane's father woke them up to demand they leave town. Shane decided to leave with a pregnant teen named Barbara and another woman named Sally. For the move, Shane bought men's clothes, a shirt, and a suit jacket, and followed up with a haircut to match the masculine attire. Shane explained, "From the day I got on that train, from then on, I went as a man."⁷² Once in New Orleans, Shane used friends' identities and documents to remain anonymous. The movement from one place to another offered Shane the anonymity to live their life more visibly.

New Orleans appealed to queer women and transmasculine people due to its reputation. New Orleans was a place where people could escape the "racial, religious and behavioral strictures that dominated their home communities."⁷³ Mary D'Amico could have had similar reasoning when she moved to New Orleans in 1955. From 1950 to 1955, police in Florida arrested Mary 10 times. Based on the number of arrests it can be assumed that Mary was from Tampa specifically, but she was once arrested in Key West in 1952.⁷⁴ When the New Orleans police officers asked her about the men's clothes she wore, Mary was recorded to have said "that she was accustomed to wearing male attire."⁷⁵ While living in Florida, Mary would have faced

the context of their life, they were presented as more masculine in their youth and intentionally decided to dress and be perceived as a man once they left Buffalo. Further, when asked how they passed, Shane emphasized they believed it.

72. Shane, "Shane, undated (Tape 2)," *Lesbian Herstory Archives AudioVisual Collections*.

73. Alecia Long, "Queers, Fairies and Ne'er-Do-Wells, "179.

74. "Bureau of Identification, Police Department, New Orleans, LA." 1959, Papers of Mary and Jacob Morrison Box 102, MSS 553, Mary and Jacob Morrison Box, MSS 553.

75. Correspondence, Jacob and Mary Morrison papers, February 24, 1959.

additional scrutiny because she dressed in what police officers categorized as men's clothes. New Orleans offered her a fresh start and the reputation as a city with more relaxed sexual constraints probably appealed to her. As more queer women and transmasculine people came to New Orleans, they found shared spaces to make a place for themselves.

Queer women and transmasculine people socialized and shared space with others who rejected heteronormative sexuality. In New Orleans, it was common for lesbians to take over heterosexual bars that were run down or shared bars with gay men. By sharing space they could come up with strategies to avoid arrest such as switching partners while dancing to appear heterosexual.⁷⁶ Prostitutes by their occupation and presence in the bars, rejected the idea of sex and gender being shaped within the confines of marriage and the nuclear family.⁷⁷ Queer women and transmasculine people's community extended to women who did sex work. Doris Lunden grew up in New Orleans and developed her sexual and gender identity and identified as a butch lesbian. To Doris, butch identified her masculine gender, and she expressed her sexual identity by stating she was a stone butch. Stone butches were lesbians who did not want to be touched, and in the sexual dynamics, they gave sexual satisfaction rather than receiving.⁷⁸ Doris spent four years working in the bars, and in that time, she said she worked as a prostitute, pimp, and b-drinker. Doris also observed other butches involved with prostitutes in what she said was "sister-in-lawing." Which was when one butch living with a few prostitutes and Doris explained this was admired as a "pimp par excellence."⁷⁹ Doris did not demonstrate shame when discussing the connection between queer women, transmasculine people and prostitutes. She spoke of these

76. Olsson, "Not All That Easy," 10-11.

77. Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 84.

78. Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*, 192.

79. Doris Lunden. "An Old Dyke's Take: An Interview with Doris Lunden" By Elly Bulkin. *Conditions: Six*, vol 2, no. 3 (Summer 1980) 30-31.

groups more often than she did of gay men. Demonstrating the communities' connections in surviving in New Orleans and speaking about the experiences in an official oral history might be another act of resistance.

The body serves as a space, and the making of gender and sexual connections served as another layer of place-making in New Orleans. This form of place-making continues with the performance in public and private spaces. In Kennedy and Davis's examination of Butch Femme in Buffalo, New York, they observed that the clothing lesbians wore enabled the lesbian community to signal their identity to each other. For lesbians, Butch Femme identity depended on gender presentation and sexual roles. Butches were masculine, presenting women and femme women represented themselves in their feminine dress. These roles were relatively rigid and based on the United States' oppositional gender dynamic.⁸⁰ Butch lesbians were more visible due to their external representation through the shaping of their bodies by wearing men's clothes. Further, transmasculine people who intended to fully present as men, like Shane, wanted their anatomy to reflect this in the public world. Shane explained that they wore a binder, so their chest looked muscle-bound.⁸¹ Shane did not rely on just clothing to make them more masculine, they bound their breast to present a more robust version of themselves.

This shaping of the body goes beyond memory in oral history, it is seen in fictional writing from people within the community. The novel written by Leslie Fienberg, titled *Stone Butch Blues*, follows the transmasculine character named Jess as she navigates her gender and sexuality in New York beginning in the 1940s. The novel was written in the 1990s and is heavily influenced by Fienberg's own experiences and is central to queer theory due to the character's

80. Kennedy and Davis. *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*, 5-6.

81. Shane, "Shane, undated (Tape 2)," *Lesbian Herstory Archives AudioVisual Collections*.

fluidity in gender. In the book, Jess has "the talk" with a butch-femme couple she met at a lesbian bar. Butch Al and her partner Jacqueline explain the sexual toy Jess will use as a butch to give the woman she is intimate with pleasure.⁸² Doris and the character Jess identified as stone butches. For stone butches, giving pleasure as women in these masculine roles was an act of resistance. Queer and transmasculine people found sexual liberation in that love and pleasure. The body serves as a personal space that an individual remakes as a place while signaling a sexual and gender preference.

In New Orleans, the resistance through gender and sexual expression was not limited to lesbian women. Queer women that identified as drag queens or transwomen also resisted through their mannerisms, or performances in public spaces. At Tony Bacino's Bar at 738 Toulouse, around the corner from the neon-lit Bourbon Street, two queer women worked as bartenders. The police said they arrested them because they were known homosexuals based on the following:

use of feminine cosmetics, by their use of semi-feminine or completely feminine garments, by their use of feminine hair dressings and hair style, by the lewd loud and vulgar exchange of pleasantries with customers ... and while off duty [from the bar] ... meeting, consorting, dancing, romancing, and socializing with all sexual perverts in or about the City of New Orleans.⁸³

The way queer women, particularly transwomen or drag queens, made a place for themselves in included the way they moved their bodies and pitch of their voices and how/who they spoke to.

82. Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues*, (Los Angeles: Alyson Publications: 2003) 29-31

83. As quoted in Alecia Long, "Queers, Fairies and Ne'er-Do-Wells" in *New Orleans: Beyond Exceptionalism and Authenticity*, 188. Dr. Long identifies these two people as gay men. While this is entirely possible, it is more likely that they were drag queens based on their "semi-feminine or completely feminine garments."

Queer women made a place for themselves in various spaces in New Orleans. Many bars gay men and lesbians occupied were in the Quarter, but Doris mentioned that the lesbian community expanded elsewhere. The Goldenrod was a lesbian bar located in what was then the suburb of Gentilly. Goldenrod became a place not just by the women's occupation of the space but through the unmistakable sign that stated "no men allowed" on the front.⁸⁴ This reclamation of the bar as a woman-only space pushed back on previous social ideas that bars were men's institutes, an idea that a member of the SCVCC meeting explicitly mentioned.

The Goldenrod, which Doris remembered in her oral history, was raided by police in 1953. She described the moment based on her sensory experience of the music suddenly stopping and all the lights turning on as the police flooded the place to arrest all the women.⁸⁵ The sign said, "no men allowed" and served as a tool for queer women to reclaim space, signaling to police to watch the bar. If that were not enough, half the women usually dressed in masculine attire and danced close together.⁸⁶ The clothing and proximity these women all danced together informed the police that Goldenrod was a lesbian women's place. The vice squad likely loaded all 43 women into police wagon and then took them to Fifth District station that morning. These raids placed many women in a cell together at once. These raids served as a tool to keep queer women and transmasculine people out of the public sphere. While it was effective, women subverted these tactics to create a queer place in the more private sphere.

84. "Police Reports: Vice Squad Nabs 43 Women in Bars" *The Times-Picayune*, September 13, 1953, 22.

85. Doris Lunden. "An Old Dyke's Take: An Interview with Doris Lunden" By Elly Bulkin. *Conditions: Six*, vol 2, no. 3 (Summer 1980) 30-31.

86. "Police Reports: Vice Squad Nabs 43 Women in Bars" *The Times-Picayune*, September 13, 1953, 22.

While bars are often considered essential to working-class lesbians, this was not a universal experience. For many women, the bars were dangerous, and white middle-class women avoided them in New Orleans. Much of the regulations emerging were gender and location-based and in order to avoid these regulations, women created alternative social spaces. In San Francisco, Daughters of Bilitis began as a social club for lesbian women, usually hosted in a member's home. Two of the founders, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon explained, "What we were looking for was a safe place, where we could meet other women and dance, ... an alternative to the gay bar scene."⁸⁷ These alternatives were seen in New Orleans. Jackie Jones was born in Pensacola, Florida and she arrived in New Orleans in 1948. She describes in her oral history how gay nurses who lived in the French Quarter would have house parties. According to her, the nurses were "... southern belles and they're all restricted and ah, and they have their little cliques."⁸⁸ She went on to say that if the women didn't follow everyone else, they would be rejected and not be allowed to the house party. Likely the expectation was that these specific women wanted to follow gender norms to remain anonymous. Jones even said she could not imagine these women being sexual. Undoubtedly, they reflected a social purity and middle-class rather than the more sexual dynamics of the Butch Femme subculture. An official chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis would find a home in New Orleans in the 1970s when St. Marks, a community center, opened its doors to the organization.⁸⁹ The altering of space and place enabled lesbians to maintain community. However, segregation divided queer women and transmasculine people.

87. D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 102.

88. Jackie Jones, Interview by Emily Miller, December 12, 1994, GLHS OHP #95-67, transcript, Elder Lesbian Project, GLBT Historical Society, San Francisco, CA, 51.

89. Allured, *Remapping Second-Wave Feminism*, kindle.

In the 1950s to the 1960s, racial segregation extended to queer women and transmasculine people's social spaces. It was not until the late 1960s that gay and lesbian bars began to integrate, likely only after the schools were integrated.⁹⁰ Doris Lunden explained in the 1950s, "the bars weren't integrated at all," and an invisible wall divided Black and white people.⁹¹ Doris pushed against that wall when she entered the Penguin Club (address unknown) for the first time. The Penguin Club was an all-Black bar where gay people made a place for themselves. A white friend invited Doris into the bar, and this moment was one of the times Doris tackled her understanding of race. As a child, Doris had neighbors that were Black and Black children living on her street. But that was where the shared spaces ended. Each morning they went to different schools. This invisible wall did not stop at the spaces Black and white people shared. Segregation had convinced Doris that race was so different that Black and white people bled a different color of blood. This experience was likely emphasized in her interview because she had moved out of New Orleans by 1957, and eventually made her way to New York. At the time of the interview, Black feminist and womanists were discussing their intersectional experiences. These discussions possibly influenced Doris' recollection of New Orleans. Doris is telling the interviewer that her understanding of race and segregation followed her to the Penguin Club.

While white lesbian women can try to offer insight to the Black lesbian experience in New Orleans, it is likely not the full truth of their experience. That night Doris danced with a Black lesbian woman, and they held each other while listening to music. Both women probably knew that not just their gender made the dance taboo but the interracial affection they

90. Olsson, "Not All That Easy," 6-7.

91. Lunden, "An Old Dykes Tale," 33.

demonstrated in public placed them in danger as well. Doris believed that the two of them shared the same curiosity and amusement at their dancing together.⁹² While the Black woman Doris danced with might have felt elements of those same feelings, her intersectional experience of being a Black queer woman in the Jim Crow South might have shifted those feelings and enhanced her sense of danger. Lorde reflected in *Sister Outsider*, “As white women ignore their built-in privilege of whiteness and define woman in terms of their own experience alone, then women of color become “other,” the outsider whose experience and tradition is too “alien” to comprehend.”⁹³ For the Black lesbian dancing with Doris, she likely felt disconnected from Doris coming into a Black space but also welcomed their romantic experience due to their sexual connection. While Doris transgressed the rules of segregation by entering Black spaces, Black queer lesbian women or trans people were limited to Black spaces in New Orleans.

Black people had limited access to queer places of community during segregation. Olsson's thesis discusses that musical interest gave Black women like "Delilah" access to bars in the Quarter due to an interest in music, and often white lesbians would come to enjoy Black entertainers' performances.⁹⁴ Access for Delilah was temporary because she was entering white space. For Black queer women, their spaces were shaped by segregation, and the walls of segregation kept Black citizens near South Rampart. South Rampart was a sexual space where Black women were erotized. Advertised as the Harlem of New Orleans, the street was viewed as a place of prostitution and gambling, some of the same vices that concerned SCCVC in the

92. Lunden, “An Old Dykes Tale,” 34.

93. Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 124.

94. Olsson, "Not All That Easy" 7. Olsson notes the Gas Light Bar as 738 Toulouse, the same address as Tony Bacino Bar. It must be clarified when the name change happened and if the owner is the same. What seems to show is that this Bar provides consistent access for members of the LGBTQ community. But it was primarily a white clientele.

French Quarter.⁹⁵ While these committees were concerned about the immoral acts of queer women and transmasculine people which is rooted in homophobia and sexism. Queer Black Women and transmasculine people had to deal with the added layer of racism. As Adam Fairclough explained, police harassed Black people to reestablish deference after the World War II.⁹⁶ As the Black population expanded due to white flight, NOPD was expected to control Black people's movement in public spaces.⁹⁷ The French Quarter was being reclaimed by preservationist and was primarily a white space. When queer Black people found community, it was likely in the Black spaces of New Orleans.

Kitty's End was likely a place where Black sex workers, gay men, and transgender women spent time. This is seen when police arrested "a bar operator, four alleged transvestites and four other persons from a negro barroom on South Rampart Saturday morning." NOPD would have likely placed in a wagon. The wagon is moving place of incarceration that began the process of criminalizing these 9 people's gender, sexuality and race. After the arrest at 2 am NOPD would have marched everyone into a holding cell First District Police Station.⁹⁸ Likely the same cell that held Mary around 6 years before. The police charged four queer women with wearing clothes of the opposite sex, three other vagrancies by loitering, and the bar owner for serving all of them. They would have been fingerprinted and held until someone came to pay their bail, or they paid it themselves. Later they would have stood before a Judge who reviewed

95. LaKisha Michelle Simmons, *City Girls: The Lives of Young Black Women in Segregated New Orleans* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 70.

96. Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana 1915-1972* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia, 1999) 110.

97. Leonard Moore, *Black Rage In New Orleans*, 2.

98. "Group Arrested at Rampart Bar" *Times-Picayune*, February 3, 1963, 23.

their records, and the ordinances and determined their fate. One of the individuals arrested for wearing clothes of the opposite sex that evening was Calvin Clark.

Newspapers published Calvin Clark when NOPD arrested her or when they placed her in front of a New Orleans court Judge. Calvin spent most of her life in the 1960s near or around South Rampart.⁹⁹ Kitty's End likely functioned for Calvin in the same way that Compton Cafeteria did in San Francisco. Compton Cafeteria was a 24-hour diner located in San Francisco's vice district. The diner was the site of a forgotten rebellion when queer women retaliated against police by "rioting" after continuous harassment. This act of resistance occurred three years before the Stonewall Uprising in New York City. The diner was the epicenter because it served as a hangout for "street queens" and transwomen looking for a place to gather and spend time together.¹⁰⁰ Kitty's End, located at 535 S Rampart, was likely where Calvin could find her community and share stories before returning to the streets.¹⁰¹ While Calvin went to Kitty's End for a reprieve, this did not mean she saw the bar as a safe place. As a Black queer woman, she would have understood there were no safe spaces for people who did not fit into what Lorde called the "mythical norm."¹⁰²

99. "Group Arrested at Rampart Bar" *Times-Picayune*, February 3, 1963, 23; "Two Men Booked on Moral Count" *Times-Picayune*, February 27, 1964, 19; "Four Males Arrested, Wearing Wrong Clothes" *Times-Picayune*, September 5, 1965, 6. "Vice Squad Officers Booked Two Accused" *Times-Picayune*, February 25, 1967, 35; *New Orleans States-Item*, April 7, 1967: 50. *New Orleans States-Item*, November 2, 1967, 40. I use she/her pronouns for Calvin because she is consistently arrested for crimes against nature, wearing clothes of the opposite sex, prostitution, or vagrancy. Newspapers reported legal names and not the names people chose. Reading Calvin's life through her arrest reminds me of Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P Johnson, who identified as women with significant influence in the gay liberation movement and transgender rights. My only goal is to represent Calvin in the best way possible with the bit of information reported on her life.

100. Stryker, *Transgender History*, kindle.

101 "Group Arrested at Rampart Bar" *Times-Picayune*, February 3, 1963, 23.

102. Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 122-123.

The difference between Calvin and Doris was their racial identity and the careful crafting of laws when police arrested Calvin in 1963. Doris may have been arrested because she was a woman in a bar and dressed masculinely, but the paper reported that all the women were booked with disturbing the peace by being loud and boisterous.¹⁰³ Calvin, on the other hand, was often arrested by NOPD for crimes specific to her gender and sexuality such as: crimes against nature, prostitution, wearing clothes of the opposite sex and even vagrancy. But it cannot be ignored that due to the racism of NOPD, Calvin was also arrested and brutalized because she was Black.

While Calvin faced brutality, her community was not silent when they witnessed it in the streets. In 1967 the *Times-Picayune* reported that Calvin Clark was arrested on the 700 block of O’Keefe in the Central Business District. According to the paper, while wearing feminine clothes and a wig she solicited a white man for sex. James Brown, another queer Black woman, was also arrested that night and booked for wearing clothes of the opposite sex. But as individuals, Calvin was arrested for aiding and abetting prostitution while James Brown was booked for “interfering with police.”¹⁰⁴ Reexamining the newspaper, interfering with police likely represents NOPD brutalizing Calvin and James stepping up to stop them. Calvin resisted by still dressing in the clothes that best represented her own gender, despite the fact she was arrested four years before for wearing these same clothes.

Regardless of the ordinances, people like Calvin and Doris's numerous arrests showed that even after being targeted by police, they still dressed the way they wanted to. It also show that the community they found in the city enabled them to resist the harassment and brutality of

103. “Police Reports: Vice Squad Nabs 43 Women in Bars” *The Times-Picayune*, September 13, 1953, 22.

104. “Vice Squad Officers Book Two Accused” *Times-Picayune*, February 25, 1967, 35. Newsbank.com.

NOPD. It is only after Stonewall, and the women's movement during Second Wave feminism and the end of segregation, that lesbians began to share their spaces and places in their unified effort for freedom and rights in New Orleans. It is also when the Butch Femme identity becomes criticized, and more women move away from the butch role. Which is likely the reason some lesbians felt the Gay Liberation movement in New Orleans did not address their concerns. Regardless, the body served as a way to resist and make a place for the community.

Doris Lunden remained impressed by the fact that women continued to go to bars even after their arrests. She understood the effectiveness of arresting women in the bar. Women who took the risk one night might never return after witnessing the police take a woman from a public space for not having a visible means of support or wearing clothes of the opposite sex. Lunden said, "When I look back at that now, I am really amazed that people were persistent, I really wonder why I was unconscious that I was part of a resistance."¹⁰⁵ Queer and transmasculine women that did continue to persist and did so because they had identified a community to support them, even in spaces as hostile as spaces of incarceration. These spaces could be worse for queer and transmasculine white and Black women in New Orleans.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, the relationships developed or maintained in the cells of New Orleans affirmed queer women's community. As Police officers forcibly removed women from bars, they were placed in spaces of incarceration.

Community in Cell: Resistance in Spaces of Incarceration

The arrest of women was a tool of harassment that, for some, was effective, but for others, it reaffirmed the community. The experience of arrest and incarceration varied based on

105. Doris Lunden. "An Old Dyke's Take: An Interview with Doris Lunden" 29.

106. Susan Stryker, *Transgender History*, kindle.

an individual's gender, sex, race, and class. Some lesbians in the New Orleans women's movement felt that ordinances did not affect lesbian women.¹⁰⁷ Women who did not have the privilege to create privacy or make their sexuality visible through their gender presentation were often victims of the arrest. Spaces of incarceration, such as prisons, are seen as queer spaces, and according to Hugh Ryan, they are an effective system to hide the social problems in America.¹⁰⁸ The jail in New Orleans served as a physical space for police officers to reinforce gender and sexual expectations that were a part of the national and local discourse. Nevertheless, spaces of incarceration are not limited to the boundaries of cells. The authority of the police connects carceral spaces and the oppression for police experience of queer women and transmasculine embracing their identity in these spaces. Transportation, also known as the paddy wagon, served as an extension of that space. So did the courtrooms of New Orleans as Judges determined queer women's future of further incarceration or freedom. These spaces designed to oppress and regulate people were all connected by their purpose. Despite the hostility and violence in these spaces, women found ways to resist. Doris, Mary, Calvin, Shane, and later Bode's persistence made carceral spaces a place for the community of queer women and transmasculine people.

New Orleans jails were spaces of gendered violence, and police officer's knowledge of geography and their power enabled them to inflict harm in the geography of the station. One evening, NOPD arrested Shane in a big round-up of masculine presenting women. Shane relives the trauma of the experience as she tells the interviewers, in detail, the lineup experience.

It's really weird. They march you and everybody who looks like guys, girls, you know anything they just line you up. You're there standing there. You can't tell

107. Janet Allured, *Remapping Second Wave Feminism*, kindle.

108. Hugh Ryan. *The Women's House of Detention: A Queer History of a Forgotten Prison*. (New York: Bold Type Books, 2022) Kindle.

what's out there. Because I always see these blinding lights where you're standing there and say hey number 3, you know, stand up straight. Turn sideways. Stuff like that. So, all you could hear is the sound of a man's voice is out in the audience at this stuff they're showing on television is bullshit. It's real bullshit. Those mother fuckers are sick. They are sick. Like there must have been about. From what I could gather. I heard about four or five different voices. And they're all making cracks like there about 3 or 4 hookers. And there was me and another butch and someone else. And I mean they made cracks like, like men will make. like maybe we oughta take that one since she wants to be a hooker. You know, look at that whore over there to take her back in the cell.¹⁰⁹

These lights made it impossible for Shane to know who was watching her. The voices, likely the police, told Shane and the other women to move so police officers could better scrutinize them. The lights, likely designed to protect witnesses, became a tool for police officers to objectify Shane and the women beside her. Shane did not know who was there, but they heard the voices. Shane identified that there were three or four men in the audience. Verbalizing how they could inflict sexual harm on these women and the spaces they would cause harm in the jail. Police justified this harassment and used their power by criminalizing these women's sexual and gender identities. Whether they talked about the sex workers who were femme, transmasculine women could be sex workers or convicted as one. New Orleans Police Department was scrutinized publicly for their brutality toward men and women.

109. Shane, "Shane, undated (Tape 2)," *Lesbian Herstory Archives AudioVisual Collections*, new york.

A series of newspaper articles published by the *New Orleans States* then summarized or related potential information collected by the Special Citizens Investigating Committee (SCIC). This commission's express purpose was to look into NOPD corruption and root out vice concerning police payoff and prostitution.¹¹⁰ This published report details NOPD's misconduct, but in a section, the witnesses accuse the First District police of police brutality, including a history of rape. In the paper, two women experienced physical violence from the First District police. NOPD arrested Jeannie Waller around Mardi Gras for vagrancy and loitering. While incarcerated in First District station, she alleged the police "cursed at her obscenely, punched her in the face and stomach, struck her on the head, and beat her severely in the kidney area, causing her to become ill."¹¹¹ NOPD arrested Jeannie for crimes that were a catch-all, and the violence officer subjected her could have occurred in a more private section of the station. However, it is possible that the police did not care about hiding their brutality.

This brutality continued with the rape of an unnamed woman who allegedly operated a "bawdy house and a dope addict" by multiple officers in the First District Police Station.¹¹² This would not be the only time New Orleans Police officers would be accused of rape. In 1960 three police officers were put on trial before a grand jury for the rape of an unnamed Black woman. Even as she explained in the court room the violence in detail, the all-white jury acquitted the former officers.¹¹³ These officers used their power to inflict violence on these unnamed women, and the Black woman saw no justice because sexism and racism. While there are no official

110. Prechter, "Gay New Orleans" 31.

111. "Summary of Citizens Committee Report on N.O. Police," *New Orleans States*, December 6, 1954, 10.

112. "Summary of Citizens Committee Report on N.O. Police," *New Orleans States*, December 6, 1954, 10.

113. Moore, *Black Rage In New Orlean*, 38-40.

reports of queer women or transmasculine people reporting rape by NOPD. Historically jails have been a ruthless place for queer women and transmasculine people. As Susan Stryker explained in her book *Transgender History*, “street queens” were the least able to formally complain about police brutality.¹¹⁴ Which is why when James Brown when the *Times-Picayune* reported that she interfered, it is one of the few examples of resistance to NOPD’s power.

The police station represented the police institution of power, and they exercised this power to force themselves on women sexually, an experience shared regardless of sexual orientation and gender expression. In the report done by SCIC, the newspaper reported that a former sex worker told the committee that the police regularly had sex with women prisoners.¹¹⁵ The newspaper likely sanitized this information due to its public nature. What is missing is the power these officers held over these women and the potential repercussions if they were even allowed to say no. In *Stone Butch Blues*, this act of violence happens outside the cell. Mona, a drag queen, is removed from the cell. When the police dragged her back, she was limp and visibly harmed. Jess, the narrator, observes that once police drop Mona into the cell, “She stayed where she fell. I could hardly breathe. I spoke to her in a whisper. “Honey, you want a cigarette? Want to smoke? C’mere, over here by me.”¹¹⁶ Even in these spaces, the cells became a place for the community to continue its resistance. Because even as a cell wall separates Mona and Jess, Jess tries to offer comfort. The care within the cells redefines this hostile space as a queer place

114. Susan Stryker, *Transgender History*, Kindle. Stryker says that transgender street workers were the least able to complain after being arrested by police. She also says that sexual assault could occur in many spaces of incarceration.

115. "Summary of Citizens Committee Report on N.O. Police," New Orleans States, December 6, 1954, 10.

116. Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues*, 35.

for these women. The heavily implied violence in *Stone Butch Blues* offers insight into an underreported or ignored experience from the perspective of a marginalized group.

Places of incarceration became opportunities to build relationships to help get others out of jail. Police pulled Shane out of bed because they associated with another transmasculine woman who robbed a man. Shane was among many queer women and transmasculine women whom the police rounded up in raids looking for the accused individual. Shane felt increasingly vulnerable because their sister told them just before the arrest that the police from their hometown were looking for them. Barbara, the pregnant teen they left with, was a minor, and it was illegal to transport minors across state lines. While in the jail cell, Shane explained, "The girl, the buddy, the butch that I was thrown in jail with. I got to know her rather well, during the two days we spent in jail, and I tell her why I was so upset and nervous. I said I had to get out of town."¹¹⁷ This opportunity to get this unnamed transmasculine woman allowed Shane to share their vulnerabilities. In building this connection, it was Shane's understanding that the transmasculine woman's father helped get them released before the full 72-hour hold period was over.

Meeting people in the cell could extend queer women's community. In 1964, NOPD pulled Calvin out of her home on 616 S Rampart in the Central Business District. That same night police made a separate arrest of Albert Wilson from 750 O'Keefe.¹¹⁸ Both were booked for alleged crimes against nature and taken to First District Police Station on North Rampart. They would have been placed in a cell until they were released. The time these two women spent in the cell affirmed their community through their shared experiences as Queer Black women in

117. Shane "Shane, undated (Tape 2)," *Lesbian Herstory Archives AudioVisual Collections*.

118. "Two Men Booked on Moral Counts" *Times-Picayune*, February 27, 1964, 19.

New Orleans. A year later, Albert, Calvin, James Earl Brown and Johnny Duval went to the Roaring 20's bar on 1000 Bienville, just outside of the French Quarter.¹¹⁹ Based on the fact they were all arrested, they probably took up space similarly to the two queer women arrested at Tony Bacino's. The four Black queer women likely walked into the bar dressed in their best clothes, dresses, skirts, and wigs. Presenting in more feminine mannerisms as they flirted with bar patrons. Regardless of previous arrest, they would have danced with each other and laughed together in resistance to the heteronormative society outside and inside the bar. After midnight, police officers entered the bar and arrested all four for wearing clothes of the opposite sex. The relationship these women had outside the cell is not traceable in their own words. Nor is it possible to pinpoint the exact moment they met. Perhaps the first arrest connected these women enough so that a year later, they went to a bar together. It is possible that the cell expanded Calvin's community, and that time in the cell was made more bearable with a friend who shared her experiences and identity. Perhaps James Earl Brown was tired of watching her community being brutalized by the police and that's why she interfered when Calvin was arrested two years later.

While sexual crimes could put queer women and transmasculine people in jail cells, longer sentencing placed them in prison. Women in Orleans Parish Prison (OPP) recorded their specific address for incarceration in OPP as 2735 Perdido St. Linda Goudeau wrote it in her diary in 1974 when the FBI arrested her for bank robbery. Linda recorded police took her to the tenth floor after being booked and fingerprinted.¹²⁰ Conditions at OPP were deplorable. In the 1970s, the prison with a design capacity for 450 people, squeezed 900 people, the operational

119. "Four Males Arrested. Wear Wrong Clothes" *Times-Picayune*, September 5, 1965, 6.

120. Linda Goudeau "Linda Goudeau diary" 21-22

capacity.¹²¹ For Transgender people in New Orleans, the prison placed them in gender-segregated spaces based on their biological sex. Prisons are places to emasculate men and reinforce women's dependence.¹²² A reporter described the women's uniforms to be grey dress uniforms, pushing women to be feminine. When talking to reporters' women complained of a lack of privacy and overcrowding.¹²³ These spaces of incarceration criminalize women and men because of their gender, sexuality, class, and race. Nevertheless, even in these conditions queer women and transmasculine people persisted and resisted by finding community, joy, and expressing themselves.

In OPP, women found ways to be intimate or comfort each other. One way was by manipulating the space to create privacy. Linda Goudeau recorded that she had sexual relations with women after she was released. During her brief time in OPP, she describes a moment when she was lying in a bed with another woman named Linda.

Had a nice talk with Linda last night, crazy Ruby and Diane put blankets around our bunks to see if we'd do anything. We mostly talked and enjoyed holding on to each other. Security most of all I guess. She seems scared at first but then realized I wouldn't do anything to her so we really napped some. It's good to have someone like her.¹²⁴

121. Emily Lane "Orleans Jail Conditions Have Been 'inhumane' for Nearly 300 Years, Report Says," *Times-Picayune NOLA.Com*.

122. Lori Girshick, "Out of Compliance: Masculine-Identified People in Women's Prisons," in *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex* (Oakland: A.K. Press, n.d.), 232.

123. Mary Gehman, "Parish Prison Women Speak Up" *Distaff*, July 1973, 2.

124. Goudeau, "Linda Goudeau diary" 1974-979, MSS 1026, 35-36.

While the two women did not become sexual, they did offer each other comfort—an act of resistance where women's prisons monitor sexual behavior and view all touching as sexual.¹²⁵ Since two other women are the ones to place the towels around the bunk to create this private place in the cell, it is possible that women did this regularly. For women who are gay and enter a consensual relationship, they create a place for intimacy.

The police would use wagons to transport women to the jails. Mary D'Amico was placed in wagon 19 and transported to First District Police Station on Rampart.¹²⁶ For larger raids on gay bars, they likely used wagons to take people to various police stations in New Orleans. The police wagons are a moving carceral place. Therefore, they likely separated people based on gender or sex. Ida Mae lived in Texas at the time of her arrest. She recounts the experience of being loaded in the vehicle based on her masculine appearance.

Then when the paddy wagon come, they used to have paddy wagon come and take you to jail, me and my girlfriend, they wouldn't let me in with the girls. They put me in with the boys. I had to ride down in the paddy wagon with the men. It wasn't a bad ride because they all had on makeup and shit. It was so fun.¹²⁷

Once they arrived at the jail, Ida was isolated from everyone else. Ida remembers being isolated for 12 hours before her girlfriend came to get her out. The isolation of people because of their gender presentation is one possible outcome for transmasculine people or queer women in jail. The time in the police vehicle does show an element of resistance and community. An

125. Girshick, "Out of Compliance" 232.

126. "Bureau of Identification, Police Department, New Orleans, LA." 1959, Mary and Jacob Morrison Box, MSS 553.

127. E. Patrick Johnson. *Black. Queer. Southern. Women*, 521.

experience that can be isolating a scary is made manageable with the community you find in these spaces. Something that likely happened when raids happened in New Orleans.

Even if many queer people were released from the cell or held in different ones, the courts were just another space to recognize each other. The courtroom is an extension of the cell and a space of incarceration because it is the intersection of freedom and incarnation. Further, the people with power in this space are concerned with social and legal order and use this power to reinforce gender and sexual norms when they can. After police raided Goldenrod and took all the women to the Fifth District jail, the bar owner paid to get Doris released from jail.¹²⁸ When she went to court the next night, she said, "I discovered then that they had raided every gay bar in New Orleans. It was like a big clean-up. I had never seen so many gay people in my whole life, I had no idea that there were so many gay people. It was really exciting! I almost forgot to be scared about whether I would be convicted or not."¹²⁹ Doris describes a similar recognition women had when they entered a gay bar for the first time. A community for lesbians can be place-specific, institutional, or through their shared sense of self.¹³⁰ When Doris sees a significant and visible community outside the bar, it expands her understanding of community. She also repurposed the courtroom from a space of hostility and oppression to a place filled with community.

Gender and sexual identity transform the body's space into a place. Years after Doris's first oral history, she participated in a documentary. This documentary gives more insight into how impactful place-making in spaces of incarceration could be to community and memory.

128. "Police Reports: Vice Squad Nabs 43 Women in Bars" *The Times-Picayune*, Sept. 13, 1953, 22.

129. Doris Lunden, "An Old Dyke's Take" 28.

130. Tamar Rothenberg, "And She Told Two Friends: Lesbian creating urban social space" in *Mapping Desire* edited by David Bell and Gill Valentine.

Doris explained that one Monday night in court after another raid, Judge Babylon became furious at a woman who refused to wear a skirt. The red-headed Judge tore into the woman about her wearing a pair of pants. In the documentary, Doris desired to find the defiant woman and express her respect for the insistence and persistence shown that evening.¹³¹ By refusing to adhere to the gender expectation in the courtroom, the woman Doris remembered brought the resistance from places of community in New Orleans into spaces of incarceration. That resistance made a place for her in the courtroom even as she faced verbal abuse by the Judge. It also made a place for her in history because her insistence lived through Doris' memory of queer women and transmasculine people in New Orleans. The memory of lesbian women often is the only insight into moments of resistance.

Bonnie "Bode" Noonan was arrested four times in her life, none of which are on her record or connected to explicitly being gay. Bode, Bonnie's lesbian name, was born in New Orleans in 1949 and grew up in Gentilly near Dillard University. Her oral history is full of lesbian women making places beyond the bar after Stonewall, just as the women's movement and gay liberation efforts picked up. Bode was an editor for *Dyke Digest*, a wimmin newsletter printed in Central City on 1725 Carondelet likely beginning in the late 1970s.¹³² She performed as an opener for lesbian music icon Meg Christian and founder of Olivia Records in 1979. Afterward, Bode was a member of the band called New Butch Revue, where she and her friends sang rock and wrote songs like "Rock and Roll Dyke." After the band ended, she took the columns she wrote for *Dyke Digest*, "Bode's Food for Thought," and made it into a book titled

131. *Some Ground to Stand On*, directed by Joyce Warshaw (A Women Make Movies, 1998) DVD.

132. The newsletter uses the term Wimmin throughout the publication. The front often even says, "For Wimmin Only." The spelling is intentional in the removal of men or man when referring to women/woman.

Red Beans and Rice: Recipes for Lesbian Health and Wisdom, where she weaved her experiences as a lesbian woman with food. Bode's oral history is full of insight into the various ways lesbian women made a place for themselves in New Orleans. This paper will focus on one of the four arrests from her oral history. After a night singing, Orleans Levee Board Police would arrest Bode and four other women around the early 1980s. Her memory of being incarcerated in the holding cell demonstrates how the cell continued to be a place lesbian women affirmed community in a different way. To fully understand the night of the arrest, a deeper dive into the importance of music as a form of resistance is needed.

Music for lesbian women was essential to their social movement and was an act of resistance. After Stonewall, women's music in the lesbian feminist movement represented solidarity, empowerment, and lesbian pride.¹³³ In Meg Christian's interview with Studs Terkel in 1981, she explained that when she moved to Washington DC and watched as the gay liberation and women's movements were emerging. The music she wrote was influenced by what she learned from both movements. Lesbian women were more radical in their connection to personal concerns in the transformation of society.¹³⁴ Meg understood that going to the concert was a political act. She explained to Studs Terkel, "It was a personal, professional risk. It was a political act to come to that concert. And so, the energy and the bonding that was there was quite amazing."¹³⁵ Her music was explicit, "Leaping Lesbians" made fun of the narratives about lesbians as dangerous creepers. Through her lyrics and performances, she showed how lesbian women could reclaim their love and identity as an act of resistance. Terpsichore Productions was

133. Eric Marcus, "Meg Christian," *Making Gay History*, podcast audio, January 7, 2021, <https://makinggayhistory.com/podcast/meg-christian/>.

134. Harker, *The Lesbian South*, 167.

135. As quoted in Eric Marcus, *Making Gay History*, podcast audio, January 7, 2021, <https://makinggayhistory.com/podcast/meg-christian/>.

explicitly created by the women behind *Dyke Digest* to invite Meg to New Orleans, and she performed at the Contemporary Art Center (900 Camp Street) on May 15, 1979.¹³⁶

Lesbian women's music in New Orleans created a space in the community, and through their singing, they resisted gender and sexual norms imposed on women. When Meg sat down for an interview with *Dyke Digest* she explained that she preferred women-only concerts to create a safe space. In that same issue of the newsletter, Terpsichore explained why the Meg Christian concert was not an women only event because they hoped to expose more women to "wimmin's music."¹³⁷ For lesbian women, their activism was in the women's movement because they felt the short-lived Gay Liberation efforts did not address their concerns as women. While they wanted women-only spaces, that did not stop radical lesbian women from working with gay men.¹³⁸ Bode had been playing the guitar since junior high, and music was a way to cope after her lover broke up with her. She emphasized that "Beast of Burden" by the Rolling Stones was important. The rock song also represented resistance to her; she said, "the thing about music was we wanted to be singing the rock and roll songs. But girls couldn't do that, you know." After opening for Meg, Bode's friend Bronwyn offered up the idea of starting a band.

The women formed the New Butch Revue in the 1980's and the band continued represent the lesbian women movement in New Orleans. The band consisted of Bode, the singer, Bronwyn on the bass, Julie on the guitar, Olivia on drums, Stefanie as back-up, and Diana playing various instruments like "triangles and the maracas and the recorder."¹³⁹ The band New Butch Revue did

136. *Dyke Digest*, Vol.2 No.2, New Orleans, LA. No date of publication

137. "Terpsichore Notes" and "Interview: Meg Christian and Sandy Ramsey" in *Dyke Digest*, Vol.2 No.2, New Orleans, LA. 1979.

138. Harker, *The Lesbian South*, 167; Allured, *Remapping Second Wave Feminism*.

139. Bonnie Noonan interview by Jordan Hammon audio recording, March 8, 2023, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. (In Progress)

rock covers with some changes to better reflect their lesbian identity and wrote original tunes. Bode wrote a song titled "Rock and Roll Dyke" and like Meg's "Leaping Lesbian," the song reclaimed a term and identity by making it explicit with the music. When Bode was asked, "Did you feel like your band and the performances were connected to like the lesbian or feminist movements?" she responded, "Yeah. That we were all women. It was an all-women band. And again, for me, it was finally able to sing Elvis Presley songs, you know, to sing these rock and roll songs and sing about loving women."¹⁴⁰ As New Butch Revue continued to perform, Bode felt a powerful energy from the concerts. This energy of women's empowerment continued even after the concert; one night in particular, men and police stifled the community energy. The following story is taken from Bode's oral history and a piece she wrote titled "Moonlight Madness," which does have elements of fictionalization.

Terpsichore invited New Butch Revue to sing on a riverboat down the Mississippi River. This event was filled with energy from the mixed crowd of gay men and women. Diana expressed her excitement when she said to Bode, "You realize we are on a boat tonight?" They were on a boat, and they were not one among many in the crowd. They took center stage that night—the spotlight bright on Bode as she swiveled her hips and belted the lyrics with the band. The songs tossed back and forth between Bode and the crowd. "Our own music driving us, dancing and whirling we stomped out our anger and bellowed our freedom. We are women alone! We are an island! We are floating!"¹⁴¹ The empowerment these women felt did not stop

140. Bonnie Noonan interview by Jordan Hammon audio recording, March 8, 2023, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. (In Progress)

141. Bonnie Noonan, "Moonlight Madness," gift of Bonnie Noonan, in author's possession.

even as the boat docked at the Spanish Plaza. As the band packed their equipment, someone said, "the police are out there." Bode was not concerned, but she did not know that Mr. Susan's girlfriend, riding the high from the night, had taken her shirt off and jumped into the fountain. The liberation of Mr. Susan's girlfriend probably felt the same bonding on the boat that Meg described when women attended her concerts. Mr. Susan's girlfriend demonstrated the empowerment by jumping into the fountain. This might have been fine until another boat docked, and this boat was filled with fraternity guys.

The night took a turn when one of the men began to harass Mr. Susan's girlfriend. By harassment, Bode said the guy tried to "feel her up and everything." Mr. Susan responded by punching the guy, who then followed by punching her back and knocking her out. Bode explains that the crowd began to push each other, which called attention from the Orleans Levee Board Police, who tried to stop the bubbling chaos. As the police tried to get a handle on the situation, Bode was trying to get to unconscious Mr. Susan. Unfortunately for the officer standing in her way, Bode was insistent about her friend. Unhappy with the officer blocking her path, Bode hit him in the face. She reflected on the memory in her oral history that she did not think this was a smart move, but at the time, she felt justified. The punch burst the bubble, and police began to arrest people based on their proximity to chaos. The police took Bode, Carolyn, Mary, and Judith to jail while Mr. Susan went to the hospital. The five women were then given the title "The Fountain Five" by the crowd.¹⁴²

The energy that women's music brought for lesbians continued into the jail cell. Bode explained that the four women (including herself) were taken to central lockup and placed in a

142. Bonnie Noonan interview by Jordan Hammon audio recording, March 8, 2023, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. (In Progress)

little holding cell. Bode explained by singing a song during her interview, the songs the four women sang in the cell. During the interview, Bode sang into the mic, "*Oh Lord won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz* [sic], " from "*Mercedes Benz*" by Janis Joplin. Janis Joplin was a sexually liberated woman, who had relationships with both men and women, became a feminist icon in the 70s. In a conversation with Bode after, she explained that the song represented their experiences of being broke and in jail and Janis represented living life that was true to oneself. She was a defiant and unique character that represented their own effort toward freedom.¹⁴³ They saw the rock music as a rejection of their gender role. Possibly, the music represented freedom at a time when they might lose it. To emphasize that the women were trying not to think about being in jail, I asked if the singing was to comfort them. Bode responded, "Yes. Yes. Just to act like, you know, we were still pretty high from the night. But yeah, we're still like, you know, I don't know, trying to bolster ourselves. We were in jail. We're in the holding cell, little bitty holding cell and not looking at something nice. And I didn't want to go to *jail*, jail."¹⁴⁴ The community bolsters the freedom that these women experienced on the boat. The community sang together, and the energy continued after the arrest.

Whether these women knew it or not, music and singing in carceral spaces were essential for the Civil Rights Movement. In *Many Minds, One Heart*, Wesley Hogan highlights how students used music to cope with fear during a protest and after when police placed people in paddy wagons and jail cells. The songs and lyrics shared among members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were rooted in the community found in the church.

143 Bonnie Noonan in conversation with author.

144. Bonnie Noonan interview by Jordan Hammon audio recording, March 8, 2023, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. (In Progress)

As Hogan explained, the lyrics and structural forms embodied resistance for African Americans in the face of white supremacy.¹⁴⁵ Unlike the intentional organization of SNCC, the four women's placement in the cell was caused by a spontaneous confrontation. While unplanned, historically, gangs of men would seek out lesbian bars and attack women when they resisted sexual advances.¹⁴⁶ These four women's actions in the cell resemble the Civil Rights Movement's singing. She and the women sang songs by Janis Joplin, a woman known for rock music. A musical choice that, for Bode, represented resistance to gender and sexual norms imposed on women. The energy or high she emphasized in her oral history came directly from her and the band singing to and with the mixed crowd of gay men and women on the boat. All this is to say that the community gave new meaning to the cell, and it affirmed her connection to the women with her.

It is seeing that queer women and transmasculine people are not alone, finding people who might share in your experience, and learning you have a community. Queer women can find a community not defined by the boundaries of bars but in some of the most hostile spaces. You can make a place for yourself and your community within these spaces. These places helped queer women and transmasculine people persist, even when they were arrested, because they would not hide their gender and sexuality. They also came together because as they experienced cruelty and hostility from the police and local authorities, queer women and transmasculine people recognized they could persist and resist together.

145. Wesley C Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007) 40.

146. D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 51.

Conclusion

When Mary came to New Orleans, she probably came here to build a life with a community of queer women and transmasculine people. But she arrived in New Orleans after the city worked tirelessly to make the French Quarter and New Orleans as a whole, unwelcoming to queer women and transmasculine people. The French Quarter was the subject to political efforts to reclaim the space and contain women's sexuality after World War II. Mayor Morrison's ensured he kept his promise to clean up the Quarter by appointing a the SCCVC to oversee the ending of vice. These groups are made of men with varying interest in cleaning up a space that became valuable. The members worked to develop authority, through the vice squad, and ordinances that would reflect their heteronormative ideals. Women were the primary targets at the beginning, but slowly before the SCCVC ended, they began to shift their focus to gay men and women. Even as these regulations were shaped to harass the growing community out of New Orleans, queer women and transmasculine people continued to make a place for themselves. The making of place was an act of resistance in the face of ordinances and police harassment. Queer women and transmasculine people made a physical place for themselves.

Queer women and transmasculine people made place of community by occupying space, interacting with each other, and marking it as women. The body served as an added layer of space that allowed queer women and trans masculine people to live their lives more visibly. This experience was so central to their gender and sexual identity it was written in novels, like *Stone Butch Blues*, that reflected this period in history. In New Orleans women who rejected heteronormative society shared space and worked together. It was common to find Butch lesbians sharing space with women who did sex work. But segregation shaped queer women and transmasculine people's places and spaces. It is likely most visible Black queer women were

bound to South Rampart Street especially in the 1960s. Calvin Clark, a queer woman found community by taking up space at Kitty's End, a Black Bar on South Rampart. She was also targeted more often because of her intersecting identity that made her ore visible to police brutality and harassment. For Queer women like Mary, Doris, Calvin, and Bode arrest and spaces or incarceration was a community experiences.

Spaces of incarceration included jails, prison, police wagons and courthouse. Jails were inherently hostile spaces and especially dangerous for women and transgender people.

Newspapers published NOPD's brutal practices that included sexual harassment and assault.

This was an experience that many members of the LGBTQ community experienced when they entered spaces controlled by police. Besides oral histories like Shane describing how the police verbalized their ability to rape women. It is a violence described in the stories told by queer women. *Stone Butch Blues* shows how queer women and transmasculine people were raped in the jails. In the same story, the cells that these women were contained in together allowed them to care for one another in the aftermath.

The cells also offered opportunity to find other queer people to build connections to survive these scary ordeals. When Shane was in a precarious situation while in New Orleans jail, she got to know another butch in the cell. In Shane's memory the woman helped them get out of jail in some way. This community building extended beyond the confines of the cell. In the police wagons or courthouses women were able to recognize they had community because of the mass arrest of queer women and transmasculine people. This was especially true when police raided multiple gay bars in New Orleans. Queer women and transmasculine people arrested and placed in various jails found community when they all appeared in court. Women involved with the lesbian women's movement took their tools of resistance and community with them into the

cell. Like the men and women arrested during the Civil Right Movement, the “Fountain Five” sang rock songs to resist their fear. The space that was designed to punish them became a place to find other queer people. Queer women in New Orleans built community with transmasculine people and the jails of New Orleans were a place they expanded or maintained this community to persist despite the harassment by police, businessmen, religious leaders, and city officials.

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