The Women's Liberation Movement in Transnational Perspective: the US, UK, and France, 1967-79



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Short Abstract

Most histories of the women's liberation movement (WLM) are nationally focused. Yet they contain glimpses of the transnational, from assertions that the American movement sparked European activity, to accounts of theory, protest tactics, and organisational ideas criss-crossing national borders throughout the movement. Transnational WLM histories have recently emerged, but they usually focus upon specific transfers. Even when taken together it is difficult to see what they tell us more broadly about how the movement operated across borders. To explore this topic, this thesis analyses links between the US, UK, and France. This provides a triangular case study, allowing the analysis of crosscurrents, multiple pathways, and entangled links.

This thesis focuses upon the first decade of the radical, grassroots WLM. It was a women-only, staunchly leaderless movement, with few overarching organisational instruments. Groups were varied, methods of struggle were diverse—from consciousness-raising, street theatre, and squatting, to refuges, healthcare centres, and bookshops. This lack of regulation provides fertile ground for transnational enquiry: how did such an informal movement manage to grow across different cities, regions, countries? To answer this question, a survey of archival material in all three countries was undertaken, and life history interviews with eighteen activists were conducted.

This thesis moves from activist awakenings and politicisation to movement formation and structure. It then explores different areas of activity: theory, protest, healthcare, and services. Throughout, this thesis highlights common networking mechanisms: periodicals, conferences, activist correspondence, and travel. It finds that ideas were primarily constructed and implemented at a local level, but that this does not minimise the importance of the

transnational. Ideas which were formed in local contexts went on to travel and were adapted by activists to new contexts. It is precisely through a study of the local, regional, and national that this thesis uncovers the transnational.

Long Abstract

Narratives of the American women's liberation movement (WLM) sparking European activity permeate movement histories. 'In 1969 we first hear of the American women's liberation movement,' wrote Simone de Beauvoir in a short history of the mouvement de libération des femmes (MLF), 'and this excited news bolstered the few scattered French feminists in their determination that it was possible to build a movement of their own.'[1] Despite such assertions, historians have neglected to explore exactly what constituted transatlantic 'inspirations'. How did European feminists 'hear of' the American WLM? What was it that 'spurred' them on? Surveying WLM historiography provides hints of an answer to this question; it also becomes clear that transnational links extended beyond the origins of the movement. We find books, concepts, protest tactics, and organisational ideas crossing national borders throughout the lifespan of the movement. But these are asides embedded within national narratives. Transnational links run through histories of the movement yet have scarcely been studied in their own right.

This lack of transnational investigation is understandable given the evolution of WLM historiography. While histories of the WLM have been written since the days of the movement itself, it is only in recent years that archival collections have accumulated a diverse array of movement sources, from personal papers to oral testimony. Access to this rich patchwork of sources has led to a recent wave of research. This includes some national movement histories, but much of this work has revised, re-examined, and nuanced our understanding of the WLM

[1] S. de Beauvoir, 'FRANCE: Feminism—Alive, Well, and in Constant Danger', trans. M. Bogin and R. Morgan in Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology* (New York, 1996), p. 230.

by focusing on specific areas or characteristics of the movement. We can therefore understand why transnational WLM histories have only recently appeared: such projects require both a wealth of source material and a solid historiographical foundation.

Yet some histories which would at first glance seem transnational are in fact comparative or multinational. Elsewhere, we usually find case studies. These histories are answers to specific questions: what was the effect of *x* on *y*? What was the result of *this particular exchange* or *transfer*? Each is an important contribution to our understanding of the WLM, but even when taken together it is difficult to see what they tell us more broadly about how WLM activists made connections, how ideas travelled: in short, how the movement operated across borders. This case-study approach can also perpetuate misconceptions. By only considering one half of an exchange, historians might miss crosscurrents, the evolution of ideas, their different meanings in different contexts. Such studies are more likely to overemphasise the importance of transnational influences. Where, one might ask, were connections with other countries *not* so significant, and why?

To explore such questions this investigation pursues an *histoire croisée* approach, using both comparative and transfer-study methods, to explore links between the US, UK, and France. This is not to place the relationship between the movements in these three countries above all others; instead, it provides a triangular case study. The choice of the US, UK, and France emerged initially from a desire to examine assertions that women's liberation travelled from the US to Europe. Including two European countries is important: above all, this allows us to assess the importance of links between European countries; it also allows for linguistic comparisons. More generally, with a triangular configuration, we can analyse crosscurrents, multiple pathways and entangled links, rather than a linear 'introduction-transmission-reception' model.

Given these broad geographical parameters, this thesis focuses squarely on the movement itself, that is, the women's liberation movement. It is not a history of 1970s feminism, or 'second-wave feminism' as it is sometimes called, encompassing non-movement aligned feminists or the effects of feminism beyond activists. Some authors use the phrase 'women's liberation' to encompass the reformist strand of the women's movement, like American NOW (National Organization for Women), and other groups that pushed for legislative change through official channels, but this thesis is firmly interested in the radical, grassroots women's movement. There were stark differences between the aims and structure of each branch of the women's movement. The WLM wanted women's complete liberation—a project which required going beyond legal reform or institutional representation. WLM activists did not merely want to share in men's power, they wanted to raze the system of power, patriarchy, to the ground.

This is reflected in structural differences. The reformist branch primarily operated top-down through formal organisations, with constitutions, designated roles, directorships. Conversely, the WLM was women-only, and emerged from the grassroots. It was messy, staunchly leaderless, with few overarching organisational instruments. In the WLM, aims were broader and more radical, groups were more varied, links between groups were more organic, and methods of struggle were diverse—from consciousness-raising groups, street theatre, and squatting, to women's refuges, healthcare centres, and bookshops. It is precisely this unregulated nature of the WLM that provides fertile ground for transnational enquiry. How did such an informal movement manage to grow across different cities, regions, countries? How did it connect up? Did WLM activists see themselves as fighting in the same struggle?

The chronological span of this thesis is similarly restricted, focusing predominantly upon movement activity from 1967-1979. This is not to say the WLM disappeared in the 1980s,

but at the turn of the decade, the WLM arguably underwent a shift in all three countries. Here, we do not have the space to treat this later period with the full consideration it deserves.

To access the history of the 1970s WLM, this enquiry began with a survey of archival collections in all three countries which contain a vast range of WLM documentation, from position papers, periodicals, and tracts, to organisational records, correspondence, and oral testimony. From this, different moments of transnational influence could be ascertained: activist awakenings and politicisation; movement formation; and organising. Within the latter, different areas became apparent: theorising; protest; healthcare; and community services. Such taxonomy is artificial—the WLM was not compartmentalised—but not arbitrary: distinct modes of organising and groups of activists can be seen within each. Crucially, focusing upon areas of organisation enables an investigation of both networks and ideas.

The collection of activist testimony was also essential. This methodology is well-suited to grassroots activism, where decision-making did not always leave archival traces. Moreover, it enables us to access individuals' motivations, feelings, and beliefs. Using oral testimony to access a movement which was decentralised, leaderless, and diverse might seem contradictory, but it was also a deeply personal movement, both in ambition (the personal as political), and effect (activists emphasise its transformative power). The collection of oral testimony for this thesis thus loosely followed a life history approach: allowing interviewees the space to form their self-narratives, while dwelling longer on their activist periods and providing more specific prompts (derived from archival research) here.

Eighteen women, living across the three countries, were interviewed. They were not selected as a representative sample of activists—their testimony is contextualised with archival sources and other oral testimony throughout. Rather, participants were recruited owing to their involvement in the areas of movement activity highlighted by archival research:

movement formation, healthcare, academia, refuges, childcare organising, bookselling. Many were selected because archival sources indicated they were central to transnational diffusions—those interviews illuminated specific case studies. Other interviewees, involved in more nationally focused organising, were selected because their testimony filled gaps in the archival material.

The first two chapters of this study primarily focus upon comparative analyses of oral testimony. Chapter I explores activist awakenings, focusing on the transnational impact of pre-movement feminist texts and awakening moments highlighted by interviewees' life histories. It argues that awakenings were understandings of societal sexism, and that such understandings often emerged from personally experiencing the limitations of womanhood. However, this alone did not lead to mobilisation. A further development was required: politicisation, which is studied in Chapter II. Experience within earlier social movements gave many women understandings that societal injustice could be struggled against through collective action. This exposed some women to instances of sexism—leading them to the belief that women needed an autonomous movement—but also furnished them with the skills to establish that movement and exposed them to networks of like-minded women. Within the pre-movement period, this study finds the transnational diffusion of organisational tactics, the travel of activists forming early transnational links, and the emergence of global mentalities.

Following this, analyses combine archival sources and oral testimony. Chapter III examines movement formation to assess historiographical assertions that the American WLM sparked the British and French. It explores multiple origins to the British and French movements, finding that some were firmly rooted in national developments; others were influenced by the American WLM. In all three countries, the networks studied in Chapter II were central to movement formation. Chapter IV looks at the shape of the WLM. It begins with

a study of the travel of consciousness-raising from the US to Britain and France. An overview of the WLM's growth in each country is then given, through which networking mechanisms are explored: conferences, periodicals, and activist correspondence and travel. Finally, local hubs are examined: women's centres and feminist bookshops. These were spaces which provided venues for movement organising and fostered local WLM communities, while connecting them to the national and transnational.

The thesis then shifts focus to specific areas of activity. Chapter V explores WLM theorising—in particular, the impact of feminist analyses on WLM activists in other countries. This underlines the significance of American thinking for British and French feminists, but only specific groups—there was homegrown theorising too, some of which travelled. Above all, this chapter demonstrates that theory was rarely imported wholesale; it was instead adapted and developed further. In Chapter VI, WLM protest is studied, with an analysis of the travel of protest tactics through case studies of the Miss America, Miss World, and Unknown Soldier's Wife protests, transnational cooperation within the struggle for reproductive rights, and transnational solidarity campaigns. Through this, the chapter examines how activists imagined their struggle as global.

In Chapter VII, on the women's healthcare movement, case studies of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and self-help, which both travelled from the US, are explored. But there was homegrown healthcare activism in France and Britain too—which explains why certain transnational ideas were adopted and how they were adapted. The role of individuals as 'missionaries' diffusing ideas is particularly important within healthcare activism, where methods needed to be taught in person. Finally, the establishment of activist healthcare networks is studied. The importance of local activism is also evident in Chapter VIII which explores the establishment of community services by the WLM through case studies of

childcare, refuges, and rape crisis centres. Refuges spread from the UK to the two other countries, and rape crisis centres from the US to the UK, but not to France—and a comparison with the UK and US provides a tentative explanation for this. Within both, as with healthcare activism, formal, specialised networks were established. Conversely, within childcare organisation we find only minimal transnational exchange. Nonetheless, there are some examples of transnationally diffused childcare ideas and, moreover, the same desire to share ideas and experience we find elsewhere in the movement.

When the arguments of this thesis are taken together, it is clear that the transnational story of the WLM extends far beyond movement origins. This thesis highlights common networking mechanisms in different areas of organisation—periodicals, conferences, activist correspondence, and travel—with the gradual establishment of formal, specialised networks, many of which spanned multiple countries. Each chapter uncovers activists' desire to share, learn, and communicate—even where organisation was firmly rooted in the local.

In fact, ideas were constructed and implemented primarily at a local level. But this should not be seen as a minimisation of the transnational. On the contrary, in exploring the transnational, this thesis does not shift focus from the local. It simply includes more localities. Indeed, it is precisely through a study of the local, regional, and national that this thesis uncovers the transnational: in the reading of texts, the establishment of services and spaces, and the personal stories of activists.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks, first and foremost, to my interviewees who were incredibly generous with their time, and in entrusting me with their life histories. Many also welcomed me into their homes, provided access to personal archives, and offered drinks, food, books—even transport and accommodation, in one case. It was a pleasure to get to know them all. Future historians will benefit from their kindness, too, with the archiving of the interviews. On that note, I am grateful for the help of British Library curators, and in particular would like to thank Polly Russell and Mary Stewart, for providing invaluable advice on conducting interviews and finding space for me on the Oral History Society's Introduction to Oral History course. Librarians and archivists at the Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand, Bishopsgate Institute, Black Cultural Archives, Centre des archives du féminisme, La Contemporaine, Feminist Archive North, Feminist Archive South, Glasgow Women's Library, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Sallie Bingham Center, Schlesinger Library, Sophia Smith Collection, and the Women's Library were also very helpful—with such broad geographic range, it was often their extensive knowledge of collections that pointed me towards transnational links. Many thanks also to Nick Beeton and Julia Segal who lent me women's liberation pamphlets from their personal collections.

I relied upon the kindness of many people in conducting research across three different countries. My hosts at various short-term rentals gave me lifts, lent me bicycles, and in one instance, sheltered me from a hurricane. My archival research in Paris and Angers was supported by an Erasmus study exchange with ENS Cachan, which gave me time to improve my French and attend EHESS seminars. I was also supported by funding from All Souls College, including two grants: one for my American archival trip, and the other to purchase recording equipment.

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List of Abbreviations

AG	Assemblée Générale
AMR	Alliance marxiste révolutionnaire
BAWAR	Bay Area Women Against Rape
BCA[1]	Black Cultural Archives
BI	Bishopsgate Institute
BL	British Library
BMD	Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand
BWHBC	Boston Women's Health Book Collective
CAF	Le Centre des archives du féminisme
Cambridge PAG	Cambridge Pregnancy Advisory Group
CARASA	Committee for Abortion Rights and Against Sterilization Abuse
CMPP	Camden Movement for People's Power
CNRS	Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
CRAC	Comité révolutionnaire d'action culturelle
CSULB	California State University, Long Beach
CVSC	Camden Vietnam Solidarity Campaign
CWLU	Chicago Women's Liberation Union
CWLU, HPLA	CWLU Herstory Project Liberation Archive
DLD	Domestic Labour Debate
DP	Depo-Provera
ÉF	Éditions des Femmes
ERIC	Education Resources Information Center

[1] For full archive details and abbreviations/codes of archival collections, see Bibliography. Within footnotes, archival boxes and folders are abbreviated (e.g. B1F2 is Box 1, Folder 2) apart from where archival codes already denote box and folder.

FAAR	Feminist Alliance Against Rape
FAN	Feminist Archive North
FAS	Feminist Archive South
FAST	Feminists Against Sexual Terrorism
FMA	Féminin Masculin Avenir, then Féminisme Marxisme Action
FSM	Free speech movement
FWHC	Feminist Women's Health Center
GFB	Groupe des Femmes Brésiliennes
GIS	Groupe Information Santé
GLIFE	Groupe de Liaison et d'Information Femmes Enfants
IMG	International Marxist Group
IUD	Intrauterine device
LCR	Ligue communiste révolutionnaire
LHA	Lesbian Herstory Archives
LTB	*Le Torchon Brûle*
LWLW	London Women's Liberation Workshop
MDF	Mouvement démocratique féminin
MIA	Marxists Internet Archive
MLAC	Mouvement pour la liberté de l'avortement et de la contraception
MLF	Mouvement de libération des femmes
NAC	National Abortion Campaign
NCNM	*Notre corps, nous-mêmes*
NFTFY	*Notes from the First Year*
NFTSY	*Notes from the Second Year*
NFTTY	*Notes from the Third Year*
NHS	British National Health Service
NJACCWER	National Joint Action Campaign Committee for Women's Equal Rights
NOW	National Organization for Women

NQF	*Nouvelles Questions Féministes*
NWAF	National Women's Aid Federation
NYRF	New York Radical Feminists
NYRW	New York Radical Women
NYT	*The New York Times*
OBOS	*Our Bodies, Ourselves*
oob	*off our backs*
OWAAD	Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent
POW	Paris Organization of Women
Psyche et Po	Psychanalyse et Politique
QF	*Questions Féministes*
RCC	Rape crisis centre
RWLAA	Redstockings Women's Liberation Archives for Action
SBC	Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society (where American) and Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (where West German)
SL	Schlesinger Library
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
SR	*Spare Rib*
SSC	Sophia Smith Collection of Women's History
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
TFM	*The Feminine Mystique*
'TLR'	'Women: the Longest Revolution'
'TME'	'The Main Enemy'
TPG	Tufnell Park group
TSS	*The Second Sex*
TWHN	Toronto Women's Health Network
TWL	The Women's Library

UJCML	L'Union des jeunesses communistes marxistes-léninistes
VLR	Vive la revolution
WA	Women's Aid
WACC	Women's Abortion and Contraception Campaign
WHR	*Women's History Review*
WHRC	Women's History Research Center
WIRES	*Women's Information Referral and Enquiries Service*
WITCH	Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell
WL	Women's liberation
WLHC	Women's Liberation Health Collective
WLM	Women's liberation movement
WONAAC	Women's National Abortion Action Coalition
WRRC	Women's Research and Resources Centre

Introduction

> The protest of the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City in September told the nation that a new feminist movement is afoot in the land.[1]

On 26 August 1970, the term 'women's liberation' made its first public appearance in France. Nine women, seven French and two American, carried a wreath and a banner proclaiming 'More Unknown than the Unknown Soldier: His Wife' to the Arc de Triomphe,[2] making front-page headlines in all the major Paris newspapers the following day.[3] This stunt, organised in solidarity with an American women's strike, was inspired by the headline-grabbing antics of American feminists a year earlier who, outside the Miss America beauty contest, had burnt cosmetics and crowned a sheep as winner.[4] In Britain, the 1970 Miss World pageant was disrupted in a similar way, with flour bombs and water pistols.[5] Each was an announcement of women's liberation activism to wider society. But these spectacles were not isolated occurrences: the women's liberation movement was moulded by transnational connections.

'In 1969 we first hear of the American women's liberation movement,' wrote Simone de Beauvoir in a short history of the mouvement de libération des femmes (MLF), 'and this excited news bolstered the few scattered French feminists in their determination that it was possible

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[1] RWLAA, FLL: Carol Hanisch, 'What Can be Learned: A Critique of the Miss America Protest' (27 Nov. 1968). Many thanks to RWLAA for permission to reproduce quotations throughout. For more primary sources of the Women's Liberation Movement and information about how Redstockings is organizing today, visit www.redstockings.org or write to Redstockings of the Women's Liberation Movement, PO Box 744 Stuyvesant Station, New York, NY 10009.

[2] French sources have been translated into English throughout; all translations are my own except where stated. Primary source quotations retain original spellings, including where American English.

[3] S. de Beauvoir, 'FRANCE: Feminism—Alive, Well, and in Constant Danger', trans. M. Bogin and R. Morgan in Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology* (New York, 1996), p. 230.

[4] S.M. Evans, 'Sons, Daughters, and Patriarchy: Gender and the 1968 Generation', *AHR* (Apr. 2009), p. 342.

[5] A. Coote and B. Campbell, *Sweet Freedom: The Struggle for Women's Liberation* (London, 1982), p. 23.

to build a movement of their own.'[6] Narratives of the American movement sparking European activity permeate histories of the women's liberation movement (WLM). According to Nicholas Owen, 'news' of American and European critical feminism 'spurred the growth of the British movement';[7] Françoise Picq describes French women as following 'the example of the American feminists'.[8]

Despite such assertions, historians have neglected to explore exactly what constituted transatlantic 'inspirations'. How did European feminists 'hear of' the American WLM? What was it that 'spurred' them on? Even David Bouchier's comparative study of America and Britain sidesteps these questions, simply stating that in Britain 'rumours had been heard of movements in France and Germany, and the existence of feminist groups in America was well known'.[9] Surveying WLM historiography provides hints of an answer to this question; it also becomes clear that transnational links extended beyond the origins of the movement. We find books, concepts, protest tactics, and organisational ideas crossing national borders throughout the lifespan of the movement. But these are asides embedded within national narratives. Transnational links run through histories of the movement yet have scarcely been studied in their own right.[10]

This lack of transnational investigation is understandable given the evolution of WLM historiography. The first accounts were national studies written contemporaneously, often by

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[6] De Beauvoir, 'FRANCE', p. 230.

[7] N. Owen, 'Men and the 1970s British Women's Liberation Movement', *The Historical Journal*, 56:3 (2013), p. 804.

[8] F. Picq, 'The History of the Feminist Movement in France', in G. Griffin and R. Braidotti, eds., *Thinking Different: A Reader in European Women's Studies* (London, 2002), p. 313.

[9] D. Bouchier, *The Feminist Challenge: The Movement for Women's Liberation in Britain and the USA* (London, 1983), p. 56.

[10] While there is no precise distinction between 'transnational' and 'international', for my purposes, the difference lies in an emphasis on *traversing*. I define 'transnational' as phenomena traversing—moving across or between—national borders, where 'international' phenomena, such as UN initiatives, simply apply to multiple nations.

students who were activists,[11] or feminists who wanted to record the movement's past while urging for continued action. Anna Coote and Beatrix Campbell saw their account of the British WLM as 'an interim report', stating: 'We don't claim to have produced a definitive history'.[12] Indeed early histories were not definitive, tending to overemphasise the group or location of the observer. Nevertheless, they are useful maps—and sometimes overtly autobiographical primary sources.[13] As some of these activists entered academia, histories became more comprehensive. Resulting works form the backbone of scholarship in all three countries: Sara Evans's *Personal Politics* (New York, 1979), Sheila Rowbotham's *The Past is Before Us* (London, 1989), and Françoise Picq's *Libération des Femmes: Les Années-Mouvement* (Paris, 1993). However, although undeniably valuable, these studies were perhaps written by those too close to the movement to provide the picture a modern-day reader might require—aspects which seem self-evident to participants are not always to outsiders.

Moreover, archival collections had not yet fully amassed. Writing in the late 1980s, Alice Echols found 'few residues' of certain aspects of the movement: no records of protests, conferences, or conflicts, and few pre-1970 sources.[14] To widen their focus, some early historians conducted interviews, also making use of participants' personal collections, which worked particularly well within focused histories: Echols's study of American radical feminism; Evans's exploration of American WLM origins; and Beverley Bryan et. al., *The Heart of The Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* (London, 1985) which explores black women's activism in the 1970s as part of a wider study. Picq (along with Liliane Kandel and Nadja

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[11] For example: S. Coquille, 'Naissance du movement de libération des femmes en France: 1970-73', (Master's thesis, University Paris X, Nanterre, 1982). S. Evans, *Personal Politics* (New York, 1979), N.G. Guadilla, *Libération des femmes: Le MLF* (Paris, 1981), and A. Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (London, 1989) were all based on theses.

[12] Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom*, p. 235.

[13] See: Anne Tristan and Annie de Pisan, *Histoires du MLF* (Paris 1977); Cathy Bernheim, *Pertubation, ma sœur* (Paris, 1983).

[14] Echols, *Daring*, p. 18.

Ringart) attempted a different kind of survey, sending out questionnaires to almost 300 activists, of whom about half replied, giving quantitative insights.[15] Claire Duchen conducted activist group discussions for her 1986 history—based on Paris-focused, printed material—to cover 'recent developments' and add new perspectives.[16] Such efforts enriched these analyses, which is more than can be said for the first comparative WLM history: sociologist Bouchier relied heavily upon printed sources—and a limited selection at that.

Following this, WLM histories slowed to a trickle, with the movement primarily explored as a sub-topic within wider explorations of women's rights.[17] Yet the body of sources grew. Activist memoirs emerged and continue to be published to this day. These often came from a particular kind of activist: well-educated, middle class, metropolitan, white; women who were already influential, in many cases.[18] However, activist testimony has expanded through other efforts, with the publication of autobiographical anthologies,[19] and oral history

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[15] Picq, *Libération*, p. 361.

[16] C. Duchen, *Feminism in France From May '68 to Mitterrand* (London, 1986), p. *x*.

[17] For example: F. Davis, *Moving the Mountain: the women's movement in America since 1960* (New York, 1991); C. Duchen, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France, 1944-1968* (London, 1994); M. Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914–1999* (London, 2000); R. Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York, 2000); R. Baxandall and L. Gordon, 'Second wave feminism' in N. A. Hewitt, ed., *A Companion to American Women's History* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 414–432; S.M. Evans, *Tidal Wave: How Women Changed America at Century's End* (New York, 2003); Eliane Gubin et. al., eds., *Le siècle des féminismes* (Paris, 2004). An important exception is the meticulous work of Eve Setch in what was possibly the first archival-based study of the British movement: E. Setch, 'The Women's Liberation Movement in Britain, 1969-79. Organisation, Creativity and Debate' (PhD thesis, University of London Royal Holloway, 2000).

[18] For example, in the UK: Sheila Rowbotham, *Promise of a Dream: Remembering the Sixties* (London, 2001); Lynne Segal, *Making Trouble: Life and Politics* (London, 2007); Michèle Roberts, *Paper Houses: A Memoir of the '70s and Beyond* (London, 2007). In the US: Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *Outlaw Woman: A Memoir of the War Years, 1960-1975* (Norman, OK, 2001); Andrea Dworkin, *Heartbreak: The Political Memoir of a Feminist Militant* (New York, 2002); Robin Morgan, *Saturday's Child: A Memoir* (New York, 2014); Gloria Steinem, *My Life on the Road* (London, 2015). In France: see footnote 13; Marie-Jo Bonnet, *Mon MLF* (Paris, 2018).

[19] C. Duchen, ed. and trans., *French Connections: Voices from the Women's Movement in France* (Amherst, MA, 1987); A. Sebestyen, ed.,*'68, '78, '88: From Women's Liberation to Feminism* (Bridport, 1988); M. Wandor, *Once a Feminist: Stories of a Generation* (London, 1990); R.B. DuPlessis and A. Snitow, *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women's Liberation* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2007); des femmes, *Génération MLF* (Paris, 2008).

projects (particularly in the US and UK).[20] Concurrently, archival holdings swelled in all three countries. These initially contained mostly printed ephemera, but over the decades, personal and organisational collections have been added, thus filling the lacunae noted by Echols.

Access to this rich patchwork of sources has led to a recent wave of research. This includes some broader movement histories,[21] but much of this work has revised, re-examined and nuanced our understanding by focusing on specific areas or characteristics of the movement, from research which focuses upon towns and regions hitherto overlooked,[22] to that which interrogates how race,[23] and class,[24] interacted with WLM activism, and explorations of specific groups and struggles.[25] Such work is too copious to list exhaustively here, but will be engaged with throughout this study.

We can therefore understand why transnational WLM histories have only recently appeared: such projects require both a wealth of source material and a solid historiographical foundation. Yet as Lucy Delap and Thierry Delessert have pointed out, 'research on less-

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[20] See bibliography. Some MLF activists were included in project 'Around 1968', but no major MLF oral history project has been undertaken.

[21] C. Giardina, *Freedom for Women: Forging the Women's Liberation Movement* (Gainesville, FL, 2010); B.J. Morris and D-M Withers, *The Feminist Revolution: The Struggle for Women's Liberation, 1966-1988* (London, 2018); L. Greenwald, *Daughters of 1968: Redefining French Feminism and the Women's Liberation Movement* (London 2018); M. Jolly, *Sisterhood and After: An Oral History of the UK Women's Liberation Movement, 1968-Present* (Oxford, 2019)

[22] See: K. Keane, 'Second-Wave Feminism in the American South, 1965-1980' (PhD dissertation, University of Maryland, 2009); S. Browne, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Scotland* (Manchester, 2014); P. Godard and L. Porée, *Les femmes s'en vont en lutte ! Histoire et mémoire du féminisme à Rennes* (Rennes, 2014); S. Bruley, 'Women's Liberation at the Grass Roots: a view from some English towns', *WHR*, 25:5 (2016), pp. 723-40; L. Ruault, 'Une fête pour l'avortement libre: La mobilisation autour du procès des militantes du MLAC d'Aix (1976-1977)', *Genèses*, 2:107 (2017), pp. 32-55.

[23] See: N. Thomlinson, *Race, Ethnicity and the Women's Movement in England, 1968-1993* (London, 2016). Work on this area was conducted earlier in the US. For example: B. Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana and White feminist movements in America's Second Wave* (New York, 2004).

[24] G. Stevenson, *The Women's Liberation Movement and the Politics of Class in Britain* (London, 2019).

[25] See: B. Pavard, *Les éditions des femmes: histoire de premières années 1972-1979* (Paris, 2005) and *Si je veux quand je veux. Contraception et avortement dans la société française (1959-1979)* (Rennes, 2012); J. Rees, 'A Look Back at Anger: the Women's Liberation Movement in 1978', *WHR*, 19:3 (2010), 337-56; C. Bard., ed., *Les féministes de la deuxième vague* (Rennes, 2012); C. Hughes, *Young Lives on the Left: Sixties Activism and the Liberation of the Self* (Manchester, 2015); des femmes, *MLF-Psychanalyse et politique 1968-2018* (2 vols, Paris, 2018-19).

formalised transnational contacts is still the exception'.[26] Some histories which would at first glance seem transnational are in fact comparative or multinational.[27] Elsewhere, we usually find case studies, like Lucile Ruault's exploration of American self-help in France,[28] Kathy Davis's history of *Our Body, Ourselves*,[29] Kirsten Harting's analysis of the relationship between French and Soviet groups,[30] Sandra Reineke's study of three 'feminist intellectual exchanges' between France, Germany, and the US,[31] and chapters in two transnational collections (though even within these collections, not all chapters are transnational).[32] These histories are answers to specific questions: what was the effect of *x* on *y*? What was the result of *this particular exchange* or *transfer*?

Each is an important contribution to our understanding of the WLM, but even when taken together it is difficult to see what they tell us more broadly about how WLM activists made connections, how ideas travelled—how the movement operated across borders. As Natalie Thomlinson asked, when reviewing one transnational collection: 'What really links the activism of those who have campaigned on behalf of the Korean 'comfort women' with those of the United Bronx Parents campaigning for better school meals in the New York of the late

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[26] L. Delap and T. Delessert, 'Beyond National Boundaries: Introductory Remarks' in K. Schulz, ed., *The Women's Liberation Movement: Impacts and Outcomes* (Oxford, 2017), p. 237.

[27] For example: N. Las, *Jewish Voices in Feminism: Transnational Perspectives* (London, 2015); K. Schulz, 'Feminist Echoes of 1968: Women's Movements in Europe and the United States' in I. Gilcher-Holtey, ed., *A Revolution of Perception? Consequences and Echoes of 1968* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 124-47

[28] L. Ruault, 'La circulation transnationale du self-help féministe : acte 2 des luttes pour l'avortement libre?', *Critique Internationale: Revue comparative de sciences sociales*, 70/1 (2016), pp. 37-54.

[29] K. Davis, *The Making of Our Bodies, Ourselves: How Feminism Travels Across Borders* (London, 2007).

[30] K. Harting, 'Echoes of Ourselves? Feminisms between East and West in the Leningrad Almanac *Woman and Russia*', in Schulz, *Impacts*, pp. 243-60.

[31] S. Reineke, 'Border Crossings: Simone de Beauvoir, Feminist Intellectual Exchanges, and the Organisation of Women's Studies Programs in France, Germany and the United States', *Simone de Beauvoir Studies*, 25 (2008-9), pp. 63-80.

[32] K. Davis and M. Evans, eds., *Transatlantic Conversations: Feminism as Travelling Theory* (Abingdon, 2016); and B. Molony and J. Nelson, eds., *Women's Activism and "Second Wave" Feminism: Transnational Histories* (London, 2017).

1960s, or dissident Soviet feminists of the 1970s?'[33] This case-study approach can also perpetuate misconceptions—as we will see throughout this thesis. By only considering one half of an exchange, historians might miss crosscurrents, the evolution of ideas, their different meanings in different contexts. Such studies are more likely to overemphasise the importance of transnational influences. Where, one might ask, were connections with other countries *not* so significant, and why?

Maud Anne Bracke's examination of transnational connections within 1970s Italian feminism demonstrates that a truly transnational focus can better illuminate local specificities. Her frames of reference provide valuable examples of how such a study might be conducted. By exploring entire areas of movement activity within certain cities—sexuality, reproduction, and healthcare activism in Rome; trade union feminism in Turin; and cultural feminism in Naples—rather than analysing one group or transfer, Bracke illuminates multiple transnational influences and traces the actors who translated and diffused them. Bracke highlights the significance of the local: this was the arena in which ideas emerged, and the transformation and implementation of transnational ideas took place.[34]

Unlike Bracke—who looks at the ways the feminist movement shaped Italian politics—our focus is squarely on the movement itself, that is, the women's liberation movement. This is not a history of 1970s feminism, or 'second-wave feminism' as it is sometimes called, encompassing non-movement aligned feminists or the effects of feminism beyond activists. Some authors use the phrase 'women's liberation' to encompass the reformist strand of the women's movement, like American NOW (National Organization for Women), and other groups that pushed for legislative change through official channels: lobbyists, legal foundations,

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[33] N. Thomlinson 'Review: Molony and Nelson, *Women's Activism*', *Gender & History*, 30/2 (2018), pp. 546-7.

[34] M.A. Bracke, *Women and the Reinvention of the Political: Feminism in Italy, 1968-1983* (Abingdon, 2014).

professional organisations.[35] Elsewhere, this strand is described as 'women's rights' as opposed to 'women's liberation': a term used more narrowly to describe the radical, grassroots women's movement.[36] I am firmly interested in the latter; for ease, that is what I refer to with the acronym WLM (MLF when specifically discussing the French case).[37]

Of course, the WLM also pushed for legislative change and, conversely, professional groups did not always seek change through official channels (for example, doctors providing illegal abortions), but there are stark differences between the aims and structure of each branch of the women's movement. The WLM wanted women's complete liberation—a project which required going beyond legal reform or institutional representation. WLM activists did not merely want to share in men's power, they wanted to raze the system of power, patriarchy, to the ground. This is reflected in structural differences. The reformist branch primarily operated top-down through formal organisations, with constitutions, designated roles, directorships. One might join an organisation like this through a membership application; men often participated, and in some cases held leadership roles.[38]

Conversely, the WLM was women-only, and emerged from the grassroots. It was messy, staunchly leaderless, with few overarching organisational instruments. I say 'few' because some grassroots groups later developed formal structures, like Women's Aid in the UK; one could also describe British national conferences, where movement demands were debated, as a steering body. But this is a far cry from reformist feminism. In the WLM, aims were

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[35] Jo Freeman describes the reformist women's movement as the 'older branch' of the WLM in her early article on the origins of the WLM. See J. Freeman, 'The Origins of the Women's Liberation Movement', *American Journal of Sociology*, 78/4 (1973), pp. 792-811.

[36] Anne Koedt and Shulamith Firestone, 'Editorial', *NFTTY* (1971), p. 1; J. Hole and E. Levine, *Rebirth of Feminism* (New York, 1971); J. Lovenduski and V. Randall, *Contemporary Feminist Politics: Women and Power in Britain* (Oxford, 1993), p. 3.

[37] I use the acronym MLF solely to denote the wider movement, and not the group who in 1979 registered the trademark. See pp. 123-4.

[38] This is not to negate the importance of grassroots, rank-and-file activism within reformist groups. See: S. Gilmore, *Groundswell: Grassroots Feminist Activism in Postwar America* (London, 2013).

broader and more radical, groups were more varied, links between groups were more organic, and methods of struggle were diverse—from consciousness-raising groups, street theatre, and squatting, to women's refuges, healthcare centres, and bookshops. It is precisely this unregulated nature of the WLM that provides fertile ground for transnational enquiry. How did such an informal movement manage to grow across different cities, regions, countries? How did it connect up? Did WLM activists see themselves as fighting in the same struggle?

To explore such questions this investigation takes an *histoire croisée* approach,[39] in which a 'toolbox' of both comparative and transfer-study methods is used to explore links between the US, UK, and France. This is not to place the relationship between the movements in these three countries above all others; instead, it provides a triangular case study. The choice of the US, UK, and France emerged initially from a desire to examine assertions that women's liberation travelled from the US to Europe. Including two European countries is important: above all, this allows us to assess the importance of links between European countries; it also allows for linguistic comparisons. More generally, with a triangular configuration, we can analyse crosscurrents and multiple pathways, rather than a linear 'introduction-transmission-reception' model. As Werner and Zimmerman note in their exploration of *histoire croisée*, studies examining triangular configurations are rare, and usually limit themselves to listing 'successive transfers' rather than exploring the complexities of entangled links.[40] Not so here. Our aim is to unpick such complexities.

Given the broad geographical parameters, our parameters of WLM activity will be limited. Various women involved in grassroots, woman-led, and woman-centred activism in this period would not have described themselves as part of the WLM. For example, some black

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[39] See: M. Werner and B. Zimmermann, 'Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity', *History and Theory*, 45:1 (Feb. 2006), pp. 30-50.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

women situated their activism within the black women's movement, distinct from the white women's movement.[41] Where this activism was centred on women's issues and carried out within grassroots women's groups, I have included it as part of my transnational study. However, I have not focused on women's activism more firmly situated within other political movements, carried out in groups with men, such as trade unions or the anti-imperialist and anti-racist movements. Such histories are mentioned where they played a role in the lives of activists and areas of struggle which I discuss but are left as loose threads.

Our chronological span is similarly restricted, focusing predominantly upon movement activity from 1967-1979. Occasionally we will trace earlier and later developments to illuminate certain stories, but crucially we will not survey movement activity beyond this. At the turn of the decade, the WLM arguably underwent a shift in all three countries. New political leaders were elected; the political and socio-economic landscape altered considerably; both the issues women struggled against and the ways they mobilised changed.[42] As some historians have pointed out, this does not mean feminist activity perished in the 1980s.[43] Here, we simply do not have the space to treat this later period with the full consideration it deserves.

To access the history of the 1970s WLM, I began with a survey of archival collections in all three countries which contain a vast range of WLM documentation, from position papers, periodicals, and tracts, to organisational records, correspondence, and oral testimony. This gave an overview; I could observe the WLM not just as 'a series of campaigns, dates and places, but […] the ways that the movement actually operates and develops', as activist-historians

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[41] The majority of my 1970s sources did not capitalise 'black', so I do not in my own prose; quotations reflect the author's usage.

[42] See: Duchen, *Feminism in France*, p. 131; S.B. Gluck et. al., 'Whose Feminism, Whose History? Reflections on Excavating the History of (the) U.S. Women's Movement(s)' in N.A. Naples, ed., *Community Activism and Feminist Politics: Organizing Across Race, Class, and Gender* (Abingdon, 1998), p. 32; L.A. Banaszak et. al., eds., *Women's Movements Facing the Reconfigured State* (Cambridge, 2003).

[43] B. Thompson, 'Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism', *Feminist Studies*, 28/2 (2002), 336-60; Thomlinson, *Race, Ethnicity*, p. 10.

wrote in 1977.[44] From this, I could ascertain different moments of transnational influence: activist awakenings and politicisation; movement formation; and organising. Within the latter, different areas became apparent: theorising; protest; healthcare; and community services. Such taxonomy is artificial—the WLM was not so neatly compartmentalised in practice—but not arbitrary: distinct modes of organising and groups of activists can be seen within each. Crucially, focusing upon areas of organisation enables an investigation of both networks and ideas.

The collection of activist testimony was also essential. As Lorenzo Bosi and Herbert Reiter assert, this methodology is well-suited to social movements, where traces of decision-making are few and far between.[45] Indeed, Margaretta Jolly, while acknowledging the WLM's leaderless nature, makes a case for the significance of individuals: they 'matter enormously to mobilization, and some organizations are actually the work of a single person'.[46] Oral history has long been acknowledged as a way to access the motivations, feelings, and beliefs of individuals.[47] Lynn Abrams' work highlights the importance of oral history in specifically recovering feminist experience and subjectivities; women can 'tell life histories in which they set the agenda, privileging their own interpretations'. She terms this narrative genre 'feminography', highlighting both interviewees' articulation of the self and the influence of late twentieth-century feminism upon the emergence of such narratives.[48]

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[44] FAN, FAN/LL/04: Amanda Sebestyen et. al., 'History of Women's Liberation' (Apr. 1977).

[45] L. Bosi and H. Reiter, 'Archival Research and Oral History in Social Movement Research', in D. della Porta, ed., *Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 129-30.

[46] M. Jolly, *Sisterhood and After: An Oral History of the UK Women's Liberation Movement, 1968-Present* (Oxford, 2019), p. 47.

[47] A. Portelli, 'The Peculiarities of Oral History', *History Workshop Journal*, 12 (1981), p. 99.

[48] L. Abrams, 'Heroes of Their Own Life Stories: Narrating the Female Self in the Feminist Age', *Cultural and Social History*, 16:2 (2019), pp. 205-6, 221.

While Abrams applies this to women beyond feminist organising,[49] her centring of self-narrative is equally applicable to self-identified activists, who, in the 1970s, were explicitly focused upon re-examining and re-fashioning their lives. To allow for interviewees' articulation of their 'feminographies', while investigating movement mechanisms, a semi-structured interview approach was taken. I primarily followed life history methodology, but dwelt longer on interviewees' activist periods, providing more specific prompts (derived from archival research) here. In constructing my skeletal template for interview questions, I was guided by the British Library's Oral History curators—the interviews will be archived there in future—and was much influenced by their project Sisterhood & After, focused on the British WLM. This collection provides invaluable examples of questions which encourage interviewee reflection and make room for self-narratives.

One key concern regarding interviewees' responses was confirmation bias. I was necessarily upfront about my transnational research agenda. As Abrams explores regarding her own interviews, this can 'markedly' shape interviewees' narratives.[50] In some cases, it clearly did: interviewees thought about the interview beforehand, and came with something to say about transnational links. Sometimes they denied their importance; sometimes they highlighted links I had not encountered in archival material—both responses were of use. However, I also mitigated the weight of my research topic on interviewees' narratives by considering (and presenting) the interviews as having two purposes: for this thesis; but also as a body of sources in their own right, to be archived for other researchers. Interviewees were

[49] See: *ibid.* and L. Abrams, 'Liberating the Female Self: Epiphanies, Conflict and Coherence in the Life Stories of Post-War British Women', *Social History*, 39:1 (2014), pp. 14–35.

[50] L. Abrams, 'Memory as Both Source and Subject of Study: The Transformations of Oral History', in S. Berger and B. Niven, eds., *Writing the History of Memory* (London, 2014), p. 96.

thus well aware that we were creating broader historical records, prioritising their life histories and memories.

The resulting recordings are mostly around two to four hours long, with two outliers: one interviewee with scheduling issues had to rush off; another requested two interview sessions, a week apart, to allow time for further recollections. Repeat interviewing worked well in this case but was both time- and resource-consuming: I could not have pursued this method across the board. Another outlier was one joint interview—again, at the request of the interviewees. They were members of a group which prioritised the collective, and could not conceive of any one member, alone, creating a record of their past. Here, there was less room for the construction of self-narratives, but the joint interview was an interesting way to explore their 'feminography', which was imagined as collective—even if complicated by the fact that I only had two microphones. Finally, one interview was conducted in collaboration with Lucy Delap, on behalf of the project Business of Women's Words. This was fruitful, with Delap's questions highlighting transnational factors I had not considered; I have indicated in the footnotes where this was so.

In total, I interviewed eighteen women: six lived in the UK, five in France, five in the US, and two in Canada. This is not where the women lived in the 1970s—US: six, UK: nine, France: eight (this does not add up to eighteen: many interviewees relocated during this period)—nor is this representative of where the women originally came from (US: five, UK: five, France: six, India: one, Canada: one). Participants were diverse in some ways, but not in others. US- and UK-based activists lived in different towns, whereas the MLF activists I interviewed were all Paris-based—partly reflecting the fact that much activity was concentrated there, but also my own difficulties in locating participants. All but one were

white, despite attempts to contact activists from the black women's movements.[51] Regarding sexuality, about half identified as lesbian. The picture is foggier in terms of socio-economic class. Most, but certainly not all, came from middle-class backgrounds; all had been in higher education, although some following their movement years; over the course of their lives, my interviewees' income and living conditions oscillated considerably. All interviews were conducted in English, bar one—I gave French interviewees a choice, but most were fluent English-speakers (unsurprisingly, given I was exploring links with Anglophone movements).[52]

These interviews were not intended as a representative sample of activists—their testimony is contextualised with archival sources and other oral testimony throughout. Instead, I set out to recruit women who were active in areas my archival research highlighted: movement formation, healthcare, refuges, childcare organising, bookselling. Many were selected because archival sources indicated they were central to transnational diffusions—those interviews illuminated specific case studies. Other interviewees, involved in more nationally focused organising, were selected because their testimony filled gaps in the archival material. But this divide was less stark in practice. Indeed, the interviews revised many of my previous assumptions.

The first two chapters of this study primarily focus upon comparative analyses of oral testimony. Chapter I explores activist awakenings, focusing on the transnational impact of pre-movement feminist texts and awakening moments highlighted by interviewees' life histories. We find that awakenings were understandings of societal sexism, and that such understandings often emerged from personally experiencing the limitations of womanhood. However, this alone did not lead to mobilisation. A further development was required: politicisation, which

[51] Perhaps owing to my whiteness, perceptions of academic history, or the focus on links between these three countries rather than others.

[52] See appendix for interviewee biographies.

we study in Chapter II. Experience within earlier social movements gave many women understandings that societal injustice could be struggled against through collective action. This exposed many (but not all) women to instances of sexism—leading some to the belief that women needed an autonomous movement—but also furnished them with the skills to establish that movement and exposed them to networks of like-minded women. Within this pre-movement period, we find transnational diffusion of organisational tactics, activist travel forming early transnational links, and the emergence of global mentalities.

From here, analyses combine archival sources and oral testimony. Chapter III examines movement formation to assess historiographical assertions that the American WLM sparked the British and French. We learn there were multiple origins to the British and French movements: some were firmly rooted in national developments; others were influenced by the American movement. In all three countries, the networks studied in Chapter II were central to movement formation. Chapter IV looks at the shape of the WLM. We start with a study of the travel of consciousness-raising from the US to Britain and France, but also note other practices centred on theorising through discussion, some of which were American, others French. An overview of the WLM's growth in each country is then given, through which we explore networking mechanisms: conferences, periodicals, and activist correspondence and travel. Finally, we examine local hubs: women's centres and feminist bookshops. These were spaces which provided venues for movement organising and fostered local WLM communities, while connecting them to the national and transnational.

We then shift our focus to specific areas of activity. Chapter V explores WLM theorising—in particular, the impact of feminist analyses on WLM activists in other countries. This underlines the significance of American thinking for British and French feminists, but only specific groups—there was homegrown theorising too, some of which travelled. Above

all, we learn theory was rarely imported wholesale; it was instead adapted and developed further. In Chapter VI, we study WLM protest, analysing the travel of protest tactics through case studies of the Miss America, Miss World, and Unknown Soldier's Wife protests, transnational cooperation within the struggle for reproductive rights, and transnational solidarity campaigns. In doing so, we examine how activists imagined their struggle as global.

In Chapter VII, on the women's healthcare movement, we explore case studies of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and self-help, which both travelled from the US. But there was homegrown healthcare activism in France and Britain too—which explains why certain transnational ideas were adopted and how they were adapted. The role of individuals as 'missionaries' diffusing ideas is particularly important within healthcare activism, where methods needed to be taught in person. But we also explore the establishment of activist healthcare networks. Finally, Chapter VIII explores the establishment of community services by the WLM through case studies of childcare, refuges, and rape crisis centres. Refuges spread from the UK to the two other countries, and rape crisis centres from the US to the UK, but not to France (and we consider a tentative explanation for this). Within both, as with healthcare activism, formal, specialised networks were established. Conversely, within childcare organisation we find only minimal transnational exchange. Nonetheless, there are some examples of transnationally diffused childcare ideas and, moreover, the same desire to share ideas and experience we find elsewhere in the movement.

Taken altogether, it is clear that the transnational story of the WLM extends far beyond the three protests—Miss American, Miss World, and the Unknown Soldier's Wife—which announced each movement's existence to the wider world. We find common networking mechanisms in different areas of organisation: periodicals, conferences, activist correspondence, and travel. We find similar stories of the gradual establishment of formal,

specialised networks, many of which spanned multiple countries. We find a desire to share, learn, and communicate—even where organisation was firmly rooted in the local.

In fact, ideas were constructed and implemented primarily at a local level. But this should not be seen as a minimisation of the transnational. On the contrary, as Werner and Zimmerman argue, the transnational is not merely 'a supplementary level of analysis to be added to the local, regional, and national levels'; it 'exists in interaction with the others'.[53] We might add: in exploring the transnational, we do not shift our focus from the local. We simply include more localities. It is precisely through a study of the local, regional, and national that we can perceive the transnational: in the reading of texts, the establishment of services and spaces, and the personal stories of activists.

[53] Werner and Zimmermann, 'Beyond', p. 43.

I. Awakenings

> I just went *ahh* [intake of breath] you know, I had to keep getting out of the bathtub and reading sections of it to Dave, who was in the living room. It's like *ahh* 'Oh my god', 'Oh my god' [laughs].

Karen Slaney was sitting in the bathtub of her London flat when she first read Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (*TFM*). It was a 'vivid memory' for her—jumping up, enthusiastically, to read sections to her husband.[1] Friedan had conducted a survey of fellow Smith College alumnae for a reunion, and discovered their discontent as housewives, describing it as 'the problem that has no name'. After further investigation, Friedan asserted that American popular culture perpetuated a myth that women were content as housewives and mothers—a phenomenon she named 'the feminine mystique'. But it resulted, for many women, in a loss of identity, depression, dissatisfaction. Something, Freidan wrote in her 1963 work, 'is very wrong with the way American women are trying to live their lives'.[2]

Slaney's 'sheltered, suburban' childhood had been spent on the American East Coast—her father was a corporate executive, her mother was a housewife. Slaney had just graduated from Wellesley College when she moved to London in 1966 with then-boyfriend David.

> The thing that I remember most […] was, she [Friedan] had gone to Smith College, which is like Wellesley […] she had talked to women of my generation and she said that they couldn't envision themselves as anything at all over the age of twenty and I went, 'Oh. That's me.' You know, 'Yeah, *oh yes*.'

Despite her degree from a prestigious women's college, Slaney had stopped working; she had been a mother for six months or so when she encountered *TFM*; and until her daughter's birth,

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[1] Interview with Karen Slaney, TL, Silver Spring, MD (6 Oct. 2018).
[2] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (London, 2010), pp. 1, 5, 28-29, 50.

her social circle had mostly comprised her husband's friends. It is little wonder, then, that she found herself in Friedan's exploration of 'the problem that has no name'. For Slaney, this was momentous. 'You know,' she said, 'they talk about whether women's liberation came as an epiphany or not, I'm in the epiphany group.'[3]

Before the idea for a women's movement was sparked, many women came to understandings of societal sexism individually. For some, like Slaney, this struck in one moment. Oral histories and memoirs often describe such moments as awakenings: from the slumber of ignorance to political consciousness. Various metaphors are used—'scales' falling from eyes,[4] 'lightbulbs' switching on,[5] 'The Click'[6]—but the significance is still emphasised whether articulated through sight or sleep, religion or reason. Awakenings signalled new chapters in activists' lives; indeed, some activists conceptualise them as a 'rupture'[7] or 'turning point'.[8] They were not universal: for some activists there was a series of experiences; others insist they were always feminist. Nonetheless, something, clearly, was happening in different countries to provoke this widespread consciousness—so much so that awakenings have assumed a central role in popular narratives of WLM origins.

We can see this in Slaney's aside: 'they talk about whether women's liberation came as an epiphany'. It is unclear who 'they' refers to—activists, historians, documentary-makers?—but perhaps this does not matter: the significance is Slaney's awareness of debate. This is notable not because it is likely to have altered her memories—throughout our interview Slaney carefully qualified certainty with 'I guess' or 'I don't think'. More likely, this debate provoked

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[3] Interview with Slaney, TL.
[4] Interview with Lyba Spring, TL, Toronto (8 Oct. 2018).
[5] Interview with Jill Rakusen, TL, West Yorkshire (5 Sep. 2018).
[6] R. Dunbar-Ortiz, *Outlaw Woman: A memoir of the War Years, 1960-75* (Norman, OK, 2014), p. 28.
[7] Michèle Idels, interview with Sylvina Boissonnas and Idels, TL, Paris (24 Oct. 2018).
[8] BL, S&A: Interview with Jenny Lynn, by R. Cohen, London (27 Apr. 2011).

her to re-interrogate memories over the years, and to reframe this moment as pivotal. While it was undeniably momentous—as we can see from her animated retelling—this was not the only step in Slaney's activist trajectory. In our interview, she also stressed the importance of her group, mentioning further epiphanies as they discussed women's condition together.[9]

Epiphanic moments and ruptures have long been noted as a common framework in activists' life stories.[10] As Lynn Abrams has shown, it is precisely their use as a narrative device which makes them such rich subjects for enquiry.[11] As pivotal moments for interviewees, awakenings provide a window, for the historian, into the experiences and feelings which interviewees believe to be foundational to their feminist identity. Taken together, we can examine the conditions of activists' lives which, to them, seemed to call for change; where such understandings were provoked by texts, we can ask what it was women found in their pages.

Anglophone macro-histories of the period,[12] journalists,[13] and documentaries[14] often point to *TFM* as the work which started a 'national and then international conversation' on women's position. In this narrative, American awakenings happened first, with the movement subsequently spreading to other countries.[15] Already, taking Slaney's example, we can begin to complicate this: women beyond the US were discovering Friedan for themselves, and as we will see, this was not unique to American ex-patriates. Carol Giardina has complicated this

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[9] Interview with Slaney, TL.

[10] L. Passerini, *Autobiography of a Generation: Italy 1968* (London, 1996) pp. 22-4; M.A. Bracke, *Women and the Reinvention of the Political: Feminism in Italy, 1968–1983* (London, 2014), pp. 24, 209.

[11] L. Abrams, 'Liberating the female self: epiphanies, conflict and coherence in the life stories of post-war British women', *Social History*, 39:1 (2014), p. 21.

[12] See: 'Women's Movement' in J.S. Olson, ed., *Historical Dictionary of the 1970s* (London, 1999); F. Davis, *Moving the Mountain: The Women's Movement in America since 1960* (New York, 1991), pp. 50–3; M. Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914–1999* (London, 2000), p. 264.

[13] For example: M. Fox, 'Betty Friedan, Who Ignited Cause in "Feminine Mystique," Dies at 85', *NYT* (5 Feb. 2006), https://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/05/us/betty-friedan-who-ignited-cause-in-feminine-mystique-dies-at-85.html (1 Sep. 2019).

[14] See: *She's Beautiful When She's Angry*, dir. M. Dore (Film, 2014); and *Feminist: Stories from Women's Liberation*, dir. J.H. Lee (Film, 2013).

[15] L. Shriver, 'Introduction' to B. Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (London, 2010), pp. *vii-xi*.

picture in another way, exploring the effect of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (*TSS*) upon American activists.[16] To explain this, we might wonder whether there were different origins for the reformist, women's rights movement of Friedan's NOW, and the radical WLM, but oral testimonies demonstrate the origins of the two movements, and influence of these two books, were not so distinct in practice. Slaney's activism would be characterised as the latter: she was a founding member of the Tufnell Park group, one of the earliest British WLM groups.

This topic is worth addressing within this transnational study. Although WLM historiography primarily focuses on national histories, transnational and comparative threads can be found in the transatlantic influence of de Beauvoir and Friedan, and the experiences of women in different countries. It is only by analysing these experiences together that can we understand how similar movements were sparked in different places. This topic is a natural departure point for any WLM history. Not just chronologically, but because it orients the historian towards a fundamental question: what was the movement's *raison d'être*? Finally, it allows us to explore the movement's theoretical and experiential foundations.

Given the personal nature of awakenings, the primary body of sources will be my oral history interviews. Here, the life history approach worked well. While my interview guide included the question *Can you remember when you first called yourself a feminist?*[17] it was rarely asked, often arising organically. Life histories create space for interviewees to draw their own connections. Some emphasised particular moments; for others, the topic threaded through the interview. As historians working on oral history project Sisterhood & After noted, recording life histories to access the history of a collective, diverse, and leaderless movement may seem

[16] C. Giardina, *Freedom for Women: Forging the Women's Liberation Movement* (Gainesville, FL, 2010), ch. 4.
[17] Wording borrowed from S&A interviews. See: BL, S&A.

contradictory.[18] But it was also a deeply personal movement, both in ambition (the personal as political), and effect (activists emphasise its transformative power). Moreover, through analysing multiple life histories, historians have constructed collective biographies—a fruitful methodology to explore both activist lives and wider societal change.[19] This chapter's scope is further widened by contextualising my interviews with other oral history collections, all of which, at least loosely, adopted life history approaches,[20] and some memoirs, though they are used sparingly, due to their prominence in existing historiography.

In exploring the transnational impact of Friedan and de Beauvoir's analyses, we discover that they resonated with certain women because they allowed such readers to understand, for the first time, that the limitations of womanhood which they had personally experienced were in fact symptoms of societal oppression. For others, texts were not needed to reveal societal oppression—an awakening was not a necessary condition for becoming a WLM activist. Nor was it sufficient: pre-movement awakenings did not alone spur women to form the WLM. Yet they did mark the beginning of many women's pathways to activism.

1. The 'Woman Question'

In post-war Europe and North America, the limitations of womanhood were enshrined in law, reinforced by culture, and experienced every day. Female suffrage had been won in recent

[18] M. Jolly et. al., 'Sisterhood and After: Individualism, Ethics and an Oral History of the Women's Liberation Movement', *Social Movement Studies*, 11:2 (2012), p. 212.

[19] See: Passerini, *Autobiography*; R. Gildea et. al., eds., *Europe's 1968: Voices of Revolt* (Oxford, 2013); C. Hughes, *Young Lives on the Left: Sixties Activism and the Liberation of the Self* (Manchester, 2015); E. Worth, 'The welfare state generation: life histories of women born in Britain *c.* 1938-1952' (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2017); M. Jolly, *Sisterhood and After: An Oral History of the UK Women's Liberation Movement, 1968-Present* (Oxford, 2019).

[20] See bibliography for collections surveyed.

memory, but Lynn Alderson, one of my British interviewees, articulated the ways inequality still curtailed women's autonomy and opportunities:

> You couldn't get a mortgage. You couldn't take out a hire purchase agreement without your father's agreement. […] it was even dodgy, the thought of being a woman doctor, was dodgy. There was hardly any women in Parliament, hardly any women in the media. It just wasn't done. […] And that reinforcement, the media reinforcement of children and home and cooking was extremely intense.[21]

While socioeconomic change was afoot, effects upon women's lives were contradictory. Women were increasingly entering the labour market, particularly with the economic turn towards the service industry, but jobs were segregated by sex, with women at the bottom of the wage hierarchy. Despite some trade unions taking up the cause of female workers' rights, working conditions remained taxing, only placing more pressure upon women, who shouldered the burden of domestic labour too.[22] Women's access to higher education had widened by the late 1960s,[23] but professional roles were still closed to all but the highest achievers, the better-off, the white.[24]

This is not to say there was a dearth of progress in the post-war era. As Pat Thane notes, 'profound cultural and social changes' in 'higher-income countries' from the late-1960s to the mid-1970s 'had roots in gradually accumulating change' even through the 'supposedly dull, conservative 1950s'.[25] In France, women organised in groups like the Mitterrandist MDF

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[21] Interview with Lynn Alderson, TL, London (20 May 2019).

[22] C. Duchen, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France, 1944-1968* (London, 1994), pp. 163-4; M. Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914–1999* (London, 2000), pp. 239-40; Evans, *Personal Politics*, p. 9.

[23] Duchen, *Women's Rights*, pp. 153-4; B.M. Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (London, 1985), p. 63; S. Bruley, *Women in Britain since 1900* (London, 1999), p. 128.

[24] Duchen, *Women's Rights*, p. 143; T. Amott and J. Matthaei, *Race, Gender, and Work: A Multi-cultural Economic History of Women in the United States* (Boston, MA, 1996), p. 342; Pugh, *Women*, p. 240; G. Holloway, *Women and Work in Britain Since 1840* (London, 2005), p. 209.

[25] P. Thane, 'Women and the 1970s: towards liberation?', in L. Black et. al., *Reassessing 1970s Britain* (Manchester, 2016), p. 167.

(Mouvement démocratique féminin),[26] pronatalist policies were 'faltering', and marriage law had been reformed by the late 1960s.[27] In the UK, 'no-fault' divorce was introduced in 1969, leading to a jump in the proportion of petitions brought by women, from 58 percent in 1961-65 to 72 per cent in 1976-80.[28] Older feminist organisations like the Fawcett Society were still active.[29] American women struggled for their rights in groups like the National Council of Negro Women and the Daughters of Bilitis,[30] and the President's Commission on the Status of Women (opened in December 1961) reanimated general interest in women's lives.[31] In all three countries, women participated in union organising (albeit at a much lower rate than men, and not without internal struggles),[32] and access to contraceptives had widened by the late 1960s, though (as we will see in later chapters) less so in the US and France, where birth control movements continued to push for change.[33]

However, until the late 1960s, campaigns for women's rights were discrete, with no comprehensive attempt to dismantle women's oppression. The same could be said of public discourse. There was a renewed interest in the 'woman question', but few voices in the post-war period criticised, let alone advocated dismantling, gender roles. Academic literature discussed women 'from almost every conceivable vantage point—economic, psychoanalytic,

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[26] S. Chaperon, 'La Radicalisation des mouvements féminins Français de 1960 à 1970', *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 48 (1995), p. 63.
[27] Duchen, *Women's Rights*, p. 4.
[28] Thane, 'Women and the 1970s', p. 172.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 171.
[30] See: R. Tuuri, *Strategic Sisterhood: The National Council of Negro Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2018); L. Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York, 2012), pp. 148-50.
[31] Evans, *Personal Politics*, p. 16.
[32] S. Boston, *Women Workers & The Trade Unions* (London, 2015), chs. 8-10; N.F. Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement: Women and the United Auto Workers* (Ithaca, NY, 1990); G. Allwood and K. Wadia, *Women and Politics in France 1958-2000* (London, 2000), pp. 84-7.
[33] Thane, 'Women and the 1970s', p. 172; Chaperon, 'La Radicalisation', p. 64; L. Gordon, *The Moral Property of Women: A History of Birth Control Politics in America* (Chicago, IL, 2002), part 3.

sexual, historical, religious, physical',[34] including a 1956 study of women's lives based on questionnaires distributed in the UK, US, France, and Sweden which highlighted the conflict between employment and household responsibilities.[35] However those, especially Freudians, who advocated dichotomised gender roles dominated academic discourse.[36] Even the publication of *TSS* in France in 1949 did not ignite wider debate on women's position. De Beauvoir's treatise sold well (22,000 copies in the first week);[37] however, its message was lost in the crosshairs of Cold War politics. Catholic commentators bemoaned the 'amorality' of Existentialism; Communists, linking it with the emergence of the Kinsey report, denounced its American notions of sexuality. Few reviewers discussed the condition of women at all.[38]

2. Textual Awakenings

a. United States

It is certainly true that *TFM* reached the American public where previous writing on the 'woman question' had not: the first paperback print-run sold 1.4 million copies.[39] And with the creation of NOW in 1966, the idea for 'a new movement toward true equality for all women in America' was put firmly on the map.[40] As we will see in Chapter III, some American women who would go on to join the radical WLM first explored their feminist politics in this arena. Others—already aware in the 1970s of the *TFM*-origin narrative—disputed the importance

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[34] H.J. Haymes, 'Postwar Writing and the Literature of the Women's Liberation Movement', *Psychiatry*, 38:4 (1975), p. 329.
[35] A. Myrdal and V. Klein, *Women's Two Roles* (London, 1956).
[36] Haymes, 'Postwar Writing', p. 331.
[37] C. Rodgers, Le Deuxième sexe *de Simone Beauvoir: Un héritage admire et contesté* (Paris, 1998), p. 15.
[38] J.G. Coffin, 'Historicizing the Second Sex', *French Politics, Culture & Society*, 25:3 (2007), pp. 129-40.
[39] W.H. Pruden III '*The Feminine Mystique*' in P.A. Lamphier and R. Welch, eds., *Women in American History: A Social, Political, and Cultural Encyclopedia and Document Collection*, Vol. 4 (4 vols., Santa Barbara, CA, 2017), p. 137.
[40] NOW, 'Statement of Purpose' (29 Oct. 1966), https://now.org/about/history/statement-of-purpose/ (19 Jul. 2020).

placed on Friedan. Instead, these activists asserted their 'roots' drew 'more nourishment from the rough but fertile soil of Simone de Beauvoir's thought than from the domesticated political gardens of Betty Friedan'.[41]

An English translation of *TSS* appeared in Anglophone countries in 1953. It began with a deceptively simple question: 'What is woman?' After rejecting straightforwardly biological definitions de Beauvoir offered her own: woman is the 'Other', the relative being, the 'non-essential' within a structure in which man is the 'essential.' From this assertion, de Beauvoir asks, 'why is woman the Other?'[42] thus outlining her Herculean task: 'to discover how the nature of woman has been affected throughout the course of history' or in other words, 'what humanity has made of the human female'.[43]

As Giardina's study of feminist memoirs demonstrates, many American women came to understandings of societal sexism through *TSS*. Roxanne Dunbar, a young mother at the time, was lent a copy in 1963 by a friend's mother, who was a member of the Socialist Workers Party. In her memoir, Dunbar described her reading as 'The Click':

> I read while walking back to the car; I read by the tiny bedside lamp late into the night; I woke up and began reading. I finished the book as we were driving back to San Francisco, and I lifted my eyes from the pages to a different world.[44]

What was this 'different world'? For Dunbar, the message of the text was that 'the patriarchal nuclear family […] socialised boys and girls to serve capitalist demands'.[45] As she went about her daily chores she repeated a mantra from *TSS*: 'Woman escapes complete dependency to the

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[41] 'Editorial', *The Longest Revolution*, 1:1 (Sep.-Oct. 1976), p. 1.
[42] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. H.M. Parshley (London, 1993), pp. *xli-xlvii.*
[43] *Ibid*., p. 38.
[44] Dunbar-Ortiz, *Outlaw Woman*, pp. 28-9.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 374.

degree in which she escapes from the family.' De Beauvoir's book affected Dunbar so profoundly that three months after reading it, she left her husband and baby.[46]

Kathie Sarachild was also profoundly affected by *TSS*, but the message which resonated with her was entirely different from Dunbar's. When she was fourteen, Sarachild spotted it on her mother's bookshelf. She read it through a teenager's lens:

> I was worried about how I looked and I remember the way it described the enormous time that women have to put in to making themselves look presentable in the world […] And it, the book, compared high heels to bound feet and of course then we were all wearing high heels and stumbling around on them.

As with Dunbar, Sarachild had found herself in the text; and just as Dunbar lifted her eyes to 'a different world' so was Sarachild's understanding of society altered:

> I think it gave me an incredibly strong commitment, because it, it just showed how it affected every—I mean I, everything it described, even though I was in the United States and supposedly this book only applied to Frenchwomen, and even though I was only a teenager.

It seems, therefore, that it was both recognition of oneself and the comprehensive nature of de Beauvoir's analysis which provoked such powerful awakenings. As Sarachild described it: 'I felt literally, physically as if my eyes were being opened'.[47]

Both Dunbar and Sarachild discovered *TSS* via an older generation—of course, the text had been published a decade earlier. This is not something which Giardina highlights, but it is notable that the only 1950s activist reading she discusses is that of New York civil rights activist Patricia Robinson. Unlike Dunbar and Sarachild, Robinson 'had trouble with de Beauvoir as a model'. Because Robinson was Black, she had been denied certain privileges 'that

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[46] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

[47] RWLAA: Kathie Sarachild, Redstockings Memorial Speakout for Simone de Beauvoir (1 May 1986), audio recording.

made achievement possible for Beauvoir'. Nevertheless, de Beauvoir had influenced her thinking: Robinson thought de Beauvoir was correct in placing women's rights 'up front in the fight for a more just society' and so was inspired to place women's rights 'up front' in her own struggles against racism and capitalism.[48]

Robinson's reading of de Beauvoir was not a powerful moment of awakening in the same way as for Dunbar and Sarachild: she did not find herself in the text. We might ask, then, why white women in the US were only 'awakened' by de Beauvoir a decade after its English publication. This would be the wrong question to ask. Clearly, de Beauvoir was resonating with white American readers before the 1960s—why else would Dunbar's friend's mother have lent her the book? But here, we are interested in the readers who would go on to found the WLM, women who highlight their readings of de Beauvoir as the beginning of their activist trajectories. Why was it *this* generation, young women in the 1960s, that used their new understandings of women's position to form a radical movement—one which would attempt to revolutionise society? The answer is to be found elsewhere. First, we turn to British readings of *TFM.*

b. United Kingdom

As with Dunbar and Sarachild's readings of *TSS*, textual awakenings in Britain were provoked by a recognition of the reader's own experience within the wider analysis of women's position. Slaney's discovery of her own experience in *TFM* is unsurprising, given she had lived a similar life to the women studied by Friedan. But *TFM* resonated with British women too—as demonstrated by oral testimony collected by Feminist Archive South.

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[48] Giardina, *Freedom for Women*, pp. 73-4.

Jackie Barron was born in Watford and married at the age of nineteen, having been 'brought up to think that marriage was all that women did'. She quickly found she didn't 'like the assumptions… that you were responsible for the children and the cooking and the house.' Barron felt isolated in her Luton home, as 'there was no one who seemed to think the way I did'. But then she read *TFM*, and although 'it was American', she explained it did 'chime with my experience and so at last there was someone else saying the things I was thinking'. Unlike Slaney, Barron 'wasn't a particularly educated person', having left school after O-levels, so the over-educated housewife's discontent did not apply. Nonetheless she felt 'being a "housewife and mother" was actually being a second-class citizen'; this feeling was so strong that in her interview she emphasised, twice, she 'really did *feel* that'. Eventually Barron joined an evening class, then a women's group, and after moving to Bristol began working for Women's Aid.[49]

Helen Taylor, who was also active in the Bristol WLM, described reading *TFM* in similar language: she recognised 'everything she [Friedan] had said about the ways in which I had internalised being female, feminine, second class.' Taylor was neither a housewife nor mother, but had 'felt it a great struggle to be accepted as a thinking person'. Both Taylor and Barron, though living different lives to suburban Smith graduates, had keenly felt the limitations of their womanhood—and in quite different ways: Taylor was studying for her master's degree in English Literature when she encountered *TFM*. Nonetheless, she felt her 'horizons had been limited by being born a woman'. Taylor read *TFM* 'right through the night', then wept 'solidly for about three hours […] with complete recognition'.[50]

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[49] Interview with Jackie Barron, by I. Singer (*c.* 2000-2001), in Singer and V. Honeybourne, eds., 'Personal Histories of the Second Wave of Feminism', http://feministarchivesouth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Personal-Histories-of-the-Second-Wave-of-Feminism.pdf (18 Mar. 2019), pp. 59-60.

[50] Interview with Helen Taylor, by I. Singer (*c.* 2000-2001), in *ibid.*, pp. 40-1.

Artist Pen Dalton had a different reading experience. As with Slaney, she 'experienced what can only be called an epiphany', but for her, Friedan's arguments provided a framework to interpret subsequent events, not a reinterpretation of already existent feelings. Dalton read *TFM* in Brighton, the night before giving birth to her first child. It was 'through the pain and fear' of the birth that she had her epiphany:

> I understood, I think for the first time, what it was to be a woman, have a woman's body, and I felt a great sense of community with other mothers who had been though the same experience.

Childbirth was a moment in which Dalton felt her experience deviated from that of men. 'Up till then,' she explained, 'I'd been competing with men, thinking of myself in linear terms of career and jobs. Having a baby puts a stop to that kind of timekeeping, it forces you back to your body'.[51]

Interestingly, none of the other oral history projects surveyed, and only one of my interviewees, mentioned awakenings based on *TFM*. Indeed, another woman, Sarah Braun, interviewed by Feminist Archive South, came across *TFM* when a colleague in Bristol lent her a copy.[52] This raises the question of whether texts caught on in certain places—but in this case neither Barron, Taylor, nor Dalton were based in Bristol when they read the text. They were, however, all subsequently part of a Bristol-oriented activist network—with Barron and Taylor active there, and Brighton-based Dalton connecting with Bristol feminist artists, like Monica Sjöö—and the organisers of the project employed snowball sampling. This could suggest activists in particular networks were awakened in similar ways; perhaps, despite isolation from each other during their awakenings, they were later inclined toward like-minded women.

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[51] Interview with Pen Dalton, by I. Singer (*c.* 2000-2001), in *ibid.*, p. 76.
[52] Interview with Sarah Braun, by I. Singer (*c.* 2000-2001), in *ibid.*, p. 7.

Or, perhaps not: other women interviewed by the project were not awakened by *TFM*. Jo Eliot came from North London, and after studying drama at the Central School, got married, then moved to Lancaster with her husband, where, while he studied, she supported them both with a lecturing job. Eliot read both *TFM* and *TSS*, but neither resonated with her: she was the breadwinner with 'an interesting job' so she didn't feel her life 'was particularly touched by the contradictions that were inherent in women's lives'. Eventually, Eliot came to feminism via her left-wing politics, finding herself 'completely blown away' by Sheila Rowbotham's *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World* (1973).[53]

This reinforces our hypothesis that texts provoked awakenings where women found the limitations of their lives explained on the page. We can also see this in the testimony of American women who experienced disconnect with *TFM*. Joan E. Biren went to a talk Friedan gave at her college, Mount Holyoke. She remembered thinking 'something was wrong with the analysis': because the Mount Holyoke ethos was 'being a strong woman and making a contribution to the world', Friedan's thesis did not 'resonate'.[54] What does it mean, that *TFM* did not connect with a young woman at an American women's college, but did chime with the experience of Barron, halfway across the globe, who 'wasn't a particularly educated person'? Biren had not left college yet—she still had her life ahead of her, still felt she could make 'a contribution to the world'. She had not experienced the limitations of womanhood.

Textual awakenings in the US and UK were ongoing—and were not just restricted to readings of *TFM* and *TSS*. Jill Rakusen came across an article by Germaine Greer in a Sunday paper supplement soon after leaving university, around 1970. She could not recall its title, but remembered her reaction vividly:

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[53] Interview with Jo Eliot, by I. Singer (*c.* 2000-2001), in *ibid.*, pp. 89-90.
[54] SSC, VFOHP: Interview with Joan E. Biren, by K. Anderson, Silver Spring, MD (27 Feb. 2004).

> And a light bulb, well actually many lightbulbs, suddenly lit up. […] What I remember was reading this, avidly reading this article, I can't remember what it said or anything, but reading it so avidly and so… Just so, feeling, *'Ahhh'*. Like, *'Aaahh,'* things started to slot into place. Things started to make sense. I had no idea things didn't make sense. But suddenly they did, so obviously they hadn't before.

Rakusen did not personally recognise herself in the article, but Greer explained why she had felt certain things—just as *TSS* and *TFM* did for others. Or, as she put it: Greer 'helped me to see something which I was obviously ready to see.' During her studies, Rakusen had not connected with literature or history, and Greer's article explained why: 'they were all written through this patriarchal prism'. As with Slaney, Rakusen became animated when recounting this memory. The realisation, she said, 'changed my life, really, the direction of my life.' For Rakusen, experiencing this awakening in 1970, when the movement was already underway, it did not take long for her to become an activist—shortly after this, she moved to London and found the WLM there.[55] But for others, years passed before they became activists. Exploring explanations for this orients us towards an understanding of why women of this particular generation were spurred by awakenings to action.

c. France

In British and American oral histories and memoirs, activists demonstrate awareness of widespread reader-awakenings. Dunbar wrote that although she 'was not aware' of other awakenings when she read *TSS*, later on, in the WLM, she would meet 'thousands of women' who had been through similar awakenings.[56] Ursula Owen, founder-director of British feminist publishers Virago, did not experience a textual awakening, but clearly heard of others: she said *TFM* 'must have been on the radar but it passed me by' and she 'certainly hadn't read Simone

[55] Interview with Rakusen, TL.
[56] Dunbar-Ortiz, *Outlaw Woman*, pp. 29-30.

de Beauvoir from beginning to end'.[57] In contrast, none of my French interviewees mentioned reader-awakenings, nor do most histories of MLF origins.[58]

There are some examples to be found in the literature. *TSS* and *TFM* were available in France (with the latter's 1964 French translation). Yvette Roudy, who translated the book, saw parallels with French post-war housing estates:

> These women in their beautiful suburban homes outside New York […] who were suffering from a mysterious illness—I recognised them. I saw them every day. They were my neighbours […] This suffering that comes from living below one's full capacity is not the prerogative of American women […] I witnessed serious crises. I saw suicide attempts and suicides.[59]

In her examination of the influence of *TSS* upon 'the French feminist scene', Catherine Rodgers finds some examples of awakenings provoked by de Beauvoir. For Elisabeth Badinter, reading *TSS* was 'like growing wings'; for Anne Sylvestre, 'It awakened me completely'; Roudy described it as 'the woman's bible'.[60]

However, one crucial point which Rodgers does not note is that these feminists were not part of the MLF. Sylvestre and Roudy were roughly a decade older than the women I interviewed. Roudy's feminism was aligned with that of American reformist feminism: she joined the Parti socialiste in 1971, eventually becoming Minister for Women's Rights in 1981, and never 'felt close' to the MLF, instead believing 'social change is achieved through politics and parties.'[61] Badinter was not older, but she stood apart from the MLF as an intellectual, and from

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[57] BL, S&A: Interview with Ursula Owen, by R. Cohen, London (22 Oct. 2011).

[58] For example: Jacqueline Feldman, 'De FMA au MLF: Un témoignage sur les débuts du mouvement de libération des femmes', *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire*, 29 (2009), pp. 193-203; C. Delphy, 'Les origines du Mouvement de libération des femmes en France', *NQF* 16:18 (1991), pp. 137-48; des femmes, *MLF-Psychanalyse et politique 1968-2018* (Paris, 2018).

[59] Yvette Roudy, *A cause d'elles* (Paris, 1983), pp. 76-7.

[60] C. Rodgers, 'The influence of *The Second Sex* on the French feminist scene' in R. Evans, ed., *Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex: New Interdisciplinary Essays* (Manchester, 1998), p. 61.

[61] Delphine Gardey and Jacqueline Laufer, 'Interview with Yvette Roudy: "Les femmes sont une force"', *Travail, Genre et Sociétés*, 7 (Feb. 2002), p. 17.

1966-70 she gave birth to three children,[62] which differentiates her from the majority of MLF activists. Thanks to a sociological survey, we have a rough profile of MLF activists—and it is one which my interviewees broadly fit. They were baby boomers, with many born in 1948; they came from across the class spectrum; only a small percentage were married; even smaller was the proportion with children.[63] As Duchen writes, MLF activists were of a different generation to feminists of the 1950s and 1960s. They 'had not yet discovered the oppressions of daily family life (from the mother's perspective), the tyranny of fertility, the injustices of the world of work'.[64] They had not, in short, experienced certain limitations of womanhood which provoked powerful awakenings in many American and British readers: within marriage, motherhood, and work.

But we have explored textual awakenings of younger American and British activists: Sarachild finding her teenage experiences within *TSS*; Greer's article reframing Rakusen's educational experience. The limitations of womanhood could be felt in earlier life too. Indeed, although MLF activists do not employ the language of awakenings, *TSS* resonated with some. For example, in Picq's history of the MLF, she said of French activists: 'They had read Simone de Beauvoir, one after the other, and many were deeply affected. Each one could draw from it what she wished'. Picq gives no examples of individuals' reactions,[65] but in an interview, she mentions that she herself read de Beauvoir in school. However, it is not framed as an awakening moment: she had 'always been a feminist.'[66]

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[62] P.E. Hyman, 'Elisabeth Badinter', in Jewish Women's Archive, *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Encyclopaedia* (27 Feb. 2009), https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/badinter-elisabeth (20 Jul. 2020).

[63] N. Ringart, 'Quand ce n'était qu'un début… Itinéraires de femmes à Paris', in Groupe D'Etudes Féministes de L'Université Paris VII, *Crises de la Société, Féminisme et Changement* (Paris, 1991), pp. 157-71.

[64] Duchen, *Women's Rights*, p. 207.

[65] F. Picq, *Libération des Femmes: Les Années-Mouvement* (Paris, 1993), pp. 24-6.

[66] Interview with Françoise Picq, by R. Gildea, Paris (27 Apr. 2007), transcript, p. 23.

Instead, the moment which the vast majority of MLF activists frame as pivotal to their activist trajectories is 1968. For Michèle Idels, this was the 'rupture', not only in her life, but also wider society. She also described de Beauvoir's analysis in these terms: she 'could not read' de Beauvoir because she was 'linked to the old world, that is, the world before 1968'.[67] While, as we will see, Idels belonged to the MLF group which was at more of a remove from de Beauvoir—other activists were closer to the philosopher, both ideologically and personally—the importance Idels places upon 1968 is nonetheless the dominant narrative in oral testimony across the board, and in movement histories, which almost always begin in 1968. This chimes with the demographics of the MLF, and also explains why, although this younger generation of feminists did read *TSS*, they did not frame it as a moment, or *the* moment, of their awakening.

3. First-hand awakenings

When I asked Nicole Bizos when she first called herself a feminist, she answered the question laughing: 'without knowing it, I was born with it.' She said she had inherited 'a wonderful energy' from her maternal grandmother, who had divorced from her husband aged twenty with two young children. As for Bizos's mother, she never married, and also provided an example of how women could live independently. Although, Bizos explained, 'at the time one would never say "feminist" […] the life she lived was that of a free woman.'[68] Bizos' testimony highlights independence as significant to feminist identity. Yet this does not contradict the importance of activists experiencing the limitations of womanhood. Bizos also underlined how unusual the independence of her grandmother was for the era—growing up, Bizos could see that the life 'of a free woman' was not common, but it was attainable.

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[67] Idels, interview with Boissonnas and Idels, TL.
[68] Interview with Bizos, TL.

Similarly, Shaila Shah also emphasised the importance of her mother's independence. Shah was born in Paris to Indian parents and spent her early childhood there, owing to her father's work in insurance. She and her brother were young children when her father passed away, and her mother, aged thirty, had to abruptly adjust to life as a single parent. The family moved to Bombay, where her mother came from. Shah said her feminism was 'born', in part, from seeing her mother 'take control in our household'. Another key influence was a friend in Bombay with whom, as a young woman, she 'used to spend a number of evenings, along with one or two others'. They would read and discuss feminist texts—Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970) and *TSS*. Shah described it as her 'first exposure' to feminism, though there was 'no movement to hang on to' in Bombay then. As Shah discussed the group in our interview, she realised that all three core members had 'some conditions in our immediate family lives which required us to be more independent': her closest friend had a single father, the other lived with her sister. Shah, who hadn't 'made that connection before', wondered whether this independence predisposed them to feminism.[69] We can see in Shah and Bizos' testimony that while some activists experienced the limitations of motherhood and marriage for themselves, others were already learning, from their upbringing, that this was not the only way to live.

This was not the case for Namascar Shaktini. She was born in Atlanta, GA, and christened Margaret Clarice Orr. At the age of nineteen, while a college student in Lexington, KY, she married Howard Stephenson. He suffered from paranoid schizophrenia, and they divorced after four years. This was a difficult process—Shaktini remembered how upset both she and her parents had been: it was 'the first time in the family' anyone had gone through a divorce. Shaktini also recalled the stigma she experienced afterwards. She interviewed for a high school teaching position and was told by the principal that, unlike other teachers, she

[69] Interview with Shaila Shah, TL, London (7 Mar. 2019).

wouldn't be given on-campus accommodation: previous divorced women had invited men to stay the night. For Shaktini, this was her 'first signal that was going to lead me to be a feminist'.[70]

Within our interview, Shaktini described her politicisation as a gradual ripening. In 1964, she began graduate studies at Berkeley and encountered student organising for the first time. Others in her department were travelling to register Mississippi voters; she remembered feeling 'ashamed' of her 'southern heritage', and consequently becoming 'more politicised'.[71] Another site of politicisation was the Berkeley free speech movement (FSM): mass civil disobedience in response to strict regulation of campus political activity.[72] Shaktini remembered passing Sproul Hall, where FSM rallies were held, and seeing speeches one day, police dragging students down the steps the next. Defying restrictions, students continued to fight for their political causes, and seeing this profoundly affected Shaktini.

> I looked at the pictures of the babies being napalmed, during the Vietnam War, and the slogans, 'This is being done in your name'. […] And so I was surrounded by politicised people and developed a consciousness of what was going on, which I had not had in the Deep South.

Shaktini began marching in anti-war demonstrations, she 'became aware' of other issues—like police violence against black communities in Oakland—and was further politicised by seeing a friend of hers collect money for bail when FSM protestors were arrested, though he had little himself. This did not lead to a feminist awakening, but Shaktini explained: 'I was ripe. I was politicised by the time I went to Europe'.[73]

After Berkeley, she went to Rome to learn a second foreign language. Shaktini stayed in a hostel, and spent each day reading a teach-yourself book in the park. One day, a man kept

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[70] Interview with Namascar Shaktini, TL, Portland, OR (10 Oct. 2018).
[71] *Ibid.*
[72] R. Cohen, 'The Many Meanings of the FSM', in Cohen and R.E. Zelnik, eds., *The Free Speech Movement: Reflections on Berkeley in the 1960s* (London, 2002), p. 1.
[73] Interview with Shaktini, TL.

harassing her. Unable to get him to leave, due to the language barrier, she spat on the ground. He became irate and she was terrified, realising they were alone. When a gelato vendor approached them, she was relieved—that is, until her harasser went to talk to him. She saw the gelato vendor nod and 'in a flash, I understood, there is a conspiracy among men. There's a complicity regarding women.' Shaktini discussed this experience with other young women at her hostel, and they 'reported similar experiences'. The women explained to her that in Italy there were 'two kinds of women': 'respectable girls who mostly stay at home' and women who went out 'unaccompanied' as 'women of the streets'.[74]

Shaktini became frustrated by this and by other things she heard during her time in Italy: of women having plastic surgery to reconstruct the hymen before marriage, of bedsheets hung out after Sicilian wedding nights so everyone could assess the bride's virginity. 'I thought that was just all so oppressive,' she said. At that point, Shaktini 'didn't know I was a feminist, but I was becoming one. I was made one by that experience [in Rome].' This was not a sudden awakening. I asked whether she applied her burgeoning understanding of sexism to American society, and she said she only 'later' put 'two and two together'. Again, Shaktini emphasised this experience was one among many: her time in Italy, she said, meant she was 'ripe for feminism' when she moved to France and came into contact with the MLF. Even then, her political education was ongoing. It was only after her time in the MLF, when she returned to the US, that—influenced by French analyses of phallogocentrism—she became 'feminist enough to have the sense to drop that meaningless married name'. She chose to call herself 'Namascar', a Hindu greeting which she had learned during yoga lessons, and 'Shaktini' from the Sanskrit

[74] *Ibid.*

'shakti' meaning female 'power of creativity'. Her renaming was a way of finally taking 'a stand having understood how male-centred […] all the Indo-European languages are'.[75]

Just as Shaktini's testimony highlights that women's perception of their oppression as women was not the only step in becoming an activist, so too does the fact that many textual awakenings took place in the decade before the movement began. To explain this, Giardina points to the British example of Judith Okely. Okely had read *TSS* in 1961, while studying in Paris, and she wept, finding 'De Beauvoir's analysis' to be 'desperately true'. But it did not lead to her agitation: she saw 'women's, but not worker's emancipation' as principally 'a matter of individual choice'.[76] Mapping this experience onto those of American women, Giardina speculates that 'feminist reaction to Beauvoir' could only be 'expressed in collective form' once women were mobilised in 'the Black Freedom Movement and the Left.'[77] Indeed, while de Beauvoir had pointed out societal inequalities, she had not advocated collective action to overthrow them. On the contrary, she argued 'women lack concrete means for organising themselves into a unit'.[78] Her solution was individual emancipation: woman was urged 'to take her changes in her own interest and in the interest of all'.[79] The same could be said of Friedan: while she urged women to 'say "no" to the housewife image', this did not mean, Friedan argued, 'she must divorce her husband, abandon her children, give up her home'.[80]

It took five years after reading *TSS* for Dunbar to found her own women's group, during which time she attended university, and joined the anti-apartheid and anti-war movements.[81] Shah became involved in feminist activism after going to university in York and

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[75] *Ibid.*
[76] Judith Okely, *Simone de Beauvoir: A Re-Reading* (London, 1986), pp. 14-18.
[77] Giardina, *Freedom for Women*, pp. 81-2.
[78] De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. *xlviii*.
[79] *Ibid.*, pp. 723-4
[80] Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, p. 277.
[81] Dunbar-Ortiz, *Outlaw Woman*, pp. 30-99.

becoming involved with student politics.[82] Rakusen's awakening through reading Greer only turned to action after she moved to London and made contacts in the WLM.[83] Slaney's awakening through *TFM* was significant in developing her own consciousness, yet, as we will see, it was through a network of American anti-war protestors that her women's group was formed.[84] If we draw a distinction between awakenings and politicisation, we can see it took both to lead to mobilisation. For almost all of the activists I interviewed, politicisation came, as with Shaktini, through other movements. For some, such experiences simultaneously led to their awakening to women's societal oppression. But for those who were awakened by texts long before the movement's birth, years could pass between the two.

Conclusion

By re-examining awakenings in a transnational context, we can complicate the narrative of *TFM* sparking an American movement which later spread to Europe. This is shown through a study of *TSS* in the US and *TFM* in the UK. More broadly, these case studies also allow us to understand the roles texts played in awakenings. Women were struck most powerfully where they could find their own experiences on the page. Different women, at different stages of their lives, in different countries were able to find themselves in these texts; the crucial uniting factor was that all had experienced the limitations of womanhood, whether through marriage, motherhood, education, or teenage peer pressure. When readers recognised that feelings and thoughts with which they'd previously struggled were symptoms of societal inequality, this transformed the way they understood the world and their place in it; they shifted from slumber to consciousness.

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[82] Interview with Shah, TL.
[83] Interview with Rakusen, TL.
[84] Interview with Slaney, TL.

However, through a comparison to a French lack of textual awakenings and an analysis of non-textual awakenings, we can assert that despite the formative nature of reader-awakenings, women needed to develop a further consciousness—of collective action—to spark the idea of building a movement. This does not mean that early awakenings to sexism in Britain and America do not merit inclusion in histories of the WLM. In analysing, comparing, and contrasting these activist testimonies we can understand what women were struggling to liberate themselves from. Moreover, we can see formative transnational crosscurrents in this pre-movement period which, as we will see, came to influence movement thinking—above all in the importance of de Beauvoir for American WLM theorists. Finally, the significance of these moments for activists themselves is undeniable. From the moment of her textual awakening, as Rakusen said, 'life has never been the same since'.[85]

[85] Interview with Rakusen, TL.

II. Politicisation

> It's not only the views, it's the fact that there are no longer views, it's something you live, you experience. […] It's beyond changing the views [pauses] because if you're part of it and part of the process it's really, it was life-transforming.

In our interview, Claudine Mulard, much like my other French interviewees, emphasised the transformative nature of May '68. For Mulard, who participated in the occupation of l'Institut Anglais, the experience was galvanising because of the role students had played. She cited the fact that the unrest had begun at the University of Nanterre, then said:

> We put the country on strike. So it sort of gave to my generation the sense that you can do things.

This was what was 'mind-transforming': the sense that groups of people, moreover people like her, had the power to alter society with action. When I asked if she remembered literature from that period, what stuck out in her memory were not tracts, pamphlets, or books, but the slogan: 'Soyez réalistes, demandez l'impossible'. May '68 was 'about dreaming', Mulard said. 'Constructive dreaming.'[1]

In the previous chapter, we noted the demographic profile of the MLF, and Mulard fits this perfectly: she was born in 1948, she studied English at the Sorbonne. As with most other MLF activists, she had not experienced an early awakening to societal sexism in the same way as many American and British women. But we have seen that even those awakened to women's oppression were not *mobilised* by this experience—it took politicisation, often within other social movements, for the notion of a women's liberation movement to arise. 'Politicisation' is here defined as a shift in consciousness to understand: (1) there is societal injustice; (2) therefore

[1] Interview with Claudine Mulard, TL, Los Angeles, CA (13 Oct. 2018).

change is needed; and (3) this change can be brought about, or struggled toward, via collective action.

This topic has been analysed since the earliest WLM histories. In *Personal Politics*, Sara Evans argued 'Young [American] women in the 1960s arrived at their feminist consciousness through an involvement in other causes'—the civil rights movement and New Left—which taught them skills and the 'necessity to struggle for freedom' while at the same time restricting women to 'subservient roles'.[2] This narrative is also found in British and French histories, but with shifted contexts: in British trade unions[3] and the New Left,[4] and May '68.[5] In the decades since, this interpretation has been fleshed out and nuanced.[6] Some histories point to the diversity of activist experience: not all women were confronted with sexism and men, too, felt stifled by movement masculinity.[7]

Yet the dual effect interpretation—of both positive and negative aspects of women's movement experience—has not been overturned. This chapter will also not revise this understanding. Instead, it will assess how these activist experiences relate to the awakenings to societal sexism which we studied in the last chapter. Where historians mention both as origins of the WLM, they do so by listing both protest experience and writings alongside societal

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[2] S. Evans, *Personal Politics* (New York, 1980), pp. 212-3, 232.

[3] A. Coote and B. Campbell, *Sweet Freedom: The Struggle for Women's Liberation* (London, 1982), p. 13.

[4] D. Bouchier, *The Feminist Challenge: The Movement for Women's Liberation in Britain and the USA* (London, 1983), p. 52.

[5] Françoise Picq, 'The MLF: Run for Your Life', in C. Duchen, ed. and trans., *French Connections: Voices from the Women's Movement in France* (Amherst, Mass., 1987), p. 24.

[6] Alice Echols added further evidence to Evans' arguments and highlighted the early schism between radical and socialist feminists. Kristina Schulz arrived at the same conclusion of the 'ambivalent' effect of 1968 upon the WLM, while also exploring its position in activist memories. See: Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis, 1989), chs. 1-2; Schulz, 'Feminist Echoes of 1968: Women's Movements in Europe and the United States' in I. Gilcher-Hotley, ed., *A Revolution of Perception? Consequences and Echoes of 1968* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 124-47.

[7] R.E. Klatch, 'The Formation of Feminist Consciousness among Left- and Right-Wing Activists of the 1960s', *Gender and Society*, 15:6 (Dec. 2001); C. Hughes, *Young Lives on the Left: Sixties Activism and the Liberation of the Self* (Manchester, 2015), pp. 162-6; R. Clifford et. al., 'Gender and sexuality' in R. Gildea et. al., eds., *Europe's 1968: Voices of Revolt* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 239-58.

changes—like the sexual revolution—to encompass the 'variety of feminist beginnings'.[8] But we can fit both into the same framework—and this helps us to understand each more comprehensively.

As with the last chapter, the sources primarily used to explore this question are my oral history interviews, contextualised with archived interviews. Only two of my eighteen interviewees were not involved in social movements prior to joining the WLM: both became activists after the movement was established.[9] All of my French interviewees were active in May '68. One participated in the Mouvement du 22 Mars at Nanterre;[10] another joined the Troskyist AMR (Alliance marxiste révolutionnaire)[11] and two joined Maoist groups.[12] For two of my British interviewees, their first political involvement was in the peace movement: one aged sixteen (with *Peace News* and Greenpeace); the other joined the CND aged fifteen and spent 'Saturdays marching to Dover'. She also attended the anti-Vietnam War protest in Grosvenor Square.[13] In fact, many of my interviewees participated in anti-war protests. Three were in the same anti-war network of American ex-patriates in London,[14] but anti-war protesting reached further afield. I also interviewed one French woman who marched in Washington DC, another who attended demonstrations in France and New York, a Brit who attended a Trafalgar Square protest, and an American who marched in California.[15] Two

[8] R.B. DuPlessis and A. Snitow, 'A Feminist Memoir Project' in DuPlessis and Snitow, eds., *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women's Liberation* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2007), pp. 5-6.
[9] Interviews, TL, with: Jill Rakusen, West Yorkshire (5 Sep. 2018); Jo Sutton, Clayton, ON (4 Oct. 2018).
[10] Michèle Idels, interview with Sylvina Boissonnas and Idels, TL, Paris (24 Oct. 2018).
[11] Interview with Nicole Bizos, TL, Paris (25 Oct. 2018).
[12] Interviews, TL, with: Sophie Mayoux, Paris (22 Oct. 2018); Boissonnas, interview with Boissonnas and Idels.
[13] Interviews, TL, with: Sophie Laws, London (9 Jul. 2018); Lynn Alderson, London (20 May 2019).
[14] Interviews, TL, with: Karen Slaney, Silver Spring, MD (6 Oct. 2018); Linda Gordon, New York (26 Sep. 2018); Sheli Wortis, Cambridge, MA (28 Sep. 2018).
[15] Interviews, TL, with: Christine Delphy, Paris (25 Oct. 2018); Boissonnas, interview with Boissonnas and Idels; Nancy MacKeith, London (14 Jun. 2018); Namascar Shaktini, Portland, OR (10 Oct. 2018).

interviewees were involved in trade union organising (one in Scotland, one in France);[16] two were involved in civil rights organisations (in New York and in Washington, DC);[17] and one first became an activist at university, in York, where she joined a socialist theatre group.[18]

Comparing these experiences, we find common threads—with variations for individuals more often than from country to country, movement to movement. It becomes clear politicisation was a prerequisite for the mobilisation of women into the WLM—even if it was not a prerequisite for the individual. But this shift in consciousness was not the only effect of women's social movement experience. Many experienced sexism within such movements, which seemed particularly egregious in the context of struggling against other injustices: indeed activists sometimes came to their own awakenings by applying their social movements' analyses of injustice to the position of women. This was often, but not always, the factor which led them to conclude that women needed to organise autonomously. Just as activist experience equipped women with this realisation, so it also furnished them with protest tactics, organisational skills, and, significantly, exposed them to networks of like-minded women. Finally, we will note the transnational nature of some activists' politicisations, which fostered transnational links in the WLM's earliest days.

1. Social Movements

a. 1968

In her recollections of May '68, Mulard emphasised 'communication': people were debating in the streets; 'everybody was talking to everybody'.[19] Sylvina Boissonnas participated in protests

[16] Interviews, TL, with: Ellen Galford, Edinburgh (12 Nov. 2018); Lyba Spring, Toronto (8 Oct. 2018).
[17] Interviews, TL, with: Galford; Delphy.
[18] Interview with Shaila Shah, TL, London (7 Mar. 2019).
[19] Interview with Mulard, TL.

with artists and underground filmmakers, and worked as a nurse with the Red Cross, picking up injured students. Boissonnas also remembered communication as 'the most important thing': everyone, from different backgrounds, was talking. It was 'an outburst'. For Boissonnas, these debates made her 'conscious of oppression', not of women at the time, 'but of workers, of immigrants.' Another incident increased her understanding: Boissonnas, who had enjoyed a comfortable, 'bourgeois' upbringing, was struck over the head by a policeman. She explained: 'I felt that I was in danger, I was not protected by the state and the police' and this made her 'feel close to all the oppressed people.' Boissonnas highlighted this as foundational for her understanding of women's liberation: when she joined women's group Psychanalyse et Politique two years later, she learned 'one could fight for one's own rights and against one's own oppression' as a woman too.[20]

Another element Mulard stressed was the totality of the transformation 1968 brought, both in terms of participants' mentalities and wider French society: 'There is a pre-May '68 and a post-May '68, there is no doubt about that.'[21] This was echoed by Idels, who participated in the Mouvement du 22 Mars at Nanterre. She described 1968 as 'an epistemological rupture'. In other words: 'there is what has been thought after this moment and what has been thought before.' Idels went on to clarify what changed for her, personally: 'I had the feeling that it was the first time in my life the world was becoming understandable, from the global point of view and from the point of view of women'.[22]

Regarding the latter, Idels discussed women's marginalisation, without women in leadership positions, and with their objectification by male activists. In more ways than one, they 'were obliged, as women, to go with men.'

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[20] Boissonnas, interview with Boissonnas and Idels, TL.
[21] Interview with Mulard, TL.
[22] Idels, interview with Boissonnas and Idels, TL.

> we did not exist otherwise than as a desire object for boys. And it's true that most of us, many young women were making love with anyone, otherwise they were accused to be bourgeois. […] So when you ask what I was doing in May, for instance, I went to the demonstrations, running in the streets also when the police was coming and then… That's all. No, no speech. Nothing special. And I had the feeling, even if I could not understand why and how, but I had the feeling that I did not exist.

For Idels, 1968 was an important development in her politicisation, because the aim was to 'free oneself, that is to free the people and be free.' However, 'in May 1968 there was absolutely not a word about women.'[23]

Not all women felt marginalised. 'Quite the contrary,' Mulard told me, 'it was the first time and situation where we could get active.' Her experience, she said, was 'not the caricature' of women 'at the Roneo'. Women ran for leadership positions in her student union; Mulard composed leaflets—although she agreed 'women's issues were not very much at the forefront'.[24] That Mulard identified a 'caricature' of women relegated to menial roles, however, suggests Idels's experience was not unique. Women's experiences likely varied from group to group. Idels's memories of objectification, for example, chime with her context: one of the first Nanterre demonstrations had sparked when activists demanded that 'men be allowed to freely visit the women's dormitory.'[25] Patrick Viveret, interviewed for *Europe's 1968*, was in the Mouvement du 22 Mars at Nanterre too. He was 'struck by the number of men who used revolutionary ideology to persuade young women to have sex with them, saying that if they refused it was because of their petit-bourgeois morality.'[26]

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[23] *Ibid.*
[24] Interview with Mulard, TL.
[25] D. Singer, *Prelude to Revolution* (Chicago, 2013), p. 61.
[26] Interview with Patrick Viveret, by R. Gildea, Paris (15 May 2008), quoted in Clifford et. al., 'Gender and Sexuality', p. 243.

Nicole Bizos, who was active in the Trotskyist Alliance marxiste révolutionnaire and its party-political counterpart, the Ligue communiste révolutionnaire, also painted a picture of women's marginalisation. She almost said women had 'no place', then corrected herself:

> Well, it isn't that they had no place, the place they had was serving coffee—but that's true, right?—they made photocopies, and… I think they were—it wasn't that they were badly treated, but, I can tell you, they weren't the ones who represented the movement.

Bizos was careful to say she noticed this 'especially with the Maoists'. Reinforcing our point that experience varied, she said it 'wasn't in every group. There were others where it was different.'[27]

Sophie Mayoux, similarly, recalled sexism in Maoist groups. In high school she had joined a 'very extreme left' Maoist group, which fractured and changed names over the years (UJCML, La Gauche Proletarienne). Members, who were forbidden from participating in the student movement, disseminated communist literature in working-class towns bordering Paris; in its most extreme incarnation, some set bombs (a development provoking Mayoux's departure). Mayoux quickly answered 'no' when I asked: *Were you ever aware of men and women [in political groups] being treated differently?* Then, after a moment's thought, she explained she had not felt there was inequality in her group, 'but probably felt, in a subliminal way, that there was inequity.' She was taught to type pamphlets by a leader's wife, but the sexism of this 'didn't come, really, to my consciousness. I didn't think, "It's unfair"." Mayoux mentioned some women had 'more or less leading positions'; however, 'there weren't many' and their roles differed from men's: 'They talked. They taught', rather than crafting policies.[28]

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[27] Interview with Bizos, TL.
[28] Interview with Mayoux, TL.

For Mayoux, this was not the most significant gendered aspect of her movement experience; instead 'the most marking point' had 'a sexual character'. Mayoux described a particular incident. A meeting ran late one night—the metro had closed—so she stayed with a comrade:

> he started making passes to me, well, really, asking me to come sleep with him. […] And I said no, and he started insulting me. Insulting me and insulting other women in the movement. And saying, 'You're all pretending that you are liberated, that you are all strong […] but in fact you are all *coincées* [frigid].'

Mayoux 'didn't think' this kind of experience 'was a generality' or 'a rule'.[29] Unfortunately, however, Idels and Viveret's testimonies suggest such pressuring was not uncommon, with women accused of being 'bourgeois' if they did not sleep with male activists. We see here a notion of sexual liberation as part of 1968's emancipatory project—a notion exploited by certain male activists. This double standard of sexual 'liberation' for men while 'complicated, limiting, and even abusive' for women was pervasive in other countries too—like Italy, as historians in *Europe's 1968* and Luisa Passerini explore.[30]

This treatment immediately spurred some women into organising separately. In an interview, Annette Lévy-Willard, a member of Maoist-libertarian group Vive la revolution (VLR), recounted a 'personal anecdote' which she said was 'important'. VLR supported striking miners in northern France and during a strike at night some 'young miners' invited her to another picket line. But they drove into the woods and switched off the engine. Lévy-Willard was 'scared stiff'. She said:

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[29] *Ibid.*

[30] Quoted from Clifford et. al., 'Gender and Sexuality', pp. 241-2. L. Passerini, *Autobiography of a Generation: Italy 1968* (London, 1996), pp. 95-100.

> They didn't say anything and I started talking, I told them: 'Listen, I came from Paris to show solidarity, to bring money, political support and if something happens to me, it's very, very bad for you, for your strike.'

Eventually, the men, without speaking, turned the engine on and took her back. Lévy-Willard explained the impact of this traumatic event:

> I was very, very scared. And then I went back to Paris, I called the girls from, from the group, from the VLR, and I said, 'Listen, […] this working-class thing. It doesn't work for women. We have to, we have to have our own organization. I don't give a damn about the working class it's, they want me dead…'

For Lévy-Willard, this incident heralded 'a war of the sexes'. VLR women met independently, then left to join the newly formed MLF. There had been other inequalities—women typing leaflets, men dominating talk—but 'it took a little while to understand that'.[31]

b. American and British experiences

These experiences of sexual assault, objectification, and marginalisation are all found in American and British movements. Poet and novelist Marge Piercy recalled her experience on the staff of the New York SDS (Students for a Democratic Society): 'A man can bring a woman into an organisation by sleeping with her and remove her by ceasing to do so.'[32] Sexual 'liberation' was tied with activism here too: one American poster, sold to raise money for the Draft Resistance, featured three bare-legged women sitting on a sofa; above their heads, a slogan declared, 'GIRLS SAY YES to boys who say NO'.[33]

Lévy-Willard's testimony—that it 'took a little while' to understand the various ways VLR women were marginalised—exhibits a chronological precision rarely clarified in the

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[31] Interview with Annette Lévy-Willard, by R. Gildea, Paris (6 Jun. 2007), transcript, pp. 11-3.
[32] Marge Piercy, 'The Grand Coolie Damn', in Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Powerful* (New York, 1970), p. 430.
[33] SSC, WLC, FFD26: Draft Resistance, 'GIRLS SAY YES to boys who say NO' poster (1968).

historiography. David Bouchier, speaking of British and American social movements says: 'In the memoirs of the period one finds, over and over again, the growing realisation that women in the radical sub-culture were being used by the men as secretaries, tea-makers and sexual partners'.[34] It is not clear whether his memoirs described this 'growing realisation' as contemporaneous or only identified in hindsight, but activist testimony points to the latter. As Barbara Haber said, 'My experience [in SDS] first of all was of incredible sexism, for which I did not have a word.'[35] For many women, the realisation came within women's groups: only then could they understand their experiences were shared—products of their oppression as women. Miki David, for example, remembered that at her first consciousness-raising session in Haverstock Hill, London a woman had said, 'I'm here cause I'm really tired of making tea for men in men's groups', and this struck a chord with other women present.[36]

At the same time, it is clear that Lévy-Willard, although unable, initially, to perceive wider instances of sexism in VLR, did have a sudden realisation that women should meet independently. Christine Delphy had a similar experience. In 1962, Delphy, who came from Paris, had gone to the University of Chicago to study sociology, then studied at Berkeley too. Her first political experience was attending 'the first demonstration against the Vietnam War in Washington DC'. In 1965 she started working at the Washington Urban League, a civil rights organisation. She remembered:

> Once I was, I wouldn't say assaulted, but I was harassed by my boss […] and also by the guy who was the boyfriend of my local director […] And I thought to myself, 'Well I'm white and I'm working for them and because they're men they take

[34] Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge*, p. 52.
[35] Klatch, 'Formation of Feminist Consciousness', p. 803.
[36] Interview with Miki David, by I. Singer (*c.* 2000-2001), quoted in Singer and V. Honeybourne, eds., 'Personal Histories of the Second Wave of Feminism', http://feministarchivesouth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Personal-Histories-of-the-Second-Wave-of-Feminism.pdf (18 Mar. 2019), p. 88.

> advantage of my being a woman and from now on I'll fight only for my own people.'

This thought was only explored, subsequently, by speaking with other women. Delphy moved to New York, where she befriended two French women. On their return to France, the three met up again and began discussing 'all things that women in general think about men. How badly behaved they are'. This was, for Delphy, the first time she could discuss her embryonic idea of an autonomous women's movement: 'if I said that to anyone else they would think I was crazy.'[37]

In Delphy and Lévy-Willard's testimonies we find a pivoting from one struggle to another. Historians have explored the ways in which social movement experience not only exposed women to sexism for the first time, but also equipped them with the analytical tools to understand women's wider oppression—regardless of whether this was understood at the time, or, as with Boissonnas, later. Schulz notes that SDS tactics like the 'teach-in' were conducive to 'consciousness formation'.[38] Coote and Campbell point to British women in trade unions learning that 'inequality is deeply built into the structure of the labour market' while simultaneously discovering 'female powerlessness' as they tried to address their own labour inequality.[39] The contradiction of a utopian thinking which excluded women created, for some female activists, bitter irony. As Sheila Gilmore, who was involved with student politics at the University of Edinburgh said: students were 'changing the world supposedly and we're changing the way we do things, but women were beginning to say, yeah but, we're not really changing what we're doing.'[40]

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[37] Interview with Delphy, TL.
[38] Schulz, 'Feminist Echoes', p. 133.
[39] Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom*, p. 144.
[40] BL, S&A: Interview with Sheila Gilmore, by F. Johnson-Ross, Edinburgh (28 Jul. 2011).

This is echoed by experiences of women in the civil rights movement. Frances Beal from Binghamton, NY explained how theoretical discussions within SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) shaped her consciousness of women's oppression:

> you would stay up all night talking with people about freedom and talking about liberation, and challenging the racial construct in such a way that it was almost like liberation and freedom was in the air. And when somebody then came up with some backward ideas [about women], […] [it] was very easy to begin to see that being a woman is no different, you know, in terms of the oppression and exploitation she feels.

This testimony clearly situates Beal's growing awareness of women's oppression during her time in SNCC. In fact, even after women began to organise autonomously, Beal continued to organise within SNCC, co-founding—at a meeting in New York in 1968—SNCC's Black Women's Liberation Committee. This contrasts with Delphy, who, when she encountered sexism, decided to 'fight only for [her] own people'. But Delphy is white. Clearly for Beal, who is black and who had organised within SNCC throughout the 1960s, fighting for her own people did not necessitate immediately removing women's struggle from the civil rights struggle.[41]

While acknowledging there were some 'tensions in SNCC around the role of women', Beal said SNCC was 'better' than other groups in this respect:

> Not from a theoretical point of view, but SNCC women were playing some leading roles—not roles where they were there for the TV cameras, but roles which, at the concrete place of organizing, they were there. And unlike the women in SCLC [Southern Christian Leadership Conference], SNCC women were not just handling the coffee and the cake.[42]

As with the French experience, this points to variation between groups. For Beal, the different gender roles within SNCC did not necessarily point to women's marginalisation—mirroring

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[41] SSC, VFOHP: Interview with Frances Beale, by L. Ross, Oakland, CA (18 Mar. 2005).
[42] *Ibid.*

Mayoux's mention of women holding 'more or less leading positions' in Maoist groups. This has been noted within historical examinations of the civil rights movement, with assertions that male leadership—drafting statements, holding offices, public speaking—fitted the media's notion of leadership, so men were presented as leaders; but female leadership was crucial too.[43]

Like Mulard, some women did not recall differences in activist gender roles. Lyba Spring, from Toronto, moved to Paris in 1973, where she taught English. During a labour dispute at work, Spring got involved with union organising, and in our interview did not recall any gendered dynamics here. She had already been exposed to the WLM in Toronto, so we might think it highly likely that Spring would have perceived sexist dynamics within the organising, had they been present. I asked whether she learned any organisational skills that she brought to the WLM. She had not, although thought it had been formative in other ways—she learned about French syndicalism and developed her language (through simultaneous translation in union meetings).[44]

Other interviewees also asserted their movement experience was not formative. Karen Slaney had moved to London with her husband, David, after he turned in his draft card. David had a fellowship at LSE—a hive of radical student politics—and became involved with anti-war organising. Although Slaney often attended political meetings with him, she confessed:

> I didn't really care about it [laughs] […] The Trotskyists and the da-da-da, and the, you know… It was a lot of discussion, meetings, theoretical things—I would fall asleep.[45]

Similarly, Ellen Galford participated in the civil rights movement during high school: she would travel into New York City to stuff envelopes at the Congress of Racial Equality on

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[43] K. Sacks, *Caring by the Hour: Women, Work and Organising at Duke Medical Centre* (Urbana, 1988), pp. 119-21, 138-41.
[44] Interview with Spring, TL.
[45] Interview with Slaney, TL.

Saturdays. In our interview, she was careful not to overstate the significance of this: she was a 'foot soldier'.[46]

However, it is worth noting some interviewees minimised their contributions to movements: Galford described her contributions to the Glasgow WLM in similar terms (she was 'just sort of helping out') even though she became involved in various initiatives, from street theatre protests against anti-abortionists to renovating the Glasgow Women's Centre.[47] And Slaney did get involved with anti-war organising, in brave and imaginative ways—though she would not have framed it in such terms herself. She attended demonstrations—including at Grosvenor Square when pregnant, surrounded by mounted police—and remembered having an idea, for one march, of buying daffodils at Covent Garden: carried by protestors, they became a significant feature of the demonstration. Slaney said she was 'bored by the finer points of leftist theories' but perhaps this was partly because they did not pertain to her situation—she was enthused when she first came across Friedan's analysis. Moreover, Slaney had the responsibility of caring for their baby during political meetings. She could recall an *Evening Standard* profile about David which said: 'when he gets to the podium, he's a fiery speaker, and la-da-da-da… and he brings his wife and baby to radical meetings'. Slaney laughed, then added this was 'a reflection of something that was going on until the women's movement started.'[48]

Regardless of whether Galford and Slaney were downplaying their contributions, their testimonies demonstrate another significant element of women's pre-WLM activism. As we will see in the next chapter, Slaney met other members of her women's group through the anti-war networks she was exposed to via her husband. Similarly, in 1971, Galford moved to Edinburgh for a postgraduate degree, then moved to Glasgow where she worked in publishing

[46] Interview with Galford, TL.
[47] *Ibid.*
[48] Interview with Slaney, TL.

and tried to unionise the workforce at her company. It was this that 'connected her to an activist world'; eventually she met women active in the nascent Scottish WLM through her union.[49]

2. Transnational movements

Both Galford and Slaney moved from the US to the UK before joining the WLM, just as Delphy was first politicised in the US before returning to France. There was much activist travel within this period. While difficult to quantify, activist testimony points to the significance of such experiences to the individual. Synthesising these, we find three effects upon movement formation: firstly, the early diffusion of organisational ideas; secondly, a notion of transnational solidarity; and thirdly, the concept of 'cognitive liberation'.

Sheli Wortis was born in the Bronx, NY in 1937. Her parents were briefly members of the Communist Party, her father was a union organiser, and 'all of' the family's relationships were 'with people on the left […] very oriented towards working-class identity'. This was during the McCarthy years and although her parents were not 'important', the FBI would harass the family, with threats to deport Wortis's grandmother, who was not a naturalised citizen; Wortis 'remembered that period very vividly'.[50] The trajectory of children with parents in the Old Left becoming 1960s radicals has long been noted, with the term 'red diaper baby' adopted, tongue-in-cheek, by young leftists themselves during the Free Speech Movement.[51] This was a term which Wortis used to frame her childhood in our interview. Growing up, her social circles were left-oriented. 'Counter […] multi-ethnic, working-class institutions' had been established by

[49] Interview with Galford, TL.
[50] Interview with Wortis, TL.
[51] E. McCurties, 'Red roots, radical fruit: Children of the Old Left in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left' (PhD thesis, Michigan State University, 2011), p. 1.

the left, like the Federation of Jewish People. Wortis attended their afterschool programme with other 'red diaper babies'. For her, there was no singular moment of politicisation: her childhood had revolved around political organisation and identities.[52]

Wortis met her husband, Henry, through these social circles.[53] Wortis was, at the time, studying psychology; Henry was a post-doctoral researcher in medical science. They spent the next few years moving between Palo Alto and London because of Henry's work and had two children during that period. But it was in Palo Alto in 1967 that the couple encountered an organisational approach which was 'very important' to Wortis. Anti-Vietnam war protests were raging in the city. Although the couple attended some protests, this was not the form of activism which interested them most, being 'very much a student-initiated effort'. Instead, the couple were members of an O'Connor group, modelled on the ideas of their friend Jim O'Connor. As Wortis explained, he was concerned about factionalism and in-fighting in the left and had experience with 'psychologically oriented groups',[54] known as 'T-groups' (structureless, interpersonal group therapy).[55] He thought the idea might benefit the left; activists could 'delve into' their lives to 'figure out' why they were 'committed to political change'. Wortis and her husband, 'taken with the idea that you really had to relate the personal to the political' participated in a small O'Connor group in Palo Alto.[56]

For Wortis, this was formative:

> That's when a lot of my working-class identity sort of came out again and at the same time, you know, I was a young mother, not comfortable with the arrangements for women who were mothers in society and I began to formulate my own thinking. I was beginning to read, I think at that time I was beginning to

[52] Interview with Wortis, TL.
[53] To maintain consistency throughout the thesis, I refer to Sheli as 'Wortis' and Henry as 'Henry'.
[54] Interview with Wortis, TL.
[55] See: S. Highhouse, 'A history of the T-Group and its early applications in management development', *Group Dynamics Theory Research and Practice* (2002).
[56] Interview with Wortis, TL.

> read books like *Feminist Mystique* and Simone de Beauvoir and developing some identity with women's issues as, as a young mother.

Wortis' reading of Friedan and de Beauvoir, unlike Slaney's, was not a sudden awakening, but part of a wider exploration of identity in the late 1960s. At the same time, Henry was involved with SDS, and a woman called Mary Lou Greenberg had suggested to Wortis that they should do 'something with women against the war, because we can't burn draft cards, what can we do?' Along with another woman from the O'Connor group, they travelled to state capital Sacramento to protest. Wortis said that it 'didn't do anything. It was frustrating.' However, on the way back, they discussed how to connect with other women. From her political involvement in Palo Alto, Wortis had already discovered, with her husband, the power of 'the personal is political' and had experienced organising in a women-only group.[57]

The former was carried into the couple's organising when they returned to London that year. They joined the Stop-It Committee—a group organised by Americans in London which protested the Vietnam War and supported draft resisters, and when it disbanded in November 1968, members including the Wortises and Dave Slaney began organising within the Camden Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (CVSC). This group then evolved into the Camden Movement for People's Power (CMPP): a close-knit New Left collective, with a strong emphasis on participatory democracy. They explored politics through social activities, engaging people in innovative ways: through street theatre, watching films, and screen-printing posters on a market stall.[58]

Celia Hughes has closely examined this activist network in her *Young Lives on the Left*. She notes the influence of the Wortises' Palo Alto experiences on the formation of CVSC and CMPP's community-oriented politics—although in our interview, Wortis mentioned that

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[57] *Ibid*.
[58] *Ibid.*

some of the specificities of this had been lost (perhaps because her interview with Hughes took place remotely). The group with Greenberg had been focused on anti-war protesting, not women's liberation as Hughes wrote (Greenberg would, however, go on to form an early Bay Area WLM group).[59] Regarding the O'Connor groups, Wortis emphasised the importance of this mode of organising for her personal development—a point which Hughes does not note, but which nonetheless evidences her assertion that Wortis' establishment of the Tufnell Park women's group—one of the first WLM groups in the UK—was 'an organic extension of the mutual personal politics she and her husband had invested in CMPP'.[60]

For Wortis, the desire to form a women-only group was a continuation of the personal development she had first explored in the O'Connor group. While in London, Wortis explained, she had begun 'talking about women's issues' again. Working as a researcher, she'd been 'feeling like it's hard to juggle mothering and politics or work'. This was despite their live-in au pair; Wortis 'was aware that this was a privilege' but she 'was also aware that a lot of people didn't have this privilege'. It was this that led her to think about women's position in society, to want to discuss it with other women, rather than any kind of marginalisation. Wortis had not felt marginalised in activist groups in London. She'd chaired Stop-It Committee meetings, and in CMPP, she said everyone 'really tried to generate democratic participation'. This experience contrasts starkly with Slaney's, but Wortis acknowledged that the dynamic of her marriage was not common. Within CMPP, she and Henry, along with Geoff and Marie Richman, were 'among the older ones', and so others saw them 'as leadership'. But overall in the group, 'women were more silent than men', and this 'was true' for Geoff and Marie: 'She was talented, she was

[59] *Ibid*. Hughes, *Young Lives*, p. 167. On Greenberg's WLM activism, see: Mary Lou Greenberg, 'Union of Revolutionary Women', *Movement*, 5:10 (Nov. 1969).
[60] Hughes, *Young Lives*, pp. 156-7.

smart, you know, but he talked more than her […] He was like the leadership of CMPP.'[61] This chimes with Hughes' analysis, also based on other members' testimony.[62]

Hughes notes this network was particular—a 'minority of radical young people.'[63] CMPP's style of New Left politics, and Wortis' experience, is certainly unique within this transnational study and we should be wary of extrapolating too much. But there are some wider implications here. Firstly, we can see how Wortis developed the idea for women to organise separately through transnational organising experience: it emerged from a convergence of the O'Connor groups, the women's anti-war protest, and CMPP's politics. This is significant given her women's group was one of the first in the UK; moreover, we will explore the afterlives of these transnational organisational ideas in later chapters on small group and childcare organising. Secondly, as Hughes explores, women joined the group not only from CMPP but through wider anti-war networks.[64] This process, we will see in the next chapter, was structurally significant and is found elsewhere. Finally, because of the presence of Americans in these groups, transnational channels for news and theory were opened up from the beginning of the WLM, as we will also later explore.

Similar channels opened elsewhere in the pre-WLM period. St Andrews student Zoë Fairbairns departed for an exchange at a Virginia university from 1969-70 and participated in campus politics there. Women were treated as 'secondary' to men: she recalled the 'Women say yes' slogan, and a protest tactic called 'Chicks Up Front' where women were 'coaxed and coerced' into standing at the front of demonstrations, so police would temper their violence. Around this time, female students were beginning to notice, and talk about, the double

[61] Interview with Wortis, TL.
[62] Hughes, *Young Lives*, pp. 163-4.
[63] *Ibid.*, p. 1.
[64] *Ibid*, pp. 169.

standard of this behaviour. This was brought back with Fairbairns when she returned to St Andrews: 'these were the sorts of things that I was becoming aware of and some were relevant to me and some weren't, but I was thinking, this is fantastic, you know, we must have something like this at home.'[65]

It should be no surprise that transnational links were already budding during this period, given much 1960s organising was transnational itself. There are countless more examples to be found in the historiography, from 1968 leaders like Daniel Cohn-Bendit travelling between cities to 'promote youth movement' to a wider 'cultural practice of travel' among young people, who 'talked politics', 'swapped books and ideas, corresponded' and fostered a sense of community with youth in other countries;[66] from Stokely Carmichael sparking the Black Power movement in Britain at the 1967 Dialectics of Liberation conference[67] to the communications between, and 'internationalist rhetoric' of, anti-nuclear movements.[68] As analyses of activist testimony in *Europe's 1968* demonstrate, such links were 'both imagined and real'.[69]

Sometimes global thinking emerged from activists' understandings of systems of oppression as global. British activist Gail Lewis explained that one of her political awakenings came from reading Fanon in the mid-1960s. She said:

> suddenly there was a different world. This was the different story that was open to me and I thought so, okay, I'm just in London but actually I'm connected to a whole world.

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[65] BL, S&A: Interview with Zoë Fairbairns, by M. Jolly, London (23 Jun. 2011).
[66] R.I. Jobs, 'Youth Movements: Travel, Protest, and Europe in 1968', *AHR*, 114:2 (2009), pp. 376-404.
[67] R.E.R. Bunce and P. Field, 'Obi B. Egbuna, C.L.R. James and the Birth of Black Power in Britain: Black Radicalism in Britain 1967–72', *Twentieth Century British History*, 22:3 (2011), pp. 391–414.
[68] H. Nehring, 'National Internationalists: British and West German Protests against Nuclear Weapons, the Politics of Transnational Communications and the Social History of the Cold War, 1957-1964', *Contemporary European History* 14:4 (2005), pp. 559-82.
[69] R. Gildea and J. Mark, 'Conclusion: Europe's 1968', in *Europe's 1968*, pp. 328-9.

Reading such texts awakened her to anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism—by their nature, global struggles.[70] In another interview, she mentioned that books from the US, Guyana, and the West Indies were also making her 'think about the centrality of the black struggle as part of a wider global struggle of the oppressed and therefore linked to class struggle'. At the same time, Black Panther activists were visiting London, and Lewis was 'beginning to be formed in that radical image of a kind of black radicalism that sees itself as part of a kind of global struggle.' She tapped into networks through people like Gerlin Bean, who took her along to meetings where, Lewis said, she saw 'conversations happening' around Black Power. Lewis described her budding understanding of London as 'linked across the globe because of diaspora' as a 'kind of mapping'—and it was through those networks that the first black women's groups in Britain formed.[71]

Other activists did not necessarily see themselves as operating within the same struggle as others across the globe, but the sense of feeling globally connected could also operate in amorphous ways. Bronagh Hinds participated in the Northern Ireland civil rights movement while at Queen's University, Belfast. She explained that while activism could be 'difficult', it was also 'uplifting', because you felt:

> you were almost connected to a global movement because there was quite a lot of kind of demonstrations going on in the United States, quite a lot of demonstrations across Europe.[72]

Activists felt they were making more of a difference, a part of something bigger, when they imagined their actions on a global stage. Timothy Brown has re-examined this 'globality' of

[70] BCA, THR: Interview with Gail Lewis, by M. Barnard, London (15 May 2009).
[71] BL, S&A: Interview with Gail Lewis, by R. Cohen, London (18 Apr. 2011).
[72] BL, S&A: Interview with Bronagh Hinds, by F. Johnson-Ross, London (15 Mar. 2012).

1968 through an exploration of how 'local actors imagined themselves into the world, creating alternative cognitive maps that corresponded to a new type of politics.'[73]

We see this in the experiences of activists who witnessed social movements in other countries first-hand. After her degree at Mount Holyoake, American Joan E. Biren went to Oxford for graduate studies. In 1968, she drove to Paris with a film crew; she could not remember how she 'hooked up' with them, but she squeezed in, perched on containers of gas, because 'everybody wanted to go. It was totally exciting.' Biren recalled seeing farmers at the Sorbonne 'bringing in the food'.

> I think it was very important to me to be there in that because it was real to me. So that when I came back to the States and we were planning revolution, I believed it. I believed it was possible. I had seen a whole modern country shut down by the joint actions of students and labour against the government.[74]

Jenny Lynn, from North Yorkshire, had a similar experience in France. In 1968, during her undergraduate degree at Birmingham, she spent a year studying in Poitiers. By February and March, students were meeting and there were rumours of strikes at Renault Billancourt. By Easter, 'we were just all on strike'; 'suddenly there was just a completely different spirit.' Lynn recalled seeing tanks heading toward Paris, and that, echoing Mulard and Boissonnas' memories, 'everybody was talking to everybody in the street'. There was, she said, 'a feeling that the students and the workers were together, and we were really going to shift things'.[75]

Lynn articulated the politicisation of this experience explicitly: she was 'starting to think of us as "we" not "they"' and this 'moved' her from thinking 'politics had nothing to do

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[73] T.S. Brown, '"1968" East and West: Divided Germany as a Case Study in Transnational History', *AHR*, 114: 1 (2009), pp. 69-96.
[74] SSC, VFOHP: Interview with Joan E. Biren, by K. Anderson, Silver Spring, MD (27 Feb. 2004).
[75] BL, S&A: Interview with Jenny Lynn, by R. Cohen, London (27 Apr. 2011).

with me.' Lynn also emphasised the emotional significance of this experience. After returning to the UK, she realised May '68 had been the happiest period of her life:

> Because there was this sense of being part of events and of changing the world and everything […] I was kind of, a bit more of an observer really, but I felt part of something, swept along in something. And I'd been really happy.

For Lynn, 1968 was therefore a 'turning point'—on her return to Birmingham, she got involved in student politics.[76] In Lynn and Biren's testimony, we find examples of sociologist James Jasper's concept of 'cognitive liberation', or, as Lynn described it, 'this sense […] of changing the world'. Movement successes can inspire mobilisation elsewhere, not because they serve as an 'indicator of the odds of success', rather, because of their 'emotional impact': as 'a symbolic reminder of a joyful utopian future'.[77] Lynn and Biren's testimonies show how transnational inspiration worked in practice, and point to an additional emotion of cognitive liberation: hope, with the realisation that change, through collective action, is possible.

Conclusion

All my interviewees' lives, in one way or another, were touched by politics before they joined the WLM. There seemed, in the 1960s, 'much world to put to rights'.[78] We have not explored every moment of politicisation within activists' lives, but by focusing on politicisation within 1960s social movements we have been able to understand key processes which sparked the idea—and underlined the necessity—of women's autonomous organising. Through a comparative and transnational approach, we have explored how women's experiences in social movements enabled them to understand that oppression could be fought, society could be

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[76] *Ibid.*

[77] J.M. Jasper, 'The Emotions of Protest: Affective and Reactive Emotions in and around Social Movements', *Sociological Forum*, 13:3 (1998), pp. 415-6.

[78] Interview with Laws, TL.

changed, through collective action. For those who began to perceive their own oppression as women, it became clear their liberation would not be struggled towards in male-dominated movements—or, in the case of Wortis, was perhaps better struggled towards by meeting with other women; and for Beal, in women-only groups within mixed organisations.

The idea of organising autonomously was not sparked in every woman who participated in 1960s social movements. Some did not experience sexism; some did not initially perceive their experiences as sexist. But the idea of women organising autonomously was sparked in enough women that it caught on. In the next chapter we will explore how this idea travelled via the same activist networks we have examined in this chapter. Similarly, just as we have explored transnational organisational tactics, channels of communication, and global mentalities within 1960s social movements, so too will we discover the impact they had on the WLM, and encounter similar moments as the WLM blossomed: activists continued to travel through the 1970s, they continued to diffuse organisational ideas from one country to another, and they continued to imagine their activism as connected to global struggles.

III. Formation

Women had been discussing their discontent within American social movements since the mid-1960s, sometimes forming women's caucuses. But they did not organise autonomously until 1967. At that year's National Conference for New Politics in Chicago, a women's caucus met. Jo Freeman and Shulamith Firestone, who had been looking forward to discussing how women could 'win equality for themselves', were disappointed to find participants preoccupied with anti-war organising. They left to compose a conference resolution demanding 51 percent convention votes and committee representation for women (who constituted 51 percent of the population). The time came to debate resolutions; they were not called to speak. When the women ran to the podium to protest, the chairman told Firestone to 'Move on little girl'. Outraged, the women met independently, writing a manifesto which, inspired by Black Power, urged the need for women's autonomous organisation.[1] Knowing their base would be found among other activists, they composed 'To the Women of the Left':

> Realizing that this is a social problem of national significance not at all confined to our struggle for personal liberation within the Movement, we must approach it in a political manner. Therefore it is incumbent on us, as women, to organize a movement for women's liberation.[2]

This birth of the Chicago WLM is recounted in *Personal Politics*, in which Sara Evans traces connections between activists, maps out group formation, and thus illuminates movement origins. These origins were, as the Chicago case demonstrates, primarily national, firmly rooted in the social movements we have just studied. Evans' approach—tracing

[1] S. Evans, *Personal Politics* (New York, 1980), pp. 198-9.
[2] 'To the Women of the Left', quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 193.

connections, following the travel of the idea for an autonomous women's movement—is one which can also be applied, fruitfully, to the beginnings of the French and British movements. In doing so, we can assess the extent to which they were influenced by American beginnings.

This question was debated in the 1970s. American journalists believed the US movement 'spread abroad'.[3] To American WLM activists, women's groups 'in Canada and Europe' seemed to form in 'Parallel, but unconnected with our own formation'. But then, the formation of women's groups 'throughout the country' had seemed entirely unconnected too,[4] although as we will see, Evans' work shows this was not the case. Interestingly, in her 2015 comparative history, Evans interpreted the spawning of feminist movements in different countries as discrete. But that study focused on activist experiences of 1968 and not subsequent group formation—a period often neglected by the historiography.[5]

In British and French historiography, we find both generalised assertions of 'news' of the American WLM spreading to Europe[6] and glimpses here and there of specific connections, but no mapping akin to Evans' study of American beginnings. The plural 'beginnings' is significant: in all three countries, the movement grew from multiple sources. As we will see, in the UK and France some of these sources were inspired by the American movement and European influences too, while others were rooted in national developments. Moreover, by placing these beginnings under the microscope, we can understand the processes which

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[3] Dierdre Carmody, 'Feminists are Shifting their Emphasis from Persons to Politics', *NYT* (22 Aug. 1972), p. 47

[4] Cell 16, 'Note on the Second Printing', untitled journal (Dec. 1969).

[5] S.M. Evans, 'Women's Liberation: Seeing the Revolution Clearly', *Feminist Studies*, 41:1 (2015), p. 146.

[6] D. Bouchier, *The Feminist Challenge: The Movement for Women's Liberation in Britain and the USA* (London, 1983), p. 56; S. de Beauvoir, 'FRANCE: Feminism—Alive, Well, and in Constant Danger', trans. M. Bogin and R. Morgan in Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology* (New York, 1996), p. 230; N. Owen, 'Men and the 1970s British Women's Liberation Movement', *The Historical Journal*, 56:3 (2013), p. 804.

enabled the growth of the British and French movements: as in the US, 'radical community' networks were significant.

1. American Beginnings

In tracing the formation of the American WLM through social movement networks, Evans was building upon the work of Freeman, who, in her sociological analysis of WLM origins, highlighted the significance of the 'radical community'. This community—often described, as in 'To the Women of the Left', as 'the Movement'—was one 'in which like-minded people', in the New Left, student movement, and civil rights movement, 'continually interacted'. Freeman identified five women's liberation groups in different cities (Chicago, Toronto, Detroit, Seattle, and Gainesville, FL) which formed 'independently of one another' in 1967, and whose members went on to spark, through 'radical community' links, groups elsewhere—particularly Chicago organisers, who 'traveled widely to left conferences and demonstrations'.[7] Evans then mapped this out, showing how news of women's liberation groups was met with 'exhilaration and relief' from radical women across the country.[8]

In half a year, the Chicago women organised four more groups in their city. And word spread beyond: Firestone moved to New York where she founded New York Radical Women (NYRW), with Pamela Allen (who first heard of women's liberation during a visit to Chicago). Their first recruits were SDS women. During the Jeanette Rankin Brigade—an anti-war demonstration in Washington, DC organised by 'a coalition of old-line women's peace organisations' in January 1968—New York and Chicago women 'proselytised' to other New Left

[7] J. Freeman, 'The Origins of the Women's Liberation Movement', *American Journal of Sociology*, 78:4 (1983), pp. 792-811.
[8] Evans, *Personal*, pp. 199-201.

women.[9] Disagreeing with the Brigade's method of protest—in 'passive' roles as 'wives, mothers and mourners'—they held a mock funeral for 'Traditional Womanhood' and called 'a counter congress'.[10] From this, collectives were formed, including in Washington, DC and Berkeley, CA. Even seemingly unconnected groups emerged from the Chicago network: Sudosfloppen in San Francisco, for example, mobilised after a paper circulated by Sue Munaker, from Chicago, and when Allen moved there.[11]

Almost all of the first groups spread from this network, but there were notable exceptions, many of which, nonetheless, mobilised through the radical community. Evans mentions one: Cell 16, founded in Boston in 1968 by Roxanne Dunbar, who recruited members by placing an advert in an underground newspaper.[12] It spawned, in turn, other local groups. Linda Gordon, who first heard of Dunbar's group through a boyfriend,[13] found it undemocratic and, with others, broke off to join a group of SDS women in 1969.[14] Their resulting organisation, Bread and Roses, started as a small discussion group, but grew quickly. When they advertised an introductory meeting for 'anyone interested in joining' in a local alternative newspaper, the first time 60 women showed up; the second time, 100; 'and for quite a while it was like that, there was this absolutely explosive evidence of women's interest in doing something like this'.[15]

Not all beginnings emerged from the radical community: one group emerged from the reformist women's movement. After reading *The Second Sex* in 1962, Ti-Grace Atkinson went looking for a feminist movement. Realising none existed, she wrote to Simone de Beauvoir, who put her in touch with Betty Friedan; after the latter founded NOW, Atkinson became

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[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 200-9.
[10] Shulamith Firestone, 'The Jeanette Rankin Brigade: Woman Power?', *NFTFY* (1968), pp. 18-19.
[11] Evans, *Personal*, p. 209.
[12] *Ibid*.
[13] Interview with Linda Gordon, TL, New York (26 Sep. 2018).
[14] TWL, 7SEB/B/02/01: Interview with Linda Gordon, by Amanda Sebestyen (1978), transcript, p. 1.
[15] Interview with Gordon, TL.

president of the New York chapter.[16] Yet she found it too hierarchical; while Friedan wanted 'to get women into positions of power', Atkinson wanted 'to destroy the positions of power'. She proposed eliminating offices, but was defeated in a vote, and resigned.[17] Along with other dissenters, in 1968 Atkinson founded the October 17th Movement—renamed The Feminists a year later—which advocated a radical approach to women's liberation.[18]

Around this time, other New York radical groups were forming. As NYRW expanded, it became clear there was a 'contradiction' between 'the politicos and the feminists', or, as they came to be known, socialist and radical feminists. In January 1969, 'politicos' left to form WITCH; radical feminists, including Firestone, formed Redstockings.[19] By early 1969, there were numerous groups across the US—blossoming, splitting, evolving. Initially groups were small, focused on discussions of personal experiences and theory, but this is not to say they were insular. As early as spring 1968, 'action projects' to raise public awareness, change legislation, and establish services had already begun;[20] and groups were communicating with each other via a national newsletter.[21]

2. British Beginnings

Activist-historians identify plural origins to the British movement with some, like the Ford Dagenham Strike, rooted in national developments and others, like the Tufnell Park group

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[16] C. Giardina, *Freedom for Women: Forging the Women's Liberation Movement* (Gainesville, FL, 2010), p. 77.
[17] LHA, 15.360: Janine Sade, 'History of the Equality Issue in the Contemporary Women's Movement' (21 Nov. 1969).
[18] SSC, WLC, B12F10: The Feminists, 'History of the Feminists' (Jan. 1970).
[19] TWL, 7SEB/B/02/04: Interview with Kathie Sarachild and Colette Price, by Amanda Sebestyen (1978), transcript, pp. 7-8.
[20] LHA, 15.360: Heather Booth et. al., 'Toward a Radical Movement' (Apr. 1968).
[21] *Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement*, 1:1 (Mar. 1968).

(TPG), sparked by Americans.[22] The presence of Americans in the early British WLM is often noted but the question of what transnational influence (if any) this resulted in is rarely examined. David Bouchier, for example, cites the foundation of TPG by Americans as an example of American influence, without analysis.[23] Eve Setch rejects Bouchier's claims, arguing the 'American movement did precede the British' but there was 'little direct take-up' of American ideas.[24] We will test her assertion throughout this study, but even regarding movement origins, it is debatable; indeed, her otherwise thorough examination of the British WLM does not tackle group formation. This is regrettable, as other historians have worked under this assumption. Sarah Browne explores American influences upon the St Andrews WLM. Citing Setch, Browne concludes: 'In this regard, Scotland would appear to have differed somewhat from the English WLM in that non-native women were crucial in establishing feminist groups.'[25]

If we survey this historiography, analysing key elements with oral testimony and archival material, we can see American influence was evident in the early British movement, but not as straightforwardly as the chronology suggests: it was not directly 'imported', even where Americans began British groups. However, some American influences did shape British beginnings. Taking the plural origins together, we can analyse the wider processes underlying their seeming spontaneity. The rooting of the British WLM in industrial action may seem

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[22] A. Coote and B. Campbell, *Sweet Freedom: The Struggle for Women's Liberation* (London, 1982), pp. 14-18; Sheila Rowbotham, *The Past is Before Us* (London, 1989), p. 166; L. Segal, 'Jam Today: Feminist Impacts and Transformations in the 1970s', in L. Black et. al., eds., *Reassessing 1970s Britain* (Manchester, 2013), pp. 153-4.

[23] Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge*, p. 56.

[24] E. Setch, 'The Women's Liberation Movement in Britain, 1969-79. Organisation, Creativity and Debate' (PhD thesis, University of London Royal Holloway, 2000), p. 14

[25] S. Browne, '"A Veritable Hotbed of Feminism": Women's Liberation in St Andrews, Scotland, *c.* 1968-*c.* 1979', *Twentieth Century British History*, 23:1 (2012), pp. 110-11.

particular to the British case, but the distinction between groups influenced by the US and those influenced by industrial actions is, on closer inspection, not so stark.

In early 1969, one of the first groups was established in Tufnell Park. Sheli Wortis knew Karen Slaney and her husband Dave through the Stop-It Committee.[26] As Wortis remembered it, Slaney and Sue O'Sullivan (another American involved in London anti-war organising)[27] 'had been talking about starting a women's group'. In the last chapter, we explored Wortis's organisational experience and her struggles to reconcile motherhood, work, and activism. When Slaney told her about the idea to begin a group, Wortis thought: 'this is perfect, we have to do this.' In her study of the group, Celia Hughes traces members' connections via radical networks, noting that many said 'it was husbands and male friends around the anti-war scene who alerted them to the group and encouraged them to attend'.[28] Wortis could not remember precisely how others joined, but said they were anti-war activists, CMPP members, and local friends. They included three other Americans, a Canadian, and a handful of Brits.[29]

Almost all of the women had young children, who they would leave with partners during the group's Tuesday meetings at Slaney's,[30] where they would discuss readings from the American WLM and theorists like Engels, ideas about childcare from Germany and Scandinavia, and sometimes their personal lives too.[31] Hughes' interviews with members highlighted that they were drawn to, and remained in, the group because of 'identification with at least some of the contradictions they saw in their lives as women only after having

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[26] Interview with Sheli Wortis, TL, Cambridge, MA (28 Sep. 2018).
[27] BL, S&A: Interview with Sue O'Sullivan, by R. Cohen, London (6 Jan. 2012).
[28] C. Hughes, *Young Lives on the Left: Sixties Activism and the Liberation of the Self* (Manchester, 2015), p. 169.
[29] Interview with Wortis, TL.
[30] Interview with Karen Slaney, TL, Silver Spring, MD (6 Oct. 2018).
[31] Interview with Wortis, TL.

children.'[32] This chimed with my interview with Slaney (not interviewed by Hughes); she remembered the group 'talking about being mothers an awful lot'.[33]

It is not clear, from Wortis and Slaney's oral testimony, nor interviews with O'Sullivan, whether the idea to organise a women's group was inspired by news of the American WLM. Slaney believed she'd heard of the American movement just before TPG started; although she remembered the idea to start a group as 'probably' coming from Wortis. O'Sullivan had heard about women's liberation while visiting New York but also did not see herself as having started TPG: she remembered initially being sceptical about women's liberation, and that her husband, who learned of TPG through David Slaney, persuaded her to attend.[34] Both accounts contradict that of Wortis, but perhaps this is not important. What is clear is that the impetus to meet came from a combination of their experience as mothers, Wortis's organisational experience in the US and UK, and some notion that women-only meetings were something other radical women (in the US) were doing—and that members were found through radical networks.

Once the group began, American links were important. Slaney was not in touch with American feminists, but others (including O'Sullivan)[35] were, and the group 'knew that women were meeting. In Cambridge [MA] and Berkeley. And New York.' But, Slaney added, more important was 'what we read', 'a lot' of which was American, like Anne Koedt's 'The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm'.[36] Wortis's testimony reinforced this. She 'personally was not influenced by […] the growth of the American women's movement until other women in that group introduced pamphlets that had been written by women in America.' But she recalled Koedt, in particular, as well as Pat Mainardi's 'The Politics of Housework', published by Redstockings in

[32] Hughes, *Young Lives*, p. 168.
[33] Interview with Slaney, TL.
[34] Hughes, *Young Lives*, p. 169.
[35] Interview with O'Sullivan, Cohen.
[36] Interview with Slaney, TL.

1970. The group were also, as we will see in later chapters, influenced by American actions and German ideas on childcare organising.[37] Nevertheless, the American influence was not central to Slaney and Wortis's memories of that early period: Slaney emphasised that 'the important thing' was the closeness of the group; for Wortis, discussions of childcare were 'very important'. Neither saw themselves as conduits to the American WLM: the presence of Americans does not automatically suggest transnational links.

Slaney thought TPG had probably only been meeting for two weeks or so before they heard of other London groups.[38] One was the Peckham Rye 'One O'Clock Club'. It had initially been established by the local council for mothers with small children, but they increasingly spent time discussing the inequalities they experienced.[39] As Wortis recalled, the Peckham group were 'working-class mothers […] very outraged at the, the division of labour between men and women in family life'; their 'husbands and partners' were involved in left-wing organising 'and they probably felt the brunt of the work at home'.[40] Another group started in 1968 following an LSE student occupation, when a male trade unionist had tried to tell the women what to do.[41] Connections between TPG and these groups were likely established through activist networks: 'People came in and out' of TPG, Slaney said, like Sheila Rowbotham, who attended a few times.[42] O'Sullivan described TPG as 'part of' an 'informal group of people who would go to different events and speak'.[43]

One such event was the 'Festival of Revolution' in February 1969, at the University of Essex. Students took over the campus for three days, holding 'seminars and workshops on

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[37] Interview with Wortis, TL.
[38] Interview with Slaney, TL.
[39] Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom*, p. 16.
[40] Interview with Wortis, TL.
[41] Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom*, p. 16.
[42] Interview with Slaney, TL.
[43] Interview with O'Sullivan, Cohen.

subjects including racism, capitalism, Black Power, imperialism and immigration'.[44] Left-wing activists travelled from across Europe to attend.[45] Janet Hadley was one such participant. She'd been 'swept into' student activism while doing an A-level course at a college 'on the doorstep' of radical LSE; Essex was one in a 'series of radical student conferences' she attended. Hadley was in a relationship with a West Indian man; through him, she had been 'involved from the sidelines' with Black Power. This was where she had found the 'courage to see that women *should* organise on their own'; at the festival, she proposed a separate women's meeting.[46]

This echoes the origins of Chicago women's idea to organise autonomously—and women at Essex were similarly met with disruption. Rowbotham remembered the women's meeting:

> One of the students came in laughing with a woman on his back. Someone threw toilet paper from a balcony and it cascaded down in long white tendrils. The lights were turned on and off.

There was a smaller meeting the next day—which two men insisted on attending—but discussion was fruitful.[47] An SDS (Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund) woman told the group about communal childcare organising in West Germany, and a TPG member described their meetings. Following the conference, another women's group started meeting in Essex.[48]

Soon after, London groups created newsletter *Harpies Bizarre*, the second issue of which reported the formation of a new group 'of housewives and students' from Morley

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[44] Hannah Booth, '"I drove the car into the fountain": causing mayhem at Essex University, 1969', *The Guardian* (19 May 2017), https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/may/19/essex-university-revolutionary-festival-brian-caldwell (21 Nov. 2019).

[45] Sheila Rowbotham, 'Essex68 Comments based on memories, conversations and diary entries' (n.d.), http://www.essex68.org.uk/comm4.html (21 Nov. 2019).

[46] Michelene Wandor, 'Interview: Janet Hadley' in ed. Wandor, *Once a Feminist. Stories of a Generation* (London, 1990), pp. 71-3.

[47] Rowbotham, 'Essex68'.

[48] Sheila Rowbotham, 'The Beginnings of Women's Liberation in Britain', in *Dreams and Dilemmas* (London, 1983), p. 37.

College. It had emerged from Juliet Mitchell's classes at the Anti-University'[49] on 'The Role of Women in Society'. As Audrey Battersby remembered, the class would 'sit around the bar afterwards'. One day 'An American woman came to talk to us about the women's movement in the United States, and said, "Why haven't you got a women's movement here?" We just gaped at her.' But this did not immediately spark meetings; that came 'as a result of talking to other women—about child-rearing mostly'.[50] The women needed to arrive at the need to organise for themselves: the idea to meet was not an automatic import.

By 1969, groups had formed in Notting Hill, Belsize Park, and Islington. That year, London groups formed an umbrella organisation, the London Women's Liberation Workshop (LWLW). They worked together on publicising actions: a sticker campaign, street theatre, and the Miss World protest. As word spread, more women wanted to join, more small groups sprouted, and 'An open monthly meeting' of the groups began, to 'discuss joint problems, activities and general themes.'[51]

Meanwhile, groups had been germinating in another area of activism. According to Leonora Lloyd, 'The Women's Liberation movement in this country is generally considered to have started as a result of an industrial dispute—the Ford sewing-machinists' strike in May/June, 1968.'[52] In that month, 187 female sewing machinists had gone on strike, following a new grading structure which classed their work as unskilled; this action demanding 'equal pay for equal work' ground Ford production to a halt, despite the fact the women received little

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[49] *Harpies Bizarre*, 2 (Jun. 1969).
[50] Wandor, 'Interview: Audrey Battersby' in *Once*, pp. 113-14.
[51] TWL, 5WRR/B/01: LWLW, 'A Brief History of the Women's Liberation Workshop', in 'An introduction to the Women's Liberation Workshop' (1971).
[52] MIA: Leonora Lloyd, 'Woman Workers in Britain', pamphlet (n.d.), p. 1, https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/document/britain/socialist-women/women-workers-in-britain-socialist-woman-pamphlet.pdf (22 Jul. 2020).

union support.[53] Although it took another strike to achieve equal pay legislation, it was a symbolic moment, shattering 'the notion that the unions could get away with ignoring women'.[54] For Audrey Wise, union branch secretary at USDAW, the Dagenham strike was 'electrifying'. It was, she noted, the first women-only industrial action since the matchgirls' strike of 1888.[55]

The strike led to the foundation of the National Joint Action Campaign Committee for Women's Equal Rights (NJACCWER), with which both Wise and Lloyd were involved.[56] The group included 'Trade-unionists, women's organisations and other interested parties'. Some women were, however, dissatisfied with the organisation, and after seeing through the Equal Pay Act of 1970, the NJACCWER experienced a 'downturn'.[57] But those who were passionate about struggling against their oppression had met each other,[58] and subsequently formed the Nottingham Socialist Woman's Committee, London Socialist Women, and the Women's Liberation Front.[59] For Wise, this meant 'the beginning of the actual feminist stirrings really was 1968' and that was 'very important because it pre-dates the American influence.' Although she added: 'Obviously there was a lot of influence, and you're going to get interactions.'[60]

Indeed, the development of LWLW groups and those emerging from NJACCWER shared some roots. NJACCWER and its offspring were nurtured by radical left-wing activism too. Lloyd's father was a founding member of the Trotskyist IMG (International Marxist

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[53] S. Cohen, 'Equal pay—or what? Economics, politics and the 1968 Ford sewing machinists' strike', *Labor History*, 53:1 (Feb. 2012), pp. 51-68.
[54] S. Todd, *The People. The Rise and Fall of the Working Class* (London, 2015), p. 289.
[55] Wandor, 'Interview: Audrey Wise' in *Once*, p. 202.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 203.
[57] TWL, 5WRR/B/06: Leonora Lloyd, 'Information Sheet on NJACWER' (Nov. 1970).
[58] Lloyd, 'Woman Workers', p. 1.
[59] TWL, 5WRR/B/06: Leonora Lloyd, letter to Sally Tomlinson (3 Dec. 1970).
[60] Wandor, 'Interview: Wise', p. 201.

Group),[61] which Lloyd herself joined in the 1960s.[62] Although NJACCWER membership primarily comprised older trade unionists and Labour and Communist Party activists, a small group of IMG women had been present from the beginning, and organised the first local groups. There had already been some IMG interest in women's oppression, which had held a joint meeting with the *New Left Review* following the publication of Mitchell's 1966 article 'Women: the Longest Revolution'.[63] This had not, however, led to any serious organisation on the issue. That is, until the wave of women's industrial action sparked by Dagenham, which legitimised the fight against women's oppression as part of the class struggle. Left-wing women could now 'raise the topic […] without being dismissed'.[64]

Socialist Woman groups in Nottingham and London and journal *Socialist Woman* were formed by IMG in early 1969.[65] Similarly, the Women's Liberation Front was founded by a small group of Maoists. Socialist Woman groups were less rigidly political than the Maoist group, and grew faster.[66] Though their journal was backed by IMG, they welcomed 'socialist women who wish to work with the IMG comrades' on only this 'aspect of their politics.'[67] In 1971, Nottingham Socialist Woman was rebranded as Nottingham Women's Liberation Group, with concerns the name might put off new recruits. By that point, they were 'first and foremost a Women's Liberation Group'. London Socialist Women's group retained their name, and that of the journal.[68]

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[61] P. Duggan and T. Conway, 'Obituary: Charlie van Gelderen', *International Viewpoint*, (10 Dec. 2001), http://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article546 (22 Jul. 2020).
[62] L. Davies, 'Obituary: Leonora Lloyd', *The Guardian* (21 Feb. 2002), https://www.theguardian.com/news/2002/feb/21/guardianobituaries (21 Nov. 2019).
[63] See p. 160.
[64] Rowbotham, 'Beginnings', p. 34.
[65] Lloyd, 'Woman Workers', p. 46.
[66] Rowbotham, 'Beginnings', p. 41.
[67] Lloyd, 'Woman Workers', p. 46.
[68] TWL, 7SHR/A/1: Nottingham WL Group, circular (Jul. 1971).

The Nottingham group had links with the American movement. As early as October 1969, member Anne Black wrote to Rowbotham, informing her they had [redacted].[69] I was unable to secure an interview with Nottingham Socialist Woman activists, but Barry Sheppard's memoir and history of the American Socialist Workers Party suggests the link was fostered through transnational connections between socialist organisations.[70] Regardless of its origins, the link resulted in early transnational exchanges. Black wrote:

[redacted][71]

This link influenced the structure of Socialist Woman groups too: as Lloyd explained, it was both 'the example of the American groups' and 'dissatisfaction' with the rigid structure of NJACCWER 'that contributed to the groups taking the form so many of them did: no "leaders" or bureaucracy, etc.'[72]

Conversely, the Dagenham strike also influenced LWLW groups: as Rowbotham asserted, it made it easier to discuss 'women's specific oppression'. The special issue of *The Black Dwarf* on women, which she directed in early 1969, had begun: 'the fight for equal pay is entering a more militant phase in this country.' Rowbotham then argued 'these areas of public inequality are merely one dimension of women's condition.'[73] Wise wrote an article for the

[69] TWL, 7SHR/A/1: Anne Black, letter to Sheila Rowbotham (8 Oct. 1969).
[70] B. Sheppard, *The Party: The Socialist Workers Party, 1960-1988*, vol. 1 (Chippendale, 2005), p. 278.
[71] Black, letter to Rowbotham.
[72] Lloyd, 'Woman Workers', p. 1.
[73] Sheila Rowbotham, 'Women sex and the abolition of the family', *The Black Dwarf*, 13:9 (10 Jan. 1969), p. 2.

issue too, entitled 'Equal pay is not enough'. The closer we look, the more connections we find between supposedly separate origins. LWLW groups also attended the Equal Pay rally in Trafalgar Square on 18th May 1969,[74] which was the first mass women's demonstration since the struggle for suffrage. It sparked more groups: Ellen Malos tried to organise a coach to take women from Bristol to the rally; they didn't make it, but later formed a group which became Bristol Women's Liberation.[75]

Links between trade union organising and women's liberation did not always come easily, as George Stevenson argues. He highlights Catherine Hall's oral testimony, in which she argued 'there weren't that many connections between the Ford women' and her group in Birmingham.[76] Hall founded her group with a friend in February 1970: both had young children and were feeling isolated. In one interview, she emphasised: 'We didn't get material from the United States or London or anything before we actually started talking to each other.'[77] But in a later interview, Hall mentioned a 'very good friend' of hers, Rachel Fruchter, who she knew through New Left connections, and 'who was very active in the women's movement' in New York. Hall explained the 'connection with her and the literature that she put me in touch with […] was important' and that when the Birmingham group began 'those ideas were definitely around'. In establishing a women's group, she said, 'we knew we were doing something that other people were doing.' Any attempts to explain the discrepancy between the two interviews will be based on pure conjecture, but regardless of whether they came before or after Hall began the Birmingham group, it is clear that her links to other WLM groups were fostered

[74] LWLW, 'A Brief History'.
[75] Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom*, p. 18.
[76] BL, S&A: Interview with Catherine Hall, by R. Cohen, London (16 Apr. 2012). Quoted in G. Stevenson, *The Women's Liberation Movement and the Politics of Class in Britain* (London, 2019), p. 44.
[77] Wandor, 'Interview: Catherine Hall' in *Once*, p. 172.

through the 'radical community'. As she said: 'the end of the New Left had created lots of sort of networks […] so many of the women that I got to know […] had connections to that too.'[78]

Another group in this network began at the University of Warwick, but spread to include 'some working-class women on a local council estate.'[79] As member Anna Davin remembered, it was founded in 1969 by women in the Socialist Society, and was 'probably partly influenced by American visitors'. The history department ran an exchange scheme, bringing forty American students each year, 'some of whom were in SDS […] and brought feminist pamphlets and ideas.' As with TPG members, these Americans were channels to ideas from the US WLM: the Coventry women's group 'ran a bookstall which included pamphlets sent from the New England Press.'[80] Barbara Winslow, who had co-founded Seattle Radical Women in 1967, was one such American student. She linked Coventry not only to the US, but also to London, through Rowbotham. Winslow was studying with E.P. Thompson—Rowbotham, 'a good friend of Edward's', would often visit.[81]

This echoes Browne's study of St Andrews. In 1970, Zoë Fairbairns returned from Virginia, enthused by her American WLM experience, and signed up to the newly forming women's liberation group on campus.[82] Fairbairns was not the only one: Susie Innes was another influential member who'd spent time in America. She had travelled to California, Chicago, and New York, participated in anti-war demonstrations, and, as Fairbairns remembered, created 'quite a stir, with her first-hand knowledge of US radicalism and rock music.'[83] Crucially, however, the group was already beginning when Fairbairns returned.

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[78] Interview with Hall, Cohen.
[79] Rowbotham, 'Beginnings', p. 38.
[80] Wandor, 'Interview: Anna Davin' in *Once*, p. 58.
[81] SSC, VFOHP: Interview with Barbara Winslow, by K. Weigand, Williamstown, MA (3 May 2004).
[82] BL, S&A: Interview with Zoë Fairbairns, by M. Jolly, London (23 Jun. 2011).
[83] Z. Fairbairns, 'Obituary: Sue Innes', *The Independent* (17 Mar. 2005), https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/sue-innes-756861.html (20 Jul. 2020).

Although it was officially founded in November 1970, other flashes of organisation had occurred in 1969.[84] Fairbairns said 'a lot of British students were flying across the Atlantic and coming back with these ideas', but women's liberation 'wasn't just an American import'; there was 'home-grown British feminism as well, but it all sort of came together.'[85]

Many of these strands 'came together' at a conference in Oxford, on the weekend beginning 27th February 1970. The idea for the conference emerged from converging influences too. The History Workshop was an initiative organised by Ruskin College (an adult education college for workers) 'to bring worker historians and academics together'.[86] At the 1969 workshop, a woman 'spoke about factory girls', perhaps influenced by Dagenham. One male respondent argued that trade unions' objective was 'for women to be able to stay at home.' When Rowbotham contested this, she was 'met with patronising laughter', which led to the idea of women meeting alone.[87] The women convened, Sally Alexander remembered, in the bedroom of Arielle Abertson, a Swiss student; indeed, many of them 'seemed to come from different parts of the world'. Two or three were from North America,[88] one of whom was Winslow. The group proposed a women's history conference, but Winslow—with her American experience—suggested a national women's liberation meeting.[89]

The women had not imagined the interest this would generate: they envisaged 100 women attending; in the event there were over 500, joined by sixty children and forty men (who ran the creche).[90] Attendees were drawn from all corners: there were women from NJACCWER, including Lloyd and Wise who both gave papers; the Birmingham and Coventry

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[84] Browne, 'Veritable Hotbed', pp. 108-11.
[85] Interview with Fairbains, Jolly.
[86] Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom*, p. 20.
[87] Wandor, 'Interview: Sheila Rowbotham' in *Once*, pp. 28-9.
[88] BL, S&A: Interview with Sally Alexander, by R. Cohen, London (7 Feb. 2012).
[89] Interview with Winslow, Weigand.
[90] Rowbotham, 'Beginnings', p. 39.

groups attended, as did many women who 'did not yet belong to a group, but had come to find out more'.[91] The call had spread out across the 'radical community'. Anna Paczuska, a member of North London IS Women's Group, recalled: 'I must have heard about Ruskin on the grapevine.'[92] For the first time, women realised just how expansive their movement was—and could become. It was, Slaney recalled, 'New and startling […], a thrilling thing'; she found it difficult to express 'how unprecedented everything was.'[93] For O'Sullivan, it was a 'learning experience' because she had 'been so located within the London women's workshop' and her 'American connections'. But those American connections had only been with 'individuals and reading publications': Ruskin was the first time she sensed 'that we were a movement.'[94]

As a result of this realisation, and publicity surrounding the event, more groups were formed and established groups grew rapidly.[95] Wortis remembered 'everyone wanting to form a women's group, all over the country'. TPG took the difficult decision to split in two, enabling new women to join without altering group size; Wortis and O'Sullivan joined the Belsize Park group which, to Wortis, 'never felt the same'.[96] Special-interest groups—on history, sexuality, education, and art—and more local groups were founded in the LWLW, with the workshop eventually finding a physical location and employing workers to cope with the influx of interest.[97]

This is not to say Ruskin was formative for all attendees. Stevenson notes Ruskin organisers contacted 'every member' of NJACCWER but few came. He finds a potential explanation in the academic nature of the event.[98] As Wise said: 'I got this letter saying I would

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[91] LWLW, 'A Brief History'.
[92] Wandor, 'Interview: Anna Paczuska' in *Once*, pp. 152-3.
[93] Interview with Slaney, TL.
[94] Interview with O'Sullivan, Cohen.
[95] Rowbotham, 'Beginnings', p. 39.
[96] Interview with Wortis, TL.
[97] LWLW, 'A Brief History'.
[98] Stevenson, *Politics of Class*, pp. 43-4.

present a paper… Present a paper? I didn't present papers. I spoke. What were they on about?' She was asked to bring 400 copies of her paper but, unlike women in academia, 'didn't have facilities' to create this number of copies. This did not stop her (she brought forty copies, assuming the large number had been an error),[99] but perhaps, Stevenson wonders, the academic format dissuaded other trade union women from attending.

Gerlin Bean, an activist in the Black Liberation Front, was one of only two black attendees: the other was Pat Smith, from Essex University. Bean listened to the papers and 'couldn't really pick on the relevance of it as it pertains to black women', apart from the paper by Selma James, who was the only person, all weekend, to speak to 'how it would affect black women and our involvement'. As Bean explained, 'our struggle wasn't just about women, it was an anti-imperialist struggle about black people'. She 'took all this information back' to her women's caucus in the Black Liberation Front and they continued their own conversations, eventually meeting with women in groups like the British Black Panthers, and forming Brixton Black Women's Group in 1973.[100] Crucially, as activist Gail Lewis argued, the black women's movement developed parallel to the white women's movement; it was incubated in a network of anti-imperialist and Black Power groups.[101]

As we will see in the next section, women from France also attended Ruskin—and were galvanised by the experience. Throughout this section, we have explored other instances of early transnational connections in the British WLM: Americans founding groups, British women returning from the US, American literature being diffused and exchanges established from the earliest days. Most origins of the British movement were, nonetheless, nationally and locally rooted: women began meeting to break isolation, discuss theory and their lives;

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[99] Wandor, 'Interview: Wise', p. 206.
[100] BCA, THR: Interview with Gerlin Bean, by K. Phillips (20 Feb. 2009).
[101] BCA, THR: Interview with Gail Lewis, by M. Barnard (15 May 2009).

industrial action sparked WLM groups; and black women's organisation sprouted from black and anti-imperialist activism. But American influence can be found even within some of these British origins; just as links between seemingly distinct origins can be found. But in all cases, 'radical community' networks, like that in the US, nurtured the growth of the early movement. The same was true in France.

3. French Beginnings

The origins of the MLF are tricky to unpick. Like the American and British movements, it evolved from independent sources. However, these groups rapidly joined together, fragmented, and changed names; archival sources are scarce; some groups disappeared without a trace; and activist memories contradict each other. General histories point to the influence of the American WLM and 1968 without exploration.[102] Thorough investigations have better illuminated this, though often by examining one group, like Claire Duchen and Lisa Greenwald with FMA. Such focus, either as an illustrative example (as with Duchen) or in-depth exploration (Greenwald) provides detail.[103] But it can perpetuate misunderstandings—for example, that FMA contributed 'More than any other group' to the MLF's birth[104]—and gives an unclear picture of other groups' formation, and their confluence. Françoise Picq provides a more comprehensive overview, though is less specific on group membership and chronology, and only touches upon transnational influence.[105]

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[102] See: de Beauvoir, 'FRANCE', pp. 229-30.
[103] C. Duchen, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France, 1944-1968* (London, 1994), pp. 199-200 and 208-9; L. Greenwald, *Daughters of 1968: Redefining French Feminism and the Women's Liberation Movement* (London 2018), pp. 101-7, 114-37.
[104] Greenwald, *Daughters*, p. 103.
[105] F. Picq, *Libération des Femmes: Les Années-Mouvement* (Paris, 1993), chs. 1-3.

Further muddying the waters, WLM activists—most notably Christine Delphy and Antoinette Fouque—have conflicted over their movement's origin story. In 1990, a newspaper and television programme stated the MLF was founded by Fouque, Josiane Chanel and Monique Wittig. Delphy took issue with this, arguing that individuals cannot found movements. Instead, she asserted the MLF began in 1970, and as evidence cited four public appearances from that year where 'the women's liberation movement appeared in France with this name' and which used the phrase 'Libération des femmes année zéro', including the protest at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.[106] Fouque maintained her first meeting in 1968 was the birth. 'Previously,' she argued, 'there were no independent single-sex groups'. It was this 'non-mixing' and 'political independence' which 'founded the identity' of the MLF.[107] For Fouque, the Unknown Soldier protest was merely a 'media baptism'.[108]

In 2008, this debate was reignited with des femmes press releases celebrating the 40th anniversary of the MLF; a special edition of journal *ProChoix* was organised in response. It has not abated. My interview with Sylvina Boissonnas and Michèle Idels, part of Fouque's group, echoed Fouque's arguments, even her language (the Unknown Soldier protest as a 'baptism').[109] The first volume of their MLF history also builds upon Fouque's argumentation—for example, claiming that 'Year Zéro' was a phrase deployed rhetorically because the year, 1970, ended in a zero.[110] Likewise, my interview with Delphy reiterated her arguments. This dispute has made its way into other histories. Kristina Schulz analyses the debate between Fouque and Delphy to assess how both referred to 1968. She points to Fouque describing 1968 as a 'symbolic

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[106] C. Delphy, 'Les origins du Mouvement de libération des femmes en France', *NQF*, 16-8 (1991), pp. 137-8.
[107] Antoinette Fouque, letter, *Le Monde* (14-15 Dec. 2008), p. 17.
[108] *Ibid*.; Antoinette Fouque, 'Qu'est-ce qu'une femme?' in des femmes, *Génération MLF: 1968-2008* (Paris, 2008), p. 19.
[109] Interview with Sylvina Boissonnas and Michèle Idels, TL, Paris (24 Oct. 2018).
[110] des femmes, *MLF-Psychanalyse et politique 1968-2018*, vol. 1 (Paris, 2018), chs. 1-3.

revolution' which 'made it possible to overcome the dominant phallocentric paradigm', heralding a 'new era' and argues that although Delphy didn't deny the connection between the MLF and 1968, she seemed 'much more in favour of the idea that the women's movement developed *against* the spirit of 1968.'[111]

The question of what 1968 meant to different MLF activists is, as we saw in the last chapter, rich for analysis, but this is not where the significance of Fouque and Delphy's debate lies. As Schulz notes, Fouque also highlighted the shortcomings of 1968 for women; and Delphy does not deny the formative nature of 1968. The real debate is at what point a movement becomes a movement. For Delphy and the *ProChoix* women, the movement launched when different groups met: this created a new dynamic, in which the MLF 'snowballs, instead of vegetating, which is the difference between a group and a movement.'[112] From this premise, we can see how they considered it an 'oxymoron' to speak of 'founding' a movement.[113] But for Fouque, a movement revolved around discussions and constructing theory: one group could constitute a movement. Moreover, Fouque did not see other groups as MLF groups because they were initially mixed and affiliated with reformist feminist groups.[114]

Given such contrasting definitions we can understand the unbridgeable nature of this debate. In one sense, this question might boil down to terminology: whether 1968 was the conception and 1970 the birth; or 1968 the birth and 1970 the baptism. Alternatively, both can be seen as moments within a longer story of formation. As historian Bibia Pavard notes, everyone agrees to start MLF histories in 1968.[115] We might add: if the story of its formation ends before

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[111] K. Schulz, 'Feminist Echoes of 1968: Women's Movements in Europe and the United States', in I. Gilcher-Hotley, ed., *A Revolution of Perception? Consequences and Echoes of 1968* (Oxford, 2014), p. 139.
[112] Delphy, 'Origins', p. 142.
[113] Des Femmes du MLF (non déposé ni co-fondé), 'L'héritage féministe détourné', *Prochoix*, 46 (Dec. 2008), p. 23.
[114] des femmes, *MLF*, p. 58.
[115] B. Pavard, *Les éditions des femmes, Histoire des premières années* (Paris, 2005), p. 36.

1970, it is incomplete. Similarly, whether or not one believes FMA was always a bona fide MLF group (and Greenwald's analysis of early FMA documents makes a compelling case that it was) neglecting its role in movement formation leads to partial retellings.

By drawing upon and critically examining different histories—both first-hand and secondary—with oral testimony, we can pick apart some of the confusions in existing accounts and thus more clearly understand MLF formation: the processes driving it, the roles transnational influence played. In doing so, we find there were multiple movement origins, that 1968 was central to almost all of their formations, and that activist networks brought them together. Some of these origins were influenced by developments in other countries: transnational influences shaped early MLF action and theory, but not universally.

Fouque, Wittig and Chanel began meeting in October 1968.[116] Wittig had already published *l'Opoponax* (Paris, 1964), a novel containing the seeds of her feminist thought,[117] and was writing *Les Guérillères*, about a fictional war of the sexes.[118] But in a 1979 interview, Wittig explained that her reading of *The Feminine Mystique* was what really 'determined' her desire to form a women's group. Not its feminist message—Wittig said she'd opposed women's oppression since childhood—rather, Friedan's criticism of Freud. The form of psychoanalysis which had taken hold in America, bringing women (in Wittig's reading of Friedan) 'to this degree of confinement in the suburbs', had not yet gripped France; Wittig thought it imperative for women to 'start organising' as soon as possible. She discussed this with her friend Chanel who suggested they talk with Fouque: she was 'also interested' in these questions.[119]

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[116] Fouque, letter to *Le Monde*; interview with Boissonnas and Idels, TL; des femmes, *MLF*, p. 17.
[117] H.V. Wenzel, 'The Text as Body/Politics: An Appreciation of Monique Wittig's Writings in Context', *Feminist Studies*, 7:2 (1981), pp. 264-5.
[118] Monique Wittig, *Les Guérillères* (Paris, 1969).
[119] Josy Thibault, 'Monique Wittig Interview: "Monique Wittig raconte…"', *Prochoix*, 46 (2008), pp. 63-7.

Chanel and Fouque met in Roland Barthes's seminar in 1967; Chanel introduced Fouque to Wittig in January 1968; and during May '68, they organised CRAC (Comité révolutionnaire d'action culturelle), to debate theory and stage street performances.[120] Their experiences of 1968 were clearly formative. For Wittig, it sparked her desire to build a protest movement: 'Since we were emerging from a political movement of the street, I didn't see why we shouldn't go out on the street.'[121] For Fouque, 1968 was 'a liberation of thought'.[122] Unquestionably, their group emerged from French activism. At this point, Wittig noted, 'we did not know about the existence of the American movement or other groups, the English and the others.'[123] They developed their thinking from critical readings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Bebel.[124] And recruits were found in activist circles. Their first meeting was attended by Suzanne Fenn (a film-cutter for Godard) and Wittig's Maoist girlfriend; the second had eight attendees, with other Maoist women in attendance;[125] more women in film joined;[126] historian Françoise Barret-Ducrocq joined at the end of 1969[127] and invited others, including an academic and another filmmaker,[128] then, a few months later, two Americans, one of whom was Namascar Shaktini.

After her time in Italy, Shaktini had moved to Paris, where she registered at the Sorbonne. Shaktini recalled Nanterre students arriving, 'with their tracts and speeches' and how the uprising took over 'all of a sudden'. Classes were cancelled, her education took place

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[120] des femmes, *MLF*, pp. 17-18.
[121] Thibault, 'Wittig Interview', p. 67.
[122] des femmes, *MLF*, p. 22.
[123] Thibault, 'Wittig Interview', p. 70.
[124] des femmes, *MLF*, p. 23.
[125] Thibault, 'Wittig Interview', p. 69.
[126] des femmes, *MLF*, p. 27.
[127] Interview with Françoise Barret-Ducrocq, by R. Gildea, Paris (28 May 2008), transcript, p. 12.
[128] Françoise Barret-Ducrocq, seminar paper, L'Institut d'enseignement et de recherches en sciences des femmes (1994), quoted in des femmes, *MLF*, p. 42.

'in the streets', literally: she attended *Tel Quel* lectures in working-class neighbourhoods. Her memories were vivid:

> When I would go down in the morning to get some croissants, I could still smell the tear gas in the air. And I would go down and be with the students who were setting up the barricades until it got too rough and […] I went back to my studio apartment and listened on the radio.[129]

Shaktini described herself as just 'an observer'. It was not until she discovered the MLF, that she saw herself as an activist. Interestingly, although the first French discussions of women's liberation were blossoming in 1968 and although Shaktini was supervised by Barthes, she did not find the MLF through student networks. Rather, it was through a network spanning the Atlantic.

In late 1968, Shaktini travelled from Paris to New York to attend the Modern Language Association convention. She did not find a job, but she did find a group of leftist, anti-war academics who were 'talking about this thing: women's liberation.' Mel and Marcia Rothenberg were in the group: he was a mathematician at the University of Chicago;[130] she'd participated in the Chicago WLM.[131] Back in Paris, Shaktini received a letter from the Rothenbergs: they were moving to Paris. Through them, Shaktini tapped into activist networks:

> [Marcia] had connections because she and Mel were very involved with leftist politics […] Marcia knew a woman named Françoise [Barret-Ducrocq] who went back and forth between England and France and knew of a group of women in Paris who met regularly and discussed women's issues.

Barret-Ducrocq told Rothenberg there would be a meeting in January 1970 and invited the Americans. That meeting, Shaktini said, 'changed my life.'[132]

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[129] Interview with Namascar Shaktini, TL, Portland, OR (10 Oct. 2018).
[130] Interview with Shaktini, TL.
[131] Thibault, 'Wittig Interview', p. 70.
[132] Interview with Shaktini, TL.

Shaktini remembered there being 'about a dozen women' at the meeting, held in the apartment of Wittig's sister, Gille.[133] By this point, the group had begun to hear of the British WLM. They learned of the Ruskin conference from Barret-Ducrocq, who had links to the UK through academic work,[134] including with Mitchell. Keen to establish contact, Fouque, Chanel, Barret-Ducrocq,[135] and Shaktini travelled over.[136] Not Wittig: there were concerns her attendance, as a successful writer, might detract from the collective.[137] They prepared a text, which Barret-Ducrocq read aloud:

> Dear comrades, in Paris we have a group of about twenty women, which meets roughly every week. Until now, we have mostly held theoretical discussions on the role of women in the capitalist system […] Our main problem concerns the forms of action we want to take.

She explained the majority of the group were also active in mixed movements, including 'social revolution, strikes, actions aimed at immigrants, workers'.[138]

The formative effect of Ruskin upon the British movement is well known—but its influence on the MLF is rarely acknowledged. The trip was formative in multiple ways. Shaktini could not remember specific people she met, nor exact topics discussed—'they were all the same issues we were concerned about'—instead, her testimony reveals a powerful emotional response. Shaktini recalled the 'wonderful' speeches: they were 'the very first feminist speakers I had ever heard so I was bowled over.' Seeing this movement altogether 'was overwhelming', 'inspirational', and this was a feeling which the French women brought home with them, along with literature they'd collected.[139] For Fouque, Chanel, and Ducrocq, the

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[133] *Ibid.*
[134] Interview with Barret-Ducrocq, Gildea, pp. 3-6.
[135] des femmes, *MLF*, p. 43.
[136] Interview with Shaktini, TL.
[137] Thibault, 'Wittig Interview', p. 71.
[138] Quoted in des femmes, *MLF*, p. 44.
[139] Interview with Shaktini, TL.

conference resulted in long-lasting contacts. Barret-Ducrocq introduced Fouque to Mitchell. They maintained contact; in 1974, Mitchell became one of the first authors published by Éditions des femmes—the women's publishing house Fouque established.[140] Ducrocq met women's historians, like Alexander and Rowbotham;[141] she would go on to translate Rowbotham's *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World*, published by des femmes in 1976.

Dutch women were also present. A few months later, in May, Barret-Ducrocq and the Wittigs travelled to Amsterdam to meet Dolle Mina, the first women's liberation group in Holland.[142] By this time, Dolle Mina was, Barret-Ducrocq remembered, 'large'.[143] There were sub-groups focusing on different issues, from single mothers to abortion.[144] But during their first year, Dolle Mina primarily focused on staging public actions to 'trap the press', highlighting 'the needs for things such as equal education, free day-care centers, equal pay for equal work, legalized abortion', but also to 'boost membership and interest in Dolle Mina'.[145] This tactic of headline-grabbing actions was one which Wittig thought their group should adopt; her sister and the Americans agreed, but Fouque, Chanel, Barret-Ducrocq, and others thought public actions too premature—they wanted to settle the group's thinking first.[146]

Increasingly, an ideological divide was widening between the two camps. Fouque was more interested in discussion than writing in the early years, so it is difficult to chronicle her thought. Nevertheless, we know she was against feminism, which she saw as reaching for the same bourgeois benefits that men enjoyed. As more *gauchiste* women joined the group, many

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[140] des femmes, *MLF*, p. 45. See Chapter IV for more on Éditions des femmes.
[141] Interview with Barret-Ducrocq, Gildea, p. 13.
[142] L. Geerlings, '"Crazy Mina" guerrillas hit Holland', *Historica* (Oct. 2013), p. 7.
[143] Interview with Barret-Ducrocq, Gildea, p. 13.
[144] Barret-Ducrocq, quoted in des femmes, *MLF*, p. 45.
[145] 'Dolle Mina', *oob* (25 Mar. 1971), p. 3.
[146] Interview with Shaktini, TL. Barret-Ducrocq, seminar paper, quoted in des femmes, *MLF*, p. 48.

sided with her on prioritising class struggle.[147] At the same time, Fouque was developing an analysis of woman's position through her Psychanalyse et Politique (Psyche et Po) practice, based on 'questioning the premise of Freud and Lacan that there is only one libido for both sexes, and that it is male or phallic'.[148] Through critical readings of psychoanalytic texts and group discussion, Fouque explored the 'female libido'[149] and 'uterus envy'.[150] Eventually Psyche et Po became a separate collective. The precise dates are unclear: Fouque saw the beginning of the MLF and Psyche et Po as 'absolutely contemporary'. But crucially, Psyche et Po practice and the group with Wittig were distinct: psychoanalytic thought was discussed in the latter, but not exclusively; some, like Wittig, 'didn't want to hear about psychoanalysis'.[151]

Conflating the two is a common error,[152] one which obscures Wittig's thinking. As her first feminist analysis demonstrates, she looked to nascent movements in other countries to construct her position. American-born journalist Jean-François Bizot heard of the group and told Wittig he'd been compiling a dossier on the American WLM. He would give it to her if her group wrote a piece for leftist paper *L'Idiot International*.[153] Ultimately, 'For a Women's Liberation Movement'[154]—a manifesto of sorts—was not written collectively, although Gille, Rothenberg, and Shaktini signed their names to it. Wittig based her analysis on Engels, with a

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[147] des femmes, *MLF*, pp. 38-9; Anne Tristan, 'Le brouillard', in Anne Tristan and Annie de Pisan, *Histoires du MLF* (Paris, 1977), p. 51; Jacqueline Feldman, 'De FMA au MLF: Un témoignage sur les débuts du mouvement de libération des femmes', *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire*, 29 (2009), pp. 201-2.

[148] des femmes, *MLF*, p. 34.

[149] See: Antoinette Fouque, *There Are 2 Sexes*, ed. S. Boissonnas, trans. D. Macey and C. Porter (New York, 2015), p. 49.

[150] See: Antoinette Fouque, 'Dialogue with Isabelle Huppert' (15 Dec. 1993), in *ibid.*, pp. 104-5.

[151] des femmes, *MLF*, pp. 35-6.

[152] J.L. Sweatman, *The Risky Business of French Feminism: Publishing, Politics, and Artistry* (London, 2014), p.36; Schulz, 'Feminist Echoes', p. 139; Duchen, *Women's Rights*, p. 209; Greenwald, *Daughters*, p. 137.

[153] Thibault, 'Wittig Interview', p. 74.

[154] Shaktini gives this as the direct translation of Wittig's original title; the editor changed it to 'Combat pour la libération de la femme'. See N. Shaktini, 'Introduction to "For a Women's Liberation Movement"', in Shaktini, ed., *On Monique Wittig. Theoretical, Political, and Literary Essays* (Chicago, IL, 2005), p. 15.

central argument that women 'are the class that has been oppressed for the longest time'.[155] But American WLM concepts were deployed too. 'American women, who have begun their fight for liberation, call the segregation in which we are held "sexism",' Wittig noted. According to her, it was capitalism which 'perpetuates sexism and draws multiple and sundry benefits from it'. Wittig gave the American name for the 'class attitude' which bolstered this: 'male chauvinism'. She went on to discuss the ways male chauvinism was linked with capitalism, from objectification in advertising and workplace sexism to women's 'double work'. This was illuminated with a comment from a British activist at Ruskin: 'My husband oppresses me when he gets home because he has been oppressed all day by his boss.'[156]

Yet Wittig situated her manifesto within a distinctly French activist heritage, invoking Olympe de Gouges: 'We have the right to mount the rostrum since we have the right to mount the scaffold'.[157] This assertion, aimed at leftist readers, articulated women's claim to reap the fruit of modern revolution too:

> We know that we are part of the vast revolutionary movement that since May 1968 has changed the aspect of struggles in France, of which the goal is the overthrow of capitalism and the takeover of power by the people. We are the people.

Wittig called for a French WLM, invoking both 'the first feminists' and movements 'in the USA and in Holland'.[158] As Shaktini pointed out, Wittig's transnational influences were not restricted to theory:

> [The manifesto] was part of all we were bringing in. The English influence, the American influence, primarily. I don't really remember exactly what we got from the Dolle Mina in the Netherlands but it was, it was an influence in that we *knew*

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[155] Monique Wittig et. al., 'Combat pour la Libération de la Femme', *l'Idiot International*, 6 (May 1970), pp. 13-16; translations from Shaktini, *On Monique Wittig*, pp. 21-34.
[156] Wittig et. al., 'Combat' in Shaktini, *On Monique Wittig*, pp. 22-5.
[157] *Ibid*., p. 25.
[158] *Ibid*., pp. 31-3.

> that it was spreading, that this movement was big and it was happening everywhere.[159]

Here, we find another example of 'cognitive liberation': the inspirational effect of observing movement successes elsewhere.[160]

At around the same time as the manifesto's publication, Wittig's camp of four pressed ahead with 'an intervention' to raise awareness.[161] They decided upon an action at the University of Vincennes. Rothenberg's US experience may have influenced this: Gille remembered the two Americans reporting that 'in the United States, women's unrest was transmitted through universities.'[162] But it was also a natural choice. Vincennes was 'still quite hot' in 1970,[163] and the French knew, as Americans had, that recruits would be found among the already politicised.

At this point, the chronology grows hazy, with unverified reports of two public appearances at Vincennes,[164] and conflicting dates. However, a survey of sources suggests most accounts describe a single event (which almost certainly took place in May 1970).[165] Reports of two events may have emerged from the fact that there was a planning meeting which, unexpectedly, twenty Vincennes students attended: an American professor at Vincennes had learned of the meeting (perhaps via Rothenberg) and informed his students. The central question was whether to call a women-only event. Rothenberg advocated this, but others

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[159] Interview with Shaktini, TL.
[160] See p. 64.
[161] Thibault, 'Wittig Interview', p. 72.
[162] Delphy, 'Origins', p. 140.
[163] Thibault, 'Wittig Interview', p. 72.
[164] Delphy, 'Origins', p. 140.
[165] Fouque mentioned a Vincennes meeting on 30 March 1970 ['Interview with Antoinette Fouque: "Femmes en mouvements: hier, aujourd'hui, demain"', *Le Débat*, 59 (Mar. 1990), p. 127] but this was likely an error: a version of this piece recently reprinted by des femmes changed it to 'Spring 1970' [Fouque, *There Are 2 Sexes*, p. 17]; in two other accounts she dates it to May [Fouque, 'Qu'est-ce qu'une femme?', p. 22; Fouque, letter to *Le Monde*, p. 17]. Gille and Delphy date the event to 21st May: Delphy, 'Origins', p. 140.

argued 'she was used to actions in [American] women's universities'—it would be challenging on a mixed campus. Besides, Vincennes students argued, 'We're dealing with a group of women and men, we have to start from there.' In the end, they compromised: everyone would be invited, but after explaining the situation, the group would ask men to leave.[166]

One of Rothenberg's American imports did catch on. From its earliest days, the American WLM had searched for a symbol, knowing—as Freeman wrote in a 1974 article—the importance of having 'a quick, convenient way of proclaiming one's views to the world'. After stalled attempts, they settled upon a radical raised fist inside the Venus symbol, created by Robin Morgan for the 1969 Miss America protest. Simple enough for reproduction, variations had spread across America: 'Boston's button is outlined, Chicago's has narrow lines, New Haven's fist crashes through the top of the female symbol'.[167] Shaktini recalled:

> We had found out [about the symbol] from Marcia Rothenberg […] and this was great news to us—we had a logo. And we got it put on t-shirts, 18 t-shirts, and we all put on the t-shirt.[168]

Shaktini's phrase 'we had a logo' is notable: the group saw themselves as belonging to the same movement as Americans—the symbol was automatically theirs too. They screen-printed it onto posters advertising the meeting,[169] conveying the group's identity 'to the world' and reinforcing a sense of belonging: between women at Vincennes, and with their American counterparts.

The plan was to parade through campus—carrying banners, shouting slogans,[170] and distributing Wittig's manifesto—leading students to an amphitheatre for discussion. In the event, this caused the spectacle they wanted—though with more hostility than anticipated. The

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[166] Thibault, 'Wittig Interview', p. 72.
[167] Jo Freeman, 'Say It With Buttons', *Ms.* (Aug. 1974), pp. 48-53, https://www.jofreeman.com/buttons/saybuttons.htm (14 Nov. 2019).
[168] Interview with Shaktini, TL.
[169] Poster reproduced on cover of *QF*, 7 (Feb. 1980).
[170] Thibault, 'Wittig Interview', p. 72.

crowd contained 'many more men than women',[171] with some shouting that the women were *mal-baisée* ['needed a good fucking'][172] and should undress.[173] At the amphitheatre, the women 'had difficulty making ourselves heard' as 'the men had bigger voices' and 'wanted to give us advice.'[174] By this point, the women had been joined by Fouque's camp (though not wearing t-shirts: they still disagreed with the spectacle). Shaktini remembered Fouque explaining why the women needed to meet alone, but the men still refused to leave. Then, as Shaktini and Wittig recalled, a black man said he understood their position: it was akin to black activists in the US civil rights movement deciding to organise without white people. 'They have problems to solve together, which they cannot solve with men,' Wittig remembered him saying. '[…] and as a man, I am leaving.' He was not followed, but after repeating it a second time, successfully led the other men out.[175]

For Shaktini, this meeting was the beginning of the movement.[176] Weekly women's meetings were held at Vincennes thereafter.[177] Along with Wittig's manifesto, which had been published that month, news of the action travelled around left-wing circles. Women in VLR read about it;[178] Picq, a member of VLR, recalled in an interview that they felt 'very much in the community of ideas with regard to those women who, in the name of the revolution, were claiming the right to free themselves'.[179] The VLR women's group was not organised until

[171] Interview with Shaktini, TL.
[172] Picq, *Libération*, p. 15.
[173] Thibault, 'Wittig Interview', p. 72.
[174] Interview with Shaktini, TL.
[175] Thibault, 'Wittig Interview', p. 73.
[176] Interview with Shaktini, TL.
[177] des femmes, *MLF*, p. 58.
[178] Picq, *Libération*, p. 15.
[179] Interview with Françoise Picq, by R. Gildea, Paris (27 Apr. 2007), transcript, p. 23.

August (following Lévy-Willard's experience)[180] but when it was, Wittig and Shaktini attended their first meeting and invited the VLR women to work with them.[181]

Other left-wing activists learned of the group too. Picq, in her written history, reported that in the aftermath of May '68 some French women had travelled to the US where they participated in anti-war activism, the New Left, 'Californian communes', and had 'met feminists'. On their return to France, they discussed these experiences and looked for contacts. The publication of Wittig's manifesto was one such opportunity: the group could be contacted through *L'Idiot*.[182] For Élisabeth Salvaresi, hearing of the Vincennes action was 'like someone sent me a letter. I packed my suitcase and returned to Paris, straight to Vincennes, where I found about twenty girls.'[183] As in the US, the rumour spread through radical circles—word of mouth, the left-wing press, posters in universities and radical bookshops—and was met with women's enthusiasm. Not universally: some were against autonomous organising. But many of these naysayers would later join.[184]

The manifesto and action also led to the group's confluence with another which had started 'parallel' and 'unknown' to them.[185] Anne Zelensky and Jacqueline Feldman had met at a seminar organised by Andrée Michel, co-author of *La condition de la Française d'aujourd'hui*,[186] who suggested they attend meetings of left-wing women's political club MDF if they were interested in feminism.[187] They joined the organisation, but felt it was not radical enough, and so in 1967 established Féminin Masculin Avenir (initially as a branch of MDF, but

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[180] See p. 49.
[181] Picq, *Libération*, p. 17.
[182] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[183] Élisabeth Salvaresi, 'Histoire quand nous tiens', *Libération* (6 Jun. 1978).
[184] Picq, *Libération*, pp. 38-9.
[185] Interview with Shaktini, TL.
[186] Andrée Michel and Geneviève Texier, *La condition de la Française d'aujourd'hui* (Paris, 1964).
[187] Tristan, 'Le brouillard', p. 34. For a discussion of MDF see: Duchen, *Women's Rights*, pp. 171-3.

later breaking away). Zelensky and Feldman distributed leaflets in the courtyard of the Sorbonne.[188]

One, addressed to female students argued:

> In the immense debate that has taken place up and down the country, in the serious re-examination of structures and values, no voice has been raised to declare that changing relations between men also entails changing relations between men and women.[189]

FMA, as with Wittig's group, knew their base would be found among the radicalised; as with Wittig's manifesto, they invoked women's revolutionary credentials. The tract ended with an invitation to discuss these issues. Men were welcome: Zelensky and Feldman (like the Vincennes women) felt they needed to be part of the conversation. In May 1968, FMA meetings held at Censier attracted up to fifty participants, mixed, but primarily women.[190] After the *événements*, this withered, leaving a steady a group of five.[191] Most were high school teachers and researchers; Feldman met Delphy at the CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique) and she joined immediately.[192] By April 1970, the group were calling themselves Féminisme Marxisme Action, the men had left,[193] and Delphy was beginning to develop her position—a stance not dissimilar from Wittig's.[194]

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[188] Feldman, 'De FMA au MLF', p. 198.
[189] MDF, 'Étudiante' (n.d.), reprinted in A. Schnapp and P. Vidal-Naquet, eds., *Journal de la commune étudiante. Textes et documents. Novembre 1967-juin 1968* (Paris, 2018), pp. 604-5.
[190] Feldman, 'De FMA au MLF', pp. 196-200.
[191] Delphy, 'Origins', p. 139.
[192] Feldman, 'De FMA au MLF', p. 197.
[193] Delphy, 'Origins', p. 139.
[194] Interview with Christine Delphy, TL, Paris (25 Oct. 2018).

As with Wittig and Fouque's group, FMA had not known of the American WLM at first.[195] But they were thrilled to come across a report about it in *Le Nouvel Observateur* in February 1969.[196] Delphy remembered:

> I was so excited, I couldn't sleep after that, it was just incredible because I have thought that […] women in the US were even more under the thumb of men than in France. […] I just couldn't believe it when I saw women's liberation in the United States. I was flabbergasted. And very happy of course.

Delphy explained that when working as a summer-school teacher in the US, the other teachers—young, financially independent women—were obsessed with marriage. The US was one of the last places she could envisage a women's movement launching.[197] The result was another example of 'cognitive liberation': the US movement symbolised the legitimacy of FMA's project. This is underscored by an FMA letter to a newspaper:

> We have discovered that [American feminists'] positions are very similar to ours. This coincidence has brought us to believe that the situation in the entire western world, and not only in the USA, is favourable to a renewal of feminist combat.[198]

Delphy's testimony indicates the emotional resonance of this discovery: it was 'just incredible'; she was 'so excited' she 'couldn't sleep'.[199]

FMA had long believed 'there must be other [French] feminist groups' and tried to find them, writing letters to newspapers, 'opposing this or that', to publicise their existence. None were published.[200] That is, until 1970, when an FMA letter in *Le Nouvel Observateur* garnered responses from women, including a group called Les Oreilles Vertes. 'The Green Ears', unlike other early MLF groups, emerged from a similar demographic to some British groups: they

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[195] *Ibid.*
[196] Greenwald, *Daughters*, p. 107.
[197] Interview with Delphy, TL.
[198] FMA, letter to 'Messieurs' (1 Feb. 1970), quoted and trans. in Greenwald, *Daughters*, p. 107.
[199] Interview with Delphy, TL.
[200] *Ibid.*

were around ten women, all young, married academics, who had formed a women-only discussion group after noticing their oppression during an Easter trip with their husbands, a few years before. Around this time, Wittig's manifesto was published; enthused by the discovery, FMA wrote right away. There was no answer so FMA decided to go ahead and meet with just Les Oreilles Vertes.[201] But then Delphy received a phone call from Fouque. Fouque made it clear that not everyone in their group agreed with Wittig's manifesto—and was unhappy to learn that FMA did.[202] Nonetheless, Fouque attended the Oreilles Vertes/FMA meeting and informed both groups of a future meeting at Rothenberg's.[203]

Around 30 women came to Rothenberg's: FMA, Les Oreilles Vertes, Wittig and Fouque's group, and individuals who had 'either written to *L'Idiot International*', or 'knew one of the signatories of the article', or 'had heard about the Vincennes demonstration.'[204] One such individual was Christiane Rochefort, author of the popular novel *Le Repos du Guerrier* (Paris, 1958), an exploration of female sexual desire. The meeting at Rothenberg's included many, like Rochefort, who would devote themselves to the MLF. (Apart from Les Oreilles Vertes, who soon disappeared from the movement without a trace.)[205] It also included the movement's first debates: whether to create public spectacles; whether to claim the heritage of earlier feminism; what ideological position to take. FMA were asked to introduce themselves: Zelensky read their most recent manifesto, which Delphy supplemented with her ideas. There was, Feldman recalled, a silence: the *gauchiste* women and Fouque disagreed with FMA, vehemently. Then Wittig, and others, gave their support.[206]

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[201] Tristan, 'Le brouillard', pp. 48-9.
[202] Interview with Delphy, TL.
[203] Feldman, 'De FMA au MLF', p. 201.
[204] Delphy, 'Origins', p. 141.
[205] Interview with Delphy, TL.
[206] Feldman, 'De FMA au MLF', p. 202.

This schism would only grow wider: Fouque's camp rejected feminism, seeing it as bourgeois, while the others saw earlier feminists as their foremothers;[207] Fouque's camp opposed spectacles, while the others were soon planning their first public action together.[208] We will revisit the protest itself—on 26 August 1970 at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier—in Chapter VI. For now, we should note three effects it had upon movement formation. First, with the group split over tactics, from September 1970 they met as two separate groups. Wittig and Delphy's group became Les Petites Marguerites then Féministes Révolutionnaires; Fouque's group met as Psyche et Po. Second, it thrust the MLF onto the public stage, with headlines in the mainstream press. The following month, a general assembly was called at the Beaux-Arts, and the women 'discovered there were more than a hundred of us'.[209] From this point on, groups sprouted in neighbourhoods; ideological stances, organising tactics, and initiatives were diverse. Third, the protest became the site of Fouque and Delphy's debate over the MLF's origin story.

One might think the 1968 vs. 1970 debate maps onto the question of American influence. Boissonnas and Idels were concerned that it would. In our interview, they disputed a quote from Simone de Beauvoir that appeared in my thesis abstract: of French feminists hearing news of the American WLM in 1969, and how this bolstered 'French feminists in their determination that it was possible to build a movement of their own.'[210] 1968 was the birth of the MLF, Boissonnas and Idels asserted; the movement came from distinctly French origins; and de Beauvoir was not involved in the early movement, anyway.[211] Their arguments have

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[207] Picq, *Libération*, p. 13.
[208] Delphy, 'Origins', p. 142.
[209] *Ibid.*, p. 143.
[210] Beauvoir, 'FRANCE', p. 230. NB: Boissonnas asked for an abstract before agreeing to an interview; it was not my practice to send this to interviewees.
[211] Interview with Boissonnas and Idels, TL.

been corroborated with this exploration of 'French Beginnings'. Yet so has de Beauvoir's quotation: it was simply that the activists bolstered by this news were not from Fouque's group. Moreover, even those bolstered were already resolute that France needed a women's movement. Delphy agrees with Boissonnas and Idels on this point: 'you can't say that feminism or women's liberation was imported from the US,' she told me, firmly.[212]

This does not mean transnational influences were non-existent, merely that we must be precise. The movement in the US preceded the French, but as in the UK, the origins of the French movement were homegrown: they emerged from experiences of 1968 and activist networks. However, as Naty Garcia Guadilla stated in her 1979 thesis, once French activists learned of the American WLM, there was 'a desire to join it.' Guadilla argued the American influence 'had an indisputable influence on the characteristics and nature of the French MLF' and as evidence pointed to the Unknown Soldier's Wife protest and the first MLF publication.[213] We will examine both cases in future chapters, but as this section has shown, there were prior influences too, and not just American: theoretical influences (in Wittig's manifesto), tactical influences (as with the import of spectacle actions from Dolle Mina), visual influences (the WLM symbol), and an emotional bolstering (from Ruskin, Dolle Mina, and America). Crucially, these all affected the Wittig/FMA tendency more than Fouque's, although her trip to the Ruskin Conference also fostered early transnational connections.

Conclusion

In the summer of 1970, Freeman travelled around Europe and reported, in American WLM periodical *Everywoman*, on movements in Holland, Denmark, Norway, and Britain. What

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[212] Interview with Delphy, TL.

[213] N.G. Guadilla, 'Le Mouvement de Libération des Femmes (MLF) en France de 1968 à 1978' (PhD thesis, EHESS, Paris 1979), p. 52.

'really amazed' her 'was the similarity'. She could 'go from' WLM groups in Chicago to New York, to Dolle Mina and the London Workshop and still 'feel perfectly at home'. They shared characteristics: activists were predominantly white, under thirty, and had 'strong connections with youth revolt organizations'; structurally, the movements were almost all leaderless, composed of small groups, and women-only. Regarding differences, Freeman noted there were 'a lot of housewives' in British groups and posited this was the origin of their early efforts on childcare (a theory substantiated by the analysis in Chapter VIII). What surprised Freeman most was the overturning of her former 'chauvinistic belief that most of the European movement was spread from the American'. Over her travels, Freeman 'became convinced' the 'European movement would have occurred whether we existed or not.'[214]

This chapter's analysis of British and French beginnings reinforces this observation, with movements emerging, above all, from homegrown activism. But this counterfactual is not necessarily helpful: the American movement did exist, and its influence did shape early European movements—just as they shaped each other. Because the American WLM began before the British and French, influence initially travelled, for the most part, in that direction. As Shaktini remembered:

> [The French women] were already going when Marcia and I arrived. But, it was an international movement. And, yes, at that moment probably more influence was going from the English-speaking countries to France, but later, during the French theory that followed, there was more influence probably coming back the other way.[215]

We will explore, as we proceed, the evolution of these crosscurrents.

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[214] Vicki, 'Interview with Joreen: Feminism in Europe', *Everywoman*, 1:9 (1970), p. 15.
[215] Interview with Shaktini, TL.

IV. Organisation

The door of the Centre des Femmes de Lyon was painted with a large women's symbol. Inside, a visitor would find walls plastered with meeting schedules, roommate requests, a poster keeping track of the yet-to-be-formally-adopted Veil Law. A long table displayed an array of French and Belgian feminist publications. As Catherine, a visiting Parisian, reported, this was the centre of Lyonnaise MLF activity, packing up to 150 women for general meetings to discuss projects amid 'noise and heckling'. These projects were 'centred on the desires […] of particular women': music sessions, a writing group. But they were also directed 'externally'. Even after their 1975 decriminalisation, abortions could not be easily obtained, so the centre maintained two dossiers—one, black, of hostile gynaecologists; pink for the amenable—as well as information on women and work.[1] The Lyon apartment was a resource centre for women, much like others across our three countries. As Z. Budapest, a Hungarian activist in LA, put it: women's centres were 'the visible manifestation of a political movement'.[2]

There was no formal structure to the WLM, but the movement could be found and seen—in women's centres and bookshops, in local newsletters, national magazines, and directories. The WLM developed organically from small discussion groups into a broad movement connected via multiple, overlapping networks—some of which were geographically focused, some specialised, some of which became formalised. We will examine such networks throughout this study, but it is useful, first, to form a general understanding of how women connected with each other—how ideas, theory, news, and tactics were debated and diffused.

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[1] Catherine, 'Lyon: des femmes, un centre…', *Histoires d'Elles*, 1 (Nov. 1977), pp. 6-7.

[2] Maria Chardon, 'The State of the Movement', *Sister* (Mar. 1974) p. 1, quoted in D. Spain, *Constructive Feminism: Women's Spaces and Women's Rights in the American City* (New York, 2016), p. 81.

This chapter explores the WLM's structure through a survey of archival material, with analyses of oral testimony illuminating case studies. In doing so, we investigate how movements in different countries connected too.

Interestingly, some of these organisational approaches travelled transnationally themselves. We begin this chapter with an analysis of one such diffusion: consciousness-raising, a foundational WLM practice which, as is often noted, travelled across the US and then to other countries—although our examination of this diffusion demonstrates its transnational significance should not be overstated. Following this, we move to an overview of groups in each country, and the networking mechanisms connecting them: conferences, activist correspondence and travel, and periodicals. Each of these mechanisms also fostered transnational connections. Both nationally, and transnationally, we find that certain individuals and organisations acted as important movement hubs, forging and maintaining links. Finally, we turn to women's centres and bookshops which were, similarly, hubs within movement networks, through their roles as referral services and within their specialised networks. They were local hubs too: spaces for congregation, socialising, and events. There were transnational implications in both areas.

1. Personal Politics

During a 1968 NYRW meeting, member Anne Forer, a kindergarten teacher,[3] said she was beginning to think of women as an oppressed group, and that they needed to 'raise' their 'consciousness'. This resonated with Kathie Sarachild, whose understanding of women's oppression was first kindled by de Beauvoir. As Forer listed everything women did to attract

[3] S. Cowley, 'Obituary: Anne Forer Pyne, a Feminist Who Opened Eyes, Dies at 72', *NYT* (30 Mar. 2018), https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/30/obituaries/anne-forer-pyne-a-feminist-who-opened-eyes-dies-at-72.html (16 Feb. 2021).

men—'not wearing our glasses, playing dumb'[4]—Sarachild realised she could learn 'how to understand and describe the particular oppression of women in ways that could reach other women' like 'this had just reached me.' NYRW decided 'to raise [their] consciousness some more.' One member proposed surveying literature on 'whether there were any biological differences between men and women'. Sarachild opposed this: it would be 'scientifically impossible […] until all the social and political factors applying to men and women are equal'. Instead, she argued, 'Everything we have to know, have to prove, we can get from the realities of our own lives'.[5]

NYRW read texts on topics 'like childhood, jobs, motherhood', but the 'starting point for discussion' and for gauging the accuracy of these texts would be their own experiences.[6] Consciousness-raising was distinguished from 'rap groups', a radical method of group therapy—similar to T-groups.[7] Personal experience was interrogated to construct theory, not for psychoanalysis; and it was not intended as a precursor to action, but an ongoing process. Sarachild outlined this in her paper 'A Program for Feminist Consciousness-Raising', distributed at the first national WLM conference at Lake Villa, in November 1968, and reprinted in the group's 1970 anthological journal, *Notes from the Second Year* (*NFTSY*):

> Our feelings will lead us to our theory, our theory to our action, our feelings about that action to a new theory and then to a new action.[8]

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[4] Carol Hanisch, 'Women's Liberation Consciousness-Raising: Then and Now', *On the Issues* (Winter 2010), https://www.ontheissuesmagazine.com/2010spring/2010spring_Hanisch.php (12 Sep. 2019).

[5] Kathie Sarachild, 'Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon' in Redstockings, *Feminist Revolution* (New York, 1978), pp. 144-5.

[6] *Ibid*.

[7] On T-groups, see p. 57; for Redstockings' criticism of rap groups, see Redstockings, *Feminist Revolution*, p. 150.

[8] Kathie Sarachild, 'A Program for Feminist "Consciousness Raising"', *NFTSY* (1970), p. 78.

Another member, Carol Hanisch, developed this further in response to criticisms that consciousness-raising was unpolitical.[9] In *NFTSY*, Hanisch argued consciousness-raising revealed:

> personal problems are political problems. There are no personal solutions at this time. There is only collective action for a collective solution.[10]

This principle was neatly encapsulated in the title given to Hanisch's piece by *NFTSY* editors Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt: 'The Personal is Political'.[11]

If, as we explored in Chapter I, reading early feminist writings awakened some women to their oppression, then consciousness-raising was a way of replicating and building upon this process on a movement-wide scale. NYRW, and later Redstockings (the group they subsequently formed), spread consciousness-raising with conference papers, writings, and links to other groups. Sarachild and Hanisch travelled to Gainesville, FL in autumn 1968, where they taught the practice to activists there who were 'excited by the new program' and went on to teach others.[12] Some NYRW members went on to found New York Radical Feminists (NYRF)—they produced guidelines, including suggested consciousness-raising topics from 'Motherhood' and 'Aging' to 'Politics' and 'The Media'.[13] These were, in turn, reproduced in local WLM newsletters.[14]

It is difficult to pinpoint the travel of consciousness-raising to the UK. Celia Hughes describes TPG as a 'consciousness-raising group',[15] but in our interview, Sheli Wortis asserted:

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[9] Carol Hanisch, 'Introduction' to 'The Personal is Political' (Jan. 2006), www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html (12 Sep. 2019).
[10] Carol Hanisch, 'The Personal is Political', *NFTSY*, p. 76.
[11] Hanisch, 'Introduction'.
[12] RWLAA, TS: Judith Brown, 'Origins of Consciousness-Raising in the South: Gainesville or Tampa?' (1 Sep. 1986).
[13] SSC, WLC, B12F11: NYRF, 'An Introduction to the New York Radical Feminists' (n.d.).
[14] For example: Berkshire Women's Liberation, 'Suggested C.R. Topics', *Women*, 1:2 (15 May 1972), p. 7.
[15] C. Hughes, *Young Lives on the Left: Sixties Activism and the Liberation of the Self* (Manchester, 2015), p. 162.

> it was a study group more than a consciousness-raising group, I have to say. We didn't talk about sexuality that much […], we did talk about our bodies to a certain extent, but it was always in relation to society.[16]

This highlights that the personal was nonetheless being related to the political. Karen Slaney also did not use the term 'consciousness-raising' when discussing the group. But she remembered talking 'about our lives', especially 'about being mothers'. Echoing language she employed when recalling her Friedan awakening, Slaney described how discussion led to revelation:

> it wasn't like we eased our way toward, out of this and into that, it was like *whoosh*. Everything changed. […] There's something that we understood and filled in the blanks.

When asked what they had understood, she elaborated:

> That almost everything we'd been told about being female was lies. That things that we were expected to like were actually limitations. […] Possibly [laughs] possibly the heart of is that women are oppressed.[17]

This revelatory experience chimes with Hughes' interviews with other TPG members,[18] and also with NYRW's discovery of the method's potential. Like Sarachild, Slaney had been awakened by a text, yet it took group discussion to understand the pervasiveness of women's oppression.

This was not a result of consciousness-raising travelling. Although Hughes uses the term 'consciousness-raising', she argues TPG's discussions were a continuation of 'a political and personal process CMPP members had initiated', also drawing upon the idea of 'the small group process'.[19] She points to the group's March 1971 article 'Organizing Ourselves', which

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[16] Interview with Sheli Wortis, TL, Cambridge, MA (28 Sep. 2018).
[17] Interview with Karen Slaney, TL, Silver Spring, MD (6 Oct. 2018).
[18] Hughes, *Young Lives*, pp. 168-70.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 171.

describes this process. It is almost indistinguishable from consciousness-raising—'Sharing oppressive experiences with other women gives them the understanding that many of the situations described are not personal but social'—but the bibliography doesn't cite NYRW/Redstockings. It instead lists CMPP member Geoff Richman's paper, 'On Strategy', along with two papers by Americans: 'Small Group: Big Job' by Arleen Sunshine and Judy Gerard, and 'The Small Group Process' by Pamela Allen.[20]

Allen co-founded NYRW; in summer 1968 (just before NYRW began consciousness-raising) she moved to San Francisco, where she joined Sudsofloppen and developed, with them, the small-group process.[21] She outlined it as:

> opening up (our hopes and visions), sharing (our tentative explorations in living a more liberated life now), analysing (how other societies are structured, what needs must be met) and abstracting (what would a liberated society look like).

Allen saw the goal as providing 'a framework from which to act'. There are evident similarities to consciousness-raising—as we might expect given Allen's NYRW link—but one difference is her emphasis on groups as a unit within a movement, with 'cross-group communication'.[22] This was echoed by TPG in 'Organizing Ourselves', which advocated 'A federation of small groups', and in the London Workshop's structure.[23]

That early London groups were not initially conceived as 'consciousness-raising' is not a question of semantics—it reveals the chronology of the transnational transfer. TPG member Sue O'Sullivan made this distinction in an interview:

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[20] Tufnell Park group, 'Organizing Ourselves', *Shrew*, 3:2 (Mar. 1971), pp. 2-3.
[21] S. Evans, *Personal Politics* (New York, 1980), p. 210.
[22] Pamela Allen, *Free Space: A Perspective on the Small Group in Women's Liberation* (New York, 1970), pp. 49-50.
[23] TPG, 'Organizing', p. 3. See pp. 76 and 83 on LWLW's structure.

> Most of the beginning groups of women's liberation in this country were small groups, not consciousness-raising yet […] maybe would call themselves consciousness-raising later, but we called them small groups.[24]

We can track this shift through Workshop newsletter *Shrew*: the issue containing 'Organizing Ourselves', compiled that month by TPG, also includes an excerpt from 'Resistances to Consciousness' by Redstockings member Irene Peslikis, first printed in *NFTSY*.[25] Clearly, consciousness-raising literature had reached Britain, but it percolated through slowly: groups are only described as 'consciousness-raising' in *Shrew* from August 1971 onwards,[26] and first discussed as strategy in 1972.[27]

Another introduction to consciousness-raising reached the UK around this time, via a different New York group: Sappho Collective's 'Rapping in Small Groups', published in a 1971 issue of *Women: A Journal of Liberation* described consciousness-raising and gave suggested topics (closely mirroring NYRF's).[28] In her 1976 pamphlet *Women Awake*, written after consciousness-raising experience in Clapham, Sue Bruley described Sappho Collective's piece as 'well circulated'.[29]

By 1973-4, when Sophie Laws joined the WLM, there were, she told me, 'consciousness-raising groups *everywhere*.' Laws was the youngest person in her Archway group: a teenager, whereas other members 'had boyfriends and husbands and other lives altogether'. For her, that 'was interesting':

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[24] BL, S&A: Interview with Sue O'Sullivan, by R. Cohen, London (6 Jan. 2012).
[25] *Shrew*, 3:2 (Mar. 1971), p. 10.
[26] 'Growing Up Gracefully', *Shrew*, 3:7 (Aug. 1971), p. 12.
[27] 'Consciousness-Raising & Collective Paranoia', *Shrew*, 4:1 (Jan. 1972), p. 3.
[28] Sappho Collective, 'Rapping in Small Groups', *Women: A Journal of Liberation*, 2:2 (1971), pp. 49-50.
[29] Sue Bruley, *Women Awake* (Liverpool, 1976), p. 2.

> We would take a subject and we would take turns and tell our story and then we would try and sort of theorise from it. Work out what was different and what was the same about what we were saying. And it was a powerful thing. [30]

Historians have studied groups across Britain, with a particular focus on activists' experiences.[31] Many have shown that while consciousness-raising could lead to strong bonds between members, there were also tensions within groups and the method was not universally embraced. Natalie Thomlinson highlights that consciousness-raising was primarily practised by white feminists and that theorising from this narrow base of experience was 'at the heart of tensions between Black and white feminists'.[32] Margaretta Jolly, in her analysis of Sisterhood & After interviews, notes some saw consciousness-raising as a 'luxury', an activity for middle-class women.[33]

However, George Stevenson argues that as a method which encouraged women to speak, and a distancing from the hierarchical nature of the trade union movement, it could give working-class women a voice. He points to Bruley's history of her Clapham consciousness-raising group.[34] As a 'working-class girl', Bruley said, she had initially thought consciousness-raising 'bourgeois' but 'actually joining a group was 'a revelation'.[35] Although consciousness-raising was not popular for all WLM activists, it was for many. Throughout the 1970s, as a booklet written by Brighton WL noted, women entered the WLM via consciousness-raising

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[30] Interview with Sophie Laws, TL, London (9 Jul. 2018).

[31] A.E. Rogers, 'Feminist consciousness-raising in the 1970s and 1980s: West Yorkshire women's groups and their impact on women's lives' (PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2010); S. Bruley, 'Women's Liberation at the Grass Roots: a view from some English towns, *c.* 1968–1990', *WHR*, 25:5 (2016), pp. 726-7; S. Browne, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Scotland* (Manchester, 2014), pp. 45-62.

[32] N. Thomlinson, *Race, Ethnicity and the Women's Movement in England, 1968-1993* (London, 2016), p. 39.

[33] M. Jolly, *Sisterhood and After: An Oral History of the UK Women's Liberation Movement, 1968-Present* (Oxford, 2019), p. 99.

[34] G. Stevenson, *The Women's Liberation Movement and the Politics of Class in Britain* (London, 2019), pp. 150-1.

[35] S. Bruley, 'Consciousness-Raising in Clapham; Women's Liberation as "Lived Experience" in South London in the 1970s', *WHR*, 22:5 (2013), pp. 717-38.

groups. It remained 'the basis from which' many groups formed 'our theory' as they branched into different activist initiatives.[36]

Consciousness-raising reached France where connections to the American movement were strong. Anglophone group POW (Paris Organization of Women) first envisaged itself as a chapter of NOW but ended up choosing to pursue their own—less reformist, more radical—feminism. POW's consciousness-raising 'began almost immediately' after the group's 1972 founding and continued until 1978-9, when their activities 'began to dwindle'.[37] In a newsletter issue dedicated to consciousness-raising, POW reprinted Sappho Collective's guidelines and gave their own thoughts on the method.[38] It is unclear whether French women joined POW's consciousness-raising sessions, although there is a hint of the method reaching beyond the Anglophone group: an archived French translation of Sappho Collective's guidelines.[39]

Consciousness-raising reached the MLF through other channels too. Translations of Hanisch and Sarachild's papers on consciousness-raising were included in a special 'Libération des femmes: année zéro' issue of leftist journal *Partisans*, which the FMA/Wittig group directed.[40] But it did not catch on like it did in the UK. Namascar Shaktini's testimony provides one explanation. She said discussions within the early group—comprising Antoinette Fouque's camp too—were 'sort of like' consciousness-raising. However:

> a consciousness-raising group is different in France because they have a lot of theoretical baggage that Americans don't have so that they've got to fit in their

[36] TWL, 5BWC/01: 'Women's Liberation in Brighton: An Introduction' (*c.* 1979), p. 4.
[37] BMD, POW: POW, 'The English Speaking Feminists: an introduction' (n.d.).
[38] Sappho Collective, 'Consciousness-Raising—How? And Why?', *POW*, 3:4 (Apr. 1975), pp. 2-4.
[39] CAF, FMLAC, 10AF35: 'Consciousness-Raising Traduction' (n.d.).
[40] Carol Hanisch, 'Problèmes actuels: éveil de la conscience féminine. Le « personnel » est aussie « politique »' and Kathie Sarachild, 'Un programme pour l'« éveil d'une conscience » féministe', *Partisans*, 54-5 (Jul.-Oct. 1970), pp. 61-4, 65-70. See pp. 165-6 for more.

> new consciousness with their old consciousness. It was often a theoretical discussion as well as a personal discussion.[41]

The statement Françoise Barret-Ducrocq read aloud at the Ruskin conference, on behalf of the early, pre-split group, emphasised theory too: it explained their discussions had been 'primarily based on analyses of Engels, Reich and Kollontaï'.[42]

Claudine Mulard's testimony points to another explanation. Two years after her 1968 politicisation, Mulard began a PhD at the University California, San Diego, which 'like most campuses in the US was a very active, politically'. Mulard taught French and when a job dispute arose, she was put in touch with union organisers. This was how Mulard tapped into radical networks and, through this, joined a consciousness-raising group. Initially, she was sceptical, yet soon realised women's liberation wasn't only about 'being critical' but also 'your own personal fights to transcend'. Consciousness-raising was 'the most important thing' she did in San Diego:

> it was the discovery of people being able to talk in a personal way that makes sense to someone else. You know, the understanding that the personal is political.

Her consciousness-raising group learned of the budding movement in France via the first MLF publication, newspaper *le Torchon Brûle* (*LTB*). When Mulard returned to France in June 1971, she thus already knew about the regular Assemblées Générales (AGs) at the Beaux-Arts, where different MLF groups met. Three days after returning, Mulard attended an AG, and soon joined a local group in the fifth arrondisement.[43]

This group was involved in the creation of *LTB* no.4, and the influence of Mulard's American experience is clear, even from the cover art: the figure of a ten-limbed woman giving

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[41] Interview with Namascar Shaktini, TL, Portland, OR (10 Oct. 2018).
[42] Statement quoted in des femmes, *MLF psychanalyse et politique 1968-2018. 50 ans de libération des femmes*, Vol. 1 (2 vols., Paris, 2018), p. 44.
[43] Interview with Claudine Mulard, TL, Los Angeles, CA (13 Oct. 2018).

birth while performing chores was inspired by a 'Fuck Housework' poster which Mulard bought in California.[44] Mulard penned an article on consciousness-raising, though her name is not signed—most *LTB* articles were anonymous or collectively signed 'to disrupt a bourgeois, traditional idea of identity'.[45] She discusses her 'experience of an American group', detailing, in particular, aspects of consciousness-raising she thought would be beneficial to the MLF: supporting other women; constructive criticism; how 'Le personnel est politique et le politique est personnel.' Significantly, though, Mulard argued these points were important for *groupes de parole*—discussion groups—to take on board. Her article ended with the assertion that 'women's speech, which is stifled when they are children, repressed in the couple, […] ignored in leftist organisations' was finally 'developing in the MLF's discussion groups'.[46]

Discussion groups were, as we saw in Chapter III, the foundation of the MLF. From 1970, Fouque and Wittig's camps had been calcifying into two distinct groups: Psyche et Po and Féministes Révolutionnaires. At the same time, women in Parisian neighbourhoods were establishing local groups. These groups were a precursor to the class struggle tendency in the MLF, but Sophie Mayoux, who joined one in the 16th arr. emphasised her group 'existed all by itself'. 'Nobody told us what to do,' she explained. 'We just talked together and decided.' Activities varied: Mayoux said her group didn't discuss 'our private lives at all'.[47] Others set out to theorise from personal experience. In *LTB,* a group in the 12th described their discussions, 'where each woman can bring her own experience' and, through 'solidarity' could 'understand

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[44] *Ibid.* The original poster is also used in a collage on p. 10 of the *LTB* issue. On the original poster, by Virtue Hathaway (1971), see: Center for the Study of Political Graphics, 'Fuck Housework' (n.d.), http://collection-politicalgraphics.org/detail.php?type=browse&id=1&term=Viet+Nam+War+Era&page=6&kv=8623&record=267&module=objects (15 Jun. 2020).

[45] Interview with Mulard, TL.

[46] 'Cause Toujours', *LTB*, 4 (*c.* 1972), p. 6.

[47] Interview with Sophie Mayoux, TL, Paris (22 Oct. 2018).

the political dimension of her condition'.[48] In questioning why consciousness-raising didn't catch on in France, it is thus worth noting some groups were already practising their own methods of relating the personal to the political.

Within Psyche et Po, an entirely different way of theorising, based upon psychoanalysis, was developing. Michèle Idels met Fouque at Vincennes, where she was hosting a seminar on the 'two libidos'. Building upon, but moving away from, Freud and Lacan, Fouque argued that just as the phallus is symbolised as 'a source of worth and thinking' so too must the uterus 'be symbolised as wearing the values of life'. It was a way to understand, Idels explained, 'there are other values than the phallic one'. This was not just a theory:

> It was a way of thinking and the thinking was […] developing every day. It was not something which was closed and that *she* [Fouque] said, but it was a way of thinking, between women.[49]

Through group discussions, Psyche et Po explored the unconscious as political.[50]

Sylvina Boissonnas met Fouque in 1968, and in 1970 came across her again at the AGs. Within Psyche et Po meetings, which could attract forty or fifty attendees, Boissonnas 'found how to relate personal problems to political problems.' She recalled, in particular, coming to terms with an abortion, and the group's discussions changing their attitudes to their mothers.[51] 'Psychanalyse et politique was a personal work,' Idels added. 'But out of the personal work we could also understand, with Antoinette—because she was a very important thinker—in which system we were in.'[52] These recollections are echoed in others' written testimony. Participants remembered exploring their upbringings, relationships, identities—they questioned what it

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[48] Groupe du 12e, *LTB*, 3 (*c.* 1972), p. 7.
[49] Michèle Idels, interview with Sylvina Boissonnas and Idels, TL, Paris (24 Oct. 2018).
[50] Interview with Antoinette Fouque (1982), quoted in des femmes, *MLF*, p. 35; Antoinette Fouque, *There Are 2 Sexes*, ed. S. Boissonnas, trans. D. Macey and C. Porter (New York, 2015), p. 49.
[51] Boissonnas, interview with Boissonnas and Idels, TL.
[52] Idels, *ibid*.

was to be a woman.[53] Natalie Mei recalled the emotional intensity of discovering this speech: 'I have happy memories of fits of laughter, fits of tears, of tenderness.'[54]

This resulted, for many, in a powerful closeness to the group. Around 1973, Mulard encountered Psyche et Po. The group has, over the years, garnered various criticisms, including accusations of a cult of personality surrounding Fouque, of Fouque acting as psychoanalyst for members, and of activists exploited within Fouque's business ventures.[55] Mulard distanced herself from the group in the early 1980s owing to disagreements. Nonetheless, she described Psyche et Po as 'the place where I felt most comfortable in the women's lib.' With long meetings, late-night dinners, and personal discussions, it was 'like belonging to a family.'[56] The group's closeness and their collective identity is seen in the example of Boissonnas and Idels insisting upon a joint interview. 'It doesn't even make sense to me,' Boissonnas said, 'to have someone ask about my individual life and involvement.'[57]

Consciousness-raising was not the only method through which women discovered the personal was political. In all three countries, women theorised from their own experiences—in some cases, following the transnational transfer of consciousness-raising and 'the small group process' from the US to Europe; in others, through homegrown practices. The importance of consciousness-raising should therefore not be overstated: in the UK, there were other transnational influences; in France, it mostly influenced groups with American connections. In comparing these practices, certain commonalities emerge: a move away from the hierarchy and doctrinaire theorising of male-dominated left-wing movements; a move

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[53] See, for example: Anouch El Khatib quoted in des femmes, *MLF*, pp. 136-8.
[54] Natalie Mei, 'De l'ectriture solitaire à l'oralité solidaire' in des femmes, *Génération MLF: 1968-2008* (Paris, 2008), p. 123.
[55] The special edition of journal *ProChoix* discussed in Chapter III levels many of these criticisms.
[56] Interview with Mulard, TL.
[57] Boissonnas, interview with Boissonnas and Idels, TL.

towards collectivity, closeness, trust. In all three countries, women discovered their voices—and began, together, to analyse the world around them.

2. Networks

a. National

i. United States

Across the US, consciousness-raising groups blossomed into city-wide, umbrella groups. For example, New Haven Women's Liberation had, by 1970, grown to '50-100 women'; they met in consciousness-raising groups, and 'Project groups' were also established to work on specific initiatives, like building a women's centre.[58] Local newsletters reported activities, meeting dates and times, and often printed position papers.[59]

There was organisational and ideological diversity between umbrella groups. Chicago Women's Liberation Union (CWLU) had 350 members organised into chapters. It described itself as a 'radical women's organization', but here the term 'radical' was used to differentiate CWLU from women's groups working within other social movements. In fact, CWLU identified as socialist feminist, arguing women were denied power 'because of their class position'.[60] This differs from the radical feminism developed primarily by New York groups—like NYRF/Redstockings and The Feminists. For NYRF, women were 'categorized as an inferior class based upon their sex'; their aim was to 'destroy this sex class system'.[61] Ideological

[58] 'Guide to the Movement', *Women: A Journal of Liberation*, 1:2 (Winter 1970), p. 70.
[59] See SSC, WLC, B7-9 for local US WLM newsletters.
[60] SSC, WLC, B8F9: CWLU, Information Pack (4 Apr. 1973).
[61] NYRF, 'An Introduction'.

difference did not always form along geographic lines. In Boston there were strong currents of both socialist feminism—with Bread and Roses—and radical feminism—as with Cell 16.

In 1970, Caltha Mellor and Judy Miller from New Haven Women's Liberation decided to visit groups in different cities to survey their structures, ideas, and activities. In doing so, they discovered that a lack of communication meant groups were working on the same issues without realising, so 'work is duplicated (research, leaflets, etc.) and we don't learn from each other's experience'. Mellor and Miller offered solutions: conferences and newsletters. On the former, they cited the national conference at Lake Villa and three regional, noting the connections made had resulted in 'important ideas and lasting contacts'.[62] In the event, that national conference was the only one—perhaps because of the difficulties in assembling from across the US. Conferences on specific topics were held, often drawing women from across cities or regions, like the Emmanuel College conference in Boston (1969); the Midwest Regional Women's Studies Conference (1971); La Conferencia de Mujeres por La Raza in Texas (May 1971); and NYRF's conferences on marriage (1973) and motherhood (1974).[63]

However, there was a proliferation of periodicals, alongside local newsletters. There were those with aspirations of acting as national publications—like *Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement* (1968-9), *Women: A Journal of Liberation* (1969-1982), and *off our backs* (1970-2008)—and those which explored specific groups' ideas, but accrued wider readership, like Cell 16's *No More Fun and Games* (1968-73) and NYRW's *Notes*. In 1971, *Ms.* magazine began—but this was mainstream and commercial, far from movement-oriented. Vast WLM directories,

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[62] Caltha Mellor and Judy Miller, 'What We Think is Happening…', *Women: A Journal of Liberation*, 1:2 (1970), pp. 78-9.

[63] SL, PAHP, 89-M204, 52: Emmanuel College, Boston, MA, conference programme (May 1969). Frances Chapman, 'alverno', *oob* (Nov. 1971), p. 3. 'Chicanas prepare for national conference', *The Militant* (14 May 1971), p. 13. SBC, NYRFR, B1: NYRF, 'Marriage Conference' flyer (1973); NYRF, 'Motherhood Conference' call for papers (1974).

growing with each edition, were compiled as well, listing contact details for groups and services in different cities. *Mushroom Effect*, for example, was created by Jane Quincey in Albany, CA, who obtained addresses from groups through correspondence, surveying periodicals, and sending out hundreds of circulars. As with many WLM networking mechanisms, *Mushroom Effect* was 'personal labor coming from the awareness that information is existence'—in other words, a grassroots initiative borne of necessity.[64]

ii. United Kingdom

City-wide groups in the UK, like the London Workshop, similarly encompassed smaller consciousness-raising and project or special-interest groups, but national networking was more significant here. National conferences acted as the steering body for the movement, with ten held, in different cities, between 1970-8. It was here that the British WLM's demands were debated and adopted: equal pay, equal opportunity, free contraception and abortion, and 24-hour nurseries (Oxford, 1970); legal and financial independence, a right to self-defined sexuality and end to discrimination against lesbians (Edinburgh, 1974); freedom from violence, and an 'end to the laws, assumptions and institutions that perpetuate male dominance and male aggression towards women' (Birmingham, 1978).[65]

There were also specialist conferences, like on women's healthcare, and for different strands of feminist thinking, with seven socialist feminist conferences from 1973-9 and five radical/revolutionary conferences between 1977-9.[66] As this suggests, there were, broadly speaking, socialist and radical tendencies within the British movement akin to those in the

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[64] Jane Quincey, notes, *Mushroom Effect*, 2 (Aug. 1970), pp. *x* and 14.
[65] BL, 'Timeline of the Women's Liberation Movement', https://www.bl.uk/sisterhood/timeline (20 Jun. 2020).
[66] Setch, 'WLM in Britain', p. 94.

American.[67] And from 1977, as Jeska Rees has explored, revolutionary feminism, 'radical feminism's younger cousin', was born, with Sheila Jeffreys' paper in which she argued men were 'the enemy'. Revolutionary feminism was further developed through the concept of 'male supremacy': all men possessed power over all women. At the 1978 national conference, revolutionary and socialist feminists clashed over the demands. That national conference was the last—although Rees argues we should not just attribute this to ideological difference; it was also symptomatic of 'the lack of a mechanism to resolve conflict, and a lack of time to hear everyone's views' at national conferences.[68]

This is not to say movement connections ended in 1978—separate socialist and radical feminist conferences were held in 1979, and other areas of organisation flourished. The Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD) was founded in 1978, connecting groups through four conferences (1979-82) and newsletter *FOWAAD!*, established as 'a forum where we can form and voice our opinions, exchange our ideas, and devise our strategies'.[69] More generally, British WLM print culture continued to flourish. From national newsletter *WIRES* (*Women's Information Referral and Enquiries Service*) (1975-84) to *Spare Rib* (1972-93), a monthly sold on newsstands (but much more movement oriented than *Ms.*);[70] socialist feminist magazine *Red Rag* (1972-80); newspaper *Outwrite* (1982-8); radical feminist magazine *Trouble & Strife* (1983-2001); and regional and local newsletters.

iii. France

[67] For more detailed discussion, see Setch and Rees.
[68] J. Rees, 'A Look Back at Anger: the Women's Liberation Movement in 1978', *WHR*, 19:3 (2010), pp. 342-3, 351.
[69] 'Editorial', *FOWAAD!*, 1 (Jul. 1979), p. 1.
[70] L.K. Nye, 'Introduction: Spare Rib - the first nine years', British Library, https://www.bl.uk/spare-rib/articles/introduction-spare-rib-the-first-nine-years (20 Jun. 2020).

Despite ideological differences present from the earliest days, the MLF began with strong connections—as Mulard's testimony suggests. AGs and *LTB* both provided arenas for movement-wide theoretical debate. Much activity was concentrated in Paris, although *LTB* also provided a forum for provincial groups, like one from Rouen, which directed an issue.[71] Disagreements played out within these forums: Psyche et Po and Féministes Révolutionnaires continued to clash over strategy and theory. Members of the latter developed a position which came to be known as 'materialist feminism'—not quite analogous to Anglophone radical feminism but moving towards it, with the assertion women were oppressed by the patriarchy as well as capitalism. In addition to these groups were two further tendencies: more reformist associations (like the Ligue du Droit des Femmes); and 'class struggle' groups.

One of the earliest 'class struggle' groups, the Cercle Elisabeth Dmitriev, took issue with Féministes Révolutionnaires' theoretical stance and with broader organisational issues. The Cercle was a Marxist-feminist group established by Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR) women and named after a nineteenth-century socialist feminist. From 1971, they argued the MLF needed structure—a committee to implement AG decisions, centralised bulletin and contact list, and a communications group—to become a mass movement.[72] Lisa Greenwald interprets 'Sortir de l'ombre', the pamphlet outlining these arguments, as a 'formal declaration of autonomy from the MLF'.[73] In fact, it declared the autonomy *of* the MLF. The Cercle believed women's liberation would 'come about through the socialist revolution' but wanted to achieve liberation 'in alliance with the working class, not as an appendage to it.'[74]

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[71] Claudie et Patricia, 'Lyon Paris', *LTB*, 6 (Jun. 1973), p. 6.

[72] Contemporaine, PLK, F/DELTA/RES/0704/01/02: Cercle, 'Le MLF doit devenire un mouvement de masse', flyer (1971).

[73] L. Greenwald, *Daughters of 1968: Redefining French Feminism and the Women's Liberation Movement* (London 2018), p. 132.

[74] SBC, BOP, B23: Cercle, 'Sortir de l'ombre' (*c.* 1972), p. 2. Translation from: FAS, EMA, DM2123/8/127 F4: Bristol WL, Translation of 'Sortir de l'ombre' (Apr. 1975), p. 2.

Such debates continued until 1974, which, Françoise Picq has noted, many activists described as the MLF's *année noire*: AGs grew less regular, then stopped altogether; discussion grew less amicable; the final issue of *LTB* was published in 1973. This change could be attributed to the adoption of the Loi Veil in November 1974, finally legalising abortion—a struggle which had united the MLF. Or perhaps groups wanted to devote more attention to their internal development. As Picq argued, 'This is not the end of the Women's Movement, only a new stage.'[75]

Psyche et Po, now calling themselves 'des femmes', founded a publishing house, bookshops, and their own periodicals, *Le Quotidien des femmes* (1976-7) and *Des Femmes en mouvement* (1977-9).[76] Féministes Révolutionnaires continued with headline-grabbing actions, along with other initiatives, including lesbian discussion group the Gouines Rouges, and journals *Questions féministes* (*QF*) (1977-80) and *Nouvelles Questions Féministes* (*NQF*) (1980-present).[77] Class struggle activists established newspaper *Les Pétroleuses* (1974-6)—named after female arsonists who supported the 1871 Paris Commune—to coordinate the *tendance*, which was still amorphous,[78] comprising neighbourhood, student, and employee groups in Paris, and groups in Nanterre, Lyon, and Marseille.[79]

The end of AGs and *LTB* did not result in a complete severance of contact between groups: tendencies still coordinated on some issues and attended the same demonstrations. Clashes also continued. Most notably, Psyche et Po, or 'des femmes', attracted much ire when, in 1979, they registered 'Mouvement de libération des femmes—MLF' as an association.

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[75] Françoise Picq, *Libération des Femmes: Les Années-Mouvement* (Paris, 1993), pp. 190-6.
[76] Interview with Mulard, TL.
[77] Interview with Christine Delphy, TL, Paris (25 Oct. 2018).
[78] CAF, FAC, 38AF1: 'Plate-forme des "Petroleuses"' (1975).
[79] Editorial collective, 'où en est le mouvement des femmes?', *Les Pétroleuses*, 5 (*c*. 1975-6), p. 15. CAF, FAC, 38AF1: 'Notre Histoire A Commence' (n.d.). On provincial groups, see: *Les Pétroleuses*, 1 and 2.

Boissonnas and Idels explained that this responded to the rise of state feminism: Fouque wanted to incorporate 'MLF' so political parties couldn't use the name to advertise.[80] Nonetheless, this move was interpreted as an appropriation by other groups—especially in the context of the group using 'des femmes' for their business ventures—resulting in litigation.[81]

Finally, while the MLF did comprise distinct tendencies, the picture was complex in practice: groups beyond Paris (which often had similar structures to city-wide groups in the US and UK) didn't always neatly fit tendencies,[82] nor did groups like POW. Activists often moved between groups,[83] and while there were journals expressing the views of particular tendencies, there were also those operating at the peripheries, like *Sorcières* (1976-81) and *Histoires d'Elles* (1977-80).[84]

b. Transnational

Clearly, the movements in each country were connected to different extents and through different networking mechanisms: local umbrella groups, city-wide meetings, conferences, and periodicals. These mechanisms also facilitated transnational exchange. International conferences were organised, including European conferences on socialist feminism (May 1977), the feminist press (March 1977), and the Coordination Internationale de Femmes Contre La

[80] Interview with Boissonnas and Idels, TL.

[81] See: Greenwald, *Daughters*, pp. 224-32. The episode is also addressed in the second volume of the group's history: des femmes, *MLF*, Vol. 2 (Paris, 2018).

[82] CAF, FAC, 38AF2(2): Groupe femmes d'Angers, 'Si toutes les femmes' (n.d.). Contemporaine, PLK, F/DELTA/RES/0704/01/05: Des femmes du Mouvement à Marseille, 'Le Pouvoir et l'Impuissance' (1974).

[83] See, for example, p. 228.

[84] For more on this, see: L. Kandel, 'L'explosion de la presse féministe', *Le Débat*, 1:1 (1980), pp. 105-28.

Repression (January 1978).[85] Activists travelled to conferences abroad;[86] papers given at conferences were typed up and circulated in other countries,[87] as were conference reports.[88] For example, *Spare Rib*'s report of the first OWAAD conference was reprinted in *off our backs*. The 'perspectives' of OWAAD member groups were also given, along with their contact details.[89] In this way, the impact of conferences radiated out: talks given, literature distributed, connections made found wider audiences.

As these conference reports suggest, magazines, newsletters, and newspapers were important platforms for exchange. Much of Laurel Forster's analysis of British WLM magazines as building 'a feminist culture' is applicable to American and French periodicals. They reported on movement news and provided 'space for individual expression' and airing debates.[90] *New Haven Women's Liberation Newsletter* declared its 'most significant role' as providing a 'forum for ideas, specifically your ideas', and encouraged readers to 'respond to articles appearing within the letter, and to submit original articles'.[91] Letters pages, naturally, allowed for debate. The *POW Newsletter* called theirs 'Forum' and solicited 'criticisms,

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[85] Anne Cesek, 'European Socialist Feminist Conferences', *WIRES*, 29 (12 Apr. 1977), p. 18. European Feminist Press Conference, notice, *Nouvelles Féministes*, 15 (May 1977), p. 4. CAF, FMLAC, 10AF11: Coordination International, flyer (1978).

[86] 'Conference on Sex-Role Stereotyping', *WIRES* (12 Apr. 1977), p. 1. Paula Jennings, 'Report on the Pornography Conference in New York City', *Nessie*, 4 (Nov. 1979), pp. 8-9.

[87] SL, RWHRC, MC556, 28.22: Margerie Canja, letter to WHRC (11 Jun. 1974).

[88] 'From the International Women's Meeting in Paris', *Bristol WL Group Newsletter* (Apr. 1973), p. 1. 'Rencontre Internationale' Supplement, *L'Information des Femmes*, 18 (Jul.-Aug. 1977). 'En Grande-Bretagne: la conférence nationale des féministes socialistes', *Cahiers du féminisme*, 10 (Jun.-Sep. 1979), p. 23.

[89] 'britain: organization of women of asian and african descent—1st national conference', *oob* (Jan. 1980), pp. 10-11.

[90] L. Forster, 'Spreading the Word: feminist print cultures and the Women's Liberation Movement', *WHR*, 25:5 (2016), p. 819.

[91] 'Editorial', *New Haven WL Newsletter*, 1:1 (Mar. 1971), p. 1.

questions, problems' to fill it,[92] just as *Les Pétroleuses* printed impassioned responses to articles.[93]

Shaila Shah was a member of the York collective that inherited (from a Leeds group) production of *WIRES*. As the newsletter for the national movement, they had a liberal editorial policy: material, sent in from across the country, was always published. There were, Shah recalled, 'lots of arguments on the pages of *WIRES*' with back-and-forth through letters. Shah remembers it as 'a very exciting time' with 'lots of disputes going on in the women's movement'. Although this wasted 'a lot of time', Shah said: 'actually it was also trying to explore what was going to be best, in terms of moving forwards and strategies'. Periodicals were vital spaces for WLM organisation—alongside conferences, Shah said, they were the primary arena for the 'exchange of ideas'.[94]

Shah described feminist magazines as having 'burst upon the scene'. She co-organised a 1978 conference on feminist magazines in Manchester,[95] at which a range of publications was represented, and subsequently co-edited an anthology of writings from various periodicals.[96] Shah explained that many of her contacts at WLM periodicals came from her time working on *WIRES*: 'We kind of scoured the feminist literature of the time and we would reproduce pieces'.[97] Reprinting pieces was common—and this was a significant method of theory and news diffusion within the movement. A circular from Radical Feminists 28 in Minneapolis, MN, which contained articles on the group's thinking, began: 'Please print the following in your newspapers, newsletters, etc. Any of the articles may be printed.'[98]

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[92] Forum, *POW Newsletter*, 2:3 (Dec. 1973), p. 3.
[93] 'en réponse à dominique', *Les Pétroleuses*, 7 (Dec. 1976), p. 9.
[94] Interview with Shaila Shah, TL, London (7 Mar. 2019).
[95] 'Feminist Papers Conference' notice, *SR*, 74 (Sep. 1978), p. 24.
[96] H. Kanter et. al., eds., *Sweeping Statements* (London 1984).
[97] Interview with Shah, TL.
[98] Contemporaine, FFL, F/DELTA/0807: Radical Feminists 28, circular (2 Feb. 1972).

As for transnational exchange, this was the explicit purpose of some periodicals. At her 1978 feminist magazine conference, Shah began discussing the need for a feminist periodical providing a 'platform' for 'Black and Asian women's struggles' in Britain, 'because by now Black women had also started organising'. She wanted the periodical to have an 'internationalist' outlook too:

> We wanted a kind of platform that would show what was happening in other countries as well because it was exciting. Women's liberation was no longer just here, it was worldwide, but at different stages, in different phases and culturally appropriate as designed by the women who were in it in those countries.[99]

In 1980, the group met in London to work on this project, and in 1982 the first issue of newspaper *Outwrite* was published.[100]

Articles were written by the editorial collective and sourced in 'a variety of ways'. Some transnational connections were fostered through the collective's contacts; for example, Shah knew feminists in Bombay and New Delhi. New connections were also sought—when the *Outwrite* collective heard of 'women's groups forming in different parts of the world' they would write. Shah remembered how 'exciting' it was collecting *Outwrite* post: 'suddenly you think, we've got something from Namibia, who's contacting us from Namibia?' *Outwrite* also 'tried to distribute as internationally as we could, including some free subscriptions overseas' and fostered 'exchange subscriptions' with other publications.[101]

There was transnational diffusion and dialogue in other periodicals too. International news sections were common, as were letters from abroad and reprints of foreign texts. One 1978 issue of *WIRES* included an article reprinted from Spanish feminist magazine *Vindicacion*

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[99] Interview with Shah, TL.
[100] Margot Farnham, '*Outwrite* Collective interview: "Writing Our Own History"', *Trouble & Strife*, 15 (1989), pp. 46-7.
[101] Interview with Shah, TL.

feminista, a notice from the Women's Union of Greece, and two 'roughly translated' letters from France.[102] Sometimes specific writers acted as channels: Canadian Nancy Huston, for example, regularly reviewed American texts, and reported on American WLM news in French periodicals.[103] National directories listed groups and publications in other countries.[104] Finally, many national periodicals had international subscribers: *Spare Rib* and *LTB*, for example, were read by Americans.[105]

One regular subscriber to both national and foreign WLM periodicals was the Women's History Research Center (WHRC) in Berkeley, CA, the earliest WLM archive. It was established in 1968 by Laura X, a UC-Berkeley student who, inspired by Malcolm X, had changed her name 'to symbolize her rejection of men's legal ownership of women and the anonymity of women's history'. By 1971, the WHRC had become an 'international women's archive'.[106] Contact lists and correspondence give an idea of how the WHRC established national and transnational links to collect material. For example, Rosalyn Baxandall—one of the founders of NYRW, and later a member of Redstockings and WITCH, who had links to Americans in the British WLM—suggested publications Laura X could contact, including *Shrew*.[107] *Shrew*, in turn, put the WHRC in touch with *Spare Rib*.[108]

The WHRC also corresponded with *Socialist Woman*, the London Power of Women collective, WL groups in Bristol, Warwick and Glasgow, *LTB*, and POW. In much of this correspondence, Laura X solicited periodicals for the WHRC's collection. This wasn't merely

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[102] 'International', *WIRES*, 46 (9 Mar. 1978), pp. 11-16.
[103] Nancy Huston: 'Review: Kate Millett, *En Vol*', *Sorcières*, 2 (Mar. 1976), p. 58; 'Review: Dolores Klaich, *Femme et Femmes*', *Sorcières*, 3 (May 1976), p. 56; 'le féminisme c'est doux', *Histoires d'Elles*, 1 (1 Nov. 1977), p. 6; 'hurler avec les coyotes', *Histoires d'Elles*, 4 (Mar.-Apr. 1978), p. 15.
[104] 'International', *Mushroom Effect*, 2 (Aug. 1970), p. 1.
[105] BI, SEBESTYEN/1/14: Betsy Warrior, letter to Amanda Sebestyen (28 Jan. 1979). SL, RWHRC, MC556, 28.92: *LTB* subscription notice (n.d.).
[106] SL, RWHRC, MC556, 28.57: Laura X, letter to *Shrew* (28 Apr. 1971).
[107] Interview with Linda Gordon, TL, New York, NY (26 Sep. 2018).
[108] SL, RWHRC, MC556, 28.57: *Shrew*, letter to Laura X (n.d.).

for storage: the WHRC ran a microfilming service, sending their collections to women's studies courses; and general libraries used the WHRC's catalogue as a roadmap for building collections. Consequently, other Americans subscribed to the WLM periodicals that the WHRC stocked.[109] Nor was the transfer of literature unidirectional. Laura X sent groups WHRC newsletter *Spazm* and its successor, newspaper *It Ain't Me Babe*. Material from these periodicals was then reprinted, for example by *Socialist Woman*.[110]

Because of this information network, and their success in self-publicity, the WHRC became a hub for early transnational communication, and was often used as a referral centre. A 'French girl' called G. Rillerson visiting Ohio, wrote to say she was 'really impressed by what is going on here' and that she intended 'to do something when I go back to France, to help my French sisters'.[111] The WHRC forwarded her letter to one of their contacts, Lyn-Carole Fitzwater, living in Grenoble, saying 'Perhaps you would like to drop her a line', along with a list of all the Frenchwomen they knew through *LTB*.[112] Similarly, when Monica Sjöö, a Swedish artist in the Bristol WLM, sent them the 'Arts Manifesto' she had written, they forwarded it onto American artists, and advised Sjöö to contact American art historian Linda Nochlin, author of trailblazing article 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?'[113]

Personal correspondence also sparked transnational diffusion and dialogue. For example, Barbara Winslow wrote letters to Sheila Rowbotham after returning to the US in 1970. They included detailed updates on the American WLM. In one letter, Winslow criticised Gloria Steinem, lamented 'younger radical' women's preoccupation with 'examining their pelvises',

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[109] SL, RWHRC, MC556, 29.60: Laura X, letter to Joy Southall (20 Jul. 1971). WHRC notice, 'Research/Resource Aids', *PM: The women's movement: Where it's at!* (2 Apr. 1971), p. 3.
[110] SL, RWHRC, MC556, 28.67: Laura X, letter to Leonora Lloyd (31 May 1971).
[111] SL, RWHRC, MC556, 28.92: G. Rillerson, letter to WHRC (16 Dec. 1971).
[112] SL, RWHRC, MC556, 28.92: WHRC, letter to Lyn-Carole Fitzwater (29 Dec. 1971).
[113] SL, RWHRC, MC556, 23.53: Laura X, letter to Monica Sjöö (18 Mar. 1972).

and reported on American International Socialists' 'fight on the woman question': she had written a 'hotly debated' pamphlet. 'I'll keep you informed,' Winslow ended. 'I will also send a copy of the pamphlet.' Rowbotham's replies to Winslow's numerous letters aren't archived, but they evidently contained news of British developments. 'I was glad to know,' Winslow responded, 'that people were criticizing Selma's piece on work.'[114]

Similar correspondence is found in archives in all three countries, and had a wide impact, reaching far beyond the two correspondents—a kind of 'hourglass effect'.[115] Letter-writers funnelled in news and literature from others, and recipients spread this at the other end. In one letter, Winslow asked Rowbotham to send 'stuff you've done' and in turn offered: 'If you want anything, let me know or give me a list—there's a great magazine out called Up From Under.'[116] She shared her pamphlet; Rowbotham sent magazines, including *Red Rag*, and her books.[117] These works were then diffused by Winslow. One of Rowbotham's pamphlets was discussed by Winslow's socialist caucus in Seattle Women's Liberation; the group wanted to reprint it.[118] Winslow told Rowbotham she wanted to review her book *Hidden from History* for *Workers Power*, *Ms.* and *off our backs*;[119] and mentioned she would use Rowbotham's writings in a feminism course she was teaching.[120]

Hourglass effects are exhibited in Rowbotham's other correspondence. Kathie Gerchow, from the Women's Liberation Caucus of New York ISC, wrote in 1969. She reported on texts they were reading, and said she wanted to obtain an article of Rowbotham's [redacted].

[114] TWL, 7SHR/A/1: Barbara Winslow, letter to Sheila Rowbotham (14 Feb. *c.* 1973).
[115] A concept borrowed from network scientists. See: K.M. Sabrin and C. Dovrolis, 'The Hourglass Effect in Hierarchical Dependency Networks', *Network Science*, 5:4 (2017), pp. 490-528.
[116] TWL, 7SHR/A/1: Barbara Winslow, letter to Sheila Rowbotham (2 Nov. 1970).
[117] TWL, 7SHR/A/1: Barbara Winslow, letter to Sheila Rowbotham, (23 Sep. 1972).
[118] Winslow to Rowbotham (2 Nov. 1970).
[119] Winslow to Rowbotham (14 Feb. *c.* 1973).
[120] Winslow to Rowbotham (23 Sep. 1972).

[redacted][121]

Networks of communication grew, slowly, as women put contacts in touch with each other. Certain individuals acted as hubs, as WHRC did. Rowbotham, known through her writing, was an important connection for women in other countries in the early period. In 1970 she was contacted by the 'Women's Movement' secretary at University College, Cork, who asked for contacts and [redacted]. They wanted [redacted]'[122]

Similar motives prompted activist travel. Priscilla Allen, from Bloomington Women's Liberation Front, detailed her travels in 'England, France, and Italy' in 1971. She'd spent four months in London in 1970 and was 'astounded' by the movement's growth since then. Allen asserted: 'We can learn something from the English movement, it seems to me, and they can learn something from us.' On the former, Allen believed 'women in Britain' were 'ahead of us generally in linking their struggle to the struggles of the working class.' To demonstrate this, she had brought back a leaflet from the Notting Hill group, distributed during agitations against the Industrial Relations Bill, along with Rowbotham's 'Women's Liberation and the New Politics' which Allen was 'happy to circulate'—travel, too, led to hourglass diffusions.[123]

These different methods of transnational exchange relied upon each other. Conferences were reported in newsletters; travellers made new contacts; letter-writers posted magazines. In 1972, feminists in Bristol translated the Cercle's 'Sortir de l'Ombre'. They wanted to distribute the paper at the British National Conference, which the French women would

[121] TWL, 7SHR/A/1: Kathie Gerchow, letter to Sheila Rowbotham, (16 Jul. 1969).
[122] TWL, 7SHR/A/1: Eithne Long, letter to Sheila Rowbotham (25 Oct. 1970).
[123] Priscilla Allen, 'Remarks on the Women's Movement in Europe', *Bloomington WL Front Newsletter* (Sep. 1971), pp. 2-5.

also be attending. Ellen Malos corresponded with Michele Besos, from the Cercle, to check the translation. This wasn't the only thing they exchanged: Malos enclosed Bristol newsletter *Enough* and a contraception leaflet 'for young girls' which the Bristol group had been distributing 'at factories & dance halls'; and mentioned she'd shared around Michele's contact details.[124]

When taken together, we can see how informal movement networks were established through a variety of different mechanisms, adapted to suit different needs, how individuals and organisations acted as hubs, and how these same networks stretched to different countries. The cost, labour, and energy poured into maintaining these links was overwhelming. Archived correspondence often begins with an apology for not replying sooner—with stacks of letters waiting—and activists lament their struggles to afford 'postage and handling'.[125] But they poured energy into maintaining links because this was how ideas, theory, news, and tactics could be shared—how the WLM could become a movement.

3. Women's Centres

From Aix to Amiens, Brighton to Belfast, and Cornell to Cleveland, Women's centres sprouted across all three countries, often where movement activity was strongest. In the US, for example, the highest concentration of centres was to be found in California, Massachusetts, and New York—states with a proliferation of WLM groups.[126] Their names differed—'locale', 'maison des femmes', 'women's house'—as did their structures and activities. Many were leaderless and relied upon voluntary labour, but some had committees and paid staff; some were supported by state funding, where others relied upon donations—almost all, like other

[124] FAS, EMA, DM2123/8/127 F4: Ellen Malos, letter to Michele Besos (9 Aug. 1972).
[125] SL, RWHRC, MC556, 12.3: Lif Cory, letter to Nancy Gordon (5 Jan. 1972).
[126] Spain, *Constructive*, p. 52.

WLM initiatives, ran on shoestring budgets. Many ran courses, both academic (women's history) and practical (mechanics, plumbing, woodwork). There were yoga classes, English as a second language lessons, film showings, food co-ops, playgroups—even healthcare services. Many held libraries, especially containing legal and medical resources. All provided space for WLM activity: meetings hosted, periodicals and pamphlets stocked.[127] Shah, who was 'active in setting up the women's centre' in York, called it 'the feminist hub' for the city.[128]

There are no discernible differences between the use of centres in our three countries. Despite their diversity, the dual purposes of serving the local movement and women in the wider community were fairly consistent. Daphne Spain has explored both women's centres and feminist bookshops in her historical geography of second wave feminism in America. She persuasively analyses them using Ray Oldenburg's concept of the 'third place':[129] a place, like a bar or café, which facilitates 'informal public life', 'offering both the basis of community and the celebration of it'.[130] Despite being physically embedded in neighbourhoods and focused on serving their communities, women's centres were far from parochial. Centres served their communities as hubs within movement networks: they connected the movement through their contact with each other, referral services, their facilitation of print culture, and role as venues. And yet, barring a few studies of American centres,[131] they have not been the subject of any comprehensive investigations, let alone transnationally.

There are a handful of examples of women's centres sparking the idea to establish others elsewhere. In our interview, Shah wondered whether the idea for the York centre had

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[127] See bibliography for list of women's centre newsletters consulted.
[128] Interview with Shah, TL.
[129] Spain, *Constructive*, p. 51.
[130] R. Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community* (New York, 1989), p. 14.
[131] A. Finn Enke also explores American women's centres but focuses predominantly on feminist spaces in the marketplace (bookshops, cafés). See: Enke, *Finding the Movement. Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism* (London, 2007).

come from A Woman's Place in London.[132] Spain's study of American centres notes a few instances of inspiration: Everywoman's Centre at the University of Massachusetts Amherst was inspired by a visit to the Berkeley Women's Centre; the idea for the first LA women's centre came from an article about a women's centre in New York.[133] Similar transnational inspirations can be found in archival sources. A group of Parisian MLAC activists who wanted to establish a centre for childcare, legal support, and reproductive activism, reported that 'Such centres are already operating in the United States.'[134] However, centres primarily emerged from local need. Either they were established as a solution to a commonly encountered problem: as Parisian neighbourhood groups realised in 1972, they needed space to carry out their activities.[135] Or from activists' desire to improve women's lives: Connecticut Women established the Hartford Women's Centre because they believed 'centrally accessible information, and services are the best means of coping with the material, physical, and emotional needs of women.'[136]

Nevertheless, once established, centres looked to share expertise. The Kingsgate Place Women's Centre in West Hampstead was the first women's centre in Britain (established in 1972) and once they were up and running, they publicised the process. As founder Tamar Karet wrote in a letter to the BBC, hoping for coverage, [redacted]'[137] Karet drafted papers explaining how they had established the centre, and circulated them. One entitled 'First Get Your Centre…' is archived with the papers of Malos, who ran the Bristol Women's Centre from her basement. It outlines every step—communication with councillors, renovations, fundraising, publicity, staffing—and various mistakes they made.[138]

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[132] Interview with Shah, TL.
[133] Spain, *Constructive*, pp. 51-4.
[134] Contemporaine, PFP, MFC/0198/1: des femmes (MLAC), 'Par les femmes pour les femmes' (n.d.).
[135] 'Maison des femmes des Gobelins', *LTB*, 5 (*c.* 1973), p. 18.
[136] Hartford WL, *Women's Voice of Greater Hartford*, 1:5 (Dec. 1972), p. 1.
[137] TWL, 7TAK/01: Tamar Karet, letter to Mike Bunce (17 Jan. 1973).
[138] FAS, EMA, DM2123/8/115 F1: Tamar Karet, 'The Kingsgate Place Women's Centre: First Get Your Centre…' (15 Jun. 1973).

The Bristol centre, in turn, shared their expertise. When Swansea Women's Centre were taken to court over a rate dispute with their council, they asked the Bristol centre for help: Malos replied, explaining how they had obtained rate relief from Bristol Council, and also wrote to Swansea City Council in support of the Swansea centre.[139] In the latter half of the 1970s, as more centres were established across the country, this cooperation was facilitated on a larger scale, with National Conferences on Women's Centres.[140] Centres exchanged information transnationally too. Malos's papers contain material from American centres—gathered, along with other movement papers, when Malos visited California in 1976-7. It includes a booklet from the Stanford Women's Centre, along with flyers from the Palo Alto Men's Centre ('for men who want to examine their lives and the roles in which they have been cast'), and the San Jose Woman's Alliance, which provided emergency housing, food banks, counselling, ex-offender support, emergency transportation, and referral services.[141]

Referral services were one of the ways centres connected the WLM. The Brighton Women's Centre, for example, was 'a contact point for various women's groups and activities both nationally and locally': through them, women could reach the National Abortion Campaign, Women's Aid, Women Against Fascism and Racism, the local health group, a photography group, 'and women's centres all over Britain'.[142] A Woman's Place explained, in a notice circulated to and reprinted in local WLM newsletters, that they were 'also used by women from all over the country and overseas.' They received around twenty letters each day 'and twice as many phone calls with queries' from researchers and journalists, isolated women

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[139] FAS, EMA, DM2123/8/115 F1: Ellen Malos, letter to Swansea City Council (25 Aug. 1980); letter to Swansea Women's Centre (24 Aug. 1980).
[140] FAN, 'Conferences', https://feministarchivenorth.org.uk/1977-1/ (17 Jan. 2020).
[141] FAS, EMA, DM2123/8/126 F6: Stanford Women's Centre booklet (n.d.); The Men's Center of Palo Alto flyer (10 Feb. 1976); Woman's Alliance flyer (n.d.).
[142] TWL, 5BWC/01: 'Women's Liberation in Brighton: An Introduction', p. 8.

who wanted to be put in touch with groups, 'lesbians, disabled women, single mothers' looking for support, and women referred on to 'Rape Crisis Centres and National Women's Aid Refuges'.[143]

Many centres maintained their own newsletters, with opinion pieces, letters, and notices reprinted from elsewhere.[144] Some facilitated the production and circulation of other publications. As Shah recalled, when editorial responsibility for national newsletter *WIRES* passed from Leeds to York, the collective used York Women's Centre as their office. After publication, the *WIRES* team would send packages of each issue to centres across the country for onward distribution.[145] Indeed, centres often stocked movement literature. The women's centre in Cambridge, MA had 'women's periodicals from around the country'; they also sold 'feminist pamphlets, newspapers and posters' and ran a lending library.[146] The latter was common—libraries were stocked at centres in Isla Vista, Bristol, Glasgow, and Toulouse—and crucial, allowing women to access texts they might not have otherwise encountered or have been able to afford, thus facilitating wider dissemination of WLM ideas.[147]

Centres also facilitated the circulation of activists, as places for visitors to touch base with the movement. When Jill Brown from Coventry travelled across North America with a friend, they 'visited women's centres all over' and 'learned a lot.'[148] Conversely, activists learned from visitors. One of the contacts Malos made in California was Ellen Boneparth, co-ordinator of Women's Studies at San José State University. When Boneparth later visited the UK, she wrote to ask whether Malos could organise meetings with Bristol women interested in

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[143] A Woman's Place, notice, *Edinburgh WL Newsletter* (Jan. 1979), p.5.
[144] For example: *Santa Cruz Women's Center Newsletter* (Aug. 1973).
[145] Interview with Shah, TL.
[146] SL, BW, MC843, 1.11: Cambridge Women's Center, leaflet (Dec. 1976).
[147] Isla Vista Women's Center, *woman-kin* (6 Feb. 1975), p. 1. FAS, EMA, DM2123/8/115 F1: Bristol Women's Centre leaflet (n.d.). Interview with Ellen Galford, TL, Edinburgh (12 Nov. 2018). La Maison des Femmes, poster (1976), reproduced in La Gaffiche, *Les Femmes s'Affichent* (Paris, 1984), p. 110.
[148] FAS, EMA, DM2123/8/115 F1: Jill Brown, letter to Ellen Malos (10 Oct. 1973).

Women's Studies, and added that she was looking forward to visiting the centre. She would be 'bringing as much resource material as possible.'[149] Rebecca Johnson, a student at Bristol in the 1970s, recalled international speakers visiting the centre and remembered, in particular, a talk given by Chilean women. Such events gave her an 'understanding of women's liberation that related to other things happening' in the world.[150]

Visiting speakers diffused ideas, but so did regular, local exchanges. In their newspaper, the San Diego Women's Center emphasised they were:

> open to all individual women, and to women representatives of groups committed to the struggle against women's oppression where activities are coordinated, facilities are shared, ideas and information are exchanged.[151]

In this way, centres acted as local hubs, connecting up different groups. The Groupe de Liaison et d'Information Femmes Enfants (GLIFE) centre in Paris hosted various groups almost encompassing the full array of Parisian feminisms, from staunch class struggle activists to the reformist: the Ligue du Droit des Femmes, Féministes Révolutionnaires, les Pétroleuses, the Latin-American group, and POW. Other groups used their space occasionally, including MLAC, Choisir, Femmes en Lutte, and le Front Lesbien.[152]

As activist Catherine Kriegel remembered, along with its newsletter, GLIFE had aimed to foster 'a climate conducive to the flowering of ideas'.[153] Centres provided a space where ideas could be discussed, debated, and put into practice—including many of the transnational ideas we will explore throughout this thesis: consciousness-raising groups, self-help groups, refuge and rape crisis services. But centres also fostered a climate 'conducive to the flowering of ideas'

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[149] FAS, EMA, DM2123/8/126 F6: Ellen Boneparth, letter to Ellen Malos (17 May 1977).
[150] BL, S&A: Interview with Rebecca Johnson, by M. Jolly, Seaford (19 Oct. 2011).
[151] San Diego Women's Center, *Goodbye to All That* (2 Jun. 72), p. 16.
[152] Catherine Kriegel, 'GLIFE' in 'Les lieux du féminisme' roundtable discussion ('Quarante Ans de Pratique Féministes en Île-de-France, Paris, 5 Jun. 2010), transcript, http://www.elianeviennot.fr/Articles/Viennot-Parcours-40ans.pdf (18 Jan. 2020), p. 2.
[153] *Ibid.*

within the WLM at large, by connecting the movement. In this section we have explored some of the ways they acted as hubs, through referral services, newsletters, stocking other WLM publications, and hosting both travelling speakers and local meetings. Centres were established to serve their local communities, but this did not diminish the importance of national or transnational connections. On the contrary, centres served their local communities in precisely this way.

4. Bookselling

In 1978, Mary Coghill and Kay Stirling approached Lynn Alderson, who was managing the women's section of radical bookshop Compendium in Camden and asked whether she wanted to start a women's bookshop with them in Islington. This was about more than bookselling alone. In my interview with Alderson, she explained:

> We wanted to have a hub of feminist knowledge and a space and a place where women could connect and get the material that they need to create feminist revolution.

According to Alderson, this 'wasn't thought any differently from […] a group that had set up a women's centre, or a women's health centre, or a centre on learning manual trades.' They were all 'part of the same thing. Which was creating an alternative culture that met our needs.'[154]

Similar motives lay behind the establishment of other WLM bookshops in all three countries, with many performing the same functions as women's centres. They were not just commercial ventures: they were centres for information, venues for meetings. Much historical investigation and analysis, on feminist bookshops in all three countries, has emphasised these roles. American feminist bookshops constituted 'vital movement spaces', as Kristen Hogan

[154] Interview with Lynn Alderson, TL, London (20 May 2019).

argues, or, as Junko Onosaka asserts: 'political and educational organisations' contributing to a 'feminist revolution in literacy'.[155] Spain, building upon their work, analyses the role of bookshops in creating feminist communities, just as Kathleen Liddle, a decade earlier, argued their significance for lesbian communities.[156]

Of course, in contrast to women's centres, to keep afloat, bookshops had to be commercially viable. This has been an area of enquiry for Onosaka, and Lucy Delap in her analysis of UK bookshops as 'social worlds and physical spaces' built 'around political commitments'.[157] In her history of women's publishing house Éditions des femmes (ÉF), Jennifer Sweatman notes their bookshops in Paris, Lyon, and Marseille were 'venues for the exchange of ideas' but this is a brief mention in a longer exploration of risk, both financial and political—an area of enquiry for British project The Business of Women's Words as well.[158] Many of these histories go beyond bookshops to look at feminist bookselling more widely: how publishers, distributors, and bookshops shaped the feminist shelf; how they cooperated with each other; how apparent contradictions between profit and activism worked in practice. These broader questions are best served by focused histories and will not be addressed at length here. But they will be touched upon, insofar as they affect our primary area of investigation: the transnational roles of feminist bookselling.

Throughout the 1970s, feminist presses and publishers were established including: the Women's Press Collective, Diana Press, and Feminist Press in America; Virago, Onlywomen,

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[155] K.A. Hogan, 'Reading at Feminist Bookstores: Women's Literature, Women's Studies, and the Feminist Bookstore Network' (PhD thesis, the University of Texas at Austin, 2006), p. 7; J.R. Onosaka, *Feminist Revolution in Literacy: Women's Bookstores in the United States* (New York, 2006), p. 1.

[156] Spain, *Constructive*, p. 110; K. Liddle, 'More Than a Bookstore: the Continuing Relevance of Feminist Bookstores for the Lesbian Community', *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 9: 1–2 (2005), pp. 145-59.

[157] L. Delap, 'Feminist Bookshops, Reading Cultures and the Women's Liberation Movement in Great Britain, c. 1974–2000', *History Workshop Journal*, 81 (2016), p. 172.

[158] J.L. Sweatman, *The Risky Business of French Feminism: Publishing, Politics, and Artistry* (London, 2014); The Business of Women's Words, 'About', https://blogs.sussex.ac.uk/businessofwomenswords/ (12 Mar. 2020).

and Stramullion in Britain; and Éditions des Femmes and Éditions Tierce in France.[159] Ellen Galford, a novelist, described it as a 'Golden Age' of feminist publishing, with 'dynamic little presses' sprouting everywhere.[160] Naturally, this resulted in an explosion of feminist texts. Laws, who worked at small, radical feminist London press Onlywomen, explained it was established so women could have 'production in our own hands' and 'do what we liked with it'.[161]

With the establishment of feminist bookshops, women could 'do what [they] liked' within those spaces too. In 1973, there were eight feminist bookshops across the US; by the early 1980s, there were 65. Spain notes that many began as outgrowths of women's centre libraries, or to fill voids left by their closures. Sisterhood Bookstore in LA emerged from the latter: one founder said that after the closing of the Crenshaw Women's Center, 'women didn't know where to get hold of feminist books and information'. The founders imagined Sisterhood Bookstore as more than just a shop: 'a movement place, multi-faceted'. They had a bulletin board, gave phone referrals, sold tickets to women's events and established a 'flyer room' for announcements and free newsletters.[162] Indeed, 'the first feminist bookstore', which opened in Oakland, CA in 1970, named itself 'Information Centre Incorporate: A Woman's Place'; announcing, as Hogan argues, 'the service of feminist bookstores' to the WLM.[163]

Feminist bookshops weren't only forums through their bulletin boards—they were also places to meet other like-minded women, socialise (particularly important, Liddle notes, for lesbians), and attend meetings and events.[164] Another case study of Spain's, New Words in

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[159] On American feminist publishing, see: Onosaka, *Feminist Revolution*. On the UK: S. Murray, *Mixed Media: Feminist Presses and Publishing Politics* (London, 2004). On France: Sweatman, *Risky Business*; L. Kandel, 'Une édition féministe est-elle possible?', *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire*, 13:1 (2001), p. 13.
[160] Interview with Galford, TL.
[161] Interview with Laws, TL.
[162] Spain, *Constructive*, pp. 94-6.
[163] Hogan, 'Reading at Feminist Bookstores', p. 8.
[164] Liddle, 'More than', p. 149.

Boston, was described by one of its founders as 'a politicized gathering space for the feminist community' where old friends bumped into each other spontaneously, where information was exchanged informally, where relationships blossomed.[165] A. Finn Enke argues that 'most feminist-identified businesses in the early 1970s' emerged from founders' motivation to 'foster community'. Pride and Prejudice Books in Chicago was one such place: it was where 'women on the North Side' would 'go for pregnancy testing', where all-women dances were held, where 'La Gente (a coalition of former street gangs turned community organizers)' mimeographed their newsletter. Bookshops and other feminist spaces, like cafés and bars, Enke argues, built the movement—and they popularised and expanded it too.[166]

Of course, they also did so through the texts they sold. As Hogan has shown, readers in the US were hungry for feminist literature, and bookshops cast their net wide to source it. Carol Seajay from Old Wives' Tales in San Francisco explained that when they opened in 1976:

> We had every book of fiction published by a woman of color that we could find. And we ordered books sometimes from England, we ordered books from Canada. We went as wide as we could; we'd order from Mexico. We had books in Spanish by women when we could get them. We were committed to having every lesbian novel and nonfiction and pamphlet we could get our hands on.[167]

Hogan argues that American feminist bookshops pursued these purchasing strategies to create a 'feminist shelf' that encompassed the experiences of a wide range of women. When Alderson established Sisterwrite, she looked to this experience in creating a shelf for the British movement.

Alderson's first bookselling job was at Peace News (now Housmans), and in the late 1970s she moved to Compendium—'the biggest and best of the alternative/radical bookshops

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[165] Spain, *Constructive*, p. 106.
[166] Enke, *Finding*, pp. 62-5.
[167] Interview with Carol Seajay, by K. Hogan, quoted in Hogan, 'Reading', pp. 203-4.

in London'—where she managed the women's section.[168] Each section was its 'own little fiefdom', so while Alderson could shape hers, she had no say over 'one of the arty sections' which 'was doing stuff' she 'considered pornographic'. It was, she remembered, 'quite a difficult environment in which to work'. When Coghill and Stirling approached her with their idea, the only question for Alderson was how it would be funded.[169] In the end, with a loan of Mary and her sister's personal savings, other loans, and some donations, they were able to pull together £11,000—enough to open if they worked without pay.[170]

In Chapter II we noted women's experience in prior movements both pushed them to create an autonomous movement and equipped them with the skills to do so; similarly, just as Alderson's experience at Compendium underlined the need for a feminist bookshop, so was her experience central to ensuring Sisterwrite's success. She took home parts of Compendium's card index file each night and copied the information to create a database. Alderson had sold American texts there, including many we will encounter throughout this study—*off our backs*, Redstockings literature, Susan Brownmiller—as well as the novel *The Cook and the Carpenter*, and the work of Mary Daly and Marge Piercy. Sisterwrite would have to import American texts too: there were British women's presses by then, but as Alderson remembered, there were 'always more there, or they were there first'. For her, importing American books was not just about expanding the 'feminist shelf': it was a business decision. As she recalled, 'we had to have the American stuff if we were gonna make a success of this'.[171]

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[168] Lynn Alderson, 'Sisterwrite Bookshop' (8 Dec. 2016), https://lesbianhistorygroup.wordpress.com/2016/12/08/sisterwrite-bookshop-lynn-alderson/ (14 Mar. 2020).
[169] Interview with Alderson, TL.
[170] Alderson, 'Sisterwrite'.
[171] Interview with Alderson, TL.

Sisterwrite wanted to order directly, so Alderson travelled to the US to open a bank account and establish connections with publishers. She achieved the latter with the help of Womanbooks in New York, where she spent three days combing through their stock:

> with a pencil and a set of cards and I looked at a book and if we didn't know about it, I wrote it down and where it came from and all the rest of it and I just did that for three days.

Though Sisterwrite wasn't direct competition for Womanbooks, Alderson considered it 'extraordinarily generous' of them. Indeed the WLM often relied upon such generosity: while in New York, Alderson stayed with 'an American woman' she knew. Armed her Womanbooks leads, Alderson visited The Feminist Press in New York, small publishers in San Francisco, and a press in a third city—either Philadelphia or Baltimore, she can no longer recall—and fostered relationships to import their books.[172]

Sisterwrite also imported periodicals from other countries, like Indian magazine *Manushi*, and stocked French texts too. When discussing the latter, Alderson emphasised its difference. 'French stuff was always so bizarre,' she said. It 'seemed very intellectual' and was 'in an entirely different intellectual framework'. This verdict is unsurprising, given the only author she recalled was the densely psychoanalytic Luce Irigaray, and chimes with Anglophone perceptions of French theory which we will explore in the next chapter. Regarding Europeans, British WLM activists were 'much closer' to Danish activists, Alderson thought, though she didn't mention Danish texts sold at Sisterwrite. Instead Alderson discussed Danish women's camp Femu (which she didn't personally attend) and a socialist-feminist conference in Amsterdam (which she did).[173] Yet by far the majority of Sisterwrite's imports came from the

[172] *Ibid.*
[173] *Ibid.*

US. This could be chalked up to language, but Alderson couldn't recall importing from Australia.[174]

Importing wasn't always smooth sailing. Sisterwrite had to mark-up prices and were sometimes criticised for this—an example of business necessity trumping 'sisterly' principles, but unavoidable if importing was to continue. Alderson explained: 'we knew we had to make a profit to survive, but it was never a private profit or capitalist venture.'[175] There were also issues with authorities. Alderson recalled the difficulty of importing *The Joy of Lesbian Sex*, which was held up at customs. The inverse was true as well—Sisterwrite exported some literature to Ireland, and anything controversial was confiscated: on 'abortion in particular' but also 'sexuality'.[176]

Alderson estimated Sisterwrite contained four times as many books as Compendium women's section, including sections for fiction, history, children's books, lesbian writing, writing on class and disability. As Alderson recalled the stock, the significance of American imports was further underlined. Discussing Sisterwrite's academic offerings, Alderson cited American journals *Feminist Studies* and *Sinister Wisdom*, along with Dale Spender (an Australian living, and published, in the UK); on collections, she named American anthologies *Home Girls* and *Sisterhood is Powerful*; and noted the importance of American presses for publishing black women writers, like Audre Lorde. These were not answers to questions about American texts. Perhaps they were at the forefront of Alderson's mind given my research topic. Nonetheless, these texts were central to Sisterwrite's sales: three of their four 'big sellers' were by Americans: *The Women's Room* by Marilyn French, *Woman on the Edge of Time* by Piercy, and *Gyn/Ecology*

[174] Interview with Alderson, by L. Delap, London (20 May 2019).
[175] Alderson, 'Sisterwrite'.
[176] Interview with Alderson, Delap.

by Daly (the fourth was Spender's *Man Made Language*).[177] *Gyn/Ecology* was 'such an important text that the Women's Press decided to publish it' in the UK, Alderson recalled. They asked Sisterwrite to stop selling the US version, which they did because—as with the help Sisterwrite had received from Womanbooks—'there was a general sense of supporting each other's projects'.[178]

Besides books, Sisterwrite also sold badges, posters, silver women's symbol jewellery, and periodicals. 'Because we very much wanted it to be a centre for information,' Alderson explained, 'we got every, sort of, newsletter and newspaper going that we could. All the feminist ones. […] it was our intention to gather it all together and to act as that kind of location.' Sisterwrite had a noticeboard,[179] and became an informal referral service. Women telephoned 'to ask for all kinds of information—when the next demo was, how they could contact someone, where could they get an abortion'. Such work was a labour of love—central to their mission of supporting the movement—and wasn't without danger. Occasionally plain clothes police officers would visit 'very obviously listening to conversations and phone calls and noting down titles'. At one point, Sisterwrite were convinced they had been phone tapped.[180]

Sisterwrite's role as a movement hub was reinforced in 1979, when they opened café Sisterbite upstairs. This was to create a 'meeting place', rather than increase profits—Alderson didn't know 'if it was ever financially viable'.[181] As with American bookshops, we find evidence of British booksellers' desire to foster community. Building upon the work of Enke in the US, Delap takes this argument one step further: bookshops did not just provide space for communities, they also brought them into being. This was particularly important for black

[177] Interview with Alderson, TL.
[178] Alderson, 'Sisterwrite'.
[179] Interview with Alderson, TL.
[180] Alderson, 'Sisterwrite'.
[181] Interview with Alderson, TL.

women's activism, Delap asserts; however, many found black bookshops more central to their organising than feminist bookshops. 'If you didn't have a black women's group and you had a black bookshop,' said OWAAD member Mia Morris, 'then that's what held the community.' Activists could find the literature they sought at bookshops, and a base for organising too.[182] Sabarr Bookshop in Brixton, for example, led to the formation of the Brixton Black Women's Group in 1973, which carried out community activism—like providing education material to schools—with the Sabarr Bookshop Collective.[183]

Bookshops fostered transnational community too. As Alderson emphasise, Sisterwrite 'had women from *all over* the place coming.'[184] Bookshops were listed in movement directories, mentioned in periodicals, and word spread between activists.[185] Sisterwrite 'became internationally known', Alderson explained, 'So we had quite famous women coming, when they came to London, they came to see us.' She could recall visits from the editor of *Manushi*, women who had been expelled from the USSR, various American writers including Piercy (who gave a talk organised by Alderson), and Americans from *off our backs*, who the Sisterwrite collective got to know on 'on a social level'. Visiting Sisterwrite was a way for women from other countries to:

> connect with our feminism, or find out a bit more about it. And, there were other places abroad where you would go and do that as well. So there was a sense of a wider network as well as the one in Britain.

When Alderson visited Amsterdam, she 'would go to [women's bookshop] Xantippe and have a look at their books and go to their women's bar'.[186]

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[182] Delap, 'Feminist Bookshops', pp. 178-81.
[183] Thomlinson, *Race*, p. 69.
[184] Interview with Alderson, TL.
[185] For example: 'Research/Resource Aids', *PM: The women's movement: Where it's at!* (2 Apr. 1971), p. 4; 'Bibliographie', *Les Pétroleuses*, 2 (*c.* 1974), p. 20.
[186] Interview with Alderson, TL.

Galford likened bookshops to women's centres. Because these spaces fulfilled similar functions across different countries, a travelling activist knew they could find the local movement through a women's centre or bookshop. Galford recalled:

> they would fetch up in a women's centre or when there started to be radical bookshops and feminist bookshops, there were noticeboards. People offering places to stay or looking for places to stay or, just, passing through.

'When you went down to London from Scotland,' she added:

> you would go to feminist bookshops as they started, like Sisterwrite. And where you would run into people in the café who had turned up from Hungary or Australia or South Africa or wherever. And so, there was that sense that people connected beyond locality. There was a […] kind of internationalism that I certainly felt part of.[187]

These same transnational functions can be found within French bookselling. The establishment of Éditions des Femmes (ÉF) by Psyche et Po in 1973 was financed by Boissonnas, heir to the Schlumberger family fortune.[188] Mulard was involved from the beginning. She saw publishing as a 'natural next step' for the movement and described ÉF as 'international from the get-go'. Italian and English translations were among the earliest books they published. Mulard recalled visiting New York with Boissonnas to 'track down Juliet Mitchell' (who Fouque had already encountered at Ruskin) and secure the rights to *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*. ÉF also sought new links: 'Every time there was a *rencontre* we went there, and they came to Paris.' Mulard remembered conferences in Holland, Germany, and Italy, as well as international book fairs: 'we went there and talked about our books and also this was a way to get to be in contact and pick up other titles that we should translate.'[189]

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[187] Interview with Galford, TL.

[188] E. Roudinesco, 'Obituary: Antoinette Fouque, militante de l'émancipation des femmes', *Le Monde* (24 Feb. 2014), https://www.lemonde.fr/disparitions/article/2014/02/24/la-mort-d-antoinette-fouque-militante-de-l-emancipation-des-femmes_4372379_3382.html (14 Sep. 2019).

[189] Interview with Mulard, TL.

This resulted in the French publication of American and English texts, but Boissonnas and Idels were also keen to note links with other countries. ÉF visited Algeria, where they became embroiled in a censorship dispute. They went to Moscow and met feminists there.[190] Three years later, they discovered Russian feminists had printed a feminist almanac, inspired by texts which ÉF had disseminated on their first trip.[191] And they had strong links with Spanish activists Eva Forest and Lidia Falcón. ÉF first heard of Falcón at the Frankfurt Book Fair, and bought the rights to her correspondence with Forest. But their relationship extended beyond this publication: they organised a petition to support the women, and a meeting at the French-Spanish border. 'It was not just a book,' Idels said. 'It was not just an action. It was all together.'[192]

The group's first bookshop, Librairie des femmes, which was established in 1974 in the seventh arrondisement of Paris, fostered transnational links too. Mulard, who was in charge of the shop, described its opening as 'exhilarating'. She recalled its interior: 'green like a garden' with a palm tree, duplicated by the angled mirror it sat before, and space to sit and read. The bookshop was, Mulard explained, 'a place that was very alive', drawing customers as 'the word of mouth spread'. As with other bookshops, this included foreign visitors: Mulard remembered Black Panther activist Kathleen Cleaver visiting.[193] In a 2005 interview, Fouque said: 'All the professors from the United States, Japan, the entire world, who passed through Paris, came to provision themselves there.'[194] The shop became, Mulard remembered, a 'formidable platform of exchange' for the publishing house: women visited with their manuscripts. This wasn't the

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[190] Idels, interview with Boissonnas and Idels, TL.

[191] For more, see: K. Harting, 'Echoes of Ourselves? Feminists between East and West in the Leningrad Almanac *Woman and Russia*' in K. Schulz, ed., *The Women's Liberation Movement: Impacts and Outcomes* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 243-60.

[192] Interview with Boissonnas and Idels, TL.

[193] Interview with Mulard, TL.

[194] Interview with Antoinette Fouque, by J. Duncan (2005), quoted in Sweatman, *Risky Business*, pp. 68-9.

only impact of international visits: Mulard explained she was moved to recently learn that one foreign customer had been inspired 'to open a bookstore in Venice that she called The Green Store'.[195] Boissonnas recalled that the bookshop inspired another in Milan too.[196]

However, given the rupture within the MLF, it was not a hub for the entire movement. In a 1980 interview with *off our backs*, Wittig and Delphy lamented the 'money and power' of des femmes, and in particular, the way this affected transnational links. 'Women come from abroad, they go to their bookstores,' Delphy said.

> They prevent feminists from abroad, who see a woman's bookstore and come there, from having contact with active groups; they don't give them the addresses of other groups.[197]

Clearly, they, at least, were not served by Librarie des femmes.

In 1978, another Parisian bookshop opened in the eleventh arrondisement, which presented itself as a hub for different groups. Carabosses announced their opening in movement magazines:

> Organized and managed by a collective of 15 women, it is not only a bookstore but also a place where women can meet, discuss, listen to music, and consult documents on the international women's movement, including a file containing all the addresses of women's groups and collectives in France and elsewhere.[198]

A year later, like Sisterwrite, Carabosses opened a café—Barcarosse—which was linked to the shop. Another announcement stressed this would 'be a place for meetings and research', book events, 'poetry, music, painting', 'theatre and video screenings'. The collective wanted other groups to use the space, like a women's centre, and asked for donations to help keep the venue

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[195] Interview with Mulard, TL.
[196] Boissonnas, interview with Boissonnas and Idels, TL.
[197] Carol Ann Douglas, 'Christine Delphy and Monique Wittig Interview: "french feminists' interview"', *oob* (Jan. 1980), pp. 7, 26.
[198] 'Carabosses', *Les Cahiers du GRIF*, 23-24 (1978), p. 185.

open.[199] The difference between Carabosses' fundraising and ÉF, with the means to travel to international book fairs, seems stark. Wittig bemoaned this power imbalance: 'They represent France abroad because they're the ones with the contacts.'[200]

Within British and American feminist bookselling there was more collaboration. Alderson remembered 'links with other feminists in bookshops, Jane at Grassroots, Mandy at News from Nowhere in Liverpool'. In 1979, a conference of Feminists in Bookselling and Distribution was held in Manchester.[201] In the US, networks became formalised, with the creation of the Women in Print Conference in 1976, which brought together 120 women from feminist bookshops, presses, periodicals, and distributors, and sparked the creation of the *Feminist Bookstores Newsletter*.[202] Hogan traces some of the transnational connections the newsletter fostered, particularly through the 1980s and beyond—but even in its second year of publication, the newsletter listed bookshops in Berlin, Lisbon, and Montreal.[203]

We see here the building of a specialised network of booksellers—another way in which booksellers' links reached far beyond their fixed shop premises. Simultaneously, they were physical hubs, bringing local communities into being with space for conversation, meetings, and events. They were, like women's centres, the WLM embodied: ideas on the shelves, activity on the bulletin boards, women browsing the aisles. But as the French case demonstrates, bookshops could embody ruptures in the movement too.

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[199] 'Barcarosse: Un Café Littéraire de Femmes', *QF*, 6 (Sep. 1979), back matter.
[200] Douglas, 'french feminists', p. 7.
[201] Alderson, 'Sisterwrite'.
[202] Onosaka, *Feminist Revolution*, p. 31.
[203] Hogan, 'Reading', pp. 16-26, 46.

Conclusion

In her case study of LA bookshop Sisterhood, Spain reproduces testimonies 'current and former customers' left on the shop's website for its 25th anniversary in 1997. One, from 'Harriet P.', read:

> You anchored our exciting new movement—to a reader like me, the existence of a bookstore for and about us made our revolution real, visible, permanent.[204]

In many ways, feminist bookshops made the transnational aspects of that revolution visible and concrete too—as did women's centres and movement periodicals.

This chapter has not provided a comprehensive overview of transnational movement networks—that is a picture which we will build throughout this thesis. Instead, we have sketched out some of the structures through which the WLM organised. Sometimes these structures were, themselves, diffused: consciousness-raising and small groups travelled, and feminist booksellers learned from their counterparts abroad. More significantly, however, this chapter has explored the networking mechanisms through which activists communicated and shared ideas, and spaces which supported local activism while connecting it to movement activity elsewhere. Both enabled the transnational links we will study in the following chapters. We turn now to one area of movement activity which flourished, in particular, through discussion groups, periodicals, conferences, and feminist bookselling: theorising.

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[204] Spain, *Constructive*, p. 101.

V. Theory

In the first issue of *Questions féministes* (*QF*), the editorial collective outlined their definition of feminist theory:

> We consider theoretical *any discourse, whatever its language may be*, that attempts to *explain the causes and the mechanisms*, the *why* and the *how* of women's oppression in general or of one of its particular aspects.

Although their journal was academic, and made no apology for not always writing 'simply', they still envisaged it as a place where 'texts of different kinds that formulate theories about women's oppression' could be brought together: 'a one-page brochure, a literary work, a lampoon'.[1] As this suggests, WLM theorising took many different shapes. In the last chapter we looked at how activists theorised collectively in consciousness-raising and discussion groups, and how ideas travelled through periodicals, correspondence, conferences, and bookselling. Activists also ran courses, sometimes within movement-controlled spaces,[2] but increasingly within higher education institutions. Although the establishment of feminist academia was less smooth in the UK and France than the US,[3] throughout the 1970s, certain WLM activists went on to obtain jobs in academia, founding seminars, lectures, conferences, and journals (like *QF*), thus providing additional space, resources, and opportunities for feminist theorising and dialogue.

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[1] *QF* Collective, 'Variations on Common Themes' [reprinted from *QF*, 1 (Nov. 1977)], trans. Y. Rochette-Ozzello, in Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds., *New French Feminisms* (New York, NY, 1981), pp. 212-3.

[2] For example: SSC, WLC, B8F11: Liberation School for Women, Syllabus (1973).

[3] See: E. Bird, 'The Academic Arm of the Women's Liberation Movement: Women's Studies 1969-1999 in North America and the United Kingdom', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 25:1 (2002), pp. 139-49; and M. Perrot, 'Où en est en France l'histoire des femmes', *French Politics & Society*, 12:1 (1994), pp. 39-57.

Given this expansiveness of the WLM theoretical landscape, it would be difficult to exhaustively catalogue its transnational aspects. Instead, this chapter focuses upon analyses of 'women's oppression in general' (rather than 'its particular aspects', such as sexuality) which were created in one of our three countries and went on to impact feminists in the other two countries. While WLM histories include examples of travelling theory, none provide this overview. Carol Giardina has examined the impact of Simone de Beauvoir upon American radical feminists.[4] Elsewhere, Eve Setch questions the influence of American theory upon the British WLM;[5] and a collection edited by Mary Evans and Kathy Davis explores the 'impact of US feminist theory on the intellectual practices of feminists on both sides of the Atlantic' through scholars' 'intellectual biographies'.[6] Anna Gurun, in her comparative study of British and French WLM approaches to sexuality, notes theory crossed borders, but states she uncovered no 'direct exchange' or 'contact' between the countries—an assertion tested throughout this transnational study, but questionable even within theory (which had to travel by some means).[7]

These histories have informed this enquiry. Yet widening our source material to include oral testimony and a survey of archival collections also brings into question some of their arguments: that 'direct contact' and transnational theory are distinct; that, as Setch writes, there was 'little direct take-up' of American ideas in Britain;[8] or that, as Evans and Davis claim, 'feminist theory is almost shorthand for theory that has been produced in the USA'.[9] We find,

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[4] C. Giardina, *Freedom for Women: Forging the Women's Liberation Movement* (Gainesville, FL, 2010), ch. 4.
[5] E. Setch, 'The Women's Liberation Movement in Britain, 1969-79. Organisation, Creativity and Debate' (PhD thesis, University of London Royal Holloway, 2000).
[6] K. Davis and M. Evans, 'Introduction', in Davis and Evans, eds., *Transatlantic Conversations: Feminism as Travelling Theory* (Abingdon, 2016), p. 13.
[7] A. Gurun, 'Second-Wave Feminist Approaches to Sexuality in Britain and France, *c.* 1970-*c.* 1983' (PhD thesis, University of Dundee, 2015), p. 252.
[8] Setch, 'WLM in Britain', p. 14.
[9] Davis and Evans, 'Introduction', p. 13.

instead, there was 'direct' take-up of American ideas in Britain (and France), but significant homegrown theorising too. Exploring these crosscurrents enables us to pinpoint the origins of certain concepts, how they travelled, examine which activists engaged with them, and analyse how ideas evolved.

1. *The Second Sex*

a. United States

In Chapter I we explored American activist awakenings inspired by *The Second Sex* (*TSS*); this was only the beginning of engagement with de Beauvoir's seminal work. It is near ubiquitous in archival traces of the American WLM, featuring on countless reading lists—more so than any other text.[10] It was available to purchase or borrow from local groups,[11] was discussed in consciousness-raising guidelines,[12] newsletter articles,[13] and manifestos.[14] It was the departure point for much early movement theorising—above all, for radical feminists.

Kate Millett had been awakened by *TSS* as a student.[15] Her *Sexual Politics* (1970), one of the first major analyses to explore patriarchy,[16] owed much to *TSS*. When de Beauvoir read it, she said Millett 'should have given credit to *The Second Sex* because that's where she gets all her theory.'[17] Millett later admitted she was 'painfully indebted' to de Beauvoir, both her general

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[10] For example: SL, FEC, Pr-11, 1.7: Bob Broedel and Bill McCausin, 'Women's Liberation: A Bibliography' (Jul. 1970). SSC, WLC, B8F9: Liberation School for Women, syllabus (Spring 1973). SBC, PBP, B31: 'Feminist Theory', introduction (1971).

[11] *LA WL Center Newsletter*, 1:11 (Mar. 1971), p. 4.

[12] SSC, WLC, B18: Springfield group, 'The Way we See it" (n.d.), p. 9.

[13] *Bloomington WL Front Newsletter* (Apr. 1971), p. 8; and *Waterbury Area Women's Center Newsletter* (Aug. 1974), p. 5.

[14] Jo Freeman, 'Bitch Manifesto', *NFTSY* (1970), p. 5.

[15] Kate Millett, in P. Forster and I. Sutton, eds., *Daughters of de Beauvoir* (London, 1989), pp. 20-2.

[16] P.T. Clough, 'The Hybrid Criticism of Patriarchy: Rereading Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*', *The Sociological Quarterly*, 35:5 (1994), pp. 473-86.

[17] Deirdre Bair, 'Simone de Beauvoir in Paris and America', *NYT* (6 May 1984), pp. 12-14.

approach—'the philosophic and historical perspective that de Beauvoir gives to the condition of women'—and specific sections, on, for example, D.H. Lawrence.[18] But Millett moved beyond *TSS* through her analysis of power relations, sketching a 'theory of patriarchy', from the 'Ideological' (men and women are socialised into different roles), the 'Biological' (these roles emerge from 'gender identity' and not sexual difference), and the 'Sociological' ('Patriarchy's chief institution is the family').[19]

Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970)—another 'founding text of radical feminism'[20]—was dedicated to de Beauvoir. Within the first few pages she describes *TSS* as 'profound', perhaps even the 'definitive analysis' on the woman question.[21] As Giardina asserts, Firestone used de Beauvoir's work as her theoretical 'springboard',[22] much like Millett—but departed from it more drastically. Where De Beauvoir notes the debilitating effects of the female reproductive system,[23] for Firestone, 'Pregnancy is barbaric', 'Like shitting a pumpkin', and should be rendered obsolete by technological advancements.[24] Firestone roots her analysis more firmly in biological difference than Millett or de Beauvoir—indeed Firestone sees this as a weakness of *TSS*. For Firestone, women are a 'sex class', where 'Unlike economic class, sex class sprang directly from a biological reality: men and women were created different'.[25]

Firestone was a founding member of NYRW, Redstockings, and NYRF. *TSS* was central to other members' thinking too. For Kathie Sarachild, de Beauvoir 'laid the groundwork' for radical feminism's 'analysis of male supremacy' with three 'key elements': the

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[18] Millett in *Daughters*, pp. 20-3.
[19] Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (Chicago, IL, 2000), pp. 23-60.
[20] V. Randall, 'Firestone, Shulamith (1945-2012)' in *The Encyclopedia of Political Thought* (2014), http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781118474396.wbept0371/abstract (3 Dec. 2015).
[21] Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (New York, 1970), p. 15.
[22] C. Giardina, *Freedom for Women: Forging the Women's Liberation Movement* (Gainesville, FL, 2010), p.76.
[23] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Harmondsworth, 1981), p. 610.
[24] Firestone, *Dialectic*, pp. 127-30.
[25] *Ibid*., p. 16.

assertions that (1) 'Women have always before been oppressed' with a basis both 'biological and historical' and (2) 'Socialism has not been sufficient to eliminate the oppression of women'; and finally through (3) her 'vivid description of male domination and its effects on women'.[26] The first element moved NYRW/Redstockings towards their assertion that 'Women are an oppressed class'. The second convinced them women's liberation needed to take priority; the third underlined the pervasiveness of 'male supremacy'—along with consciousness-raising. But it was probably through practising the latter that Redstockings developed another key tenet of their thinking: the 'pro-woman line', which, as they explained in their 1969 manifesto, rejected 'the idea that women consent to or are to blame for their own oppression'.[27]

'Redstockings Manifesto' was another foundational text of radical feminism, circulating 'widely in mimeographed form' and appearing in numerous WLM anthologies.[28] Other radical feminist groups similarly drew upon *TSS*: it featured on the recommended reading for The Feminists' 'Membership Requirements';[29] Cell 16 read aloud from *TSS* at their first meeting.[30] In the group's journal they described it as 'still the most intelligent, human, and thorough document written on Female oppression and masculine supremacy.'[31] Following de Beauvoir's death in 1986, Redstockings held a memorial speakout in New York, which many radical feminists attended.[32]

Although *TSS* continued to inform American WLM theorising through the 1970s, it was not wholeheartedly embraced by all. In September 1979, an NYU conference on feminist

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[26] Kathie Sarachild, 'The Power of History' in Redstockings, *Feminist Revolution* (New York, 1978), pp. 27-8.
[27] RWLAA, FLL: Redstockings, 'Redstockings Manifesto' (7 Jul. 1969).
[28] Redstockings, 'A Collective Radical Feminist Declaration' (Jul. 2009), http://www.redstockings.org/index.php/a-collective-radical-feminist-declaration (3 Jul. 2020).
[29] The Feminists, 'The Feminists: A Political Organization to Annihilate Sex Roles', *NFTSY* (1970), p. 116.
[30] Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *Outlaw Woman: A memoir of the War Years, 1960-75* (Norman, OK, 2014), p. 125.
[31] Roxanne Dunbar, 'Sources of Information', *No More Fun and Games*, 2 (Feb. 1969), pp. 120-1.
[32] RWLAA: Redstockings, Memorial Speakout for Simone de Beauvoir (1 May 1986), audio recordings.

theory commemorated the thirtieth anniversary of *TSS.* It had three aims: to re-evaluate 'the single most seminal work of feminist theory'; to bring 'individuals from different countries and different fields' together to discuss 'feminist theory today'; and to facilitate 'the dialogue, sharing and enthusiasm' which would provide 'fertile ground for new theoretical leaps'.[33] But 'dialogue' erupted into bitter debate: only one paper (of the 21) was written by a black woman; only three of over 100 panellists, moderators, and workshop leaders were black;[34] and lesbians felt erased, with no sessions or workshops using the word 'lesbian' in their titles.[35] Robin Morgan opened the first evening session by declaring 'feminist theory cannot be created by mostly all white women limited by a Euro-American tradition'. She called upon Susan McHenry, *Ms*. magazine's first black editor, to give an unscheduled paper.[36]

In 'Notes of a Native Daughter', McHenry explained her 'black feminist study group' had read *TSS* 'among other theoretical works by white European and American feminists' to try 'to determine the extent to which the various analyses were consistent with *our* experiences as black American women'. McHenry found de Beauvoir's 'account of the psychosocial process of becoming a woman' resonated with her 'experiences as a black American female' but expressed her frustration that de Beauvoir only briefly mentions 'the situation of people of color and that is by way of an analogy'. For McHenry's study group, this was 'a real stumbling block' in their reading of *TSS* and most 'white feminist theory'. McHenry agreed with Barbara Omolade's argument that:

> *since* all of the theory produced by white feminists to date speaks far too little about and to the fundamentally different historical and political realities of

[33] SBC, RMP, BS15: NYU, 'The Second Sex—Thirty Years Later', call for papers (1979).
[34] Barbara Macdonald and Cynthia Rich, 'Feminist Theory: Debates of the 1980's', *Sojourner*, 5:3 (Nov. 1979), p. 8.
[35] Carol Anne Douglas, '2nd sex 30 years later: feminist theory conference', *oob* (Dec. 1979), p. 5.
[36] Macdonald and Rick, 'Feminist Theory', p. 8.

> women of color, *then* the body of this theory […] is inauthentic—or maybe just *plain wrong*.

'There can be no feminist theory,' McHenry argued, 'except that it addresses the condition of *all women*.'[37]

b. France

Just as this conference revealed different American responses to *TSS*, so it revealed different MLF schools of thought. Hélène Cixous, another speaker, argued the word 'feminism' was 'negative': 'We have different words in France.' According to a conference report in *off our backs*, other MLF women in attendance—Christine Delphy, Monique Wittig, and Michèle Le Dœuff—'were visibly and audibly disturbed' by this. 'I fear that in getting rid of man-made woman,' Cixous continued, 'we will get rid of woman-made woman.' She then claimed French women did not use the word 'lesbian' because it had negative connotations in France. 'What France?' cried Wittig. 'This is a scandal.'[38] This MLF conflict came as a surprise to Americans. In their next issue, *off our backs* printed an interview with Delphy and Wittig where they explained the 'neo-femininity line' that Psyche et Po and writers like Cixous advanced.[39]

As Elaine Stavro has noted, Psyche et Po 'scorned de Beauvoir's "misogyny" and her "phallic feminism", which, they believed, was oriented to increase women's status within existing male-identified power structures', not challenge them.[40] This corresponded with my interview with Michèle Idels and Sylvina Boissonnas. According to Idels, *TSS* presented 'misogynist stereotypes concerning women, who were the second sex, which is subordinated

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[37] Susan McHenry, 'Notes of a Native Daughter', *Sojourner*, 5:3 (Nov. 1979), p. 8.
[38] Douglas, 'theory conference', p. 5.
[39] Carol Anne Douglas, 'Christine Delphy and Monique Wittig Interview: "french feminists' interview"', *oob* (Jan. 1980), p. 7.
[40] Elaine Stavro, 'The Use and Abuse of Simone de Beauvoir: Re-evaluating the French Poststructuralist Critique', *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, 6 (1999), p. 265.

to the first one'. Together with Antoinette Fouque, in their discussions, Psyche et Po moved 'from the second sex' to an assertion that 'there are two sexes, and then having to think the difference, what is it to be a woman?'[41] Fouque's answer took the biological essentialism of psychoanalysis as its starting point. Within the work of Freud and Lacan, with their 'phallic monism', women were defined as 'castrated' males but, Fouque argued, a different 'symbolic order' could be conceived: the 'uterine'.[42]

In an attempt to ascertain de Beauvoir's influence over French feminism, Catherine Rodgers interviewed a range of thinkers. Although there was diverse opinion on *TSS*, all agreed 'it was not discussed, and certainly did not function as a programme.' By 1968, MLF activists 'had either absorbed Beauvoir's premises' and 'were ready to radicalise them further' or 'had time to reject them'.[43] Psyche et Po came under the latter; materialist feminists, the former. As Rodgers argues, they shared de Beauvoir's 'non-essentialist approach', but went further in rejecting biology: only 'social factors' for materialist feminists, 'are pertinent to the analysis of women's oppression'.[44] De Beauvoir was a supporter of materialist feminists, and became honorary 'directrice' of their journal *QF*, and financed *NQF*.[45] But this did not result in an engagement with *TSS* on the same level as Americans'—quite the contrary. Following her death, *NQF* noted 'Anglo-Saxon feminists' had 'studied, re-studied, and over-studied' de Beauvoir, while 'a great silence prevails on the French side'. They explained: 'Living in another country has allowed American and English women to worship or criticize her freely; we were held in respect by her proximity: she was not a myth to us'.[46]

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[41] Michèle Idels, interview with Sylvina Boissonnas and Idels, TL, Paris (24 Oct. 2018).
[42] Antoinette Fouque, *There Are 2 Sexes*, ed. S. Boissonnas, trans. D. Macey and C. Porter (New York, 2015), p. 37.
[43] C. Rodgers, 'The influence of *The Second Sex* on the French feminist scene' in Ruth Evans, ed., *Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex: New Interdisciplinary Essays* (Manchester, 1998), pp. 62-4.
[44] Rodgers, 'The influence', pp. 83-4.
[45] Interview with Delphy, TL; Douglas, 'french feminists', p. 6.
[46] 'Simone de Beauvoir 1908-1986: Gracias por tu vida', *NQF*, 13 (1986), I-XII.

c. United Kingdom

TSS certainly starred in the British WLM canon—a staple in movement libraries and bibliographies.[47] Although British theorists grappled with *TSS*, however, it was not as formative as for Americans. In her 1966 article 'Women: the Longest Revolution' ('TLR'), Juliet Mitchell described *TSS* as 'the greatest single contribution' on women's oppression, but only engaged with it briefly and critically before outlining her own analysis. For Mitchell, de Beauvoir's analysis is unhelpfully ahistorical, with socialism emerging 'as a curiously contingent solution at the end of' *TSS* 'in a muffled epilogue.'[48]

However, as we will see, those American radical feminist texts heavily influenced by *TSS* were influential within the British and French movements—perhaps evidencing Davis and Evans' claim that European feminist theory 'came into its own once it had been taken up in the USA, only then returning to Europe as a central strand of feminist thinking.'[49] Indeed, one of the few British WLM conference papers that referenced de Beauvoir featured a quotation lifted from Firestone's *Dialectic*.[50]

2. 'The Longest Revolution'

However, Mitchell's 'TLR' provides a counterexample to Davis and Evans' argument. Published in the *New Left Review* in 1966, a few years before the WLM's conception, it offered an analysis of woman's position which moved beyond the attempts of previous socialist theorists (Bebel, Fourier, Marx, Engels, de Beauvoir). Such works were 'predominantly economist in emphasis',

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[47] TWL, 7SHR/B/1: WLW, 'Paperback Literature List' (25 Apr. 1973); TWL, 7SAA/2: 'Some General Books to Start With' (c. 1970).
[48] Juliet Mitchell, 'Women: the Longest Revolution', *New Left Review*, 0:40 (Nov. 1966), pp. 15-16.
[49] Davis and Evans, 'Introduction', p. 13.
[50] TWL, 7PAC/01: Griselda Pollock, 'Some Ideas About the Sex Role—Stereotypes in the Visual Arts' (Nov. 1973).

Mitchell asserted, 'stressing [woman's] simple subordination to the institutions of private property' without projecting 'a convincing image of the future'. Mitchell's 'solution to this impasse' was to situate woman's oppression within a series of 'separate structures' which together formed a 'complex' unity: Production, Reproduction, Sexuality, and Socialisation.[51] Women's liberation, Mitchell concluded, 'can only be achieved if *all four* structures […] are transformed'.[52]

a. United States

'TLR' was first sold in the US by radical presses as a pamphlet.[53] In 1971, it was published in Mitchell's *Women's Estate* by Penguin in the UK, occasionally imported into the US.[54] This version had been updated by Mitchell to tackle the advent of the WLM and radical feminist theorists, including Firestone and Millett. Mitchell acknowledged they contained 'pertinent insights', but ultimately found them wanting—and reasserted her original thesis.[55] Finally, in 1972, it was published in the US by Pantheon Books, widening circulation.

Like *TSS*, 'TLR' was a staple on American WLM bibliographies.[56] It was discussed in both city-wide meetings[57] and small study groups.[58] It shaped Sudsofloppen's 'small group process': the San Francisco group took Mitchell's four structures and spent 'one month discussing the ways women are oppressed in each area, plus one month discussing how the

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[51] Mitchell, 'TLR', p. 16.
[52] *Ibid.*, p. 29.
[53] 'Pamphlets, Packets, Paperbacks…', *PM: The women's movement: Where it's at!* (2 Apr. 1971), pp. 5-6.
[54] Louise Thompson, 'Review: Juliet Mitchell, *Women's Estate*', *NYRF Newsletter*, 2:4 (Apr. 1972), p. 6.
[55] Juliet Mitchell, 'TLR', *Women's Estate* (London, 1971), pp. 75-122. This 1971 version has been mistaken for a copy of the 1966, leading to conclusions Mitchell was remarkably prescient about the WLM. See Gurun, 'Second-Wave Feminist', p. 42.
[56] Rita, 'Suggested Reading', *Women*, 2:4 (10 Jul. 1973), p. 13; SL, FEC, Pr-11, 1.7: 'Women's Bibliography' (n.d.).
[57] SL, PAHP, 89-M204, 52: 'Large Meeting' (25 Jul. 1969).
[58] 'Study Groups' Reading List', *Berkeley/Oakland Women's Union Newsletter* (Mar. 1975), p. 3.

four elements interrelate.'[59] Engagement could be formative even when negative: one New York group read it aloud over several weeks 'to criticize it';[60] an NYRF member said she found Mitchell's discussion of American radical feminism 'stimulating', but concluded 'a "truly" Marxist analysis' was not of 'particular value to Radical Feminism'.[61] This is not to say Mitchell's analysis was only of use to socialist feminists. One San Diego group who identified as both socialist and radical feminists found it so central to their 'political education' that they named their newspaper *The Longest Revolution*. Unconcerned with ideological labels, they were in the process of 'studying a lot'—including writings by Mitchell, Firestone, and Sheila Rowbotham.[62]

Yet 'TLR' was most firmly embraced by socialist feminists—especially CWLU. As former member Christine R. Riddiough explains, in 1971 CWLU chapter The Midwives of the Revolution argued it should inform CWLU's programme of action.[63] In line with Mitchell's assertion that '*all four* structures' governing women's oppression needed transformation, the Midwives proposed a 'strategy which emphasizes struggle on many different levels'. To elucidate this, they conceived of 'a visual chart'. Along one side were Mitchell's four structures; down the other were areas of struggle: women's immediate needs (abortion, daycare, equal pay, healthcare), developing consciousness (education, guerrilla theatre, consciousness-raising groups), developing an analysis of societal oppression, and building a vision for the future.[64] These areas were later simplified into 'service, education, direct action'. CWLU initiatives then filled the squares (**Fig. 1**). The paper and 'Mitchell Chart' were discussed at CWLU's second

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[59] Pamela Allen, *Free Space: A Perspective on the Small Group in Women's Liberation* (New York, 1970), pp. 49-50.
[60] 'Them and Me', *NFTSY*, p. 63.
[61] Thompson, 'Review'.
[62] 'Editorial', *The Longest Revolution*, 1:1 (Sep.-Oct. 1976), p. 1.
[63] C.R. Riddiough, 'Women: The Longest Revolution' (26 Aug. 2016), https://www.dsausa.org/women_the_longest_revolution (30 May 2018).
[64] CWLU, HPLA: The Midwives of the Revolution, 'Some Thoughts on Program' (1971), https://www.cwluherstory.org/teaching-modules-theory-strategy/some-thoughts-on-program (5 Jul. 2020).

conference (April 1971) and, Riddiough concludes, 'guided the organization's work' for 'the remainder of CWLU's existence'.[65] For example, a paper written by the Gay Women's Group of CWLU, officially adopted at the CLWU annual conference, used 'TLR' as its framework, working out the position of lesbians within each of Mitchell's structures.[66]

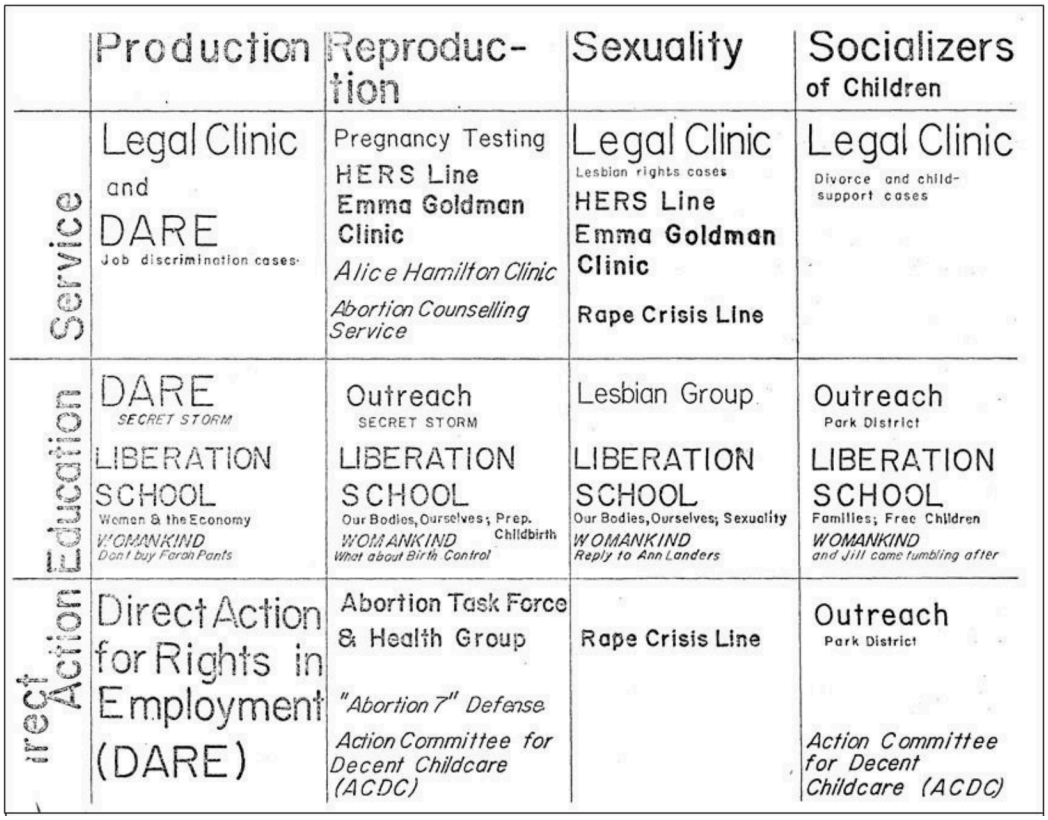


Figure 1: *'Mitchell Chart' showing CWLU programmes.*[67]

b. United Kingdom and France

Though less formative for British and French groups, 'TLR' was nonetheless significant. Karen Slaney recalled TPG discussing it,[68] as did feminists in other groups.[69] Rebecca Johnson read

[65] Riddiough, 'TLR'.
[66] SSC, WLC, B8F9: CWLU Gay Women's Group, 'Lesbianism and Socialist Feminism' (Nov. 1972).
[67] CWLU, 'Mitchell Chart' (*c.* 1974).
[68] Interview with Karen Slaney, TL, Silver Spring, MD (6 Oct. 2018).
[69] BL, S&A: Interview with Beatrix Campbell, by M. Jolly, London (6 Sep. 2010); Interview with Ann Oakley, by M. Jolly, London (11 May 2012).

Mitchell, along with Friedan and others, in the feminist philosophy group she established while studying at the University of Bristol.[70] In France, *Woman's Estate* was among the very first books published by ÉF;[71] when Françoise Barret-Ducrocq established a university course on 'Feminism and Politics', participants studied it alongside texts by Marx and Rowbotham.[72]

Indeed, Rowbotham's writings were also influential. They often featured alongside Mitchell's in bibliographies from the British movement,[73] and are found in French reading lists and articles.[74] For example, an analysis of housework in *Cahiers du féminisme* began with lengthy extracts from Rowbotham's *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World* (1973)[75]—also published by ÉF.[76] They reached the US too—as evidenced by Rowbotham's correspondence with Barbara Winslow.[77] Even Rowbotham's historical work informed American theorising: in one letter to *off our backs*, her *Women, Resistance and Revolution* was described as 'A good beginning' to exploring the differences in women's lives 'in spite of our common biology'.[78]

European feminist theory did not only become central to feminist thinking after being 'taken up in the USA', as Davis and Evans claim.[79] As Jeska Rees has noted, at the beginning of the British WLM, 'most radical women assumed […] the "woman question" was best examined through a socialist analysis of economic class relations' with understandings drawing upon 'the work of Engels, via Juliet Mitchell's landmark 1966 article'. The influence of this can be seen, Rees adds, in the British WLM's first four demands, which 'reflected a socialist understanding

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[70] BL, S&A: Interview with Rebecca Johnson, by M. Jolly, Seaford (19 Oct. 2011).
[71] 'Maison d'édition "des femmes"', *LTB*, 5 (*c.* 1973), p. 23.
[72] Interview with Françoise Barret-Ducrocq, by R. Gildea, Paris (28 May 2008), transcript, p. 14.
[73] 'Recent Acquisitions to the Bookshop', *Glasgow WL Newsletter* (May 1977), p. 15.
[74] 'A lire en vrac pour patienter en attendant le prochain numero', *Les Pétroleuses*, 2 (*c.* 1974), p. 13.
[75] Michèle, 'En débat: le travail ménager', *Cahiers du féminisme*, 2 (n.d.), pp. 21-4.
[76] Book list, *Information des femmes*, 7 (1 Jun. 1976), p. 14.
[77] See pp. 129-30.
[78] Ann Froines, letter, *oob* (Oct. 1973), p.19.
[79] Davis and Evans, 'Introduction', p. 13.

of the significance of the family under capitalism'.[80] In fact, the demands can be linked not just to socialist feminism, but to 'TLR' specifically, in which Mitchell argues for 'a coherent system of demands.'[81]

3. American theory

a. France

When I asked Namascar Shaktini whether she recalled feminist literature from her time in France, she said she remembered 'the ones that we put out.' But Shaktini was not only referring to writings by MLF activists—the first thing which sprang to mind was Anne Koedt's 'The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm'.[82] First published in 1968, the essay by Koedt—founding member of NYRW, The Feminists, and NYRF—argued that women had 'been defined sexually in terms of what pleases men' and should 'redefine our sexuality'.[83] It was printed twice by NYRW, in *Notes from the First Year* and *NFTSY*, and also circulated 'on ill-typed roneoed sheets', even reaching the UK in this form in 1969.[84]

Koedt's essay was one of several pieces Shaktini's group reprinted in their special edition of *Partisans*. Half the articles were American, half French, and two were by Cubans. Koedt's was a reprint from *NFTSY*,[85] as were many of the other American articles: Redstockings Manifesto, pieces by Dunbar, Sarachild, Carol Hanisch, and Lucinda Cisler. Two

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[80] J. Rees, 'A Look Back at Anger: the Women's Liberation Movement in 1978', *WHR*, 19:3 (2010), p. 339.
[81] Mitchell, 'TLR', p. 34.
[82] Interview with Namascar Shaktini, TL, Portland, OR (10 Oct. 2018).
[83] Anne Koedt, 'The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm', *NFTFY* (1968), p. 11.
[84] Anna Coote and Beatrix Campbell, *Sweet Freedom: The Struggle for Women's Liberation* (London, 1982), p. 18.
[85] Not *NFTFY* as Greenwald suggests; nor were the American articles written for *Partisans*, which is the impression Greenwald gives: L. Greenwald, *Daughters of 1968: Redefining French Feminism and the Women's Liberation Movement* (London 2018), p. 121.

of the other American articles appeared in anthologies *Voices from the Women's Liberation* and one in *Sisterhood is Powerful*, highlighting the importance of such collections in diffusing theory. Of the remaining articles, one was from leftist journal *Red Papers*, another was by the same author. The third was a 1968 statement from a group of black women in Mount Vernon, NY—including Patricia Robinson, who, as we saw in Chapter I, was inspired by her reading of *TSS* to place women's rights 'up front' in the struggle against racism and capitalism.[86] Responding to a call from the Black Unity Party for black women to 'not take the pill' because it contributed to 'our own GENOCIDE', the statement asserted the rights of 'Poor black sisters' to 'decide for themselves whether to have a baby or not'.[87] It circulated widely through American radical networks,[88] was printed as a pamphlet, and appeared in *Sisterhood is Powerful* (*Partisans* contained the pamphlet version). Clearly, a wide range of writings from the US had reached the *Partisans* group—probably via the connections we explored in Chapter III.

The editors explained they had 'drawn heavily' upon *NFTSY*, hoping it would 'provide a starting point for feminist reflection among French women.'[89] It certainly did for Delphy. In our interview, she recalled being 'absolutely enthusiastic' when she first encountered *NFTSY*.[90] Its articles were one of several 'starting points' for 'The Main Enemy' ('TME') which she published in *Partisans* under the name 'Christine Dupont' (all of the French authors were pseudonymised to avoid drawing attention to individuals—much as with *LTB*). In 'TME', Delphy argued against Marxist analyses of women's oppression which focused primarily on the 'consequences' of women's oppression 'for the proletariat'—she cited Kathy McAffee and

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[86] See pp. 27-8.
[87] SBC, SEP, B19: 'Poor Black Women' (1968).
[88] See: M.R. Polatnick, 'Poor Black Sisters Decided for Themselves' in K.M. Vaz, ed., *Black Women in America* (London, 1995), pp. 110-30.
[89] Quelques militantes, 'Présentations', *Partisans*, 54-5 (Jul.-Oct. 1970), pp. 7-8.
[90] Interview with Delphy, TL.

Mynna Wood's article 'Bread and Roses', reprinted in *Partisans*, as an example. This was the result of a 'theoretical failure': while claiming to be materialist analyses, such writings in fact neglected 'the specific relations of women to production'. Thus women's oppression was, incorrectly, seen as a 'secondary consequence' of 'the oppression of the proletariat by capital', and it was assumed women's oppression would disappear with socialism.[91]

Delphy set out to form a truly materialist analysis. She pointed to similar attempts by Margaret Benston (reprinted in *Partisans*), Suzie Olah (from *NFTSY*), and Isabel Larguia (one of the Cuban *Partisans* pieces). These writers believed it was the nature of women's work that explained 'their relationship to production'. Delphy argued the inverse: the 'relations of production' explained why women's 'work is excluded from the realm of value'.[92] Within her academic work, she had explored rural sociology and realised 'there was a whole set of goods' which didn't 'pass through the marketplace'.[93] In 'TME', Delphy analysed the family as 'a unit of production', with the work of wives belonging to husbands. From this base, she developed a 'class analysis of women'. There were two modes of production: (1) industrial, producing 'capitalist exploitation' and (2) family, producing 'patriarchal exploitation'.[94]

Although Delphy didn't originally call this position 'materialist feminism', 'TME' contained its beginnings,[95] emerging from her sociological research, and her building upon, and arguing against, American (and Cuban) analyses, both socialist and radical feminist. The influence of the latter upon her thinking is found not just in her citation of Olah, but also her

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[91] Christine Delphy, 'The Main Enemy' trans. L.A.P. Roberts in Christine Delphy, *The Main Enemy* (London, 1977), pp. 1-4.
[92] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[93] *Je ne suis pas féministe, mais...*, dir. Florence and Sylvie Tissot (Film, 2015).
[94] Delphy, 'TME', pp. 6-13.
[95] Interview with Delphy, TL.

discussion of 'patriarchal exploitation', and the assertion that women are not just a 'class' but a 'caste'—which Dunbar had argued in her *Partisans*-reprinted piece.[96]

The influence of American theory upon the MLF reached beyond *Partisans*. Another text Shaktini mentioned was Valerie Solanas's *SCUM Manifesto.*[97] Written in 1965-7, pre-WLM, the manifesto was a revolutionary, anarchic, possibly parodic treatise, arguing that males, lacking the Y-chromosome, were 'incomplete' females with 'pussy envy' (a stark contrast from Psyche et Po's take on Freud), who had 'made of the world' a 'shitpile'. Solanas addressed the many ways they did so—from 'War' and 'Prejudice' to 'Conformity' and '"Great Art"'—then concluded the elimination of men was essential.[98] Solanas initially sold mimeographed copies of the manifesto; in 1968, it was published commercially, and leapt to fame following her attempted assassination of Andy Warhol.[99] Solanas was not a member of any WLM group but her manifesto was praised by radical feminists, including Atkinson and Dunbar.[100]

Excerpts appeared in *Sisterhood is Powerful*, so we know it reached France in at least this manner. In 1971, a translation by Emmanuel de Lesseps was published, with an introduction by Christiane Rochefort (both Féministes Révolutionnaires) and a short history of the WLM by 'Un groupe pour la liberation des femmes'. Solanas's 'violence' was, they wrote, 'of a poetic and fantastical order'.[101] Although the manifesto wasn't taken up in lengthy French analyses, it was explored in an *LTB* piece by Cathy Bernheim: 'SCUM or l'écume inconnue' ('inconnue', perhaps, in reference to the protest at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier). 'One day, you cannot

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[96] *Ibid*., p. 16. Roxanne Dunbar, 'Caste and Class: A key to understanding the oppression of women', *Partisans*, 54-5 (Jul.-Oct. 1970), pp. 50-3.
[97] Interview with Shaktini, TL.
[98] Valerie Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto* (London, 2004).
[99] T. Drake and D. Kerekes, *Headpress Guide to the Counterculture: A Sourcebook for Modern Readers* (Manchester, 2004), p. 199.
[100] L. Winkiel, 'The "Sweet Assassin" and the Performative Politics of *SCUM Manifesto*' in P.J. Smith, ed., *The Queer Sixties* (London, 1999), p. 67.
[101] Un groupe pour la liberation des femmes, 'Les femmes bougent' in Valerie Solanas, *SCUM* (Paris, 1971), p. 10.

find your socks,' Bernheim wrote. 'Or the roast gives you heartburn […] Something gets stuck, everything goes wrong, the chips are down, all bets are off: this is when SCUM appears.'[102]

In 1976, feminist film collective 'Les Insoumuses'[103]—filmmaker Carole Roussopoulos and actress Delphine Seyrig—filmed their short, 'SCUM Manifesto'. The film shows Seyrig translating the English version, reading aloud, with Roussopoulos typing it up; the French translation was, as Roussopoulos notes in a voiceover at the end of the film, out of print at the time, so their filmed reading was an attempt to introduce French audiences to Solanas's writing. But it was also a reframing. Between the two women sits a television, broadcasting news—at times interrupting the reading—of men waging war in Beirut, of Belfast women marching for peace.[104]

As for Psyche et Po and the class struggle tendency, they were far less influenced by American writings—there are no textual traces of this, nor did interviewees from these tendencies mention American analyses. Millett did meet Fouque after the publication of one of her books into French,[105] and maintained a relationship with des femmes.[106] But their psychoanalytic thinking was not imbued with her firmly non-biological analysis of patriarchy, much more closely aligned with Delphy's thought.

b. United Kingdom

Setch calls into question 'the total absorption of ideas from America' in the UK, correctly pointing out the shortcomings of prior histories. Many used only books to assess the 'principles

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[102] Cathy Bernheim, 'SCUM or l'écume inconnue', *LTB*, 4 (*c.* 1972), pp. 2-3, trans. H. Fleckinger, 'Returning to the Scenes of Your Crimes' in T. Faucon et. al., eds., *SCUM Manifesto* (Paris, 2020), p. 16.
[103] 'Insoumises' (insubordinates) + 'muses'. See Fleckinger, 'Returning', p. 18.
[104] *SCUM Manifesto*, dir. Carole Roussopoulos and Delphine Seyrig (Film, 1976).
[105] Interview with Boissonnas and Idels, TL.
[106] SBC, KMP, BS7: Des femmes, letter to Kate Millett (16 May 1975).

of feminist thought' and reached for American texts to illustrate British thinking, where British 'newsletters and conference papers revealed little direct take-up.'[107] Setch is right to question histories based only on books, but the influence of American theory cannot be denied—even she admits that many of the texts advertised as for sale at the London Workshop were American. Setch minimises this, arguing 'these texts were grassroots writings that would have been unavailable elsewhere', and that they 'stood on sale' beside British material.[108] On the former, these writings *were* available elsewhere: in Chapter IV, we discussed American books and periodicals sold in British bookshops. On the latter, it is undeniable that home-grown theorising flourished. It is precisely through this that we can trace the influence of American theory. Moving beyond Setch's source material—newsletters and conference papers—makes this clear.

In our interview, Sophie Laws highlighted the influence of American writings on her thinking. One of her projects at feminist press Onlywomen was *Love Your Enemy* (1981). In the late 1970s, within *WIRES* and other newsletters 'one of the key debates was about political lesbianism', with revolutionary feminists asking, 'what would you want to be a heterosexual for?' But Laws thought this was 'not the way to do it'. She'd been influenced by Redstockings' pro-woman line—'thinking that women aren't necessarily right or wrong'—and by Adrienne Rich's conception of a 'continuum of lesbian experience'. Laws responded to calls for women to eschew men in a newsletter article, others replied, and it became a 'complex debate' which Onlywomen edited into a book. Laws also taught a course on feminist ideas for the Workers Educational Association in Lancaster. When remembering readings the course was based upon, the only British author she recalled was Virginia Woolf. The others were primarily

[107] Setch, 'WLM in Britain', pp. 10-14
[108] *Ibid*., p. 46.

American: she definitely recalled using Redstockings' *Feminist Revolution*, and wondered whether Millett, Friedan, and *TSS* had featured too. Black feminist writers from the US were particularly important later on, Laws added, like Michele Cliff and Audre Lorde.[109]

Lynn Alderson, who imported Redstockings' *Feminist Revolution* when working at Compendium and Sisterwrite, emphasised it as '*hugely* important'. That 'one publication from them', she said, 'was an absolute founding stone for a lot of feminism'. In line with her memories of American texts as important offerings at her bookshop Sisterwrite, she explained:

> feminism was already a few years ahead in America so there were already presses and newspapers and stuff before we had anything like that range of things. So it was happening there and it was very, very influential, particularly from a radical feminist point of view.[110]

Shaila Shah, similarly, described Redstockings' book as 'hugely influential'. She said it 'kind of made me a radical feminist.' I asked Shah what 'radical feminism' meant to her. She began by saying it 'meant taking a particular position' against that of socialist feminists, who believed class was the 'paramount structural framework that oppressed people, and within that, oppressed women'. Radical feminism provided 'another lens'. Shah didn't follow revolutionary feminists in maintaining 'men are the enemy'. However:

> I was more than prepared to say that men oppressed women and men dominated over women and we lived in a patriarchal society. Wherever you looked in the world, it was just a question of a difference in degree […] and how that intersected with class differences or in some countries community or religious differences or caste, class, tribal, whatever. […] But patriarchy reigned supreme wherever you looked.[111]

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[109] Interview with Sophie Laws, TL, London (9 Jul. 2018).
[110] Interview with Lynn Alderson, TL, London (20 May 2019).
[111] Interview with Shaila Shah, TL, London (7 Mar. 2019).

Both Shah and Alderson were friends of Laws, who put me in touch with them. But American radical feminist theory was significant for other feminists in Britain too. Browsing through archival material, excerpts from Redstockings' writings are found in papers on subjects as diverse as domestic abuse (by a Norwich activist),[112] and women's history (by a London group).[113] The Radical Feminist Theory Group in Edinburgh pursued 'an in-depth study of classic radical feminist theory and strategies' by reading *TSS*, *The Dialectic of Sex*, Redstockings' *Feminist Revolution* and *Radical Feminism* edited by Koedt, along with pamphlets and movement literature from 'all liberation movements'. The importance of American radical feminist writings to this Edinburgh group doesn't diminish homegrown theorising. 'Discussion,' they wrote, 'will have a focus on the Edinburgh Movement. The group's study will produce material for this newsletter, the *Scottish Women's Journal* and/or *Catcall*.'[114]

Redstockings weren't the only American thinkers Shah cited—like Laws, she mentioned Lorde. Lorde was particularly important for black British activists—surveying oral testimony, her name resurfaces repeatedly. However, activists usually cite the examples of her person, rather than any particular set of writings, as particularly inspirational. Donna Jackman, a member of Leicester Black Sisters, remembered: 'we were looking at sisters in the States', like Lorde and Alice Walker. She added: 'What we were getting is a sense of what they were achieving.'[115]

For Gail Lewis, member of Brixton Black Women's Group and OWAAD co-founder, Lorde was an 'exemplary woman'. Angela Davis was another inspirational figure, and Lewis's

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[112] FAN, FAN/LL/04: Liz Kelly, 'The Personal is Political' (n.d.).
[113] FAN, FAN/LL/04: Amanda Sebestyen et. al., 'History of Women's Liberation' (Apr. 1977).
[114] 'Groups Who Wish to Use the Workshop', *Edinburgh WL Newsletter* (Mar. 1977), p. 5.
[115] BCA, THR: Donna Jackman, interview with Jackman and Carol Leeming, by A. Sylvester (19 Mar. 2009).

exploration of this demonstrates the close link between theory and practice. Davis was 'so inspirational not just because of her own history and against the US state' but because:

> what she represented for us was this incredible articulacy, a way to articulate the character and dimensions of the struggle, in a way that both held on to the question of womanhood and the project of emancipation or liberation […] as deeply intertwined with, inseparable from the struggle against racism.[116]

Both the example Davis set as an activist and her thinking—as articulated in her writings and speeches, and as explored through her activism—inspired.

In a chapter for *Transatlantic Conversations*, British psychologist Ann Phoenix explored the writings which had influenced her. She joined consciousness-raising and rape crisis groups in Manchester in the late 1970s—both were, she wrote, 'examples of transatlantic conversations' (in Chapter VIII we explore the latter). For Phoenix, the 'publication of work by black feminists in the USA, such as the Combahee River Collective statement, was deeply exciting.' It provided 'much needed critical theory' and 'filled the gaps between feminisms and anti-racist politics'.[117]

The Combahee River Collective originally began as the Boston chapter of the National Black Feminist Organisation, founded in 1973, before splitting off a few years later.[118] In their 1977 statement, they outlined their position, which they had been 'defining and clarifying' while 'doing political work within our own group and in coalition with other progressive organizations and movements':

> we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are

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[116] BCA, THR: Interview with Gail Lewis, by M. Barnard (15 May 2009).
[117] Ann Phoenix, 'Re-narrating Feminist Stories: Black British Women and Transatlantic Feminisms' in Davis and Evans, eds., *Transatlantic*, pp. 58-61.
[118] SSC, VFOHP: Interview with Barbara Smith, by L.J. Ross, Northampton, MA (7-8 May 2009).

> interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives.

Their analysis, which had emerged from consciousness-raising discussions, was grounded in the Collective's concept of 'identity politics': 'We believe that the most profound and potentially the most radical politics come directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else's oppression.'[119] Founding member Barbara Smith clarified this in an interview: the Collective were 'never separatists'; it meant they 'had a right as people who were simultaneously black and female to determine a political agenda for our own freedom.' Smith was 'committed' to having the statement 'appear in as many places as possible around the country and the world.' It was printed as a pamphlet and appeared in various anthologies and periodicals.[120]

Phoenix described reading the statement in the same language as the awakenings we explored in Chapter I: it 'constituted a flashbulb moment'. This was because it:

> powerfully expressed and validated the reasons why multiple sites of political engagement were important, but also made it clear that it was crucial to engage with issues specific to black women's experiences without treating black women as if they were all the same and necessarily different from white women or men in general.

Phoenix is clear that American developments were 'important intertextual background' for the UK movement—'more so than the other way round'. But it wasn't that 'black feminists in Britain adopted US black feminist ideas wholesale'. OWAAD shaped their thinking to the British context in, for example, including Asian women under the label 'Black'.[121]

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[119] Combahee River Collective, 'A black feminist statement', *Monthly Review*, 70:1 (2019), pp. 29-36.
[120] Interview with Smith, Ross. 'combahee river collective', *oob* (Jun. 1979), p. 6.
[121] Phoenix, 'Re-narrating', p. 62.

Echoing Alderson, Phoenix notes it is unsurprising that the US, which is 'so much larger than the UK, with a greater number of black feminist academics and activists, provided a rich body of material on which UK-based black feminists could draw.'[122] We could say the same for other feminists in Britain—and France too. But this was not a straightforward importing. Different groups of women in Europe engaged with different bodies of American thought in different ways. And for the most part, theory was not unquestioningly adopted: readers used it to work out their own positions.

4. French feminisms

Published in 1980, American anthology *New French Feminisms* comprises a neat snapshot of the writings which its editors believed encapsulated French feminist thought, from manifestos and interviews to excerpts from *TSS* and Wittig's *Les Guérillères*. It was envisaged as an answer to Cixous's complaint: 'We translate what the American women write, they never translate our texts.' But this wasn't quite true: Cixous had been translated into English and published in the US three times; as had Julia Kristeva, Wittig, and Marguerite Duras; there were also a range of interviews with French feminists; and if one included pre-1968 texts, de Beauvoir was an obvious exception. The anthology's introduction also gives insights into American perceptions of the MLF. Editors Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron paint a picture of an insular movement, with 'psychoanalytic theory' at 'the centre of current debate'; a movement obsessed with language and 'the projection of male libidinal economy in all patriarchal systems'; a movement of feminists uninterested in the tasks preoccupying American activists: writing history, 'problem-solving', and 'filling in cultural silences'.[123]

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[122] *Ibid.*, pp. 65-6.

[123] 'Why This Book?', Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds., *New French Feminisms* (New York, NY, 1981), p. *ix-xii*.

The notion of French feminism as 'other' is something one finds in British WLM testimony too. 'They were always so feminine, the French women,' remembered feminist artist Mary Kelly, '[…] and it wasn't like us.'[124] Sociologist Mary McIntosh remembered:

> a lot of French feminism was sort of *Psyche et Po*, kind of very stylish. That's how we thought of it and they had a feminist magazine which was run by *Psyche et Po* I think, where everyone wore white and white skirts especially and it had nothing to do with our feminism, which was much more related to America.[125]

As this suggests, such characterisations of 'French feminism' were primarily derived from encounters with a specific group.

Claire Goldberg Moses has argued this notion of 'French feminism' emerged from the 'key role of French literature specialists' within blossoming feminist academia in the US. Moses' 1998 study pinpoints this to a conflation of writers like Kristeva, Cixous and Luce Irigaray with 'French feminism' in general. The first American publications of Kristeva (1975) and Cixous (1976) did not frame them as feminists—as we know, it was a label they eschewed. 'The slippage from "French writers" to "French feminists",' Moses wrote, 'seems to have begun with the essays by [French-language literature specialists] Carolyn Burke and Elaine Marks published in summer 1978 in [feminist academic journal] *Signs*.' For example, Burke solely focused upon the literary scene in her 'Report from Paris: Women's Writing and the Women's Movement'. The personalities she singled out were Kristeva, Cixous, and Irigaray; the only MLF group examined was Psyche et Po. At the time, Moses said, she had read Burke's article as a description of the MLF as a whole. Moses doubted she was alone: by the end of the 1970s,

[124] BL, S&A: Interview with Mary Kelly, by M. Jolly, London (19 Mar. 2012).
[125] BL, S&A: Interview with Mary McIntosh, by M. Jolly, London (12 Jan. 2011).

sessions at academic conferences devoted to these psychoanalytic writers were entitled 'Contemporary Feminist Thought in France'.[126]

It is little wonder many Americans—particularly academics—understood 'French feminism' to be psychoanalytic. More generally, we have explored the success of Psyche et Po, through Éditions des femmes, in forging transnational connections: perhaps other MLF tendencies seemed less dominant to foreigners because they lacked the wealth and connections des femmes enjoyed. Yet the picture painted by Marks and Courtivron is strange given their anthology included materialist feminist writings, and their introduction does note the array of MLF tendencies. As for the two British feminists' testimony: Kelly was a member of a Lacanian reading group and had links with French psychoanalysts like Catherine Millot so her perception of the MLF is understandable;[127] sociologist McIntosh, however, encountered both Psyche et Po and materialist feminists so it is unclear why, in her testimony, she focused on the former.[128] Perhaps this ideological strand was unimaginable in Anglo-American contexts, and thus seemed especially 'French'.

In our interview, Delphy lamented this state of affairs. 'Oh yeah,' she said, 'the psychoanalytical school won, because it was taken up by American women who […] were totally into psychoanalysis.' She thought this impression, which 'stayed with' Americans gave 'a totally distorted idea of the women's movement in France.'[129] However, this doesn't mean other French schools of thought had no transnational impact—indeed, Delphy's own work also gained traction in some British and American circles.

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[126] C.G. Moses, 'Made in America: "French Feminism" in Academia', *Feminist Studies*, 24:2 (1998), pp. 252-60.
[127] Interview with Kelly, Jolly.
[128] Interview with McIntosh, Jolly.
[129] Interview with Delphy, TL.

It was her relationship Diana Leonard, a sociologist working in the 1970s on courtship and marriage in South Wales,[130] that introduced Delphy's work to Anglophone audiences. Leonard was pioneer of women's studies in the UK and one of the founders of the Women's Research and Resources Centre (WRRC) in London—an important hub within feminist academic networks.[131] They met at a conference in 1974. Delphy remembered the location as Edinburgh;[132] it was likely that year's National Conference, at which mimeographed translations of 'TME' were sold.[133] From then on, they collaborated. In 1977, Leonard arranged for a new English translation of 'TME', which was published by WRRC in a pamphlet along with a debate between Delphy and sociologist Danièle Léger on 'Capitalism, Patriarchy and the Women's Struggle' and a critique of *Parole de Femmes* by Annie Leclerc (another psychoanalytic author).[134] Within the cases of both materialist and psychoanalytic feminism, we find the impact of nascent feminist academia upon the diffusion of theory—perhaps unsurprisingly, given the travel of French theory to Anglophone audiences required translation.

Through Leonard, Delphy became embroiled in the Domestic Labour Debate (DLD)—a discussion about the relationship between women's housework and capitalism in journals, Leftist groups, and the Wages for Housework Campaign. Setch has demonstrated that much DLD writing—by both feminists and Marxists—was 'constructed in reference' to 'TME'. However, she does not closely examine Delphy's position, categorising her as a 'radical feminist' who attempted to 'adapt Marxist terminology for feminism'. But Delphy's materialist feminism made use of Marxist analytic tools, not mere 'terminology'. And without exploring

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[130] D.L. Barker and S. Allen, eds., *Sexual Divisions and Society: Process and Change* (London, 1976), p. *vii*.
[131] Jan. Walbe and Wendy Davison, 'The Women's Research and Resources Centre', *Assistant Librarian* (Feb. 1979), p. 33; BL, S&A: Interview with Zoë Fairbairns, by M. Jolly, London (23 Jun. 2011).
[132] Interview with Delphy, TL.
[133] Diana Leonard Barker, 'Introduction' in Delphy, *TME*, p. *ii*.
[134] Delphy, *TME.*

Delphy's intellectual inheritance—or American theoretical influence more generally—Setch mistakenly describes British radical and revolutionary feminists' use of 'the term "sex class"' as 'echoing Delphy'.[135] As we have seen, it was a concept, not just a term—one which both Delphy and British feminists derived from American radical feminists.

Leonard continued to translate Delphy's work into the 1990s. For Delphy this was less important than their ongoing discussions and collaboration. They established an Anglo-French study group in 1975 which attracted a range of participants both French and English who, Delphy remembered, did not all agree with each other. Maxine Molyneux and McIntosh, for example, both participated[136]—and were both critics of 'TME'.[137] Delphy was, around this time developing her ideas about gender, or 'social sex', as she called it then. This was debated within the study group. A notice for their second meeting, in 1975, read: 'the reduction of sex (or more exactly, of the category "women") to its biological element is one of the traits of the ideology of our society.' The question posed to the group was:

> —should we speak of 'social sex' (and risk letting slip the specificity of sex relations […])?
> —or should we speak of social relations between 'biological sexes' (and risk forgetting the purely sociological dimension […])?[138]

In 1977, when Delphy launched *QF* along with Collete Capitan Peter, Emmanuèle de Lesseps, Nicole-Claude Mathieu, and Monique Plaza, the question of 'social' versus 'biological' sex was at the heart of her feminist analysis. In the journal's first editorial, the collective outlined their stance. Although they described American radical feminism as the tendency 'to

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[135] Setch, 'WLM in Britain', pp. 154-92.
[136] Interview with Delphy, TL.
[137] Maxine Molyneux, 'Beyond the Domestic Labour Debate', *New Left Review*, 0:116 (Jul. 1979), pp. 3-27; Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh, 'Christine Delphy: Towards a Materialist Feminism?', *Feminist Review*, 1 (1979), pp. 95-106.
[138] TWL, 7PAC/01: Diana Leonard, Anglo-French Study Group Agenda (15 Oct. 1975).

which we adhere',[139] their brand was a far cry from Firestone's, which saw 'sex class' as springing 'from a biological reality'.[140] In fact, the 'preliminary tenet' of the collective's radical feminism was opposition to 'naturalist ideology': 'The battle of the sexes,' they wrote, 'is not biological.' There were instead 'social, economic, and political relations that lead to the hierarchical classification into so-called "sex" groups' and to destroy this 'we must analyse the system of social sexes.'[141]

By 1981, Delphy was using the term 'gender'. 'We,' she wrote, meaning 'Those of us who are radical feminists and also claim a materialist approach':

> We believe […] that it is *oppression which creates gender* […] i.e. created the sexual roles, which we call gender. *Gender in its turn created anatomical sex*, in the sense that the hierarchical division of humanity into two transforms an anatomical difference […] into a relevant distinction for social practice.

At this point, Delphy was clear on the distinction between 'materialist radical feminists' and radical feminists in 'Anglo-Saxon countries' like Firestone, who she described as 'outrageously biologistic'; likewise, she argued against the stance of 'English revolutionary feminists'.[142] The roots of this analysis can clearly be seen in the mid-1970s concept of 'social sex' the Anglo-French study group explored. Indeed, all of the *QF* collective (bar Plaza) attended the biological/social sex meeting and many of the British participants were pioneers of gender scholarship, including historian Leonore Davidoff and anthropologist Pat Caplan (both WRRC founders);[143] Leonard went on to publish her own materialist feminist analyses of marriage and the family too.[144]

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[139] *QF* Collective, 'Variations', pp. 214-16.
[140] Firestone, *Dialectic*, p. 16.
[141] *QF* Collective, 'Variations', pp. 214-29.
[142] Christine Delphy, 'Patriarchy, feminism and their intellectuals', trans. Leonard, in Delphy, *Close to Home* (Amherst, MA, 1984), pp. 143-4. First published in *NQF*, 2 (Oct. 1981), pp. 58-74.
[143] TWL, 7PAC/01: List of Anglo-French study group participants (1975).
[144] S. Jackson, 'Diana Leonard and materialist feminism', *Gender and Education*, 25:1 (2013), pp. 108-12.

Laws was introduced to Delphy's thought through Leonard. To her, it was a 'very French' approach, which she saw as a 'completely different tradition' to British radical feminism. In the UK, feminists 'were always around Trotskyists' who were 'all trying to convert you', so it was interesting to encounter Delphy who was 'using a Marxist tradition to think about women's position'. Laws was one of the co-founders of radical feminist magazine *Trouble & Strife* in 1983, along with Leonard, whose 'original vision' for the magazine was to replicate *QF* and *NQF*.[145] Another co-founder was Jalna Hanmer, a sociologist at the University of Bradford, WRRC co-founder, and Anglo-French group participant. Hanmer had worked at Women's Aid and was an important figure in theorising violence against women in the British movement, as we will explore in Chapter VIII—analytical work which was published, in translation, in *QF*.[146] Leonard and Hanmer approached Alderson and Laws to join their collective, because of their publishing and bookselling experience. Laws explained: 'we were all women who wanted to develop a radical feminism that wasn't biological-determinist and wasn't telling you, necessarily, how to be a lesbian'.[147]

It was via Leonard's translation that Delphy's writing also reached the American WLM. Betsy Warrior, central to the refuge movement in the US, was introduced to Delphy's work by Amanda Sebestyen, who worked on *Trouble & Strife*. Warrior raved about 'TME' when Sebestyen posted a copy: 'It's exciting, it's great, it's fantastic!!' Delphy had made 'so many good points', and Warrior asked to be put in touch with the French sociologist. She wanted to try to get the paper published in the US, and to obtain for copies 'for friends, to put in the library [of Cambridge Women's Center], etc.'[148] And when Delphy appeared at the New York *TSS*

[145] Interview with Laws, TL.
[146] Jalna Hanmer, 'Violence et contrôle social des femmes', *QF*, 1 (Nov. 1977), pp. 68-88.
[147] Interview with Laws, TL.
[148] BI, SEBESTYEN/1/14: Betsy Warrior, letter to Amanda Sebestyen (26 Jul. 1978).

conference, it was Leonard's translation and publication of her work that obtained coverage in *off our backs*.[149]

Conclusion

Historian and WLM activist Sally Alexander has argued that in the movement 'ideas were built up slowly' through consciousness-raising, magazines, and demonstrations; through conversations, meetings, organising; through 'activities and action'. Writing an article for a feminist magazine was never the telling of concrete theory, but 'a learning method' in itself.[150] In this chapter we have explored some of the ways 'ideas were built up', in periodicals, conferences, books, and academic collaboration, and we have examined case studies of transnational theoretical dialogue. In doing so, we have noted the importance of American theorising for certain British and French groups (not all), but also that those ideas were developed and challenged, not imported wholesale. Noting the importance of American theory does not negate the importance of home-grown theory; indeed, we have also explored the impact of British and French theorising on Americans.

There are omissions to this exploration. Some are deliberate: this chapter covers American, British, and French analyses which, from my archival survey and interviews, seemed especially important in the development of WLM thought. Others are regrettable but necessary: there was neither space to explore links beyond these three countries, nor non-textual theorising—through poetry, fiction, visual art, film, and music.[151] Nevertheless, in this

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[149] 'Review: Christine Delphy, *The Main Enemy*', *oob* (Jan. 1980), pp. 8-9.

[150] Sally Alexander, comments delivered at 'New Directions in the History of the WLM' conference (Oxford, 4 Dec. 2017).

[151] See: L.M. Hogeland, *Feminism and its Fictions: The Consciousness-Raising Novel and the Women's Liberation Movement* (Philadelphia, PA, 1998); L. Keller and C. Miller, eds., *Feminist Measures: Soundings in Poetry and Theory* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1994); H. Fleckinger, 'Cinéma et video saisis par le féminisme (France, 1968-1981)' (PhD thesis, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris, 2011); M. Moravec, 'Toward a

chapter we have looked at some of the ways that 'ideas were built up' beyond book-length treatises and academic articles in film, pamphlets, even in strategizing action; and in the last chapter we looked at how 'ideas were built up' through discussion. As we go on to explore other areas of activism, we will bear Alexander's assertion in mind; WLM activists also formed analyses through practical organising, whether protesting in the streets, examining their bodies, or establishing services.

History of Feminism, Art, and Social Movements in the United States', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 33:2 (2012), pp. 22-54.

VI. Protest

One evening in 1968, NYRW watched avant-garde film *Schmeerguntz*, which juxtaposes messy domestic life with glossy media representations of women, including beauty pageants. For Carol Hanisch, this recalled childhood memories of watching Miss America on television; she proposed a consciousness-raising session on the topic. From that discussion came 'concrete plans' for action:[1] on 7th September, activists from across the US descended upon Atlantic City to picket the pageant.[2] They threw 'bras, girdles, curlers' into a 'Freedom Trash Can';[3] a sheep was crowned as Miss America; and a Miss America dummy was auctioned.[4] Signs and songs—'Ain't she sweet/Makin' profit off her meat'[5]—protested everything the pageant represented: women's objectification; war (Miss America supported 'American troops abroad'); racism (Miss America was always white); capitalism.[6] Such actions were intended as mass consciousness-raising.[7] It worked: media coverage 'brought many new members' to NYRW, and 'requests from women outside the city for literature and information'. It even garnered foreign coverage,[8] inspiring similar actions in Britain and France.

WLM protests ranged from this kind of guerrilla theatre to mass marches. Sometimes protests were part of sustained campaigns, as with the struggle for abortion; sometimes they were more focused, around, for example, the imprisonment of certain women. We do not have

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[1] RWLAA, FLL: Carol Hanisch, 'What Can be Learned: A Critique of the Miss America Protest' (27 Nov. 1968).
[2] Robin Morgan, 'Miss America Goes Down', *Rat*, (20 Sep.-3 Oct. 1968), p. 4.
[3] SBC, RMP, BS17: 'No More Miss America', flyer (22 Aug. 1968).
[4] Morgan, 'Miss America Goes Down'.
[5] SBC, RMP, BS17: Song sheet (1968).
[6] SBC, RMP, BS17: Washington WL, 'Slavery Exists!', flyer (1968).
[7] Kathie Sarachild, 'Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon' in Redstockings, *Feminist Revolution* (New York, 1978), p. 145.
[8] Hanisch, 'A Critique'.

space here to delve into every campaign or protest within, and supported by, the WLM in all three countries. But there is little need. This is already an area well covered by historiography: all the WLM histories discussed in the introductory chapter examine protests; and popular narratives of women's activism often focus here too.[9] However, transnational dimensions of protest have been little explored, given the national focus of most WLM histories.

This may seem a strange topic for transnational inquiry. Protest often took place in local and national arenas: to highlight specific injustices, call for legislative change. But this does not mean activists in other countries were of no importance. We begin with an obvious moment of transnational influence, with an analysis of the two Miss World protests and the Unknown Soldier's Wife protest. We then look at one particular struggle—for reproductive rights—comparing differences between the three countries, but also assessing transnational inspiration and cooperation. In doing so, we examine sisterhood and solidarity: how and why WLM activists in different countries saw themselves as acting within the same struggle, and the effects of this upon national developments. Finally, we note more localised issues, and explore how some garnered transnational solidarity and campaigns. Not only will this illuminate the origin and travels of certain ideas; it enables us to consider how activists imagined their struggle as global.

[9] See: *Made in Dagenham*, dir. Nigel Cole (Film, 2010); *She's Beautiful When She's Angry*, dir. Mary Dore (Film, 2014); *Elles... Les Filles du Plessis*, dir. Bénédicte Delmas (Film, 2016); *Misbehaviour*, dir. Philippa Lowthorpe (Film, 2020).

1. The Unknown Wife and the Beauty Queen

a. Miss World

The first action the Tufnell Park group took was creating the film *Women, Are You Satisfied with Your Life?* about the effects of commercialism on women. After that, Sheli Wortis recalled, 'more global things started to happen that influenced what we did' and 'sparked our work'—in particular, she remembered the group discussing American actions, 'demonstrations like the bra-burning and Atlantic City'.[10] In November 1969, British WLM—from the London Workshop, Essex, and Warwick—groups decided to stage a similar protest of their own, establishing a picket outside the Miss World contest.[11] Although smaller than the Miss America protest, there was the same joviality. Neither Karen Slaney nor Wortis attended, but both remembered inventing the sashes protestors wore. 'Miss Conception,' said Slaney, laughing. 'Miss Take and Miss Judges. That was fun.'[12] Protestors carried corresponding placards: Miss Conception demanded 'free abortion'; Miss Fortune, 'equal pay'.[13]

Leaflets were handed out, emphasising similar messages to the Miss America protest: pageants and their sponsors objectified women. This was linked to women's wider exploitation:

> Inside the home we are dependant housekeepers.
> Outside the home we are given second rate jobs at third rate pay.
> THIS IS THE PRICE OF THE MISS WORLD CONTEST—THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVALUATION OF WOMEN […] FINANCED BY MECCA, BUT PAID FOR BY WOMEN.[14]

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[10] Interview with Sheli Wortis, TL, Cambridge, MA (28 Sep. 2018).
[11] *Shrew* (Nov.-Dec. 1969), p. 2.
[12] Interview with Karen Slaney, TL, Silver Spring, MD (6 Oct. 2018).
[13] 'The Miss World Picket – the straight story', *Shrew* (Nov.-Dec. 1969), p. 3.
[14] TWL, 7SHR/D/3: 'What Price Miss World?', leaflet (Nov. 1969).

Of the fifteen members of Warwick Women's Liberation who attended, several were men—they were surprised the London group comprised only women. Disappointed with the Londoner's sashes and slogans which they saw as 'apolitical', Warwick women tried to 'step up the volume and the political content' and were promptly 'told off for being too raucous' by London protesters. They sang 'Ain't she sweet' from the Miss America protest, probably learned via American Barbara Winslow, from the Warwick group.[15] Other American WLM songs, including civil rights anthem 'We Shall Overcome', were sung too.[16]

The small protest was successful 'as a publicity catching issue'. Yet it also raised existential questions for the movement.[17] The same had been true of Miss America. As Hanisch wrote, 'no action taken in the Women's Liberation Struggle will be all good or all bad.' She criticised the 'anti-womanism' of certain aspects of the Miss America protest, the lack of clarity in their messages, and some of their tactics.[18] Similarly, following the 1969 Miss World protest, as Victoria Bazin has shown, London Workshop newsletter *Shrew* was dominated by debate surrounding protest strategy, and the question of the mainstream media, who, some thought, had warped their message.[19]

Furthermore, the Warwick women were unhappy after being scolded and left 'rather disheartened'.[20] Winslow thought their treatment may have come from Londoners' provincialism and class prejudice: 'in England,' she explained to her American interviewer, 'the North' was viewed as 'hairy-chested'.[21] And, as we saw in Chapter III, the Warwick group

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[15] Anna Hodgkin, 'Miss-Take', *Campus* (5 Dec. 1969), p. 9. NB: 'Not our heading' reads a note on the clipping in the author, Anna Davin's papers at TWL. See TWL, 7ADA/05/01.
[16] 'Miss World Picket'.
[17] *Shrew* (Nov.-Dec. 1969), p. 2.
[18] Hanisch, 'A Critique'.
[19] V. Bazin, 'Miss-Represented? Mediating Miss World in *Shrew* Magazine', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 27:4, pp. 423-5.
[20] Hodgkin, 'Miss-Take'.
[21] SSC, VFOHP: Interview with Barbara Winslow, by K. Weigand, Williamstown, MA (3 May 2004).

included working-class women. Sally Reynolds from the London Workshop explained in *Shrew* that the Warwick women's shouting had been 'contrary' to her 'idea of a "ladylike" demo"'. But she seemed to subsequently regret, or at least question, this reaction. It was 'all to the good' if they 'do not have a bourgeois fear of authority as I do', she wrote. 'Those women are the mass base and probably work in factories […] how do we support them?'[22] Clearly, this early protest was a learning moment for activists.

By the next Miss World protest, in 1970, some of these questions had been resolved: it would be an action 'for women by women'. Jo Robinson, a member of radical print-making collective Poster Workshop and the Grosvenor Avenue commune, remembered the idea for the protest being raised at a meeting of the latter, by two Peckham group members. But she added: 'I think we must have heard about the […] American pageant […] it must have been at the back of our minds.' Interestingly, Robinson didn't mention the 1969 protest in her Sisterhood & After interview—but she hadn't been involved in the WLM then. Other Workshop members had been, however, and there were some continuities: slogans like 'Miss Demeanour'. There were also further similarities to the Miss America protest, with a cattle market staged.[23]

However, the strategy differed greatly: protestors disrupted the event itself. As Bazin highlights, this was carefully planned. The women had purchased pricey seats and dressed up to fit with the audience.[24] Robinson armed herself with 'soggy tomatoes' and 'old lettuce'—a 'British way of showing disgust at something', she explained—as well as flour, leaflets, an ink-filled water pistol, and smoke bomb. The signal for the disruption would be a football rattle. Robinson waited, nervously, as the show began. Then she heard it:

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[22] Sally Reynolds, 'Thoughts about the Miss World Action', *Shrew* (Nov.-Dec. 1969), p. 4.
[23] BL, S&A: Interview with Jo Robinson, by P. Russell, London (9 Feb. 2012).
[24] Bazin, 'Miss-Represented?', p. 427.

> And it all went very quiet. And then suddenly another football rattle started up and then just after that there were these almighty howls and *screams* around the Albert Hall and […] I saw in the floodlights all this flour, smoke bombs and leaflets all coming down on to the floor […] and I was just mesmerised.

Robinson threw her vegetables at the media and chanted the slogan which appeared on their leaflets: 'We're not beautiful, we're not ugly, we're angry.' The excitement can be felt in her testimony: 'And the show stopped and it was ours, we got that moment and it was ours, this was our moment to tell the whole world about feminism'.[25]

Robinson was arrested, along with others; five were charged with misdemeanours. Their trial was another protest opportunity: three of them, including Robinson, decided to represent themselves. Robinson explained she'd been inspired by the Chicago Seven,[26] anti-war protestors who had disrupted their trial with theatrics, including by holding a birthday party in the courtroom.[27] A booklet, *Why Miss World?*, created by the protestors after the trial also mentioned the example of the Pankhursts who, during their trial, used speeches and cross-examination to expose 'male prejudice'.[28] As for WLM activists, they called the magistrate 'Daddy', 'laughed all the way through', 'ate fruit'—all garnering more press attention. In the end, they received fines, which were covered by the WLM.[29]

Again, the protest was followed by soul-searching. One piece in *Why Miss World?* wondered whether 'propaganda' actions, mediated by the press, could ever communicate WLM messages. Nevertheless, Workshop membership 'doubled in the month after'. Even 'a

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[25] Interview with Robinson, Russell.
[26] *Ibid.*
[27] 'Obituary: Judge Julius J. Hoffman', *NYT* (2 Jul. 1983), https://www.nytimes.com/1983/07/02/obituaries/judge-julius-j-hoffman-87-dies-president-at-trial-of-the-chicago-7.html?searchResultPosition=1 (10 Jul. 2020).
[28] TWL, 7SAA/9/2: *Why Miss World?* (1970), p. 19.
[29] Interview with Robinson, Russell.

year later women were still talking about it as something that started them thinking about their oppression.'[30]

b. The Unknown Soldier's Wife

The protest which announced the MLF to the wider world was more explicitly linked to the US. Namascar Shaktini explained that the date, 26 August 1970, was chosen 'to be solidary with the women in America because we heard that they were going to be having strikes and other events to celebrate the fifty-year anniversary [of the women's vote in the US] and we wanted to celebrate it too.' They had likely heard this through Marcia Rothenberg, the 'pipeline to all the English-speaking feminism'.[31] American feminists were marking the date with a Women's Strike for Peace and Equality, organised by NOW, but also attended by radical WLM groups.[32] A few weeks prior, a NOW task force had draped an enormous banner across the Statue of Liberty, declaring: 'WOMEN OF THE WORLD UNITE'.[33]

Unlike British and American protestors, the Wittig/FMA group did not protest a pageant. Instead, they chose the Arc de Triomphe, which housed the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. As a national *lieu de mémoire*,[34] it had been a site of May '68 protest.[35] But the ten women who participated were not focusing upon the soldier; they carried an enormous wreath inscribed: 'To the one more unknown than the Unknown Soldier: his wife'. Much like the Miss America and Miss World protests, they were thus focusing upon one woman who symbolised

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[30] *Why Miss World?*, p. 20.
[31] Interview with Namascar Shaktini, TL, Portland, OR (10 Oct. 2018).
[32] Linda Charlton, 'Women March Down Fifth in Equality Drive', *NYT* (27 Aug. 1970), https://www.nytimes.com/1970/08/27/archives/women-march-down-fifth-in-equality-drive-women-march-down-fifth.html (10 Jul. 2020).
[33] Betty Friedan, *Life So Far: A Memoir* (New York, 2000), p. 236.
[34] M. Agulhon, 'Paris: La traverse d'est en ouest', Pierre Nora, ed., *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1992), p. 895.
[35] E. Drott, *Music and the Elusive Revolution* (London, 2011), p. 34.

a nation. For the Americans and Brits, beauty queens embodied women's objectification; for the French, the unknown wife highlighted the universal as masculine, the erasure of women. They carried four banners including one proclaiming: 'One man out of two is a woman.'[36]

The police who arrived to arrest the protestors were bemused by this slogan. Christine Delphy, laughing, remembered one policeman taking offense because he thought they meant 'one man out of two was a homosexual'.[37] When another checked Shaktini's American passport, he complained that Americans thought half of Frenchmen were 'effeminate'. He hadn't understood 'it was about the generic "he"'.[38] The police were further confused when they asked the women 'Aren't you ashamed?' to which Christiane Rochefort responded: 'We are the future mothers of unknown soldiers.' This was, to Rochefort's fellow protestors, hilarious. Police vans came to transport the women; when sirens sounded, they stuck their heads out of the window to sing: *'pin-pon, pin-pon'*. I asked whether Delphy had been nervous; she said: 'We weren't afraid at all'.[39] Shaktini had similar memories: 'it was all a lark, riding in style down the Champs-Elysée in the paddywagon.'[40]

It wasn't only the date linking the protest to the US. The flyers protestors distributed were titled 'Solidarity with women strikers in the USA'. 'American women revolt,' one began. 'They refuse to be the most exploited workers.'[41] Another also began with mention of 'le Women's Liberation Mouvement' American strike, listing reasons behind it, including 'equal pay', 'free abortion' and 'against domestic exploitation'. American women were striking, the leaflet explained, 'against the patriarchy'. 'The condition of European women is the same,' the

[36] Interview with Shaktini, TL.
[37] Interview with Christine Delphy, TL, Paris (25 Oct. 2018).
[38] Interview with Shaktini, TL.
[39] Interview with Delphy, TL.
[40] Interview with Shaktini, TL.
[41] Contemporaine, PLK, F/DELTA/RES/0704/01/01: 'Solidarité avec…', flyer (Aug. 1970).

flyer argued, invoking movements in England and Holland—which, as we noted in Chapter III, the MLF had already visited.[42] It is little wonder, then, that journalists made the connection to the American WLM: the day after the protest, *L'Aurore* and *Le Figaro* crowned it the 'Mouvement de libération de la femme française'.[43]

The police made the connection as well. After the protest, Shaktini was put under surveillance and eventually interrogated. The police asked whether she was 'receiving money' from the US and who was paying her. As she explained: 'They seemed to think I was an outside agitator.' But to Shaktini such questions were 'totally ridiculous': 'As if the Frenchwomen didn't have enough sense to agitate on their own.' Regardless, with fear of deportation and concerns that her being monitored might jeopardise future MLF actions, Shaktini ended her participation in the MLF—and went on to join the nascent French gay liberation movement. Despite this, she had been 'thrilled' to participate. 'It was wonderful,' she said, 'I knew it was a historic moment.'[44]

There was fallout from the protests in all three countries. In the US, there were no arrests, but some participants were fired from their jobs,[45] and we have explored resulting internal disagreements in the US and UK. In the French case, as we know, the action cemented the split in the MLF between those who wanted to continue with headline-grabbing actions and those who did not. In all three countries activists were still learning how to work together, and how to present themselves to the world. Regardless, they successfully garnered attention.

And from the very beginning the WLM was presented as transnational: the idea to protest a pageant, American songs, and the inspiration of the Chicago Seven in the Miss World

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[42] Contemporaine, PLK, F/DELTA/RES/0704/01/01: 'Le 26 août, aux USA…', flyer (Aug. 1970).
[43] Christine Delphy, 'Les origins du mouvement de libération des femmes en France', *NQF*, 16/18 (1991), p. 143.
[44] Interview with Shaktini, TL.
[45] Hanisch, 'A Critique'.

protests; Americans calling upon 'WOMEN OF THE WORLD'; the connections with other movements that French protestors invoked. This should not eclipse the distinctly national flavours of each protest. In America and France, national emblems carried protestors' messages. British protestors, inspired by the suffragettes, situated themselves within the long history of British feminism. And in all three countries, it was the ingenuity of the activists—from British groceries to American sheep and French flowers—which seized public attention.

2. Reproductive rights

On 16-18 July 1971, women from across the US of all races and classes, both WLM activists and those 'not feminists yet', met in New York. The idea for national coordination on abortion law repeal had emerged from a fight against Connecticut state laws, where local activists' lawsuit was thrown out, despite support from hundreds of women. It was time, Connecticut women wrote in a letter to 200 American women's groups, for 'nationwide political action'. Before the national abortion conference convened, the idea to demand 'the repeal of all abortion laws' was 'expanded' to demand free contraception and end forced sterilisation. The latter was 'the price Black, third world and poor women have been forced to pay for abortion'. A slogan was chosen to encapsulate this: 'Abortion, a Woman's Right to Choose.'[46] During the conference, the struggle was also expanded in another way. Reports of the Irish Contraceptive Train spread through the event—when, in May 1971, Irish women had protested contraception prohibitions by travelling to Belfast to buy contraceptives.[47] This highlighted, for American conference

[46] Fran Pollner, 'abortion: a woman's right to choose', *oob* (Oct. 1971), p.8.
[47] Pat Brennan, 'Women in Revolt', *Magill* (Apr. 1979), p. 40.

attendees, 'that we were undertaking an international struggle to free ourselves and our sisters from a universal bondage.'[48]

'There is no country which recognizes a woman's right to abortion,' explained Boston activist Gail Anderson in a pamphlet, having surveyed the global legislative landscape.[49] A handful of American states had begun to relax their anti-abortion laws—a process which accelerated between 1970-2—but it wasn't until 1973 that women's right to abortion was enshrined in federal law.[50] In the UK, abortion had been decriminalised in 1967, though the availability of abortion depended on individual doctors' judgements of medical necessity;[51] consequently, access to NHS abortions varied geographically.[52] In France, by 1967, the ban on contraception had been overturned, but abortion remained illegal until the 1975 Loi Veil was passed.[53] Given this legislative variation, activists primarily struggled on national terrain—fighting alongside different activist coalitions within each country. However, activists in different countries borrowed each other's tactics; they shared news, cooperated, protested in solidarity, and eventually formed international campaigns. The WLM's struggle for reproductive rights, though conducted in national arenas, was envisaged as global from its conception.

At their July 1971 conference, the American Women's National Abortion Action Coalition (WONAAC) began their 'international campaign' with 'a call to our sisters around the world' to join together on 20 November and 'let the world hear in one united voice and

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[48] SL, FEC, Pr-11, 1.1: Gail Anderson, 'No Force Can Stop Us' in Female Liberation, *The Right to Choose Abortion* (c. 1971), p. 27.
[49] *Ibid*.
[50] T. Joyce et. al., 'Abortion Before & After Roe', *Journal of Health Economics*, 32:5 (2013), pp. 804-15.
[51] S. Sheldon et.al., 'The Abortion Act (1967): a biography', *Legal Studies*, 39 (2019), p. 20.
[52] G. Davis et. al., 'All Aboard the "Abortion Express": Geographic Variability, Domestic Travel, and the 1967 British Abortion Act' in Davis and C. Sethna and Davis, eds., *Abortion Across Borders: Transnational Travel and Access to Abortion Services* (Baltimore, MD, 2019), pp. 101-22.
[53] B. Pavard, 'Du Birth Control au Planning Familial (1955-60): Un Transfert Militant', *Histoire@Politique*, 18 (Sep.-Dec. 2012), p. 2.

many languages our slogan, "Abortion – A Woman's Right to Choose."'[54] The MLF answered. In 'all corners of the United States, of Canada,' began a circular written by the Circle Dimitriev, 'probably in England, perhaps in many European countries, women are going to gather.' It would be 'a symbol of the international solidarity of all women in the fight for their liberation.'[55] Paris held the largest march, with thousands of women creating the 'atmosphere of a street festival'. There were marches in San Francisco and Washington, DC; rallies across Canada. In London and Oxford, women leafleted; there were Bristol and Nottingham teach-ins.[56] WONAAC representative Linda Shepherd toured Britain, to explain how Americans had built their campaign, and to argue: 'that this is an international question; that in spite of the legal differences were are all fighting for the same fundamental right—the right to control our bodies'.[57]

a. Coalitions

Struggles for reproductive rights were not limited to WLM activists. Activity in the US ranged from reformist, lobbying organisations like the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws,[58] to underground abortion clinics run by WLM activists, like Chicago Jane.[59] WLM groups brought legal action against their state laws,[60] and focused upon abortion in general demonstrations too: for the 1970 Women's Strike, Boston activists held a birth control teach-in.[61] When the landmark 1973 *Roe v Wade* decision recognised women's constitutional right to

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[54] Anderson, 'No Force'.
[55] Contemporaine, PFP, MFC/0198/1: Circle Dimitriev, '20 Novembre: Une Date Importante' (1971).
[56] 'November 20th – International Demonstrations', *WACC Newsletter*, 2 (Jan. 1972), p. 1.
[57] Nottingham WL, 'Editorial', *Women Now* (Jan. 1972), p. 1.
[58] NARAL Pro-Choice America, 'About Us' (n.d.), https://www.prochoiceamerica.org/about/ (11 Jul. 2020).
[59] K.S. O'Donnell, 'Reproducing Jane: Abortion Stories and Women's Political Histories', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 43:1 (2017), pp. 77-96.
[60] SL, FEC, Pr-11, 1.1: 'Women v. Mass' (*c.* 1971).
[61] SL, PRGR, MC915, 1.13: Boston Women United, 'Women's Rights Day', flyer (Aug. 1970).

abortion, many feminist groups pivoted from campaigning and underground clinics to establishing health clinics officially, which provided low-cost, woman-led services.[62]

In the UK, 'Free contraception and abortion on demand' was one of the first four WLM demands.[63] In January 1972, the Women's Abortion and Contraception Campaign (WACC) was founded, as a 'federation of local groups'.[64] The influence of WONACC's approach can be seen in WACC's policy statement, composed a few months after Shepherd's tour. It began with mention of the international 20 November protests, then stated: 'We declare that it should be every woman's right to choose whether or not to have a child.' For WACC, this comprised three aims: free contraception, the right to choose abortion, and no forced sterilisation.[65] The formulation of these aims mirrored WONAAC's exactly.[66] Given neither the 'right to choose' nor 'no enforced sterilisation' were included in the original demand, it is likely these were US imports.

Moreover, WACC reported that Shepherd had been the one to convince them of the importance of their struggle. At the Nottingham teach-in, she argued the 1967 Abortion Act was only 'partial reform'. It came 'as a shock' to her that the British considered it progressive; similar laws existed in some US states, she explained, and they were seen as 'a severe restriction on our rights.' Shepherd continued: 'There should be no laws at all. It should be the right of women to decide solely.' WACC were convinced: 'WE NEED AN ACT WHICH EMBODIES OUR SLOGAN "A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE".' This would, they added, 'merely be the start

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[62] See p. 243.
[63] Ruth Petrie and Anna Livingstone, 'Out of the Backstreets', *Red Rag*, 11 (Autumn 1976), p. 11.
[64] FAN, FAN/LL/04: London WACC, 'What is WACC?' (Nov. 1972).
[65] Nottingham WL, 'Editorial'.
[66] 'United States', *WACC Newsletter*, 2:1 (Feb.-Mar. 1973), p. 8.

of our attempt to control our own bodies and our own lives'—echoing American WLM slogans.[67]

WACC groups undertook a range of activities including consciousness-raising, leafleting, self-examination, and pregnancy testing services.[68] WLM groups also ran their own campaigns to improve local services.[69] At the same time, anti-abortion groups were campaigning to repeal the 1967 law. The closest they came was MP James White's 1975 reform bill. This sparked the formation of the National Abortion Campaign (NAC)—a collaboration between activists in the WLM, IMG, Communist Party, Working Women's Charter Campaign, and Abortion Law Reform Association (founded by feminists in 1936)—which organised pickets and mass demonstrations. Although the NAC was an autonomous organisation, attracting broad-based support, many WLM activists worked in, and ran, local NAC groups, and attended NAC protests. The influence of WACC—and thus WONAAC—upon the NAC can be seen in their slogan: 'FREE ABORTION ON DEMAND – A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE'.[70]

The MLF's abortion activism began with the Manifeste des 343 printed in April 1971: a public statement by 343 women claiming to have had abortions. From there, the MLF undertook a range of abortion activism. Claudine Mulard recalled handing out abortion leaflets at the Marché Maubert with her neighbourhood group. They were arrested:[71] 'anti-natalist propaganda' was still illegal.[72] She also participated in the 1971 march, which she remembered as 'immensely creative'. There was a 'spontaneous' feeling to the demonstration,

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[67] WACC, 'Linda Shepherds Tour', *WACC Newsletter*, 2 (Jan. 1972), pp. 2-3.
[68] FAN, FAN/LL/04: Merseyside WACC, 'Running an Abortion and Contraception Campaign' (Jan. 1973); London WACC Group, report (Jan. 1973); Bristol WACC, 'Bristol Report' (*c.* 1973); 'What is WACC?'.
[69] FAN, FAN/LL/04: Bolton WL Group, 'A Local Campaign for a Free Contraceptive Service' (n.d.).
[70] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 130.22: 'National Abortion Campaign' (*c.* 1977). Petrie and Livingstone, 'Backstreets', pp. 12-14.
[71] Interview with Claudine Mulard, TL, Los Angeles, CA (13 Oct. 2018).
[72] B. Pavard, 'The Right to Know? The Politics of Information about Contraception in France (1950s–80s)', *Medical History*, 63:2 (2019), p. 174.

which made her feel 'very much alive'. Mulard could recall their songs. She recited one, about pro-natalist politician Michel Debré, in our interview:

> Debré, nous n'auront plus d'enfants,
> Non, non, non, non,
> Pour faire de la poudre canon,
> Non, non, non, non.

As these lyrics suggest, MLF activists tied the issue of abortion to pacifism. 'You have to have strong boys to defend your borders,' Mulard explained, of the pro-natalists. 'And women didn't want to be a part of […] that war machine.'[73]

As with the UK and US, the MLF also struggled alongside a broad coalition of groups. 'Choisir la cause des femmes' was founded following the Manifeste des 343, to campaign for decriminalisation and defend women prosecuted for abortion.[74] Moments like the 1972 trial of women in Bobigny, who obtained/procured an abortion, provided opportunities for Choisir to campaign in the courtroom—and were flashpoints for the wider MLF too, with solidarity protests.[75] The Groupe Information Santé (GIS)—a collective of doctors formed in 1972 to 'criticise the health conditions in France' and push for improvements—campaigned for free abortion and practised illegal abortions.[76] Finally, the Mouvement pour la liberté de l'avortement et de la contraception (MLAC) also facilitated abortions, both in providing them and by arranging travel to countries with legalised abortion. It was not an MLF initiative—instead founded as a collaboration between doctors and left-wing activists (including the Parti Socialiste, trade unions, and AMR).[77] Nevertheless, many MLF groups supported their local

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[73] Interview with Mulard, TL.
[74] Choisir la cause des femmes, 'Années 1970', http://www.choisirlacausedesfemmes.org/historique/annees-1970.html (11 Jul. 2020).
[75] 'Avortement: La France Hors la Loi', *le Nouvel Observateur* (20 Nov. 1972), pp. 54-8. CAF, AMG, 46AF3: Des femmes du MLF, 'Le "Respect" de la vie' flyer (Nov. 1972).
[76] CAF, FGIS, 44AF1: GIS, 'Qu'est-ce que le GIS' (1972); GIS, 'A Propos du GIS' (n.d.).
[77] M. Zancarini-Fournel, 'Histoire(s) du MLAC (1973-75)', *Clio. Histoire, femmes et sociétés*, 18 (2003), p. 4.

MLAC,[78] and some MLAC committees were run by women—like the Aix-en-Provence MLAC, formed by a female commune.[79]

These efforts sometimes relied upon transnational cooperation. As Christabelle Sethna shows in her history of the 'Heathrow Airport to Harley Street' journey, the 1967 Abortion Act's lack of residency requirements led to an influx of non-resident women seeking terminations. In 1972, 30.8 percent of British terminations were performed upon non-resident women, with the largest numbers arriving from France and Germany, then other Northern European countries. Indeed, this was one area of closer links between Britain and France, due to their proximity.[80] Travel from France was organised by MLAC which functioned, Michelle Zancarini-Fournel argues, as a kind of 'parallel social service' in this regard.[81] MLF protestors often highlighted the inequalities of this situation; when leafleting outside the Bobigny trial, feminists chanted: 'England for the rich, jail for the poor'.[82] Delphy remembered that when MLAC buses left France, they would drive across the country adorned with banners declaring, 'We are going to Holland to abort'. She thought this was a significant factor in lawmakers' 1975 decision to legalise abortion: 'the law was being broken' already.[83]

b. Transnational testifying

'One million women have an abortion each year in France,' asserted a seven-line manifesto, signed by 343 women, printed in *le Nouvel Observateur* on 5 April 1971. 'I declare that I am one

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[78] For example: CAF, FAC, 38AF1: 'à l'ombre des maris' (n.d.).
[79] Lucile Ruault, 'Interview with Guilaine Enoc', *NQF*, 35:1 (2016), pp. 136-52.
[80] C. Sethna, 'From Heathrow Airport to Harley Street: The ARLA and the Travel of Nonresident Women for Abortion Services in Britain', in Sethna and G. Davis, eds., *Abortion Across Borders: Transnational Travel and Access to Abortion Services* (Baltimore, MD, 2019), pp. 46-71.
[81] Zancarini-Fournel, 'Histoire(s)', p. 4.
[82] Ministère de la Justice, 'Il y a 40 ans, le procès de Bobigny' (20 Dec. 2012), http://www.justice.gouv.fr/histoire-et-patrimoine-10050/proces-historiques-10411/il-y-a-40-ans-le-proces-de-bobigny-24792.html (11 Jul. 2020).
[83] Interview with Delphy, TL.

of them. I declare that I have had an abortion.' The Manifeste des 343 condemned the criminalisation of abortions in France, ending: 'Just as we demand free [liberalised] access to contraceptives, we demand free [liberalised] abortion.' A footnote to this statement added that signatories who were also MLF activists demanded 'free' abortion in two senses: 'liberalised' and 'without cost'.[84] Indeed the 343 signatories comprised many MLF activists—including Delphy, Fouque, Rochefort, Wittig—but not exclusively. It was filled with other names including the famous: Catherine Deneuve, Marguerite Duras, Françoise Sagan—and Simone de Beauvoir, who had penned the declaration.[85]

The origins of the Manifeste des 343 are sometimes ascribed to Redstockings' speakout tactic—which would constitute an interesting example of transnational diffusion. In February 1969, Redstockings interrupted a New York legislative hearing on abortion with Kathie Sarachild's cry to 'hear from some real experts—the women.' Of the hearing's fifteen speakers only one was female: a nun.[86] Redstockings activists each testified to their personal experiences of abortion, as a form of 'mass consciousness-raising'.[87] A month later, they called their first speakout event, where, before an audience of more than 300, they, and female audience members, 'rapped about their own abortions'.[88] Redstockings hoped speakouts would 'become the equivalent, for the women's movement, of the Vietnam teach-ins'.[89]

Alice Echols in her history of American radical feminism, and Sandra Reineke in her history of 'exchanges' between French, German, and American feminists, argue this inspired

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[84] 'Un appel des 343 femmes', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 334 (5 Apr. 1971), https://www.nouvelobs.com/opinions/00013216.EDI0001/un-appel-de-343-femmes.html (11 Jul. 2020).

[85] Contemporaine, PLK, F/DELTA/RES/0704/01/01: Manifeste des 343, signatories (1970).

[86] Edith Evans Asbury, 'Women Break Up Abortion Hearing', *NYT* (14 Feb. 1969), p. 42.

[87] Kathie Sarachild, 'The Power of History', *Feminist Revolution* (New York, 1978), p. 20.

[88] Susan Brownmiller, 'Everywoman's Abortions: "The Oppressor is Man"', *The Village Voice* (27 Mar. 1969).

[89] Ellen Willis, 'Up From Radicalism: A Feminist Journal', *US Magazine* (1969). Reprinted in Nona Willis Aronowitz ed., *The Essential Ellen Willis* (London, 2014), p. 17.

the Manifeste des 343. Both protests involved public testifying, but it is not clear that their theory is based on more than this similarity. Echols cites a *Ms.* magazine report on the MLF,[90] which discussed the manifesto, but made no mention of Redstockings.[91] Reineke's assertion is also tenuous: she notes the Unknown Soldier's Wife link to the American strike, but does not evidence her claim that the 'often overlooked Redstockings speakout' led to the manifesto, beyond an assertion that 'Like their American "sisters," French feminists used the mainstream media for publicity purposes'.[92]

In fact, the manifesto was a distinctly French initiative. Anne Zelensky, one of the Unknown Soldier's Wife protestors, wanted specific action on abortion because it seemed to her 'the most scandalous aspect' of women's 'condition'; she had witnessed friends going through illegal abortions.[93] Delphy also thought a focus on abortion was strategically important: 'most women were concerned about it', as were many men.[94] Zelensky and Delphy formed an abortion group and announced it in an AG. It was met with criticisms of being too 'reformist', but nonetheless grew to fifteen. They discussed, wrote tracts, and then one morning Zelensky received a call from *le Nouvel Observateur*.[95]

The editor, Jean Moreau, was friends with Sartre and had seen first-hand the way authorities kowtowed to celebrities. This was the origin of his idea: if famous women admitted

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[90] A. Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (London, 1989), p. 142.
[91] Claude Servan-Schreiber, 'Notes from Abroad: What Frenchwomen are up to', *Ms.* (Sep. 1972), pp. 30-1.
[92] S. Reineke, 'Border Crossings: Simone de Beauvoir, Feminist Intellectual Exchanges, and the Organisation of Women's Studies Programs in France, Germany and the United States', *Simone de Beauvoir Studies*, 25 (2008-9), pp. 67-8.
[93] Anne Tristan (née Zelensky), 'Le manifeste des 343' in Tristan and Annie de Pisan, *Histoires du MLF* (Paris, 1977), p. 64.
[94] Interview with Delphy, TL.
[95] Tristan, 'Manifeste', pp. 64-5.

to abortions, 'Who would dare to prosecute them?'[96] Open-letter style manifestos were common in France: in 1960, intellectuals, including Sartre, had signed the 'Manifeste des 121', calling upon the French government to recognise the Algerian war as a legitimate struggle for independence.[97] The MLF abortion group had mixed reactions to Moreau's idea. Those who were enthusiastic, including Zelensky and Delphy, carried it forwards. They approached de Beauvoir to gauge her reaction—her signature would lead to others. De Beauvoir like the idea and said she would sign. The MLF abortion group updated the rest of the MLF at the next AG and were met again with derision, for working with the 'bourgeois press' and de Beauvoir—'Mama's feminism,' came the jeers.[98] But as de Beauvoir and Rochefort—who was not only a popular author, but had also worked as the Cannes Film Festival press attaché for years[99]—opened their address books, and famous signatures amassed, eventually even their detractors signed.[100]

None of the signatories were arrested—just as Moreau suspected. Spurred on by this, the manifesto sparked further activism. The MLF abortion group, now called Mouvement pour la liberté de l'avortement (not to be confused with MLAC), urged other women to add their signatures—two months after the manifesto's publication, they had accrued 1,500.[101] Class struggle groups organised their own interventions, including mobilising neighbourhood groups, like Mulard's, to reach women exiting work, schools, and shops.[102] And in July 1971, de

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[96] Jean Moreau quoted in S. Des Deserts, 'Avant la loi Veil: l'histoire secrète du manifeste des 343 "salopes"', *L'Obs* (19 Nov. 2012), https://www.nouvelobs.com/societe/20121119.OBS9921/avant-la-loi-veil-l-histoire-secrete-du-manifeste-des-343-salopes.html (11 Jul. 2020).

[97] 'Déclaration sur le droit à l'insoumission dans la guerre d'Algérie', *Vérité-Liberté*, 4 (Sep. 1960), reprinted in *Libération* (12 Jan. 1998), https://www.liberation.fr/cahier-special/1998/01/12/algerie-manifeste-des-121-declaration-sur-le-droit-a-l-insoumission-dans-la-guerre-d-algerie_544819 (11 Jul. 2020).

[98] Tristan, 'Manifeste', pp. 65-8.

[99] M-A. Hutton, *Countering the Culture: The Novels of Christiane Rochefort* (Exeter, 1998), p. 3.

[100] Des Deserts, 'Avant la loi Veil'.

[101] Contemporaine, PLK, F/DELTA/RES/0704/01/01: MLA, 'Le Gouvernement Intensifie…' circular (10 Jun. 1971).

[102] Contemporaine, PLK, F/DELTA/RES/0704/01/02: Cercle Dimitriev, 'Avortement' (19 May 1971).

Beauvoir and Rochefort founded Choisir—initially to defend the 343 signatories—along with scientist Jean Rostand and Gisèle Halimi, another signatory.[103]

Halimi was born in Tunisia in 1927, and after refusing an arranged marriage she moved to France to study law, eventually coming back to Tunis in 1949, where she defended members of the Algerian National Liberation Front including Djamila Boupacha, a 22-year-old woman who was tortured and raped by French soldiers.[104] Halimi and de Beauvoir co-authored a book about Boupacha,[105] and it was this that prompted Choisir's involvement in the Bobigny trial, when one of the defendants, having encountered the book, reached out to Halimi. Halimi agreed to act as the women's defence, as she would in other Choisir trials—taking the opportunity to campaign in the courtroom.[106] The manifesto and establishment of Choisir influenced doctors' activism too: in 1973, 331 doctors (organised by GIS) declared they had performed abortions.[107] Shortly after, MLAC was established, originally to defend doctors who performed abortions, much in the style of Choisir.[108]

Even if not transnational in origin, Reineke rightly highlights the manifesto's transnational impact.[109] Moreau contacted German journalist Alice Schwarzer (who'd previously, briefly, participated in the MLF),[110] and she organised 'Der Appell der 374', printed

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[103] Choisir, 'Années 1970'.
[104] K. Willsher, 'Obituary: Gisèle Halimi, trailblazing French feminist MP and lawyer, dies aged 93', *The Guardian* (29 Jul. 2020), https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/29/gisele-halimi-trailblazing-french-feminist-mp-and-lawyer-dies-aged-93 (16 Feb. 2021).
[105] Simone de Beauvoir and Gisèle Halimi, *Djamila Boupacha* (Paris, 1962).
[106] Ministère de la Justice, 'Il y a 40 ans'.
[107] 'Des medecins "s'accusent"', *le Nouvel Observateur*, 430 (5 Feb. 1973), pp. 4-5.
[108] Zancarini-Fournel, 'Histoire(s)', p. 2.
[109] Reineke, 'Border Crossings', p. 69.
[110] Alice Schwarzer, 'Ein unerhörtes Selbstbekenntnis', *Die Zeit*, 18 (23 Apr. 2009), https://www.zeit.de/2009/18/D-Abtreibung (11 Jul. 2020).

in June 1971 in German newspaper *Stern*.[111] The following year, in *Ms.* magazine, 53 American women declared: 'We have had abortions'. 'Last year,' the statement began:

> 343 prominent and respected Frenchwomen were willing to sign a public manifesto declaring that they had undergone abortions. This *acte de révolte* dramatized their individual determination to take their lives and liberation into their own hands.

Like the French manifesto, this initiative was envisaged as the start of a petition: there was a slip beside the declaration, which readers could sign and post back. The petition would be 'sent to the White House, to every State Legislature, and to our sisters in other countries who are signing similar petitions'.[112]

c. 'Our sisters in other countries'

Transnational coordination and the sharing of protest tactics were ongoing. In one planning document, we can see how WACC campaigned both nationally and transnationally. Just as they planned to send 'as many women as possible' to counter-protest a Manchester anti-abortion rally, so too did they plan to 'mobilise women' for a WLM demonstration on International Women's Day. They supported local campaigns and would also send representatives to the International Tribunal on Abortion in New York, to take material on 'the British situation', and report back to local WACC groups—another hourglass effect. Just as WACC would set up a 'committee to look into the Abortion Act' so did they 'invite women from other countries to make tours of this country, publicising their campaigns and highlighting the relevance of ours'.[113]

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[111] 'Der Appell der 374', *Stern* (6 Jun. 1971), reproduced by Alice Schwarzer (25 Jul. 2013), https://www.aliceschwarzer.de/artikel/der-appell-der-374-264824 (11 Jul. 2020).
[112] Barbaralee Diamonstein, 'We have had abortions', *Ms.* (Spring 1972), pp. 34-5.
[113] FAN, FAN/LL/04: WACC, 'The Right to Choose' (*c.* 1973).

WACC newsletters were regularly packed with reports on campaigns abroad. US developments featured heavily—as in one 1973 issue, which also included a translation of an MLF notice on the Bobigny trial, the Manifeste des 343, and 1971 march, and another notice reporting the doctors' manifesto.[114] Likewise, British campaign groups publicised themselves. In 1975, the National Abortion Campaign authored a French pamphlet about their 'A Woman's Right to Choose' campaign, which they sent to groups including MLAC. 'We appeal to our sisters in Europe,' it ended, asking them to attend a London protest, demonstrate outside British Embassies, or send telegrams to British ministers against the White Bill.[115]

Information was also shared, and solidarity actions planned, at international meetings. On 16-17 March 1973, Monica Sjöö from Bristol WACC attended one in Paris, with activists from across Europe and the Americas. The first day was devoted to abortion and contraception. Sjöö described the UK situation and reported back in the *WACC Newsletter*.[116] So did Maureen Blackburn from Glasgow, who represented Britain at another international meeting, held one week earlier—this time in New York, organised by WONAAC to celebrate *Roe v Wade* and 'support the struggle of women throughout the world for control over their bodies.'

Representing the French movement were Halimi and Claude Servan-Schreiber from Choisir, who spoke of the Bobigny trial. At the heart of the trial was Marie-Claire, a 16-year-old who was raped and fell pregnant, and whose mother, Michèle Chevalier, helped her to procure an illegal abortion. Chevalier, a single, working-class mother, also gave a speech at the New York meeting, and was met with a spontaneous standing ovation. This drove home, for Blackburn, the transnational nature of the struggle:

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[114] 'Foreign News', *WACC Newsletter*, 2:1 (Feb.-Mar. 1973), pp. 8-13.
[115] CAF, FMLAC, 10AF11: NAC, 'A Woman's Right to Choose' (*c.* 1975).
[116] Monica Sjöö, 'Report from an International Women's Meeting in France', *WACC Newsletter*, 2:2 (Apr.-May 1973), pp. 25-7.

> Everyone had listened spellbound to Michele's moving story and we were all aware of the tremendous atmosphere in the hall of a sisterhood which knew no national barriers […] it made us realise for certain that we CAN win, that we won't stop until every one of our sisters throughout the world has the right to control her own body and her life.

Blackburn ended her report with a slogan from the American movement: 'Sisterhood is powerful!'[117]

'Sisterhood' and 'our sisters throughout the world' were regularly invoked by Anglophones in the reproductive rights struggle, as sources quoted throughout this section show. One can find the use of 'sœurs' in some MLF material, often with the same usage as 'sisters'—to send solidarity to other women;[118] as an emotional appeal to women with differing opinions;[119] and as a rallying cry[120]—but it is not as ubiquitous. As for 'sisterhood': one finds occasional mentions of 'sororité',[121] but chiefly when activists recount MLF memories, not in contemporary sources. The WLM sign-off 'In sisterhood' was adopted in correspondence with Anglophone feminists (even where the rest of the letter was composed in French),[122] as was 'Love and sisterhood';[123] in correspondence with other French feminists one even finds the Franglais 'En sisterhood !'[124] That the MLF did not fully embrace its own language of 'sisterhood' should not be overstated, however. Within the struggle for reproductive rights, we

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[117] Maureen Blackburn, 'Report of the International Abortion Rally in New York', *ibid.*, pp. 22-5.
[118] Contemporaine, PFP, MFC/0198/1: Des militantes du MLF, 'Solidaires de no sœurs' (19 Oct. 1970).
[119] Contemporaine, PLK, F/DELTA/RES/0704/01/02: Catherine D., 'Aux sœurs des organisations principalement trotskistes et maoistes' (23 Jun. 1971).
[120] Une F.R., 'NE SOUTENONS PLUS LES SOUNTENEURS MES SŒURS !', *LTB*, 5 (*c.* 1973), p. 19.
[121] Collectif, 'Généalogie', *ProChoix*, 46 (Dec. 2008), p. 32; Jacqueline Feldman, 'De FMA au MLF: Un témoignage sur les débuts du mouvement de libération des femmes', *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire*, 29 (2009), p. 203; Hélène Fleckinger, 'Interview with Carole Roussopoulos: "Une révolution du regard"', *NQF*, 28:1 (2009), p. 106.
[122] For example: SBC, RMP, BC2: Simone de Beauvoir, Correspondence with Robin Morgan.
[123] FAS, EMA, DM2123/8/127 F4: Michele Besos, letter to Ellen Malos (n.d.).
[124] CAF, FEF, 33AF1: Françoise d'Eaubonne, circular (Apr. 1974).

find the same solidarity. It is simply expressed in different terms: 'comrades', 'for the right of all women to free abortion', 'international solidarity',[125] 'solidarity with all women'.[126]

Much work has interrogated sisterhood within the UK and US. In 1986, bell hooks, analysing the concept generally, criticised the 'vision of Sisterhood evoked by women's liberationists' which seemed, to her, 'based on the idea of common oppression'. For hooks, this was not true sisterhood: the idea of 'common oppression' was 'false', 'mystifying the true nature of women's varied and complex social reality'. Sisterhood should not be abandoned entirely, hooks added: it could strengthen 'resistance struggle'. True sisterhood would be based upon the sharing of experiences, culture, ideas. Women could be 'united by shared interests and beliefs, united in our appreciation for diversity, united in our struggle to end sexist oppression, united in political solidarity.'[127]

In his exploration of class and the British WLM, George Stevenson examines previous historical interpretations of sisterhood. Both hooks' 'true' and 'false' sisterhoods can be found here. Within traditional narratives of the British WLM, Stevenson says, the movement's invocation of sisterhood was problematised: sisterhood did not account for racial or class differences, these narratives asserted, and it was this that led to the movement's eventual fragmentation. On the other hand, Stevenson adds, are revisionists who countered this, highlighting flexible forms of sisterhood and emphasising the healthiness of disagreement and debate. In other words: there *were* examples of hooks' 'true' sisterhood in the 1970s. Stevenson positions himself between these camps, demonstrating sisterhood was found in the British WLM by many working-class women, and there were sincere efforts by activists to create a

[125] CAF, FMLAC, 10AF11: MLAC, 'La Lutte Continue' (*c.* 1975).
[126] Dimitriev, '20 Novembre'.
[127] bell hooks, 'Sisterhood: Political Solidarity between Women', *Feminist Review*, 23 (Jun. 1986), pp. 125-38.

sisterhood not based upon the 'sameness' of women's experiences; but this sisterhood was not limitless—the movement could, nonetheless, perpetuate oppression.[128]

These two formulations of sisterhood can be found within the transnational reproductive rights struggle. Activists saw themselves as participating in the same struggle despite differences in legislation, and there was strength to be derived from this diversity. With her experience of American abortion laws, Shepherd could point out the precariousness of British women's legal position. And there was strength to be derived from solidarity. The sense of belonging to a global struggle clearly galvanised: Americans' excitement at hearing of the Irish Contraceptive Train; the MLF's enthusiastic response to the international march; the electric atmosphere Blackburn felt upon hearing Chevalier's speech. Strategically, activists in different countries could amplify each other's voices, whether in submitting petitions (as *Ms.* suggested) or solidarity protests (as with the NAC's 'appeal to our sisters in Europe').

But hooks' 'false' sisterhood based upon misunderstandings of 'common oppression' could be found too, as with the question of forced sterilisation. Women's experiences of sterilisation were polarised: often, doctors refused it to young, white, middle-class women, while forcing it upon many women of colour and working-class women. One 1973 WLM newsletter from Berkshire, MA reported on a South Carolina doctor who was 'the only Dr. that will deliver the babies of poor women' in his town. He required 'welfare mothers with 3 children to be sterilized in order to continue receiving his care'. The majority of the women were black. The article added, 'It goes without saying' this was 'for social rather than medical reasons.'[129] As Jennifer Nelson shows, American activists clashed over the issue: attempts by women of colour to regulate sterilisation were met with white feminist opposition. Resolving

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[128] G. Stevenson, *The Women's Liberation Movement and the Politics of Class in Britain* (London, 2019), pp. 154-6.

[129] Sue, 'It's Happened Again!!!!!!', *Women*, 2:5 (18 Mar. 1973), p. 6.

this required a reconceptualisation of the struggle for abortion rights as the struggle for 'reproductive rights'; a repositioning which feminist campaign group CARASA (Committee for Abortion Rights and Against Sterilization Abuse), founded in New York in 1976, spearheaded, by adopting 'critiques made by African Americans and Puerto Ricans'.[130]

This reveals the difficulty of shaping movement aims through notions of common oppression. Stevenson argues that in the UK movement, issues like forced sterilisation, experienced by both 'black and white working-class women' could 'build sisterhood', in ways which were absent 'when it came to middle-class white women'. However, he also notes the addition of 'no forced sterilisation' to WACC's original demands—concluding that perhaps 'disjuncture between white and black feminists over these types of issues owed as much' to 'political *emphasis* as to fundamental political differences.'[131] But when we take into account the transnational dimension of the struggle for reproductive rights, we find WACC's original demands were imports from WONAAC—and this has interesting implications for Stevenson's hypothesis.

The demands were formulated by American women of colour and white women, together, at WONAAC's 1971 founding conference, rather than derived from soul-searching in the UK. WACC's discussion of WONAAC's demands mentioned:

> The demand to end forced sterilization is very important in a country of immigrant peoples: black, chicano and Latin women are often only given an abortion if they will also be sterilized.[132]

This suggests a lack of knowledge that women of colour in the UK also experienced forced sterilisation. Elsewhere in British WLM periodicals, we find reports of the sterilisation of black

[130] J. Nelson, *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement* (London, 2003), pp. 5, 20.
[131] Stevenson, *Politics of Class*, pp. 138-9.
[132] 'United States', p. 8.

and Puerto Rican women in New York, women in US-controlled Puerto Rico, and Chicana women in LA.[133] There were occasional reports of forced sterilisation occurring in the UK—but not how it fell mainly upon British women of colour and working-class women.[134] Only in 1978, with the printing of a speech made by Brixton Black Women's Group was there an assertion that 'Black women have been the victims of forced sterilisation' in the UK.[135]

This explains black activists' frustration with British abortion campaigning—and thus Stevenson's hypothesis of a difference in political emphasis between white and black activists. In a 1979 conference paper, OWAAD argued the NAC's slogan 'a woman's right to choose' had different meanings for white and black women, and that it should also refer to 'a woman's right to choose *not* to have an abortion' (as Americans, who formulated the slogan, had intended).

> As black women we frequently find ourselves sterilised without our knowledge or consent […] So the whole question of our 'right to choose' has a very different meaning.

In the UK, OWAAD argued, campaigns for 'a woman's right to choose' had 'mostly been used to refer to the right to abortion'. But they should 'relate to the different needs' of all women, recognising 'the problems of black women do not mirror those of white women'.[136]

Françoise Vergès argues there was a similar lack of understanding in the MLF. Thousands of non-consensual abortions and sterilisations were performed on women in Réunion, an overseas French department, from the mid-1960s to 1970, but the MLF ignored this—despite reports in French newspapers. Vergès sees this as a wider symptom of French

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[133] 'The Americas', *Women's Report*, 3:1 (Nov.-Dec. 1974), p. 5; 'Sterilised Women Sue Hospital', *Women's Voice* (Jan. 1975), p. 3; 'Forced Sterilisation in Los Angeles & New York', *Power of Women*, 1:4 (Summer 1975), p. 4.

[134] 'Withdrawal Method?', *Women's Report*, 1:6 (Sep.-Oct. 1973), p. 6; Red Rag Collective, 'Dear P. Shiels', *Red Rag*, 9 (Jun. 1975), p. 23.

[135] Brixton Black Women's Group, '…and what did we find?', *Red Rag* (1978), p. 18.

[136] OWAAD, 'Black Women and Health', in Feminist Anthology Collective ed., *No Turning Back: Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement, 1975-80* (London, 1981), p. 145.

feminism's historic blindness 'to the colonial/racial question'. But, she adds, this was particularly 'troubling' given 1970s activists' stances on racial injustice elsewhere in the world. MLF activists:

> translated texts by Black feminists in the United States and in the Global South, supported Vietnamese women fighting US imperialism, created routes of solidarity with women victims of Franco's fascism in Spain and of fascism in Italy and Germany, and signed petitions of support for women in Egypt, El Salvador, and Guatemala.[137]

Again, we find the limits of transnational sisterhood.

Forced sterilisation was, eventually, taken up by the French movement—just not until the late 1970s.[138] We can pinpoint this to two causes. Firstly, as with OWAAD in the UK, black activists raised the issue. Formed in May 1976 and with their first public meeting in October 1977, la Coordination des femmes noires (also known as 'Mouvement des femmes noires')[139] in March 1979 organised a protest against forced sterilisation, and on 15 December 1979 publicised the issue again with 'Five hours against polygamy and forced sterilisation'.[140] Secondly, international organisation reached a new stage of coordination. In June 1978, NAC called a meeting for abortion activists from across Europe,[141] at which the International Campaign for Abortion Rights was created, with the slogan: 'Contraception and abortion are a woman's rights. No forced sterilisation.'[142]

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[137] F. Vergès, 'On Women and their Wombs: Capitalism, Racialization, Feminism', *Critical Times*, 1:1 (2018), pp. 263-7.
[138] CAF, FAC, 38AF8: CIDA, 'Journee d'Action Internationale – 31 Mars 1979' (23 Sep. 1978).
[139] C. Lesselier, 'La coordination des femmes noires', http://musea.univ-angers.fr/exhibits/show/immigrees-exilees-femmes/la-coordination-des-femmes-noi (11 Jul. 2020).
[140] M. Zancarini-Fournel, 'Notre corps, nous-mêmes' in E. Gubin et. al., eds., *Le siècle des féminismes* (Paris, 2004), p. 212.
[141] 'La campagne doit s'amplifier!', *Cahiers du féminisme*, 6 (Oct.-Nov. 1978), p. 18.
[142] 'Abortion', *Women's Report*, 6:6 (Oct.-Nov. 1978), p. 11.

At the next meeting, in September, each country—now including the US, Australia, and New Zealand—reported on their situation. Ideas for centralising communication were formed, and an international day of action was planned for 31 March 1979.[143] The resulting call demonstrates the evolution of activist thinking. It began by describing how abortions could only be obtained illegally and dangerously, or via expensive travel in 'Portugal, Spain, the Maghreb, Italy or Ireland'. Under more liberalised legislation in the US, France, and Britain, there were still time limits, and minors and immigrants found it difficult to obtain abortions. Population control programmes were in operation in 'Latin America, Africa, and the Indies', as well as for 'oppressed minorities and poor women in the US and Europe'. 'Everywhere,' the call asserted, 'forced sterilisation is the instrument of racist politics.'[144] By the end of 1979, this thinking was encapsulated in the renaming of the campaign to 'the International Contraception, Abortion and Sterilisation Campaign'—a change which *Spare Rib* attributed to 'criticisms from black feminists'.[145]

3. Local protest, transnational solidarity

Much WLM campaigning focused on local issues. In all three countries, WLM activists supported women's workplace organising, including the Night Cleaners Campaign[146] and Grunwick strike[147] in London, the Fakenham factory occupation,[148] the Troyes strike and occupation,[149] and the organisation of clerical workers into union 9to5 in Boston.[150] WLM

[143] CAF, FAC, 38AF8: CIDA, 'Compte Rendu de la Reunion de Bruxelles du 23/09/78' (1978).
[144] CIDA, 'Journee d'Action'.
[145] Eileen Fairweather, 'Abortion: The feelings behind the slogans', *SR*, 87 (Oct. 1979), p. 29.
[146] TWL, 7SHR/D/1: 'Why should WL support the campaign to unionise night cleaners?' (*c.* 1970-1).
[147] 'Grunwick', *WIRES*, 39 (11 Oct. 1977), p. 6.
[148] TWL, 7SAA/9/6: LWLW, 'Fakenham: The Factory the Women Took Over' (*c.* 1973).
[149] *Grève de femmes à Troyes*, dir. Cathy Bernheim et. al. (Film, 1971).
[150] Interview with Linda Gordon, TL, New York (26 Sep. 2018).

activists also rallied around other local struggles: Californian women's prison activism;[151] the hunger strike at the Plessis-Robinson boarding school for pregnant girls;[152] the Lyon sex worker church occupation.[153] In the UK, with a greater level of movement coordination, national campaigns were launched too: around the WLM demand for financial and legal independence;[154] in support of the Anti-Discrimination Bill.[155] In partnership with trade unions, the Working Women's Charter campaign was launched in 1974 to struggle for aims including equal pay and opportunity, nurseries, free contraception, and better women's trade union representation.[156]

Transnational organisation, though not pivotal, was not entirely absent here. Unsurprisingly, socialist feminists were particularly interested in fostering transnational links. Periodicals like *Cahiers du féminisme* regularly reported on women's industrial action abroad,[157] and activists travelled. Camille Daniele and Marie-Françoise Danielle from a Parisian neighbourhood group visited London to explore initiatives there. In *Les Pétroleuses* they assessed the efficacy of British women's working-class organisation, provided readers with list of WLM and left-wing journals, and translated the Working Women's Charter.[158] Experiences were also shared, and transnational solidarity fostered, at conferences. The European Socialist Women's Conference in Paris (1977) was called because 'Many women from

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[151] See: *The Santa Cruz Women's Center Newsletter* (Aug. 1973), pp. 5-7.

[152] Contemporaine, PFP, MFC/0198/1: Les Eleves du College d'Enseignement Technique Plessis-Robinson, 'Compte-Rendu de la Greve' (*c.* 1971). 'Mineures-Enceintes-Celibataires', *LTB*, 3 (*c.* 1972), pp. 12-13.

[153] *Les Prostituées de Lyon parlent*, dir. Carole Roussopoulos (Film, 1975).

[154] FAN, FAN/LL/04: 'The 5th DEMAND – Financial & Legal Independence' (Apr. 1977).

[155] TWL, 7SAA/9/3: Pat Howe, 'Anti-Discrimination Campaign' (*c.* 1973).

[156] 'The Working Women's Charter', *Women's Report*, 2:4 (May-Jun. 1974).

[157] See: *Cahiers du féminisme*, 10 (Jun.-Sep. 1979).

[158] Camille Daniele and Marie-Françoise Danielle, 'les petroleuses traversent la manche', *Les Pétroleuses*, 3 (Apr. 1975), pp. 4-5.

European movements are raising the same questions and are determined to find collective answers, and to organise actions of international solidarity'.[159]

The causes of individual women also garnered transnational support. Sometimes this was due to activists' links with other countries, as with the case of Portuguese political prisoner Isabel do Carmo, brought to the MLF's attention via the Groupe des Femmes Brésiliennes (GFB) in Paris.[160] But not always. The campaign to free Dessie Woods, a black American mother-of-two, sentenced to 22 years in prison for killing a white man in defence, after he tried to rape and murder her and a friend, was led by a national committee, formed in 1976 by the African Peoples Socialist Party. The committee's chairperson, Damesha Blackhearth, toured Europe to mobilise support,[161] and letters were sent to activist groups around the world.[162] *Cahiers du féminisme* and *FOWAAD!* both publicised the cause, with a support committee established in Paris.[163]

Perhaps the largest international solidarity campaign was for the 'Three Marias': Portuguese writers Maria Isabel Barreno, Maria Teresa Horta, and Maria Velho da Costa, who co-authored *New Portuguese Letters* (1972), on the condition of women in authoritarian Portugal. The book was banned; the women, arrested. Without a Portuguese WLM to support them, the authors sent their book to French writers, including Rochefort, who was in touch with GFB. Together with Anglophone group POW, which included some GFB activists, and Rochefort's group Féministes Révolutionnaires, discussions on how to support the Three Marias began. In June 1973, POW and GFB raised the issue at NOW's International Feminist Planning Conference; the conference voted unanimously to call for international support. On

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[159] 'Call to a European Women's Conference', *WIRES*, 27 (11 Feb. 1977), p. 4.
[160] 'Solidarité avec Isabel do Carmo', *Cahiers du féminisme*, 9 (Apr.-May 1979), p. 48.
[161] 'Who is Dessie Woods?', *FOWAAD!*, 2 (Sep. 1979), p. 7.
[162] BCA, DADZIE/1/2/2: Dessie Woods Support Coalition, letter (10 Apr. 1979).
[163] 'Who is Dessie Woods?'; 'Solidarité avec Dessy Woods', *Cahiers du féminisme*, 11 (Oct.-Nov. 1979), p. 27.

3 July, in Tokyo and cities across Europe and the US, protests were held outside Portuguese Embassies. WLM activists around the world wrote petitions, performed theatrical readings—and on 7 May 1974, following the toppling of the authoritarian regime with the Carnation Revolution on 25 April, the authors were acquitted (although the prosecutor had already recommended their acquittal in March).[164]

This kind of solidarity came from the desire to fight injustices, but also a responsibility to do so: *New Portuguese Letters*, wrote NYRF, would continue to be treated as a threat in Portugal 'unless we women of the "free" world have the strength to back up that threat.' Although this particular injustice was not the same as injustices experienced by women elsewhere, they were seen as part of the same struggle for women's liberation: 'In solidarity with our sisters in Portugal,' wrote NYRF, 'in support of the right of all women to publicly confront their oppression, let our voices be heard.'[165]

Conclusion

This chapter has not examined every instance of transnational protest tactics and cooperation within the WLM, but it has explored a handful of cases to look at the transnational dimensions of WLM protest. Protests and campaigns were not detached from the other areas of movement organising we will explore in the last two chapters—the establishment of services was often accompanied by campaigns to raise awareness or improve public provision.

We will continue to find examples of organisational ideas which were specific to certain countries—just as national emblems were used within the Unknown Soldier's Wife protest and the American Women's Strike. But we will also explore organisational ideas which

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[164] J. Lapidus, 'International Feminism in Action: The Case of the Three Marias', *Conditions*, 14 (1987), pp. 137-51.

[165] 'Portugal vs. Feminism', *NYRF Newsletter*, 3:7 (Jul. 1973), p. 1.

did travel—just as the ideas to protest beauty pageants and publicly declare abortions travelled—and examples of information and experiences being shared, as within reproductive rights. Similar networking mechanisms carried those ideas: activist connections, periodicals, correspondence, conferences, and eventually the establishment of official networks and organisations. Yet it is in examining protest that we can most readily perceive transnational solidarity: how women in different cities, who for the most part never met, considered themselves to be fighting together, in the same struggle.

VII. Healthcare

In 1977, a Frenchwoman living in Leeds wrote to women in Boston, MA. Agnes Pivot outlined her WLM credentials: she worked for national newsletter *WIRES*; she had compiled a British WLM directory with two friends—one English, one American. Moreover, Pivot had contributed to the first book to emerge from the British women's healthcare movement: *The Women's Health Handbook*. Pivot was writing to the Boston Women's Health Book Collective (BWHBC) to see if she could translate their book, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (*OBOS*), into French; she emphasised her French publishing contacts.[1] Pivot's transnational connections were not unusual within the WLM. Nor was the answer she received: 'Thanks […] for your interest' but 'There is already a French translation'.[2]

BWHBC's archives are full of letters from women wanting to adapt *OBOS*, asking to reprint sections in newsletters, or saying they had shared their copies. There was desperate need for an accessible reference book on women's health, and readers found *OBOS*'s format refreshing: medical terms debunked, personal tales woven throughout. It was like asking for advice from a knowledgeable friend or participating in a discussion group—and it went on to form the basis of many conversations, courses, and workshops. Crucially, *OBOS* was more than a text. It sparked correspondence within the US and across national borders. It created links between activists, with readers using BWHBC as a referral service. And it established a healthcare activist network, with BWHBC distributing packets of information gathered from

[1] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 74.15: Agnes Pivot, letter to BHWBC (1977).
[2] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 74.15: Robbie Pfeufer, letter to Agnes Pivot (17 Aug. 1977).

women's health groups across the globe. *OBOS* was one initiative within a diverse tapestry of feminist healthcare activism.

Here, feminist healthcare is defined as organising around women's bodies, health problems, and healthcare services—leaving aside the struggle for reproductive rights (although many groups organised for both). This is a growing area of historiography. In France most studies concentrate on contraceptive activism, although this work moves beyond legal struggles to encompass services too;[3] Lucile Ruault's research on MLAC, for example, explores the transnational circulation of self-help methods to France.[4] Studies of British initiatives have also recently emerged, on pregnancy testing and mental health activism.[5] Historiography of American healthcare activism is the most comprehensive—understandably: activity was busiest there—with spotlights often resting upon *OBOS*, self-examination, and Jane, an underground Chicago abortion service run by women's liberation activists.[6] *OBOS* has garnered transnational studies too: Kathy Davis's analysis of its many adaptations, and a study of Francophone adaptations by Nesrine Bessaïh and Anna Bogic. However, no studies closely examine the British and French adaptations: Davis uses other case studies; Bessaïh and Bogic sketch a history of the 1977 adaptation but are more interested in theorising translation; and

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[3] M. Zancarini-Fournel, 'Histoire(s) du MLAC (1973-1975)', *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire*, 18 (2003), pp. 241-52; B. Pavard, *Si je veux, quand je veux: Contraception et avortement dans la société française (1956-1979)* (Rennes, 2012).

[4] L. Ruault, 'La circulation transnationale du self-help féministe : acte 2 des luttes pour l'avortement libre?', *Critique internationale*, 1:70 (2016), pp. 37-54.

[5] J. Olszynko-Gryn, 'The feminist appropriation of pregnancy testing in 1970s Britain', *WHR* (2017), pp. 1-26; S. Crook, 'The women's liberation movement, activism and therapy at the grassroots, 1968–1985', *WHR*, 27:7 (2018), pp. 1152-68.

[6] S. Morgen, *Into Our Own Hands: The Women's Health Movement in the United States, 1969-1990* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2002); W. Kline, *Bodies of Knowledge: Sexuality, Reproduction, and Women's Health in the Second Wave* (Chicago, 2010); J. Nelson, *More Than Medicine: A History of the Feminist Women's Health Movement* (London, 2015). Jane was founded by Heather Booth in the late 1960s initially as a referral service (although it later became a provider), with 'Jane' chosen as a code name, so that women could safely contact the service over the phone. Jane collective members estimate that within their four years of operation, they helped 11,000 women obtain abortions. See Kline, *Bodies*, pp. 71-2.

Michelle Zancarini-Fournel describes it as 'a tangible symbol of the influence of American feminism on French feminism and of cultural and political transfers', but does not explore this further.[7]

This chapter builds upon this historiography, using archival sources to map out transnational ties, and interviews with healthcare activists in Britain and France to further illuminate areas of transfer: three of the six French *OBOS* adaptors; one of two British *OBOS* adaptors; and two British practitioners of self-help. This complements existing recordings: Ruault's interview with French self-help practitioners; Davis's interviews with BWHBC; and archived healthcare activist interviews in American collections and the Black Cultural Archives. Given my life history methodology, healthcare activism also surfaced in my other interviews, illuminating its wider impact. An analysis of these sources demonstrates transnational influence was crucial to British and French healthcare activism: both were shaped by *OBOS* and self-help methods, which originated in the US. But not exclusively: some European healthcare activism was home-grown, and sometimes transnational influence travelled in unexpected ways. Understanding national and local specificity draws out these distinctions; moreover, it explains why transnational healthcare ideas were adopted, how they were used, and where and why they evolved.

1. Raising Consciousness

> You may find this hard to believe but when this thing started I remember […] if a woman went to the doctor and something very serious was wrong, perhaps she

[7] K. Davis, *The Making of Our Bodies, Ourselves: How Feminism Travels Across Borders* (London, 2007); N. Bessaïh and A. Bogic, '« Nous les femmes » de 1970 à 2017 à travers les traductions et adaptations de *Our Bodies, Ourselves* en français', *Translation and Power: Countertactics*, 29:2 (2016), pp. 43-71; M. Zancarini-Fournel, 'Notre corps, nous-mêmes' in E. Gubin et. al., eds., *Le siècle des féminismes* (Paris, 2004), p. 210. Bessaïh is a member of the collective which recently published a modern adaptation: La CORPS féministe, *Corps Accord: Guide de Sexualité Positive* (Montréal, 2019).

> had cancer, the doctor would have not told her anything, would've told her husband what was wrong.

Linda Gordon was not a BWHBC member, but she encountered the collective during her activist years in Boston. Writing her first women's history book, on birth control, she grew close to the collective—she still has a 'huge stack of the various editions' of *OBOS*. At the end of our interview, I asked Gordon to reflect upon the extent to which the WLM achieved its aims. One success she highlighted was the 'health system', although she qualified this: 'people who don't have insurance […] don't have the benefit of that.' Notwithstanding these continued inequalities, however, Gordon emphasised how much women's healthcare had transformed. The stark difference between the 'before' and 'after' of the WLM is contained in that telling phrase: 'you may find this difficult to believe'.[8]

That healthcare became a key issue for the WLM is unsurprising. Women's healthcare ranged from inadequate—lack of research on women,[9] the sexism of male doctors,[10] and cuts in women's services[11]—to abusive, with female patients used in non-consensual trials and medication with serious side effects.[12] There was little trust in the medical establishment. Treatment of women of colour was particularly atrocious. In San Antonio, TX, 76 low-income Mexican-American women were entered into a medical trial without consent, believing they were taking birth control pills. They were actually placebos (doctors wanted to test whether side effects were psychological) and ten women fell pregnant—with abortion illegal in Texas, they were forced to bear children.[13] More generally, as we have seen, forced sterilisation of

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[8] Interview with Linda Gordon, TL, New York, NY (26 Sep. 2018).
[9] 'Women and Science Paper' in Feminist Anthology Collective ed., *No Turning Back: Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement, 1975-80* (London, 1981), p. 186. Written for 'Is There a Socialist Science?' Conference (Jan. 1975).
[10] Dinny, 'Feeling Sick with Doctors' in *ibid*., pp. 142-4. First published in *York Feminist News* (7 Oct. 1978).
[11] Sue Fawcus, 'Abortion and the Cuts' in *ibid*., pp. 42-5. First published in Abortion: Our Struggle for Control, National Abortion Campaign Pamphlet (1980).
[12] Janet Hadley, 'Depo-Provera: Control of Fertility—Two Feminist Views', *SR*, 116 (Mar. 1982), pp. 49-53.
[13] Caroline Lund, 'I could never explain this to Mrs. Gomez', *The Militant* (14 May 1971).

women of colour was widespread; and diseases like sickle-cell anaemia, disproportionately affecting black people, were little researched.[14] Women, above all women of colour, were not treated as autonomous human beings.

In a position paper by the Women's Liberation Health Collective (WLHC), in New York, one woman described her childbirth experience:

> They [the doctors] talked to us like people talk to children, you know, slow and loud, repeating everything. Sometimes you'd be up there on the table and eight students would poke around inside. By the time I had the baby I hated them. I heard them call the women there cows and animals.

Another added her friend's experience: 'After the baby was born, she asked the clinic doctor to give her the pill and he said they'd already put in an IUD.' These testimonies are included in a description of WLHC's origins. As they discussed personal experiences, 'we found out that we'd all received very haphazard care, that we'd been ignorant about how our bodies worked.' Increasingly, they considered 'what kinds of action to take'. The group aimed to 'help build a grassroots movement' as well as to 'work with local issues at specific hospitals'.[15]

Similar origins can be found in other American WLM groups' interest in health. As we explored in Chapter IV, it was by analysing their 'personal lives' in consciousness-raising groups that women first perceived 'the pattern' of their oppression. Bodies emerged as a significant discussion topic, often through sharing life experiences, like sexuality and ageing.[16] Early consciousness-raising guidelines demonstrate how healthcare emerged in discussion. 'How did I feel about developing breasts, menstruating, becoming a "woman"?' reads one question in the 'Puberty' section of the Women's Action Alliance guidelines. Under 'Health',

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[14] OWAAD, 'Black Women and Health', in *No Turning Back*, pp. 146-7.
[15] LHA, 15.360: WLHC, 'Women and Health Care' (n.d.).
[16] SSC, WLC, B12F11: NYRF, 'An Introduction to the New York Radical Feminists' (n.d.).

questions range from 'Am I generally in good health?' to 'What do I know about my rights as a patient?'[17]

These two factors—inadequate healthcare provision, consciousness-raising—explain why healthcare emerged as an early concern in the US. It was where consciousness-raising first began, and where provision was worst: the NHS was established in Britain in 1948, and the process of implementing universal healthcare had begun in France after the Second World War, whereas American healthcare was entirely privatised. There were providers for low-income patients—like Community Health Centers, established in the 1960s—but these financially stretched services were not ideal.[18] As WLHC wrote: 'Some of us had used private doctors, had paid enormous sums and still felt intimidated […] Those of us who'd been to [free] clinics had been angered by the long hours of waiting, by the arrogance and racism of the professional staff.'[19]

2. *Our Bodies, Ourselves*

The origins of *OBOS* echo these stirrings. In May 1969, a workshop on 'women and their bodies' was held at a WLM conference in Boston.[20] The programme explained: 'Our bodies have been central to our existence as woman and yet we—married or single, rich or poor, working women or housewives—have not had control over them.'[21] For many attendees, 'talking to women in this way was a totally new experience' and the group arranged to meet again.[22]

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[17] LHA, 15.360: Women's Action Alliance, 'Consciousness-Raising Guidelines' (1973), pp. 11, 17-18.
[18] Nelson, *More Than*, p. 6.
[19] WLHC, 'Women'.
[20] BWHBC, 'Course Introduction', *OBOS* (Boston, MA, 1971), p. 1.
[21] SL, PAHP, 89-M204, 52: Emmanuel College conference programme (May 1969).
[22] BWHBC, 'A Good Story' in BWHBC and Angela Phillips and Jill Rakusen, *OBOS* (Harmondsworth, 1978), p. 11.

Several members developed a questionnaire to compile lists of sympathetic doctors[23]—until they realised 'there were no "good" doctors'. They had to learn for themselves.[24]

Over the summer, the group of women, which became BWHBC, discussed their lives, read medical research, and shared knowledge. They assigned paper-writing topics, from 'Anatomy', 'Birth Control', and 'Pregnancy' to 'Medical Laws' and 'Organizing for Change'. By autumn, they wanted to share this material, and offered a course to 'sisters in women's liberation'.[25] The course met 'in any available free space, in schools, nurseries, church halls, in our own homes',[26] with women presenting their research and participants adding 'experiences, questions, fears, feelings, excitement.' The group wanted course participants to be able to teach others: they rewrote their research papers to be shared 'not only with women in Boston, but with women across the country.'[27]

The collective's research was published in 1970 by the radical New England Free Press as *Women and Their Bodies: A Course by and for Women*. Gordon remembered this first edition: 'very cheap newsprint paper, poorly printed; it cost 75 cents, it was just mimeographed.'[28] It was reprinted in 1971 as *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and quickly became 'an underground success, selling 250,000 copies, mainly by word-of-mouth'.[29] Then in 1973, to achieve 'wider distribution', the first commercial edition was published by commercial publisher Simon & Schuster.[30] This was controversial: *OBOS* became more expensive; some activists saw the move as betrayal.

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[23] BWHBC, 'Course Introduction', p. 1.
[24] BWHBC, 'History', https://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/history/ (13 Jan. 2018).
[25] BWHBC, 'Course Introduction', p. 1.
[26] BWHBC, 'Good Story', p. 11.
[27] BWHBC, 'Course Introduction', p. 1.
[28] Interview with Gordon, TL.
[29] BWHBC, 'History'.
[30] BWHBC, 'Preface' in BWHBC, *OBOS* (New York, 1973).

BWHBC defended their decision: it was a way to reach more women, copies were sold at cost to clinics, and BHWBC used their royalties to purchase copies for women's groups.[31]

Throughout these first editions, *OBOS* held true to its workshop origins. Anatomical diagrams cut from textbooks were printed alongside hand-drawn ones.[32] Excerpts of academic studies were interspersed with horrified punctuation: '(!!#*)'.[33] Anonymous personal stories threaded through the chapter on sexuality. One read:

> When I first got my period, my mother dragged me into the bathroom and told me to take off my clothes. I stood naked in front of her while she grumbled, 'you can have kids now so you better be careful.'[34]

Questions accompanied medical information. The 'Anatomy and Physiology' chapter ended with 'These are just the anatomical facts. But knowing these facts about our bodies is only one way to know them'. Things 'to think about' included 'Are we accepting of our bodies?'[35] This was how the original course worked: discussing experiences, raising questions, and expressing feelings were more important than 'any specific body of material'.[36]

Paediatrician and activist Helene Rodríquez Trías 'felt a surge of joy' when she read the first edition: 'The authors spoke to me as if I had been a part of their discussion group.'[37] Literary scholar Lisa Hogeland has explored the consciousness-raising potential of novels, arguing that 'If not in a group, then presumably one experienced the collective speaking of women's experiences in the activities of reading and writing'.[38] Building upon this, Wendy Kline argues that for many women, reading *OBOS* led to the same 'awakening' moments we

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[31] BWHBC, 'From the Authors' and 'A Reply from the New England Free Press' in *OBOS* (1971), pp. 137-8.
[32] Abby Schwartz et. al., 'Anatomy and Physiology', in BWHBC, *OBOS* (Boston, MA, 1970), p. 10.
[33] Jane de Long et. al., 'Sexuality', in *ibid.*, p. 27.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 20.
[35] Schwartz et. al., 'Anatomy and Physiology', p. 15.
[36] BWHBC, 'Course Introduction', p. 2.
[37] BWHBC, 'Preface', *Our Bodies, Ourselves for the New Century* (New York, 1998), p. 16.
[38] L.M. Hogeland, *Feminism and its Fictions: The Consciousness-Raising Novel and the Women's Liberation Movement* (Philadelphia, PA, 1998), p. 30.

explored in Chapter I.[39] Readers found themselves in *OBOS*, and responded passionately—as encouraged by BHWBC in the frontmatter: 'Would you like to make suggestions, write up your own experience, or otherwise work on the course? Please write us. The course is what all of us make it.'[40] In the 1970s and 1980s, over 200 readers responded. Some detailed home remedies, some requested topics for future editions—others criticised BWHBC's approach.[41]

As BHWBC noted in their preface, the original collective was homogenously white, middle-class, and young. They asserted they did 'realize that poor and non-white women have greater difficulty in getting accurate information and adequate healthcare, and are most often mistreated in the ways we describe in this book.' But they also stated: 'Learning about our womanhood from the inside out has allowed us to cross over some of the barriers of race, colour, income and class, and to feel a sense of identity with all women in the experience of being female.'[42] Kline argues this points to a classic feminist paradox between 'the singularity of being female (a shared identity based on female biology)' and 'the plurality of individual experiences (every woman's experience is different and just as valid as every other woman's, because each individual is the authority over her own body)'.[43]

When readers could not find their bodies included in 'our bodies', they responded with outrage, disappointment, and personal stories. As Kline has shown, BWHBC tried to incorporate these suggestions into later editions.[44] In one response to a letter detailing a reader's traumatic experience of a medically necessary abortion, a BWHBC member wrote:

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[39] Kline, *Bodies*, pp. 24-5.
[40] BWHBC, 'Contents' in *OBOS* (1971).
[41] W. Kline, '"Please Include This in Your Book": Readers Respond to *Our Bodies, Ourselves*', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 79:1 (2005), pp. 81-110.
[42] BWHBC, 'Good Story', p. 12.
[43] Kline, *Bodies*, p. 11.
[44] Kline, 'Please Include This in Your Book', p. 94.

> I feel very much humbled by your letter […] and appreciate the time you took to help us make the abortion chapter of *OBOS* more careful and compassionate. It is letters like yours that help us make the book better, but it is always a sorrow for us that someone suffered for what we did or didn't say.[45]

With every edition, author lists for each chapter grew, topics multiplied. Founder Jane Pincus maintains *OBOS* was 'never considered a finished project'.[46]

OBOS was not simply a text: it was a conversation, one which went beyond author-reader correspondence, and it travelled in much the same way as other movement texts. It was sold at women's centres[47] and listed as recommended reading by national directories[48] and small study groups.[49] Moreover, it shaped the activities of women's groups across the US. When reviewing *OBOS* in their newsletter, Berkshire Women's Liberation attached a questionnaire on healthcare provision in their county,[50] as did the 'Health Interest Group' at San Jose Women's Centre.[51] Courses and workshops based on *OBOS*, or listing it as required reading, were taught from California to Connecticut.[52] One Chicago course explained its purpose:

> to enable us, as women, to gain greater control over our lives through understanding 'our bodies and our selves' […] Technical apparatus like speculum used in vaginal exams, types of birth control, charts, etc., will be exhibited.[53]

This was how BWHBC wanted *OBOS* to be used: 'as a tool which stimulates discussion and action, which allows for new ideas and for change.'[54]

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[45] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 107.5: Wendy Sanford, letter to reader (14 Aug. 1980).
[46] Interview with Jane Pincus quoted in Davis, *Making of OBOS*, p. 23.
[47] San Jose Women's Center, *Up from the Basement*, 2:1 (Nov. 1974).
[48] *Mushroom Effect*, Supplement 1 to 2nd ed. (Apr. 1971), p. 8.
[49] 'Women's Studies', *Stanford Women's Center Newsletter* (Apr. 1973), p. 3.
[50] Berkshire Women's Liberation, *Women*, 2:2 (21 Apr. 1973).
[51] Supplement, *Up from the Basement*, 2:1 (Nov. 1974).
[52] For example: SSC, WLC, B8F9: 'Liberation School for Women' programme (Spring 1973); B7F13: Norwalk Women's Liberation Center calendar (Feb. 1973). *Maine Women's Newsletter*, 1 (*c.* 1974), p. 4. Isla Vista Women's Center, *woman-kin* (6 Jan. 1975), p. 4.
[53] 'Liberation School'.
[54] BWHBC, 'Course Introduction', p. 1.

Understanding the ways the WLM diffused texts is crucial to assessing its early travels in Europe. In France, *OBOS* was first read by women with American contacts, like POW. *OBOS* is reviewed in their March 1974 newsletter, with the author praising its ability to give 'the same kind of feeling you can get in a consciousness raising group'. Interestingly, they add: 'there are several copies in the possession of members of POW, so ask around.'[55] Sharing copies was common. 'I brought the book with me when I came to France this year,' one American in Paris wrote to BWHBC. 'I've shared it with French friends who are equally generous in their praise for it as a wealth of information.'[56] Another American, in Grenoble, said she had shared around her copy, sent by her brother in the US.[57] Americans living in Britain circulated copies too, and the commercial edition was imported by radical bookshops.[58] *OBOS* was mentioned several times in *Spare Rib*, as early as 1974,[59] often as 'highly recommended' further reading in healthcare articles.[60] By 1976, it was so well known within the British WLM, it was synonymous with feminist healthcare: *WIRES* titled their health news section 'Our Bodies Ourselves'.[61]

But *OBOS* didn't quite fit with European experiences. A worker at Cambridge (UK) co-operative Arjuna, which sold *OBOS*, explained: 'some of the information applies only in the States.'[62] The 'Medical Institutions' chapter, for example, discussed links between the FDA and pharmaceutical industry.[63] As Sue O'Sullivan, who shared around her early edition, said of material she read from the American WLM:

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[55] 'Review: *Our Bodies,* Ourselves', *POW Newsletter*, 2:6 (Mar. 1974), p. 5.
[56] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 75.4: Jean Hardy Robinson, letter (10 Dec. 1976).
[57] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 75.4: Wilma Diskin, letter to Julie Albertin (12 Oct. 1974).
[58] BL, S&A: Interview with Sue O'Sullivan, by R. Cohen (6 Jan. 2011). Interview with Lynn Alderson, TL, London (20 May 2019); 'Books on Women's Health', *Cambridge WL Newsletter* (Jul. 1978), p. 11; 'Recent Acquisitions to the Bookshop', *Glasgow WL Newsletter* (May 1977), p. 15.
[59] 'Overseas: Our Bodies—Ourselves', *SR*, 20 (Feb. 1974), p. 27; Angela Phillips, 'Working the Law', *SR*, 21 (Mar. 1974), p. 32.
[60] Essex Road Women's Health Group, 'How to Get an Abortion', *SR*, 38 (Aug. 1975), p. 47.
[61] *WIRES*, 20 (29 Sep. 1976), p. 9.
[62] 'Books on Women's Health'.
[63] Nancy Mann and Barbara Perkins, 'Medical Institutions' in BWHBC, *OBOS* (1970), p. 179.

> I would be quite inspired by it, but I didn't feel that it necessarily fit here […] Let's say around healthcare […] you couldn't go to an NHS hospital and have a baby, you had to pay vast amounts.[64]

Other European readers criticised BWHBC's narrowness. One Parisian reviewer wrote:

> I have some gripes which stem from my minority group viewpoint of woman's world. I feel the book is heavily overweighted for maternity and heterosexuality; for those under 30 and white.[65]

OBOS provoked the same responses in European readers as in the American. But readers in other countries didn't just write to the collective with suggestions—by the late 1970s, many women like Pivot had written to BWHBC, desperate for an adaptation for their country, eager to play a part.[66] As with Pivot, the answer was usually: we're already working on it.[67]

a. Notre Corps, Nous-Mêmes

OBOS adaptations were not smooth, straightforward processes and this is especially true of the French (1977) and British (1978) editions, which were among the first. The French edition was translated by a collective of six women, one of whom, Nicole Bizos, came across *OBOS* during a 1973 trip to the US. Bizos had been politicised in the Trotskyist AMR and its party-political counterpart, the LCR; in the early 1970s, she joined Cercle Elisabeth Dmitriev then Psyche et Po. Both were important to Bizos: in the former she could address women's oppression within Trotskyist politics; in the latter's *groupes de parole*, she first realised she wasn't alone in her personal struggles. But Bizos felt both groups lacked action on the 'concrete realities of women'. When she discovered *OBOS*, she remembered thinking: *'Voilà*, here's a

[64] Interview with O'Sullivan, Cohen.
[65] POW, 'Review'.
[66] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 75.4: Julie Albertin, letter to BWHBC (12 Sep. 1974).
[67] Diskin, letter to Albertin.

concrete reality which helps all women, whether bourgeois, whether workers—all women, whether old or young. There wasn't anything like that in French.'[68]

Another member of the collective, Lyba Spring, encountered *OBOS* independently, through its early movement dissemination in both North American and France. Spring had grown up in Toronto, where she first joined the WLM and helped establish women's studies at the University of Toronto. They used the early, mimeographed *OBOS* as a teaching resource—BWHBC had been 'sending all this material around'. In 1973 Spring moved to Paris; her first printed edition of *OBOS* arrived in the post, sent by her sister. Spring frequented a bookshop which sold English literature; a man who worked there asked whether Spring knew of *OBOS*, and whether she would be interested in joining some women he knew who were working on a translation.[69]

Sophie Mayoux also joined the collective in this way. After her politicisation in Maoist groups, Mayoux had participated in a neighbourhood group in the 16th arrondisement, then paused her activism to travel. When she returned to Paris, a man she knew from the student movement told her his friend had recently returned from the States with 'a fantastic book' she was 'trying to translate'. Mayoux spoke English fluently—she had even worked as a translator. Knowing this, Bizos's friend thought the collective would want to meet her.[70] There were three other collective members: Anne Raulin, Catrine Benoit, and Brigitte Petit-Archambault. Some were friends; they had all been active in the MLF. Benoit was studying medicine at the time, and although Mayoux was the only collective member with professional translation experience, they all spoke English.[71]

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[68] Interview with Nicole Bizos, TL, Paris (25 Oct. 2018).
[69] Interview with Lyba Spring, TL, Toronto (8 Oct. 2018).
[70] Interview with Sophie Mayoux, TL, Paris (22 Oct. 2018).
[71] Interviews with Bizos and Mayoux, TL.

The collective agreed *OBOS* was desperately needed in France. Mayoux explained the importance of *OBOS* in personal terms:

> Because there was nothing like it. Because we didn't know about our bodies. Because I remember my mother shouting at me because I had spotted the carpet with my period's blood […] My mother was a lovely woman but she was afraid of her own body and so she didn't want to look at her daughter's body either and she didn't tell us anything.[72]

For Bizos, it was a 'political idea', an 'activist project': like BWHBC, she saw its potential as a 'toolbox'. As the collective explained in their preface, French contraceptive activist groups like MLAC needed a reference book 'to answer women's questions about their physiology, how their bodies work, but also about their sexuality and their identity as women.'[73]

Creating the translation was harder than expected. First, the collective had trouble finding a publisher. Initially, they approached Éditions des femmes—Bizos, a member of Psyche et Po, knew them—but they declined: *OBOS* was 'too concrete'.[74] Other publishers thought the book too American, or wanted a different text, plagiarising the title.[75] Finally, through a personal connection, the collective found a home at mainstream publishing house Albin Michel.[76] There were issues, however, with the relationship. The collective were paid as though they were one translator—already a pittance when split six ways. One year after remaining 'completely faithful to the American text' the collective realised a direct translation was 'virtually illegible': it needed to be adapted.[77] This was an enormous task, leading to publication delays and remuneration disputes, including a difficult clash over images.[78]

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[72] Interview with Mayoux, TL.
[73] Collectif, 'Préface à l'édition française' in Collectif and BWHBC, *NCNM* (Paris, 1977), p. 10.
[74] Interview with Bizos, TL.
[75] Collectif, 'Préface', p. 11.
[76] Interview with Mayoux, TL.
[77] Collectif, 'Préface', p. 11.
[78] Interview with Mayoux, TL.

The problem was, Bizos explained, neither 'the political' nor 'the social context' were the same; 'certain chapters' didn't correspond 'to the French reality' at all.[79] The medical system was entirely different, Mayoux said. For example, 'In the French system, we didn't resent at all the fact of giving birth in a hospital.' Patients could choose private services, but state-funded care at specialist *maternité* hospitals was of the same quality, wasn't overly medicalised, and gave patients various freedoms of choice. The extent of the adaptations can be found with a side-by-side comparison of *OBOS* and *Notre corps, nous-mêmes* (*NCNM*). Their overall structures are the same, but the healthcare chapter was rewritten, as were sections on laws, specific treatments, and culture—'*Nutrition et sport*' contains a table of calories detailing statistics for pastries, brioche, and camembert.[80]

Spring recalled discussions about the nutritional chapter, due to cultural differences between her North American diet and the French collective members':

> They all laughed at me because of the, you know, massive healthy breakfast that I used to have [laughs]. You know, they were all, 'Un café, un croissant.'

In our interview, she recalled the process of working collectively. They would work in pairs on chapters, debating linguistic points—Spring remembered the thorny issue of French genders.[81] In the preface the collective explained their trouble with American feminist terms with no French equivalent, some—like using 'woman' to refer to young women, not 'girl'—the collective adopted. Medical vocabulary often had no everyday counterpart in French.[82] But Spring's memories were primarily of group dynamics. A few times they travelled out to 'Nicole's place in the country':

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[79] Interview with Bizos, TL.
[80] Collectif, 'Nutrition et sport' in *NCNM*, pp. 78-81.
[81] Interview with Spring, TL.
[82] Collectif, 'Préface', p. 11.

> We would sit outside and eat and talk and work. It was very… congenial. Of course, we had arguments, but it was really sisters in the struggle. It was a beautiful thing.[83]

The French collective sourced material as widely as possible. They read medical studies, spoke to doctors, and interviewed women. In the 1973 *OBOS*, BWHBC had replaced a short section in the 'Sexuality' chapter with a new chapter: 'In Amerika They Call Us Dykes', written by local collective Lesbian Liberation. The French adaptors followed suit, with 'En France, on nous appelle des gouines', attributed to the 'Mouvement de Libération Lesbienne'. As far as Mayoux could recall, the chapter was not actually handed over to another group, but was pulled together from 'a lot of interviews'.[84] Elsewhere, the collective had, like BWHBC, relied on their own experiences: Spring, for example, had a child during the process.[85] In this way, their collective adaptation mirrored BWHBC's process: exploring personal experience, dividing up chapters but discussing together, and collecting testimony beyond the group.

Like BWHBC, the *NCNM* collective had ambitions for their text to inspire change. The introduction urged: 'You who read it, you can, you must complete it, criticize it; that's why there are blank pages at the end of the book.'[86] This was scuppered by Albin Michel: the publisher claimed it was a 'technical impossibility'.[87] Nevertheless, copies were given to both MLAC and MPFP for their counselling centres,[88] and it sold well across France and French-speaking European countries like Belgium and Switzerland.[89] All three of the collective members I interviewed considered *NCNM* their most important contribution to the WLM.

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[83] Interview with Spring, TL.
[84] Interview with Mayoux, TL.
[85] Interview with Spring, TL.
[86] Collectif, 'Préface', p. 12.
[87] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 75.4: Sophie Mayoux, letter to BWHBC (*c.* 1976).
[88] Interview with Mayoux, TL.
[89] Bessaïh and Anna Bogic, 'Nous les femmes', p. 57.

'Do not hesitate to do like American women have done,' the preface ended, 'use it in your high schools, your universities, your workplaces, your neighbourhoods…'[90]

b. British *OBOS*

After moving from Yorkshire to London in 1970, Jill Rakusen became involved with *Women's Report*, a bi-monthly magazine rounding up women's news. There were regular pages on different subjects and responsibility for each would rotate through the collective, which included Angela Phillips, Anna Coote, and Gail Chester. After a few turns writing the 'Mind and Body' section on healthcare, Rakusen realised she had a responsibility to readers in reporting on healthcare news more than any other area—and she began to question the research.[91]

In Chapter I, we explored Rakusen's memories of her awakening: a few months before moving to London, she'd encountered a Germain Greer article on literature. In our interview, Rakusen explained how this led to her thinking on healthcare:

> [Greer] didn't use this phrase I don't think but I've created this phrase for myself: this 'patriarchal prism' exists, through which everything is seen. And […] obviously it pertains to discourse and research around health and medicine […] And the underlying assumptions behind so much research were so *ludicrous* and absurd when you were aware of that.

After reading Greer's article 'it seemed obvious' to Rakusen that just as the male-dominated literary canon needed to be interrogated, so did healthcare.[92] The urgency of applying this analysis to healthcare came from news stories Rakusen read. 'Every couple of months,' Rakusen remembered, 'there'd be yet another series of horror stories, some of them gut-wrenching'. This

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[90] Collectif, 'Préface', p. 12.
[91] Interview with Jill Rakusen, TL, West Yorkshire (5 Sep. 2018).
[92] *Ibid.*

became 'a real grounding in the personal is political around health issues'. Working in a collective reinforced this 'grounding'. When I asked about her relationship with the other collective members, Rakusen mentioned they had done consciousness-raising in the early days. Although this petered out, when working late at night, talk would turn to personal lives and health issues.[93]

Elsewhere in the movement, consciousness-raising resulted in a similar turn toward healthcare. Susie Orbach, who co-founded the Women's Therapy Centre in London in 1976, became interested in feminist care through consciousness-raising. She was 'involved in a group that was specifically to do with compulsive eating,' she said, 'and out of that we developed therapeutic techniques.' Her co-founder Luise Eichenbaum had a similar journey: from 'consciousness-raising groups' to 'my own therapy, my own development, and it led me into psychotherapy'.[94] As with American activists, the body and mind emerged as highly contested sites for British activists: intensely intimate yet controlled by the patriarchy. 'Having lost external control,' wrote Sue Bruley of her Clapham group, 'we turn inward to protect what remains and thus our mind and our bodies become unconscious symbols of our inner desire for self-determination.'[95]

The *Women's Report* collective decided Rakusen should have sole responsibility for the 'Mind and Body' section.[96] This was when she first encountered *OBOS*: the 1973 commercial edition was sent to the magazine for review. Rakusen described this with the same animation as she'd used to recount the Greer article:

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[93] Interview with Rakusen, TL (13 Sep. 2018).
[94] Sue Llewelyn, '"Woman-Centred Therapy" interview: Susie Orbach and Luise Eichenbaum', in *No Turning Back*, p. 150.
[95] Sue Bruley, *Women Awake* (Liverpool, 1976), p. 13.
[96] Interview with Rakusen, TL (5 Sep.).

> God, do I remember when I first encountered it? It was such breath of fresh air. Such a breath of fresh air. I don't know if I can find the words to do it justice.

The book corresponded with her own 'feminist analysis' of healthcare, which she was developing. But she also emphasised *OBOS*'s groundbreaking nature:

> And then here was this book, we were talking the same language […] And this was a commercial book, they'd got it out there. They'd done this extraordinary thing which was a combination of a handbook and an analysis and critique […] and weaving in women's experiences which informed everything. […] It was the most incredible thing to do, I mean nobody'd done anything like it before. It was just fantastic. And, yeah, it was extraordinary. It still is.

She remembered discussing *OBOS*, sharing around her copy.[97]

By 1973, Rakusen had done 'quite a lot' of writing on women's health and was 'probably' already involved with women's health groups too.[98] Not long after, she moved to Glasgow, where she joined Glasgow WL and continued with her healthcare activism. Browne has noted a particular emphasis on healthcare in the Glasgow movement, with, for example, self-examination sessions, and posits this stemmed from Rakusen's influence.[99] Indeed, Rakusen is listed in the *Glasgow WL Newsletter* as the main contact for the 'Women and Health' sub-group.[100] Rakusen's healthcare writing continued, with *Spare Rib* articles from 1974 onwards in which she dissected medical reports, spoke to doctors, and synthesised information for a general audience, on topics including chemical contraceptives (co-written with Phillips), pregnancy testing, and contraceptive Depo-Provera.[101]

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[97] Interview with Rakusen, TL (13 Sep.).
[98] *Ibid.*
[99] S. Browne, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Scotland* (Manchester, 2014), p. 68.
[100] 'Contact List', *Glasgow WL Newsletter* (Aug. 1976), p. 1.
[101] Jill Rakusen and Angela Phillips, 'No Packet Carries A Government Health Warning', *SR*, 29 (Nov. 1974), pp. 9-11; Rakusen, 'New Pregnancy Test: Reliable before you've missed a period', *SR*, 41 (Nov. 1975), p. 20; Rakusen, 'Depo-Provera: Still For Sale', *SR*, 47 (Jun. 1976), p. 26.

In the latter, Rakusen outlines her approach, which closely aligns with BWHBC's, but is also derived from her reporting:

> In this and other articles I've written for *Spare Rib*, I hope I've shown how we can begin to question doctors' attitudes and decisions—once we have information. Without it, we're stuck—we can't ask informed questions or get informed answers. With no power over our bodies we have no hope of power over our lives.[102]

This last sentence became, Sheila Rowbotham notes, a slogan for the British movement: 'power over our bodies, power over our lives'.[103] Rakusen passed on this message in courses as well as articles. She remembered running one in Glasgow for the university's extramural department and continued with others 'around the country' as she relocated (to Leeds, then London again), teaching participants what she termed 'the politics of information'.[104]

During this period, around 1975, Rakusen started working on the British *OBOS* adaptation. Rakusen was 'on the periphery' of a collective of WLM activists who were trying to organise an adaptation—much like the French—but it hadn't worked out. A Penguin editor, Julia Vellacott, also a member of socialist-feminist photography collective Hackney Flashers,[105] bought the rights instead. Vellacott invited Phillips to consider the task; Phillips asked Rakusen whether she would join. For Rakusen, not working with the initial collective was an uncomfortable prospect. But Vellacott (who had experience of working collectively) thought it would multiply the work.[106]

The writing process was therefore less faithful to BWHBC's way of working, but Phillips and Rakusen mirrored BWHBC's research methods. Healthcare professionals helped

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[102] *Ibid.*
[103] Sheila Rowbotham, *The Past is Before Us* (London, 1989), p. 61.
[104] Interview with Rakusen, TL (5 Sep.).
[105] N. Klorman-Eraqi, 'The Hackney Flashers: Photography as a Socialist Feminist Endeavour', *Photography & Culture*, 10:1 (2017), pp. 53-71.
[106] Interview with Rakusen, TL (13 Sep.).

'by contributing, commenting and advising';[107] Phillips and Rakusen also 'worked with and drew on the experience and expertise of every conceivable feminist we knew about or could find', so they could weave in British women's experiences.[108] Their preface thanks dozens of people, including two of my other interviewees, who recalled discussions with Rakusen and Phillips: bookseller Lynn Alderson and Nancy MacKeith who, as we will see, was a women's healthcare activist, but was also interviewed 'as a woman having a baby'.[109] Like the French adaptation, Phillips and Rakusen outsourced their lesbian chapter: 'Lesbian Perspectives' written by a group of London lesbian socialists.[110]

Incorporating these voices was, Rakusen recalled, the easiest part. Even altering the text to reflect differing healthcare systems wasn't challenging; instead, the hardest task was keeping research up-to-date and relevant to the British context. Cultures handle medical evidence in different ways, Rakusen explained; there were things one could say or interpret in America, and not Britain. And medical advancements kept coming. Phillips and Rakusen finished writing in 1976, but Rakusen remembered updating the draft until the last minute—it was published in 1978. This led to difficulties with Penguin. They had budgeted for a shorter text based on the 1973 edition, but in 1976 BWHBC published a bumper edition. Phillips and Rakusen were faced with an impossible task: including this new material, along with British changes, without overrunning page length. Rakusen didn't think anyone at the outset had understood the work it would involve. The adaptors consequently earned little. 'It was,' Rakusen said, 'a labour of love.'[111]

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[107] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 74.15: Jill Rakusen, letter to Judy Norsigian (9 Jan. 1977).
[108] Interview with Rakusen, TL (13 Sep.).
[109] Interviews by TL with: Alderson; Nancy MacKeith, London (14 Jun. 2018).
[110] Interview with Rakusen, TL (13 Sep.).
[111] *Ibid.*

In the end, British *OBOS* contained major changes to the 'Abortion' and 'Childbirth' chapters, as well as alterations on treatments, like British doctors' reluctance to prescribe anything but tranquilisers for menopausal symptoms.[112] The 'Women and Healthcare' chapter was rewritten, including patient rights and a history of the NHS, as well as critiques of recent cuts.[113] Along with British women's voices, Phillips and Rakusen provided British reading suggestions. But they kept the structure and tried to keep its spirit too. Like the French collective members, Rakusen considered the *OBOS* adaptation her most important contribution to the movement. Its significance to her could already be felt in the language she used, the emotions expressed, throughout our interview:

> You know, the tears are in my eyes, it was just the most amazing book and it was just a privilege to do it. It was just fantastic, yeah… what, what the Boston women gave the world [laughs].[114]

c. What BWHBC Gave the World

Because both adaptations were among the earliest, BWHBC hadn't yet ascertained the level of control they wanted to exert. Their contract with Simon & Schuster allowed the publisher to arrange foreign editions; as founder Norma Swenson explained in an interview with Davis, BWHBC 'simply signed the contracts'.[115] A 1976 internal memo written by Swenson indicates that they only learned of adaptation complications when they heard of the French collective's disputes with Albin Michel. BWHBC found it 'a little problematic' to work out their role in the dispute but didn't want the women to be exploited. They organised a trip to Europe to assess the situation.[116]

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[112] Phillips and Rakusen, 'Preface', p. 10.
[113] Phillips and Rakusen, 'Women and Healthcare' in *ibid.*, pp. 535-73.
[114] Interview with Rakusen, TL (13 Sep.).
[115] SL, MC902, T-330.26: Interview with Norma Swenson, by K. Davis (22 Feb. 1999).
[116] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 75.4: Normal Swenson, 'French Translation of OBOS' (11 Jul. 1976).

This spurred BWHBC to contact other translators. In 1977 Judy Norsigian from BWHBC wrote to Rakusen. As the project was handled by Penguin, BWHBC hadn't had any direct contact with the adaptors. Norsigian had acquired Rakusen's details from MacKeith, who had been corresponding with BWHBC for a few months. Evidently, BWHBC had no idea who the British adaptors were, let alone how they were progressing. 'Are you working with other women?' Norsigian asked, mentioning BWHBC preferred to work with groups, and publishers sometimes lied about this. She enclosed literature, including material from the 1976 *OBOS*, adding: 'I hope that the English edition will look critically at current British trends towards 100% hospital-based birth.'[117]

The manuscript had already been sent to Penguin. In her reply, Rakusen explains 'it was not possible to work on it with more women (for the publishers' reasons)'. She thanks Norsigian for offering assistance, but stresses BWHBC could not have helped: 'everything had to be re-researched since so many things are different here'. Norsigian's childbirth suggestion, for example, was irrelevant given 'Childbirth has had to be virtually totally re-written. Yes, of course, the whole home/hospital issue is covered in great detail, but also medical practices are often v. different here.'[118] For BWHBC, home birthing was a radical position which needed to be defended against the medical establishment. Internal memos indicate BWHBC's concern that *OBOS*'s message might be watered down with adaptation. There was little understanding that the radicalism of different positions could shift, country to country. Similarly, BWHBC wanted *NCNM* to defend a French organisation which advocated for home births. But the French collective refused: it was a 'very traditional' Catholic organisation.[119]

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[117] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 74.15: Judy Norsigian, letter to Jill Rakusen (1 Jan. 1977).
[118] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 74.15: Jill Rakusen, letter to Judy Norsigian (9 Jan. 1977).
[119] Interview with Mayoux, TL.

For sociologist Davis, *OBOS* became globally successful because it was an 'epistemological project',[120] evolving through a 'continuous process of re-articulation and re-contextualisation'. While the French and British cases correspond with this assertion, they also reveal blind spots within Davis's approach to transnational inquiry. Her book sets as its task 'Decentering *OBOS*', assessing 'the unpredictability of the way the book moved' as it was published in other countries.[121] But her departure point, a determination to refrain from 'writing a straightforward history of *OBOS* as a US feminist project', undermines this aim.[122] Davis avoids 'the historical' because it has 'led many US feminist historians to overlook the fact that feminism emerges in different forms in different places': existing WLM histories, she says, treat feminism 'as a US phenomenon' (tellingly, she footnotes only histories of the American WLM). But without contextualising the text within the WLM as it manifested in different countries, Davis's history becomes one of 'The global dissemination of *OBOS*', rather than a decentring.[123]

OBOS was an exceptional success, but its methods and mission were not. As Pincus explained:

> [I]t wasn't just us in Boston—women wanted to learn about themselves and […] that feeling that you could […] know and you could share the knowledge. And it was very powerful. It was happening all throughout the country.[124]

It wasn't simply that BWHBC drew upon consciousness-raising methods (which Davis does note): readers were receptive to *OBOS* because for them the personal was political. Sharing and analysing experiences were the foundations of WLM theorising. And while it is fascinating that

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[120] Davis, *Making of OBOS*, p. 124.
[121] *Ibid.*, pp. 77-8.
[122] *Ibid.*, p. 199.
[123] *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 202-4.
[124] SSC, WAOHP: Interview with Jane Pincus, by K. Lucy, Roxbury, VT (29 Nov. 2008).

BWHBC encouraged reader responses and wrote collectively, this was not entirely unique: in the next chapter we will come across similar texts within refuge and rape crisis organising. Moreover, *OBOS* first spread through WLM channels; it became a tool for movement activism. This can be seen in BWHBC's correspondence, which includes not only responses from individual readers, but also health groups who, as BWHBC wrote in the introduction to the 1971 edition, 'wanted to compare and combine our work and theirs.'[125]

Reconsidering *OBOS* as part of the wider movement is crucial to understanding both how it reached and why it resonated with readers—including those in other countries. Davis's oppositional stance toward histories of feminism neglects this important part of the transnational story or, as she describes in her title, 'How feminism travels across borders'. Her analyses of translations and adaptations come from the viewpoint of *OBOS* travelling to new countries, rather than highlighting the agency of women—often WLM activists—in contacting BWHBC to create adaptations. This was something BWHBC took issue with when they read Davis's book; they emphasised foreign editions were 'always at the initiative of publishers or women's groups in other countries […] We never tried to export *OBOS*.'[126] Feminism had travelled across borders long before the publication of *OBOS* in Britain and France.

This was why Bizos was 'overjoyed' to discover *OBOS*: here, finally, was a way for her to improve the lives of other women, a concrete answer to the problems she had been exploring in her MLF groups.[127] This was why Rakusen found *OBOS* 'extraordinary'. Article by article she had been building her feminist critique of healthcare, 'then here was this book', 'a commercial

[125] BWHBC, 'Course Introduction', p. 1.
[126] BWHBC, '"The Making of 'Our Bodies, Ourselves'": Founders' Corrections', https://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/history/impact-and-influence/founders-corrections/ (16 Jan. 2018).
[127] Interview with Bizos, TL.

book' which was 'talking the same language'.[128] For both sets of adaptors, *OBOS* was groundbreaking in different ways—but crucially it was groundbreaking as a new direction for their existing political missions. Moreover, there was a ready audience for *OBOS* in France and Britain because WLM activists were already circulating and discussing earlier American editions—this was how Rakusen and Spring first encountered the text.

Eschewing the history of the WLM neglects this important step in the travels of *OBOS*. It also leads to misunderstandings of why adaptations were needed. Davis states the British were 'less concerned about how to force doctors to be more responsive to women's needs than about how to preserve a National Health Service that was constantly threatened with extinction.'[129] Not only was this not true for the wider British WLM, where Rakusen and other activists were already questioning the medical establishment, but nobody having read through British *OBOS* could form that opinion: the final chapter outlines various healthcare complaint processes, as well as discussions of how to improve patient rights, how readers could educate themselves, and how women could organise for change.

3. The Women's Healthcare Movement

As BWHBC worked on *OBOS*, other women were questioning the male-dominated medical establishment. Many local WLM groups had a special-interest sub-groups working on women's health and they undertook a range of activities.[130] In all three countries, WLM activists demonstrated against service cuts and supported women employed in hospitals and

[128] Interview with Rakusen, TL (13 Sep.).
[129] Davis, *Making of OBOS*, p. 67.
[130] For example: CAF, FAC, 38AF2: Groupe femmes d'Angers, Meeting Notes (Feb. 1977). *Edinburgh WL Newsletter* (Winter 1976-7), p. 2. SSC, WLC, B8F9: CWLU, Introductory Letter (4 Apr. 1973).

clinics in labour disputes;[131] and healthcare news was regularly reported in movement periodicals. Other activities varied with national context. With healthcare privatised, feminist clinics were widespread in the US; approximately 50 American woman-controlled clinics had opened their doors by 1976.[132] For example, the Feminist Women's Health Center in Tallahassee, FL opened after *Roe v Wade* in March 1974 with educational programmes. Two months later, it began providing gynaecological services, birth control advice, and low-cost abortions with a local doctor visiting once a week. By 1979, the centre was receiving 400 telephone calls a week from women looking for advice and had performed 8,000 abortions.[133] Smaller American WLM groups also undertook services, like teaching women to use speculums.[134] In 1974, there were over 1,200 women's groups providing health services.[135]

In Britain, activism primarily filled gaps left by the NHS: teaching sex education in schools;[136] leafleting shopping malls to advertise contraception services;[137] and providing pregnancy testing. By time of the first national 'Women and Health' conference in Sheffield in October 1974, there were healthcare groups in Sheffield, London, Rochdale, Manchester, and Leeds. Some, like a West London group, focused on supporting members. Others, like the Cambridge Pregnancy Advisory Group (PAG) ran community services including pregnancy testing, contraceptive counselling, abortion counselling and referrals, and sold contraceptives

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[131] For example: Cathy Mellor and Judy Miller, 'What we think is happening', *Women: A Journal of Liberation*, 1:2 (Winter, 1970), p. 78. 'The Fight Back', *Women's Struggle Notes*, 8 (Mar.-May, n.y.), p. 29. CAF, FAC, 38AF2: Groupe Femmes Hôpital, 'De Quoi Parlent-elles?' (n.d.).

[132] Kline, *Bodies*, pp. 41-2.

[133] 'Feminist health center under fire', *Star-News* (18 Nov. 1979), p. 41.

[134] Isla Vista Women's Center, *woman-kin* (6 Jan. 1975), p. 2.

[135] S.B. Ruzek, *The Women's Health Movement: Feminist Alternatives to Medical Control* (New York, 1978), p. 144.

[136] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 131.2: Sheffield Women and Health Conference Booklet (Oct. 1974).

[137] Contraception-Abortion Campaign Committee, *WLW Newsheet*, 15 (10 Jan. 1971), p. 1.

and literature (including *OBOS*). Around 250 women attended the Sheffield conference, participating in workshops including on 'V.D.', 'Childbirth' and 'Women and the NHS'.[138]

In France, healthcare activism primarily orbited the struggle for abortion and contraception. Counselling and information were already available to women through doctor-activist groups like Mouvement français pour le planning familial[139] and GIS.[140] MLAC centres sometimes offered counselling and information, as well as illegal abortions;[141] and some MLF groups collaborated to found new centres, like the Pétroleuses in Passy who established an information and consultation centre with a gynaecologist from MFPF and help from trade unions.[142] One activist tactic which could be found across the MLF was the creation of clear information on contraceptives. Local Choisir and MLAC groups, for example, created pamphlets on the pill.[143]

Neither pamphlet is dated so we cannot know if they preceded *OBOS*'s French arrival, but it is likely this educational activism emerged from national abortion struggles. Since 1920, not only were abortion and contraception illegal in France, but 'contraceptive propaganda' too.[144] Around 1972, Claudine Mulard created a booklet on contraception with her neighbourhood MLF group. It was officially a supplement to an issue of *LTB* but was 'passed around' instead of distributed with the paper.[145] It included sections explaining different

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[138] Sheffield Conference Booklet. For a thorough study of the Cambridge group see Olszynko-Gryn, 'Feminist appropriation'.

[139] Institut national de l'audiovisuel: ORTF, 'Le premier centre de planning familial' (3 Nov. 1961) filmreel, http://fresques.ina.fr/rhone-alpes/impression/fiche-media/Rhonal00319/le-premier-centre-de-planning-familial.html (23 Jan. 2018).

[140] CAF, FGIS, 44AF1: 'Qu'est-ce que le G.I.S.' (n.d.).

[141] CAF, FAC, 38AF8: 'Le MLAC à Aix-en-Provence' (n.d.).

[142] Danièle, 'au ministère…', *Les Pétroleuses*, 7 (Dec. 1976), pp. 20-1.

[143] CAF, FAC, 38AF8: Choisir Angers, 'La Pilule contraceptive' (n.d.); FMLAC, 10AF17: 'Questions sur la Pilule' (n.d.); FMLAC, 10AF11: MLAC, 'Breves Informations sur les Moyens Contraceptifs' (Aug. 1974).

[144] 'Loi du 31 juillet 1920', https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000683983&categorieLien=id (10 May 2020).

[145] Interview with Claudine Mulard, TL, Los Angeles, CA, 13 Oct. 2018.

contraceptive methods—what they were, how effective, how to use and procure them—but also comics, cartoons, jokes. 'They could have made their booklet sooner!' cries a pregnant girl on the cover. The section on 'Sexualité' echoes *OBOS*, peppered with hand-drawn, annotated diagrams of reproductive organs; personal testimonies; and the first-person plural.[146]

Mulard was not sure whether *OBOS* had influenced her group. They researched in various ways:

> There were networks of information. First there was the Planning Familial […] And I guess there was information coming in *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, no? We gathered information, I mean, we talked to gynaecologists. We gathered as much information as we could because this was absolutely not something you could find in any legitimate newspaper or magazine at the time.

It wasn't until a few years later, with the 1973 edition, that we find the first archival traces of *OBOS* reaching the MLF, but Mulard wondered whether she encountered *OBOS* during her time in San Diego.[147] However, it is not referenced in the booklet's bibliography. The group probably obtained most of their information from French family planning networks and their own experiences. This is important to note, because it suggests a similar epistemological approach to *OBOS*. Either Mulard read *OBOS* in the US, or perhaps her American consciousness-raising experience led her group to this method, as it did for BWHBC.

In this section we have noted differences between the methods and objectives of healthcare activism in all three countries. In turning to a case study of one particular method, self-help, we can understand how methods spread between countries for different reasons and were used in different ways. These pathways of diffusion differed from those of *OBOS*: where

[146] Personal Archives of Claudine Mulard: Groupe de Femmes 5e, supplement, *LTB*, 3 (*c.* 1972).
[147] Interview with Mulard, TL.

the latter could be posted, cut and pasted, self-help required in-person teaching. Its diffusion thus relied more heavily upon activist 'missionaries'.

a. Self-Help

Aged 15, around 1966, Nancy MacKeith left school and moved to London, where she worked in office jobs. MacKeith recalled singing in Trafalgar Square at an anti-war demonstration, but it wasn't until she moved to Belfast in 1971 that she became fully involved in activism. MacKeith initially travelled for a summer job on a play scheme; she stayed for three years. Life in Northern Ireland seemed a stark difference: divorce, abortion, and homosexuality were all illegal; deprivation levels were higher. MacKeith joined a women's liberation group and became an abortion counsellor, although these were separate initiatives: 'not everybody in the women's liberation group would even know that you could do that.'[148]

The Ulster Pregnancy Information Service had been established by an Englishwoman, Lorna Goldstrom, and her academic husband in their home;[149] abortion services, MacKeith said, were often run by foreigners. Protestant and Catholic women alike would visit to access abortions in England. MacKeith interviewed the women, explained the procedure, then arranged for terminations at clinics in Liverpool or Brighton.[150]

During this period, MacKeith went to London to attend a talk: her sister had told her about some women visiting from LA. The room was packed, MacKeith remembered.

> They showed slides of different cervixes, the theme being, we're all different. This is what you look like when you haven't had a baby, this is what you look like when you've had six. This woman's got thrush—lots of different ones. And then they said: let's all look.

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[148] Interview with MacKeith, TL.
[149] L. Earner-Byrne and D. Urquhart, *The Irish Abortion Journey, 1920–2018* (Liverpool, 2019), p. 89.
[150] Interview with MacKeith, TL.

The LA women passed around disposable plastic speculums and demonstrated how to self-examine the cervix using a mirror. 'And then we all did it,' MacKeith recalled. 'And that is amazing on so many levels.' In our interview, MacKeith marvelled at the fact that attendees felt comfortable enough to try. When asked whether it had felt political, she said: 'I probably wouldn't have put it in those terms. But my reaction was very gut level.' MacKeith took a moment to consider the meaning of 'political', and then added: 'I would not have articulated it as political, but it was extremely political'.[151]

The women giving the demonstration were Carol Downer and Debi Law. Downer had joined NOW in LA around 1969—although felt herself more radical than the other members who, unlike her, seemed very middle class—and became interested in abortion activism, having had two terminations herself: one painful and illegal, the other legal, but for which she had to prove she was mentally unstable. Downer signed up for the NOW abortion taskforce and accompanied women referred to illegal abortions by Crenshaw Women's Center. During one of these trips, Downer saw a cervix for the first time. '[redacted]' she said in an interview archived in CSULB, '[redacted]'[152] Aiming to upturn this, in 1971 Downer, with a group of women including Law, founded the Self-Help Clinic, which developed self-examination and menstrual extraction.[153]

The latter was a method adapted from the underground abortion clinic which Downer had visited. It was run by layperson Harvey Karman, who had developed the 'Karman cannula':

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[151] *Ibid.*

[152] CSULB, VOAHA, FHM: Interview with Carol Downer, by M. Moravec (1988).

[153] C. Pearson, 'Self Help Clinic Celebrates 25 Years', *Network News* (Mar.-Apr. 1996), https://www.fwhc.org/selfhelp.htm (10 May 2020).

a plastic tube inserted into the uterus, and attached to a syringe and jar, for suction.[154] It was less invasive than the usual method: scraping the uterus with a metal tool. Examining the device, another Self-Help Clinic member, Lorraine Rothman, noticed a dangerous oversight: there was no valve to stop air passing back into the uterus.[155] Using kitchen and hardware store materials, Rothman invented the Del-Em kit.[156] This allowed laypeople to perform safe abortions, although the Self-Help Clinic did not envisage menstrual extraction as a service. They hoped self-help groups would regularly extract 'each other's menses around the time of their expected periods'. If 'a pregnancy happened to be present' it would be routinely removed.[157]

In 1972 the Self-Help Clinic women established the Feminist Women's Health Center (FWHC), which ran a self-help group and an abortion referral service (doctors performed the terminations). It operated from the Crenshaw Center until 1973, when, following *Roe v Wade*, they opened the first [redacted].[158] But the group also wanted to spread self-help. In 1971, Downer and Rothman toured America, visiting 20-25 cities over six weeks to teach self-examination and menstrual extraction; in 1973, Downer and Law embarked on their European tour.[159] Byllye Avery, in Gainesville, FL, remembered Downer and Rothman's visit. They 'travelled on the Greyhound Bus with a box marked "toys" that had these speculums in them'. Avery could recall the women climbing onto a table to demonstrate, and their message: 'we needed to make sure that we knew what the doctor was looking at and we needed to know

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[154] C. Greenspon, 'The secret home abortion movement that started in LA two years before Roe v. Wade', *Off-Ramp* (14 Apr. 2017), https://www.scpr.org/programs/offramp/2017/04/14/56179/the-secret-home-abortion-movement-started-in-la-tw/ (10 May 2020).

[155] E. Woo, 'Obituary: Lorraine Rothman, 75; feminist clinic's co-founder helped demystify gynecology', *Los Angeles Times* (3 Oct. 2007), https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2007-oct-03-me-rothman3-story.html (10 May 2020).

[156] CSULB, VOAHA, FHM: Interview with Lorraine Rothman, by C. Dyer (31 Mar. 1990).

[157] Pearson, 'Self Help Clinic'.

[158] Interview with Downer, Moravec.

[159] CSULB, VOAHA, FHM: Interview with Carol Downer, by D. Robinson (*c.* 1984).

how to take care of our bodies'. For Avery, who established the Gainesville Women's Health Center in 1974 and the Black Women's Health Project in 1984, this 'act sort of gave birth to what I call the women's health movement'. Discovering self-examination was a significant moment, she explained: 'You will remember when you did it. It was of that importance.'[160]

This was certainly true for MacKeith. After the talk, she went to a café with Downer, who was interested in discussing the Belfast abortion referral service. They invited MacKeith to LA—MacKeith believes they did so because they thought she was Irish. Downer and Law continued with their European tour, and after returning told MacKeith to 'just come over'. She bought a return ticket for a six-week trip, during which she stayed in an apartment owned by the group, attended their meetings, and worked at FWHC. It was a brilliant experience for MacKeith, who had never visited America before.

> I remember the differences, I remember the excitement of America, and I remember learning lots of skills.

FWHC ran two different services. One of MacKeith's roles was to accompany patients seeking terminations through the process. 'It was kind of like a conveyor belt,' she explained:

> You went through the whole thing, you actually walked through the building with the woman, you gave her the information, you were with her during the termination and you supported her afterwards until she was well enough to leave and you gave her […] the antibiotics and the painkillers.

The second service was called 'pelvics': a way of assessing for pregnancy by 'pushing' the 'uterus up past the pubic bone' and 'feeling how big it is from the top'.[161]

MacKeith also learned how to fit coils and diaphragms, and visited their San Francisco sister clinic. It was an 'amazing' experience. Even British midwives and nurses wouldn't learn

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[160] SSC, VFOHP: Interview with Byllye Avery, by L. Ross, Provincetown, MA (21 Jul. 2005).
[161] Interview with MacKeith, TL.

this variety of skills, she explained: she could only receive this 'layperson' education in America. But there were other cultural differences, limiting transferability of this education to the British context. MacKeith recalled 'hilarious conversations about the NHS, which they didn't understand'. Some women at the clinic 'liked the idea of free healthcare' but they ran FWHC as a business—this was how they funded their 'missionary work', as MacKeith called it. Downer 'didn't get' why it wouldn't be possible to establish a similar abortion clinic in Belfast.[162]

After her time in LA, it was not safe for MacKeith to return to Belfast—a rumour had spread that she visited America 'to learn how to do abortions'—so she moved to London. It was 1974: the beginning of what MacKeith called her 'self-help missionary era'. She travelled around doing 'loads of talks, loads, everywhere, that's all I did', demonstrating self-examination like the Americans, but with 'more understanding of the NHS', to WLM groups across the country. MacKeith remembered a tour of Scotland, in particular, during which she was pregnant—she showed how this changed the cervix.

> I had a little old lady shopping bag, you know, the sort you pull along with you and in it I had a projector, slides, actually pretty much the same ones at the American women had, and some other ones I put in, and then I would sell speculums for 50p. And I used to get stick for selling the speculums because everything should be free, of course.

Through MacKeith's demonstrations, and the LA women's tour too, self-help groups sprouted across the country.

In a 1975 article for *Spare Rib*, MacKeith compiled a list of 14 self-help groups. Above the list, 'a member of a women's health group' described the powerful emotions self-examination provoked: it gave a 'sense of excited discovery' and doing it in a group helped to develop 'feelings of trust and warmth'. But also, it was an important step in reclaiming 'control

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[162] *Ibid.*

of our own bodies'.[163] Women experiencing self-examination for the first time found it profoundly educational; women meeting in regular groups could monitor changes, symptoms. Sophie Laws taught self-examination classes too, and published a guide, *Down There* (1981), sold in a package with a plastic speculum.[164] Self-examination, the introduction began, is a 'good way to face up to and start to change the fear and hatred of our female bodies which this male-dominated culture has taught us.'[165] In our interview, Laws explained how self-examination empowered: 'it was in our control and it did feel very radical' to 'look at ourselves in a way that wasn't sexual or judgmental'. Self-examination helped women to 'accept themselves' and not be 'afraid to look for help if you had any infection'.[166]

Natalie Thomlinson demonstrates the method was not always perceived as political. When Olive Morris—a feminist, Black Nationalist, and squatters' rights campaigner in Brixton—suggested self-examination to her women's group, it was dismissed as not 'political' enough. British self-help groups, Thomlinson notes, were 'overwhelmingly young, middle-class and white'. This was not true in the US, and that affected black British activists' perceptions of the American movement. Stella Dadzie, co-founder of OWAAD, recalled visiting a black feminist group in Chicago, where members discussed the colour of their nipples. To Dadzie, this was evidence that the black British women's movement was more radical than the American.[167] OWAAD didn't need introspection to understand the healthcare issues they faced—from forced sterilisation to sickle cell anaemia—which required urgent action.[168]

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[163] Nancy MacKeith, 'Self-Help Groups', *SR*, 31 (Jan. 1975), p. 11.
[164] Interview with Laws, TL.
[165] Sophie Laws, *Down There: An Illustrated Guide to Self-Exam* (London, 1981), p. 5.
[166] Interview with Laws, TL.
[167] N. Thomlinson, *Race, Ethnicity and the Women's Movement in England, 1968-1993* (London, 2016), pp. 61-2.
[168] OWAAD, 'Black Women', pp. 145-9.

Some groups found ways to combine self-help with other organising. The Manchester women's health group began after a talk from the LA women.[169] Initially, they met to perform self-examinations and exchange 'personal experiences with health services'. But they grew dissatisfied: self-help was 'fine for women experiencing capitalist medicine as it is practised in the USA', but they were strong proponents of the NHS. In the end, the Manchester group did not stop practising self-examination, but used it to focus their 'criticisms' of the NHS, for which they would then campaign.[170] In this way, self-examination was one tool within the struggle for 'power over our bodies'; it could go hand-in-hand with other initiatives. In 1973, Rochdale women's health group began a pregnancy testing service, and this made them 'more aware of how little we and the women we meet know about their bodies'. Reading *OBOS* was 'fascinating' and 'Nancy's self-help demonstration made the group feel close emotionally' and armed them with 'facts and information we can use.'[171]

MacKeith continued with her 'missionary work' for about a year. In April 1975 she had her baby and moved to Leeds, where she continued with healthcare activism. She joined a health group which met weekly for 'mutual support' discussions, taught women's health courses for the WEA,[172] and gave community outreach talks—for a women's refuge, a single parents' support group, and a community health group in Bradford.[173] Like other healthcare groups, the Leeds group produced their own material—the *Leeds Pregnancy Handbook*—with local healthcare information.[174] MacKeith also co-organised the first national health

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[169] FAN, FAN/LL/04: Manchester Women's Centre, 'Manchester Women's Liberation Groups: Structure and Organisation' (Jun. 1974).
[170] Manchester, 'Where Next', Sheffield Conference Booklet, p. 25.
[171] Rochdale, Sheffield Conference Booklet, p. 1.
[172] Interview with MacKeith, TL.
[173] FAN, FAN/AV/08/04: Interview with Nancy MacKeith and Alison Garthwaite, by E.A. Ross, Leeds (19 Mar. 1995), transcript, p. 12.
[174] SL, RBHWBC, MC503, 131.2: Leeds WL, 'Leeds Pregnancy Handbook' (n.d.). Groups in Swansea and Bolton, for example, also created local pregnancy guides.

conference with Sheffield health group, which strengthened her movement connections: MacKeith said she'd already visited many of the groups that participated, and later visited those she hadn't.[175]

These links were important when MacKeith compiled the 'first women's general health book coming directly out of the British movement'.[176] *The Women's Health Handbook* was a reference book with chapters written by different women involved in healthcare activism, including Pivot, Rakusen, and Cambridge PAG. The book was originally commissioned by a small, Leeds-based press called Feminist Books, but when they lost interest the first edition was self-published in 1976.[177] It became 'a roaring success'—MacKeith thought this probably encouraged Penguin to buy British *OBOS*—sold out, was reprinted, then published as *The New Women's Health Handbook* by Virago in 1978.[178] It was often compared with *OBOS*, which MacKeith had read. But interestingly, she highlighted a different influence: the Canadian *Birth Control Handbook* (1968), a bilingual contraceptive guide created by a group of McGill students.

The *BC Handbook* has largely been forgotten in histories of the women's health movement, but it was a huge success: from 1969-70, 300,000 copies were sold; two million the following year, with orders shipped overseas. It was especially popular on American campuses.[179] MacKeith explained: 'lots of people think that [self-help] started in Boston or Los Angeles, no, I would attribute it to the Canadian people, who were way ahead.'[180] Indeed, in the 1971 *OBOS*, BWHBC recommended it for 'additional information, pictures, or charts and

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[175] Interview with MacKeith, TL.
[176] Sue O' Sullivan, 'Review: Nancy MacKeith, ed., *The Women's Health Handbook: a self-help guide*', *Red Rag*, 11 (1976), p. 32.
[177] Interview with MacKeith, TL.
[178] Interview with MacKeith, Ross, p. 11.
[179] C. Sentha, 'The Evolution of the Birth Control Handbook: From Student Peer-Education Manual to Feminist Self-empowerment Text, 1968–1975', *Bulletin canadien d'histoire de la médecine* (Feb. 2006), p. 103.
[180] Interview with MacKeith, TL.

models'.[181] It is understandable that *OBOS* took prominence within the WLM; as Christabelle Sethna argues, the *BC Handbook* was more narrowly focused on birth control, it didn't have the same feminist origins as *OBOS*, and the latter's commercial publication secured its popularity.[182] But the *BC Handbook* was nonetheless significant. MacKeith recalled its illustrations as revolutionary. For the first time, pictures weren't of disembodied anatomy: 'They had heads and they were people and they were different and they weren't all beautiful.'[183]

When I asked MacKeith whether her book was inspired by *OBOS* or the *BC Handbook*, she said: 'all of them'. This can be seen in the introduction, which mentions the transnational influences upon MacKeith's activism, but also how she adapted these methods:

> *Nancy, why are we doing this handbook?*
>
> We need a British handbook mainly because previous women's health literature has been about America and there hasn't been much information on how to use a speculum or what you see when you do use one.

The introduction went on to outline the importance of self-examination—how it could lead to a range of activist initiatives, from writing healthcare material to pregnancy testing services, from defending abortion to demanding more from the medical profession. It was printed with a self-examination chart for tracking observations.[184]

Just as self-help was adapted to the British context, so was it adapted to the French.[185] Downer and Law also visited France in their 1973 European tour. One woman from POW,

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[181] BWHBC, 'Course Introduction', p. 5.
[182] Sentha, 'Evolution', pp. 104-5.
[183] Interview with MacKeith, TL.
[184] Nancy MacKeith, ed., *The New Women's Health Handbook* (London, 1978), pp. 1-2.
[185] Bibia Pavard has explored the transnational circulation of the Karman method through family planning networks following Karman's 1972 visit to Paris; this was menstrual extraction as practised by professionals on patients, and is not explored here, but provides an interesting parallel transnational journey. See B. Pavard: 'Quand la pratique fait movement: La méthode Karman dans les mobilisations pour l'avortement libre et gratuit (1972-1975)', *Sociétés Contemporaines*, 85:1 (2012), pp. 43-63.

who'd 'heard about the self-help movement in the States, but second-hand, through books or word-of-mouth', visited the Feminist Centre in Paris for their self-examination demonstration. The next day, at a Montparnasse apartment, she watched Downer perform menstrual extraction. 'This is a great boost to the movement!' she wrote.[186] And it was: POW formed a weekly self-help group to track changes and self-diagnose infections.[187] They also 'devoted some effort to compiling and distributing information about the Self-Help Movement in the States'[188] and taught self-help to Francophone groups.[189]

After publication, some *NCNM* collective members tried self-help. For Bizos it was:

> A true reappropriation of women's bodies [...] I think that actually daring, in a group of women, to hold up a mirror and look at a woman's [...] genitals or look internally, that's a true reappropriation of her body.[190]

In 1978, Bizos had written to BWHBC to tell them that since *NCNM*'s publication, she had been practising self-help, but 'it is not easy in France to learn to do abortion, or how to put a UD'. She asked whether she could visit with other French women to 'learn […] what we can't do in France.'[191]

In our interview, Bizos could not remember such a visit. Her self-help group didn't last long—she thought she must have written the letter during a period when she hoped it would take off.[192] As Mayoux remembered, self-help was no substitute for state-funded, professional care:

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[186] Nadine Marilyn Margulies-Goode, 'Happiness is Seeing Your Own Cervix', *POW Newsletter*, 2:3 (Dec. 1973), p. 4.
[187] PTM, 'Working Itself Out', *POW Newsletter*, 2:6 (Mar. 1974), p. 2.
[188] 'Self-Help: Information Available', *ibid.*, p. 6.
[189] 'Self-Help', *POW Newsletter*, 2:9 (Jun.-Jul. 1974), p. 2.
[190] Interview with Bizos, TL.
[191] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 75.4: Nicole Bizos-Cormier, letter to BWHBC (9 Mar. 1978).
[192] Interview with Bizos, TL.

> When we started trying to feel our breasts, we all felt as if we had cancers everywhere, so we thought maybe it's not such a good idea [laughs]. It's better to see a good doctor, who pays the right sort of attention to us.[193]

Nevertheless, Bizos wondered whether their group had included women who moved to the South of France afterwards, taking the method with them.[194]

POW and the *NCNM* collective's self-help experiences correspond with Lucile Ruault's argument that self-help often reached France via 'intermediaries' familiar with 'Anglo-American culture'. It was a Brussels Anglophone group, Women Overseas for Equality, which arranged the LA women's visit; one of the Paris-stint organisers was the 'Franco-American' Élisabeth; and in 1978 Parisian group Self-Help Abbesses was founded by a Canadian—two of its members had also visited feminist clinics in LA and Tallahassee. However, Ruault notes that sometimes Francophone links spread the method, with women in Geneva advising Santé de Grenoble.[195]

Self-help groups were established following the LA women's visits, but others continued to sprout from the mid-1970s—in Grenoble, Lille, Lyon, Paris, Saint-Étienne, and Strasbourg (I also found evidence of a group in Amiens).[196] Ruault attributes this, in part, to the impact of *NCNM*—as a self-help guide—and in part to the adoption of the Veil Law. Following this, MLAC's leadership stopped performing abortions, apart from some local groups who continued because they wanted to de-medicalise gynaecology and counter inadequacies of the law: 'delays, prices, the excluded: female immigrants, foreigners and minors.' Rualt demonstrates how self-help practices reinvigorated such MLAC groups—in Aix, Lyon, and

[193] Interview with Mayoux, TL.
[194] Interview with Bizos, TL.
[195] Ruault, 'La circulation', pp. 42-3.
[196] CAF, FRG, 37AF1: Maison des Femmes, 'Informations' (Nov. 1979).

Paris. Self-help focused criticisms of professional healthcare; it was a re-appropriation of knowledge; it 'kept the utopian aspirations of the dissident MLACs alive'.[197]

For British feminists, this French approach to self-help was an inspiration. The Sheffield health conference booklet gave it as an example to learn from. French women had used self-help:

> to arm women with knowledge about their own bodies, but combined that activity with initiatives which highlight the state's responsibility to provide the essential services […] It is within this framework […] that we should work in the women's movement in our fight for a health service which relates to the needs of women.[198]

This transnational influence extended beyond theoretical approaches: in some instances, menstrual extraction reached British activists via France, rather than directly from the LA women.[199]

It is difficult to know how widely menstrual extraction was practised in Britain, given the haziness of its legality, but reasons for its adoption are clear. Activists practised menstrual extraction for woman-led abortion. And more importantly, they wanted to learn safe methods, should abortion ever be re-criminalised.[200] 'WE CAN'T GO BACK TO THE KNITTING NEEDLE, INFECTION, TERROR AND EXPLOITATION,' urged a paper which secretly circulated through the movement in 1979 when it looked as though a Private Member's Bill to amend the Abortion Act might pass. The paper described another method—introducing a soap solution into the uterus to induce a miscarriage—but it relied upon self-examination skills that had circulated from the US, including pelvic examinations to date pregnancies and 'Use of

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[197] Ruault, 'La circulation', pp. 43-9.
[198] 'Women and the NHS', Sheffield Conference Booklet, p. 12.
[199] BL, S&A: Interview with Sue O'Sullivan, by R. Cohen (6 Jan. 2011).
[200] *Ibid.*

speculum'.[201] There was an underground abortion network, Alderson told me in our interview, and Sisterwrite 'would get people ringing up' the bookshop 'and asking about that from time to time'. She explained that learning methods was 'a way of holding some knowledge about how our bodies worked' so 'we would not be entirely dependent on what the state dictated.' Alderson likened this to the establishment of WLM presses to 'control the whole means of production of our literature'—activists were 'literally trying to take control of our bodies.'[202]

b. Networks

Healthcare activists shared their knowledge and joined forces to campaign. In the US, women's clinics came together under the Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers, founded by Downer in 1975;[203] that same year the National Women's Health Network was established to campaign for women to have 'the right to written information' on prescription drugs.[204] In Britain, healthcare activists met at two national conferences (the second in Manchester in 1976);[205] and in 1982, healthcare activists, including Rakusen, established the Women's Health Information Centre.[206] As Ruault has shown, healthcare activists in France were more of a loose 'nebula' than a movement, as in the US—and, I would add, UK. But 'dissident' MLAC groups continued to communicate with each other and looked to groups in other countries for networking, particularly the US and Italy.[207]

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[201] TWL, 5HWA/4: 'COMMON KNOWLEDGE' (*c.* 1979).
[202] Interview with Alderson, TL.
[203] 'Carol Downer', https://www.womenshealthspecialists.org/about/the-womens-movement/carol-downer/ (11 May 2020).
[204] NWHN, 'NWNH History', https://www.nwhn.org/nwnh-history/ (11 May 2020).
[205] 'Women and Health Conference', *WIRES* (3 Nov. 1976), supplement.
[206] Interview with Rakusen, TL (13 Sep.).
[207] Ruault, 'La circulation', pp. 45, 51-2. Also see: M.A. Bracke, 'Our Bodies, Ourselves: The Transnational Connections of 1970s Italian and Roman Feminism', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 50:3 (Jul. 2015), pp. 560-80.

Transnational communication was, for the most part, deliberately sought out. Women's health knowledge needed to be pooled, above all in areas where it was especially scarce. Sickle cell anaemia, for example, was under-studied in Britain, as Elizabeth Anionwu discovered when she started working as a nurse at Central Middlesex Hospital. Together with a haematologist, Anionwu founded the first British sickle cell information centre in Brent, in 1979. In an interview for 'The Heart of the Race' project, Anionwu explained it was an important issue for black women because although the disease affected men too, it placed 'a particular burden' on women: they were primary caregivers, it affected pregnancies, and there was the question of new-born screening. In late 1970s Britain, 'there was virtually nothing about Sickle Cell Disease' and people were 'thirsty for knowledge.'[208]

To learn more, Anionwu had to travel to the US, where the civil rights movement had led to research and campaigning on the condition. Anionwu visited the headquarters of the Sickle Cell Foundation in LA and attended a course in San Francisco, which was free: the Americans, who 'didn't actually realise there was a significant black population in Britain' were 'amazed that sickle cell was an issue in Britain and so they bent over backwards' to help Anionwu. She returned several times after that first trip, visiting different cities 'where sickle cell was an issue', and collecting films, slides, posters, and leaflets to use in the Brent centre. For Anionwu, this American experience was 'crucial': 'I learnt what to do and what not to do from there and also how to adapt it to the British situation.' Much like MacKeith spreading self-help, Anionwu was central to the spread of sickle cell awareness. She shared her knowledge with other groups in Bristol, Manchester, Leeds, and Birmingham, and became the first sickle cell counsellor nurse in Britain. Importantly, Anionwu situated her activism as focusing on black

[208] BCA, THR: Interview with Elizabeth Anionwu, by S. Ruiz (4 Sep. 2009).

women's issues within black health activism, rather than the women's healthcare movement; she gave community talks and worked with a range of black organisations.[209]

Transnational information sharing was particularly needed within healthcare activism, where activists contended with ever-shifting medical and pharmaceutical research. As Lyba Spring pointed out: 'When you read the research, you read the research internationally.' Specialised knowledge was needed, so specialised networks were forged. When Spring returned from France to Toronto, she co-founded the Toronto Women's Health Network (TWHN) in 1981. It brought together a range of women—including disability activists and an alternative birth collective—and became a hub for projects, including around legislation on contraceptive Depo-Provera (DP).[210]

DP is another key example of a healthcare issue which sparked transnational sharing—although for a variety of reasons. It was an under-researched, long-acting injection contraceptive, thought to cause a range of serious side effects. TWHN were particularly concerned with DP being used on women with disabilities and indigenous women 'because of paternalism'.[211] In Britain, activists highlighted that it was used to control the fertility of women of colour without their consent—especially where they could not speak English. OWAAD were concerned about the situation in Rochdale where 'Asian sisters are being given the injection, having just given birth, along with an injection against German measles.'[212]

In the early 1980s, women's healthcare activists in Britain and North America lobbied their governments for official enquiries into the drug and its use, but much initial research into

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[209] *Ibid.*
[210] Interview with Spring, TL.
[211] *Ibid.*
[212] OWAAD, 'Black Women', pp. 146-7.

DP began in the late 1970s.[213] Given the drug was manufactured in the US, British activists contacted their American counterparts to learn more—and BWHBC were seen as a women's healthcare authority. 'Dear Sisters,' wrote a community worker in East London.

> I am investigating the use of the injectable contraceptive Depo-Provera. We are worried that it is being used on women here often without their really understanding what it is and certainly without proper research being carried out into its long-term side effects. I would be grateful for any information you could send me about its use in the USA.[214]

Another activist, Dorothy Jones, wrote to BWHBC to say that she would be visiting the US to learn from their campaigns against DP.[215]

By neglecting healthcare activism beyond BWHBC, Davis misses this key part of the 're-articulation and re-contextualisation' of *OBOS*. Not only did individual readers contact BWHBC; other women's healthcare groups did too, including transnationally. Some letters were information requests, like one from Marie Stopes House in London inquiring about hysterectomies.[216] Often BWHBC answered such requests by referring the sender to another group, either in the US or their own country.[217] They soon realised no matter how many *OBOS* editions they printed, a book could never keep up with medical progress. Consequently, they started distributing monthly packets of women's health information sourced from feminist papers, health organisations, and medical journals, in the US and abroad. In 1977, when the initiative began, packets were sent to roughly 280 groups in the US and eighty abroad. In an

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[213] On the US see: W. Kline, 'Bodies of evidence: activists, patients, and the FDA regulation of Depo-Provera', *Journal of Women's History*, 22:3 (2010), pp. 64-87. On Britain and Canada: interviews with Spring and Rakusen, TL. In 1983 Rakusen established the Coordinating Group on Depo-Provera to give evidence at a public hearing.

[214] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 74.16: Diana Kelly, letter to BWHBC (18 Dec. 1978).

[215] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 74.16: Dorothy Jones, letter to BWHBC (30 May 1979).

[216] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 74.15: Sylvia Clark and Joan Jenkins, letter to BWHBC (7 Feb. 1978).

[217] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 74.15: Robbie Pfeufer, letter to Marie Stopes House (1 Mar. 1978).

interview with *Spare Rib*, Swenson described it as 'a way of rewriting our book' and 'helping groups involved in giving care on a direct daily basis.'[218]

BWHBC was also interested in learning from healthcare activists in other countries. They were put in touch with the Essex Road Women's Centre and Woman's Therapy Centre by Pat Herron, originally from Iowa, who had in turn contacted BWHBC after getting the address from a woman in her London health group.[219] When Swenson and Norsigian visited Europe in 1977 to see translators, adaptors, and publishers they took the opportunity to meet healthcare activists, contacted via their correspondence with British activists. They visited an Oxford health group, Marie Stopes, the Well-Woman Centre, and met the Natural Childbirth Trust, the Association for Improvements in the Maternity Services, and 'about 20 women from Bradford, Manchester and Leeds'.[220] Many of these groups became long-term correspondents of BHWBC, sending in their material for the information packets.

This correspondence reveals cross-currents of exchange, like a letter from a social care organisation in Newcastle, who described their activities as well as other Newcastle groups', and who in turn fed BWHBC's information-packet material to the local branch of the Natural Childbirth Trust.[221] The Groupe Mère Célibataires in Paris exchanged their leaflets for the new *OBOS* edition.[222] When *NCNM* was listed in French magazine *Alternatives*, BWHBC requested a copy, and other issues, in exchange for the information packets.[223] Likewise, Jill Rakusen kept in touch with the collective: she sent them the latest edition of *The Women's Health Handbook*, the *Sheffield Women's Health Handbook*, the Sheffield conference report, copies of *Spare Rib*, and

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[218] Jill Nicholls, '"Our Bodies" International', *SR*, 60 (Jul. 1977), p. 29.
[219] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 74.15: Pat Herron, letter to BWHBC (n.d.).
[220] Nicholls, '"Our Bodies" International', p. 29.
[221] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 74.15: Margaret Wright, letter to BWHBC (20 Oct. 1977).
[222] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 75.4: Grainne Farren, letter to BWHBC (20 Jan. 1977).
[223] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 75.4: Judy Norsigian, letter to Alternatives (10 Sep. 1977).

a leaflet for a campaign against the closure of the Elizabeth Garrett Hospital for Women in London; and BWHBC subscribed to *Women's Report*.[224] Healthcare activists used information from the packets in various ways: to teach women in Holloway Prison; to write a paper on Depo-Provera, given at a workshop on racism and imperialism.[225]

Spring recalled staying in touch with BWHBC during her time at TWHN. But, like other members of the *NCNM* collective I interviewed, the transnational contact which stood out in her memory was the first International Women and Health Conference in Rome, in June 1977. It was a moment which brought together groups we have studied throughout this chapter: the *NCNM* collective, BWHBC, Rakusen and Phillips, MacKeith, and Aix MLAC were among the 300 attendees from over 12 different countries. In a *Spare Rib* report, Rakusen and Phillips said 'it was the best conference' they'd ever attended. They heard from Genevan women who had occupied their local hospital five times; women in Holland, West Germany, Norway and Mexico, who wanted to open feminist clinics; and women in Sydney and Rome, who already had. The Aix women talked about their use of menstrual extraction for abortions—and how they'd been teaching the method to women who used their services.[226]

Each of my interviewees took different memories from the conference. Spring remembered, vividly, a menstrual extraction workshop:

> there was a woman on the table. The speculum was in her and the, you know, the equipment: *that's* what I remember is the [laughs] the process. And the shock that such a thing existed.[227]

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[224] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 74.15: Jill Rakusen, letter to Norsigian (14 Feb. 1977).
[225] SL, RBWHBC, MC503, 131.3: Sue Cowley, letter to BWHBC (6 Jan. 1979).
[226] Jill Rakusen and Angela Phillips, 'The medical establishment', *SR*, 62 (Sep. 1977), pp. 17-19.
[227] Interview with Spring, TL.

MacKeith recalled meeting people from Choisir, and Roman group CRAC, as well as a woman from Chicago Jane.[228] For Mayoux, the conference was an 'important moment' simply because of the emotional resonance of seeing so many activists. It 'had been a little solitary, our work on the book'. Meeting 'so many women from the women's movement' was 'very exciting': 'we could feel there were so many women concerned with the same issues that we were addressing in the book. And we were with our American sisters.'[229]

Conclusion

Rakusen and Phillips ended their *Spare Rib* conference report: 'Women are becoming increasingly aware of the international nature of medical oppression and our relative lack of information to cope with it'. To counter this, the Rome conference decided 'an international information network' was needed and 'women already involved in providing information agreed to coordinate material through centres in Boston and Berlin.'[230] The former group was BHWBC, with their existing network of women's healthcare activists.[231] In this way, BWHBC became one hub in a feminist healthcare network which stretched across the globe.

Throughout this thesis, we have explored the ways feminist theory was, as Sally Alexander put it, 'built up slowly', through consciousness-raising, conversation, and collective writing, through 'activities and action'.[232] This was certainly evident within feminist healthcare,

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[228] Interview with MacKeith, TL.
[229] Interview with Mayoux, TL.
[230] Rakusen and Phillips, 'Medical establishment', p. 19.
[231] The other group was called ISIS, see: Leti Boniol and Annie Calma, 'Coming a Long Way Together', http://feministarchives.isiswomen.org/97-feminist-archives/women-in-action/women-in-action-1999-2/1473-coming-a-long-way-together-isis-and-marilee-karl (10 May 2020); Jane Cottingham, 'Making Ourselves Exist' in 'The Personal is Political' roundtable, *Reproductive Health Matters*, 10 (Nov. 1997), pp. 9-11.
[232] Sally Alexander, comments delivered at 'New Directions in the History of the WLM' conference (Oxford, 4 Dec. 2017).

where women constructed ideas from discussions of their experiences; where activists learned by examining themselves; and where books were written by collectives and continually revised with new information from readers. These ideas then travelled—as movement texts, or via 'missionaries' who taught their methods. In both cases, adaptations were needed. National healthcare systems differed, as did views on the radicalism of certain positions. Sometimes differences of opinion were evident within countries: each group worked out their own way of challenging the patriarchal medical establishment, and they adopted and adapted transnational ideas as needed.

In doing so, they forged links with other groups to share experience and knowledge, and this was how a transnational network of healthcare activists was also 'built up slowly': through one woman getting in touch with another to express admiration or ask for literature; through one group travelling to teach another new methods; through correspondence and conferences. It was a distinct network: special interest groups sharing specialist knowledge. But it was not disconnected from the rest of the movement, with WLM newsletters publishing international women's health news, women's health groups operating under the umbrella of their local WLM group, and with *OBOS* and self-help first incubated in activist circles.

VIII. Services

In our interview, Linda Gordon emphasised the wide range of projects Bread and Roses members worked on: sex education for teenagers, food co-ops, childcare. The umbrella organisation was, she said, 'open, in a sense, to almost any project, that any group of people wanted to do'. Eventually, around 1971, Bread and Roses 'faded out', Gordon explained. 'But most of the projects did not end.' Its members stayed active, including in two well-known Boston WLM initiatives. The first was created on International Women's Day, in 1971, when women, including Gordon, marched through town. In a move only known to a small group of organisers, the march suddenly veered off the main avenue onto Pearl Street, toward a Harvard-owned warehouse.[1] They occupied the building, which became the Cambridge Women's Center, much like those we studied in Chapter IV, with a library and a school offering courses to women in the city.[2] The second, Transition House, was established in 1975 as the first refuge for women fleeing domestic violence on the East Coast.[3]

Although the Cambridge WLM was particularly community-focused, or 'activism oriented' as Gordon put it,[4] these initiatives were not unique. In this chapter, we will explore services established by the WLM in all three countries which were intended for use by women generally. Sometimes this focus came from the aim of welcoming more women into the movement, but often they simply arose from a desire to improve women's lives in concrete, immediate ways. It is important to consider this area of activism, partly because of its

[1] Interview with Linda Gordon, TL, New York, NY (26 Sep. 2018).
[2] SL, PBW, MC843, 1.11: Cambridge Women's Center, leaflet (Dec. 1976).
[3] Transition House, 'The History of Transition House', http://www.transitionhouse.org/oldsite/history.html (21 Jan. 2020).
[4] Interview with Gordon, TL.

significance to the movement—it was the practical result of much WLM theorising, with an impact that endures today, in, for example, refuges and rape crisis centres. Moreover, as we saw in the previous chapter on the women's healthcare movement, local focus did not always preclude the implementation of transnational ideas.

Certain organisation ideas which emerged from local need were diffused nationally and transnationally, sometimes evolving. Once established, community services connected with each other through literature, correspondence, travel, and specialised networks. In this chapter, we will explore case studies of three WLM-implemented services: childcare, refuges, and rape crisis centres. This is a tale of two stories: within childcare activism there was minimal transnational diffusion, whereas the idea to establish refuges and rape crisis centres travelled straightforwardly from one country—from Britain, in the first case, and the US, in the second. Yet in all of these initiatives, whether diffused transnationally or not, we find the same desire to share ideas and expertise.

1. Childcare

Childcare was important to all three movements, but approaches varied. In the Bay Area, a childcare switchboard was established, with the local WLM newsletter advertising emergency childcare for mothers 'who have been jailed or must leave town'.[5] In Rouen, a group of single mothers—including MLF and Planning Familial activists—formed in 1972. Initially, they met to break their isolation, but they decided to collectively produce a brochure covering issues they'd encountered, including analyses of laws on parental authority, creches, and childhood education.[6] In Glasgow, childcare discussions began with a questionnaire sent out with the

[5] *Bay Area WL Newsletter*, 1 (Jan. 1971), pp. 1-3.
[6] 'Groupe Mères Celibataires', *LTB*, 6 (Jun. 1973), pp. 4-5.

women's liberation newsletter, asking for activists' opinions on questions like whether babysitting should be arranged by neighbourhood communities or the WLM, and whether men should be involved.[7]

Each of these approaches to childcare activism was unique within sources I consulted, pointing to the highly localised nature of this work. Initiatives addressed the needs of WLM groups and their communities; engagement with local authorities and national policies consumed much energy. Nonetheless, this area of activism must be explored as part of a transnational enquiry. Firstly, as a counterpoint to other areas with more transnational exchange. Secondly, because we can find examples of transnational diffusion which, though exceptional, exhibit the same network mechanisms we find elsewhere. Finally, even in this locally concentrated activity, there was sharing of expertise and experience.

In all three countries there was little state provision, costs were often prohibitive, and parental responsibility primarily fell to mothers. For women who worked, even where there was state-funded childcare, opening hours were usually shorter than work hours.[8] For women who had the means to stay at home, this often resulted in isolation for both mothers and children—causing unhappiness for the former, and worries of developmental delay regarding the latter.[9] As women began to question their lives in the WLM, they wondered why the burden of childcare weighed upon them. Some even saw childcare as the root of women's 'passive' role in society.[10] Discussion and analyses evolved into calls for action. Whether the solution was agitating for better state provision or creating grassroots alternatives, improving childcare could redress inequality and improve women's lives—both inside and outside the movement.

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[7] Childcare Questionnaire, *Glasgow WL Newsletter* (Mar. 1976).
[8] 'Daycare', *So What are We Complaining About?* (*c.* 1970), p. 11. FAN, FAN/LL/04: 'Childrens Community Centre', booklet (Nov. 1972). 18th arr. group, 'Oui Giroud!', *Les Pétroleuses*, 2 (*c.* 1974), p. 7.
[9] Morag Murchie, 'Womens Lib and the Under Fives', *Pent Up* (n.d.), p. 40.
[10] 'Daycare', *So What*, pp. 11-13.

In Chapter III, we learned TPG formed after Sheli Wortis had been struggling to reconcile motherhood, work and activism, and that almost all of its members had young children. It is unsurprising, then, that one of their first actions was establishing a neighbourhood creche. The idea did not just emerge from their discussions: it 'grew directly out of the experience of the German Action Council for the liberation of Women'.[11] At a 1968 SDS conference, activist Helke Sander had given a paper analysing women's oppression under capitalism, and condemning men (including socialists) for permitting the division of domestic labour. This problem, Sander asserted, could not wait until after the revolution. But SDS men were not willing to address this, so SDS women were left to find a solution alone. With a focus on mothers, 'because their situation is worst'[12], they proposed a strategy of 'Kinderläden' (children's shops). Occupied shop fronts were used '(1) to create counter-institutions for pre-school children and (2) to create a place where the mothers of these children could become politicised'.[13]

Sander's paper circulated through the radical community in London. It was quoted in an issue of *Black Dwarf* and discussed by Wortis in an article (reprinted from *Red Camden*) in the third issue of *Shrew*. In that same issue, Sue O'Sullivan said the idea had 'been floating around in the London Women's Liberation groupings from the first meeting'.[14] SDS leader Rudi Dutschke and his wife, American Gretchen Dutschke-Klotz, were living in London at the time, following Dutschke's attempted assassination, and TPG managed to make contact with them—

[11] Sheli Wortis, 'A People's Creche', *Shrew*, 3 (Jul. 1969), p. 3.
[12] Helke Sander, quoted in *ibid*.
[13] Wortis, 'A People's Creche', pp. 3-4.
[14] Susan Cowley, 'The Tufnell Park Creche', *Shrew*, 3 (Jul. 1969), p. 5.

probably, O'Sullivan thought, through the anti-war activist network.[15] They organised meetings (open to men too) to question the Germans on their Kinderläden experience.[16]

Kinderläden was not directly applicable to London—with no permanent location like German shop fronts[17]—but the meetings sparked interest. TPG studied 'manuals on child rearing and child development', and debated questions like whether creches should be established for 'internal purposes' (for activists) or for 'people external to the group', in which case it could be used to 'inspire these people to political activity'.[18] They decided to tentatively try out the idea for themselves, running 'drop-in childcare' from one of their homes to 'free up women […] on weekends when they have some time to go shopping' or 'do things for themselves'. However, in the end, Wortis said, 'we couldn't make anything really good happen'; the creches petered out.[19]

Not that there were no longer-lasting consequences: reflecting in our interview, Wortis wondered whether this engendered 'the idea for the creche' at Ruskin, run by male partners, and organised by TPG and the Peckham group.[20] Another outcome was the paper Wortis presented at the conference, on 'Child-rearing and Women's Liberation',[21] which emerged from both TPG meetings and her academic experiences. During graduate studies, Wortis had researched animal behaviour, and was critical of John Bowlby's attachment theory—influential both academically and, increasingly, in popular culture.[22] It overemphasised the role of the mother which, Wortis argued, oppressed women. She

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[15] BL, S&A: Interview with Sue O'Sullivan, by R. Cohen, London (6 Jan. 2012).
[16] Interview with Sheli Wortis, TL, Cambridge, MA (28 Sep. 2018).
[17] Cowley, 'Tufnell Park Creche'.
[18] Wortis, 'A People's Creche', p. 4.
[19] Interview with Wortis, TL.
[20] *Ibid.*
[21] TWL, 7ADA/01: Rochelle [Sheli] Wortis, 'Child-rearing and Women's Liberation', paper from Ruskin Conference, Oxford (1970).
[22] Interview with Wortis, TL.

concluded: 'any transformation of society, in order to liberate women as well as men, must incorporate, from the beginning, more shared responsibility for the care and socialisation of children.'[23]

Wortis was not the only participant interested in childcare. She recalled, in particular, the Peckham women, being 'outraged' at the 'division of labour between men and women in family life' and recounting how they felt 'the brunt of the work at home'.[24] Another paper, given by 'MF', explored 'Children and the Family'. It, too, advocated nursery groups, and 'fundamental changes in role between husband and wife', arguing:

> If men do not voluntarily participate, then every other means at women's disposal must be used. Strikes, ridicule, leave home, etc.[25]

Though varied in origin and tone, these papers each identified childcare as a site of women's oppression—and a site for potential change. 'Free 24-hour nurseries' was the fourth demand adopted by the conference, with round-the-clock availability emphasised for emergencies and parents with uncommon working hours.[26]

Clearly, childcare activism in the UK was not merely imported from Germany, but TPG had shared the 'Kinderläden' strategy with others at Ruskin. Wortis also circulated her thoughts in *Red Camden* and *Shrew*, and this reached far beyond London: the latter can be found in the personal papers of Meredith Tax.[27] Tax, an American, was living in London in 1968, where she became involved in anti-war activism. She'd returned to the US by the time the issue was printed, so was likely sent it by a London contact.[28] Wortis's Ruskin paper also travelled: it

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[23] Wortis, 'Child-rearing'.
[24] Interview with Wortis, TL.
[25] TWL, 7ADA/01: MF, 'Children and the Family', paper from Ruskin Conference, Oxford (1970).
[26] TWL, 5WRR/B/01: LWLW, 'The Four Demands', in 'An introduction to the Women's Liberation Workshop' (1971).
[27] SBC, MTP, B113.
[28] SSC, VFOHP: Interview with Meredith Tax, by K. Weigand, New York (11 Jun. 2004).

was printed in *Black Dwarf* and, after redrafting, in an academic journal.[29] When Wortis returned to the US, half a year after Ruskin, she published it as a pamphlet to distribute. We see the same methods of diffusion we find elsewhere in the movement: through conferences, correspondence, periodicals, reprinting, and the travel of activists.

In Cambridge, MA, Wortis' childcare activism continued. This was influential given childcare was not a focus of the Boston-area movement in 1970—in our interview she described it as her most important contribution to the WLM. Wortis attended Bread and Roses meetings, where she met Phyllis McEwan: together they formed the Boston Area Childcare Action Group. In the end, they 'didn't do too much more than talk and write' but Wortis went on to help with organisation for a referendum on 24-hour childcare in Cambridge,[30] placed on the 1971 ballot after campaigning from a coalition of women's groups.[31] The proposal passed, but there wasn't adequate funding. Instead, the council, 'as a gesture', allocated funds to the 'Child Care Resource Center', to help people establish their own daycare initiatives—increasingly common, Wortis explained, perhaps due to the influence of the WLM. With other women who had campaigned for the referendum, she formed newsletter *Labor Pains*, distributed to Boston childcare centres. Eventually, Wortis took her childcare experience and expertise into her professional career. She worked at the Child Care Resource Center, where she became interested in questions of race and co-founded the Multicultural Project, and later worked for Cambridge Public Schools, where she became interested in racial diversity in children's literature.[32]

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[29] Rochelle Wortis, 'The Acceptance of the Concept of the Maternal Role by Behavioural Scientists: Its Effects on Women', *American Journal of Ortho-Psychiatry*, 41:5 (Oct. 1971), pp. 733-746.
[30] Interview with Wortis, TL.
[31] D. Dinner, 'The Universal Childcare Debate: Rights Mobilization, Social Policy, and the Dynamics of Feminist Activism, 1966–1974', *Law and History Review*, 28:3 (2010), p. 607.
[32] Interview with Wortis, TL.

Throughout the 1970s, the question of alternative institutions versus agitating for state provision was not settled within the WLM in any of the three countries. However, there were different national approaches. In France, there was an emphasis on campaigning for better state provision, particularly in the mid-1970s, with Françoise Giroud as Minister for Women's Rights. When Giroud proposed a mother's wage, she was met with the MLF's derision. As an article in *Les Pétroleuses* argued, it wasn't 'a real salary' but an allowance, it locked parents into traditional roles, and would save the government the responsibility of providing services. Creches for working mothers were, the article asserted, 'a right'.[33]

The intensity of these debates can be attributed to France's pronatalist policies, which, although declining by the late 1960s,[34] were at the forefront of feminist minds—in particular, the hypocrisy of the government's stance on contraception:

> The same government which prevents us from choosing our motherhood (contraception, abortion, money) declares that the foetus belongs to society but forgets this at birth.[35]

Indeed, childcare was often seen as an extension of reproductive rights. One MLAC petition included a demand for 'social-cultural facilities, crèches, decent housing' because it would 'facilitate free choice for all women'.[36]

American activists, on the other hand, primarily explored alternative childcare, perhaps because reformist feminist organisation NOW had assumed the mantle of lobbying, with publicly funded childcare in its 'Bill of Rights for Women'.[37] Women's liberationists did want state funding, but they wanted control over the running of centres, with concerns about

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[33] 18th, 'Oui Giroud!', p. 7.
[34] C. Duchen, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France, 1944-1968* (London, 1994), p. 4.
[35] 18th, Oui Giroud!', p. 8.
[36] CAF, FMLAC, 10AF11: MLAC petition (n.d.).
[37] 'Guide to the Movement', *Women: A Journal of Liberation*, 1:2 (1970), p. 71.

daycare leading to women's economic exploitation (pushing them into underpaid jobs) and brainwashing children (into gender roles).[38] However, this divide was not stark: as the Cambridge referendum shows, WLM activists campaigned for public provision too.

Similarly, some MLF activists were interested in working towards alternatives to state-controlled childcare. Students at Vincennes and Censier established creches in their universities during May '68,[39] a 24-hour creche was run at the Sorbonne,[40] and children and parents occupied the Beaux-Arts for months.[41] *Crèches sauvages* were part protest tactic, part prototype. Neighbourhood creches weren't adequate, activists argued: children should be cared for near their parents' place of work; hours should be longer and more flexible; parent-participation should be facilitated; and the mother's burden should be alleviated.[42] *Crèches sauvages* were created by men and women together, just before the MLF began, but after women began to organise autonomously, helping out with their running became an important movement activity.[43]

In the UK, WLM groups took a range of approaches. Some—like those in Leeds, Shetland, and Edinburgh[44]—pressured or worked with local councils to improve provision. But even where groups established centres, local authority funding was usually sought. One group in Camden was asked by their borough's Director of Social Services for 'positive suggestions' after they criticised existing provision in 1971. Ambitiously, they proposed twelve new childcare

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[38] 'Daycare', *So What*, pp. 12-13.
[39] 'Les Creches Ouvertes A Tous', *Cahiers de mai* (Oct. 1968), reprinted in l'Institut Tribune Socialiste, 'Les crêches sauvages vers la revolution', p. 2, https://www.institut-tribune-socialiste.fr/wp-content/uploads/1969/05/70_MNEF_RU_CRECHES.pdf (12 Jan. 2020).
[40] K.J. Morgan, 'The Politics of Mothers' Employment: France in Comparative Perspective', *World Politics*, 55:2 (2003), p. 281.
[41] Centre d'Activités des Enfants des Beaux-Arts, 'crêche aux beaux arts', 'Les crêches sauvages', p. 4.
[42] University Early Childhood Centre, tract, 'Les crêches sauvages', p. 6.
[43] des femmes, *MLF-psychanalyse et politique 1968*-2018, vol. 1 (Paris, 2018), p. 44.
[44] FAN, FAN/LL/07: Day Nurseries Action Group and Leeds WL Group, Deputation and Petition to Leeds City Council (20 Jan. 1971). S. Browne, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Scotland* (Manchester, 2014), p. 73.

centres, run on a voluntary rota system, with the council providing empty property and a grant to employ a full-time worker. Ultimately, finding suitable property proved challenging, and '21 months after the initial idea' the group was ready to open just one centre. But this local organising did not preclude wider campaigning: they also convened the WLM's national Nursery Campaign. However, this was also a struggle and Camden women concluded: 'These sort of things can probably only come about by local people forming pressure groups and taking control.'[45]

Although initiatives emerged from local interests and needs, activists endeavoured to share experiences. Boston women reported on approaches to childcare activism taken by New York groups;[46] in Britain, Southampton WLM magazine *Pent Up* discussed national campaigning.[47] The group of single mothers in Rouen were also keen to work with others: they liaised with a similar group in Le Havre. And they shared their knowledge with the wider MLF not only in the brochure they prepared, but also via *LTB*, in an article analysing the Civil Code.[48] The Camden group shared their approach at the 1972 National Conference, although they questioned how easy it would be to roll out across the country, given their local council was especially liberal.[49] And one 'French sister' placed a notice in *WIRES* looking to 'exchange info' with women 'involved in political work in the community, especially around creches and coops.'[50] We find the desire to share, debate, and discuss ideas and experience in periodicals and conferences, even where it was not directly applicable elsewhere.

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[45] 'Community Centre' booklet.
[46] 'Daycare', *So What*, pp. 11-13.
[47] Murchie, 'Womens Lib', pp. 38-40.
[48] 'Groupe Mères'.
[49] 'Community Centre' booklet.
[50] 'NEWS FROM GROUPS', *WIRES*, 10 (17 Mar. 1976), p. 9.

2. Refuges

In 1973, Jo Sutton—a social work student at North London Polytechnic—was looking for a residential placement when she heard of Women's Aid (WA) in Chiswick:

> It was a two-up, two-down house, on a peppercorn rent. The toilet was outside across the yard and they had 32 women and children and it was opposite a bus station where they serviced buses at night.

At 5 ft 10, Sutton was exactly what the refuge needed—she could stand in the doorway if an abusive man came looking for his partner. 'There were guys there who believed these were their possessions,' she explained in our interview. When her placement ended, she kept in touch: 'It was something that was growing.' Inspired by Chiswick, women across the country were establishing refuges. After university, Sutton was hired as national coordinator to connect this blossoming movement, travelling to refuges around the UK and facilitating their communication.[51] When American activist Betsy Warrior printed the sixth edition of her refuge directory *Working on Wife Abuse* in 1978, Sutton was listed under 'England' as 'One of the most important individuals involved in the creation of the national organization and in getting countless refuges off the ground.'[52]

The idea to establish refuges for women fleeing violent partners is one which various historians acknowledge as originating in the UK.[53] But the precise mechanisms of its travel have not been examined. In this section, we will trace this diffusion: from Chiswick, across the UK; then to the US and France. In doing so, we will see refuges existed in the US prior to the import of the idea from Britain, but that the American refuge movement—the explosion of

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[51] Interview with Jo Sutton, TL, Clayton, ON (4 Oct. 2018).

[52] Betsy Warrior, *Working on Wife Abuse* (1978), p. 57.

[53] See: A. Sebestyen, 'BRITAIN: The Politics of Survival', in R. Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology* (New York, 1996), p. 95; M. Zancarini-Fournel, 'Notre corps, nous-mêmes' in E. Gubin et. al., eds., *Le siècle des féminismes* (Paris, 2004), p. 214.

refuges, their networking—followed the British example. Conversely, the first French refuges were directly inspired by the British. Throughout, we will look at the ways refuges connected with each other to share experience and ideas—within countries, then transnationally.

As Warrior noted in the introduction to her directory, 'refuges of sorts' had 'existed for hundreds of years'. But refuges established by WLM activists signalled a new departure—one less paternalistic toward women, less forgiving of male violence, and which analysed this violence as a patriarchal product. For Warrior, the movement to create such places had begun with 'sanctuaries for battered wives in England'.[54] Chiswick WA was established by Goldhawk Road Women's Liberation in 1971, in a derelict house donated by Hounslow Council.[55] It was initially envisaged as a women's centre, a place where local women could 'get advice and simple support and friendship'.[56] A few days after opening, a woman who had been 'persistently beaten by her husband' arrived with her children, asking for 'a temporary home, help and moral support'. Despite the council's licence forbidding overnight residence, the centre admitted her.[57] Other women arrived with the same problem; by 1972, around 30 women and children were sleeping on mattresses on the centre's floor. By 'accident, rather than design', it became a refuge.[58]

Unlike most other WLM initiatives—staunchly collective and leaderless—by the time Sutton joined Chiswick, Erin Pizzey, a member of the Goldhawk Road group, had assumed leadership. Pizzey, whose husband worked at the BBC, was adept at garnering media attention.[59] With the 1974 publication of her book *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours Will Hear—*

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[54] Warrior, *Working*, pp. 1-3.
[55] Jalna Hanmer, 'Jo Sutton interview: "Writing Our Own History: The Early Days of Women's Aid"', *Trouble & Strife*, 4 (1984), p. 55. FAN, FAN/LL/04: 'Women's Aid and the problem of battered women: A report from Chiswick' (Jan. 1974), p. 2.
[56] Annette Muir et. al., 'Wife Torture', *Red Rag*, 8 (Feb. 1975), p. 3.
[57] 'A report from Chiswick', p. 2.
[58] Erin Pizzey, 'Foreword' in *ibid*., p. 1.
[59] For example: Francis Horsburgh, 'Battered wives', *Reading Evening Post* (3 Jul. 1973), p. 5.

which contained case studies of women seeking refuge, and an analysis of domestic violence—and the simultaneous airing of a documentary about the refuge, this coverage increased.[60]

WLM groups across the country began establishing their own refuges.[61] Others emerged from the same improvised situation as Chiswick: the Bristol women's centre provided a bed for emergency accommodation, and although this was not advertised, in the first half-year of opening (from March 1973) they fielded 25 requests, including from four 'battered wives' with children.[62] This urgency increased with the national publicity Pizzey had drawn to the cause,[63] and so women from the centre, with Samaritans members and social workers, campaigned to establish a refuge—which they finally achieved, two years later.[64]

After receiving government funds, Pizzey decided to employ a national coordinator to contact these refuges.[65] When Sutton accepted the role there were 'about 40 groups setting up or running centres for battered women and their children' and six established refuges, including one in Dublin.[66] A flyer, circulated at the sixth national WLM conference, outlined Sutton's aims: using Chiswick as a base, she wanted to facilitate 'co-operation between groups, both regionally and nationally', including through national campaigns and a 'clearing house' to share experience, information, and organise refuge exchanges (for women who wanted to relocate).[67] There were 'lots of enquiries coming in' from WLM groups, mostly on practical

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[60] 'In Print: Erin Pizzey's Harrowing Account of Women in Fear', *Acton Gazette* (31 Oct. 1974), p. 10.
[61] R.E. Dobash and R.P. Dobash, *Women, Violence and Social Change* (London, 1992), p. 62.
[62] FAS, EMA, DM2123/8/115 F1: 'The Need for a Women's House' (Nov. 1973).
[63] FAS, EMA, DM2123/8/115 F1: 'Bristol Women's House Project' (n.d.).
[64] Interview with Ellen Malos, by I. Singer (*c.* 2000-2001), quoted in Singer and V. Honeybourne, eds., 'Personal Histories of the Second Wave of Feminism', http://feministarchivesouth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Personal-Histories-of-the-Second-Wave-of-Feminism.pdf (18 Mar. 2019), p. 26.
[65] Hanmer, 'Sutton Interview', p. 56.
[66] Interview with Sutton, TL.
[67] FAN, FAN/LL/04: Jo Sutton, 'Women's Aid' flyer (1974).

issues—how to find a house, whether to squat—rather than 'the problems of the people they were dealing with'. That, Sutton explained, women's groups already knew 'very well'.[68]

Sutton wanted to avoid her role enforcing 'a top-down model' with Chiswick dictating 'how it should be done'. Instead, she aimed for 'more of a network than a hierarchy'.[69] This was achieved partly through national conferences—unsurprisingly, given the wider British WLM's organisation. Sutton arranged the first national WA conference in August 1974, which fifteen groups attended, and over the next year the 'connections came very quickly': the second conference, in February 1975, was attended by thirty-eight.[70] Sutton also travelled to groups across the country. She remembered visiting Belfast, where a refuge was established for both Protestant and Catholic women, and Nottingham, where there was a conflict between two groups of women who wanted to found a refuge. Sutton travelled so much that at one point she was homeless, sleeping in her car and staying with activists.[71]

But tensions were beginning to surface—between Pizzey and Sutton, between Chiswick and the other refuges. One source of conflict was Pizzey's monopolising of media attention. A refuge in Brixton had been established around the same time as Chiswick, but the latter wouldn't share publicity, creating arguments when Chiswick made media appearances alone.[72] A Norfolk woman heard about Chiswick and donated £2,000 to them, unaware there was a Norwich group struggling for funds to establish a local refuge. The money was not shared—despite Sutton suggesting to this Pizzey.[73]

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[68] Interview with Sutton, TL.
[69] *Ibid.*
[70] Hanmer, 'Sutton Interview', p. 56
[71] Interview with Sutton, TL.
[72] Hanmer, 'Sutton Interview', p. 55.
[73] *Ibid.* Liz Kelly, 'Women's Refuges 20 years on', *SR*, 221 (Mar. 1991), pp. 32-3.

Increasingly Pizzey was moving away from WLM principles. As Sutton remembered, other groups, with 'a women's liberation point of view' didn't want a leader or Chiswick acting as 'the major, senior organisation'. Another 'philosophical difference' centred on domestic violence analyses. Pizzey had brought researcher Dr. J.J. Gayford into Chiswick. He presented questionnaires to women arriving at the refuge, which made some workers, like Sutton, uncomfortable: they thought it gave the impression that participation was required. Anger around Gayford intensified when he published his results: a paper on 'Ten Types of Battered Wives' which argued violence was inherited, and categorised victims of domestic violence into types, like 'Doris Doormat' and 'Fanny the Flirt'. This 'caused a rift', Sutton said. 'It was very much victim blaming'.[74]

In contrast, others in the refuge movement were beginning to construct analyses of domestic violence which saw the problem as one of male power in a 'male-dominated society'. Liz Kelly at Norwich WA situated her analysis firmly within transnational radical feminist theory. Her paper 'The Personal is Political' was argued from Carol Hanisch's central tenet: individual lives are shaped by political decisions, and the politics of power encompass areas usually considered apolitical, like the family. Kelly argued that violence against women was perpetuated by women's economic dependence on men, and women were controlled by the threat of male violence (echoing arguments surrounding rape, which also travelled from the US, as the next section discusses). Kelly ended her paper with a Redstockings quote—'the conflicts between individual men and women are political conflicts and can only be solved collectively'—and urged WA to struggle for 'real change in attitudes and women's position in society.'[75]

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[74] Interview with Sutton, TL.
[75] FAN, FAN/LL/04: Liz Kelly, 'The Personal is Political' (n.d.).

As we will see, this theorising developed throughout the decade, in tandem with general analyses of violence against women, but such questions were already a point of contention in 1974 between Pizzey and others. This was not abstract discussion. Pizzey believed children needed positive male role models, to break (as she saw it) the cycle of violence, so men ran Chiswick's playgroups.[76] Others argued male role models weren't needed: 'children should learn that women are strong' and refuges, like other WLM initiatives, were 'about women working with women for women'.[77] Sutton was sympathetic to WLM-oriented points of view and Pizzey was beginning to move against her. Sutton organised the second WA conference without access to the office: she was locked out of it, following the dispute over sharing donations.[78]

These issues came to head in 'a large confrontation at the second conference', which Sutton remembered as 'probably the worst day of my life for a long time'. She, and groups who were unhappy with Pizzey, knew there would be conflict. They 'decided it was time to be something different. And more feminist.' Sutton couldn't recall the event precisely: her memories were overwhelmed by feelings of conflict. But she remembered the community hall crammed with people, including male playgroup leaders who Pizzey had brought, and that the session 'just deteriorated'.[79] A 1984 interview with Sutton in *Trouble & Strife*, by WA activist Jalna Hamner reinforces this:

> I found [the male playgroup leaders entering] very threatening. I was publicly denounced. I was keeping minutes at the time. I was shaking so much that I couldn't write anything—so there are no minutes of that!

When Hanmer asked what she was denounced for, Sutton answered:

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[76] Hanmer, 'Sutton Interview', p. 57. Interview with Sutton, TL.
[77] PAJS: 'The History of Women's Aid' (Feb. 1981).
[78] Hanmer, 'Sutton Interview', p. 57. Interview with Sutton, TL.
[79] *Ibid.*

I can't remember! I blocked it out. It means nothing can ever be as bad again.

Following this, Pizzey fired Sutton, and groups met the next day to establish a separate national organisation. They passed resolutions to designate themselves National Women's Aid Federation (NWAF), with Chiswick abstaining.[80] Pizzey retaliated by writing letters to local authorities, informing them Chiswick had sacked Sutton as they were 'worried about her political affiliations'. Pizzey said she was 'particularly worried' about groups using WA 'as a platform for Women's Liberation and Gay Women's Liberation' and cautioned councils 'to look very carefully' at groups who wanted to establish refuges 'before giving them your support'.[81] Pizzey had severed herself from the WLM and NWAF. But this only strengthened the latter's resolve. 'Suddenly,' Sutton said, 'there was an organisation because there was somebody opposing it.'[82]

NWAF maintained the autonomy of local groups, with the national conference as the main decision-making body. Sutton stayed on as national coordinator, operating from the Wandsworth refuge—but only until April.[83] The aim, Sutton explained, was that links between refuges would be 'horizontal', not 'vertical'. Groups with things in common—relationships to councils, for example—were put in touch. Knowledge was also shared in the information packet *Battered Women Need Refuges*.[84] Different refuges wrote their own sections, like Hammersmith WA's account of establishing their refuge, which advocated the 'Importance of strong support group'. The horizontal framework of NWAF worked well for Hammersmith: they 'should never have got off the ground so quickly if Acton had not been so willing to share

[80] Hanmer, 'Sutton Interview', pp. 57-8.
[81] FAN, FAN/WOGC/B9: Erin Pizzey, circular (4 Feb. 1975).
[82] Interview with Sutton, TL.
[83] Hanmer, 'Sutton Interview', pp. 57-8.
[84] Interview with Sutton, TL.

their information and experience with us.'[85] But NWAF could also operate as a single voice, as they did when giving evidence to the 1975 Select Committee on Violence in Marriage.[86]

In 1976, Scottish WA broke away to network 'amongst themselves' and better obtain government funding;[87] then in 1978, separate federations were founded in Northern Ireland and Wales.[88] This can be seen not as a disintegration of WA, but a continuation of the decentralisation Sutton implemented, with each nation better able to share funding, expertise, ideas. And they maintained communication—delegates from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland attended the English national conference[89]—and continued to share material.[90]

a. France

A combination of Pizzey and NWAF's methods spread the idea of establishing refuges to the US and France: both media attention cultivated by Pizzey, and NWAF's networking approach. In France, activists were more influenced by the former. Personal testimony and contemporary sources attribute the sparking of French refuges to the 1975 translation of Pizzey's *Crie moins fort, les voisins vont t'entendre*, published by Éditions des Femmes, and her accompanying tour. Pizzey undertook, *Nouvelles Féministes* reported, 'a two-week trip to four European countries with staff members, sheltered women and their children to encourage similar initiatives.' Pizzey 'established the headquarters' of her French 'crusade' at the Maison Femmes in Saint-Josse. She met with the head of the Social Committee of the Common Market to urge public

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[85] PAJS: Hammersmith WA, 'Setting up the Hammersmith Refuge' in NWAF, *Battered Women Need Refuges: a kit for new groups* (May 1977).
[86] Hanmer, 'Sutton Interview', pp. 58-9.
[87] Browne, *WLM in Scotland*, p. 147.
[88] Northern Ireland WAF, 'History of Women's Aid', https://www.womensaidni.org/about-us/womens-aid/history-of-womens-aid/ (22 Jan. 2020). Welsh WA, 'About', https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/about/ (22 Jan. 2020).
[89] PAJS: NWAF, National Coordinating Group Minutes (28-30 Sep. 1979).
[90] PAJS: 'Summary of Information in NWAF National Office' (Jun.-Jul. 1979).

spending on refuges and invited Parisian film group Les Muses S'amusent (a precursor to Les Insoumuses) to visit Chiswick and document their activities.[91]

The reaction of French establishment figures further galvanised activists. Giroud declined an invitation to write the preface to *Crie moins fort*, saying the French didn't have 'this problem'. 'Can we be sure of that?' *Nouvelles Féministes* asked. Their report gave a comprehensive description of Chiswick WA, their policies, and the personal story of one of the women travelling with Pizzey. Clearly, Pizzey was just as successful at mobilising European media: *Nouvelles Féministes* also reprinted extracts from Belgian newspaper *le Soir*; reported an airing of 'Scream Quietly' on Dutch television which had provoked calls to establish a shelter there; and ended by saying they were 'planning a special issue on battered women to encourage the creation of similar centres in France'.[92] Des femmes journal *Le Quotidien des femmes* also amplified Pizzey: they published a short article by her in one issue, and printed excerpts from her book in the next. The latter sat alongside an article on a refuge in Dublin—further publicising the cause.[93]

This media circus had an impact. Activist Anne Sugier had joined the MLF after reading 'Libération des femmes: année zéro' issue of *Partisans*, but it 'wasn't until 1975, when Erin Pizzey […] came to tour France' that she 'became aware of the collective nature of the problem' of violence against women.[94] A friend of hers, Vickie, was the one who mentioned Pizzey's tour—she'd met Pizzey in London—and Sugier immediately agreed they should take action in France, believing it was their 'role as feminists'. Local events underlined the need: that

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[91] 'Femmes et enfants maltraités ont besoin d'un refuge', *Nouvelles Féministes* (n.d.), pp. 14-15.
[92] *Ibid.*
[93] Erin Pizzey, 'A Londres, le refuge des femmes battues…', *Le Quotidien des femmes*, 4 (26 Jun. 1975), p. 19. Katie Breen and Bernadette Cahill, 'Une maison-refuge pour femmes battues… à dublin', *Le Quotidien des femmes*, 5 (1975), p. 15.
[94] Anne Sugier, 'Premier refuge pour femmes battues Flora Tristan' in 'Les lieux du féminisme' roundtable discussion ('Quarante Ans de Pratique Féministes en Île-de-France, Paris, 5 Jun. 2010), transcript, http://www.elianeviennot.fr/Articles/Viennot-Parcours-40ans.pdf (18 Jan. 2020), p. 3.

week, a woman arrived at the general meeting of the Ligue du Droit des Femmes looking for refuge, face swollen from her husband's beating. Soon after, Vickie and Sugier received a letter from a young activist in Strasbourg who wanted to establish a centre there: a 47-year-old Alsace woman had thrown herself from a window to escape her husband's blows.[95]

They decided to establish a working group on 'battered women', joined forces with a nascent anti-rape group who were trying to establish a 24/7 rape hotline, and named themselves 'SOS Femmes Alternatives'. Activity was three-pronged: they ran 24-hour support from Vickie's house; created a dossier of demands for Giroud; and tried to help establish a refuge in Strasbourg. The latter was no easy task—the city council didn't provide premises; and the Alsace Officer for the Status of Women initially took a victim-blaming stance.[96] Back in Paris, the group occupied Giroud's office over Christmas 1975 with two 'battered women' and their children to publicise the lack of refuges; and that action led to the occupation of the Château du Plessis-Robinson in March 1976. Shortly after, an activist found suitable premises for a refuge in Clichy, and SOS Femmes finally obtained a government grant: the first French refuge opened in 1978, named 'Flora Tristan',[97] after the nineteenth-century socialist and feminist who managed to escape her abusive husband.[98] Another Centre Flora Tristan followed in Strasbourg, in October 1979.[99]

Elsewhere in France, the combination of local need and Pizzey's book led to the establishment of refuges. Vivane Monnier from Nantes cited both: the problem of domestic violence had been highlighted by Pizzey, along with the 1976 International Tribunal on Crimes

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[95] Anne Tristan and Annie de Pisan, *Histoires du MLF* (Paris, 1977), pp. 199-200.
[96] *Ibid*., pp. 201-17.
[97] Sugier, 'Premier refuge', p. 4.
[98] Michelle Perrot, 'Histoire des Femmes Rebelles', YouTube (21 Mar. 2019), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRinfBKq1tk (20 Jul. 2020).
[99] Solidarité Femmes, 'SOS Femmes Solidarité—Strasbourg', http://www.solidaritefemmes.org/historique-strasbourg (29 Jan. 2020).

Against Women, and MLAC activists had encountered the issue too, with women visiting their centres for support. But local scandals drove the issue home, when three high-profile men—a sociologist, the director of a University Institute of Technology, and a doctor who was also an elected official—were reported as having assaulted their wives. Monnier was contacted by an MLF activist friend, and they assembled a group which 'sheltered the victims of these men'. This was not a sustainable solution; they appealed to the city for funding and in 1978-9, opened a refuge with a city council loan.[100]

Around this time, the Nantes group also learned 'other associations were being set up' across France and made contact. Around 1978 the groups met for the first time, with about ten in attendance, and they continued to meet a few times annually until 1991.[101] In May 1979, women representing 'twenty groups and associations helping battered women in France met in Chambéry' and decided to take collective positions: they 'refused to conceive their action as a "social service" and joined "resolutely in the women's struggle movement"'. They also settled upon demands including the provision of emergency housing to victims of violence, and 'The adoption, as in Great Britain, of a law prohibiting husbands from beating their wives.'[102] In 1984, they founded a national federation.[103]

The Nantes group also gained experience through 'internships abroad': Monnier said they 'learned a lot' from such exchanges, which included a trip to a refuge in Amsterdam.[104] Contact was made with NWAF too: for the International Socialist Feminist Conference held in Paris on 28-30 May 1977, British feminists were asked to present papers on WA as 'French and

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[100] Vivane Monnier, 'Espace solidarité Halte aux femmes battues', 'Quarante Ans' roundtable, p. 4.
[101] *Ibid.*
[102] Y.M., 'L'aide aux femmes battues', *Cahiers du féminisme*, 10 (Jun.-Sep. 1979), p. 28.
[103] 'SOS Femmes'.
[104] *Ibid.*

Italian sisters are attempting to set up refuges'.[105] The next year, a focused meeting was organised with the International Conference on Battered Women in Amsterdam on 14-15 April 1978. The 128 women attending exchanged their thoughts in workshops on 'the use of paid and nonpaid staff, refuge structure and organization, research, publicity, fundraising, and a feminist analysis of battering'. The press release announced:

> Although individual refuges in different countries face different practical problems of housing, finance and government policies, we agreed to the fact that women being battered is rooted in an international acceptance of the subordination of women.[106]

Scottish WA reported the conference had been 'a tremendous success', generating 'a great deal of enthusiasm and support', and organised a second conference at Stirling University.[107] SOS Femmes delegates were also invited to the NWAF national conference in 1979, where they presented a paper describing the situation in France.[108] As elsewhere in the WLM, the effects of such meetings spread beyond the events, with detailed reports in movement periodicals.[109]

b. United States

American refuges existed prior to the publication of Pizzey's book. Del Martin (gay rights activist, co-founder of Daughters of Bilitis, and member of NOW)[110] surveyed provision in her 1976 book *Battered Wives* and discovered shelters were founded as early as 1965, when Haven

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[105] 'CONFERENCES MEETINGS EVENTS', *WIRES*, 32 (20 May 1977), p. 1.
[106] Jean Rosiello, 'Exciting Dialogue Emerges from International Conference on Battered Women', *Aegis* (Sep.-Oct. 1978) quoted in S. Schechter, *Women and male violence: The visions and struggles of the battered women's movement* (Boston, 1982), p. 150.
[107] PAJS: Scottish WA, Conference notice (*c.* 1980).
[108] NWAF, NCG Minutes.
[109] See: Y.M., 'L'aide', pp. 27-9.
[110] T. Gianoulis, 'Lyon, Phyllis and Del Martin' in *glbtq: An Encyclopedia of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Culture*, http://www.glbtq.com/social-sciences/lyon_p.html (archived 16 Feb. 2007).

House in Pasadena, CA was established for families of alcoholics. These early shelters catered for women who experienced abuse, yet often limited admission to those abused by alcoholics.[111] With the explosion of WLM activity, there were isolated instances of emergency shelters, like Women's Advocates, founded by a consciousness-raising group in St. Paul, MN. In the early 1970s, they began a women's divorce helpline, and quickly realised emergency housing was a common problem; by 1973, they'd gathered enough donations to rent an apartment.[112] And, like in Britain, from the early 1970s, women's centres were often used as 'emergency facilities'—as with Women's Center South in Pittsburgh, PA.[113]

However, Martin noted, Chiswick WA was 'the starting point for the current international trend to create shelters specifically for battered women'.[114] A 1982 analysis of domestic violence media coverage discovered 'Sketchy coverage began in 1973, when *Newsweek* ran one story on Chiswick Women's Aid and *Society* devoted some space to the problem'. One year later *Ms.* reported on Chiswick, after which the media 'latched on' to the topic. Chiswick became in the US 'the first widely publicised shelter for battered women', and again, Pizzey's book and speaking tours 'furthered awareness'.[115] In notes written in the 1970s, Sutton mentioned 'a flood of interest' from the US after 'refuges began to open in Britain', and reported: 'Many women crossed the Atlantic to see the refuges in operation so that they could return home and repeat the experiment'.[116] Elizabeth Miller mentions, in her thesis on the American 'battered women's movement', that Chiswick also provided a model for liberal feminists, like Gabrielle Bernard who visited in 1974. When she returned, Bernard 'held a

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[111] D. Martin, *Battered Wives* (Volcano, CA, 1981), p. 197, 206-9.
[112] Schechter, *Women*, p. 62.
[113] Martin, *Battered*, p. 209.
[114] *Ibid.*, p. 197.
[115] K.J. Tierney, 'The Battered Women Movement and the Creation of the Wife Beating Problem', *Social Problems*, 29:3 (Feb. 1982), pp. 207, 213.
[116] PAJS: Jo Sutton, Research funding application notes (n.d.).

Boston NOW general meeting on the subject of battered women' and drafted a resolution on the subject for the 1975 NOW conference. Indeed, Martin had begun her exploration of American refuges after her editor, Ruth Gottstein, visited Chiswick and returned 'convinced' of its importance.[117]

Another connection between British and American refuges came via researchers Russell and Becky Dobash, two American sociologists based at Stirling University, studying domestic violence and refuges. They cultivated a relationship with WA, and in 1975 invited Sutton to travel to the US with them, putting her in touch with the nascent shelter movement there. Sutton recalled being collected from the airport in New York 'by a woman who'd opened up her home to battered women'. She attended a meeting in a town hall with 'a huge range of people' from 'working-class black women to white lawyers' sitting around a 'huge wooden table'—including Martin, who had travelled over from San Francisco. They were all 'there to listen' to Sutton, who 'talked about the experience of setting up shelters'. Afterwards, some of the black activists took her to see the shelter they had established in Harlem for children, which was a 'serious education'.[118]

At this point, Sutton explained, American shelters were small operations. As we will explore, around this time, American activists were establishing rape crisis centres, so the town hall debate was whether to 'do a rape crisis centre *or* a refuge'. Nonetheless, they were keen to learn about the British experience and following the meeting 'some of them went on to pass the word around'.[119] As Miller argues, Martin's book was another 'catalyst for the emergence' of an American refuge movement.[120] In it, Martin described the formation of NWAF and how

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[117] E.B.A. Miller, 'Moving to the Head of the River: The Early Years of the US Battered Women's Movement' (PhD thesis, University of Kansas, 2010), pp. 103, 123.
[118] Interview with Sutton, TL.
[119] *Ibid.*
[120] Miller, 'Moving', p. 123.

networking 'on a national scale can often deal more effectively with social issues than isolated committees in local communities'. The British refuge movement's progress, Martin added, 'has been extraordinary'.[121]

American network formation progressed less formally than the British. One initiative came from Transition House in Cambridge, MA, which, like other refuges, had emerged from local need. Activists Cheri Jimenez and Chris Womendez had both experienced domestic abuse. Their idea to establish 'a safe, temporary shelter for battered women and their children' in their own apartment in January 1976 came from this personal experience. Transition House, like many shelters, ran on a shoestring budget (initially supported by the welfare cheques and food stamps of Jimenez and Womendez) but it provided a comprehensive service, with a 24-hour crisis hotline and—after moving to a bigger house—childcare. It was oversubscribed, with women referred by hospitals and social services.[122]

Warrior, a working-class activist in Boston radical feminist group Cell 16, had also experienced domestic abuse. When Transition House was founded, she began to work with them.[123] It was then Warrior realised 'the great need for communication on this issue'. In the summer of 1975, she began collecting information on refuges.[124] The resulting directory, *Working on Wife Abuse*, detailed services in different states, addressed political questions ('Why refuges?'), and gave practical information on, for example, 'shelter procedures'. It became, Warrior asserted, 'an indispensable tool for contact, information sharing, and referral'.[125] One shelter in Nevada attested: 'It means so much to groups such as ours, that have limited

[121] Martin, *Battered*, p. 251.
[122] SL, PBW, MC843, 1.13: Transition House, 'History' (Sep. 1977).
[123] Cambridge Women's Heritage Project, 'Betsy Warrior' https://www2.cambridgema.gov/historic/cwhp/bios_w.html#WarriorB (30 Jan. 2020).
[124] TWL, 7SEB/B/02/02: Betsy Warrior, notes on *Working on Wife Abuse* (Dec. 1977).
[125] Warrior, *Working*, p. *i.*

resources, to be able to tap the areas where there is experience'.[126] The directory proved so popular, Warrior published nine editions: the first contained 33 pages; the last (in 1989) contained 300.[127] Given the size of the US, Sutton's method of travelling wouldn't have been feasible, but we can see the same desire to share information and resources behind Warrior's directory.

The directory also included 'Overseas' listings: NWAF, the London Workshop, Chiswick WA, Interval House in Glasgow, and Scottish WA, along with the personal contact details of Sutton and women involved in Scottish WA; for France, SOS Femmes in Paris and Strasbourg were listed, and the Centre d'hebergement (the state housing bureau). Details were given for ordering material, including NWAF's *Battered Women Need Refuges* and a SOS Femmes Strasbourg report.[128] In turn, Warrior's directory travelled to Europe. Scottish WA advertised it under 'New Publications Available' in their newsletter.[129] A year later, in *Spare Rib*, Hanmer described it as 'A *must* for anyone interested in comparing developments and seeking contact with movement-oriented women's aid in the States.'[130]

In the same issue, Amanda Sebestyen interviewed Warrior about Transition House and the directory, and this was printed alongside excerpts from Transition House's welcome sheet.[131] The interview resulted in further transfers. Sebestyen and Warrior kept in touch, with the latter sending over a new edition of the directory. In a letter to Sebestyen, she said she had 'started to go through the literature you left me'. She had received copies of *Spare Rib* which had given 'a very impressive view' of the British WLM, Christine Delphy's 'The Main Enemy'

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[126] SL, PBW, MC843, 1.6: Betsy Warrior, 'Some Comments of People who are using the Directory *Working on Wife Abuse*' (n.d.).
[127] CWHP, 'Warrior'.
[128] Warrior, *Working*, pp. 57-60, 71-2.
[129] 'New Publications Available', *Scottish WA Newsletter* (Mar. 1977), p. 4.
[130] Jalna Hanmer, 'Publications', *SR*, 76 (Nov. 1978), p. 25.
[131] Amanda Sebestyen, 'Interview with Betsy Warrior: "Feminism USA, Part Three: The Politics of Women's Aid"', *SR*, 76 (Nov. 1978), pp. 26-30.

(as we saw in Chapter IV), and WA material. The latter was 'useful' in 'a very practical way'. Warrior found many of WA's perspectives were 'so similar' to American feminists'. But 'the English ones were formulated years earlier', whereas Americans hadn't yet 'written down' the more 'comprehensive stuff.'[132]

Consequently, Warrior planned to publish in the next issue of the newsletter 'the paper on the principles of WA' which Sebestyen gave her. It covered questions which American refuge workers had encountered, like 'Why no men?'. Warrior thought 'people will react more favourably to the "no men" rule when they see that an historical precedent has already been set with a successful shelter movement in another country'.[133] The newsletter to which Warrior referred was probably the *National Communication Network*, another shelter networking tool. The October 1977 issue, for example, contained: opinion pieces from a Minnesota shelter and Transition House; reports on shelters from California to Wisconsin; a list of 'Books, Articles, and Resources'; and a list of shelters that were willing to participate in exchange services.[134] This reached the UK: a copy is archived in the collection of Leeds feminist Lou Lavender.[135]

Another network began on the West Coast, parallel to Warrior's. The Women for Shelters Collective was formed *circa* 1976, more explicitly inspired by NWAF. In a circular to local shelters (titled 'Battered women need shelter', echoing NWAF's *Battered Women Need Refuges*), Carol Lopes and Kathy Chan outlined their ambition to open 'as many long-term shelters for battered women and their children as we can in the San Francisco Bay Area and the West Coast (and ultimately, nationwide!)'[136] Their San Francisco collective had emerged

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[132] BI, SEBESTYEN/1/14: Betsy Warrior, letter to Amanda Sebestyen (26 Jul. 1978).
[133] *Ibid.*
[134] *National Communication Network*, 1:3 (Oct. 1977).
[135] FAN, FAN/LL/07: *ibid*.
[136] FAS, EMA, DM2123/8/126 F1: Carol Lopes and Kathy Chan, 'Battered women need shelter' circular, (*c.* 1976).

from La Casa de las Madres, a 'multicultural coalition' which ran an emergency shelter and hotline.[137] In their circular, Lopes and Chan advertised conferences in Portland, OR and San Francisco at which they wanted 'to lay the philosophical foundation for an organized shelter network somewhat like the National Women's Aid Federation in England'.[138] The circular, in turn, reached British WA activists: it was collected by Ellen Malos, from Bristol, during her year in California, along with other literature from West Coast refuges.[139]

As this shows, the American refuge movement primarily communicated with the British—a point which Susan Schechter noted in her 1982 book *Women and Male Violence*: 'most international movement information available in the US comes from England, usually through journals or personal contacts'.[140] And Americans were particularly keen to follow the example of NWAF. Activist papers do contain some correspondence between French and American activists about refuges, and clippings (from the mainstream American press) about SOS Femmes,[141] but nothing anywhere near as systematic and formative as the channels of communication between America and Britain—or Britain and France.

3. Rape Crisis

In her history of the London movement, Eve Setch argues rape crisis centres (RCCs) and Women's Aid 'have specific but comparable histories. Both started from individual groups and grew as other women realised their needs.'[142] This is true, though not her subsequent narrative: Setch discusses the London RCC without mention of how it was inspired by American RCCs.

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[137] FAS, EMA, DM2123/8/126 F1: La Casa De Las Madres, (n.d.) and La Casa Notes (n.d.).
[138] Lopes and Chan, 'Battered women'.
[139] FAS, EMA, DM2123/8/126 F1.
[140] Schechter, *Women*, p. 151.
[141] SBC, MSP, B5: IHT clipping (18 Jun. 1976); Miriam Slifkin, letter to Claudette Eleini (15 Aug. 1977).
[142] Setch, 'The WLM in Britain', p. 195.

The 'individual groups' which began the rape crisis movement were located in the US—another case which challenges Setch's assertion there was 'little direct take-up' of American ideas in the UK.[143] Conversely, in their study of British RCCs, Helen Jones and Kate Cook assert the approach caught on partly because of its grounding in prior American imports: consciousness-raising and radical feminist theory.[144] This section will not seek to challenge their interpretation, but flesh it out. The idea of establishing RCCs spread across the US and UK in a similar way to refuges, with pioneering centres sharing expertise, then network formation. In contrast, although the idea of RCCs reached France, they were not established there. Using comparisons with the US and UK, we can offer some tentative explanations for this.

According to Jones and Cook, speakouts—which as we noted in Chapter VI, emerged from consciousness-raising—'created the realisation that contrary to common belief, rape was far from rare' and 'this led to the idea that women who experience rape need support'.[145] This is true, but it neglects the importance of consciousness-raising itself and early anti-rape activism. The first public events addressing rape were speakouts organised by NYRF.[146] But the group only became interested in the issue after hearing news of anti-rape activism elsewhere, when in September 1970, NYRF member Diane Crothers arrived at one of the group's consciousness-raising sessions with a copy of San Francisco WLM publication *It Ain't Me Babe*.

It contained a report from Contra Costa Anti-Rape Squad #14. A dancer hired for a bachelor party had been assaulted by guests, then raped by the groom. Despite filing a complaint with police, and medical evidence of rape, the district attorney decided not to prosecute. The Anti-Rape Squad had leafleted wedding guests' cars, detailing the assault and

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[143] *Ibid*., p. 14.
[144] H. Jones and K. Cook, *Rape Crisis: Responding to Sexual Violence* (Lyme Regis, 2008), p. 8.
[145] *Ibid.*, p. 1.
[146] N.A. Matthews, *Confronting Rape: The Feminist Anti-Rape Movement and the State* (London, 1994), p. 9.

condemning the perpetrators. After reading this, Crothers proposed a consciousness-raising session on rape. One member, Susan Brownmiller, was reluctant, not convinced it was political. But she 'started to change [her] mind' when another member recounted her experience of rape.[147] Clearly, for Brownmiller, it was the consciousness-raising itself which changed her mind—but the conversation may not have happened without the news from San Francisco.

After two other NYRF members recounted 'lucky escapes from threatening situations', Brownmiller proposed a conference on rape. Others argued 'a public speakout was the proper way to begin, the way abortion had been politicized by Redstockings the previous year.' Brownmiller 'doubted' they would find 'enough women willing to go public.'[148] In the event, over 300 attended their speakout, held in January 1971, and around thirty women recounted their experiences of rape.[149] The speakout—and conference which NYRF subsequently organised that year[150]—pushed rape onto the agenda of the wider movement, provoking other activists to consider the issue. Throughout 1971, Women Against Rape groups were founded in various cities, and in 1972 the first RCC was established in Washington DC.[151]

The DC women had initially met to establish a women's centre, and one proposed project was rape counselling.[152] As Maria Bevacqua highlights in her examination of the American anti-rape movement, the idea to create services for women who had been raped had already 'been circulating' in the WLM 'for some time': at the NYRF conference a year earlier, participants had proposed a support phoneline and police and hospital advocate services.[153]

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[147] Susan Brownmiller, in K. Cullen-DuPont, *American Women Activists' Writings: An Anthology, 1637-2001* (New York, 2002), pp. 494-6.
[148] *Ibid.*, p. 496.
[149] Susan Brownmiller, *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution* (New York, 1999), pp. 199-200.
[150] SBC, NYRFR, B1: NYRF, Rape conference flyer (17 Apr. 1971).
[151] Jones and Cook, *Rape Crisis*, p. 6.
[152] ERIC: DC RCC, *How to Start a Rape Crisis Center* (1972), p. 5, https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED108060 (17 Jan. 2020).
[153] M. Bevacqua, *Rape on the Public Agenda: Feminism and the Politics of Sexual Assault* (Boston, MA, 2000), pp. 74-5.

The DC women began with a 24-hour hotline run from one of their houses—they received around 200 calls a month—then added a bed for emergency shelter.[154] Eventually, their activities expanded to include counselling, advocates, public actions, and lobbying for legal change.[155]

At the same time, the group were developing their theory of rape, as were others—in discussions, at conferences, and individual research projects. Most notable among the latter was Brownmiller's 1975 *Against Our Will*, which she'd begun following the NYRF conference. It debunked rape myths (that women who experienced raped deserved it, that rape was a common female fantasy) and argued, instead, for a theory of rape based on power relations. Rape was not just an isolated sex crime, but 'a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear.'[156] The DC group had taken a similar line themselves a few years earlier: rape was 'political issue, where men violently exercise their power over women. It logically follows that rape will not end until men do not have power over women.'[157]

The DC centre detailed their formation and structure in their 1972 pamphlet *How to Start a Rape Crisis Center*, written 'in response to requests from throughout the nation' about starting an RCC. Articles covered topics from hospital care to the 'pros and cons of working with the police'; it also contained sample forms, the centre's bylaws, and a mock telephone conversation. Much like *OBOS*, it was intended as 'a living document, only your contributions can make it grow'. Because of their early establishment, media coverage, and contact with other RCCs, the DC centre became 'a national clearinghouse of information and referrals'.[158] By 1973

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[154] Brownmiller, *Time*, pp. 206-7.
[155] Jones and Cook, *Rape Crisis*, p. 7.
[156] Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will* (New York, 1975), p. 15.
[157] *Washington Rape Crisis Newsletter* (1973), quoted in Matthews, *Confronting Rape*, p. 13.
[158] DC RCC, *How to Start*, p. 1, 4, 21.

there were at least fifteen other American anti-rape groups, which the DC group communicated with via a newsletter.[159]

In her comparative history of six anti-rape organisations in LA, sociologist Nancy A. Matthews notes certain RCCs acted as 'national hubs'. Bay Area Women Against Rape (BAWAR) was another such hub. Established around the same time as the DC centre, BAWAR researched and wrote information packs on hitchhiking safety and medical information for women who had been raped—on what to expect at hospital, STIs, pregnancy, abortion, and therapy. Information sharing sometimes resulted in localised networks, as in LA. One women's centre, in Crenshaw, organised around rape after one of their members was raped while hitchhiking—they printed bumper stickers and ran an emergency hotline. Another group was established at the Westside Women's Center in 1971, after consciousness-raising sessions on rape. The two centres kept in touch, and after the Crenshaw Women's Center closed, they merged to become the Los Angeles Commission on Assault Against Women.[160]

The LA women communicated with other groups, like BAWAR, and when women elsewhere established their own anti-rape squads, they helped. Roanoke Valley Women's Coalition wrote to say:

> Sisters
> Just read about your squad in Spokeswoman.
> As we are trying to get something similar going here—please send us immediately
> any information on what you are doing, how you are going about it etc., etc.[161]

The LA women responded explaining how their squad worked, how they'd overcome obstacles, and enclosed a reading list on rape, bumper stickers ('Sisters Give Rides to Sisters'), and

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[159] Matthews, *Confronting Rape*, pp. 9-10.
[160] *Ibid*, pp. 9-10, 19-23, 27.
[161] Quoted in *ibid*., pp. 10-11.

pamphlets, including one on medical information. The latter, Matthews points out, was probably modelled on BAWAR's.[162]

We can see the same methods of sharing we found within the women's healthcare movement: groups reaching out for information, sharing advice and literature. Just like the healthcare movement, the American RCC movement relied upon existing WLM resources: many anti-rape groups, like in Crenshaw and the Westside, operated from women's centres; they publicised their actions in movement periodicals. And just as in the healthcare and refuge movements, throughout the decade, anti-rape groups moved towards forming official networks, like the Feminist Alliance Against Rape (FAAR), established in 1974 by women in DC, to publicise the anti-rape movement and facilitate exchange—which they did through a newsletter.[163]

During the late 1970s, feminists in all three countries began to join struggles against rape and domestic violence under 'violence against women'. The phrase becoming more common, *National Communication Network* argued, signified 'a change in women's consciousness', and increased awareness that both were linked in 'a total system of social control'. From this 'new analysis flow new organizing strategies; if we conceptually link all forms of violence against women, then our fight, too, must be against the whole web.' American anti-rape and shelter activists compared notes at the 1976 National Conference on Wife Abuse in Milwaukee, and the idea for a common network emerged: 'One publication making theoretical and practical links between all forms of violence against women'.[164] In 1977, FAAR and *National Communication Network* joined to form *WIN*. This publication travelled to the UK

[162] *Ibid*., p. 11.
[163] Toni White, 'Feminist Alliance Against Rape', *In Our Own Write* (Jul. 1977), p. 3.
[164] 'Merger Effected', *National Communication Network*, 1:3 (Oct. 1977), p. 17.

too, and was reviewed by Hanmer in 1978 alongside Warrior's directory. 'Again,' Hanmer wrote, 'a must for feminists wanting to know what is happening in the States.'[165]

a. United Kingdom

The May 1976 issue of *Spare Rib* contained a lengthy review of *Against Our Will*, which both summarised Brownmiller's arguments and in some cases challenged them—for example, her stance on censoring pornography. As the review highlighted, rape was already a focus of the British WLM, but only in organising against a Private Member's Bill which required victims to 'prove resistance'. The review ended with a call to arms: 'Susan Brownmiller has provided a history of rape and, as she says, "We must deny it a future."'[166] Sarah Browne has argued that until the mid-1970s, the Scottish WLM's interest in sexual violence was constricted to local flashes of activity—like in St Andrews, following student sexual assault. It was only after American theory on rape reached the UK that the issue 'began to explode onto the pages of women's liberation newsletters in Scotland'.[167] The same was true for the rest of the country.

Lynn Alderson remembered *Against Our Will* as one of the American texts she sold at Compendium, and linked its publication with the influence of Redstockings literature:

> The main thrusts of all of that work—the Susan Brownmiller work, the Redstockings work—was the change […] to recognising that sexual oppression is a system of power, maintenance of power. And once you've got that, it completely changes how you see things like rape. It's not an individual aberration, it becomes part of a system of power.[168]

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[165] Hanmer, 'Publications'.
[166] Victoria Green, 'Review: Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*', *SR*, 46 (May 1976), pp. 41-3.
[167] Browne, *WLM in Scotland*, p. 157.
[168] Interview with Lynn Alderson, TL, London (20 May 2019).

In other words, it was part of a growing discussion around radical feminism in the UK. By this point, conversations about domestic violence had been ongoing in the British WLM for years—and, as in the US, rape and domestic violence were increasingly discussed together under 'violence against women'. Brownmiller's thesis fed into these discussions, influencing, for example, Hanmer's paper on 'Male Violence and the Social Control of Women'.[169] With the growth of revolutionary feminism following Sheila Jeffreys' 1977 conference paper, this influence increased.[170] The revolutionary feminist London Rape Action Group began their 1978 analysis of rape with a quotation from *Against Our Will*, concluding: 'We must be clear—*all* men are potential rapists.'[171]

Some WLM activists had been interested in anti-rape activism prior to the import of Brownmiller. Jones and Cook argue British RCC activism also 'grew straight out of consciousness-raising';[172] it was a combination of this practice, and the example of American RCCs that led to the first British RCC. Around 1972-3, a London group, 'very much influenced by what had been going on in the US', met 'to do something about rape'. There were various ideas: campaigns, a local support group. Several members of the support group were interested in establishing an RCC; eventually the centre opened in March 1976.[173] Later centres emerged from this practice too: Edinburgh RCC began when fifteen women—primarily English and

[169] Jalna Hanmer, 'Male Violence and the Social Control of Women', *Catcall*, 9 (Mar. 1979), pp. 21-6.
[170] Lorna Mitchell, 'Men are everywhere, not just in dark alleys', *SR*, 62 (Oct. 1977), p. 28.
[171] FAN, FAN/LL/04: Rape Group paper, National WLM Conference (1977). London Rape Action Group, 'Towards a Revolutionary Feminist Analysis of Rape' (1978), reprinted in D. Rhodes and S. McNeill, eds., *Women Against Violence Against Women* (London, 1985), pp. 24-9.
[172] Jones and Cook, *Rape Crisis*, p. 8.
[173] Manning in Lynn Alderson and Liz Kelly, 'Romi Bowen and Bernadette Manning interview: "Writing Our Own History: Ten Years of London Rape Crisis"', *Trouble & Strife*, 10 (Spring 1987), p. 49.

American[174]—started consciousness-raising 'to challenge their own and society's perceptions of rape.'[175]

From the beginning, American centres provided examples to follow. A 1975 *Spare Rib* editorial, written by the London centre's collective, set out their ambitions 'to function rather like an American Rape Crisis Centre.'[176] And the collective continued to learn from American RCC experiences. An article announcing the centre's opening, stated: 'Women often suffer for years after a rape; Crisis Centres in the USA have had appeals from women raped ten years previously.'[177] By the end of the decade, centres had been established in Glasgow, Kent, Tyneside, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Sheffield, and Manchester.[178]

The London centre was a national hub like those in the US. Groups who wanted to establish RCCs would visit. One member, Romi Bowen, remembered in a 1987 *Trouble & Strife* interview:

> It was a regular occurrence that we met with small groups of women to share what we thought about counselling, funding—what worked for us and what might work for them in their situation.

The centre was 'lucky to have visitors quite often', with, for example, 'international contact, especially in the summer—women from American, Australia, South Africa'. But this was not a one-way street: Bowen explained it was about 'exchange'. More formal meetings took place too, to discuss 'what the law was, or post-coital contraception'.[179] The *Spare Rib* article announcing

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[174] L. Greenan et. al., 'Still a Long Fight Ahead' in S. Henderson and A. Mackay, eds., *Grit and Diamonds: Women in Scottish History 1980-1990* (Edinburgh, 1990), p. 81.
[175] Browne, *WLM in Scotland*, p. 159.
[176] The Rape Counselling and Research Centre, 'Rape', *SR*, 37 (Jul. 1975), p. 8.
[177] Victoria Green, 'News: Crisis Centre Opens', *SR*, 46 (May 1976), p. 17.
[178] Jones and Cook, *Rape Crisis*, p. 9.
[179] Bowen in Alderson and Kelly, 'RC interview', p. 55.

the centre's opening explained the aim was to establish 'a network of small groups all over the country'.[180]

Women involved in RCCs connected with each other, and the wider movement, through the network mechanisms we have explored throughout this thesis: activist travel, correspondence, periodicals. The latter was often groups' first port of call: in *Spare Rib*, Coventry RCC said they 'would like to hear how other centres got their finance, property, workers, and about local councils' attitudes towards them'.[181] Rape crisis groups connected at conferences too. The London collective gave a paper at the 1977 National Conference, entitled 'What is rape?' It outlined their political position, discussed the mistreatment of raped women by legal and medical systems, then debunked pervasive myths:

> MYTH. Rape is an act committed by a maniac.
> FACT. In 1975 only 1.5% of convicted rapists in England and Wales were sentences to psychiatric institutions.[182]

The influence of this can be seen in leaflets produced by the Bristol Anti-Rape Group and Edinburgh RCC which used the 'MYTH' and 'FACT' format and deployed similar evidence.[183]

There was no British umbrella RCC organisation comparable to Women's Aid: there was discussion of forming a national federation around 1978-9 but RCCs decided to maintain their autonomy so they could be flexible in meeting 'the needs of the women calling'.[184] But an informal network, FAST (Feminists Against Sexual Terrorism), was founded in 1979 with a monthly newsletter,[185] and conferences on sexual violence were held too.[186]

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[180] Green, 'News', p. 17.
[181] 'Centres', *SR*, 76 (Nov. 1978), p. 25.
[182] FAN, FAN/LL/04: RCC Collective, 'What is rape?' (London, Apr. 1977).
[183] FAS, EMA, DM2123/8/115 F1: Bristol Anti-Rape Group, 'Rape and Fighting Back' leaflet (n.d.). Edinburgh RCC Opening leaflet, *Edinburgh WL Newsletter* (Jul. 1978).
[184] Manning in Alderson and Kelly, 'RC interview', p. 56.
[185] Browne, *WLM in Scotland*, p. 175.
[186] J. Lovenduski and V. Randall, *Contemporary Feminist Politics: Women and Power in Britain* (Oxford, 1993), p. 324.

b. France

This contrasts sharply with anti-rape activism in France, where RCCs were never implemented. This does not reflect a lack of interest—rape was discussed in the earliest days of the movement. Emmanuèle de Lesseps had written an account of her own rape in 'Libération des femmes: année zéro'. While her narrative is personal, de Lesseps draws wider conclusions throughout; for example, when recounting how the assailant approached her on the street, de Lesseps argues women are viewed 'above all as a sexual objects'.[187] However, this was not a focus of the movement generally, nor discussed in other movement publications beyond sporadic articles—until, as Gill Allwood has pointed out, around the time the Loi Veil passed.[188]

The crucial development was a galvanising case, which Gisèle Halimi and Choisir rallied around. In August 1974, two Belgian women had been raped by three men while camping in Marseille, and their aggressors were only charged with assault and battery.[189] This underlined several flaws in the legal system. In France, there was no legal definition of rape so it was narrowly interpreted by judges: it often revolved around the question of whether the rape could have introduced illegitimate children (with, therefore, no concept of marital rape); and debates of consent boiled down to notions that women provoked rape by their behaviour and dress. If an assault was not identified as rape, it was classed as grievous bodily harm or an indecent act, which were criminal offences, not crimes, and were therefore tried by *tribunaux correctionnels* (rather than the *Cour d'assises*). These could only hand out less severe sentences.[190] The first stage in the Marseille case was to decide whether the offence should be classed as a crime, which it was, following a hearing which forty feminists attended. The assailants were

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[187] Emmanuèle Durand, 'Le viol', *Partisans*, 54-5 (Jul.-Oct. 1970), pp. 91-6.
[188] G. Allwood, *French Feminisms: Gender and Violence in Contemporary Theory* (London, 1998), p. 101.
[189] 'Marseille', *Les Pétroleuses*, 5 (*c.* 1975-6), p. 5.
[190] Allwood, *French Feminisms*, pp. 104-5.

then tried at the *Cour d'assises*, where they were found guilty and sentenced to imprisonment (one for six years; the other two for four).[191]

As Anna Gurun notes in her history of feminist approaches to sexuality, Halimi's tactics were not always supported by the wider MLF: her use of 'establishment figures' like politicians and lawyers to convince the public and an emphasis on severe sentences were criticised—both ceded control 'to the broader justice system'.[192] Regardless, the trial increased interest in rape throughout the MLF, with actions on rape organised from the mid-1970s, like a 10-hour rally on 26 June 1976, which 5,000 women attended to testify to their own experiences of rape. This sounds like an imitation of the NYRF rape speakout but was instead a descendant of the Manifeste des 343. Echoing the abortion manifesto, on 16 June 1976 a 'Manifeste contre le viol' appeared in *Libération*, with women signing their names to declarations including 'Rape is not a law of nature'.[193] It was the signatories of that manifesto who had organised the rally. Like the abortion manifesto, it was an attempt to challenge 'a permanent reality' for women, 'about which there is silence'.[194]

The Marseille trial also sparked an explosion of discussion within movement publications, with theoretical positions reflecting the diversity of the movement. Socialist feminists, for example, used the issue to draw attention to their analysis of capitalism. One article in *Les Pétroleuses* stated:

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[191] J. Mossuz-Lavau, *Les lois de l'amour : les politiques de la sexualité en France (1950-2002)* (Paris, 2002), pp. 231-2.

[192] A. Gurun, 'Second-Wave Feminist Approaches to Sexuality in Britain and France, *c.* 1970-*c.* 1983' (PhD thesis, University of Dundee, 2015), pp. 242-7.

[193] 'Manifeste contre le viol', *Libération* (16 Jun. 1976), reprinted in Cathy Bernheim et. al., eds., *Mouvement de Libération des Femmes: Textes premiers* (Paris, 2009), pp. 249-52.

[194] Contemporaine, PFP, MFC/0198/1: Des femmes du MLF, 'Viol' flyer (26 Jun. 1976).

> women are constantly raped in capitalist society, because they are reduced to the role of mother or wife, because if they find a job, they are at the mercy of the boss or the boss's wife.[195]

But some socialist feminists also shared theoretical interpretations of rape closer to the radical feminist position. Another article in the issue discussed the power dynamics of rape. '*Viol, violence,*' the author wrote. 'But rape isn't just any kind of violence: it is the form of violence preferred by the dominant sex over the dominated sex.'[196]

The article echoes Brownmiller's thesis—even ending with an advocacy of self-defence—but, remarkably, was written a year before the French translation of *Against Our Will* (published in 1977), as was the 'Manifeste contre le viol' which also echoed Brownmiller:

> [Rape] is an expression of the ongoing violence against women by a patriarchal society. Every man is a potential rapist.[197]

The original English edition, much like *OBOS*, had reached France before this point. Film director Carole Roussopoulos, for example, recalled her collaborator Delphine Seyrig introducing her to Brownmiller. Seyrig was bilingual, and 'often brought […] books from the United States, which had not been translated yet'; they would read them in a group, with Seyrig translating.[198] Brownmiller's book had also been discussed in the mainstream press in coverage of the MLF's 1976 anti-rape actions.[199] This is not to say the *Pétroleuses* or manifesto authors imported their views from Brownmiller—but her theory was certainly in circulation.

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[195] 'Marseille'.
[196] Valerie, 'Viol', *Les Pétroleuses*, 5 (*c*. 1975-6), p. 4.
[197] 'Manifeste contre le viol', p. 250.
[198] Hélène Fleckinger, 'Carole Roussopoulos Interview: "Une revolution du regard"', *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*, 28:1 (2009), p. 104.
[199] Roger-Pol Droit, 'La fin du silence', *Le Monde* (19 Nov. 1976), https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1976/11/19/la-fin-du-silence_2946087_1819218.html (19 Jan. 2020).

Yet none of this interest—legal battles, protests, theoretical explorations, even some local discussion groups[200]—ever manifested in French RCCs. Sociologist Pauline Delage has offered explanations for this in her *histoire croisée* of anti-rape activism in the US and France. Delage argues we can find, in this area, a 'transfer of ideas rather than "conversations"', and that this shows ideas can travel 'from one country to another' without 'gaining a foothold or leaving a lasting mark on the activist scene.'[201] She cites, for example, a 1976 *Nouvelles féministes* article which discussed American RCCs.[202] Delage's study was based upon analyses of 'feminist articles and books' on rape from the 1970s and 80s; she notes that 'work concerning activist travels and correspondence' might be more likely to reveal conversations. And it does, although this further supports her assertion that ideas could circulate between countries without 'leaving a lasting mark on the activist scene.'[203]

This can be seen in correspondence between Miriam Slifkin, who founded an RCC in Chapel Hill, NC and the North Carolina Rape Crisis Association, and Claudette Eleini, a lawyer at the Paris Court of Appeal. In 1976, when living in France, Slifkin had met Eleini 'about three times to discuss the problem of rape', as Slifkin reminded her French acquaintance in a letter sent a year after her return. Slifkin mentioned she was 'still very much involved with rape victims' and reported that her RCC and North Carolina association had 'worked very hard' to change their state laws. It was now illegal to use a victim's past as evidence in trial, unless the defence demonstrated (privately, in judge's chambers) its relevance. They had also introduced legislation 'creating a position for a state coordinator for victims of sexual assault' to 'establish

[200] CAF, FRG, 37AF1: Maison des Femmes, 'Informations' (Nov. 1979).
[201] P. Delage, 'After Year Zero: A Comparative History of the Fight Against Rape in France and the United States', trans. E. Rundell, *Critique internationale*, 70:1 (2016), p. 3.
[202] Marie-Pierre et. al., 'Le viol n'est pas une fatalité', *Nouvelles féministes*, 13 (Jun.-Jul. 1976), pp. 1-2.
[203] Delage, 'After Year', pp. 2-3.

a net-work [sic] of public and private services for rape victims'.[204] In her response, Eleini says she found the information Slifkin provided helpful—but specifically for 'a project of Law on rape problem [sic]'.[205] There was no mention of Slifkin's work on support services, although Slifkin, in her reply, invited Eleini to visit Chapel Hill for the University's Women's Festival in January to 'bring the French point of view', and also 'get a good idea of what is happening here'.[206]

Delage offers three reasons for the lack of RCCs in France: the criminalisation of rape in the US; the relationship between the movements and the state; and links between anti-rape activism and other causes. We can test these hypotheses with our knowledge of the US and UK movements. On the first, Delage points out that American RCCs 'responded to needs relating to the criminalisation of rape'—accompanying victims to police stations and courts—and that RCCs 'relied on subsidies […] including the Law Enforcement Assistance Agency'.[207] This is true, but legal support was only a fraction of the service RCCs provided, and many American and British activists were uncomfortable working for the state. When the DC centre was founded, they 'immediately decided' at their first meeting 'that we did not wish to work directly with the police'.[208]

On her second point, Delage notes that in the US, RCCs primarily relied upon voluntary labour and precarious funding, whereas in France a 'lack of financial support' from the state 'impeded the creation of structures specifically devoted to dealing with rape'.[209] But it is not clear this would have been a barrier to French RCCs being established: other MLF

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[204] SBC, MSP, B5: Slifkin to Eleini (15 Aug. 1977).
[205] SBC, MSP, B5: Claudette Eleini, letter to Miriam Slifkin (22 Aug. 1977).
[206] SBC, MSP, B5: Miriam Slifkin, letter to Claudette Eleini (3 Oct. 1977).
[207] *Ibid*., pp. 11-2.
[208] DC RCC, *How to*, p. 7.
[209] Delage, 'After Year', p. 12.

initiatives, like women's centres, were initially established without state support—just as services in the UK were established both voluntarily and with state funding. We cannot say a lack of funding would inhibit activists from at least working towards creating RCCs, if they had thought the service an important cause.

This point is important, and links to Delage's third argument: that the French MLF did not see rape as an autonomous issue but related to other activism surrounding violence against women. In the *Nouvelles féministes* article, the authors asserted that SOS Femmes groups were the equivalent of Anglophone RCCs, but as we explored in the previous section, and as Delage notes, 'these structures for listening to and assisting women mainly dealt with victims of domestic violence'. She argues that support for victims of domestic violence absorbed funding, time, and energy from activists and public authorities: there simply was not space for both.[210] This is persuasive. As we know, the inverse was happening in many American groups. Ultimately, however, both RCCs and refuges were established in the US and UK, suggesting room for both.

But consider the chronology of this transnational diffusion: we know movement interest in rape and domestic violence reached France at around the same time. It makes sense that in France, where neither refuges nor RCCs were established before the other, both initiatives would be considered under the same umbrella from the start—hence the earliest service, SOS Femmes, provided support to women affected by both rape and domestic violence. Of course American and British RCCs provided other services too, but these were already covered by other groups: Choisir assumed the reformist mantle; MLAC centres and MFPF provided medical assistance and public education; and women's centres, as we saw in Chapter IV, provided legal and medical information, referrals, and a sympathetic ear. This French

[210] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

coalition effort is underlined by the 1985 establishment of Le Collectif Féministe Contre le Viol by a range of different organisations—including SOS Femmes and MFPF.[211]

Conclusion

At the end of each interview, I asked activists to discuss their 'most important contribution to the movement'. Just as Wortis pointed to her childcare activism, so did Sutton talk about her WA work. 'It would be setting up shelters,' she said, 'and making that happen.'[212] Activists in all three countries who worked towards community services certainly made it 'happen', with the effects of their work still visible today. They made it happen across national borders too. In case studies of childcare, refuges, and rape crisis, we have explored how activists diffused ideas transnationally, and have noted the same networking mechanisms were used here as in other areas of WLM organising. We have also explored the limits of this diffusion: using comparative history to assess why RCCs did not catch on in France despite the idea's circulation; and noting that childcare initiatives—although occasionally, as with the TPG creche, influenced by transnational ideas—were primarily shaped by local need. But even where the idea to establish services did not originate from transnational diffusion, there was a strong desire to communicate, to share ideas and experience.

Moreover, within these services we can see the afterlives of transnational imports previously examined—consciousness-raising, the personal as political—and national practices too: American speakouts, British conferences, French manifestos. As the former suggests, services were another area in which the American movement shaped the British and French,

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[211] S. Rojtman, 'Le Collectif Féministe Contre le Viol: Un Lieu d'Information, de Solidarité et de Lutte', *NQF*, 16:18 (1991), p. 21; Collectif Feministe Contre Le Viol, 'Qui sommes nous?', https://cfcv.asso.fr/le-collectif-feministe-contre-le-viol-cfcv/ (17 Jan. 2020).

[212] Interview with Sutton, TL.

but we find other crosscurrents: the influence of German approaches upon the UK; the transnational export of the British idea of refuges. Given British-American and British-French connections were stronger within the refuge movement than American-French, we can posit that what mattered for transnational influence was who got there first—who had amassed experience, ascertained what did and didn't work, and constructed analyses from this practice.

Conclusion

In our interview, Ellen Galford remembered Halloween 1976, when women gathered in a dangerous area of the Edinburgh Meadows. 'And then mobs of people,' she recounted, laughing:

> dressed as witches pursuing poor innocent guys, or maybe not so innocent guys kind of terrorizing them, you know, across the Meadows. And then the cops turned up and various people sort of shouting across, 'Why don't you come when we need you?'

Galford described 'witching the meadows' as 'a precursor to Reclaim the Night (RTN)'.[1] Historian Sarah Browne has traced this out to show that it was, in fact, an origin: at the 1977 revolutionary/radical feminist conference in Edinburgh, participants 'spilled' onto the streets to 'take back the night'.[2] Leeds activists, who were present, then formed an RTN group. They distributed thousands of leaflets across Leeds, 'in offices, factories, hospitals, shopping centres and pubs' to provoke mass 'consciousness-raising'. On 12 November, 130 women met in the city centre, then proceeded by torchlight to 'Woodhouse, where rapists lurk on the moor, or Chapeltown, Ripper '77 territory'. Following this, RTN protests spread to other UK cities; in London, women ran through Soho, 'slapping stickers' proclaiming 'THIS DEGRADES WOMEN' on the windows of sex shops and throwing live maggots at 'offending males'.[3]

The transnational dimensions of this story have not been explored. The Halloween action was inspired by WITCH (Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell), an

[1] Interview with Ellen Galford, TL, Edinburgh (12 Nov. 2018).
[2] S. Browne, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Scotland* (Manchester, 2014), p. 166.
[3] RTN Group et. al., 'We will walk without fear', *SR*, 66 (Jan. 1978), pp. 22-3.

American street theatre group, founded in the late 1960s.[4] One report from the 1976 Scottish Women's Liberation Conference mentioned a session about the group:

> who dress up as witches and go around doing crazy disruptive things like invading the stock exchange and brewing their cauldrons or levitating the Pentagon.

They concluded: 'I want to be a witch.'[5] American theory influenced the Leeds action—both consciousness-raising, and theories of violence against women—and there were additional transnational origins: the group had been reading about night-time demonstrations in Germany,[6] and women in Rome had held their own RTN protests in 1976.[7] Night-time protests were held across Holland and France;[8] and in San Francisco the first 'Take Back the Night' protest, which sparked a wave across the US, was held in 1978.[9] Our decade both began and ended with transnational protest.

It would take much work to closely examine the transnational spread of RTN marches, which continue to this day. Our investigation of the links between the American, British, and French movements might provide a template for such an enquiry. By investigating both network building and the ideas diffused, we have examined the ways transnational organising shaped the local and national, and vice versa. Delving into the grassroots is crucial to this approach: only in doing so can we understand how ideas (theory, protest tactics, organisational methods) were created, disseminated, and adapted. Only in doing so can we see which ideas did not travel, and carefully distinguish parallel developments from diffusion.

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[4] W.I.T.C.H., 'Witch Power', *Motive*, 29:6-7 (Mar.-Apr. 1969), p. 72.
[5] L.E.S. Mitchell, 'Opinions of the Scottish Women's Liberation Conference', *Edinburgh WL Newsletter* (Nov.-Dec. 1976), p. 8.
[6] RTN, 'We will'.
[7] RTN, 'Why RTN?' (n.d.), http://www.reclaimthenight.co.uk/why.html (15 Jul. 2020).
[8] 'RTN', *SR*, 73 (Aug. 1978), p. 10.
[9] Take Back the Night, 'About Us' (n.d.), https://takebackthenight.org/about-us/ (15 Jul. 2020).

Through this *histoire croisée* approach, we have assessed transnational influences during different stages of the movement's lifespan—from transnational texts in awakenings and transnational politicisations, to early group formation. We have explored the networking functions of periodicals, conferences, activist travel, correspondence, women's centres and bookshops, how they built community and diffused ideas. And we have traced the origins, travel, and evolution of specific ideas. From consciousness-raising, analyses of women's oppression, and declarations of abortion, to self-examination, refuges and RCCs, we have seen how they were often adapted rather than adopted wholesale and were taken up in different ways by different groups.

Largely, though not exclusively, these ideas travelled from the US to the UK and France, which is unsurprising given the movement first began and was much larger there. However, this transfer did not uniformly affect all areas of movement activity. There were multiple origins to both the British and French movements, with only some linked to the US. Only certain MLF groups were influenced by American theory and protest (primarily Féministes Révolutionnaires). Different British groups reacted differently to American ideas too, with black activists, for example, emphasising the importance of the Combahee River Statement, critiquing the struggle for reproductive rights, and querying the radicalness of self-examination.

Ideas also travelled in other directions, sometimes straightforwardly (as in the travel of refuges from the UK), sometimes less so. Menstrual extraction, for example, began in the US, but reached some British activists via the MLF; Christine Delphy's theory reached the US via Diana Leonard and Amanda Sebestyen. And specialised networks were established—from bookselling to healthcare and community services—so that knowledge could be shared in all directions, and dialogue and solidarity could flourish.

We have explored the limits to transnational transfers. Some ideas were not implemented, as with RCCs in France. Other initiatives—like women's centres and childcare services—were implemented across our three countries, but primarily emerged from local need, rather than transnational diffusion. Throughout, we have noted various differences between our three countries: the importance of national conferences for the British movement; the split in the French; the ways national context affected abortion, childcare, and healthcare activism. Variation locally and in different activists' experiences are found within our three countries too. In exploring the life histories of activists, we have been able to uncover some of these specificities. They have also enabled us to look at how individuals were touched by the transnational, and to trace the importance of certain activists and groups in maintaining links and transferring ideas.

None of this completely upturns our understanding of the WLM, but it does expand it. This thesis has addressed different historiographical debates throughout, both elucidating generalisations which can be found in macro-histories and examining glimpses of transnational stories which can be found in more focused studies. It has revised certain assumptions and reinforced others. In short, it has interrogated any mention of transnational links and 'inspirations' which could be found in the literature: it has treated the transnational as something which cannot be taken as a given.

In summarising the different arguments of this thesis, it is clear there is no question as to *whether* movements in different countries shaped each other. We know they did, in myriad ways. We could ask ourselves, *to what extent* movements in different countries shaped each other, whether local developments were more influential, but this too would be the wrong question to ask: the local was situated within the transnational, and vice versa. A woman exploring her intimate hopes and fears in a Norwich discussion group may have done so

through a method first created by New Yorkers. A woman writing a manifesto in Paris may have done so with theory she acquired from American periodicals or an Oxford conference. A woman protesting state abortion laws in Connecticut may have imagined herself part of a global struggle. When the case studies of this thesis are taken together, it becomes clear that the transnational nature of the movement—though not omnipresent—was a strength of the WLM. There was a wider well of experience to draw upon; a larger body of women to construct ideas; a louder chorus of voices calling for change.

We are still in the early days of this kind of historical work—made possible by historiographical development, and recent collections of archival material and oral testimony. We can look to future scholars, with more sources available to them, to build upon and refine our understandings further. Of course, the WLM extended far beyond the three countries examined in this thesis. In my research, I came across links with women in Iran, Japan, Argentina, Vietnam—to name a few—and we have seen glimpses of links with Spain, Russia, Cuba, and more entering this narrative. It is my hope that we can look forward to explorations of other transnational WLM links in future, and that this thesis might provide an example of how such histories can be uncovered.

Interviewee Biographies

Lynn Alderson was born in Stockton-on-Tees (1948) and grew up there, as well as in Newcastle, Somerset, and Kent. She joined the CND at 15, and after leaving school attended secretarial college (1968). In the early 1970s, she participated in the LWLW; in the mid-1970s she worked on the editorial collective of feminist publisher Onlywomen. Alderson worked at the Peace News Bookshop, then ran Compendium's women's section, before co-founding bookshop Sisterwrite. She lived in various squats, including a women's squat in Hackney, and was also an anarcho-feminist. In 1983, Alderson co-founded radical-feminist magazine *Trouble & Strife*. She has had a career in local government, becoming Head of Equalities for Leeds City Council. Alderson also successfully fought off a legal challenge against her adopting as a lesbian. She is now involved in her local Labour Party and her feminist organising continues.

Nicole Bizos was born in Paris (1945). She participated in May'68 and was arrested; she also helped establish newspaper *Libération*. Bizos was active in L'Alliance marxiste révolutionnaire and La Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR), as well as feminist group Cercle Dimitriev. She joined Psychanalyse et Politique in the mid-1970s. Bizos was a member of the collective which adapted and translated *Notre Corps, Nous-Mêmes* (1977). In the 1980s, she lived in a commune. Bizos completed a masters in sociology at the University of Vincennes, a diploma in special education, and a DEA (advanced postgraduate degree) in psychology and pathology. She has worked as a psychoanalyst and psychologist in various roles, often with young people and immigrants; Bizos is still involved in activism, working with refugees.

Sylvina Boissonnas was born in Toulouse (1942) and lived in Texas and Connecticut, before returning to France aged 16. She joined a Maoist group; during May'68 she participated in street demonstrations (though not in a political group) and as a nurse with the Red Cross. In the late 1960s, Boissonnas produced films for radical collective Zanzibar; she also directed *Un film* (1970) which was shown at Cannes. Boissonnas found the MLF in 1970 and joined group Psychanalyse et Politique (see Idels biography for further information). Boissonnas, heir to the Schlumberger family, financed the establishment of publishing house Éditions des femmes. She has had a professional career as an architect and her work with des femmes continues.

Christine Delphy was born in Paris (1941). She studied sociology at the Universities of Paris-Sorbonne, Chicago, and Berkeley. While in the US, Delphy worked at the Washington Urban League and attended anti-war protests. In 1968, she joined feminist group Féminin Masculin Avenir (later Féminisme Marxisme Action). In 1970, Delphy participated in one of the first MLF actions at the Arc du Triomphe and wrote 'The Main Enemy', outlining her position, which would come to be known as materialist feminism. Delphy co-founded groups Féministes Révolutionnaires and Les Gouines Rouges, as well as feminist journals *Questions Féministes* (1977) and *Nouvelles Questions Féministes* (1980). Delphy joined the CNRS, eventually becoming Director of Research (1990).

Ellen Galford was born in Newark, NJ (1947) and grew up in Livingstone. She attended Bennington College (1964-7), then moved to New York, where she worked in advertising and publishing. In 1971, Galford moved to Edinburgh and then to Glasgow (1973), where she was involved with trade union politics and the WLM, including Glasgow Women's Centre and street theatre actions. Galford moved to Edinburgh (1977), where she co-founded a feminist writers' group, then lived in London (1979-87), where she was involved with Lesbian Line,

before returning to Edinburgh. Her first novel, *Moll Cutpurse, Her True History*, was published in 1984; she has since written three more. Galford was involved with Edinburgh LGBT history project Remember When; she is learning Yiddish and writing poetry.

Linda Gordon was born in Chicago, IL (1940), but considers Portland, OR, her hometown. She attended Swarthmore College, then obtained a PhD in Russian history (Yale University, 1970). In 1967, Gordon lived in London and participated in anti-war activism. In 1969, she moved to Boston, MA, where she became a founding member of socialist feminist group Bread and Roses and a pioneer of women's and gender history. Gordon taught at the University of Massachusetts Boston, then the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She has written histories of birth control, domestic violence, and welfare in America, as well as two biographies, and co-edited two books on the American WLM with Rosalyn Baxandall. Gordon is a professor of history at NYU.

Michèle Idels was born in Paris (1949); her parents were Jewish immigrants from Poland and Lithuania. She began studying at the University of Paris Nanterre in 1967 and participated in May'68, including the 22 March movement. Idels joined Psychanalyse et Politique in 1970, after attending a seminar by Antoinette Fouque. The group established women's publishing house Éditions des femmes (1972), bookshop Librairie des femmes (1974), and three periodicals. In 1980 they created the Bibliothèque des Voix—France's first audiobook collection—then, in 1989, founded political organisation Alliance des Femmes pour la Démocratie. Idels has had a professional career as a lawyer and her work with des femmes continues. Idels and Sylvina Boissonnas requested a collective interview, as they view their history as collective.

Sophie Laws was born in north London (1957). She joined a consciousness-raising group in Archway while still at school, then participated in WLM groups during her sociology and politics degree (University of York, 1979). She subsequently moved to London and worked at feminist publisher Onlywomen. In 1983, Laws co-founded radical feminist magazine *Trouble & Strife*. Her doctoral research on attitudes to menstruation (University of Warwick, 1986) was published as *Issues of Blood: the Politics of Menstruation* (1990). Laws co-founded organisation Out for Our Children with other lesbian mothers. She has worked in various research roles—including Coram's Head of Policy and Research (2007-13), and Assistant Director for Evaluation and Impact at Barnardo's (2013-16)—and has written research guides and reports. Laws is currently Deputy Director of Research and Evaluation at the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse.

Nancy MacKeith was born in Norwich (1951), and grew up there, as well as Surrey and Winchester. Aged 15, she left school and moved to London. In 1971, MacKeith moved to Belfast and became an abortion referral service counsellor. She learned self-examination methods from visiting Americans, and subsequently worked in their LA women's health clinic. After moving to Leeds, she continued her women's healthcare work, including teaching self-examination and compiling *The Women's Health Handbook* (1976). MacKeith obtained a diploma in health education (Leeds Polytechnic, 1978), a nursing degree (Leeds Polytechnic, 1988), and an MPhil in social policy (University of York, 1995). She worked both as an independent and NHS midwife in Britain, and in various overseas roles, and is now a part-time midwife.

Sophie Mayoux was born in Boulogne-Billancourt (1948) and grew up in Paris. During high school she joined a Maoist group, then the Parti communiste marxiste-léniniste de France; she obtained a degree in the humanities (1968). Afterwards, Mayoux worked in a garment factory,

charcuterie, and as a cleric. In 1972 she joined a neighbourhood women's group, then worked for publication *La Cause des Femmes*. Mayoux was one of the translators and adaptors of *Notre Corps, Nous-Mêmes* (1977). She participated in the Parisian squatting movement. Mayoux has translated many literary novels; in 1995, she started working as a translator at Amnesty International. Mayoux is now retired, although still involved in activism: as a friend of the Freedom Theatre, a volunteer for a co-operative, and in asylum seeker support.

Claudine Mulard was born in Stains (1948). She studied at the Sorbonne and participated in May '68 events. In 1970, Mulard went to UC, San Diego, where began a PhD in Linguistics and joined a consciousness-raising group. After returning to Paris, she participated in the MLF, and joined a neighbourhood women's group. Mulard subsequently joined Politique et Psycheanalyse, and from April 1974 worked in the Librairie des femmes bookshop; she later ran the des femmes monthly and weekly magazines. In March 1979, Mulard and a group of women, including Kate Millett and Boissonnas, documented Iranian women's liberation protests. Mulard subsequently became a journalist, moved to California, and went to film school. She worked as a *Le Monde* correspondent and is currently involved with women-led organisation Code Pink.

Jill Rakusen was born in Yorkshire (1948). She studied music at the University of Bristol then moved to London, where she worked on *Women's Report*, eventually focusing on women's health. Around 1973 Rakusen moved to Glasgow and joined Glasgow Women's Liberation, continuing with women's health writing. She co-wrote the British adaptation of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (1978) with Angela Phillips. Rakusen studied Health Education (Leeds Polytechnic, 1977), then worked part-time in a London Community Health Council. She also co-founded the Women's Health Information Centre (1982). In 1983, Rakusen established the Coordinating

Group on Depo-Provera, which gave evidence at public hearings on the contraceptive. After a period of illness, Rakusen re-engaged with music and developed her Giving Voice approach.

Shaila Shah was born in Paris (1954) and moved to Bombay aged four. She studied English literature and psychology at Elphinstone College, Bombay University, then obtained an MA in English literature. In 1974, Shah moved to York to study English literature and music. She joined socialist group York Shoestring Theatre and the WLM, and was involved in York Women's Centre and running national newsletter *WIRE*S. In 1978, Shah moved to London, then co-founded feminist newspaper *Outwrite* (1982-8), which focused on women's movements internationally, as well as British women's activism, particularly of black and Asian women. Subsequently, Shah worked for Indian magazine *Imprint* for a year, and co-edited anthology *Sweeping Statements* (1984). From the late 1980s, she worked in publishing at Shelter, the British Association for Adoption and Fostering, and CoramBAAF, where she is Managing Director. Shah is currently in a women's group, comprising 1970s feminists.

Namascar Shaktini (née Margaret Orr) was born in Atlanta, GA (1939). After attending college in Lexington, KY (1961), she taught high-school English in California, then studied comparative literature at Berkeley. In 1966, Shaktini moved to Italy, then Paris, where she studied at the Sorbonne. Shaktini attended early MLF meetings and was one of the signatories of Monique Wittig's 1970 manifesto. She participated in MLF actions, including the protest at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and subsequently helped establish the French gay liberation movement. After returning to the US, she lived in commune Struggle Mountain and completed a PhD in the history of consciousness (Santa Cruz, 1981). Shaktini was a farmer, then taught at the University of Oregon. After working at Florida Atlantic University, she retired to Oregon in 2009; her academic work focuses on the writings of Wittig.

Karen Slaney (née Seay) was born in New York State (1944) and grew up there, as well as the New Jersey suburbs and Pittsburgh, PA. After obtaining a BA in English (Wellesley College), Slaney moved to London with her husband, David, who was involved in anti-war activism. Slaney was a founding member of Tufnell Park women's group. In 1970, she moved to Cambridge, MA. Slaney studied law at Northeastern University and became a member of the Women's Law Collective (1976). She worked for Civil Legal Aid until the late 1980s. After a period of leave, Slaney began working for a women's peer-counselling organisation. She marched in the Women's March.

Lyba Spring (née Steinberg) was born in Kirkland Lake, Ontario (1948) and moved to Toronto aged nine. She studied English literature at York University, Toronto. After graduation, she spent a year travelling around Europe and Morocco. On her return, Spring participated in WLM activities, including the day-care movement and establishing women's studies at the University of Toronto. In 1973, Spring moved to Paris, where she taught English and was involved with union organising. She was a member of the collective which adapted and translated *Notre Corps, Nous-Mêmes* (1977). Afterwards, Spring moved to Marseille, where she participated in immigrant rights protests and union organising, and resumed teaching. After returning to Toronto, she co-founded the Toronto Women's Health Network (1981) and worked for Toronto Public Health as a sexual health educator, eventually establishing her own sex education business.

Jo Sutton was born in Barnet, Hertfordshire (1947) and grew up in Stepney, East London. After school she studied social work at North London Polytechnic and started working at the Chiswick Women's Aid (WA) refuge during a residential placement. After finishing her degree (1974), Sutton became the WA national coordinator. When the organisation split a year later,

Sutton became coordinator for the new National WA. She obtained a master's in social work (1978) then worked as a lecturer at the University of Bradford. In 1985, Sutton moved to Canada with her partner. Together they founded magazine *Women'space*—about Canadian women and the internet—which became Sutton's full-time occupation until the early 2000s, when she stopped to raise their two adopted children.

Sheli Wortis (née Rochelle Paul) was born in the Bronx, NY (1937), where she grew up. Wortis received a BA (CCNY, 1958) and a PhD in Psychology (Rutgers University, 1965). In 1963, with her husband Henry, she moved to London, where she was a researcher at St Mary's Hospital; they both became involved with anti-war activism and founded collective Camden Movement for People's Power with others. Wortis was a founding member of Tufnell Park women's group. The Wortises moved to Cambridge, MA in September 1970, where Wortis formed the Boston Area Childcare Action Group and taught Feminist Studies (Goddard, 1971-3). Wortis subsequently worked at the Child Care Resource Center, and while there co-founded the Multicultural Project. In 1986 she joined Cambridge Public Schools, working on racial diversity in children's books. Wortis is still involved in local activism.

List of Illustrations

Figure 1

p. 163: 'Mitchell Chart' showing CWLU programmes.

CWLU, 'Mitchell Chart' (c. 1974), © Chris Riddiough. With thanks to Riddiough for permission to reproduce.

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[1] Given the contemporary nature of this historical enquiry—and the fact that many activists have written histories both during and after their movement activity—there is not a clear distinction between primary and secondary sources. Sources have been categorised according to their use in this study.

[2] To be archived at the British Library as 'Interviews exploring the Transnational Women's Liberation Movement, 1967-79' (call number: C1880).

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C1420/35: Interview with Michele Ryan, by R. Cohen, London (24-5 Oct. 2011)

C1420/36: Interview with Ursula Owen, by R. Cohen, London (21-22 Nov. 2011, 16 Feb. 2012)

C1420/37: Interview with Siobhan Molloy, by R. Cohen, Belfast (6-5 Dec. 2011)

C1420/38: Interview with Barbara Taylor, by M. Jolly, London (5 and 16 Dec. 2011)

C1420/39: Interview with Mukami McCrum, by F. Johnson-Ross, Edinburgh (9-8 Dec. 2011)

C1420/40: Interview with Sue O'Sullivan, by R. Cohen, London (5-6 and 18 Jan. 2012)

C1420/45: Interview with Sally Alexander, by R. Cohen, London (7 and 15 Feb. 2012)

C1420/46: Interview with Marie-Therese McGivern, by R. Cohen, London (9-10 Feb. 2012)

C1420/47: Interview with Alison Rayner, by R. Cohen, London (12 and 20 Mar. 2012)

C1420/43: Interview with Jo Robinson, by P. Russell, London (11 and 17 Nov, and 15 Dec. 2011, 9 Feb. and 19 Apr. 2012)

C1420/50: Interview with Bronagh Hinds, by F. Johnson-Ross, London (15-16 Mar. 2012)

C1420/54: Interview with Catherine Hall, by R. Cohen, London (16 Apr. 2012)

C1420/55: Interview with Mary Kelly, by M. Jolly, London (19 Mar. 2012)

C1420/56: Interview with Ann Oakley, by M. Jolly, London (11 May 2012)

C1420/58: Interview with Sheila Kitzinger, by L. Brodie, Oxford (28 May 2012)

Spare Rib Digital Archive

California State University, Long Beach (CSULB), CA, USA [Online]

Virtual Oral/Aural History Archive – Feminist Health Movement (VOAHA, FHM)

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Le Centre des archives du féminisme (CAF), Angers, France

Archives de Michèle Grosjean (AMG)

46AF3: Groupe de femmes de Nantes

46AF4: Documentation

Archives du Collectif Femmes de Saint-Nazaire

40AF1: Organisation

40AF3: Fonctionnement

40AF4: Manifestation

40AF9: Documentation

Fonds Anne-Marie Charles (FAC)

38AF1: Les Pétroleuses

38AF2(1-2): Groupe femmes d'Angers

38AF3: Groupe femmes « agression et viol »

38AF4: Association la boutique de droit

38AF5: Association lesbienne

38AF6: Les Danaïdes

38AF7: Les femmes, le travail et le militantisme synodical

38AF8: Avortement et contraception

Fonds Ecologie-Féminisme (FEF)

33AF1: Documentation du mouvement Ecologie-Féminisme

Fonds Eliane Viennot

15AF12: Groupe Lutte de femmes 20e (Paris)

15AF13: Librarie des femmes

15AF14: Alliance Marxiste Révolutionnaire

15AF15: Ligue communiste (révolutionnaire)

15AF15: Groupe lesbiennes Paris

Fonds Groupe Information Santé (FGIS)

44AF1: Création du GIS

44AF47: Contraception/avortement

Fonds Marie-Françoise Gonin

45AF19: Vie associative: Mouvement pour la Libération de la Femme

Fonds MLAC (FMLAC)

10AF4: Courrier

10AF11: Manifestations et campagnes

10AF17: Bulletins, revues et journaux

10AF18: Affaire Psyche et Po

10AF19: La Maison des femmes: Création

10AF22: Tracts et Affiches

10AF29: La Maison des femmes: Activités

10AF35: Défense et protection des populations particulières

10AF38: Défense et protection des populations particulières – Femmes

10AF56: Défense et protection des populations particulières – Femmes et Immigration

10AF62: Défense et protection des populations particulières – Homosexuels

10AF76: Internationale: Royaume Uni

10 AF 79: Internationale: Etats-Uni

Fonds Monique Prieur

41AF1: Courant III pour la cause des femmes au sein du PS, creation

41AF2: Courant

41AF21: Maison des femmes

41AF22: Le Nationalisme Féminin

Fonds photographiques Béatrice Lagarde

27AF1-27AF7: Photographs

Fonds Raymonde Gérard (FRG)

37AF1: Maison des femmes d'Amiens

La Contemporaine, Paris, France

Etats-Unis: Socialist Workers Party

F/DELTA/0418: Documents relatifs au mouvement de libération des femmes nord-américaines

France: Féminisme (1971-72)

4/DELTA/1145: Tracts et coupures de presse

Fonds François Lasquin (FFL)

F/DELTA/0807: Etats-Unis, Mouvement de libération des femmes

Papiers Françoise Picq (PFP)

MFC/0198: Tracts du MLF, dossier de préparation du *Torchon brûle*

Papiers Liliane Kandel (PLK)

F/DELTA/RES/0703: Mouvements étudiants et les universités parisiennes

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Lou Lavender Papers (FAN/LL)

FAN/LL/04: Lou Lavender Papers, Conferences 1970-78

FAN/LL/06: WLM feminist theory in USA / Canada; feminism international

FAN/LL/07: WLM general and Leeds and North

Women's organisations, groups and campaigns (FAN/WOGC)

FAN/WOGC/Box 9: Various groups in France, London, Lancaster, Leeds, Manchester

FAN/WOGC/Box 10: Various groups in Bradford, Derby, Leeds, London

Bradford Oral History Project: 'Women in the women's liberation movement in Leeds and Bradford, 1969-79' (FAN/AV/08)

FAN/AV/08/04: Interview with Nancy MacKeith and Alison Garthwaite, by E.A. Ross, Leeds (19 Mar. 1995), transcript

Feminist Archive South (FAS), University of Bristol, Bristol, UK

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DM2123/8/114: Women's Aid Foundation for England

DM2123/8/115: Bristol Women's Centre

DM2123/8/116: Women's Liberation Movement

DM2123/8/126: International Material

DM2123/8/127: International Material

Spare Rib Letters

DM2123/FA/Arch/52: Boston Women's Health Collective Correspondence

DM2123/FA/Arch/56: Boston Women's Health Collective Correspondence

Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, UK

Women's Liberation Movement Newsletter Collection

Edinburgh Women's Liberation Newsletter
Glasgow Women's Liberation Newsletter
London Women's Liberation Workshop Newsletter
Nessie
Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter
Scottish Women's Liberation Journal
Scottish Women's Liberation Newsletter
WIRES
Whatever happened to the Scottish Women's Liberation Journal?

Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA), New York, NY, USA

15.360: Women's Liberation Movement Subject Files

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England #3

Paris, France #1

Marxists Internet Archive (MIA) [Online]

Leonora Lloyd, 'Woman Workers in Britain', pamphlet (n.d.)

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Beeton, Nick

Pamphlets, various

Mulard, Claudine

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Rakusen, Jill

Papers relating to the Co-ordinating Group on Depo-Provera

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Segal, Julia

Pamphlets, various

Sutton, Jo (PAJS)

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Redstockings Women's Liberation Archives for Action (RWLAA), New York, NY, USA [Online]

Abortion Speakout

Taking Stock (TS)

First Literature List (FLL)

Redstockings Memorial Speakout for Simone de Beauvoir (1 May 1986), audio recordings

Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture (SBC), Duke University, Durham, NC, USA

Alix Kates Shulman Papers:

Box 1: Foreign Travel Itineraries

Box AW/PS1: Speeches: Simone de Beauvoir Conference, NYU, 1979

Box LW1: Literary Work: Comments on Other Authors, 1971-1982; Political Work: Women's liberation/feminism, 1968-2000

Box LW2: Literary Work: Special Projects – Articles on Feminist Lit., 1970-1993

Bobbye Ortiz Papers (BOP):

Box 16: International Women's Liberation – England

Box 22: British Feminist Publications

Box 23: French Feminism – Newspapers 1970s

Box 24: Paris 1968 – Bound publications, documents, misc.

Box 25: Paris 1968 – Newspapers, periodicals

Kate Millett Papers (KMP)

Box FL6: *Flying* – Book reviews/ French; Book reviews/England; Foreign fan letters

Box s7: Italy and Paris travel; London and Paris correspondence

Box S8: Paris trips and correspondence

Box S9: England, 1975-81

Box S10: Women's History Research Center; Women's Rights Movement

Box S16: Political Activism

Box S18: Simone de Beauvoir's Visit, 1984

Meredith Tax Papers (MTP)

Box 30: France

Box 113: WL England; WL Europe

Box 115: London 1967 Notebook

Box 116: Black Movement, Late 1960s-early 1970s

Box 117: England

Miriam Slifkin Papers: (MSP)

Box 5: England, 1972-1976; Europe, 1975-1976; France, 1976-1980

New York Radical Feminists Records (NYRFR)

Box 1: NYRF organizing and theory documents; consciousness-raising; speak-outs and other activities

Box 2: NYRF member participation in other groups

Pauline Bart Papers (PBP)

Box 1: Personal Files – Correspondence, 1971

Box 25: Feminist Theories, 1982

Box 31: Feminist Theory, 1968; Materials for Women's Course, 1969

Phyllis Chesler Papers

Box P/P10: Book Business – Editions Payot

Box WHO1: Strikes: Publishers England, 1975

Robin Morgan Papers (RMP)

Box 1 c.1: European Trip, 1959

Box 12: Memoir materials, Women's Lib. clippings, 1960s-1970s

Box C2: Correspondence with: Simone de Beauvoir, 1980-84; Gorley Putt, 1960-87

Box S3: International Feminist Activism – Europe, general

Box S15: De Beauvoir Conference, 1979

Box S16: Controversies – Gloria Steinem, 1970s

Box S17: Miss America, 1968 and 1969

Box W9: *Sisterhood is Global* personal notes

Box W12: Simone de Beauvoir, *Sisterhood is Global* contribution

Box W17: Amanda Sebestyen, *Sisterhood is Global* contribution

Box W18: *Sisterhood is Powerful* contributors' correspondence

Sara Evans Papers (SEP)

Box 13: Gloria Steinem, 1973-1995; Organizations, 1970-72; Contemporary Views of Feminism, 1970s-1980s

Box 15: Women's Studies, 1970s

Box 19: Race and Racism in the Women's Movement, 1970-1980s; Bibliographies, database sources, etc – Women of Color, 1971-1989; Black Women, 1960s; Black Women, 1970s

Box 20: Asian American women, 1971-1989; Native American Women, 1968-1998; Latin American Women

Box 21: Women's Liberation: voices from the late 1960s, early 1970s

Box 22: Chicago Women's Liberation Conference, 1968; Durham Women's Liberation, 1970-1999; Actions, 1970

Box 28A: Personal Politics – Interview Transcripts, 1972-1973

Box 34: Working Class Women's Movement, 1982-1983

Victoria Ortiz Papers:

Box 5A: International Women's Liberation – Europe; France; France – Simone de Beauvoir

Box 8: Revolution – Rowbotham

Sophia Smith Collection of Women's History (SSC), Smith College, Northampton, MA, USA

Gloria Steinem Papers

Box 84, Folder 16: Correspondence with Simone de Beauvoir

Box 150: *Ms.* magazine, Simone de Beauvoir Interview material, 1977

Box 210, Folder 11: Women in Europe: general, 1968 and 1971

Periodicals collection

F Magazine
The Longest Revolution
Ms.
Planning Familial
Power of Women
Red Rag

Voices of Feminism Oral History Project (VFOHP)

Interview with Avery, Byllye Y., by L.J. Ross, Provincetown, MA (21-22 Jul. 2005)

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Interview with Cook, Katsi, by J. Follet, Berkshire, NY (26-27 Oct. 2005)

Interview with Fried, Marlene Gerber, by J. Follet, Amherst, MA (14-15 Aug. 2007)

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Interview with Nelson, Marjory, by K. Weigand, Northampton, MA (18-19 May 2005)

Interview with Pharr, Suzanne, by K. Anderson, Knoxville, TN (28-29 Jun. 2005)

Interview with Powell, Achebe Betty, by K. Anderson, Brooklyn, NY (6-7 Jul. 2004)

Interview with Ross, Loretta, by J. Follet, Northampton, MA (3-5 Nov. and 1-3 Dec. 2004; 4 Feb. 2005)

Interview with Smith, Barbara, by L.J. Ross, Northampton, MA (7-8 May 2003)

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Interview with Tax, Meredith, by K. Weigand, New York, NY (11-12 Jun. 2004)

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Interview with Winslow, Barbara, by K. Weigand, Williamstown, MA (3-4 May 2004)

Women's Activism and Oral History Project (WAOHP)

Interview with Pincus, Jane, by K. Lucy, Roxbury, VT (29 Nov. 2008)

Women's Liberation Collection (WLC)

Box 1

Folder 9: Countries – England
Folder 11: Countries – France

Box 4, Folder 3: Biographies – Germaine Greer

Box 20

Folder 9: Conferences – International
Folder 10: Conferences – International Feminist Planning Council, June 1973

Box 6

Folder 4: *Mushroom Effect*
Folder 12: *Women's Yellow Pages*

Box 7

Folder 1: Alaska
Folder 1a: Arkansas
Folder 3: *Berkeley/Oakland Women's Union Newsletter*
Folder 4: LA Women's Liberation Center
Folder 5: San Diego Women's Center
Folder 6: San Jose Women's Center; Santa Cruz Women's Center; Isla Vista Women's Center
Folder 7: Stanford Women's Center
Folder 7a: Sudsofloppen, San Francisco
Folder 8: Boulder County Women's Resource Letter
Folder 9: Colorado, University of Boulder
Folder 11: Hartford Women's Liberation
Folder 12: New Haven Women's Liberation
Folder 13: Norwalk – Women's Liberation Center
Folder 15: Waterbury Area Women's Center

Box 8

Folder 2: Washington Area Women's Center
Folder 4: *George Washington University Women's Liberation Newsletter*
Folder 5: Washington Women's Liberation
Folder 9: Chicago Women's Liberation Union

Folder 10: New University Conference – Pamphlets and Newsletters
Folder 11: Bloomington Women's Liberation Front
Folder 12: New Orleans – Southern Female Rights Union
Folder 13: *Maine Women's Newsletter*

Box 9

Folder 1: Amherst Women's Liberation
Folder 5: Berkshire Women's Liberation
Folder 8: Cambridge - Cell 16
Folder 17: North Shore Feminists

Box 12

Folder 10: The Feminists
Folder 11: New York Radical Feminists
Folder 14: New York WITCH

Box 18

Folder 1: *Notes from the First Year*
Folder 3: *Notes from the Third Year*
Folder 5: Pamphlets, 1968-69
Folder 6: Pamphlets, 1970
Folder 9: Pamphlets, 1974-75

Box 23

Folder 14: Protest Actions, 1970-72
Folder 15: Protest Actions – Clippings

Box 24, Folder 8: Speeches

Flat File Drawer 7

'Women Working', Women's graphics Collective, Chicago Women's Liberation Union (1972)
Washington Mayday (n.d.)
Cranky, San Francisco, The Women's Street Theatre (n.d.)

Flat File Drawer 26: Draft Resistance, 'Girls Say Yes to boys who say NO' poster (1968)

The Women's Library (TWL), London School of Economics, London, UK

Papers of Amanda Sebestyen (7SEB)

7SEB/B/02: Transcripts of interviews about the US women's movement

Papers of Anna Davin (7ADA)

7ADA/01: Material relating to Women's Weekend in Ruskin College, Oxford, 27 Feb.-1 Mar. 1970

7ADA/02: London Feminist History Group

7ADA/05: Ephemera

Papers of Elaine Showalter

7ESH/B/01: Women's liberation movement in United States of America

7ESH/B/02: Women's Studies in the United States of America

Papers of Leonore Davidoff

7LDA: Papers relating to the WRRC

Papers of Lilian Mohin

7LIM: Periodicals, newsletters, campaigning papers, and other publications relating to the Women's Liberation Movement

Papers of Pat Caplan (7PAC)

7PAC/01: Anglo-French study group

Papers of Sally Alexander (7SAA)

7SAA/2: Papers relating to the WLM

7SAA/9: Women's Studies

Papers of Sheila Rowbotham (7SHR)

7SHR/A/1: Varied correspondence including: numerous letters from fellow Women's Liberation Movement activists in the UK, USA and elsewhere

7SHR/A/2: Women's Liberation Movement General Correspondence

7SHR/A/5: International Correspondence

7SHR/B/1: Women's Liberation Workshop

7SHR/B/2: Socialist Feminist Groups

7SHR/B/4: Essex Road Women's Centre

7SHR/D/1: Night Cleaners Campaign

7SHR/D/3: Leaflets, notices and campaign material

7SHR/D/4: Campaign material

Papers of Sue O'Sullivan

7SUL/9: WLM and health

Papers of Tamar Karet (7TAK)

7TAK/01-02: Kingsgate Place Women's Centre

Records of the Brighton Women's Centre (5BWC)

5BWC/01: General papers relating to centre establishment, history, and aims

Records of the Essex Road Centre

5ERC: Papers relating to information and advice services offered by the centre

Records of Hackney Women's Aid (5HWA)

5HWA: Reports, administrative papers and ephemera

Records of Women in Media

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5WRR/B: Subject files and correspondence

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de Beauvoir, Simone, and Gisèle Halimi, *Djamila Boupacha* (Paris, 1962)

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Bryan, Beverley, et. al., *The Heart of The Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* (London, 1985)

BWHBC, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (Boston, MA, 1970)

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BWHBC, and Angela Phillips and Jill Rakusen, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (Harmondsworth, 1978)

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La CORPS féministe, *Corps Accord: Guide de Sexualité Positive* (Montréal, 2019)

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Dinny, 'Feeling Sick with Doctors' in Feminist Anthology Collective, ed., *No Turning Back: Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement, 1975-80* (London, 1981), pp. 142-4

Duchen, C., ed. and trans., *French Connections: Voices from the Women's Movement in France* (Amherst, MA, 1987)

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Rochefort, Christiane, *Le Repos du Guerrier* (Paris, 1958)

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Rowbotham, Sheila, *Dreams and Dilemmas* (London, 1983)

—*Promise of a Dream: Remembering the Sixties* (London, 2001)

Sarachild, Kathie, 'The Power of History' in Redstockings, *Feminist Revolution* (New York, 1978), pp. 12-43

—'Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon' in *ibid*., pp. 144-50

Sebestyen, Amanda, ed., *'68, '78, '88: From Women's Liberation to Feminism* (Bridport, 1988)

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'Interview: Anna Davin', pp. 55-70
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[4] This section only lists primary articles and periodicals cited. See 'Manuscripts and Archives' for all newsletter collections consulted. NB: not all articles have page numbers: some were read as clippings or online; some periodicals were loose-leaf, or not numbered in the original format.

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