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“The Fountain Pen and the Typewriter”:
The Rise of the Homophile Press in the
1950s and 1960s

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Introduction

In 1963, the *New York Times* ran a front-page article entitled “Growth of Overt Homosexuality in City Provokes Wide Concern,” bringing together police statements, “expert” opinions, and even some homophile¹ activist interviews in order to comment on New York’s “most sensitive open secret.”² The lengthy article constituted a relatively comprehensive report of homosexual life in New York City, discussing at length homophile organizations, the more visible gay life in the city, and psychological views regarding homosexuality. The article touched briefly upon gay periodicals, calling them “a kind of distorted mirror image of the straight publishing world” where a homosexual could engage in “intellectual discussion of his problems.”³ That the article spent so little time on queer⁴ publications is likely due to their relatively small circulation in 1963. At the time, the three largest homophile-era publications had a cumulative circulation of only about 7,000, although since queer people often passed copies on to their friends, the actual number is likely somewhat higher.⁵ However, the dismissive tone

¹ “Homophile” is a term that has its origin in European (specifically German) queer activism. It was adopted by American activists in the early 1950s, preferred over “homosexual” due to the emphasis on love, rather than sex, and because it was inclusive of non-homosexual allies. The homophile movement in the United States tends to be defined as the queer activism that existed between roughly 1950 and 1969, with the three most prominent homophile organizations being the Mattachine Society (est. 1950), ONE, Inc., (est. 1952), and the Daughters of Bilitis (est. 1955).

² Robert Cory, “Growth of Overt Homosexuality In City Provokes Wide Concern,” *New York Times*, December 17, 1963.

³ Ibid.

⁴ A note on terminology: in this paper, and in most academic settings, “queer” is the preferred term when discussing non-straight, non-cis communities. Since terminology revolving around non-straight, non-cis peoples has undergone constant evolution over the period of time this paper covers, period-specific terminology (such as “homosexual” or “transvestite”) will be used where applicable. When referring to the cumulative movement for queer peoples, which encapsulates the homophile, gay liberation, feminist lesbian, etc., movements, “queer activism” will be used.

⁵ Roger Streitmatter, *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (Winchester, MA: Faber and Faber, Inc., 1995), 28.

speaks of a larger issue, wherein the queer press was, and continues to be, devalued in the context of queer communities and activism because of the misconception that its role is peripheral. The mainstream press, and straight society in general, places little emphasis on the role of queer press. Similarly, queer historians and academics often discount or minimize the role of queer press in our history, particularly during the homophile era. In actuality, the queer press played a crucial role in early queer movements, operating at the intersection of identity, community, and activism to define an identity around which a community could coalesce, which in turn led to the blossoming of the homophile movement. While *identity* and *community* are terms which are somewhat nebulous, in this thesis I take *identity* to mean a self-definition which affects our understanding of how we fit into society, and *community* to mean “a unity of individuals sharing and living a common awareness.”⁶ There is much overlap between the two, which both complicates the formation of queer identities and communities, and heightens the stakes of the queer press, as without an identity there cannot be a community, and without a community it is difficult to define yourself in positive terms.

The queer press is a form of alternative press produced *of* queer people, *by* queer people, and (primarily) *for* queer people. Many early homophile publications did attempt to reach straight audiences in the hopes of educating them about homosexuality, but their primary intended and actual audience consisted of queer people. The queer press of the 1950s and 1960s often contained literature submitted by readers, editorials, reviews of books and movies, academic articles regarding homosexuality, and letters. The press functioned as a site of community journalism that engaged the relationship between self-identity and community

⁶ Alan D. Winter, “The Gay Press: A History of the Gay Community and its Publications” (master’s thesis, University of Texas, 1975), 7. Here, Winter is agreeing with sociologist Carol Warren, who determined that a community is at its essence an idea and a group of people.

identity.⁷ One historian of alternative press in the United States noted that social movement press, a category to which the queer press belongs, plays its most important role in “the creation of a community and culture” which sustains the social movement in question.⁸ The queer press is no different in this regard. Like other forms of alternative press, the queer press can be both subcultural and oppositional, and at its best it is both. The alternative press is subcultural when it is aimed internally, aiding its community in self-determination and -organization, and is oppositional when aimed externally, denying mainstream impositions of definition (such as, for instance, the belief that homosexuality is an illness) and fighting against oppressive measures.⁹

Queer people are, unlike most other oppressed groups, an invisible community in that there are no physical markers that set them apart from a majority group or allow them to find one another. Unlike children of color, who generally grow up learning strategies for resisting racism and embracing their culture from their families, queer people do not learn strategies for resisting heterosexism or homophobia from their families; they must learn it on their own, as adults.¹⁰ It is here where the queer press comes into play, with a dual role first in solidifying a queer *identity* rather than queer *behavior*¹¹ and then shaping the resulting communities through disseminating

⁷ Rob Cover, “Engaging Sexualities: Lesbian/Gay Print Journalism, Community Belonging, Social Space and Physical Space,” in *Pacific Journalism Review* 11, no. 1 (2005): 121.

⁸ Bob Ostertag, *People’s Movements, People’s Press: The Journalism of Social Justice Movements* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2006), 19.

⁹ Henry Ross Waring, “Media System Dependency and Identity: The Development of America’s Gay and Lesbian Alternative Media and the Transformation of Homosexuality,” (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1996), 12-13.

¹⁰ Kristin G. Esterberg, “From Accommodation to Liberation: A Social Movement Analysis of Lesbians in the Homophile Movement,” in *Gender and Society* 8, no. 3 (1994), 425.

¹¹ While queer behavior has existed essentially forever, queer identities only began to be constructed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as Foucault’s iconic work on sexuality explains. *Ibid*, 427.

ideas about how queer people should interact in both queer and mainstream spaces.¹² By the late 1960s, largely through the queer media more than any other mechanism, queers had developed into a “linguistic-thought community characterized by common patterns of interaction,” ready to mobilize effectively as a demographic and lobby for change.¹³

The role of the media in constituting and promoting social movements has been explored by a number of books. One of the most notable works on media activism is Bob Ostertag’s *People’s Movements, People’s Press* (2006), which makes the argument that the media produced by a social movement is inseparable from the social movement itself. Ostertag explored a handful of social movements in detail (including the gay and lesbian press¹⁴) and drew his conclusions regarding the press based upon the context of the social movement’s internal dynamics and strategies, relation with its immediate adversary, relation with the state, and location in broader culture.¹⁵ While discussing queer publications in this thesis, I take Ostertag’s strategy as a guideline, exploring how each publication relates to the queer movement’s goals and strategies as well as the larger societal context.

Other works that explore how the media help form identity and identity-based communities, and particularly those of minority or oppressed groups, draws upon Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1983), an exploration of the origins of modern nationalism. In his work, Anderson makes the pivotal argument that the press (and particularly print

¹² James W. Chesebro, introduction to *Gayspeak: Gay Male & Lesbian Communication*, ed. James W. Chesebro (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1981), xiv.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Here, I use “gay and lesbian” rather than “queer” because it is the term that Ostertag himself preferred. While I contest his use of the phrase, partially because he did discuss publications that weren’t necessarily gay or lesbian, but fell under the larger queer umbrella, I don’t wish to put words in his mouth. Therefore, I grudgingly accept the use of this limited terminology.

¹⁵ Ostertag, 1-2.

capitalism) was the largest precedent for the development of nationalism.¹⁶ Drawing upon this theory, other scholars have written on community as a cultural construct “imagined through various social institutions including media formations and the frequent, periodical reading of (print) media as a ritual through which community identities are narrated.”¹⁷ Martin Meeker in *Contacts Desired* (2006) has explained how queer communications networks, including the queer press, “provided the context for a multitude of individuals to begin imagining themselves as being homosexual and as identifying with that subculture.”¹⁸ Most of the work on the relationship between media, identity, and community are about social movements in general, with little attention paid to the queer media in particular. However, this work remains relevant by providing models of social movement press and methods of examining the intersection of community and media that can be applied to queer media.

Oddly, while scholars recognize the centrality of media in helping to build marginalized communities,¹⁹ queer history has generally downplayed the queer press in favor of in-person communities, such as bar life or social events, and other queer activist strategies. John D’Emilio’s *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* (1983), makes the point that the homophile movement placed publishing at the center of their activities, but spends little time discussing the

¹⁶ Benedict R. O’Gorman Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 3rd ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 36.

¹⁷ Cover, 118.

¹⁸ Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s—1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 4.

¹⁹ It’s rare that media scholars directly discuss the queer media when talking about social movement press, with a few exceptions. Most books on underground, alternative, or social movement media only peripherally discuss the queer press, if at all. McMillian’s *Smoking Typewriters* (2011) and Peck’s *Uncovering the Sixties* (1985), for instance, mention the queer press only peripherally, without much analysis. John Downing’s acclaimed *Radical Media* (1984), a work upon which many following works on non-mainstream media draw, offhandedly mentions gays and lesbians only a few times.

publications in detail.²⁰ Only a few publications talk directly about the queer press as their primary objective, most notably Streitmatter's *Unspeakable* (1995) and the compilation *Gay Press, Gay Power* (2012). Both are relatively comprehensive studies, but they spend the bulk of their work post-1970. Armstrong and Crage's "The Making of the Stonewall Myth," an essay that was instrumental in the formative development of this thesis, also talks about the importance of media, in terms of mnemonic capacity—the institutional resources, particularly capability for publicity and information dissemination—to the successful telling of the "Stonewall Myth."²¹ However, she makes the claim that it was only in the mid- and late-1960s that this mnemonic capacity was built, discounting the work of the 1950s and early 1960s by the homophile-era queer press.²² Moreover, since existing scholarship focuses more on post-Stonewall press, they do not focus on the formation of queer communities themselves. This thesis, then, is written to fill in the blanks and to discuss in depth the relationship between queer press, community, identity, and activism in the homophile era, during which the queer press was instrumental in the tentative first attempts of the homophile movement to build a queer community.

A few theses and dissertations have been written which have begun to fill in the blanks left behind by queer historians' tendencies to sideline the homophile-era queer press. Most notably, I've drawn upon Master's "'A Part of Our Liberation': *ONE* Magazine and the Cultivation of Gay Liberation, 1953-1963" (2006); Alan Winter's "The Gay Press: A History of

²⁰ John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 109.

²¹ E. A. Armstrong & S. M. Crage, "Moments and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth," in *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 5 (2006): 726. By the "Stonewall Myth," I refer to the misconception that the Stonewall Inn riots, the violent clash between police and patrons (mostly gender-non-conforming queer and trans people of color) at the Stonewall Inn bar in New York City, which began late June 27th/early June 28th and lasted for several days, marked the "beginning" of the gay rights movement.

²² *Ibid*, 728.

the Gay Community and its Publications” (1975) and Corzine’s “The Gay Press” (1977); and Waring’s “Media System Dependency and Identity: The Development of America’s Gay and Lesbian Alternative Media and the Transformation of Homosexuality” (1996). Of these dissertations, only Master’s focuses on the same time period that I do, while the other three spend much more time on the queer press of the later 60s and beyond. Winter’s and Corzine’s works, undoubtedly because they were written when the history was much newer, were more interested in looking ahead to see how the queer press would develop and how it shifted in the 60s and 70s. Waring, on the other hand, takes a media studies, rather than historical, approach, to look at how media are used to help construct identities. My thesis fits in nicely with their work, as I expand upon areas which they overlook or do not focus on, such as *Mattachine Review* and *The Ladder* or reader responses to the homophile-era publications, while still touching on keystones which they talk about. Waring’s work proved a useful tool in examining the relationship between media and identity construction, while Master’s dissertation helped me articulate my own ideas on how the homophile-era queer press created a shift in collective consciousness. Winter and Corzine both helped fill in the gaps, with useful points on the intersection of the queer press and the trajectory of the homophile movement.

This thesis draws upon the content of early homophile publications, specifically *ONE*, *Mattachine Review*, and *The Ladder*, as well as the short-lived, pre-homophile *Vice Versa*, in conjunction with scholarship on media theory and homophile history in order to explore how queer press was central to the construction of a queer identity and community in the years preceding Stonewall. In particular, I will focus on the homophile press of the 50s until the mid-60s, at which point the transition to a gay liberation movement began in earnest. The three publications *ONE*, *Mattachine Review*, and *The Ladder* each grew out of the three largest

homophile-era organizations: ONE, Inc., the Mattachine Society, and the Daughters of Bilitis, respectively. ONE, Inc.'s primary purpose was to publish a queer magazine, whereas the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis used publication in order to further their goals of, among other things, education and community outreach for assimilation. By examining the publications of the three largest homophile organizations, I can look directly into how those organizations were using the press to their own ends, and how the press itself was functioning as a site of identity, community, and activism creation.

In Chapter One, I will look at pre-1950 fledgling attempts at queer organization, and will argue that the actions of pioneering activists in the United States since at least the 1920s highlight the vital role the press has played in constructing identity and community in ways that could sustain activism. In Chapter Two, I will introduce the early homophile movement and show how activists in the early 1950s came to realize that using media could be a powerful tool to unite queer people previously separated by spatial limitations and build the foundations upon which a sustained queer movement could be built. In Chapter Three, I will discuss *ONE*, the first major homophile publication, and its importance in terms of content, reception, legal victories, and influence on subsequent queer publications. And in Chapter Four, I examine how queer press operated in the 1950s and into the 1960s, paying particular attention to the rise of *The Ladder* and the *Mattachine Review*. Finally, in the conclusion, I will bridge homophile-era activism and post-Stonewall gay liberation and explain why it was so easy for the myth of Stonewall as the beginning of the queer rights movement to be propagated in relation to the folding of the big three homophile-era publications just prior to Stonewall, which caused a generational split just as Stonewall exploded off the map.

Chapter One:

Pioneer Queer Press in the United States

Social and political movements are dependent on communities, which coalesce around identity formation. Before building a movement to confront systemic oppression, discrimination, or other antagonistic factors, queer people had to “coalesce around an identity and gather themselves in collectives, into communities, into specific places, and around certain ideas.”¹ However, the formation of queer communities has been complicated by the fact that queers were an “invisible minority,” lacking any physical characteristics that marked them obviously as “other” or enabled them to find each other.² Certain codes to signify homosexuality were used, like wearing red ties during the interwar period, but in order to understand said code, a person would have to have already been involved to some extent with a queer enclave.³ In a society where “outing”⁴ oneself as queer risked the possibility of ostracizing friends and family, losing one’s job, or facing legal ramifications, many queer people were isolated. Even in urban centers where there were well-known queer enclaves (such as Times Square of New York City in the pre-World War II decades), many queer people never formed ties outside of sexual encounters

¹ Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s—1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 1. Other scholarship on the relationship between identity and community includes Kristin G. Esterberg, “From Accommodation to Liberation: A Social Movement Analysis of Lesbians in the Homophile Movement,” *Gender and Society* 8, no. 3 (1994): 424-443;

² Certain behavior or attributes, mostly gender non-conformity, did mark some queer people as obviously “other,” but there are no *inherent* physical differences between straight and queer peoples.

³ George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890—1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 51-52.

⁴ Here, “outing” is used in its modern definition to mean “publicly announcing oneself as queer.” “Coming out” did not really exist as a concept until the McCarthy era, when the idea of being “closeted” began to take shape.

out of the fear of going public with their identity. For these reasons, one of the most important goals of early homophile organizations was to establish communities that allowed for the flourishing of an individual and cultural identity—and the press was one of the most successful methods of doing so. The first attempts at developing a queer press in the United States, successful or unsuccessful, reflect a blossoming understanding of the importance of the queer press in identity, community, and activist formation.

The earliest efforts to foster a queer identity and activism in the United States reveal the key role that the press would eventually play in such a project. Long before the well-known Mattachine Society or Daughters of Bilitis began publishing newspapers and magazines in the mid-1950s, a man named Henry Gerber brought the idea of a queer media to the United States from Germany. Gerber, born Josef Henry Dittmar in Bavaria, Germany in 1892, moved to the United States in 1913 with his family and almost immediately enlisted in the United States army. When the United States entered World War I on April 2, 1917, American paranoia regarding hidden German spies became widespread, and all unnaturalized immigrants of German birth were declared alien enemies. 8,000 were arrested and detained—including Henry Gerber, who had been offered internment and accepted because it guaranteed three meals a day.⁵ After the war ended, he reenlisted in the army and was assigned as a journalist to the AMAROC News Company with the U.S. Army of Occupation based in Coblenz, Germany. At the time, Germany was home to Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, one of the most famous sexologists in the world, who had also founded what is historically known as the world's very first institute dedicated to LGBTQ+ rights in 1897, The Scientific Humanitarian Committee (SHC). By the time Gerber was living in

⁵ St. Sukie de la Croix, *Chicago Whispers: A History of LGBT Chicago Before Stonewall* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 73.

Germany with the U.S. Occupation Army, Hirschfeld had also established the Institute for Sexual Science (ISS). Moreover, Germany was home to what was probably the world's gay capital at the time: Berlin. As an isolated gay man, Gerber fell into the German gay scene with enthusiasm, traveling to Berlin multiple times to bask in the widely-tolerated vibrant gay subculture where he could be himself. More importantly to his later activism, he subscribed to multiple German homophile periodicals. During the Weimar period, Berlin had a thriving homosexual press with roughly thirty periodicals, many of which were sold publicly; *Die Freundschaft*, the world's very first homosexual newspaper sold in public kiosks, appeared there in August 1919.⁶

Upon returning to Chicago in 1923, Gerber took a job in the post office while deliberating on how to mobilize American homosexuals into a force that could campaign for social rights and develop a subculture just as vibrant as the one he experienced in Germany. He reached out to multiple friends and sex reform leaders, including Margaret Sanger, asking for help establishing an organization for the advancement of homosexual rights. His efforts were mostly futile; he found almost no allies save for a few friends who hesitantly joined his crusade. In 1924, he applied for, and received, a charter from the State of Illinois, and founded the Society for Human Rights, the first American organization devoted to queer rights. The charter avoided the words "gay" or "homosexual", instead writing that its objectives were to:

promote and to protect the interests of people who by reasons of mental and physical abnormalities are abused and hindered in the legal pursuit of happiness, which is guaranteed them by the Declaration of Independence; and to combat the public prejudices against them by dissemination of facts according to modern science among intellectuals of mature age. The Society stands only for law and order; it is in harmony with any and all general laws insofar as they protect the

⁶ Robert Beachy, *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 164.

rights of others, and does in no manner recommend any acts in violation of present laws nor advocate any matter inimical to the public welfare.⁷

One of Gerber's first actions with the SHR was to create a periodical. He named it *Friendship and Freedom*, taking the name from the German periodical *Freundschaft und Freiheit*. Gerber saw the kind of thriving homophile press he had enjoyed in Germany as a way to further his own fledgling aspirations of an American homophile movement. *Friendship and Freedom* was the very first gay periodical in the United States.⁸

Unfortunately, no copies of *Friendship and Freedom* have survived to this day; the only remaining sources are a picture of the cover of the first issue, and a review from a 1925 French periodical *L'Amitié*.⁹ However, what information we do have indicates that Gerber, like future homophile activists, sought to use *Friendship and Freedom* as a forum for building a sense of a homosexual identity and community. *L'Amitié*'s review, which calls *Friendship and Freedom* "a moral, homosexual American newsletter," comments upon its contents, which included an article on "Self-control," a Walt Whitman poem, and an essay, "Green Carnations," about Oscar Wilde and the use of green carnations as signifiers of one's homosexuality. Of the goals of *Friendship and Freedom*, the review states that Gerber and co. intended to use the subscription funds to help fellow "intermediates", find jobs for out-of-luck homosexuals, and "lead the way towards modifying the unjust law which oppresses them."¹⁰ Though there were no mentions of

⁷ Shirley Baugher, "Not Everyone Was Brave: Henry Gerber and the Beginning of the Gay Rights Movement in Chicago," *Living in Interesting Times* (blog), Chicago Now, April 15, 2014, <http://www.chicagonow.com/my-kind-of-old-town/2014/04/not-everyone-was-brave-henry-gerber-and-the-beginning-of-the-gay-rights-movement-in-chicago/>

⁸ Tracy Baim, "Gay Newspapers, an Overview," in *Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America*, ed. Tracy Baim (Chicago: Windy City Media Group, 2012), 81.

⁹ *Ibid*, 82.

¹⁰ de la Croix, 79.

community-building or the development of a group consciousness, the contents all support the notion that this was one of Gerber's goals. Walt Whitman and Oscar Wilde were both widely known to be queer, and a celebration of both their work and their lives seems to indicate an attempt to create a sense of a queer subculture and pride in a shared history, a goal shared by later famous queer journalists like Jim Kepner. The essay on green carnations as signifiers of homosexuality also reveals an understanding of a preexisting queer "language" that was understood only by fellow queer people.

The SHR was short-lived; Chicago police shut it down in 1925. Gerber and his associates were arrested, and a local newspaper ran an article about the arrests with byline "Girl Reveals Strange Sex Cult Run by Dad." Though *Friendship and Freedom*, like the SHR, was quickly shut down and declared illegal due to obscenity laws, Gerber had had an impact.¹¹ His work with the Society for Human Rights and *Friendship and Freedom* offers early evidence that the queer press operates as a central pillar within queer activism. Gerber in particular seemed to understand the importance of a queer press to the formation of a queer community; even after *Friendship and Freedom* and the Society for Human Rights were violently torn from him, he continued to write for decades, including writing articles on homosexuality in mainstream papers. He also upheld a pen-pal club's newsletter, "Contacts," which—while not exclusively for queer people—did serve as a means of communication between fellow homosexuals.¹² In the years after *Friendship and Freedom*'s demise he came into contact with several people who would later become central members of homophile-era activism, including George Mortensen and Manuel

¹¹ Unfortunately, the police destroyed all copies of *Friendship and Freedom* after they were confiscated. Baim, "Gay Newspapers," 82.

¹² Salvatore John Licata, "Gay Power: A History of the American Gay Movement, 1908-1974" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1978), 53.

Boyfrank, both of whom served as presidents of ONE, Inc.¹³ He wrote articles defending homosexuality that were published in *Chanticleer*, a short-lived publication for which he was circulation manager, and *Modern Thinker*, and he remained in touch with (if not necessarily active in) later attempts at queer activism. Gerber wrote a letter to *ONE*, signed “G.S.,” that appeared in July 1953, briefly discussing his prior attempts at a magazine and homosexual organization.¹⁴ He was later interviewed for an in-depth piece published in *ONE* magazine in 1962, detailing his experience creating Chicago’s Society for Human Rights and publishing *Friendship and Freedom*.¹⁵ It’s unsure whether or not it was his original work as founder of the first gay rights organization or his later writing that influenced later homophile activists, but whatever the reason, Harry Hay—founder of the Mattachine Society, which was in turn directly responsible for the *Mattachine Review* and indirectly responsible for *ONE*—cited Gerber as one of his main influences. According to historian John Poling, Hay built upon Gerber’s ideas of an organized society dedicated to gay rights after hearing of Gerber’s earlier work from the lover of a friend who would become one of the founding members of the Mattachine Society.¹⁶ Without Gerber’s early work, as founder of both the first American gay rights organization and gay periodical, it is unlikely that the Mattachine Society would have developed in the direction that it

¹³ Ibid, 52-53.

¹⁴ G.S., Washington, D.C., letter to editor, *ONE*, July 1953, 22. When I first found this letter, I was positive it was from Gerber due to evidence within the letter (details of employment, army experience, etc.), but couldn’t find confirmation. However, Jonathon Katz reprinted it in his section on Gerber in *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.*, rev. ed. (New York: Meridian, 1992), and in the endnote confirms that Gerber was using a pseudonym, so I defer to his expertise. Katz, 632.

¹⁵ Henry Gerber, “The Society for Human Rights—1925,” *ONE*, September 1962, 5-10. From ONE National Archives, *ONE, Incorporated Records (Coll2011-001)*, Box 9.

¹⁶ Baim, “Gay Newspapers,” 83.

did, especially in regards to its later development resulting in two of the most defining queer publications of the homophile era.

Gerber's publication of *Friendship and Freedom* illustrates that the queer press and queer activism have gone hand-in-hand in the United States since the first attempts at an organized movement. The queer press, however, also developed distinctly from queer activism, simply as a method through which gay people could keep in contact with one another. In particular, gay men during World War II used newsletters to communicate with friends who had been sent abroad. One such example is the *Myrtle Beach Bitch*, a 1943 newsletter founded by two soldiers stationed in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, to stay in touch with their gay friends in the Air Force. For the gay servicemen who received copies, "It was almost like receiving a newsletter from home."¹⁷ Like *Friendship and Freedom*, *Myrtle Beach Bitch* was quickly shut down, and within a year the two GIs who produced the newsletter were court-martialed for misusing government property, and sentenced to a year in prison.¹⁸ A similar example is *Shawger's Illiterary Digest*, a mimeographed circular that grew from an audience of three to perhaps more than a dozen. Content included gossipy tales of queer socializing, including sex, without once making a direct reference to homosexuality. Using "camp culture" language to hide its queerness behind "she" pronouns and camp names like "Bessie Backstage," *Shawger's Illiterary Digest* lasted from 1943 until the end of the war, keeping its readers both entertained and reassured that their friends were still alive.¹⁹ These circulars reflect attempts to form communication networks on a semi-public scale, blurring the line between private correspondence among friends and the

¹⁷ Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 105.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 144.

¹⁹ Meeker, *Contacts Desired*, 22-23.

public distribution of a magazine. Though neither activist nor of any particular literary value, *Myrtle Beach Bitch* and *Shawger's Illiterary Digest* showcase how queer people came to understand that the press could play a vital role in fostering a sense of community.

Like the GIs who wrote *Myrtle Beach Bitch* and *Shawger's Illiterary Digest*, Edith Eyde, better known by her pseudonym Lisa Ben (an anagram of “lesbian”), had no intentions of trying to further an activist agenda when she founded the first lesbian newspaper in the United States, *Vice Versa*, in 1947. Unlike both the GIs and Gerber, however, she had had almost no contact with gay and lesbian subculture; in fact, before moving to Los Angeles in 1946, she didn't even know the term “lesbian.” Her first interaction with lesbians involved a group of women sunbathing on the roof of the apartment she lived in, whom she overheard talking about girls. When asked if she were gay, she thought they meant “gay as in happy.”²⁰ Not interested in many lesbian activities, and particularly scared of participating in the bar scene due to the possibility of police raids, Ben had no real way of getting to know other lesbians. In multiple interviews, she has specified that she primarily started *Vice Versa* because she was lonely. In a 1993 interview with Rodger Streitmatter, author of *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (1995), she admitted that *Vice Versa* was meant as a way for her to reach out to other lesbians, saying,

I was by myself, and I wanted to be able to meet others like me. I couldn't go down the street saying: ‘I'm looking for lesbian friends.’ ... It gave me a way of reaching out to other gays—a way of getting to know other girls. I wasn't very comfortable in the bars. But when I had something to hand out and when I tried to talk girls into writing for my magazine, I no longer had any trouble going up to new people.²¹

²⁰ “Gay Gal—Lisa Ben,” in *Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights, 1945-1990: An Oral History* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1992), 6.

²¹ Rodger Streitmatter, *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (Winchester, MA: Faber and Faber, Inc., 1995), 3

For Ben, writing *Vice Versa* represented becoming comfortable with her identity, and gave her a vehicle through which she could foster a lesbian community she could happily be a part of.

Alternative media such as the queer press generally operate both in subcultural and oppositional manners, with the subcultural aspect supporting the community itself, while the oppositional aspect pushes back against mainstream coverage.²² *Vice Versa* seems to be the earliest example of the queer press developing into this model; Ben cited the mainstream press' coverage of gays people as another reason for *Vice Versa*, showing that her magazine had oppositional intentions in addition to her desire for a lesbian community.²³ Ben had read about raids in mainstream newspapers in which terms like “perverts” were used as coded phrases referring to gay people, and was deeply upset by how straight society treated homosexuality as an illness that was inherently wrong. The positive, upbeat way Ben wrote *Vice Versa* material, including the use of silly puns, and her encouragement of lesbians to develop a positive self-image was an intentional counteraction to the way gay people were covered in American newspapers.

Ben, unlike Gerber with his small group of supporters or the GIs who worked in small friend groups, operated single-handedly. As a secretary at a publishing company without a lot of work to do, but told to always *look* like she was working, Ben spent her office hours writing *Vice Versa* essays, reviews, short stories, and poems, and used the carbon printer there to make

²² Henry Ross Waring, “Media System Dependency and Identity: The Development of America’s Gay and Lesbian Alternative Media and the Transformation of Homosexuality,” (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1996), 12-13.

²³ While Gerber’s *Friendship and Freedom* likely was also operating both as a push-back against mainstream depictions of homosexuality as well as a positive attempt toward fostering community, we simply don’t have enough information regarding the contents to make a true judgment call.

copies. Due to her limited resources, Ben was only able to produce twelve copies of each of the nine issues, but her method of circulation allowed the small quantities to reach larger populations of lesbians. Ben handed out the copies by hand either to personal friends or to lesbians at bars, especially the If Club, and urged them to pass the magazine along to another “gay gal” once they were finished. In this way, while her readership remained small, each issue was able to reach an estimated several dozen women as the magazine was passed from friend to friend to friend.²⁴ *Vice Versa* only folded once the company Ben worked at was sold and she, along with many other workers, were fired. No longer having the resources that would allow her to continue publishing, she was forced to end *Vice Versa*. At that point, too, she had established a social life through friendships cultivated by *Vice Versa* and was beginning to truly discover the lesbian lifestyle; as she put it in a 1993 interview, she wanted to live the lesbian lifestyle rather than write about it.²⁵

Despite being short-lived with a small circulation, Ben had largely accomplished what she set out to do: use a magazine reach out to fellow lesbians and create a community she could comfortably be a part of. One reader wrote a letter thanking Ben, saying that while reading *Vice Versa* she truly felt the sense of belonging to a group in society. In response, Ben wrote, “This is precisely the feeling that I would like to impart through this publication—a feeling of camaraderie—that even though readers may never actually become acquainted with one another, they will find a sort of spiritual communion through this little magazine.”²⁶ *Vice Versa* had succeeded in cultivating a community through this “feeling of camaraderie” that readers shared

²⁴ This strategy continued into the 1950s and beyond, with many readers of *ONE*, *Mattachine Review*, or *The Ladder* receiving copies that were passed along to them from a friend.

²⁵ Streitmatter, 5

²⁶ Lisa Ben, “The Watchama-Column,” *Vice Versa*, November 1947, 17. From the Lesbian Herstory Archives.

with each other. This reader's letter speaks to both the queer press' efficacy in fostering community as well as a growing understanding that the queer press could be used to accomplish such a goal.

Gerber's *Friendship and Freedom*, the World War II circulars *Myrtle Beach Bitch* and *Shawger's Illiterary Digest*, and Ben's *Vice Versa* suggest the importance of media to the homophile and later queer activist movements. From the very beginning of attempts at organized queer movements in the United States, queer press has played an important role, revealing a deep understanding on the activists' parts of how media can shape opinions and create communities. While Gerber was directly influenced by an existing (and thriving) homophile press in Germany, the gay World War II servicemen were using their newsletters as an extension of one-on-one letter correspondence, and Ben had no real understanding either of a homophile press or even of a queer community. Despite their different aims—Gerber was focused primarily on activism and long-term social advancements; the gay GIs were interested purely on keeping in contact with pre-existing friends; and Ben was interested in shaping a community she could be a part of while pushing for positive lesbian representation—they all had an innate understanding that the press was a tool that, if controlled properly, could be used to alter their circumstances, create communities, and better the lives of their queer readers.

Chapter Two:

The Beginning of the Homophile Era

The 1950s saw the birth of a new era in the United States: the homophile era, defined as roughly the period between 1950 and the Stonewall Riots in 1969. The early- and mid-1950s featured the birth of the three largest, and most famous, queer rights organizations of the time, which defined the era: The Mattachine Society, ONE, Inc., and the Daughters of Bilitis. The political and cultural environment of the 1950s both contributed to the creation of these new homophile organizations and shaped the methods through which they sought to fight back against the entrenched homophobia of the era. In the turbulent post-World War II era, the mainstream media, especially newspapers and magazines, greatly expanded its coverage of homosexual men and women. For the first time, the media was discussing homosexuality was out in the open on a national scale, rather than referring to with euphemisms or ignoring it outright. However, this visibility came at a price that many homosexuals paid for with their careers, relationships, and sometimes their lives. Given the dangers of exposure, the earliest homophile activism in the fifties operated secretly. But activists very quickly learned to embrace the media and use publication as a vehicle to challenge mainstream media representations and to foster forms of homosexual consciousness that would help mobilize people for political activism. This evolution in tactics helped shape queer activism for decades. Queers in the 1950s began the long haul of turning visibility from a weapon wielded against homosexuals by the straight mainstream into a tool used by and for homosexuals to further their political agenda.

The heightened visibility of homosexuals in the mainstream media stemmed from two main factors: Alfred Kinsey's enormously popular *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948),

and the advent of the Lavender Scare in 1950.¹ Kinsey's 1948 publication, commonly referred to as the Kinsey Report, brought homosexuality to the public consciousness through shocking statistics that suggested that as much as 37 per cent of the adult male population had had at least one homosexual encounter and 4 per cent were exclusively homosexual.² According to one historian, the Kinsey Report created an even sharper divide in sexual histories than Stonewall did, as "almost overnight it created a divide between radically different eras of sexual understanding: pre-Kinsey versus post-Kinsey."³ The book was immensely controversial, but despite—or perhaps because of—that, the 1948 Kinsey Report remained on the New York Times bestseller list for several weeks. Later, the Lesbian and Gay Media Advocates would call the male Kinsey Report the impetus to "the first truly positive discussion of homosexuality in the mainstream media."⁴

The Kinsey Report also helped set the stage for the almost explosive growth of the Lavender Scare in the midst of the early Cold War. Shock that such a large portion of men in the United States had had homosexual encounters gave way to fear in the wake of a February 1950 speech given by Under Secretary of State John Peurifoy in which he stated that 91 federal employees dismissed for reasons of moral turpitude between 1947 and 1949 were homosexual. A

¹ Though less dramatically, the publication of homosexual-related literature by acclaimed authors also raised awareness of homosexuality. Early works included Gore Vidal's *The City and the Pillar* (1948); Truman Capote's *Other Voices, Other Rooms* (1948); and James Barr's *Quatrefoil* (1950). An earlier, but tremendously influential, example of queer literature gaining awareness was Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928).

² "The Psychologist—Evelyn Hooker" in *Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights, 1945-1990: An Oral History*, ed. Eric Marcus (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2002), 22.

³ C. A. Tripp, "Alfred C. Kinsey (1894-1956)," in *Before Stonewall: Activists for Gay and Lesbian Rights in Historical Context*, ed. Vern L. Bullough (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2002), 13.

⁴ Tracy Baim, "All the News That's Not Fit to Print," in *Gay Press, Gay Power*, ed. Tracy Baim (Chicago: Windy City Media Group, 2012), 24.

few months later, in June 1950, the Senate authorized a formal inquiry into the employment of “homosexuals and other moral perverts” in the government, marking the official beginning of what would become known as the Lavender Scare.⁵ Homosexuals were seen as emotionally unstable, with questionable character and moral fiber, who thus represented national security risks because they were susceptible to blackmail and intimidation by Soviet Russia. In a news article published during the first few months of the Lavender Scare, a journalist in Omaha theorized that it was “not Communists, but rather homosexuals, who pose the greatest security threat to this country.”⁶ Kinsey’s well-intentioned study of male sexuality gave ammunition to a government determined to flush out the homosexuals they perceived as infiltrating the state.

The visibility of homosexuals during the Lavender Scare brought them into more immediate danger, and on a larger scale, than they had been at any other time in American history. Magazines and newspapers on local and national distribution levels published headlines emphasized the threat homosexuals posed to the nation. “Perverts Called Government Peril” the *New York Times* announced in an exclusive article, quoting the Republican National Chairman as saying that “the sexual perverts who have infiltrated our government in recent years [were] perhaps as dangerous as the actual Communists.”⁷ Another headline warned, “Hitler Had U.S. Pervert List,” helping to spread panic that Russia, too, must have a list of all “sex deviates” employed in government positions.⁸ Another *New York Times* article told its readers that

⁵ John D’Emilio, “The Homosexual Menace: The Politics of Sexuality in Cold War America,” in *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University*, ed. John D’Emilio (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 58.

⁶ “Pervert Data Shocks Group: Senators Can’t Decide What to Do,” *World Herald* (Omaha, NE), March 30, 1950.

⁷ “Perverts Called Government Peril: Gabrielson, G.O.P. Chief, Says They Are as Dangerous as Reds—Truman’s Trip Hit,” *New York Times*, April 19, 1950.

⁸ “Hitler Had U.S. Pervert List,” *World Herald* (Omaha, NE), circa March 1950.

Communist and Nazi agents had already been in the practice of blackmailing homosexuals into becoming spies “by threatening to expose their abnormal sex activities.”⁹ While the Lavender Scare began as a scandal about the employment of homosexuals in federal employment, it also led to a broader attempt to root out and punish homosexuals far beyond the government. News articles everywhere stressed the danger of the weak moral character of homosexuals, using language such as “infiltrating,” “perverts,” and “sex deviates” to portray homosexuals as a corrupting other. Editors printed the names, addresses, and places of employments of homosexuals arrested in bar raids, ousting homosexuals not just from government jobs but also from jobs in every profession and industry.¹⁰

The Mattachine Society, the first of the “Big Three” homophile organizations, was formed in response to this atmosphere of fearmongering and uncertainty. The father of the homophile movement was Harry Hays, a member of the communist party since 1934. Hays had been contemplating creating a political organization for gay men ever since the publication of the Kinsey Report—a report he had actually interviewed for in 1940—suggested to him that there were enough homosexuals out there to be considered an organizable minority.¹¹ Hays first brought up the idea of a homosexual rights organization in 1948 at a small party of “seminarians and music students”¹² when he pondered about creating a “Bachelors for Wallace” organization that would mobilize the gay vote for the third-party presidential candidate Henry Wallace.

⁹ “Federal Vigilance on Perverts Asked: Senate Group Says They Must Be Kept Out of Government Because of Security Risk,” *New York Times*, December 16, 1950.

¹⁰ D’Emilio, “The Homosexual Menace,” 62.

¹¹ Timmons, Stuart. *The Trouble with Harry Hays: Founder of the Modern Gay Movement* (Boston, MA: Alyson Publications, 1990), 134.

¹² “Seminarians and music students” were euphemisms for homosexuals at the time.

Though the “Bachelors for Wallace” never came to fruition, the idea of an organization aimed at mobilizing homosexuals did.

His vague plans sharpened in 1950, when the stigmatizing tactics of McCarthy-era press created a sense of urgency about the social oppression of homosexuals. Hay had foreseen the scapegoating of queers, noting that they would be the likely victims of the postwar era because queers “were the one group of disenfranchised people who did not even know they were a group because they had never formed as a group.”¹³ In November 1950, Hay organized the first meeting of the as-yet-unnamed Mattachine Society at his home in Los Angeles, California. Only five men were present: Hay himself, his partner Gernreich, Bob Hull, Chuck Rowland, and Dale Jennings. Hay, Hull, and Rowland were communists; Gernreich and Jennings, though never affiliated with the party, were sympathetic to the cause.

One of the first issues the early Mattachines ran into was a complete void in semantics: there simply wasn’t yet an awareness of homosexual language that could be used in political activism. Just as a community could not be formed without a central identity, a language with which a shared experience could be discussed was also necessary.¹⁴ Determined to avoid the clinical and pathological connotations of “homosexual,” Hay and the other founders spent a lengthy period of time putting together a language that could encapsulate and shape their movement. Early options were “homeo-amative”, “homeo-entropic”, and “homeoprosphoros”—

¹³ Timmons, 135.

¹⁴ Two books which discuss in depth the need for a common language in identity-based communities are Martin Meeke’s *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s—1970s* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006); and *Gayspeak: Gay Male and Lesbian Communication*, ed. James W. Chesebro (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1981).

but the word they finally settled on was “homophile.”¹⁵ Nevertheless, the Mattachines were responsible for creating an American lexicon to describe a homosexual political and social movement that to this day is referred to as the homophile era of queer activism.

In their first mission statement from April 1951, the Mattachines declared their purposes of unifying, educating, and leading gay men. “A major purpose of the Mattachine Society,” they declared, “is to provide a consensus [sic] of principle around which all of our people can rally and from which they can derive a feeling of ‘belonging’.” Calling homosexuals “one of the largest minorities in America today,” the group declared that they were “in the process of developing a homosexual ethic... disciplined, moral, and socially responsible.” Once the homosexual minority was unified and educated (on their history, the medical and psychological research on homosexuality, and their position as a minority), the Mattachines would “push forward into the realm of political action” to fight for the social rights of homosexuals.¹⁶ The Missions and Purposes, largely the work of Harry Hay, emphasized what is perhaps the most important contribution of the 1950s homophile movement: the concept of homosexuals as a cultural minority, comparable to other oppressed minorities like African Americans, Jews, and Mexicans (all of which are referenced in the Missions and Purposes as “fellow-minorities”). Said one founding member of the Mattachine Society, “Harry is the first person I know who said that gays are a minority—an oppressed minority. This was a profound contribution, and really the heart and core of the Mattachine movement and all subsequent gay movements.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Ironically enough, it wasn’t until later that the early Mattachines realized that “homophile” had also been used by the European gay movement, as coined by Hirschfeld, since the early 20th century. Timmons, 149.

¹⁶ Mattachine Society, *Missions and Purposes*. Mission statement. 1951. From ONE National Archives, *Mattachine Society Project Collection (Coll2008-016)*, 1:5.

¹⁷ Timmons, 151.

The Mattachines began running informal discussion groups in 1951 that were advertised by word of mouth, spreading from friend to friend. These meetings were intended by the founders to become forums where they could fulfill their goals of unifying and educating gay men so as to foster a group consciousness of social oppression that would make political action possible. Despite their goal of spreading consciousness, Mattachines were secretive by necessity; due to the radical nature of the founding members and the danger of running a homosexual rights group in a particularly hostile period, they had to be careful about who they let into the fold.

It was not until Dale Jennings, one of the five founding members, was arrested and charged with lewd and dissolute behavior, a victim of entrapment policies by local police, that the Mattachines took their first steps into using the media as a tool of their activism. George Shibley, Jennings' lawyer, proposed an unprecedented strategy in his defense. Shibley had Jennings admit he was gay, but plead not guilty for all charges. In all previous cases, an admission of homosexuality was enough for a guilty sentence to be laid down; pleading "not guilty" usually meant denying all allegations of homosexuality.¹⁸ Hay was enthusiastic about using the trial to raise publicity about entrapment and homosexual rights, citing it as "the perfect opportunity to press the issue of oppression."¹⁹ The Mattachines adopted a standard Communist Party tactic, creating an ad hoc committee (the Citizens Committee to Outlaw Entrapment) to publicize the case. They sent out press releases and letters to local radios, TV stations, and newspapers. Although they were with a complete media blackout, this change in strategy

¹⁸ The only comparable case was that of Herbert Lowe, a victim of entrapment from forty years prior. He was exonerated only because he'd persistently denied being a homosexual. Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons, *Gay L.A.: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 113.

¹⁹ Timmons, 165.

reflected a new appreciation of the ways in which the media could be mobilized the further the cause of homosexual rights.

Since the mainstream media refused to publicize their case, the Mattachines took it upon themselves to “raise the homosexual issue” by distributing flyers and pamphlets in gay beaches, bars, and other social spaces. The Mattachines even got supermarket cashiers to slip the flyers unobtrusively into their clients’ grocery bags.²⁰ This marked the first time a homophile organization had used publications as an activist strategy. One flyer, entitled “Are You Left-Handed?” used the parallel between left-handedness and homosexuality to point out the absurdity of laws against homosexuality. “Whether you are [left-handed] or not,” the flyer opened, “you certainly know many who are left-handed . . . Can you imagine what it would be like if whole sections of the penal code were devoted to left-handedness, if left-handedness were made illegal and punishments varied from twenty years in prison to life?”²¹ Another flyer, “NOW is the time to fight” emphasized that the practice of entrapment of homosexuals was a threat to *all* citizens because entrapment was legitimized as an action to be wielded against all. This was a very effective strategy, and, despite the initial reluctance of discussion group members to get involved, the trial ended up garnering much attention and support from local homosexuals. The 1952 trial ended in a deadlock, with all but one juror voting for an acquittal. A retrial was ordered, but the Defense Attorney decided to drop charges a few days later—a major win for the Mattachine Society and for homosexuals in general, even if Shibley and Hay were disappointed that they did not actually win the trial.²² “Victory!” crowed a flyer released in the

²⁰ John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940—1970* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 70.

²¹ Mattachine Society, *Are You Left-Handed?* Pamphlet. 1952. From ONE National Archives, *Mattachine Society Project Collection (Coll2008-016)*, 1:8.

²² D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics*, 71.

aftermath of the case; “You didn’t see it in the papers, but it could -- and did -- happen in L.A.: In a victory unique for California Dale Jennings defended himself against entrapment by the L.A. police and won!”²³

The Jennings trial marked a decisive turning point in Mattachine history. Not just did it mark the Mattachines’ first foray into political action and use of media as a weapon to further homosexual rights, but their strategy of publicity had paid off, and membership skyrocketed. By 1953, Mattachine membership had spread throughout California. By mid-1953, an estimated 2,000 homosexuals and straight allies were participating in dozens of discussion groups. Jim Kepner, an activist who later became one of the most prolific journalists in the homophile press, remembered participating in his first discussion group in 1952, where about 180 people were crammed into the living room, with yet more seated on the stairs and the landing above.²⁴ The surging popularity of the Mattachines inspired the founding members to declare a not-for-profit educational organization in California known officially as the Mattachine Foundation. Their declaration as a non-profit was intended to allay the fears of newcomers regarding the sponsors of discussion groups and activities, offer an acceptable front for reaching out to society, and act as a vehicle of campaigning for homosexual rights. Their sudden explosive growth, however, exacerbated internal conflict and put a strain on the communist-inspired cell structure, leading to schisms that began with the formation of ONE, Inc., in October 1952.²⁵

²³ Citizens’ Committee to Outlaw Entrapment (Mattachine Foundation, Inc.), *Victory!* Pamphlet. 1952. From ONE National Archives, *Mattachine Society Project Collection (Coll2008-016)*, 1:8.

²⁴ “News Hound—Jim Kepner,” in *Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights, 1945-1990: An Oral History*, ed. Eric Marcus (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2002), 48.

²⁵ John D’Emilio, “Dreams Deferred: The Birth and Betrayal of America’s First Gay Liberation Movement,” in *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University*, ed. John D’Emilio (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 36.

The splitting-off of ONE, Inc. from the Mattachine Society was the result of numerous internal conflicts regarding the direction of future social activism. The Mattachines believed that discussion groups were enough of a vehicle to mobilize a group consciousness, while ONE, Inc., founders believed the best method of creating a homosexual consciousness for political action would be through publication. Martin Block, one of the founding members of ONE, Inc., recalled his friend Johnny Button complaining at one of the discussion groups, “You know, this whole thing is a lot of shit. We sit here talking and talking. ... Why don’t we do something real? Why don’t we start a journal or a magazine or something?”²⁶

The Mattachine Society as it had been known in the first few years of the 1950s ultimately was taken over by conservative forces, a result both of the sudden influx of members and of negative publicity in the mainstream press which intimated the group had communist connections, and by 1954 most of the radical founding members had left the Society behind, either distancing themselves from the movement in disgust or realigning themselves with more radical movements.²⁷ ONE, Inc. was the perfect repository for the last of the radical influences of the Mattachine Society. Martin Block, Dale Jennings, Jim Kepner, and other early members of the Mattachine Society poured their energy into the creation of *ONE Magazine*, which released its first issue in January 1953 with the byline “The Homosexual Magazine.” Presented as by and for homosexuals, *ONE* took the energy that made the discussion groups so popular and reformed it into a vehicle that could reach far larger numbers of people. Though Mattachine Society was

²⁶ “The Editor—Martin Block,” in *Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights, 1945-1990: An Oral History*, ed. Eric Marcus (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2002), 40.

²⁷ For a thorough rundown of this “conservative takeover,” see Chapter Five in D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics* (1983).

the first—and the biggest—homophile organization of the 1950s, it was ONE, Inc. and their magazine that truly began to make the homophile movement national.

As the homophile movement moved forward, organizations increasingly turned to the burgeoning queer press as one of their primary tools for combatting oppression and anti-homosexual attitudes. The Mattachine Society started the shift in this direction with their use of flyers, pamphlets, and media outreach during the Jennings trial, and the founders of *ONE* took that idea and ran with it. ONE, Inc. would develop the queer press as a central pillar in the homophile movement, using it in ways that built upon early Mattachine discussion group goals: creating a homosexual identity and community, and building a sustained homophile movement.

Chapter Three:

ONE and the Rise of the Queer Press

In May 1953, a quaint, cheaply-bound magazine with simplistic geometric cover art began appearing on Los Angeles and New York newsstands. A passerby's eyes would easily slide past the small offering, less than half the size of the typical magazine format at a nearly-square five-by-six inches. Less than 40 pages long, sold for 25¢, and small enough to slip discreetly into a coat pocket, *ONE* was not an eye-catching publication. Despite the innocuous cover, at times poor printing, and uninspired cover images, however, *ONE* represented one of the most radical attempts at homophile activism: a magazine, written by and for queer people, that was meant to be “a propaganda device to put the homosexual point of view across.”¹ More than just introducing the homosexual viewpoint—the phrase which would become the magazine's byline by 1954—*ONE* intended to help shape grassroots homosexual activism. As early as April 1953, the manifesto on the inside cover stated that *ONE* “offers no pat solution to the problems of the homosexual, but hopes its readers may be stimulated into making their own and acting upon them.”²

As the first, and largest, major homophile-era queer publication, *ONE* set a precedent in tone, content, and role in the movement that would influence the other two primary publications of the 1950s: The Mattachine Society's *Mattachine Review* and the Daughters of Bilitis' *The Ladder*. *ONE* expanded upon early attempts to develop a queer press and brought press activism

¹ *Editor's Report*. Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1958. From ONE National Archives, *ONE, Incorporated Records (Coll2011-001)*, 1:2.

² *ONE Magazine*, Apr 1953. From ONE National Archives, *ONE, Incorporated Records (Coll2011-001)*, Box 9.

to an unprecedented centrality in the fight for queer rights. *ONE* also offered many queer writers, such as Jim Kepner, Barbara Grier, and Stella Rush, the stepping point off which they began their long careers as journalists and press activists. Perhaps most importantly, *ONE*'s legal battles with the Post Office regarding the supposed obscenity of their material, ending in a Supreme Court decision that homosexuality in print was not inherently obscene, paved the way for the proliferation of queer publications in later years. *ONE*'s own struggles with obscenity charges helped create an environment in which later queer publishers could safely circulate their materials without fear of legal repercussions, which was crucial for the establishment of a mnemonic capacity that could support a sustained social movement. Mnemonic capacity is defined by Armstrong and Crage in their essay "The Making of the Stonewall Myth" as the skills and resources, particularly publishing capacity and media connections, necessary for commemoration of and organization around particular events.³ In protecting the legal rights of the queer press, *ONE* set the stage for the development of the gay liberation movement in 1969. *ONE* developed a mature model of the queer press which operated both subculturally, looking inward to provide positive images of and information for homosexuals, and oppositionally, looking outward to rally against discrimination.⁴ In all, *ONE* was important not just because they were the first major homophile magazine and acted as a critical influence upon later publications, but because they proved that the press was an effective means of mobilizing homosexual political and social action, and created an environment in which it became safe to do so.

³ E. A. Armstrong & S. M. Crage, "Moments and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth," in *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 5 (2006): 726.

⁴ In his thesis, Waring writes that subcultural alternative media answers the question "who we are" while oppositional alternative media answers "why we are different" and "who we oppose." *ONE* does all three. Henry Ross Waring, "Media System Dependency and Identity: The Development of America's Gay and Lesbian Alternative Media and the Transformation of Homosexuality," (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1996), 35.

Dale Jennings' trial was the incendiary spark for the rise of ONE, Inc.⁵ and *ONE*'s initial popularity. The reluctance of Mattachine discussion group members to mobilize visibly around the trial, lack of media coverage despite press releases drafted by the Mattachines, and first tentative uses of media through the press releases as well as flyers that were distributed in gay bars set the stage for a new direction in homophile activism. Mattachine members' reluctance to do more than host "stitch-and-bitch clubs" wore on the nerves of more politically-minded individuals who were eager to move out of the discussion groups.⁶ This reluctance seemed to indicate that there was a lack of queer consciousness, and that discussion groups weren't enough to cultivate the sense of community which was needed to sustain a social movement. A new tactic was necessary.

Chief among the discontented Mattachines who would form the initial core group of ONE, Inc. was Dale Jennings himself. Despite being one of the founding members of the Mattachine Society, Jennings had been frustrated with their lack of action for some time, but the concrete idea of creating a homosexual magazine wasn't brought up until an October 1952 Mattachine discussion group meeting—the same meeting wherein Johnny Button complained, "Why don't we do something real?" The host for the October meeting had tentatively suggested the creation of a monthly magazine to provide a forum through which readers could be educated on homosexuality, but the next day quickly rescinded his suggestion and resigned as group

⁵ *ONE*'s staff did not officially incorporate their organization until almost a year after the first issue was published.

⁶ Don Slater, one of the founding members of *ONE*, had avoided the Mattachine Society because he considered it a "stitch and bitch club" where queens met to gossip. Of the people who met on October 22, 1952 to more seriously discuss starting a magazine, he was the only one who hadn't previously been a member of the Mattachine Society. C. Todd White, *Pre-Gay L.A.: A Social History of the Movement for Homosexual Rights* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 31.

leader.⁷ However, his remarks spurred on group members, who quickly mobilized. Jennings, along with fellow Mattachine founder Chuck Rowland, and three others met a week later to seriously discuss putting together a magazine. Within a month, after fierce debates, they had their name, taken from the Thomas Carlyle quote, “a mystic bond of brotherhood makes all men one.”⁸ The founders were passionate about their cause, and work went quickly; the first issue of *ONE* was published only a few months later in January 1953, and distributed through bohemian bars and neighborhoods in downtown Los Angeles.⁹ The founders capitalized upon the Jennings trial, which had spread through word of mouth and flyers printed by the Mattachine Society, in order to drum up support for their magazine, and the first issue included an article written by Jennings himself regarding his experiences with the trial and its aftermath.

From the beginning, the founders of ONE, Inc. made an effort, however nominal, at diversity; early discussions regarding their nine-person voting board called for at least three of those members to be women, and another three to be people of color (one black, one Asian, and one of another racial or ethnic minority).¹⁰ Their determination to represent the diverse interests of homosexuals extended to their policies of publishing conflicting opinions from readers and ensuring that their readers would feel safe sharing their thoughts in a public space. They welcomed not just homosexual or homophile readers, but heterosexual readers as well; they

⁷ Paul D. Cain, *Leading the Parade: Conversations with America's Most Influential Lesbians and Gay Men* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2002), 5.

⁸ The quote was proposed by Bailey Whitaker AKA Guy Rousseau, a young black Mattachine and a founding member of *ONE*. C. Todd White, *Pre-Gay L.A.*, 34.

⁹ C. Todd White, “Drama, Power and Politics: *ONE* Magazine, *Mattachine Review* and *The Ladder* in the Era of Homophile Activism,” in *Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America*, ed. Tracy Baim (Chicago, IL: Windy City Media Corp, 2012), 142.

¹⁰ C. Todd White, *Pre-Gay L.A.: A Social History of the Movement for Homosexual Rights* (IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 34.

would sometimes publish the letters from heterosexual readers, a mix of academics interested in the topic, average people who'd seen the magazine on the street, or heterosexual friends of queer readers. These letters ranged in tone from contemplative to hostile to analytical. Although the magazine was undeniably *for* homosexuals, other readers were encouraged. After all, *ONE* founders believed, it was through the education not just of its homosexual readers, but of a heterosexual majority as well, that social change would occur. This was a viewpoint that would be shared by the later *Mattachine Review* and *The Ladder*, both of which also focused on education of both a queer and straight audience as an activist tactic. The content of *ONE*, however, varied more broadly than in either *Mattachine Review* or *The Ladder*, reflecting their desire to represent the diverse opinions and interests of the burgeoning homosexual community.

Jim Kepner, a staff writer for *ONE* who would become one of the homophile era's biggest names in journalism, once accused W. Dorr Legg (*ONE*'s editor, also known as William Lambert) of having "no interest in editorial quality. It would have been fine with him simply to reprint the phonebook." Upon hearing Kepner's criticism, Legg, not particularly bothered, shrugged and agreed. While his reasons for the lack of quality were more personal—he was more interested in "building the finest library and educational institution for homophile studies the world would ever know" than he was in publishing *ONE*¹¹—the indiscriminate publishing of polished, well-written pieces alongside unedited, poorly-written material actually reflected what was at once *ONE*'s greatest strength and flaw: for much of their printed material, *ONE* relied upon reader submissions. This was not necessarily for lack of written material, as *ONE*'s writing staff included several talented, verbose journalists who would write under multiple pseudonyms, a strategy that both obscured their identity and gave the impression of having a larger writing

¹¹ Cain, *Leading the Parade*, 6.

staff than they actually did. Rather, *ONE* advocated for an inclusive homosexual journalism with a magazine that purported to be the voice of the greater queer community; as they wrote in one early issue, “The point of all this is, of course, what do *you* think? *ONE* is your voice. Use it!”¹²

ONE's claim of being the vehicle through which the average homosexual or otherwise queer reader could amplify their voice was not unsubstantiated. More so than any other homophile-era publication, *ONE* acted as a conversation, blurring the line between reader and writer. Between December 1953 and May 1954, *ONE* received 102 submissions (poetry, fiction, and non-fiction alike) and published 24, which was an impressive accept rate for six issues, each of which ran under 40 pages. Non-fiction submissions, including articles, opinion pieces, and self-reflection, made up the bulk of accepted material, with 18 out of 33 submitted pieces published between December and May.¹³ These numbers support *ONE*'s claim of acting as the voice of the United States' queer population; by prioritizing non-fiction pieces above prose or poetry, they helped broadcast the opinions of their readers about relevant issues without shying away from controversial material.¹⁴

It's possible that the writers and editors of *ONE* sometimes published their own or submitted controversial articles in order to stir up conversation among their readers. In one such example, in the February 1953 issue of *ONE*, Dale Jennings, writing under the pseudonym Jeff Winters, wrote a harshly-worded article about Christine Jorgensen, the first American trans

¹² *ONE Magazine*, May 1953. From ONE National Archives, *ONE, Incorporated Records (Coll2011-001)*, Box 9.

¹³ ONE, Inc., *Meeting Minutes*. 8 May 1954. From ONE National Archives, *ONE, Incorporated Records (Coll2011-001)*, 2:2.

¹⁴ *ONE* also had a more concrete reason for prioritizing nonfiction, which was that they had been advised by their attorney that fiction could more easily be labeled as obscene and get them into legal trouble.

public figure.¹⁵ Using he/him pronouns and refusing to call Jorgensen a woman, Jennings essentially blamed Jorgensen for helping propagate the idea that homosexuals were just men with female spirits. Subsequent issues featured strongly opinionated letters, one of which was “shocked at your giving space to the intolerant Mr. Winters in his jaundiced and cheap attack on Christine Jorgensen.” In a short response to the writer, P.E., *ONE* wrote, “The editors are shocked that P.E. is shocked. *ONE*, in giving space to both Jeff Winters and P.E.’s reaction to him, maintains its policy of allowing to be heard all who wish to speak.”¹⁶ Though the material could be at times remarkably insensitive, *ONE* stayed true to their word and gave a platform to as many people as they could fit in their slim issues. By doing so, they both prevented *ONE* from having one clear stance on many issues, allowing their readers to formulate their own opinions, and gained their readers’ trust as a magazine that would always do its best to present the unfiltered opinions of their readers. It’s no surprise, then, that in 1954 a national publication dubbed *ONE* “The Voice of the U.S. Homosexual.” There was, however, a less noble, and slightly embarrassing, reason for their lack of a clear policy. In 1965, publications manager Manuel Boyfrank admitted that one reason it took so long for *ONE* to sponsor regular editorials in the magazine was “because it took that long to acquire some clearly defined positions of editorial caliber.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Christine Jorgensen, born George Jorgensen, Jr., was the first person to both receive hormone-based treatment and undergo a sex realignment operation, the latter of which she underwent in Denmark. She was revealed to the public in the *New York Daily News* article “Ex-GI Becomes Blond Beauty” in December 1952. She became a public sensation, and used her popularity to raise awareness of gender issues such as hers, then known as transvestism or transsexualism (both of which are now outdated terms).

¹⁶ “Letters,” *ONE*, April 1953, 21. From ONE National Archives, *ONE, Incorporated Records (Coll2011-001)*, Box 9.

¹⁷ Manuel Boyfrank, *Publications Division Report*, Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1965, 15. From ONE National Archives, *ONE, Incorporated Records (Coll2011-001)*, 1:9.

Although *ONE* gave priority to its readers' non-fiction submissions, due to popular demand they occasionally published issues that were devoted strictly to creative writing, the first of which was published in December 1953. They also began to offer annual contests for creative submissions. This willingness to publish fiction attracted major writers such as Norman Mailer and Clarkson Crane, both of whom wrote original stories for the magazine.¹⁸ By including fiction written by and for queer people, *ONE* gave its readers' talents the platform they needed to flex their skills and, in some cases, acted as a stepping-stone for publication in other venues. Furthermore, their inclusion of creative writing by queer writers establishes a connection that stretched back not just to Lisa Ben and *Vice Versa*, but even further back to Henry Gerber's short-lived *Friendship and Freedom*, in which one issue he published a poem by Walt Whitman, somewhat of a queer icon even then. The defining factors of the queer alternative press were slowly emerging, and among them was the propensity for including creative work by queer people—a tactic that not just showcased their community's talents, but also helped develop a sense of queer culture.

ONE's inclusion of fiction is not just noteworthy because it reflects the developing notion of a queer press. Equally important is that they only began including fiction more regularly because their readers asked them to. This reflects one of *ONE*'s most unique and effective policies: that of creating a forum in which queer voices could be heard, and wherein a true dialogue was created. *ONE* urged their readers to submit letters, stories, personal essays, and other content because its publishers truly wanted to hear from readers and open up a discussion with them. And when they were critiqued, they listened. In the August 1953 issue, *ONE*'s editors published a letter from a lesbian expressing disappointment that *ONE* seemed male-dominated

¹⁸ Streitmatter, 25.

and asking for a feminine viewpoint. The letter was published under the headline “For Men Only?” and began, “For six months I have been subscribing to a man’s magazine. I thought it was going to be a magazine for all homosexuals.” She concluded by saying, “Perhaps you would welcome the feminine view point. I’m sure we have much to offer it would be acceptable to ONE.”¹⁹

ONE’s response came in February 1954, when they printed a special issue entitled “The Feminine Viewpoint.” The inside cover read, “The entire content of this special issue was prepared exclusively by women with the intention of furthering understanding among ourselves, and between ourselves and all others.”²⁰ Inside were short stories, poems, personal essays—all the usual *ONE* content, but with no male contributors. The name was directly lifted from J.P.’s letter when she mused if *ONE* would be open to more gender-inclusive content. *ONE* later began to publish a regular section, “The Feminine Viewpoint: By and About Women,” with a separate (female) editor who published only materials (as the title suggests) by and about women. Despite their regular attempts at inclusion, readers continued to complain, to the point that the editor, Ann Carll Reid, wrote a missive entitled “To the Women of *ONE*” in response. Answering their question “Why doesn’t *ONE* magazine have more for the lesbian?” Reid wrote, “It’s a question easily answered. The women do **not** support *ONE* with stories, poems, book reviews and, mainly, articles. Now **I’d** like to ask “WHY.”” In the rest of the article, she examined why women might feel less inclined than men to submit materials, citing shame, apprehension, complacency, or the comparatively less violence lesbians faced as possible reasons. Ultimately,

¹⁹ J.P., “For Men Only?” *ONE*. Aug 1953. From ONE National Archives, *ONE, Incorporated Records (Coll2011-001)*, Box 9.

²⁰ Editor’s Note. *ONE*. Feb 1954. From ONE National Archives, *ONE, Incorporated Records (Coll2011-001)*, Box 9.

though, no matter the reason, Reid urged readers to raise their voices, to “drive away your prudery! Thrust hesitancy into a corner! Let us wage the most modern war: a bloodless one. ONE magazine is the artillery; **your** ideas, **your** ink the ammunition. Neither does much good without the other.”²¹ Reid’s statement is one of the clearest examples of how homophile activists at the time understood the queer press. She acknowledged that the queer press could be used as a weapon, but also pointed out that without reader participation in the form of submitted ink and ideas, it was essentially useless. On the other hand, people’s ideas did little good if they couldn’t be disseminated and expanded upon through the queer press. This exemplifies the understanding of homophile activists that the queer press operated by, for, and through the community in a reciprocal relationship wherein readers gave the press its platform, and the press gave people’s words their power.

ONE paid careful attention to their writers, relying on their input for the magazine’s content—not just in reader-submitted essays and creative writing, but in comments on directions in which *ONE* should go. At the same time, they uplifted their readers’ voices and urged them to interact and share their opinions. Reid’s call to arms, while dramatic, was in many ways the undeniable truth. *ONE* relied upon its readers as much as their readers replied upon it. As Reid pointed out, artillery without ammunition is pointless. Only through the cultivation of a close relationship between magazine and reader, inclusive of gender, could the queer press be used to its full potential.

Considering *ONE* was the first queer magazine to reach a substantial audience, much can be ascertained by examining their readers’ responses to the publication. Publishing a queer

²¹ Ann Carll Reid, “To the Women of *ONE*,” *ONE*, March 1956. From ONE National Archives, *ONE, Incorporated Records (Coll2011-001)*, Box 9.

magazine in 1953 was undeniably a controversial action, one that was not necessarily supported by all *ONE*'s readers. However, the responses, both positive and negative, reveal how queer people were thinking of the press both in terms of identity and community, as well as in terms of its use as "artillery" in the fight against oppression. Since *ONE* was the first experience many readers had with queer publications, for many it was a light in the dark, an assurance that they weren't alone.²² One woman, using the common imagery of illumination, wrote:

Your wonderful magazine has found its way into my dark hermit's cave and seems to shed a great ray of light. ... We who have dreamed and have remained true to our moral standards have but lain in wait to answer the call that we have known in our hearts must someday come. Your magazine IS the call and I with the others am here, fresh from my cave, to do all and everything I can to help.²³

Her words express not just the positive emotional reaction she had to experiencing a sensation of community, with the magazine finding its way into her "dark hermit's cave," but also her understanding of *ONE* as a call to action. For her, *ONE* represented both community as well as the promise of mobilization as other isolated readers, fresh from their caves, stood with her ready "to do all and everything" they could to help. Other letters reflected similar feelings of community and the stirrings of mobilization. Another writer expressed that "**O**ne is more than a magazine to me. It's a vehicle through which communion is made with thousands of brothers whose outlook, ideals, problems, etc. are

²² *ONE* received thousands of letters over the years it was published, and most, if not all, of them are preserved in the *ONE* National Archives. Craig Loftin's work sifting through the correspondence resulted in two compilations of unpublished letters: *Letters to One: Gay and Lesbian Voices from the 1950s and 1960s* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2012); and *Masked Voices: Gay Men and Lesbians in Cold War America* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2012).

²³ West Los Angeles, Calif., letter to editor, *ONE*, June 1954, 26. From *ONE* National Archives, *ONE, Incorporated Records (Coll2011-001)*, Box 9.

my own.”²⁴ Even for readers who had in-person contact with queer circles wrote in to say how much they appreciated *ONE*, an indication that the queer press operated more than just as a vehicle for community building, but also as a promise of mobilization for action. One thoughtful writer, who’d received a copy of *ONE* through the host of a party he’d attended, wrote that he, “sat right down and read it cover to cover. I cannot tell you how deeply moved I was when I finished. ... Your magazine ... has given me the hope that perhaps my ideas are not so impossible after all.”²⁵ Like the woman who was ready to emerge from her hermit’s cave, this man saw *ONE* as an indication of better things to come.

Not everyone who wrote in expressed positive feelings, however, indicating that although there were many queers for whom *ONE* represented solidarity and progress, there were others who derided the idea of a queer press. A letter that had been sent even prior to publication, and was published in the first issue, wrote angrily, “Why in hell are you idiots drawing a lot of attention to us by starting a magazine? Prejudice will fade away all alone if we don’t make things worse by fighting it.”²⁶ The writer’s fear that *ONE* would draw attention to homosexuals was valid, of course; in 1953, the visibility of the Lavender Scare still hung over every queer person’s shoulder. Safety was only ensured if nobody knew you were a homosexual.

²⁴ Mr. R, Williamsburg, Virginia., letter to editor, *ONE*, Oct-Nov 1956, 38. From ONE National Archives, *ONE, Incorporated Records (Coll2011-001)*, Box 9.

²⁵ K.R., Idaho, letter to editor, *ONE*, February 1953, 19. From ONE National Archives, *ONE, Incorporated Collection (Coll2011-001)*, Box 9.

²⁶ Savannah, Georgia, letter to editor, *ONE*, January 1953, 22. From ONE National Archives, *ONE, Incorporated Collection (Coll2011-001)*, Box 9.

Many homosexuals simply weren't ready to come out of their hermit's caves, and for those who *were* ready, there were many who vehemently disagreed that a magazine was the best way forward. One such individual, the anonymous A.X., submitted a scathing diatribe printed in July 1953 under the headline "Six Reasons Why 'Your Little Magazine Won't Last.'" A.X. scoffed, "Rational people dislike the spectacle of wasted energy. ONE is just such a spectacle in 3D, color and on the big, new screen." He went on to pick apart the magazine, citing its lack of a clear argument, questioning the ability of the magazine's writers and editors, expressing incredulity that there was anything to print about homosexuals, pointing out the practical money issue, and wondering why anybody should even care about *ONE*. A.X. concluded that, "Were [the inclusive homosexual] to put his defiance into informed protest instead of egg-sized cuff-links, nothing could stop him. As it is, everything does and will. He's just not worth the bother."²⁷ This sort of bitter disillusionment with homosexuals whom the writer perceives as shallow and selfish reflected a common opinion that homosexuals simply weren't ready to organize. As *ONE* grew in the coming years, however they provided an example of a successful, coherent effort of homophile organization which inspired their readers and helped cultivate a sense of responsibility, community, and capability. Furthermore, their more objective victories gave a concrete example of homophile activism done successfully, and built the steps that would lead to gay liberation.

²⁷ A.X., "Six Reasons Why 'Your Little Magazine Won't Last'," *ONE*, July 1953, 2-7. From ONE National Archives, *ONE, Incorporated Collection (Coll2011-001)*, Box 9. The editors introduced the piece by writing, "A.X. went to a lot of trouble to write ONE's epitaph which mentions neither rest nor peace. Try it for size."

The October 1953 issue of *ONE Magazine* featured an unusual cover image overseen by the headline “ONE is not grateful.” An arrow pointed to a text box which opened by informing its readers that their August issue, with the cover announcing the topic of homosexual marriage, had been late because postal authorities in Washington and Los Angeles had the issue “under a microscope.” Two more text boxes filled in the story; that after the Post Office had recalled their August issue on grounds of obscenity, ultimately the authorities had been forced to grudgingly admit that there was nothing inherently obscene about the magazine’s contents. The copies were released from holding, and *ONE* was free to mail out their August issues without further trouble.

However, the staff of ONE, Inc. was not impressed. They wrote,

The admission is welcome, but it’s tardy and far from enough. As we sit around quietly like nice little ladies and gentlemen gradually educating the public and the courts at our leisure, thousands of homosexuals are being unjustly arrested, blackmailed, fined, jailed, intimidated, beaten, ruined and murdered. ONE’s victory might seem big and historic as you read of it in the comfort of your home (locked in the bathroom? hidden under a stack of other magazines? sealed first class?). But the deviate hearing of our late August issue through jail bars will not be overly impressed. There’s still a bit to be done. Want to help?²⁸

Unimpressed by this “victory” and reminded of their own flaws, *ONE* criticized their own activism, for sitting around quietly “like nice little ladies and gentlemen.” Subsequent issues began to deal with issues of more concrete value, informing their readers of their rights in case of arrest, describing in general lay terms the law on various topics related to homosexuality, and exploring methods in which homosexuals could organize to fight back.

Announcing this “victory,” however, occurred too soon, because a year later *ONE* was once again detained despite having adopted the policy of having their lawyer, Eric Julber, read

²⁸ Cover, *ONE Magazine*. October 1953. From ONE National Archives, *ONE, Incorporated Collection (Coll2011-001)*, Box 9.

over issue multiple times in order to ensure there was nothing that could be declared obscene.²⁹ Federal officials targeted specifically a 4-page lesbian romance, “Sappho Remembered,” which featured the shockingly intimate scene of one woman touching her knee to her love interest’s. An FBI officer described the scene as “lustfully stimulating to the average homosexual reader.”³⁰ (The short story also, unlike more “acceptable” lesbian pulp novels, did not end with tragedy.) The other article declared obscene was the poem “Lord Samuel and Lord Montagu,” which poked fun at British uproar regarding the arrests of several prominent men for homosexuality, which an editor later admitted was a risky move, but one they couldn’t resist. Lastly, the government contended that an advertisement for a Swiss homophile publication, *Der Kreiss*, gave “information for obtaining obscene material.”³¹

It’s likely that the obscenity charge was less related to *ONE*’s content and more the result of a personal interest by FBI and Post Office officials in shutting down the magazine. The senator of Wisconsin and Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Alexander Wiley, had come across the March 1954 issue, which celebrated the difference of homosexuals. He sent a furious letter to the U.S. Postmaster General Arthur Summerfield saying that allowing a homosexual magazine to be dispersed by the nation’s mailing system ran “utterly contrary” to moral principles, their intentions to protect American youths, and the entire government security program.³² The FBI had kept tabs on *ONE* since before the first issue had even been published.

²⁹ Joyce Murdoch and Deb Price, *Courting Justice: Gay Men and Lesbians v. The Supreme Court* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2001), 29.

³⁰ Rodger Streitmatter, *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (Winchester, MA: 1995), 35.

³¹ Murdoch and Price, 32-33.

³² *Ibid*, 40.

Senators, FBI, and Post Office officials alike had waited for the opportune moment to strike, and this was it.

Unlike when their August 1953 issue had been seized, the staff of *ONE* were not initially worried. After all, the August 1953 issue had been deemed not obscene after only a few weeks. This time, however, the Los Angeles Post Office upheld the charge of obscenity. With their attorney's help, ONE, Inc. filed suit against the Los Angeles post-master Olesen. They lost two cases in quick succession, but ONE's attorney managed to file a petition to the U.S. Supreme Court in June 1957. ONE, Inc. heard nothing for months. Then, in mid-January 1958, *ONE* began to receive phone calls regarding their Supreme Court victory. Jim Kepner had to confirm that they'd won the case by reading a short blurb about it in *The New York Times* on page 35. No one at *ONE*, including their attorney, had even known their case had been accepted.³³ In full, the Supreme Court opinion supporting the primary holding that "speech in favor of homosexuals is not inherently obscene" read only, "The Petition for writ of certiorari is granted and the judgment of the United States Court of Appeal for the Ninth Circuit is reversed."³⁴

In the February 1958 issue of *ONE*, Don Slater published an editorial entitled "Victory! Supreme Court Upholds Homosexual Rights" in which he wrote,

By winning this decision ONE Magazine has made not only history but law as well and has changed the future for all U.S. homosexuals. Never before have homosexuals claimed their right as citizens. ... ONE Magazine no longer asks for that right to be heard; it now exercises that right. It further requires that homosexuals be treated as a proper part of society free to discuss and educate and propagandize their beliefs with no greater limitations than for any other group.³⁵

³³ Ibid, 47. For a full account of their post office battle, see Chapter One of Murdoch and Price, *Courting Justice: Gay Men and Lesbians v. The Supreme Court* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2001).

³⁴ ONE, Incorporated, v. Olesen 355 U.S. 371 [1958]. Accessed <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/355/371/#annotation>.

³⁵ Don Slater, "Victory! Supreme Court Upholds Homosexual Rights," *ONE*, February 1958, 17. From ONE National Archives, *ONE, Incorporated Records (Coll2011-001)*, Box 9.

Though celebratory of the quiet victory *ONE* and homosexuals at large had won with the Supreme Court case, Slater made no pretenses that the battle for homosexual rights was over. Even in the immediate aftermath of victory, he was thinking ahead to when *ONE* would have to continue to fight for homosexuals to be given the same rights as any other American citizen. In the meantime, though, *ONE* would continue its fight “to bring about understanding, acceptance, and status for the group [of homosexuals], to chart its history, to report through news and fiction and science etc. the growth of the movement, the position and place and lives of homosexuals everywhere.”

In the two years *ONE* was published before first *Mattachine Review* and then *The Ladder* were founded, it developed a mature model of the queer alternative press which served both to reinforce a homosexual identity around which a community coalesced, and to offer examples of political action. By the end of the 1950s, *ONE* had settled firmly into its position as a leader in the nascent homophile press. However, a national homophile movement could not be sustained with just one magazine. Try as they might, *ONE* could not truly reflect the voices of *all* its readers, let alone all the homosexuals in America. Instead, as the homophile movement blossomed, the queer press began to diversify, representing demographics that *ONE* didn't necessarily appeal to. With the addition of *Mattachine Review* and *The Ladder* in 1955 and 1956, respectively, the queer press spread throughout the nation, creating communication networks which brought readers out of their hermit caves, cultivating a politically-oriented shared consciousness across the nation.

Chapter Four:

Diversifying the Queer Press in the Homophile Era

By the mid-1950s, a fledgling queer press was forming at the center of the homophile movement. With *ONE Magazine* leading the way, the Mattachine Society's *Mattachine Review* and the Daughter of Bilitis' *The Ladder* soon emerged as the next steps in building a robust queer press that could, and would, unite queer individuals across the United States and even internationally. With the introduction of the *Mattachine Review* in 1955 and founding of *The Ladder* in 1956, it became clear that press activism was becoming a fully intentional, coherent, and even necessary part of the homophile movement. In the latter half of the 1950s and into the 1960s, these early publications struggled to define the role of press activism and create a new genre of American journalism which Don Slater referred to as homosexual journalism. Despite differences that were at times quite drastic, causing both inter- and intra-organization conflict, *ONE*, *The Ladder*, and the *Mattachine Review* stood arm-in-arm as an interconnected effort to escalate the homophile movement to a national scale.

Leading figures in both the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis, Hal Call and Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon respectively, were professional journalists, making them unique candidates for leading homophile organizations. Their experiences with publishing shaped the steps they took as an organization to achieve their goal. As journalists, they had first-hand experience with the efficacy of publications in disseminating information, and as activists and members of a largely isolated, hidden minority, they were aware of how important it was for queer people to see themselves in publications.

Certain trends—including the focus on personal essays and fiction; a dedication to education of both homosexual and heterosexual readers; letters to editors; and homosexual-related news coverage—developed that existed across all three publications and came to define homophile-era homosexual journalism. Key differences, however, ensured that each publication reached an audience that, though overlapping, remained unique and expanded the homophile movement’s influence to a diverse, nationwide readership. Unlike *ONE*, which purported to be a forum reflecting the diverse voices of the homophile community in its entirety, *Mattachine Review* and *The Ladder* were aimed at more specific audiences. *Mattachine Review* was more “high-brow,” with a comparatively serious tone and content, intended for a professional audience. *The Ladder*, on the other hand, was the only publication specifically for lesbians, and it sought to form a community that was at once separate from and within the larger homophile community. By appealing to particular demographics, *Mattachine Review* and *The Ladder* reflected a growing acknowledgment of the diversity of the homophile movement and queer individuals, and of the importance of the press as a tool which could reach disparate audiences.

For *Mattachine Review*, education and outreach were their primary goals. These were values that emerged during the transition from communist roots to a conservative leadership, as discussed in Chapter Two. In the words of Chuck Rowland, founding member of the *Mattachines*, the “conservative insurgents” believed that queer people would only ever have equal rights “by being nice, quiet, polite little boys that our maiden aunts would have approved of,” who would never do something “naughty like having picket signs or parades.”¹ Harsh as his words were, there was an element of truth to them. The new leadership distanced themselves

¹ “The Organizer—Chuck Rowland,” in *Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights 1945-1990: An Oral History*, ed. Eric Marcus (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2002), 34-35.

from Hay's notion of a homosexual minority with a distinct culture and abandoned collective action to instead place responsibility on the individual to change his behavior to become more "acceptable to society in general and compatible with the recognized institutions of home, church, and state."² The new leaders of the Mattachine Society shied away from any sort of concentrated action, including task-oriented chapters devoted to fighting entrapment, in the fear that, in their new attorney's words, it would "intimidate and anger heterosexual society." Furthermore, the Mattachines increasingly blamed anti-queer prejudice on "false ideas about the variant" and focused instead on educating the public through the use of recognizably "professional" voices, particularly those in the mental health field.³ With their increasing reliance upon the voices of mental health professionals—a tactic shared by the Daughters of Bilitis—they also came to reinforce the sickness model that treated gayness as an illness. Partially because of this, their discussion groups—once the thriving center point of the Mattachine Society—floundered, with members leaving in droves. After all, they had once met to talk positively about the gay experience, discussing their sexuality openly in an environment that encouraged their identities and advocated for action; few wanted to gather just to talk about how they were coping with their "illness."⁴

For these reasons, the Mattachine Society's membership declined, first in bursts, and then more steadily. The adoption of several controversial changes to the constitution in November 1953, including the limitation of the Mattachines' actions to working with reputable

² John D'Emilio, "Dreams Deferred: The Birth and Betrayal of America's First Gay Liberation Movement," in *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University*, ed. John D'Emilio (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 45.

³ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴ John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 82.

professionals, alienated more politically minded members. Furthermore, when one of the “conservative insurgents,” Dave Finn, threatened to reveal the names of all convention attendees to the FBI if they didn’t fail to reject any “communistic” principles, many remaining members—in particularly those with more radical leanings—were scared off. The convention the following year, May 1954, had fewer than half the attendees of the one hosted by the original founders in 1953.⁵ The tactic of respectability they had adopted in order to deflect anti-homosexual antagonist was clearly unpopular with many of their original members, but their period of relative inaction did not last long.

As the Mattachine Society began focusing explicitly on education and outreach, San Francisco chapter leader Hal Call determined that the press was the best way to achieve the Society’s goals.⁶ Call was a professional journalist—in fact, the first professional journalist in the queer press—and as such he recognized the value of the media, an outlook which was adopted by his compatriots. Call was determined to break through the “conspiracy of silence” surrounding homosexuality which was propagated by mainstream society, government, and media. His goal was to publish a magazine which would raise awareness of the Mattachine Society among homosexuals as well as “begin a dialogue with heterosexuals, particularly

⁵ Ibid, 85-86.

⁶ After the somewhat disastrous conventions in 1953 and 1954, the Mattachine Society split into chapters, with representatives in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, Boston, Denver, Philadelphia, and briefly Detroit, Chicago, and Washington. The largest were in New York and California, but overall membership remained small and largely inactive. In 1960, total membership of the Mattachine Society was only 230. These chapters were often quite independent from one another, with distinct goals and perspectives that sometimes caused severe internal tensions. D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics*, 115. National affiliation was disbanded in 1961, after which a few “chapters”—including that which published *Mattachine Review*—retained the name.

professionals in psychiatry and the law.”⁷ More broadly, they wished to show that homosexuals were just the same as “normal” people, and to use education to convince straight society to treat homosexuals decently. As Call put it in a 1992 interview, “We worked through *evolution* rather than *revolution*.”⁸

Discussions of the “magazine project” began as early as July 1954, reflecting how quickly the Mattachine Society came to realize that the press was the most viable option for achieving their goals. Early discussions show dedication to the press as a tactic; meeting minutes from July 1954 reflect concern over the high investment (\$1000) necessary for the desired first issue run of 3000 copies, but the Mattachines were willing to reach deep into their pockets to finance their forays into the queer press.⁹ The first issue of *Mattachine Review* was published in January 1955, spearheaded by Hal Call and the rest of the San Francisco chapter and printed by Pan Graphic Press, an independent printing press which Call founded with a few other leading Mattachine members in the effort to keep the *Review*’s means of publication out of the capricious hands of the lay membership.¹⁰ The inside cover of the first issue related the intentions of the magazine, showing a dedication to “acting in the public interest” by “giving readers the true facts of the Mattachine Society and the place of the sex variant in the life of the community.” They continued, “The truth—good or bad—will be the policy of the REVIEW in helping to make

⁷ Martin Meeker, “Behind the Mask of Respectability: Reconsidering the Mattachine Society and Male Homophile, 1950s and 1960s,” in *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, no. 1 (Jan, 2001), 90.

⁸ Rodger Streitmatter, *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (Winchester, MA: Faber and Faber, Inc., 1995), 21.

⁹ Mattachine Society, *Meeting Minutes*. Jul 26, 1954. From ONE National Archives, *Mattachine Society Project Collection (Coll2008-016)*, 1:31.

¹⁰ “The Sexualist—Hal Call,” in *Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights 1945-1990: An Oral History*, ed. Eric Marcus (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1992), 67.

everyone cognizant of the facts.”¹¹ The first issue reflected this statement, with an article clarifying the Society’s history and purposes, as well as articles explaining the California Penal Code and presentations on psychological studies of homosexuals. The tone and contents were almost academic.

In a publication’s report the month after the first issue’s publication, the *Mattachine* admitted that the *Mattachine Review*

may not have its greatest appeal to the invert or homophile. But it is important and significant material to advance our cause among professional people and laymen who think. And these are the people we want to reach because the *Mattachine* Society must literally “ride on their shirt-tails” to accomplish our aims and principles.¹²

Although all three major homophile-era publications accepted, and in fact urged, straight readership, the *Mattachine Review* was more intentional about reaching an intended audience of intelligent people of respectable positions in society whose support could validate the homophile movement to mainstream society. This reflects Call’s declaration that the magazine was meant to be “an educational and informational tool” which “spread the word of what we thought was the reality of homosexual behavior,” rather than a forum to advocate for queer rights or establish a sense of a uniquely queer culture or community.¹³ This also speaks to one of the deepest divides between *ONE* and *Mattachine Review*; that *Mattachine Review* “strived to establish communication rather than assert rights.”¹⁴ However, though *Mattachine Review* did not necessarily view the idea of a queer community in the positive lens that *ONE* did, it still, through

¹¹ Letter from *Mattachine* Society Chairman, *Mattachine Review*, Jan-Feb 1955, 2. From Oberlin College Library.

¹² *Mattachine* Society, *Publication’s Report: Minutes of San Francisco Bay Area Council*. Feb 23, 1955. From ONE National Archives, *Mattachine Society Project Collection (Coll2008-016)*, 1:32.

¹³ “The Sexualist—Hal Call,” 67.

¹⁴ Streitmatter, 20.

its intended audience, helped queer people (largely homosexual men) coalesce into a distinct pro-integration community that engaged in dialogue with the straight majority. This community was mobilized for public outreach through professionals, with the *Mattachine Society* chapters leading the way in organizing conventions which invited straight “experts” into the fold.

Mattachine Review’s dedication to integration, education, and social outreach was reflected by its reception by readers who shared its goals, showing the *Review*’s role in cultivating a community of intellectual, pro-assimilationist homophiles, homosexual or straight. The first few issues printed several letters from Reverends, one of whom said that *Mattachine Review* as “the best thing that I have seen in this field of counselling with the sex deviate. As a minister I have found it like water on dry land.”¹⁵ Another writer, a social worker, wrote, “I hope that you will try to keep [*Mattachine Review*] as much like an “intellectual or scientific” journal as possible,” acknowledging that they were attempting to appeal to a different audience than *ONE* because “otherwise there is little justification for your existence.”¹⁶ Readers and editors alike knew that *Mattachine Review* played a unique role in the burgeoning homophile press as a center of scientific thought unlike the more culture-based *ONE* and *The Ladder*. While occasionally a reader complained that *Mattachine Review* contained too much theory or “six-syllable words,” others were quick to defend the magazine and their academic tone.¹⁷

Mattachine Review also carved out its particular role in the early homophile press as potentially the most international of the three homophile magazines—not necessarily in readership, since all three boasted subscribers or readers in foreign countries, but in content,

¹⁵ Rev. W.D., California, letter to editor, *Mattachine Review*, Mar-Apr 1955, 36. From Oberlin College Library.

¹⁶ Miss (Social Worker), California, letter to editor, *Mattachine Review*, May-Jun 1955, 33. From Oberlin College Library.

¹⁷ R.L., Texas, letter to editor, *Mattachine Review*, Feb 1956, 29. From Oberlin College Library.

helping establish a sense of continuity between American and European homophile movements. It wasn't uncommon for them to publish translated articles previously published in other countries' homophile periodicals. In particular, *Mattachine Review* reprinted several articles that first appeared in the Swiss-German periodical *Der Kreis (The Circle)*.¹⁸ They also ran a regular column, "International Report," in which they reported upon news in other countries (mostly European) that was relevant to homophile interests, starting early in 1955. *Mattachine Review* was, in fact, the first of the homophile publications to report on England's *Wolfenden Report*, which recommended the decriminalization of homosexual acts between consenting adults, in November 1957. Furthermore, they produced several "International Issues" devoted entirely to reprinting translated articles from homophile periodicals in Italy, Germany, Switzerland, and other European countries. *Mattachine Review*'s relationship with the International Committee for Sexual Equality (ICSE), a coalition of European-based homophile organizations, meant that they had a front-row seat to the European homophile movement. In letters from the ICSE newsletter's editor in 1957, the Mattachine Society was urged to send copies of *Mattachine Review* and their chapter newsletters to ICSE, and vice versa, to create a flow of information between the European and American homophile movements.¹⁹ Furthermore, the *Review* regularly published a directory of international publications, giving their readers the addresses and subscription prices for homophile magazines such as Denmark's *Vennen*, Italy's *Sesso Liberta*, Switzerland's *Der*

¹⁸ *Der Kreis* was a Swiss-German periodical that ran 1933-1967. It was based upon the earlier Berlin-based homosexual press, especially the work of Friedrich Radszuweit, who was one of the publishers whose work Henry Gerber read and used as inspiration in publishing *Friendship and Freedom*. Robert Beachy, *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 190.

¹⁹ Letter from Jack Argot to the Mattachine Society. July 25, 1957. Letter from Jack Argot to the Mattachine Review. November 4, 1957. From ONE National Archives, *Mattachine Society Project Collection (Coll2008-016)*, 9:36.

Kreis, and others.²⁰ *Mattachine Review*'s international efforts reflected, and were an instrumental force in, the creation of a more international homophile identity and community. Their coverage reached beyond the borders of the United States in a way that *ONE* and *The Ladder* didn't necessarily, an example of the diversification of both the queer press and the queer community in general.

Mattachine Review and the individual chapter newsletters also participated in practical solutions, education, and social services for their readers. They published stories on police oppression and educated readers on their rights in case of arrest, similarly to *ONE*, but they also went one step further in addressing housing and employment issues. *Mattachine Review* published tips on how to avoid or deal with job discrimination, though they kept their tone decidedly non-confrontational, advising against fighting back against discrimination.²¹ Articles like "Fair Employment Practices and the Homosexual" and "You're Fired!" discussed how homosexuals could deal with job security, looking for jobs when "out", and heterosexual coworkers.²² Other articles discussed the best jobs for "deviates" and recommended not taking jobs that required heterosexual social contacts unless the "deviate" in question was willing to put forth the "conscious effort" to "fall in with the social requirements of the job."²³ *Mattachine Review* also advertised the services offered by the Mattachine Society, including help with unemployment; Society members used the magazine's publicity to connect unemployed queer

²⁰ Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s—1970s* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 54.

²¹ Streitmatter, 42.

²² Robert Kirk, "Fair Employment Practices and the Homosexual," *Mattachine Review*, Apr 1956. John Logan, "You're Fired!" *Mattachine Review*, Mar 1956. From Oberlin College Library.

²³ "The Invert and His Job," *Mattachine Review*, May-Jun 1955, 15. From Oberlin College Library.

readers to jobs or unemployment agencies.²⁴ One issue of *Mattachine* New York's newsletter offers an example of how other *Mattachine* publications dealt with job discrimination; they published "Employment Service Bulletins" where unemployed readers could post their services, and other readers could get them in contact with potential employers. Posted applicants included waiters, high school teachers, social workers, and "apartment sitters," while job offerings included publishing positions, lab assistants, and real estate trainees.²⁵ At other times, readers would write to *Mattachine Review* staff and be directly placed into contact with employment agencies their area.²⁶ Eventually, the demand for social services grew too great for the *Mattachines* to handle, and their other programs—even publishing, which was a primary vehicle which got unemployed or otherwise disenfranchised queers into communication with the Society, sending out pleas for help and having their prayers answered—fell to the wayside.²⁷

Though *Mattachine Review* scoffed at the idea of "the ghettoization of homosexuals" as a "special people," they undeniably served, and supported the creation of, a sub-community of queer people who were interested in living, unafraid for their lives and rights, in the mainstream society.²⁸ These were the people who cultivated an identity that didn't place their sexuality first and foremost, but saw themselves rather as "normal" people, with a modifier. *Mattachine Review*

²⁴ "I've Got a Problem," *Mattachine Review*, Jul 1958, 32. From Oberlin College Library.

²⁵ Ken Warren, "Employment Service Bulletin," *New York Mattachine Newsletter*. June 1964. From ONE National Archives, *Mattachine Society Project Collection (Coll2008-016)*, 18:2. Though by 1964 the different *Mattachine* chapters were no longer officially affiliated, their publications continued to do much of the same work in terms of services offered, and as such, this New York publication is a helpful example.

²⁶ Martin Meeker, "Behind the Mask of Respectability: Reconsidering the *Mattachine* Society and Male Homophile Practice, 1950s and 1960s," in *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, no. 1 (2001): 96.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 91.

²⁸ James T. Sears, "Hal Call (1917-2000): Mr. *Mattachine*," in *Before Stonewall: Activists for Gay and Lesbian Rights in Historical Context*, ed. Vern L. Bullough (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2002), 155.

helped connect this community to the broader international homophile movement, creating a sense of trans-cultural unity. In serving this sub-community of queer individuals in the homophile era, *Mattachine Review* came to act as a vehicle for social services, a unique role within the larger homophile press that speaks to the diversification of homophile goals and communities in the later 1950s and 60s.

The Ladder similarly played a unique role during the 1950s and 60s as it was the only publication for lesbians. *The Ladder* grew out of a lesbian homophile organization, the Daughters of Bilitis, who, like the Mattachine Society, originated as a series of informal social events where lesbians could meet and talk about their experience as lesbians. The development of the Daughters of Bilitis reflects a trend in the early homophile movement as moving from personal, private interactions (discussion groups or social meetings) to public communication networks through the form of a queer press.

In 1955, Rose Bamberger, a Filipina lesbian disheartened by recent raids targeting lesbian bars, reached out to several acquaintances in the hopes of creating a “secret society for lesbians.” She wanted to create a place where lesbians could have fun, socialize, and dance together, where “we wouldn’t get caught up in police raids and we wouldn’t be stared at by tourists and so on,” Phyllis Lyon, a founding member of the Daughters of Bilitis and *The Ladder*, recalls.²⁹ Altogether, eight women, comprised of four couples, attended the first informal meetings in September, wherein names, insignias, guidelines, membership, and a constitution were discussed. Over the course of the next few weeks, tenuous drafts of a constitution and by-laws were accepted, and members reached a satisfactory decision upon a final name and motto—and

²⁹ Marcia M. Gallo, *Different Daughters: A History of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Rise of the Lesbian Rights Movement* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2006), 1.

the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) was born.³⁰ Like the Mattachine Society and ONE, the name was a cultural reference. While the Mattachines named themselves for medieval court jesters who wore masks and had the dubious honor of being allowed to tell the king the truth, and ONE was named for a quote by the philosopher Thomas Carlyle, the Daughters took their name from a 19th-century French poet, Pierre Louys, whose book of poetry *Songs of Bilitis* celebrated the love between a young woman, Bilitis, and the ancient poet and lesbian icon Sappho.³¹

Among the Daughters' first actions was finding what literature there was available on homosexuality and lesbians in particular, reflecting that from the very beginning they were cognizant of publications' importance to their movement. During their first meeting, they agreed to write to the existing homophile organizations, ONE and the Mattachine Society, and subscribe to their publications. They also agreed to contact the National Association for Sexual Research and the Cory Book Service in New York. Already, they'd exhausted the meager resources available to any fledgling homophile organization, and were keenly aware of the need for more literature on the topic.³² Unlike the Mattachine Society and ONE, both of which had a clear vision from the beginning, the Daughters of Bilitis initially struggled to refine their position and the aims of their organization. While some preferred the group to operate as a social setting only, others believed it would be an excellent vehicle to discuss political action—a similar struggle in early Mattachine discussion groups.

³⁰ “Bilitis” is pronounced “Bill-EE-tus” rather than “Bill-eye-tus”; though no members were entirely sure how to pronounce the name, they decided upon the first pronunciation in order to avoid sounding like some sort of disease. Later discovery of an audio recording of the *Songs of Bilitis* revealed that their hunch was right, and the first pronunciation was correct.

³¹ Gallo, *Different Daughters*, 2.

³² *Ibid* 5.

Mattachine Review and *ONE* were both very influential on leading members of the Daughters of Bilitis, acting as models which gave the Daughters ideas on how to move forward in the transition from social group to political activism. Influenced by an article in the *Mattachine Review* about letter-writing campaigns, some members of DOB (including Martin and Lyon, the de facto leaders) started pushing for political action and began making connections with the Mattachine Society and ONE, Inc. A pleasant meeting with the Mattachines preceded Lyon and Martin's attending ONE's Midwinter Institute in January 1956, after which they were bursting with ideas of political organization that combined socialization and social activism.³³ Eventually, the organization split, with those who wanted to focus on socialization leaving to found two other secret, exclusively lesbian groups (Quatrefoil and Hale Aikane), while DOB became more politicized and adopted a stance of welcoming alliances beyond their social circles.³⁴

With only three of the original founding members remaining and membership low, desperate to keep their little organization alive, Martin and Lyon turned to what they knew best: journalism. Both had studied journalism in college (though only Lyon graduated; Martin dropped out due to lack of funds and never returned) and had experience working as editors and writers. By that time, DOB was in contact with both ONE, Inc. and the Mattachine Society, and had allies in both. Moving forward with their new tactic of an "all-out publicity campaign"—reflecting the ONE, Inc. statement of using their magazine as a propaganda tool—and intending

³³ Ibid 8.

³⁴ Later reflection determined that the split had been largely across class lines; while the working-class founders and early members of DOB preferred private socialization, likely because they, as low-income, high-risk lesbians, had more to lose through visibility, the white-collar founders saw an opportunity to expand into political action. Paul D. Cain, *Leading the Parade: Conversations with America's Most Influential Lesbians and Gay Men* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2002), 49.

on using *The Ladder* as a recruitment tool as well as publicity vehicle for their faltering organization,³⁵ Lyon and Martin had the help of both the *Mattachine Review* and *ONE*. Both publications wrote articles and advertisements announcing the new-born magazine, and printed press releases carefully crafted by Lyon, *The Ladder*'s first editor.

Cleverly, just as *ONE* piggy-backed off the chatter regarding Dale Jennings' trial, *The Ladder* used two socially relevant events to conjure up interest for their first issue. Alfred Kinsey, whose 1953 report on female sexuality had been met eagerly by DOB members, died shortly before the first issue was published, and at the time of publication in late 1956 a new wave of lesbian-specific bar raids had swept across San Francisco. Their first few issues were steeped in content that was not just relevant, but reassuring, to its readers, with *The Ladder* adopting a similar role as *ONE* did by educating their readers on knowing their rights in case of arrest. They even presented resources such as a talk by a local attorney, 'The Lesbian and the Law,' and reassured readers that they would shortly print a guide, "What To Do In Case Of Arrest" in their third issue.³⁶ In this way, they paralleled early *ONE* actions, and mobilized current queer-related events in order to prop themselves up as a dispenser of not just information, but of sympathy and courage, a voice that could cut through the fear that every queer woman faced in the mid-1950s.

The Ladder's effects were multivariable and not just restricted to the alleviation of lesbian fears regarding anti-homosexual, anti-women sentiment. Rather, like both *Mattachine Review* and *ONE*, the magazine's influences could be understood in multiple categories as a tool of community building, a place in which lesbian identities were solidified and defined, a forum

³⁵ Marcia M. Gallo, "Celebrating the Years of 'The Ladder'," in *Off Our Backs* 35, no. 5/6 (May-June 2005), 35.

³⁶ Gallo, *Different Daughters*, 29.

of activism, and an accessible opportunity for flexing one's voice and creativity. Unlike any other homophile organizations or press at this time, *The Ladder* was specifically for lesbians, and devoted to content that explored the intersection of women and queer identities. According to Daughters of Bilitis historian Marcia Gallo,

The Ladder was a lifeline. It was a means of expressing and sharing otherwise private thoughts and feelings, of connecting across miles and disparate daily lives, of breaking through isolation and fear. For female artists and intellectuals, *The Ladder* was an accessible workshop in which to try out creative efforts and new ways of analyzing experiences of same-sex love and eroticism. For political activists, it was a forum for debating tactics and strategies and publicizing meetings and public gatherings.³⁷

Gallo's claim that *The Ladder* was a lifeline wasn't overstating its significance. For isolated lesbians and bisexual women, *The Ladder* was their only connection to a larger community through which they could confront their own loneliness, self-doubt, and negative self-image. One woman, lamenting that she had no way to contribute to the Daughters of Bilitis, wrote, "I join ranks of those quiet followers who find you a light in the dark night and a warm fire for alien souls."³⁸ Another, reflecting the same imagery of light in the darkness, wrote, "Your publication is an extraordinary arm that can reach forth into our midst and bring light and knowledge where there is now darkness and ignorance, hope and peace where there is now fear and suspicion."³⁹ Others wrote of receiving *The Ladder* as "like a letter from home."⁴⁰ Yet more, reflecting Gallo's words directly, wrote that *The Ladder* "is the only lifeline extended to some of us."⁴¹

³⁷ Gallo, "Celebrating the Years of 'The Ladder'," 35.

³⁸ C.H., Pasadena, Calif. Letter to editor. *The Ladder* 2, no. 6 (Mar 1958), 20. From Oberlin College Library.

³⁹ L.L., New Jersey. Letter to editor. *The Ladder* 7, no. 1 (Oct 1962), 24. From Oberlin College Library.

⁴⁰ N.J.C., Alaska. Letter to editor. *The Ladder* 4, no. 2 (Nov 1959), 22. From Oberlin College Library.

⁴¹ New England Subscriber. Letter to editor. *The Ladder* 7, no. 5 (Feb 1963), 26. From Oberlin College Library.

One woman, perhaps reflecting the feelings of all the women who wrote to *The Ladder*, mused, “There is one very effective weapon we, who must fight from a hiding place, still have – the fountain pen and typewriter.”⁴² This statement, calling back to Ann Carll Reid’s declaration in *ONE* that their readers’ ideas and ink were the ammunition for *ONE*’s artillery, reflects the unique nature that the press played in activism, and one of the most important aspects of the queer press: the queer press was a tool for *everyone*. Any person who received *The Ladder*, or any other queer publication, became part of a larger community where their words could be received and turned into forces used against discrimination and oppression. Even women in isolated communities, with no access to organized activism, could write in and see their words published and disseminated to a potential audience of thousands.⁴³ The queer press was a vehicle through which women across the nation could participate in the homophile movement.

The magazine proved meaningful not just to isolated lesbians and other queer women who’d never interacted with the homophile movement, but to women who already had experience with the male-dominated homophile groups of the time or had grown up in accepting environments. For Barbara Grier, future editor of *The Ladder*, who had come out as a lesbian to her mother at 12 and been completely accepted, *The Ladder* was a lightning bolt. Upon seeing her first issue, she recalled, “I said this is what I am going to spend my life doing. ... I wrote to

⁴² J.M., Cleveland, Ohio. Letter to editor. *The Ladder* 1, no. 2 (Nov 1956), 14. From Oberlin College Library.

⁴³ Though *The Ladder*’s official circulation never reached more than 1000 (and was closer to the 700 mark before the mid-60s), it was common for women to share copies through shared subscriptions, reading groups, or passing along copies to friends. Multiple letters to the editors mentioned reading *The Ladder* with friends, or receiving copies from others. For examples, see B.A., Grand Rapids, Mich., letter to editor, *The Ladder* 2, no. 10 (Jul 1958), 22; and B.A.N., Ontario, Canada, letter to editor, *The Ladder* 3, no. 10 (July 1959), 26. From Oberlin College Library.

them and offered my body, my soul, my heart, my money.”⁴⁴ The offer of money was almost more important than her offer of her body, soul, and heart—*The Ladder*, like other queer publications of the time, was constantly struggling for funds. However, the magazine was also severely short on (wo)manpower, and letters offering concrete help were cherished. *The Ladder* served in many ways as a sort of “recruiting” tool, with many of their readers using *The Ladder* as their first rung into climbing into the world of homophile activism.⁴⁵

The sense of activism that *The Ladder* helped cultivate among its readers led to one of its most important contributions to the larger homophile movement: their politicization and mobilization, for the first time, of a queer voting bloc. While both *ONE* and *Mattachine Review* expressed policies of not becoming involving with politics, *The Ladder*, even from its most assimilationist beginnings, was interested in galvanizing lesbian readers specifically for political action. In the very first issue, Del Martin wrote that the future for lesbians need not be fear and scorn—“IF lethargy is supplanted by an energized constructive program, if cowardice gives way to the solidarity of a collective front.”⁴⁶ *The Ladder*, despite their dedication to respectability, had visions of a politically-mobilized lesbian community from the very first issue. In the later 1950s, it became increasingly interested in explicitly political issues, publishing articles supporting the right of same-sex couples to file joint tax returns and home insurance policies.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Victoria A. Brownworth, “Barbara Grier (1933-): Climbing the Ladder,” in *Before Stonewall: Activists for Gay and Lesbian Rights in Historical Context*, ed. Vern L. Bullough (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2002), 257.

⁴⁵ I would apologize for the pun, but I’m not sorry.

⁴⁶ Del Martin, “Message,” *The Ladder*, October 1956, 7. From Oberlin College Library.

⁴⁷ Streitmatter, 46. Articles regarding lesbian couples’ political rights included “Me vs. Taxes” by Helen Sanders and “Me vs. Insurance” by Del Martin. Helen Sanders, “Me vs. Taxes,” *The Ladder*, May 1958, 10. Del Martin, “Me vs. Insurance,” *The Ladder*, June 1958, 12-13. From Oberlin College Library.

In 1959, *The Ladder's* political leanings resulted in the explicit mobilization of queer people for political action. Their proper introduction into politics began with an interview on KNBC radio with Russell Wolden, a candidate for San Francisco mayor who blamed current Mayor George Christopher for transforming the city into “the national headquarters for sex deviants.” He specifically pointed to the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis, both organizations whose national headquarters were located in San Francisco, as examples of Christopher’s “support” for homosexuals, and warned parents that their daughters were in danger from stalking lesbians. Panicked, Lyon and Martin held a meeting to discuss the situation. While initially reluctant to use *The Ladder* to get involved, once the magazine published Lyon’s clear, rational presentation of facts, the mainstream media followed her lead and began to cover the issue. Multiple city newspapers turned on Wolden, and others followed when it became clear Wolden had infiltrated the Mattachine Society to push through a resolution which supported Christopher so he could use the resolution as a weapon against Christopher. Come election day, Christopher won with 61% of the votes—a success which Streitmatter calls gay and lesbian America’s “first major battle against antihomosexual politicians.”⁴⁸ Queer voices had, for perhaps the first time, influenced political decisions to support and defend their own rights. This spawned an increasing dialogue among not just the Daughters of Bilitis and readers of *The Ladder*, but also the Mattachine Society and their *Review*, about how a homosexual bloc might be cultivated and then deployed for action against anti-homosexual legislation.

In *The Ladder's* later years, under the editorial leadership of Barbara Gittings from 1963 to 1966, the magazine revolutionized one of the most important events in many queer people’s lives: coming out. Under Gittings’ leadership, *The Ladder* adopted a more militant stance,

⁴⁸ Ibid, 46-47.

reflected by their bold adoption of the subtitle “A Lesbian Review” on the cover, declaring for the world to see that this was a magazine by and for lesbians.⁴⁹ This was just the first step in Gittings’ new strategy of visibility. *The Ladder* soon began publishing a regular column “Living Propaganda,” which encouraged lesbians to come out and publicly live as lesbians, bolstered by the stories of out-and-proud queer women.⁵⁰ Soon thereafter, in November 1964, *The Ladder* took an unprecedented step: they began publishing full-face photograph portraits of lesbians on their front cover. The headshots, taken by Gittings’ partner Kay Tobin, sought to portray “actual healthy, happy-looking homosexual women” who reflected the diversity of lesbians.⁵¹ The first was an Indonesian woman Ger van Braam, whose correspondence with *The Ladder* resulted in a “Books for Ger” drive to provide books regarding homosexuality for van Braam and the small circle of queer friends she managed to accumulate.⁵² They published two more headshots in 1965, and in 1966 made yet another breakthrough by featuring the New York Daughters of Bilitis president and civil rights activist Ernestine Eckstein, the first black lesbian on the cover of any magazine. Gittings’ “Living Propaganda” column and the lesbian portraits taken by Tobin “chang[ed] the definition of “coming out” from a private act to a public one.”⁵³ Lesbians were given the concrete images and personal stories of other queer women upon which they could

⁴⁹ Streitmatter, 55.

⁵⁰ Kristin G. Esterberg, “From Accommodation to Liberation: A Social Movement Analysis of Lesbians in the Homophile Movement,” in *Gender and Society* 8, no. 3 (1994): 433.

⁵¹ Lillian Faderman, *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 87.

⁵² Ger van Braam’s story was shared with *Ladder* readers in a series of articles, “Notes from Abroad,” starting with “Isolation in Indonesia” published in mid 1964. See G. van B, “Notes from Abroad: Isolation in Indonesia,” *The Ladder*, June 1964, 9-11; Ger van B, “Notes from Abroad: Thanksgiving from Indonesia,” *The Ladder*, Nov 1964, 9-11; and Ger van B, “Notes from Abroad: Gift Books for Indonesia,” *The Ladder*, Dec 1964, 24-25, for details. From Oberlin College Library.

⁵³ Ostertag, 84.

build their own narratives of “coming out” and take pride in their identity at the intersection of woman and queer. As Kay Tobin and Randy Wicker later wrote, “‘Gay Pride’ was obviously just around the corner.”⁵⁴

Gittings turned out to be too radical for the more conservative board of the Daughters of Bilitis. After showing support for picketing, denouncing professionals and claiming that queer people were the experts on their own lives, and supporting more militant homophile groups, other leading members of the Daughters of Bilitis had had enough, and she was replaced as editor in 1966. Soon thereafter, *The Ladder*, returning to its more assimilationist tone, struggled to keep up with the changing environment of the later 1960s. However, the impact of *The Ladder*, both as a political motivator and in providing structures for coming out, lasted far beyond its publication, as subsequent generations picked up on the gay voting bloc first mobilized in *The Ladder* and reconstructed coming out as a visible, public experience.

Mattachine Review and *The Ladder*, unlike *ONE*, did not purport to act as voices for the homophile community as a whole. While *ONE* welcomed diversity in their audience and strove to represent all facets of the homophile movement, one magazine was simply not capable of appealing to everyone. By branching out to specific audiences—*Mattachine Review* to professionals and homophiles of a more intellectual status; *The Ladder* to lesbians and queer women in general—these publications diversified and extended the homophile community of the 50s and 60s. Their appeal brought a wider circle of members into the fold of a larger, unified homophile movement, as readers of *Mattachine Review* who had never heard of other homophile organizations saw advertisements for *ONE* and *The Ladder* and readers of *The Ladder* came to

⁵⁴ Kay Tobin and Randy Wicker, *The Gay Crusaders* (New York: Paperback Library, 1972), 215.

be aware of the work of the Mattachine Society and ONE, Inc. The work of these early homophile publications brought an increasing awareness of the homophile community and activism to an ever-growing, ever-diversifying audience, helping lay the groundwork for the shift from homophile activism to gay liberation.

Conclusion

The queer press is one of the longest-lasting legacies of homophile-era activism in the 1950s and 60s. The magazines, more than anything else, *spoke*. As platforms through which queer people could express opinions and engage in dialogue with each other, the queer press “created a national venue for homosexuals, forming an arena in which lesbians and gay men could, for the first time, speak above a whisper about issues fundamental to their lives.”¹ Through *ONE*, *Mattachine Review*, and *The Ladder*, thousands of queer people in the United States and abroad were brought into a conversation of queer rights, culture, and community. Moving forward, queer press played the same role, for different people, as the surrounding environment began to shift.

In the 1960s, and particularly in the latter half of the decade, pre-existing internal and external tensions in the homophile movement heightened and fractured. The growing divide between homophiles active since the 1950s and the increasingly militant newcomers, influenced by the burgeoning counter-culture, Civil Rights, and women’s liberation movements, created a period of tension in which newcomers accused their elders of being assimilatory or conservative while veterans accused the newcomers of being too radical and giving the movement a bad name. Violence against queer people, and particularly bar raids, heightened in conjunction with increasing queer visibility, and queer people, with almost two decades of concentrated attempts to mobilize effectively as a community, began to rebel with increasing confidence in their strength. Queer communities existed in ways they hadn’t prior to the founding of the homophile movement, no longer geographically bound but instead aware of themselves as an oppressed

¹ Rodger Streitmatter, *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (Winchester, MA: Faber and Faber, Inc., 1995), 18.

cultural minority that spanned the nation and, beyond that, the globe. Increasingly, queer activists were finding themselves discontented with the quiet work they were doing; at an ECHO (East Coast Homophile Organization) conference in 1964, one activist who said they had read their way through much of the New York Mattachine Society's library complained that they were "fed up with reading," and wanted instead to take more concrete action fighting the systematic discrimination of homosexuals.² The homosexuals that early activists had worried about the possibility of uniting as a group for political action were now increasingly ready to stand up for their rights.

At the same time, magazines that had been institutions of the homophile movement for over a decade began to falter. Don Slater stole *ONE*'s resources from under the noses of the other leaders in 1965, leading to a lengthy, bitter battle which resulted in a lawsuit which left nobody satisfied while *ONE* crumbled, with its last issue—barring a brief revival with a two-issue run in 1972 by Jim Kepner—published in December 1969.³ Florence Conrad, research director of the Daughters of Bilitis, and her conservative allies ousted Barbara Gittings as the radical editor of *The Ladder*, and the magazine, after a golden few years as a radical force in shaping lesbian identity, activity, and communism, once more took up an assimilationist stance and began aligning itself more with the blossoming women's liberation movement rather than with other queer people.⁴ The final blow was struck in 1970 when, in a move eerily reminiscent of Slater's "theft" of *ONE* from the organization which produced it, Barbara Grier and Rita Laporte

² Kristin Gay Esterberg, "From Illness to Action: Conceptions of Homosexuality in the Ladder, 1956-1965," *The Journal of Sex Research* 27, no. 1 (1990): 75.

³ For a detailed account of this two-year battle, see Chapter Seven in C. Todd White, *Pre-Gay L.A.: A Social History of the Movement for Homosexual Rights* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

⁴ Esterberg, 78.

sequestered *The Ladder*'s mailing lists and resources from DOB headquarters and remade the magazine as not a lesbian magazine, but a women's magazine which supported lesbians.⁵ The transformed *Ladder* published its last issue in 1972, proving too expensive to maintain without the support of the Daughters of Bilitis.⁶ The *Mattachine Review* crawled to an exhausted end when, after three years of sporadic publication, its last issue was published in 1967, the powerhouse behind it, Hal Call, no longer willing—or able—to give the magazine the attention and financial support it required.⁷ Smaller magazines that had played valuable roles in queer circles like *Tangents* (a 1965 offshoot of *ONE*) and *Drum* (the first gay periodical to publish full-frontal nudity, in 1967) also folded, victims of lawsuits, bankruptcy, in-fighting, or other forces.⁸

It is no surprise, then, considering that all three of the major homophile-era magazines folded either before or soon after the Stonewall Inn riots, that Stonewall is often seen as the “watershed” of the gay liberation movement and the birthplace of queer rights activism. *ONE*, *The Ladder*, and the *Mattachine Review* each played crucial roles in pulling together geographically disparate queer readers and helping solidify queerness both as an identity and as a community. The homophile organizations, and particularly homophile-era queer press, were the precursors to Stonewall that built the institutional strength and mnemonic capacity that allowed Stonewall to be commemorated in such a significant way. In many ways, the Stonewall Riots' success was as much the culmination of decades of queer activism as it was the beginning of a new phase of queer activism the gay liberation movement. The news, fiction, editorials, and

⁵ Marcia M. Gallo, *Different Daughters: A History of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Rise of the Lesbian Rights Movement* (New York, NY: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2006): 160-161.

⁶ *Ibid*, 181.

⁷ Rodger Streitmatter, *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (Winchester, MA: Faber and Faber, Inc., 1995), 111.

⁸ *Ibid*, 112.

letters published in the homophile-era queer press helped create a cohesive queer community with members who were self-aware. As these publications fell apart, the communities they pulled together lost some of their cohesion.

At the same time, new communities were being created as a younger generation stepped in to fill the void. Chief among them was a small newsletter belonging to the organization PRIDE, which in September 1967 was repurposed into a general magazine, “devoid of any literary (or even journalistic) distinction,” called *The Los Angeles Advocate*⁹—a paper which noted queer press historian Streitmatter calls queer journalism’s “first true newspaper.”¹⁰ One of the founders of this paper was Jim Kepner, who had made his quiet start in the queer press more than a decade earlier with *ONE*.¹¹ After a rocky first few months, the paper blossomed to a circulation of 5,500 by their first anniversary; by September 1969, their circulation had reached 23,000.¹² Shortly thereafter, they dropped the geographic modifier and began publishing simply as *The Advocate*. Founding editors Dick Michaels and Bill Rand attributed the gay movement’s success to their paper, saying, “Nobody ever would have heard about the Stonewall riot if we hadn’t run stories on it”—even though, to them, the riots didn’t even warrant front-page news, but was instead pushed to page three by the results of their annual “Groovy Guy” competition.¹³ That said, if they were responsible for the nation’s queer communities learning about Stonewall,

⁹ Martin Duberman, introduction to “We Are Born,” in *Long Road to Freedom: The Advocate History of the Gay and Lesbian Movement*, ed. Mark Thompson (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 1.

¹⁰ Streitmatter, 83.

¹¹ Lewis Gannett and William A. Percy, “Jim Kepner (1923-1997),” in *Before Stonewall: Activists for Gay and Lesbian Rights in Historical Context*, ed. Vern L. Bullough (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2002), 131.

¹² *Ibid*, 88.

¹³ Randy M. Shilts, “A Tense Past ... A Bright Future,” *Advocate*, November 2, 1977, 24.

perhaps they are to blame for Stonewall's mythic misconception: the very first sentence of their article made the claim that the Stonewall riots were "the first gay riots in history."¹⁴

The queer press operates at the intersection of community, identity, and activism, but it also has a secondary, though no less important role; the queer press represents the archives of queer history, wherein modern historians can take in "a measure of the gay community's texture and temperament."¹⁵ As one queer historian puts it, "LGBT history since the early days of the homophile movement ... is the history of queer media."¹⁶ Queer media serve as the record-keeping of our predecessors, perhaps an attempt to make up for all the history we have lost through families who have burned letters and diaries or destroyed personal effects belonging to queer members. In Alan Winter's words, the queer press plays the "distinctive role of chronicler for the gay community."¹⁷ If we do not have a record of queer people who came before us, those lives—our history, our activism—are not preserved.¹⁸ The homophile movement's leaders understood that an understanding of history could better queer people as individuals, a community, and a movement, and this preservation and education of history took place largely through their publications. Jim Kepner in particular made his writing a source of historical knowledge, using *ONE* as a platform to talk about queer icons like Oscar Wilde and Walt

¹⁴ Dick Lietsch, "Acting Up at the Stonewall Riots," in *Long Road to Freedom: The Advocate History of the Gay and Lesbian Movement*, ed. Mark Thompson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 28.

¹⁵ Chuck Colbert, "Newspapers: Research Values," in *Gay Press Gay Power*, ed. Tracy Baim (Chicago: Windy City Media Group, 2012), 426.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 427.

¹⁷ Alan D. Winter, "The Gay Press: A History of the Gay Community and its Publications" (master's thesis, University of Texas, 1975), 101.

¹⁸ Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell, "Introduction: Something Queer at the Archive," in *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories*, ed. Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015), 8.

Whitman, ancient homosexual practices, and other historical topics.¹⁹ The queer press acts as a record of the voices of the queer people who wrote and read its publications, a snapshot into the past. As we move forward in this uncertain political climate, holding on to legacies of activism and community are perhaps more important than ever, and it is the queer press that holds the knowledge of our past which our personal and collective survival depends upon.

¹⁹ Craig M. Loftin, "Secrets in Boxes: The Historian as Archivist," in *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories*, ed. Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015), 52.

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