

Carnival of the Oppressed: The Angry Brigade and the Gay Liberation Front Dr Lucy Robinson

'And the faggots won't seem so funny ...when the revolution comes'¹

Authentic history - Gay Men and the Revolutionary Left in Britain

According to the main bodies of Leftist thought and practice there is no relation between the politics of homosexuality and the revolution. In fact, prior to the liberation movement of the 1970s the development of a political homosexual identity was seen as the antithesis of the worldwide working class revolution. Even following the emergence of a visible and dynamic gay liberation movement, the political potential of sexuality was seen as a diversion from the class struggle. This has been replicated in the dominant Leftist histories of the period. There is some acknowledgement of the significance of the Women's Liberation Movement in these histories, for example in the writing of Tariq Ali.² However, the role of gay liberation, its theories and the way in which it informed a radical shift in political activism, is more or less wholly absent from these histories.³

For if identity, as Alan Sinfield describes it, is 'fluid, unstable, elusive and self-parodying',⁴ it constitutes the antithesis of objectively defined grand narratives of class. However, behind these silences there lies a highly integrated relationship between the shifts and restructuring of the Left and the development of a homosexual political identity. Gay Men as a political identity shared a development with, and directly intervened in, the perceived decline of the Left. The relationship between homosexual self-perception, organisation and the revolutionary Left became the dynamic behind what was to become identity politics. The development of a gay Left identity therefore illuminates the specificity of the interaction between the Left's demise and the wider personalisation of politics. It is possible to interrogate the assumptions behind both gay and Leftist histories by bringing them into play together. In so doing, the relationship between the personal and the political can be understood as a process of ongoing reproduction. In order to understand the particular role of Gay History in the construction of a gay Left identity it is first necessary to outline the major historiographical positions in the field. Following which a particular period of gay Left history, the relationship between the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and the Angry Brigade in London between 1970 and 1972, can be used to explore the variety of contextual demands and political influences played out through groups built according to a subjective identity.

Gay History has developed against these silences and the privileging of economic structures of class over the impact of social and political structures. It has sought to negotiate new ways of combining identity, academy and activism. To understand gay historiography within its context is to explore what Simon Watney has described as the 'distinct institutional and discursive barriers between the separate (if often overlapping) domains of ... gay politics, the ... gay press ..., gay community-based ... work, and Lesbian and Gay Studies'.⁵

Thus the lines between academic investigation and subjective experience are blurred, one reinventing the other in an ongoing process. The rejection of objective grand narratives feeds into the celebration of subjectivity and of the participant as observer. Among others, Lisa Power, Donn Teal, Anthony Grey and Jeffrey Weeks, have produced academic and political texts that undermine the traditional division between objective study and personal experience.⁶ All concentrate on their personal experiences at the time under study in their analysis, giving value to the assumed authenticity of the participant turned observer. For example, Donn Teal, the author of 'the first history of the Stonewall era' set the tone. He was a 'frontline' participant in many of the events he chronicled.⁷

Concurrently, viewing the personal as political brings with it a methodological *monde reversé*. As the American counter-culturalist Emmet Grogan explained, 'we don't know enough gossip, which is the actual history'.⁸ However, foregrounding the personal within gay histories can be taken beyond its own *raison d'être*. Rather than attempting to measure the validity of public declarations according to personal behaviour, instead the division between the personal and the political can be seen as undergoing constant reformation. This article is an exploration of the impact of external intervention in the realm of the experiential.

Previous gay centred approaches have emphasised either the concept of continuum or change in order to historicise homosexuality. In the former, the position of homosexuality is read teleologically back through history in order to show the development of the concept of the individual. In the latter the liberationist moment is seen as fundamentally redefining the context of homosexual expression. To illustrate this, there follows a whirlwind tour of the historiography of gay identity. In the 'traditional' canon homosexuality has been traced back to the Ancient Greeks, invested with a theological meaning throughout the seventeenth century⁹ and produced under the development of capitalism into a whole identity. Homosexuality is accordingly a shifting concept free from any innate value. In this view the historical position of homosexuality has been seen as the universalising key to the whole. For example Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick wrote that 'sex is a leverage point ... between gender and class'¹⁰ and that homosexuality 'is distinctively relate[ed] to wider mappings of secrecy and disclosure, and of the public and private'.¹¹ Michel Foucault, John D'Emilio and Jeffrey Weeks have all argued for the need to contextualise liberation within the development of capitalist relations.¹² Week's position, like that of Foucault, argued that homosexuality provides capitalist society with clear-cut lines between the permissible and the impermissible which renders sexuality a passive disciplinary construct in the divisions between types of behaviour. This understanding of homosexuality as the key to all sections of society was at the heart of a gay liberationist approach.

Gay activists and academics have commonly conceptualised the way in which homosexuality could become the saviour of all society according to a three-point approach. The first point has been to position one's subjectivity in line with a political identity, the second to form a commonality of similarly positioned subjectivities, and the third to act on the outside world in unity with all oppressed groups in order to liberate all of society. This was expressed by the Gay Liberation Front when they declared 'come out, come together, unite with the revolutionaries of the world'.¹³ The tensions behind the third stage of liberational development, acting with and on the outside world, rested on to what extent the liberation of homosexuality would free all peoples, and to what extent the process of bringing homosexuality into this wider arena undermined its own possibilities. As a political practice this left liberational groups open to opportunistic involvement from Left wing groups whereby gay Left issues would be forever subsumed by other agendas. The negative experience of this 'everyman' approach lead increasingly to separatism.

Where to come out from? Theoretical starting points for political identification

Homosexuality does not simply reflect and reproduce the nuances of the development of the 'personal' as a political entity, but instead, homosexuality and homosexuals are central to the production of the concept as we know it. Therefore, by placing concepts of individual homosexuality within its collective context, it is possible to counter the homosexual as a measurement of constructed identity. Homosexual identity is seen therefore as a political process rather than historical construction. Central to this is an understanding of the development of a gay liberationist position. Therefore this work seeks to counter those historical approaches that emphasise the uniqueness of the liberationist moment. For example, homosexuality as a contemporary identity has been seen as bursting forth as a new political agency following the Stonewall riots in America on the 27 June 1969.¹⁴ This is seen as simultaneously the product of a long period of oppression and the dawning of a new era of liberationalism. Thus, according to 'common sense' gay history, following

Stonewall the New Homosexual was born.¹⁵ For D'Emilio, the Stonewall riot of 1969 was an 'historic rupture'¹⁶ and the decade which followed it catalogued a 'list of concessions as a result of the gay and women's liberation movement.'¹⁷ Similarly, to Keith Howes 'Stonewall was the lighting of the blue touch paper for an international homosexual rights movement'.¹⁸

It seems then, that homosexual history and historiography are either a product of a liberational explosion that brought into being new problems, or bound in the age-old battle of the individual private and public role throughout history. Either way, the struggles and redefinitions of the decade prior to the liberationist explosion are left impotent, as are ultimately attempts to reach outside of the purely personal. The 1950s becomes either a teleological continuum or the calm before the storm. According to these two approaches, the periods preceding and subsequent to 1969 are left as ineffectual, insignificant, or worse, culpable for continued homosexual oppression. By suggesting a longer genealogy and wider-reaching interactions within the world of transformative politics it is possible to place these historical perspectives in their own context.

Who did you come with? The development of liberational alliances

The development of a gay Left identity in Britain can instead be traced to a significant point for both gay men and the revolutionary Left. 1957 was the year in which the Wolfenden Report on homosexuality and prostitution was published. The Wolfenden Commission had been formed in reaction to an increasing sense that the existing laws on both homosexuality and prostitution were unworkable, out of step with new ways of understanding behaviour and that their arbitrary application was seen as uncivilised. The Wolfenden Report received widespread discussion when published. The Report's recommendations on prostitution were on the statute books within two years.¹⁹ The recommendation to decriminalise homosexuality for consenting adults over twenty-one was to take a decade to be passed.²⁰

1957 was also the year that signalled the period following the crisis in the Left over Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin and the Soviet defeat of the Hungarian revolution. Following 1956, as mainstream and Marxist-Leninist forms and structures were increasingly seen as incompatible with the broadening of political identities, new radicals turned elsewhere. Trotskyite organs like International Socialist and Socialist Labour League described homosexuality as a bourgeois deviation and condemned self-organisation that undermined the supremacy of class and the Party.²¹ Although, following 1968, there was a degree of Leftist acknowledgement of sexual politics it was typically entryist in nature. The rejection of Leftist analysis and structure brought with it a blurring of traditional divisions of the personal and political, the subjective and objective. Thus, as well as rejecting the heterocentricity of class politics, proto-liberationists rejected the objectivity of the public world, and moved towards the experiential.

As the new liberation movements challenged the Left's objectivity, workerism, and bureaucratic form, so too did it challenge the centrality of economic analysis. Intensified by the ramifications of 1968, the public declarations of personalised politics countered workerism with a playfully performative form. Thus new challenges to the status quo were increasingly cultural. The historically-bound form of the Carnival as described by Bakhtin and expanded by Stallybrass and White offered a description of the value of cultural parody over industrial unrest.²² Bakhtin counter-points rigid leftist bureaucracy with the political potential of the world reversed, the power of the orifice, the grotesque, the fool, expressed in folk lore and reconstituted language in a mass performative form. However, despite the performed reversal of hierarchies, this cultural emphasis on the subjective brought with it its own tensions and contradictions. These were particularly; a tendency towards disunity, privileged concepts of authenticity which brought with them their own anti-egalitarian bent and, with this, a victim-centred concentration on the child-like or holy fool.

Although the campaigns surrounding the Wolfenden Report had encouraged the development of homophile law reform campaigns such as The Albany Trust and the Homosexual Law Reform Society, these were determinedly apolitical in nature. They masked their homosexual membership behind the façade of being concerned professionals. Above all they argued for homosexuality to be seen, and constituted, as respectable²³ - whereas the GLF celebrated homosexuality as a threat to the status quo and rejected constructs of respectability altogether. The liberation movement was therefore less rooted in the homophile groups than defined against them. The impact of these political and formal dialogues outlined above can be traced through counter-cultural forms. For example, the 1950s 'youthquake', the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), the hippie counter-culture, communalism, drug culture and punk can all be discussed in relation to gay political identity. Models of organisation and direction were appropriated from the United States. Free from the British Left's legacy of defeat and complicity and homophile apologism, American models offered an assumed hierarchy of authenticity via offshoots from Black Power and anti-war movements which inspired many who were to become gay liberationists in Britain. For example, the GLF in London was formed through its founding members experiences in the United States in groups such as the Yippies, the Gay Activist Alliance and Black Panthers.²⁴

The Gay Liberation Front held their first meeting at LSE in October 1970. Nineteen people attended. It rapidly grew out of subsequent meeting places, a national workshop and commune-based structure developing along the model of Maoist-influenced consciousness-raising groups. The GLF's major points of analysis are outlined in three documents. Firstly, the demands that came out of The Male Homosexual Workshop held as part of the Black Panthers' People's Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1970. Secondly, the original London Principals drafted by Aubrey Walter and David Fernbach and adopted in December 1970. Thirdly, GLF's manifesto which was collectively-produced in 1971. These documents are divided in subsections that cover areas of particular concern. These concerns reproduced wider counter-cultural and liberational targets: Family, School, Church, Media, Language, Employment, The Law, Physical violence, Psychiatry, Self-oppression and, ultimately, The Revolution. *In toto* they constituted an argument for the necessity of the third liberational stage, the inclusion of gay liberation within all revolutionary movements. This was summarised in the ultimate statement of the Manifesto and of the Philadelphia demands. 'No Revolution without us! An Army of Lovers Cannot Lose! All Power To The People!'²⁵ The Manifesto demanded ... The full participation of gays in the peoples' revolutionary army.²⁶

Man is Woman is People - the State makes us all Angry

The clearest, and perhaps most dramatic, example of GLF's political empathy in practice, at least in the minds of the reactionary forces, was the relationship between the GLF and The Angry Brigade.²⁷ The Front and the Brigade were connected through some individuals who were involved in both groups. However, the groups were most significantly connected by police conspiracy theories, the shared experiences of the subsequent surveillance and of the court cases and trials that followed. These factors conspired towards an attempted entryism by the Brigade on the Front. Individual GLFers crossed-paths with the Brigade to varying degrees. Whereas some were generally sympathetic to the Brigade, others were vehemently opposed.²⁸ However, the significance of the relationship lies in both its thematic and observed significance.

To understand the different positions that came into play during the Brigade's 'theatre of terror' it is necessary to provide some brief background and context. This can then be used to relate the Brigade more directly to the GLF. According to the Brigade's champion, Tom Vague, they were a 'small left-wing group which in the name of the working-class mounted sporadic attacks upon various representatives of the ruling class or establishment'.²⁹ One of Britain's few home-grown terrorist groups, the Brigade succeeded in embarrassing the Heath government for the year

following August 1970. The Brigade's claimed successes included machine-gunning the US embassy, bombing the BBC van outside the Miss World competition and the fashion emporia Biba as well as the Minister of Employment's home during the time he was preparing the controversial Industrial Relations Bill.³⁰ That the Angry Brigade were the impetus behind the establishment of the Bomb Squad demonstrates their perceived significance.³¹ However, their threat lay in their lack of coherence. Their connections seemed untraceable and, unlike the IRA, the targets chosen by the Brigade appeared wholly indiscriminate according to traditional models.³²

In 1971 the Conservative government introduced the Industrial Relations Bill under which unions would have to register in order to gain legal status. Furthermore, the Government could enforce strike ballots and 60 day delays before action.³³ On the 9 January 1971 two protests were directed against the Bill, one was a mass march and the second was a terrorist attack by the Brigade. The physical attack on the proponents of the Industrial Relations Bill carried out by the Brigade was the most dramatic aspect of a general discontent over both the curtailing of union power and the unions' failure to pick up on the liberational undercurrents. These attempts to bring union power into the fold occurred against the backdrop of an increase in the amount of work days lost to strikes. Between 1970 and 1971 this rose from ten to thirteen million days.³⁴

Thousands participated in a strike and mass march against the Bill. The GLF had made a strong statement against the Bill when adopting its list of Principles³⁵ and were present at the march, distributing leaflets and discussing gay liberation with the marchers, chanting 'Homosexuals oppose the Bill' and 'Poof to the Bill'.³⁶ The GLF saw its role as both challenging the Bill and the forms of protest against it. Therefore GLF challenged the government, sexism, as well as the traditional Left, Trotskyites and the Unions.³⁷ International Socialist (IS), the march organisers, relegated GLF to the back of the march, and some of the contingent recollect being physically attacked on the march. GLF member Luke Fitzgerald saw this as a product of Communist Party style workerism on behalf of IS.³⁸ According to David Fernbach this was compounded by IS fears that the GLF would attract the much competed over news coverage.³⁹ The Leftist concerns were well founded, the Press used their presence as an excuse to ridicule the campaign.⁴⁰

Earlier that morning two Angry Brigade bombs had exploded at the home of Secretary of State, Robert Carr. No-one was injured, although his housekeeper was extremely close to the second explosion. Carr had ordered her back into the house whilst he and his family took refuge at a neighbour's home.⁴¹ Whilst significant in symbolic terms, the Brigade's physical impact was minimal. They were exponents of 'guerrilla theatre' or the 'propaganda of the deed',⁴² therefore the strength of the armaments were secondary to the performance of their use. Alluding to Situationism, they constituted more of a humiliation than a real revolutionary force. The Brigade differentiated their attacks from 'bombings' by limiting the size of the explosives used to 'half a pound of gelignite'.⁴³ Similarly the Brigade were clear that it was not the impact of the explosives per se that worried the government, it was the vulnerabilities they exposed.

Marcuse had argued that '[t]here is a policeman in all our heads that must be destroyed'⁴⁴ - and this call to arms against the self was taken up by the liberational practitioners of the 'theatre of terror'. Their acts were propagandist, designed to shake up the observer's sense of self, rather than structurally undermine the State. Thus, the message was the point of the performance rather than any structural damage. The media became coerced into spreading the Brigade's political message.⁴⁵ Groups such as the Weathermen and Baader-Meinhof who shared much of the Brigade's expression of post-68 positioning also attempted to coerce the media to spread their political message. As traditional Leftist targets and methods came to represent a legacy of defeat rather than models of organisation, those that had developed in their wake around the protests of 1968 seemed similarly divided and disconnected. The eventual failure of *Les Events* to connect the economic with the political led to a rejection of the working class as the spontaneous driving force behind history. As the proponents of the 'theatre of terror' turned

their backs on workerism the media and the cultural came to replace the industrial as a site of struggle. These shared approaches were the product of a shared ideological legacy as well as a shared context. They were the product of the post-1956 realignment whose theoretical lineage can be traced to the Situationist International,⁴⁶ rejecting of and rejected by 'good Marxists [and] good Leninists'.⁴⁷ But, beyond this, they were also the result of the failure to find an alternative to these approaches. In Britain, the Brigade were the outcome of the failure of Trotskyite groups such as the International Marxist Group and International Socialist to take on the post-1968 mantle and optimism.⁴⁸ The failure of 1968 and other attempts to replace the Left had pushed this clique of radicals underground, these small cells of counter-cultural expression taking the Latin American guerrilla movement as the source of their inspiration and authenticity.

The Brigade's connections extended their perceived power beyond the capability of their explosives. This affected both the counter-culture and the minds of the law enforcers. Within the GLF the Brigade were seen generally according to the third stage of liberational development outlined above, that gay liberation must connect with the wider revolutionary struggle. Yet practical support from the wider liberation movement was the product of Special Branch's presumption of interconnection rather than any shared political approach. Special Branch's conspiracy theory became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Traditional Leninist forms of organisational structure meant that the police were unsure precisely where to direct their energies. Brigade member Hilary Creek explained that the state 'didn't know where to attack us'.⁴⁹ This led to raids throughout counter-cultural venues, publications and communes that sporadically led to drugs or obscenity charges. Support for the Brigade grew as defence from these attacks. In January 1971 there was a series of raids by Special Branch on known Leftists and anarchists as well as on the Brigade's flat in Amerhurst Road, London. Another commune that was raided was one where a prominent GLF participant, Andrew Lumsden lived. Police suspicions surrounding Lumsden had been raised through his activity in the Agitprop bookshop in Muswell Hill. With a reminiscence of the chains of arrests that affected homosexuals prior to decriminalisation in 1967, Lumsden's address book was removed as evidence.⁵⁰ The most prominent arrests as a result of these investigations were of the Stoke Newington Eight. One of these, Angie Weir, was a member of GLF. Weir was accused of being 'Rosemary Pink' with connections to international gun smuggling.⁵¹ Angie Weir, is now known as Angela Mason, who spearheads the contemporary respectable pressure group for lesbian and gay rights - Stonewall. At the time, however, she said that although she had not been a marxist before the trial, the experience of it had turned her into one. According to the counter-culturalist rejection of the Leftist possibilities available, this form of gay Left Marxism was centred on a deep-seated distrust of the organised Left.⁵²

According to Martin Bright, those arrested 'fitted perfectly the Establishment's picture of dissolute middle-class revolutionaries plotting to undermine civilised values'.⁵³ Certainly those arrested were a representative cross-section of the peculiarly British counter-culture of the time. The old universities were represented by Jim Greenfield and John Barker, who had torn up their Cambridge finals papers in a political protest in 1968, after which they joined the underground surrounding the anti-Vietnam war movement.⁵⁴ The new universities contributed University of Essex students Chris Bott and 'revolutionary babes' Anna Mendelson and Hilary Creek.⁵⁵ According to fellow Essex student and journalist in the underground press, Richard Trench, the Angry Brigade was the natural outcome for that section of the Essex student body who honed their activism in the university coffee bar.⁵⁶ However, Bott had taken part in the student activity in Paris in 1968⁵⁷ and had been to Cuba.⁵⁸ Mendelson and Creek had dropped out of Essex after their second year to join the underground of communes, squats and the early women's movement.⁵⁹ Alongside Weir, the two had been involved in the publication of the women's issue of the underground publication *Frendz*. Two others arrested, Ian Purdie and John Christie, had a history of terrorist activity. Purdie had served 9 months for petrol bombing an army recruitment office. Christie, an anti-Franco anarchist, had already come under police suspicion for a series of attacks on Spanish targets in London.⁶⁰ Jake Prescott, a burglar and heroin addict,⁶¹ was in

prison for possession of fire arms when he first came into contact with the Brigade through Ian Purdie who was serving time for his attack on the army offices.

Prescott's involvement in the Brigade led to his arrest for cheque fraud and in connection with the Miss World bombing. He was already in prison when the rest of the Brigade was arrested. His position outside of the Eight extends beyond time and the particularities of his arrest. Many argued that the 'Bighead' brigade lacked legitimate revolutionary credentials.⁶² GLF's Carla Toney had her suspicions that the Brigade were middle-class interlopers into working-class politics.⁶³ Prescott was the 'working class ghost at the Angry Brigade's bourgeois feast'.⁶⁴ Looking back at his position Prescott was later clear that '[a]s the only working class member, I was not surprised to be the first in and the last out of prison'. He remained resentful towards the other members. Prescott expressed the parasitic relationship that the Brigade had with the working-classes. Whilst valuing the authenticity of his experience and class position it appeared that the Brigade were prepared to sacrifice him.⁶⁵ It is questionable whether the relationship between the Brigade as an organisation and the rest of the counter-culture was any more egalitarian.

According to counter-cultural journalist and lead singer with The Deviants, Mick Farren, support for the Brigade emphasised the pre-existing factions of direct-action versus pacifism that could be traced back to CND and continued to represent the ideological poles of the new counter-culture. However, these questions were muted in the face of the immediate need to defend the Brigade from State oppression. When under attack the disparate groupings around the counter-culture were committed to attempt a coherence against their shared enemy. This was a process which necessarily celebrated the Brigade as a new and radical voice. Accordingly in practical terms, the counter-cultural publication *International Times (IT)* treated the Brigade as 'another rock group looking to make their name'.⁶⁶ This proved problematic. The Brigade used *IT* as the drop off point for their communiqués. This not only implicated the publication but brought with it high level police interest, something unwanted at a time of frequent drug and obscenity busts.⁶⁷ The Brigade also invaded *IT*'s offices and burnt whole archives of photographic negatives.⁶⁸ Despite all this *IT* felt 'virtually compelled' to support the Brigade.⁶⁹

The trial of the Stoke Newington Eight was of record length. Combined with a lack of press coverage, this fuelled a belief in police corruption, the role of personal vendetta and MI5's obsession with the case.⁷⁰ On 3rd December 1973 a verdict was returned on the Angry Brigade.⁷¹ Five defendants, including Weir were acquitted. The remaining four defendants were sentenced to ten years for conspiracy to cause explosions. Ultimately the jury believed that the police had fabricated evidence connected with the actual terrorist acts. The charges that remained, those of 'conspiracy' to cause the explosions, were, according to Stuart Christie 'very ham fisted and didn't require any definite evidence that have always been used as a classical attack on political opponents of the state'.⁷² Similar contrived conspiracy charges had also been used to attack homosexual expression following the Sexual Offences Act.

The Gay Left Collective were a group who developed out of the GLF. They recognised the historical precedent in which 'conspiracy' charges had been used to break up attempts at both working-class and gay self-organisation. Bob Cant and Nigel Young wrote that 'just as conspiracy charges were used to weaken the rights of workers, so they are being used to attack the rights of a sexual minority to meet and to organise'.⁷³ The great counter-cultural trials, especially those relating to *Kidz Oz*, and *Gay News* as well as less infamous that involved *Gay Circle*, had all revolved around the charge of 'conspiracy to corrupt public morals'.

In terms of its impact on the GLF, the combination of shared political concerns and contingent unity led to entryist attempts on the Front by the Brigade. GLF member Luke Fitzgerald explained the relationship between the GLF and the Brigade:

Angry Brigade? Well, [we were] part of the same general movement, really. We were all part of a large inchoate revolutionary movement that would change society from without and within (and of course make the Gay movement unnecessary... come to think of it, not too unlike the Communist Party line in a way).⁷⁴

A shared foregrounding of the politics of desire initiated this particular dialogue. The structure and analysis of the Brigade transported gender concerns into the masculinised world of terrorist tactics. Underground journalist David May had described the Brigade women as 'proto-lezzies'.⁷⁵ Furthermore, there were suggestions from the Brigade that the secret lives led by gay men meant that they were more duplicitous and therefore more suited to terrorist activity.⁷⁶

However, according to the GLF founders, the Brigade's interest in the GLF was of a pragmatic, entryist nature. The Brigade had been 'secretly attempting to recruit individual gay men and lesbians' hoping to utilise the GLF's numerous and widespread networks for the Brigade's own access to the underground, thereby establishing a 'gay-wing' through the GLF.⁷⁷ To a degree this relationship was reciprocated. Some GLFers such as Andy Elsemore have been accused identifying publicly with the Brigade in order to increase their kudos.⁷⁸ The GLF also recognised the resonances of the Brigade's cutting-edge position for its own purposes. When GLF London attempted to step outside of its inward-looking politics by launching *International Gay News* they alluded to the Brigade. The subheading of the magazine was 'gay is good' and 'gay is angry'.⁷⁹

The Troops Fall Out

Despite these connections, the counter-cultural posturing, the conspiracy theories of those in authority and the intermingling nature of the culture around Stoke Newington at the time, the political outlook within GLF was itself too diversified to welcome the Brigade whole-heartedly. Reaction against attempted alliances brought with it practical problems. Joint organisation and the celebration of difference had turned discord into a virtue. By 1972 GLF's publication, *Come Together*, was becoming increasingly referred to as *Fall Apart*.⁸⁰ However, its parameters continued. Branches of the Front continued throughout the country, in London its communes and workshops remained, and it spawned the groups and organisations that were to structure the next twenty decades of gay activism. These included Gay Switchboard, theatre companies like Bloodlips and Gay Sweatshop, and particularly the groups that were to structure the campaigns over AIDS such as Body Positive, Jewish AIDS Trust⁸¹ and IceBreakers, Outrage! and Stonewall which were all founded by ex-GLFers. These groups were formed with protection from the Left's appropriation and entryism built into their analysis and form. For example Stonewall 'was set up with a defensive structure, to stop it from being taken over by the straight Left, which was what kept happening'.⁸² In Outrage!'s case this suspicion of the Left took on a form that fitted the group's reputation for direct confrontation. On March for Equality in March 1994 Outrage! organised a "trot-watch" to monitor the Socialist Worker's Party (SWP). Eventually, tired of SWP's intimidation and attempts to divert the role of the march, Outrage! minders confiscated their loudhailer and argued, alongside the police, that SWP were inciting a riot.⁸³ The experiences of the liberational years, compounded by those under Thatcher, of the Bermondsey By-election in 1980,⁸⁴ Clause 28 and the campaigns surrounding AIDS proved how limited the possibilities for an incorporation of class and sexual analysis remained within both the Labour and Trotskyite Left.

Outside of the organised Left the 'theatre of terror' no longer held appeal. As for the liberation movement, at the heart of Bakhtin's historicisation of the Carnavalesque was the understanding that under bourgeois society the Carnival was 'an individual carnival, marked by a vivid sense of isolation'.⁸⁵ However these positions do not necessarily constitute an end of the political dialogue.

Rather, they are expressions of the ongoing struggles between the objective and the subjective and between grand narrative and personal experience.

¹ The Last Poets, 'When the Revolution Comes', *Spoken Word Collection* (Guerrilla Bootleg, 2000).

² Ali, T., *Street Fighting Years: An Autobiography of the Sixties* (New York: Citadel Press, 1991), p.235.

³ An exception to this rule is the writing of David Widgery, who, despite his position within the International Socialist Party, managed a maverick allegiance to the counter-culture and the rise of gay liberation. Widgery, D., ed., *Preserving Disorder – Selected Essays 1968-88* (Pluto, 1989).

⁴ Sinfield, S., 'Identity and Subculture', in C. K. Creekmur and A. Doty (eds.), *Out in Culture* (Durham & London: Duke Press, 1995), p.201.

⁵ Munt, S., 'The Personal, Experience, and the Self,' in C. K. Creekmur and A. Doty (eds.), *Out in Culture* (Durham & London: Duke Press, 1995), p.359.

⁶ Power, Lisa, *No Bath but Plenty of Bubbles* (Cassell, 1995); Teal, Donn, *The Gay Militants* (New York: Stein and Day, 1971); Grey, Antony, *Speaking Out: Writing on Sex, Law, Politics and Society 1954 - 95* (Cassell, 1997); Weeks, Jeffrey, *Coming Out* (2nd ed: Quartet, 1990).

⁷ Nichols, J., *The Very First History of the Stonewall Era* (www.gaytoday.com/garchive/history.htm, 2002 [cited 20/9 2002]).

⁸ Grogan, E., *A Speech: Dialectics of Liberation* (speech from dialectics of liberation conference on www.diggers.org/digpaps68/dialib.html, 1997 1968 [cited 12/07 2002]).

⁹ Kosofsky Sedgwick, E., *Between Men* (New York: Columbia U. P., 1985), p.183.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.11.

¹¹ Kosofsky Sedgwick, E., *Epistemology of the Closet* (New York: Harvester, 1990), p.47.

¹² Foucault, M., 'An Introduction', in *The History of Sexuality Volume 1* (Allen & Lane, 1979). D'Emilio, J., 'Capitalism and Gay Identity,' in H. Abelove, M. Borale, and D. Halperin (eds.), *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, (Routledge, 1993). Weeks, J., 'Capitalism and the Organisation of Sex', in Gay Left Collective (eds.), *Homosexuality: Power and Politics*, (Allison & Busby, 1980).

¹³ GLF, 'Principles', *Come Together*, 4, 1970.

¹⁴ Leyland, W., 'Gay Liberation and New Literature', in W. Leyland (ed.), *Grass Roots*, (San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press, 1991), p.241. The Stonewall riots are named after the bar in Greenwich Village where they took place. The Stonewall Inn was frequented by lesbians, drag queens and rent boys who had come under constant police harassment. There was a strong sense that intimidating gay and lesbian venues and their patrons was a form of entertainment for the local police. On the 27 June the police once more raided the bar in an aggressive and intimidating manner. The customers reacted immediately. That the raid occurred on the night of the funeral of gay icon Judy Garland has been understood as a driving impetus behind the riots. Word of the events soon spread encouraging hundreds of lesbians and gay men to participate over a number of days.

¹⁵ Scraggio, W., 'Producing Identity - From Boys in the Band to Gay Liberation,' in Patricia J. Smith (ed.), *The Queer Sixties* (Routledge, 1999), p.237.

¹⁶ D'Emilio, J., *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics and the University* (Routledge, 1992).

¹⁷ D'Emilio, 'Capitalism and Gay Identity', p.467.

¹⁸ Salewicz, C., 'Anarchy in the UK', *The History of Rock*, 9, 103, 1984.

¹⁹ Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution, 'Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution,' September, Cmnd 247 (HMSO, 1957).

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⁸⁴ The Bermondsey by-election has been called the most homophobic by-election of all time. Ex-GLF activist Peter Tatchell took over the role of candidate in a challenge to the councillor Bob Mellish who had been accused of a number of major and minor offences. Tatchell's homosexuality and left-wing activism conspired in the minds of the Labour Party NEC to form a major threat to the Party. The leadership refused to back Tatchell, and publicly condemned him. All the major parties involved in the election played on Tatchell's homosexuality in an attempt to suggest that he was therefore unable to represent 'ordinary working people'. It appeared that homosexuality still constituted a bourgeois construction to many on the Left. The Liberal Party won the by-election, although they were to remain implicated in Tatchell's treatment.

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