

THE WHOLE NAKED TRUTH OF OUR LIVES: LESBIAN-FEMINIST PRINT CULTURE FROM 1969 THROUGH 1989



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Abstract

During the 1970s and the 1980s, lesbian-feminists created a vibrant lesbian print culture, participating in the creation, production, and distribution of books, chapbooks, journals, newspapers, and other printed materials. This extraordinary output of creative material provides a rich archive for new insights about the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM), gay liberation (the LGBT movement), and recent U.S. social history. In *The Whole Naked Truth of Our Lives*, I construct and analyze historical narratives of lesbian-feminist publishers in the United States between 1969 and 1989. Interdisciplinary in its conception, design, and execution, *The Whole Naked Truth of Our Lives* is the only sustained examination of lesbian print culture during the 1970s and 1980s; it extends the work of Simone Murray on feminist print culture in the United Kingdom as well as the work of literary scholars Kim Whitehead, Kate Adams, Trysh Travis, Bonnie Zimmerman, and Martha Vicinus, and historians Martin Meeker, Marcia Gallo, Rodger Streitmatter, Abe Peck, John McMillian, and Peter Richardson. From archival material, including correspondence, publishing ephemera such as flyers and catalogues, and meeting notes, oral history interviews, and published books, I assemble a history of lesbian-feminist publishing that challenges fundamental ideas about the WLM, gay liberation, and U.S. social history as well as remapping the contours of current historical and literary narratives. In the excitement of the WLM, multiple feminist practices expressed exuberant possibilities for a feminist revolution. Cultural feminism and lesbian separatism were vibrant expressions of the WLM; they were not antagonistic to radical feminism or liberal feminism but rather complementary and overlapping. Economic restructuring in the United States (e.g. globalization, decreasing governmental support for the arts, and neoliberalism) tempered visions for a lesbian-feminist revolution. Lesbian-feminist publishers experienced economic restructuring as it unfolded and actively discussed the political, economic, and theoretical implications. The strategies and responses of lesbian-feminist publishers demonstrate the effects of and resistances to these macro-economic forces. Examining the economics of book publishing explains how literary artists and other creative intellectuals support themselves in capitalist economies, illuminates broader intellectual and cultural currents, and suggests how broader economic trends in the United States interacted with cultural production.

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transgressive sexuality, and liberatory space. Recommended for all students of 20th/21st-century southern cultures, especially if the mere mention it has been a long time since I felt as turned on by a piece of academic feminist writing as I felt reading the introduction to *The Lesbian South*. 11. On lesbian feminist theory and politics, see, e.g., Phelan 1989: "the core of lesbian feminism is the position that sexism and heterosexism are 'hopelessly intertwined,' that the oppression of women and of lesbians is 'the prototype for all other oppressions, since the oppression of women and of lesbians crosses boundaries of race, class, and age'" (p. 47, footnotes omitted). There are also many forms of anti-assimilationist lesbian and gay politics that are not "queer," such as socialist-inspired activism. 13. Interestingly, McClintock 1995 has provided substantial evidence that historically nationalism and imperialism were transmitted through commodity fetishism. 14. On the power of boundaries in our collective conscience, see generally Nedelsky 1990a. There are more than 200 countries in the world and even more nations. The world is open now and at your work, during your business trips and studies or just through the Internet you can be involved in the multicultural communication. Someone thinks that for efficient conversation good communicational skills and language proficiency (usually, in English) are enough. However, it's not is easy. Knowi.