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Making Butch: an Historical Memoir of the 1970s

While watching the film Last Call at Maud’s, I remembered my first night at Maud’s: more, my many nights at Maud’s. For Maud’s was my first bar, my coming-into-the-life bar, the bar I frequented several nights a week, the bar that centered my obsessive fantasies of a lesbian (under)world – the bar that loomed behind my article “Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic.” The film was about Maud’s. In part, it depicted a Maud’s that did not exist, since the film was peopled by well-known feminist authors whom I had never seen there, but whose inclusion in the film seemingly added legitimacy to the bar’s claim to centrality in the lesbian scene in San Francisco. In part, the film focused on the later Maud’s, in which baseball provide some innocent centre around which the drinking, drugs, and cruising could be relegated to more marginal roles. Perhaps all that cheery team-playing was partially a result of the feminist clean-up of the lesbian scene. At any rate, Maud’s, the oldest women’s bar in San Francisco, was my training ground, was the social centre of the lesbian scene in the city, and now is no more.

My first night at Maud’s was in the late 1960s. I pushed open its plain black door to discover two rather dimly lit rooms. The long bar occupied the first room. It was illuminated by various neon ads for beers, the warm, orange light from the juke box, and the garish surround of the pinball machine. The other room afforded a central view of the pool table, with its low-hanging lamp and a few tables along the walls. The old butch–femme scene hunkered down at the end of the bar itself, while a few hippie dykes straggled in to sit at the tables. The classical butches still played the pinball machine and occupied the central pool table. The hippie dykes played the juke box (demanding...
new tunes) and talked endlessly among themselves. Their conversation was not like anecdotal monologues delivered by the classical butches, after a few beers, but were sometimes drug-inspired, enthusiastic descriptions of altered perception. The two groups regarded one another with suspicion.

It is this sharpened, but contested gaze that defines the intersection, the historical moment of this memoir. The time when hippie neo-butches encountered the classical ones. At Maud’s: where lifestyle politics met ghettoized, closeted behavior; where middle-class drop-outs, students, and sometime professionals met working-class people who had slim, but tenacious hopes of doing better; where the “sexual revolution” broke the code of serial monogamy; where costume and hallucination affronted sober dress codes and drink. Outside that dark retreat, feminism was constructing other social spaces and the student movement at San Francisco State was wiping the sidewalk with the canon and the exclusionary curriculum that produced “whiteness” with its every assignment. Inside, a new historical moment was being forged whose legacy of confrontations proceeds down into the contemporary scene.

At the time, I was a grad student in an experimental program at San Francisco State College. The program offered a version of the history of ideas, with young junior professors just out of the places like Brandeis University, where Herbert Marcuse was teaching and Angela Davis was studying. Even without the later wisdom of cultural studies programs, studying notions of history by day and standing around in the bar by night did not seem to contradict one another. Student activism encouraged a necessary relationship between the streets and the classroom. Later, in my PhD studies in drama at Berkeley, I completed a course which combined dramatic theory with the practice of directing. I knew, even then, that I was just sublimating my earlier pleasure in books by day and bars by night – text and performance. I continue to do so, perhaps most literally in this piece. This particular combo currently defines the field, where gender dresses up in the glad rags of the performative and lesbian bars go as “queer” watering holes.

Like many others, I wore long, straight, hippie hair and bell-bottom hip-huggers, but felt I was “butch” (though I had never heard the term). They were men’s pants, after all, with broad leather belts, and hippie men when sporting long hair as well. Nevertheless, I had to depend on the kindness of classical butches in order to learn the ropes of bar culture. They seemed quite obliging – I think it was my long hair. They drove me around in their big
American cars, showing me the route of four bars which composed the itinerary of a weekend night. Maud's was both the starting place and the end-point along a route that included two bars in the Mission district and one over on the North Beach side of town. After the bars closed, the hearty might add an after-hours joint (for members only) in the Tenderloin district. Brunches at the boys' bars on Sunday provided an opportunity to see who had gone home with whom, and all that together composed a weekend in the life.

The butch–femme people included “Whitey” whom some may remember from the film *The Word is Out* – her parents had her confined to a mental institution for her sexual proclivity. I dated one of her girlfriends, a young innocent from Kansas City, whom Whitey had rescued from the Midwest by arriving at her parents' door in Kansas City to whisk her off on the back of her motorcycle. That young girl later committed suicide. Other femmes I knew also went down: one who had worked in the publishing film *Little, Brown*, until she ran off to join a lesbian commune and become addicted to pills; a sex worker (called prostitutes at the time) who had her own “shop” in her apartment and sold stained glass windows on the side; the beautiful Eileen, the bar server, and Janice Joplin, who (it was said) sometimes frequented the place. Of course, lots of people were dying from drug use in the hippie culture and its environment. So there were mourning rituals in the hippie culture and in the bar culture.

Strangely, among those, I knew, it was the femmes who died. These were actually the neo-femmes, who somehow crossed the two cultures. The classic ones did better – they survived. One was called “the fox” because of her dyed red wig – she waited tables at a hamburger place called Zim’s. She might still be there. She had already been there for several years. Some classic butches included “Red”, who once won the pool championship with one hand, having broken her other in a bar fight, and “Ace” who drove a cab and had lived for years with a beautician, whose teased, dyed hair was truly monumental. I can remember one femme–femme couple, actually. They were both beauticians. No butch–butch couples, though – well, not until the androgynous look came into fashion. Then everyone looked like butches – “Girl Scout counselors”, some of us called them, who wore plaid shirts and REI pants. They could be camping in a minute. They had their back packs close at hand.
The crowd was almost exclusively “white”, a fact I did not notice at the time, even though, by day, I was involved in the student strike at San Francisco State which broke out over bringing ethnic studies onto campus. I could yell at a cop in riot gear about needing to break the “white” composition of the campus and then fail to notice its hold in the bars. My semi-closeted student status must have helped to isolate my political critique from my social one. In fact, as I remember, there was little discussion of the student strike in the bar. Of course, I didn’t discuss the writings of Marcuse in there either. Somehow, my own working-class upbringing had taught me to confine school words and concerns to the schoolyard. Still, I knew that the “black” women, as they were then called, hung out over in Oakland at their own bars and the Filipinas hung out in a place out by the Avenues. I don’t remember any Latinas. Hippies were also a pretty white bunch, seemingly ignorant of the racist element in their “new world” of love and understanding. It doesn’t seem to be much better today. Oh, Diva, for instance, includes that one article on, say, Andrea Stuart, but look at the ads. The “white” image of the “queer” or the sex radical pervades the videos and the hair-styles. Or, as one of my students has written, the butches are women depicted as women of colour, but the femmes are white. Maybe it’s a consequence of the heritage of lifestyle politics. I mean, who has a lifestyle, anyway?

We were beginning to develop a sense of ourselves in representation – we were discovering with the camera. My friend Lili Lakich, the neon artist, was on the cover of The Ladder, for instance, looking all brooding and hot. Judy Grahn, over in Oakland, was writing the poetry and helping to found a women’s press and bookstore. Barbara Hammer was making underground films. In 1979, I wrote a play about Maud’s called Jo: A Lesbian History Play. It was produced at a straight theater in San Francisco. It wasn’t very good play, but it was a big event, since no such play had ever appeared on a regular stage there. The show was sold out night after night to roaring, screaming, clapping lesbian audiences who loved seeing Maud’s depicted on the stage. Fortunately, their catcalls drowned out much of the dialogue. Meanwhile, the reviewer for the San Francisco Chronicle reported that it “told us nothing new about about being a lesbian”. He presumably had a good “deep throat”. Anyway, Meg Christian went to see the play and looked me up later to ask why, in my humorous and alluring depiction of the bars, I had not detailed the alcoholism and drug abuse, which had so challenged her life and which she attributed
to the fact that lesbians could only gather in bars. I guess that’s why I want to bring it up here.

I, too, when writing out into the straight culture, want to idealize the bars for political purposes. Make them jealous. But writing within the new fashionable context of pro-sex and butch–femme lifestyle politics, I do want to make a point the community, as it was then called, discovered was valuable. Many elements and substances in the bars and bar life are addictive. I, myself, started going out four and five nights a week. I watched lots of people drop out, go on welfare, or gain some kind of disability pay, in order to live their whole lives there. Why not? It was painful to live under the dominating culture. And wearing a damned skirt in an office was confining. There was a dress code at San Francisco State, for example, stating that skirts and hose were required for all female instructors. I had a couple of knit suits that made riding a motor scooter to work rather treacherous. Inside, in the remove of the bar, it seemed like being a waitress, all decked out, and the centre of dyke attention, was a really glamorous job. In my earlier article, “Toward a Butch–Femme Aesthetic”, I try to undo the class assumptions behind the upward mobility required by groups such as the Daughters of Bilitis. I realize I might be promoting that same attitude now. More to the point, however, is the feeling that the ghetto nature of our social life at that time encouraged us to collapse many of our aspirations and dreams into the mythic landscape of the bar, sometimes to the detriment of our futures.

Drinking accompanied the socializing and for some, that was life-threatening. I have two friends from those days who are still struggling with alcoholism. Eroticizing commodity fetishism, as lifestyle politics will do, is also addictive. It’s like Edie Sedgwick said in her book Edie, about life in the Warhol factory: after a while, with the drugs, they just spent all their time getting dressed up and ready to go out — eventually they never even made it out the door. The most fun was the dressing up, the make-up, the hair-styles. Saturdays were about getting ready, Saturday night partying and picking up, and Sundays about seeing who had done what with whom. The weekend was gone. So, when the feminist movement came up with the idea called “substance abuse” it didn’t seem as prudish and antique as it does now. In fact, it was an eye-opener. The organization called “sober dykes” was founded with great pride. Most drugs were put away, except for cocaine, which was touted then to be non-addictive. We later found out about that one, too. I’m not promoting an anti-alcohol,
anti-drug attitude, nor even a 12-step approach to life. However, for some, the fact that the social life occurred only around alcohol was dangerous – even life-threatening. As corny and middle-class as those early feminist coffee houses appeared to many of us, they at least provided a safer place for some.

During the later 1970s, feminist coffee houses began opening in the city, along with a women’s centre, which included a lesbian space. So suddenly there were options for places to gather. If you couldn’t afford to be around drinking, but still wanted to meet dykes, you had another possibility. People began exploring social relationships outside of the context of drinking and sexual practice. Anyway, all these discoveries would later suffer their own correction back to the pro-sex perspective. Contradictions create healthy politics, as Mao once said. But it is important to keep in mind that early on in those changing years, bars were still the only places to hang out and sex was the centre of social relations. Addictions abounded and were explored with great gusto and we all kept returning to the magic circle that bounded those rites. In one way, it was a grand time. The imagination that would celebrate myth and ritual could find wonderful dreams in those bars. Yet constructing a ghetto out of choice, as some bars currently do, has a different valence from having no option but the ghetto.

Now, I just want to take this opportunity to excuse myself if I seem to be name-dropping while recounting these times. I do not mean to imply that I was running around with the in-crowd. I enjoyed only a nodding acquaintance with most of the people I want to mention. On the contrary, I was rather shy, leaning/hiding by my favorite pillar near the bar. Hopefully, the name-dropping can serve as another kind of footnote – a different way to cite the community. Esther Newton had said about my “Toward a Butch–Femme Aesthetic” that it is not historical, so in this piece I want to display the nature of my evidence. As we now know, however, as constitutive a role as they may play, experience and memory cannot claim much real empirical power. I’d like to think I could take my cue from Audre Lorde’s notion of “a biomythography”. Lorde’s invention in *Zami* helps to inform my uncertainty about how much memory is constructed out of my desire, how much is observation, and how much is reconstructed to make a timely political point.\(^5\) Of those possibilities, the mythic nature of the construction is its most authentic component. Memory’s maids of honour, nostalgia, mourning, vindicating and celebrating colour most of what is written here. Anyway,
about the name-dropping, the riskiest part of the venture, we spent a lot of time at the bar gossiping about certain well-known names and claiming sightings of them in the scene. That’s what I want to report here. Perhaps namings places and people can lend a candour to this report if not the kind of proof the -ologies so admire. Anyway, name-dropping can also recreate the sense that just everyone was seen at Maud’s. Herb Caen even included it in his trend-setting column in the Chronicle as the “place where beautiful women meet women”.

Maud’s location, about three blocks from Haight Street, influenced the mix of people in the bar. The woman who wrote the book Going Down on Janice had opened a kind of sexy, hippie clothing store on Haight and could be seen in the bar on a Friday night. I felt comfortable going into her store to buy the men’s clothes. She had the exciting reputation of peeking around the dressing-room curtain when you were undressing. Her butch lover, in full leathers, could be seen riding her Triumph chopper down Haight Street in the early evening. She was one of the few butch images to intrude into the het, hippie flower look. You see, hippies were into strong gender roles, with women baking bread and having bavies, while men chopped wood and rolled joints. They didn’t mix with the homosexual crowd, but many of the lesbians around that scene emulated some of its practices, such as living in communes. Theirs were as separatist communes, though. People at the bar often moved “out into the country” for a while, but many returned in a hurry. Some lesbian communes still persist in the south of Oregon. Others were founded in Grass Valley in California and in northern New Mexico. They were the subject of many conversations in the bars. We would pack up our cars and go out there for a week, just to look. The ones up in Sonoma County were close enough for the girls to come into town on the weekend and report on their successes with goat grazing and wood chopping. It was exotic. We were interested in flirting with these “milk maids”, as we called them. I was having fantasies out of Restoration comedies. For that I would be.

So, anyway, I learned butch in the heart of this cauldron, which was brewing alternative subcultures in San Francisco. A new butch was born then, combining certain characteristics of the classical style with other influences. Because of feminism, cloning was already happening, toning down the masculine stance. Likewise, middle-class and student conventions altered the gestures, in terms of how you held your cigarette, for example, no longer between the thumb
and first finger, which was definitely working-class, but more like Virginia Woolf, in that famous smoking photo of hers. Your seated posture was different as well. You might cross your legs and lean forward at the table, rather than hook your big shoes on the rungs of the bar stool and lean back. The volume of speech diminished, no more yelling “Hey, Red” when your friend entered the bar, while the volume of music rose, with the new electro sounds of the Jefferson Airplane, for instance. Dancing freed up, releasing one from the bondage of partnering – like sexual freedom, the flirtation was opened out into a wider, more flexible space on the dance floor. Finally, walking the walk definitely altered. Although we might have ridden motorcycles (I certainly did) we did not stomp about in our boots. Everyone was wearing boots, after all. If you had shoulders, you didn’t need to mark the fact. Feminism made us interested in women and allowed us to be uninterested in men.

While we were butch, an identification with men would have seemed sordid. Many hippie men, with their long hair and soft ways, who were anti-Vietnam activists, running from the draft, were also trying to put aside the masculine. The idea of a politics around gays in the military would have been strange, indeed, to those against national military forces. Replicating what were perceived as the gestures of power and dominance had no attraction to those concerned with “equals rights”, so to speak. We were “flower children” who were against all aggression. The vietnam war made weaponry and hints of violence seem obscene. Hulking about, or strutting one’s stuff would have been aggrandizing space and aping dominance. Thus, butch was about giving sexual pleasure, taking pride in a lesbian identification, and being attracted to femmes. We were seeking to be “gentlemen”, in the best sense of the word, if we understood butch to have any referent among men. A sense of gallantry could mark gestures as butch. You know, there was that Brit fashion of puffy sleeves – the courtier style. Listening to the Stones’ “my sweet lady Jane” encouraged fantasies as pages – exquisite ceremonies for butch bottoms.

However, the butch I learned was not acceptable to the classical butches. Sherman, who appears in a chapter in the novel Sita, laughed derisively at my long hair, my silly hippie pants, my flowered shirts, and my “execrable” taste in music. She had been elected the “king” of North Beach, in her men’s long-sleeved shirts, her tough ways, and her abstract-expressionist painting style. She wore
boxer shorts and men’s pajamas and was probably “stone”. We were not. We had been a part of the “sexual revolution”, after all and wanted to experience it all. Sherman told me to just forget it and, by the way, to forget her beautiful girlfriend. I didn’t. Some of those femmes liked the new-style butches. For one thing, we could “pass” when necessary, both in terms of sexual orientation and class manners. For another, we were struggling with some kind of feminist notion of equality and shared practices. But then, Kate Millett agreed with Sherman, telling me, as a butch, I was just missing a certain something – maybe I just wasn’t tall enough.

At the other end of the spectrum, the clone thing was around, compromising a too-rigid stance on role-playing. Barbara Hammer’s ground-breaking films represented, as sexual and chic, women in bib overalls, in the country. She associated the nude body with “nature”, cutting from scenes of clitoral manipulation to caves, or whatever. Even though some of us called out ‘What is that?’ in the dark, alternative cinema showings, protesting the vanilla portrayal of sex, we were still somewhat disciplined by these initial lesbian films. Caught somewhere between being too soft for the Shermans and too tough for the Hammers, we forged a style that referred to hippie anti-masculine male fashions, while still distancing ourselves from new feminist representations which would have us dancing in the meadow in our bib overalls.

Some called us “nelly butches” as a way to accommodate the new style. We took to wearing 1930s men’s clothes from the thrift stores, with flowing, Dietrich-type pants and silk bow-ties. Why, we wondered, did butch necessarily mean dressing down, playing baseball, or poker? To be honest, sometimes, when we watched those traditional butch–femme couples waltz around the floor, they resembled our parents, saying the same things, like “cut your hair” and don’t listen to that loud, horrible music’. We were alternatively amused and frustrated by the classic rhetoric of serial monogamy: repetitively “falling in love”, “getting married”, and then living with a “roommate” who, as they loved to insist, “used to be my lover but we don’t sleep together anymore”. This was the signal that they were moving on. It occasioned those bar fights and couple-identified postures. Hippie free love shred a devotion to sexual pleasure with the classic butches and femmes around the bars, but without the thrill of sneaking around. Bar fights just didn’t fit with the idea of “make love not war”. And then, those classic couples seemed so apolitical, at the time of street demonstrations. They didn’t join them.
Perhaps it was because they couldn’t yet feel comfortable in the streets.

Rather than enjoying tradition, hippie dykes felt themselves part of a modernist movement, I guess you could say, dedicated to creating the new. Whether it was actually new or not, that was the rhetoric of the subculture. Let me remind the reader again that I am here correcting my stance in my first butch–femme article. At that point in the history of writing about lesbian subculture (the mid-1980s), I felt it was important to emphasize the connection with classical butches in the face of feminism’s intrusion into the discourse. Now, I sense a certain mythologizing of butch–femme, which is made to serve an anti-feminist stance, which I believe misinterprets certain historical moments in the history of the feminist movement. I have revised my earlier stance at length in a new article, “Toward a Butch-Feminist Retro-Future”, in hopes of retaining the debates within feminism and its dedication to coalitions among women. Part of the polemic behind this essay is to understand a different reception around issues of “female masculinity” (now enjoying a privileged status in some critical circles) by historicizing the markers of masculinity at the time of the Vietnam war.

While we’re on contested critical terrain, let me return to the much-debated issue of the lesbian relationship to “camp”, which I celebrated in the first article. When I asserted that such a practice was common, I neglected to locate that practice within San Francisco. It probably did not play in, say, Buffalo. In San Francisco, lesbians and gay men did suffer some social intercourse with one another. Perhaps that is how camp came into the lesbian bar discourse. Crowning the king and Queen of North Beach was an annual joint event. The boys’ bars hosted some wonderful women entertainers whom the lesbians poured in to ogle. Tapes by the fabulous Ann Weldon circulated in both bars. The drag ball brought the leading queens around in their limos to visit the annual drag party at Maud’s. And, as I mentioned before, the boys’ bars hosted those Sunday brunches we all attended. Moreover, several of them served cheap dinners on certain nights of the week. We often met our gay friends there early in the evenings before making our way out into our gender-specific clubs. So, the practice of drag and the enjoyment of multiple sexual partners circulated between gay and lesbian bar cultures. Show people were on the fringes of the scene. Some girls who worked as “exotic dancers”, as they preferred to be called, cynically performed flirtations with men on the stages of topless/bottomless clubs. Costumes were playing
on the sidewalks of the Haight. Hallucination dis-jointed the “real”. Some of us had seen not only Barbara Hammer’s films, but Andy Warhol’s as well. Kenneth Anger was around in the city. His movie, which begins with a big biker putting on his leathers and chains to “Blue Velvet”, was the talk of the town. I talked with him once about trying to do some homosexual version of Oedipus. Shortly after that, he jumped, nude onto the altar of Glide Memorial Church. Meanwhile, back at Maud’s, the brutal, clipped discourse of bar butches still circulated among the hippie descriptions of visions and hallucinations. Opening in there, between the clip and the float, in an environment of self-ironic flirtation within an urban homosexual scene, was a space for masquerading thoughts and inverting social codes. Clipped, ironic, playful travesties cast the mantle of camp across the scene. Not the whole scene, of course, but this particular graft of hippie and traditional.

At the same time as this permissive environment held great sway, violent homophobic practices still penetrated the removed spaces of the bars. Paying off the cops at the bar could be seen by anyone who wanted to look over there on party nights. It was still illegal to dance together in close contact and the local beat cops had to be encouraged not to come around. The raids around election time as “moral clean-ups” enforced a sense of the frailty of official liberality. One of the bars in Oakland allowed dancing in a back room, where a large red light blinked when the vice cops entered the front door. Everyone flew to their seats. A certain butch badge of daring could be sported by getting “86ed”, or thrown out of the bar for a certain period of time. The owners had to be careful about the vice cops, so they would police untoward physical proximity, when we enjoyed in various dark corners. Frighteningly, there were still repeated episodes of male gangs hiding around the corner at the time of the bar’s closing ready to gang rape the women who dared to walk down the pavement alone. This happened to two of my friends. We might swagger in the bars, sporting our butch outfits, but we put on a coat and hurriedly got on our bikes out in front, when we left the safety of the bar’s confines.

In many ways, a certain sense of “butch” did not survive this moment. The lesbian feminist movement turned away from role-playing into a privileging of androgyny, or non-gendered, or non-patriarchal, or “natural” styles, as they insisted. When butch re-emerged out the other side of that betrayal, it did so with a vengeance – so vengeful, in fact, that it associated its demeanour with
gay men and the masculine, rather than with styles among women. Daddy boy dykes and F2M associated with men in new, more fleshly ways. The swagger was back. Images of dominance were eroticized. Working-class styles were sported, even though, often, by middle-class butches. Leather harnesses, dildos, and piercings don’t exactly suggest the gestures of gallantry, the way page haircuts and puffy sleeves once had done. In those days, I think the gyno-centric (as it was called then in feminist circles) was the magnetic pole of the imaginary, rather than the masculine. The masculine had been contaminated by its proximity to war.

Well, I am not calling for a vote on which is better. Instead, I want to make a different point, to conjecture that it was in the contrast between these two styles that the notion of style itself became visible in the subculture. Before hippies, butch and femme were not perceived as a style, but as “the way we are”. At this point in history, one might argue, when hippies and butches actually regarded one another across the room, both became aware of a contest of styles. They were on their way to constructing a sense of lesbian “lifestyle”. Their comparative practices redefined lesbian sexual practice as style and began to construct a sense of a self-conscious lesbian sociality, grounded first in the bars and later, in various kinds of locations. At the same time, because of the poets, the filmmakers, and the dress-shop owners, there arose a sense that there was a style of lesbian self-representation. Lesbians could begin to see themselves in the mirror in a way that only a few novels had provided them before. Now, they were represented in a certain way – partially influenced by the underground cinema practices in women’s and gay films at the time, partially by the styles of the subculture itself. Now, by the time “lesbian style wars”, as Arlene Stein called them in her article by the same title, were taking place in the late 1980s, the 1970s had become cast as a pre-style moment. Although Stein makes some acute observations about the politics of “lifestyle”, she grounds its emergence in the 1980s by reducing the 1970s to what she calls the “anti-fashion” movement within lesbian feminism. I think this has become a kind of commonplace assumption that I want to adjust here by introducing the hippie butch. At least in the urban centre known as San Francisco, with its Haight–Ashbury hippie culture, its “Love-Ins”, its Fillmore Auditorium, its local groups such as The Jefferson Airplane, its singers such as Joan Baez and Janis Joplin, its anti-war demonstrations, its student uprisings such as the one at San Francisco State and other events of the late 1960s and the 1970s,
Making Butch

more than a strict hairy-legged, overall-wearing lesbian feminist was walking through the bar door. Sure, she was around and she was influential. But the encounter between the classic butch and the hippie butch was perhaps even more prescient in its focus on style, on issues or representing masculinity and sexual desire.

Hippies also presented the subculture with an interest in perception (via hallucination) and in the structuring of internal processes. If you look around now, these elements, although reconfigured, are still recognizably present. The student movement brought these kinds of studies onto the campus. Some people think we got them from importing French psychoanalytic studies. But I think they developed out of a subculture which smoked marijuana and indulged in long monologues about inner processes, or dropped acid and then dealt with the nature of perception, and out of a militant student movement that insisted that the streets, with all their priorities and social exigencies become part of the “student body”.

Of course, organizing observations around something designated as a historical moment is really only a familiar disguise for a polemic. I think I already copped to that. Every time I see those crowds at Pride pushing for gays in the military, with those uniformed colour guards marching by, and those lesbians cheering on Margarethe Cammermeyer in her drive to get her much-deserved promotion in the US Army, I think of those flowered banners that read “Make love not war!” Cammermeyer served in Vietnam, I believe. Allen Ginsburg recently died, a gay brother who led that ferocious “ooohm” out in front of the Pentagon, never running from those cops who were restoring order, but standing quietly his anti-way ground, his long, hippie hair just blowing in the winds of war. Those are the issues in their most aggressive form. Watching some styles of butching it up today, though, I find they still carry for me, a one-time hippie butch, the same associations with masculinity I learned then. I can’t shake those countercultural images of talking on the feminine as the devalued, unAmerican, anti-militaristic style. An interest in the masculine still smells of Agent Orange.

So, in spite of what the X Files advertises, I am ultimately unconvinced, when discussing the lesbian subculture, that “the truth is out there”. I don’t claim any truth in this matter, only my own strong opinions, memories, vindictive parries, and iconoclastic mythologies. I’m trying to replicate my opinions at the time. But intertextuality, as we call it, among all the articles on butch–femme, queer dykes, lesbian history and attendant topics has penetrated my associations.
“Hippie” is thus a position to hold a certain ground in the terrain of lesbian studies. Still, it does serve to correct the misapprehension that “lesbian feminists” as they are now constructed against stylish queer dykes define the representation of lesbian in the 1970s.

Notes
1. *Last Call at Maud’s/The Maud’s Project* (New York: Water Bearer Films, 1993). The bar was Maud’s on Cole Street in San Francisco, also known as The Study.
2. This article has been published in many places, to my embarrassment. I did not retain the copyright and it was released by the press. One accessible collection is Henry Abelove, Michèle Barale and David Halperin (eds), *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 294–306. [Reproduced here as Chapter 2.]
3. This idea occurred thanks to a class paper written by Tricia Slusser.
4. The critic was named Bernard Weiner, who was pretty good on other political theatre.
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