

"Down At the Whorehouse?": Reflections on Christian Community Service and Female Sex Deviance at Toronto's Street Haven, 1965 - 1969

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on Street Haven, a drop-in centre that opened in Toronto, Ontario in 1965 to service female ex-offenders and street women, the majority of whom were gay, drug users, and prostitutes. Interviews and archival materials reveal how white, middle-class Haven volunteers endeavoured to improve the lives of "the girls" in the interests of "normal" womanhood. At the same time, stories told by volunteers complicate notions of societal norms unilaterally imposed by Christian "do-gooders" on "deviant" subjects.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet exposé se concentre sur Street Haven, un centre pour les femmes qui a ouvert ses portes à Toronto en 1965 pour offrir des services aux anciennes contrevenantes, et les femmes de la rue, la majorité d'entre elles étaient des homosexuelles, des droguées et des prostituées. Des entrevues et du matériel des archives révèlent l'effort fourni par les bénévoles qui sont de la bourgeoisie blanche pour améliorer la vie des "filles" dans l'intérêt de la féminité "normale." En même temps, les histoires racontées par les bénévoles compliquent les notions des normes de la société imposées unilatéralement aux sujets qui s'écartent de la norme par des "saintes-nitouches" chrétiennes.

INTRODUCTION

In 1965 "Street Haven at the Crossroads" opened as a drop-in for street women and ex-offenders in what was known as Toronto's red-light district. Founded by nurse Peggy Ann Walpole, it occupied the abandoned beverage room in the run-down Atalanta Hotel on Carlton Street before moving to rented rooms above the Edison Shoe Store on Yonge Street. Quickly the Haven became known as a non-denominational, charitable agency that provided resources to a targeted constituency: "streetwalkers, sex deviates, and drug addicts."

Before the end of its first year, the Haven had established some financial stability with the aid of funders: the United Church of Canada, the Timothy E. Eaton Company, Metropolitan Toronto, the Alcohol and Drug Addiction Research Foundation (ADARF), and a handful of private donors. Between 1965 and 1969, the funding covered operating costs such as rent, utilities, food supplies, and furniture, and by 1967, Director Walpole's modest salary. Within this four-year

period, over six hundred women, or "girls" as they were called, passed through the front door. The routine, daily work of making the Haven a vibrant and increasingly successful organization was accomplished by upwards of fifty unpaid female staff in the longstanding tradition of middle-class, Canadian women's volunteer service (Valverde 1991; Iacovetta 1992, 1995; Pederson 1986, 1987; Lévesque 1991; Stewart 1993).

This paper is based on archival data and interviews with Director Walpole and nine former Haven volunteers.¹ From combined oral and printed sources, I learned that during the early years of Street Haven, Walpole and her female staff dedicated their efforts to improving the quality of life for "down-and-out" women. Instrumental to the Haven's vision was the promotion of respectable (heterosexual) femininity and domesticity among the homeless, "wayward street girls" who arrived at the drop-in. This was a formidable assignment given that, according to Walpole, "eighty to eighty-five percent of the Haven drop-ins were either lesbians or in lesbian relationships." I argue that in the

1960s, the program overseen by Street Haven staff was, in part, guided by 1) their sense of mission to offer street women compassion and safety, 2) their own class-based, heteronormative expectations about decent, honourable womanhood, and, 3) the favoured medical diagnosis of homosexuality, and butch/femme identities especially, as symptoms of arrested sexual development and derailed gender socialization. Haven volunteers participated in a larger, postwar public process of labelling female sex deviance as a multi-faceted social problem (Penn 1994; D'Emilio 1989; Kinsman 1995, 1996; Kennedy and Davis 1994; Terry 1990, 1995). At the same time, however, the volunteers selflessly extended patience, kindness, and care to gay women whose lives were radically contrary to their own. It is this contradiction that troubles what might otherwise appear to be the story of uncomplicated imposition of heterosexual, feminine norms on "deviant" subjects.

VOLUNTEERING: "WE WERE IGNORAMUSES"

Who were the women who volunteered at Street Haven, and why did they choose the Haven? Executive Director Peggy Ann Walpole grew up in middle-class comfort in Toronto, the daughter of Frank Walpole, a mining consultant (who died when she was twelve), and Mary Walpole, famed social columnist for the *Globe and Mail* newspaper. Ms. Walpole attended private Catholic schools and graduated from St. Michael's School of Nursing in 1955. For ten years, she worked as a nurse in various milieux in Toronto: St. Michael's hospital, Sancta Maria House - a Catholic hostel for women in need - and the Don Jail. No stranger to physical pain, by 1965 Walpole had had multiple operations, a hysterectomy, and a partial stomach removal.

Peggy Ann Walpole was introduced to the principles of nursing education in the early 1950s. Nurses-in-training - groomed to be models of bourgeois femininity - were encouraged to be self-sacrificing, principled, loyal, and to put others' needs before their own. This training, according to historian Kathryn McPherson, would in turn enhance nurses' marital prospects, and their skills at making marriage and motherhood a success (1996, 191). In the post World War II era, the occupation's

leaders reconstructed nursing's image to emphasize its new, fundamentally heterosexualized persona (McPherson 203-4). However, though a self-identified heterosexual woman, Peggy Ann Walpole - working nurse and Street Haven Director - never married, did not raise children, and in the early years of the Haven chose to live in small apartments close by, on the edge of the tenderloin. Eschewing permanent hospital employment and professional advancement which were characteristic of nursing in Canada in the 1950s and 1960s, Walpole performed double duty: she nursed at night for the first two years of the Haven's existence to pay the bills, and she worked the day shift at the Haven. Not content to be a rank and file practitioner, Walpole strove to be her own boss. She recognized a double standard: men in need had many more services available to them in Toronto, and it became her mission to offer "women in need" a sanctuary.

The Street Haven volunteers recruited by Walpole were white, English-speaking, middle-class, Christian women, the majority of whom were middle-aged wives and mothers; when they joined the Haven they ranged in age from mid-twenties to late-fifties. For the most part, it was no accident that they signed up to help at the Haven when their children no longer required round-the-clock care. As such, the volunteers were not as easily blamed for "maternal deprivation" as were mothers of young children who worked outside the home (Arnup 1994; Strong-Boag 1994; Prentice 1988, 1992). According to Veronica Strong-Boag (1994), it was feared that, "By taking paid employment without the justification of an overwhelming economic need, middle-class women were threatening to assume masculine traits and to disturb an essentially fragile gender balance" (12). The work done by women at the Haven did not ring alarm bells for social commentators in postwar Canada in large part because it was perceived as an extension of their non-remunerated service at home and in the church.

Each woman I interviewed had made a commitment of three years or more to the Haven; she did an average of one-to-two, eight-hour shifts a week, and juggled her family, church, and social obligations alongside the rigours of Haven business. The majority had full lives which for some included golf club memberships, theatre and symphony

subscriptions, and weekly bridge clubs. According to Haven Director Walpole, "The volunteers must have thought, 'Who's this crazy nurse? My gosh, there must be something in it, because she's just kind of plunged in, on her own, with no back up, no nothing...let's go investigate it.'" Walpole continued, "The ones who stayed were accepting and they cared. They wanted something more meaningful than church work." By assisting women in less comfortable circumstances, volunteers at the Haven reconfigured their commitment to familism - child-centredness, happy families, and cohesive neighbourhoods - that had become so characteristic of women's lives in suburban, postwar Toronto (Strong-Boag 1995, 68).

Former volunteers Harriet O. and Nora S. shared concerns about the United Church more than thirty years ago. Harriet explained: "We found that the Church was wanting in its outreach. And we had been through all the women's groups and the children's groups and the Sunday schools, and the Brownies, and the guides, and the Scouts; we both recognized that the world wasn't just church and home, home and church." Nora S. recalled her favourite expression: "It's time we knock down the walls of this church!" When asked about volunteering at Street Haven, Nora replied: "We [the volunteers] were a bunch of ignoramuses. We'd never even been downtown! My first night I went to the Atalanta Hotel thinking, 'Gee, I hope no one sees me going in here.'" Four of the nine women I interviewed spoke of the Haven as "a calling." Hilda C. read a Haven fund-raising brochure in 1967, when she was thirty-six, and decided on the spot: "I had to get down to the Haven; this is what the Lord was telling me." Mary-Ann B., who had volunteered for several years at the Catholic Information Service, recalls reading about the Haven in a *Maclean's* magazine article and being immediately drawn to the opportunity for "non-professional involvement in health and service."

Of all the women who showed up to volunteer, approximately 25 per cent stayed. Of those who left, Nora S. reminisced: "It wasn't their cup of tea... My husband said, 'I don't like you going down to that *whorehouse!*' I told him 'It's not a whorehouse, Garnet. It's just a step from the street for some of the girls that never knew what a home was.' So he let me go." Harriet O. smiled when she

said, "There was no training program at the Haven. We had meetings where we sat down together and talked about what we should do for the girls, and so forth. But all of us were green...none of us were social workers. We were housewives!" Eva D., a life-long Catholic, remembers why she was attracted to the Haven: "These girls needed friendship and love; they needed to be fed love first, prayers later. I had a lot of love and caring to give."

In the mid-1960s, a shift at the Haven might include: visiting women in jail and in hospital, preparing daily meals inside the Haven, locating "nearly new" clothes and rental accommodation for the girls, bathing them and washing their hair, offering a friendly ear over cards, preparing resumés, accompanying them to the welfare office, and doing late-night street walks in and around the neighbouring cafés, burger joints, and hotels. Mary-Ann B. began with several night-shifts a week, and within a year was traveling with other Haven staff on weekends to visit women locked up in the federal prison in Kingston. Though the women I interviewed stated that they rarely felt qualified to perform Haven duties, they recall their work with pride; none of them remember feelings of guilt about neglecting their wifely and motherly roles.

LIFE SKILLS DISCOURSE: PRODUCING FEMININITY

From the beginning, Haven volunteers introduced their clients to programs intended to teach the particulars of womanly deportment and aesthetics, along with specific life skills. This was not unusual, training in (heterosexual) femininity had been central to the mandate of both charitable organizations and state-run agencies in Canada since the late 19th century (Sangster 1996; Kunzel 1993; Iacovetta 1995; Valverde 1995; Gentile in press; Pierson 1986; Lévesque 1997). In B.C., in conjunction with the staff of the Girls Industrial School, the Elizabeth Fry Society, founded in 1939, encouraged instruction of "problem girls" in "all phases of housekeeping, personal care, and vocational training in hairdressing, flower arrangement, corsage making and horticulture - strategies employed to return the girls to 'normal and happy existence'" (Stewart 1993, 22; 44-45).

Historian Joan Sangster (1996) notes how "incorrigible," "unmanageable" women inside Industrial Houses of Refuge in mid-century Ontario faced an emphasis on clean language, good manners, and hard work at female-type jobs - a program designed to prevent recurrences of "idle and dissolute" behaviour and "out of control" sexuality (239, 272). Throughout the 1950s and 60s, local chapters of the YWCA in Canada made efforts to "teach girls new skills - cooking, dressmaking and typewriting" (Harshaw, 1966, 127).

Schooled in the "natural" symbiosis of man and woman, staff members at Toronto's Street Haven learned that companionate heterosexuality could not always be taken for granted. The Haven girls defied gender and sexual conformity: their femininity was seen to be in jeopardy, hence it was something to be repaired, restored, and uplifted; it required not only attention, but discipline and dedication (Matthews 1984; Edwards 1993; Butler 1993). To apply the conceptual bite of Michel Foucault (1980), femininity was "something to be administered; it called for management procedures; it had to be taken charge of" (24).

**BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS:
BETTER FOR WHOM? BETTER THAN
WHAT?**

At the Haven, volunteer Joan H.'s "Fashion for Living" course covered modelling, art appreciation, diction, make-up, posture, and "good books to read," including *Better Homes and Gardens*. However, Street Haven girls in no way fit *Better Homes and Gardens*' profile of the intended or preferred reader. Haven-goers were poor women who lived large parts of their lives in jail, in cheap rooming houses in and near Chinatown, and/or in temporary housing at the Haven near the 'Corners' at Jarvis and Carlton Streets. They ranged in age from sixteen to sixty; of the 600 case files I consulted, there were no high school graduates. Many women had been incarcerated in the federal prison for women in Kingston, Ontario, and later moved to Toronto for a fresh start. All had relations to the "round" world of the informal economy (prostitution, petty thievery, the drug trade) and most spent long periods of time on welfare. That the

girls lived precarious lives was not lost on the Haven volunteers. Harriet O. recalled:

They had to live in rooms that were terrible. We went with them to the rooms. Oh! You have no idea how these girls survived in the late '60s. You should have seen what they got! One little bed no wider than two feet. One little hot plate which was *filthy*...I had never seen anything like it, and one little chest. That was the room. Not even a chair...Another time we went, the room was divided...the division was a curtain. Not a wall. A man on one side, a woman on the other. And each paid \$50. a month.

"IN MY HEART IT WAS DISGUSTING"

Fewer than 5 per cent of the Street Haven regulars were married. None could depend on a male wage-earner to pay the bills, buy the top-of-the line Frigidaire products, Maytag washing machines, and Oldsmobile family wagons pictured in *Better Homes and Gardens*. The majority identified as gay women, many of whom had been denied admittance at all other women-only shelters and half-way homes in Toronto (Benson 1966). Walpole and her Haven staff prided themselves on an official policy that extended unconditional entry to lesbians. However, log books, case files, and interviews with former Haven volunteers reveal ways in which lesbianism, as well as prostitution and drug culture, came to figure as social problems.² Haven staff were not unique in this regard. As historian Donna Penn notes, "Partly in response to fears of sexual chaos and partly in response to the increasing visibility of lesbian subcultures, by the second half of the twentieth century, 'experts' and disseminators of expert opinion demonized the lesbian in order to position her, along with the prostitute, as the essence of female sexual degeneracy" (Penn 1994, 359; Nestle 1987; Chauncey 1989; Kennedy and Davis 1994; Terry 1991 and 1995; Chenier 1995; Strange and Loo 1997; Sommerville 1994).

According to Haven records, Walpole and her volunteers were openly critical of lesbian relationships, and often commented that the

"arrangements" were extremely short term. There is no reference to lesbian couples, with or without children, as families. Any display of same-sex affection at the Haven was banned; the house policy was stapled to bulletin boards, and the girls who disregarded Haven rules were immediately "pulled up" by the volunteers. (Importantly, in women's prisons across North America, "true homosexuals" and "jailhouse turnouts" who engaged in intimate acts were also subjected to staff surveillance and punitive sanctions (Ward and Kassebaum 1965, Giallombado 1966).) According to Harriet O., "A lot of the Haven girls were homosexuals and you knew why: they'd been abused at home. You see, a lot of the young girls were from large families in the Maritimes or Northern Quebec...and maybe they were a middle one that was missed. And the mother never had time to look after them. And they were never loved as children. So of course the fathers and brothers used them. Most of them were sexually abused as youngsters. Most of them *hated* men! They hated men with a passion." Later in the interview, Harriet O. contradicts her earlier statement about the prevalence of "homosexuals," and attempts to explicate lesbianism as play-acting:

The real lesbians were few and far between, you see. We thought that they played at it. It was a relationship in which they felt secure, but they were not really homosexuals or lesbians - not physically or mentally or medically. I think of all the Haveners that I have seen - thousands of them - I think that there was a handful that were true lesbians. They were genetically more male than female. Some of them had deep voices, they were mannish in appearance. Some of them walked and talked like a man. It was tragic. Those were tragedies.

Nora S., who worked at a downtown department store, reminisced: "The first time I opened the door to the Haven I thought, 'Oh, we're gonna have boys here!' She was a perfect man! She was one that should have been a man. I felt sorry for her. She had mannish hands and mannish features. But we eventually got her into dresses and skirts...it took ten years at least. She had two chips, one on each

shoulder, that girl." In 1965, Eva D. was a 50-year old mother and secretary when she first volunteered at the Haven. She remembered believing that homosexuality was "disgusting" and in some women it was "cultivated." She continues: "The hardcore lesbians, the hard-boiled ones, the ones seasoned to the life, would get a hold of a young girl and try to win her over. It bothered me, seeing a pretty young girl...a normal, pretty young child turned into a lesbian. That's the part that hurt. It was heartbreaking." Katie F. remarked on a similar pattern at the Haven, and she blamed the prison system: "Once in jail, the butch girls would pick out the femme and probably the femme had no idea what they were getting into, but they were lonely. Here's some big girl comes along and wants to be your friend..." She then speculated about what she thought the Haven girls wanted, and what got in their way: "I suppose they all lacked love; deep down they wanted a nice, happy life, with a husband and children, but they had a weakness of character; they weren't able to resist temptation." In Director Walpole's view, "There were a lot who gravitated to that lifestyle who really didn't want to or didn't need to." Harriet O. said she did not consider lesbianism abnormal in the 1960s, though in places during the interview, she compared the all-gay Haven baseball team to the "everyday normal girls" who formed the other teams in the prestigious Ontario Ladies Financial League.

Every Haven staff member I interviewed produced an account of lesbianism that drew on medico-moral and/or criminological discourses of female homosexuality (Freedman 1996). In the professional vocabulary of conservative prison critics in the 1950s and 60s, "hardcore" lesbians were equivalent to sex offenders.³ Whether persuaded by the sexological concept of gender inversion, the Christian equation of same-sex relations with sin, and later sickness, and/or Freudian theories of arrested development, the volunteers and Director Walpole speculated on the causes of lesbianism: 1) women had homosexual sex in prison because they were desperate, and upon release they had a horrible time escaping "the life;" 2) some lesbians at the Haven inherited homosexuality as a genetic disorder, 3) others were recruited into the lifestyle; 4) gay Haveners, especially those who were prostitutes, loathed men

and ended up with women by default; and/or 5) they were abused as children by adult men and had grown up unnaturally mistrustful and suspicious. That women in prison may have discovered sexual attraction to women in their own right was not voiced as a possibility by Haven staff (Faith 1993). Interestingly, incest is neither registered nor discussed in the casefiles I consulted, yet in the interviews more than half of the former volunteers were quick to name incest, borrowing from pop-psychoanalysis, as one *explanation* for the prevalence of lesbianism at the Haven in the 1960s. Incest as an *expression* of abusive male power in families went largely unacknowledged until feminist grassroots and legal action erupted in the 1970s.

MAKING OVER

Tropes of the innately butch predator and her undeserving prey - the criminally predisposed freak and her temporary, pretend-femme - stud the talk of the former Haven volunteers who struggled to make sense of homosexual desire, practice, and identity. Flummoxed by overt displays of "mannishness," Haven volunteers instituted an aesthetic regimen that encouraged street women, butches and femmes alike, to approximate the standards of (heterosexual) femininity. Their strategies were more subtle than the mid-twentieth century initiatives of behaviour modification, aversion therapy, and electro-convulsion treatments devised to "cure" homosexuals (Cappon 1965; Gilhooly and Blackbridge 1985; Duberman 1991; Terry 1990). Debbie-Lynn F. claimed that she "learned almost immediately" that "converting the very tough gay women to a heterosexual lifestyle" was not an option. However, she noted that, "If you could convince them *by example* that there was nothing wrong with wearing makeup or doing your nails or getting your hair done, it would be a lot easier for them to exist in society" (her emphasis). Harriet O. remembers the tactic of positive reinforcement: "Some of the girls who had never, ever been out of pants suddenly changed and put on dresses, put on skirts, and their whole appearance changed; it was because we'd tell them, 'Oh do you look smashing! You look smashing in that!'" Nora S. remembers her approach: "I always wore upper-class clothes. One of the things I taught my kids is

'never come down to someone else's level. Never ever. You bring them up.'" In the words of Eva D., "If you were clean and better dressed, your whole well-being is upgraded." According to Debbie-Lynn F., volunteers were prohibited from wearing slacks on duty, and this was meant to "show gay women that there was nothing wrong with being feminine." She continued: "I didn't understand why they had to prove to the world that they were 'butch broads.'"

Images of Ms. Walpole and her volunteers reveal the hair and clothing styles they deemed appropriate for both themselves and their girls - stiff, permanented and beehived hairdos, smart, tailored dresses or two-piece skirt-suits and matching shoes, girdles, full-figure bras, pearl necklaces, earrings, face make-up, and lipstick. Rather than showy or flashy, their outfits signaled their preference for what Pierre Bourdieu (1984) in his anatomy of class-structured distinction has named "ostentatious discretion, sobriety and understatement" (249). In effect, Haven staff maintained their own class-based affective and instrumental investments in, and "practical mastery" of, feminine fashion (466). To women in possession of popular knowledge and skills, beauty, grace, and poise were on order as commodities; with sufficient skill, flare, and money, they could be purchased (Smith 1990). Once in hand, they enabled a certain consciousness of self coterminous with normalized femininity.

At times, butches at Street Haven aggravated the Haven volunteers. To Katie F., "They were big girls, they had deeper voices, were tougher and more masculine in the way they walked and talked." Butches never wore makeup though they often used men's cologne. Both Euro- and African Canadians sported tattoos on their arm and fingers, usually the names of their female lovers. Yet in the log books and case files, they were roundly upbraided by Haven staff for "not taking an interest in their appearance" in ways that summon and extend Bourdieu's critique of the terrible violence of bourgeois aesthetic intolerance (Bourdieu 1984, 56). Surgical removal of tattoos - a painful, lengthy process - was espoused by Walpole and her staff as integral to the girls' accommodation to the "square world" (Ross 1997). To former volunteer Eva D., "Tattooing was a status symbol for a lesbian who wanted to be a man." It

seems that signs of flouting feminine conventions - lack of lipstick, myriad tattoos, cropped, slicked-back hair, men's blazers and underwear, leather jackets, male nicknames - were read by Haven staff as indices of a "moral physiognomy", i.e., a predisposition among Haven butches to vulgarity, coarseness, and indiscretion (Bourdieu 1984, 1993). On the surface it would appear that femmes were not subject to the same scrutiny and surveillance at the Haven, and yet given concerns about butches' predacious propensities, lessons for femmes likely had an implicitly preventive, yet no less rigorous, character.

Few of the volunteers recall the presence of women of colour beyond the hazy memory of "the odd Indian," "Chinese Mary" or "Negress;" moreover, the casefiles and logbooks offer little concrete evidence of these women's lives. However, First Nations women were being warehoused in the Kingston Prison for Women in the 1960s - did these women find Street Haven upon their release? How might the openly Christian faith of the Haven director and staff have exacerbated the wreckage of First Nations spiritual traditions carried out for most of a century in federal residential schools? (Lomawaima 1994, 1995; Haig-Brown 1988; Miller 1996). And how did the century-old racism directed at Asian peoples in Canada shape the experience of Chinese Canadian women, some of whom likely traversed the spaces of Street Haven and Toronto's Chinatown?

PUSH AND PULL, GIVE AND TAKE

Like social workers in immigrant aid societies who encountered non-conformist Italian-Canadian women, and caseworkers inside maternity homes for unwed mothers in the 1950s and 60s, staff at Street Haven were in the business of enunciating particular norms of (heterosexual) femininity, family, and domesticity (Iacovetta 1992, 1995; Cahill 1992). Walpole and her Haven volunteers were dismayed by and at times judgmental towards the "bad influences" of lesbianism, prostitution, and drug-using. They strove to bring the girls into conformity with dominant social and political norms, and yet realized that the girls were "not members of the Rotary Club," and never would be.

Moments during my interviews with the former Haven volunteers interrupt a straightforward narrative of heterosexism, homophobia, Christian "do-gooding," and class-based antagonism. Here, the volunteers' talk shows up the limitations of an exclusive reliance on casefiles and log books for insight into official, regulatory discourse (Iacovetta and Mitchinson 1998). A notion of shared expert opinion among staff at the Haven is weakened by contradictory evidence of dialectic encounters between staff and Haven clients. Mary-Ann B. remembered how much she admired the "culture of sharing and networking" among the girls who looked out for each other in ways utterly foreign to the "square, middle-class world." Several former volunteers recounted to me how they were invited by the girls to attend the annual drag queens' parade and crowning at Hallowe'en on Yonge Street. Awestruck by the gay street theatre, Harriet O. recalls: "We went to King Street, beside the King Eddy [King Edward Hotel]. Letros, that was the name of the place. Ooooooh! the gorgeous, beautiful women in feathers and high heels... who were men." A number of volunteers I interviewed shared a beer occasionally with the Haven girls in the gay section of the Continental Hotel (Chenier 1995; Fernie and Weissman 1992). Debbie-Lynn F. taught makeup lessons and fitness classes at the Mercer Reformatory for Women, "wearing a pair of tights and a leotard like I'd walked out of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School." "Luckily," she added, "I was comfortable with my [hetero]sexuality, because there were lots of lesbians at Mercer. I suspect some of them quite enjoyed what I had on." Following the death of their husbands, former volunteers Harriet O. and Nora S., lived together for "twenty-odd years," as platonic companions.

All of the Haven staff feared for the girls' lives. Sally E. and Carol D. were openly critical of jail terms for drunkenness, excessive police violence, the lack of high quality counselling, and the tendency of some doctors to prescribe pills for the girls' every ill. On the tough days volunteers defended themselves and others against flying fists and false teeth, and airborne typewriters. According to Eva D., the Haven arranged and paid for a "good funeral at St. Michael's Cathedral Chapel, with an organ and a casket" for every girl who died. Nora S. was moved by one of the girls' desire for a surrogate

mother-figure:

Cindy was a butch...a jack of all trades. One night the phone rang, and I answered it - it was my youngest son. When I came off the phone she said: "Do you always speak to your son like that?" I said, "What did I say?" She said, "Well, you're calling him *dear* and *darling*." I said, "Yes." And the tears started. So I took her back into the living room where we had a big rocking chair. I sat down in the rocking chair, and I pulled her on my lap. I rocked that girl for half an hour, with the water just running down her face. After I said that, she says, "My mother never called me *dear* in her life." So she called me "Mother" from then on.

Each woman I interviewed spoke of learning to lower, if not abandon, all expectations for success at Street Haven in the 1960s. The rewards were small; the challenges immense. Harriet O. commented: "We had never heard of half the words that came out of those girls' mouths! But we learned fast. It was a discovery. The challenges were always there to do something. There was a person there who needed help, and you tried your best...We tried everything." Sally E. noted that, "There was no salary, and no glory. We walked in where angels feared to tread. Most of us ladies were open-minded. If we'd had closed shutters, it wouldn't have worked." Director Walpole reminded me that, "The volunteers yearned for something to sink their teeth into. We had some who were on call in case we needed them. They brought dinner from their own tables down to us, at times. If they'd seen the Haven as *fascinating*, they wouldn't have lasted" (Walpole's emphasis). Indeed, as Mary-Ann B. recalled, "The do-gooders weeded themselves out. They didn't stay because you couldn't - the smell was too bad, both literally and figuratively." The stakes were high as the Haven volunteers who did stay risked judgment from family members and from the local church for venturing downtown and working with "those people."

Undaunted, the volunteers who stayed at the Haven gained some autonomy from the conventional expectations of home-bound wifedom

and motherhood. In contradistinction to dominant ideologies of women as helpmates dedicated to domestic perfection, they sought a public role in bettering poor women's lives. As Nora S. recalled, "[the Haven] opened up my awareness of the world. It wasn't all just lovely gardens and parasols and afternoon tea." To Mary-Ann B., "The Haven was a learning experience - it changed a lot of my ideas about what life was all about. Looking at it today, I was part of the 'charity model,' and I don't agree with that approach anymore, but back then it was the first step in recognizing that problems were systemic; we needed more than Band-Aid solutions." None of the women had ever met lesbians, prostitutes, addicts, or criminals prior to the Haven. For Mary-Ann B. and others, the powerful influence of the Christian doctrine of "accepting you and not your behaviour" meant that a "lesbian lifestyle" was rejected in the mid-1960s while the gay women who frequented the Haven were not; they were in trouble with nowhere to turn. This distinction raises important questions about the flesh-and-blood practice of reformers caught between religious and social criticism of female sex deviance and their own personal desire to "feed the hungry, and house the homeless."

THE FOOT SOLDIERS OF HETEROSEXUALITY?

In the mid-to-late 1960s, the meeting of street women and middle-class reformers at Street Haven was structured by contradictory, complex elements. Atop the Haven agenda was servicing the girls' practical, emergency needs for survival: the provision of food, car fare, counseling and shelter, together with advocacy in prisons, welfare and employment offices, hospitals, and courtrooms. Volunteers remember a diverse population at the drop-in - women with mental and physical disabilities, teenagers and grandmothers, heterosexuals and homosexuals, women with rural and urban backgrounds, white women and a small number of women of colour. Gay women who constituted the sexual majority at the Haven faced middle-aged mothers, wives, and church-workers who treated homosexuality or homosexual "tendencies" as a kind of nature gone awry. It would seem that Haven staff were part of a more extensive

regime of sex/gender discipline wherein they had at their disposal what Foucault (1980) has termed "polymorphous techniques of power" (11). And yet the volunteers I interviewed downplayed their influence, which suggests that their practices of normalization were more subtle and commonsensical than they were self-consciously punitive. In addition, Haven girls were not mandated by the law or by social agencies to attend the drop-in; they appeared voluntarily, they used the facilities, and where necessary, challenged staff authority. Like the immigrant women clients featured in Linda Gordon's *Heroes of Their Own Lives* (1988), Haven-goers both accepted and resisted interventions made by Haven volunteers.

In the mid-1960s, lesbian desire, relationships, and culture were neither fully understood nor sanctioned at Street Haven or any other social service agency in Toronto. At the same time, struggles around gender and sexuality were not the only pressing matters. The amalgam of needs expressed by the girls - financial, emotional, psychological, physical - was vast in scope, and the volunteers were stubbornly determined to improve each girl's chance of surviving another day in spite of, or perhaps because of, her "sex deviance." As such, the Haven itself, as an institution of social welfare, operated doubly as humanitarian refuge and as instrument of social and moral regulation.

Haven volunteers operated in a socio-historical and discursive context wherein female sex deviance was "speechified" verbosely and thoroughly stigmatized by criminologists, the police, law-makers, educators, psychiatrists, politicians, and the mass media (Foucault 1980, 32; Adams 1997, Kinsman 1996; Robinson and Kimmel

1994). Christian churches publicly decreed that homosexuality was equivalent to sickness and perversion, and homosexuality was categorized as a serious disorder in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Diseases* (until liberalizing changes in 1973). Street Haven staff found themselves in what Director Walpole called a "war zone" of competing "lifestyles" wherein homosexuality was synonymous with "character weaknesses" and threats to national security.

In the end, the stories that both groups of women - the girls and the volunteers - have to tell about the frustration, miscommunication, support, love, anger, gratitude, and tensions that they variously associate with Street Haven in the 1960s are enormously propitious. They offer a window onto debates about gender and sexual (ab)normality in the context of one particular moment of economic, moral, and political tumult. And they comment, more broadly, on the ideological and material processes put in play to mandate and to resist the manufacture of good, upstanding, Canadian citizens and communities in uncertain times, both past and present.

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ENDNOTES

1. I interviewed Ms. Walpole at Street Haven in 1992 and 1994. I am grateful for her insights and generosity. I am also indebted to former Haven volunteers who consented to be interviewed - they have been assigned pseudonyms. Shawna Jo Murphy provided valuable research assistance.

2. In a 1965 report based on 244 case files, "homosexual tendencies" were identified by the YWCA as a social problem for women, alongside alcoholism, sexual promiscuity, theft, venereal disease, suicide, and chronic unemployment. Author Vivien Durden (1965) noted that administrators at the YWCA were especially concerned about the incidence of homosexuality in women's prisons and reformatories (13, 29).

3. Critics of lesbianism in prisons were informed by prison officials that lesbian and heterosexual inmates were not always easily differentiated - a dilemma that frustrated attempts to classify and compartmentalize the deviate, and at the same time, jeopardized efforts

to protect the "normal" inmate.

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