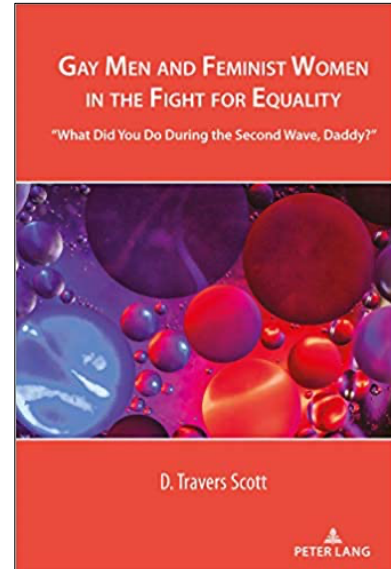


D. Travers Scott, **Gay Men and Feminist Women in the Fight for Equality: "What Did You Do During the Second Wave, Daddy?"** New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2020, 234 pp., \$40.95 (paperback).

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Gay and feminist movements have come a long way since the 1960s. As progressive forces, their struggle has attacked patriarchal forms of oppression. While apparently sharing the same vision, a sensible question remains: To what extent have gays and feminists collaborated over the decades?

These groups have been at the forefront of the battle for autonomy in questions regarding sex, gender, and identity. They have denounced institutions that prolong harmful asymmetries: from treating epidemics to new epistemologies, from the right to legal marriage to individual terms of social affirmation. Much before buzzwords such as *ally*, the intersection between LGBTQ and feminist movements has lingered underexplored. This context of rough approximation and distance informs D. Travers Scott's **Gay Men and Feminist Women in the Fight for Equality: "What Did You Do During the Second Wave, Daddy?"**



As a "gay man born in 1969" (p. 27), the author starts with an overview of gay liberation and second-wave feminist movements. This same year marked the Stonewall riots in New York and the ratification of the women's suffrage constitutional amendment in South Carolina. The state serves much of the book's research with its long history of pushbacks against progressives.

Scott debunks perceptions of kinship and criticism between them—both camps have crossed sights in distinct moments. There is a whole background on shared epistemologies of the period, but, as we shall see, gays and feminists were not always on the same side.

The book's research method introduces queer ways of understanding support as a broader front. It translates *support* into casual allyship: mentioning one another, sharing the other's stage, and voicing supportive stances. Scott draws on discourse analysis with an eye at both archival and contemporary media. "Movement" comes up as something fluid: It stems from various initiatives during two critical moments in modern history: the 1970s' "liberation moment" and the AIDS crisis of the 1980s.

South Carolina's archives reveal a log of meetings and collaborations between gays and feminists. Despite being predominantly conservative, it is a state with a neglected gay and feminist history. Indeed, the material opens up a lot about the diverse fabric of liberation marches, with notorious lesbian participation in the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP).

On the other hand, by revisiting history in such detail, Scott also tells of a series of push-and-pull moments in which homophobia and misogyny came to the fore. Can gay men also become a branch of patriarchy? Can radical feminists follow homophobic diatribes? The author establishes three axes for his inquiry: commonalities, opposition, and intellectual contributions. This threefold strategy enlightens a complex sphere of interaction.

In this case, neither the "natural gay feminist" nor the inheritably homophobic feminist exists as a credible archetype. Instead, it is all about alliances and trade-offs that mark the growing institutionalization of these movements—the "pre-formative" (p. 44) age of coalitions. Of course, some members will voice unhelpful remarks and see each other with suspicion. But, overall, the "public memory" (p. 39) is one of the collaborations between gay men and women in general, like, in *Will & Grace*, the TV series.

In South Carolina, "support" from one side for the other also means moments of heated negotiations during crucial times. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), for example, triggered many exchanges about the liberations that would come afterward: the free divorce for women and the right to gay marriage.

These discussions reveal a lot of the "commonalities," but it inevitably exposes the way that feminists and gays can be oppressed by the same forces. Feminists are recorded as attendees at local sit-ins, as their solidarity transpires from press reports of the time, but episodes of prejudice and indifference also occur. In 1973, an anti-ERA flyer from the League of Women Voters featured an image of skull and crossbones and read: "E.R.A. WILL LEGALIZE HOMOSEXUAL MARRIAGE" (p. 77). The national anti-ERA campaign was led by Phyllis Schlafly, for whom ERA was "legitimizing the right of homosexual women to raise children" (p. 77). Cases like this, for Scott, were not enough to disprove the long-term portrait of latent commonalities, as feminists would come to voice loud positive stances on gay rights, too.

The author then turns to media discourse as a site of ideological representation. Both images of the gay man and the lesbian may be "slippery," but these references undoubtedly guided what many women thought about gays. The latter are objects of their research, as many media productions and academic essays of the 1980s confirm. At the same time, stereotypes produce an epistemic crisis that lasts to date. On the other side, the very definition of a "woman" persists as a powerful tale that generates clashes about the inclusion and support (or not) of transgender women by the so-called separatist feminists.

The epistemic debate will continue with much emphasis on homosexuality as nonheterosexuality (pp. 96, 102). It confined gay sex and lesbianism, for instance, to diminished ideas. In effect, numerous definitions of feminism lay out a vision of autonomy only for women in lieu of a coalition with other movements, including gay men. For Scott, second-wave feminism places little value on gays as allies, thus failing to reach common goals or fight the same enemy. Heteronormativity remains the elephant in the room, and homophobia and misogyny, sadly, are fought as if they were separate forms of oppression (pp. 145, 193).

On media production, the book highlights women's cinema produced in the aftermath of the 1980s' AIDS crisis. Several documentaries have interviewed women with AIDS, but to portray them in non-Western countries. Lesbian model Gia Carangi's death from AIDS appeared in American cinema in two movies, *Gia* (1998) and *The Self-Destruction of Gia* (2003; p. 107). In the Oscar-winning *The Hours*, Meryl Streep is a

bisexual woman preparing a party for her ex-lover, a bisexual man dying of AIDS. These sketches, for Scott, reveal a sort of informal coalition between women and gays. Whenever women appear as “partners, leaders, participants, or caregivers who struggle with the toll of caregiving,” (p. 124) they can still be part of the same story.

The author then expands toward collecting firsthand perspectives of the gay–feminist binary. Focus group attendants discussed the rules of affiliation and exclusion for gays in women’s imaginaries and vice versa. Feminism begins as a word with negative connotations (p. 129), and lesbians come up as “switchers,” as if they belonged to both groups. Here, the author echoes Manuel Castells’ description of lesbians who joined both feminist and gay groups during the AIDS crisis (p. 36). Yet, participants later conceded that both groups aligned in cultural preferences and probably knew similar sources of oppression, gender stereotypes, and stories of violence.

Conversely, the focus group also unveiled microstories of competition, stereotyping, and misunderstandings within communities. One female member stated: “In many ways, LGBT activism wouldn’t be functioning as well as it was if it wasn’t after the wake of the feminist movement and the headway that was made there” (p. 159). Social media is the aggregator of choice for both gays and women, chiefly Facebook, but their enthusiasm to social media faded overtime (p. 135).

To evaluate how the connection between gays and feminists evolves today, Scott has scrapped social media content. He inquires on whether online platforms direct any sort of intersectional support. The conclusion is much dissimilar indeed. From a list of gay, lesbian, and feminist influencers, little of its context reverberates the spirit of the early times. Otherwise, social media comes down as a challenging territory, whereby the same actors split into other ideologies and agendas.

The author ends this journey by reflecting on the imbalances that still affect gays and women distinctively. The Trump administration, for instance, had never recognized any of the LGBTQ commemorative dates. In retrospect, this still seems less harmful than the direct attacks that the former president launched against women.

On commonalities, many accounts of the relationship and cooperation between gays and lesbians remain not entirely visible. A personal level of influence or interaction between these groups is less salient in the book, except for the author’s own experience. That sort of testimonial can be harder to extract from archives, social media, or focus groups. As a result, much of the subjectivity that entails the individual rapport between gays and feminists as political and cultural agents still lies unexplored. As Scott eventually recognizes, the upshot stands in the limits of collective identities and the extent to which one can still gauge new exchanges beyond each group’s borders. How do we broaden cross-affiliation without relativizing each other’s uniqueness? Can we do it without selling out hardly conquered rights or favoring regressive agendas? These questions pertain to gays, feminists, and other groups persistently threatened and disunited by hegemonic forces.