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Mark Achard

► **To cite this version:**

Mark Achard. “Sister, Sister, This Is an Outrage!”: OutRage!’s Media Strategies for Queer Emancipation.. Linguistics. 2024. dumas-04604491

HAL Id: dumas-04604491

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UNIVERSITÉ RENNES 2

Mémoire de recherche

Master 2 Recherche • Master LLCER Aires Anglophones

Études anglaises

**“Sister, Sister, This Is an Outrage!”:
OutRage!’s Media Strategies for Queer
Emancipation**

Mark Achard

Sous la direction de David Haigron

Année 2023 – 2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. David Haigron, who has helped me write this dissertation and who patiently listened to me rambling during most of our meetings. Thank you to Dr. Anne-Laure Besnard as well, with whom I worked on a research project on the pronoun THEY in 2021-22. Without their encouragements, I honestly believe that I would have given up on my studies. I also want to thank the other professors at Rennes 2 who have continuously supported me.

On a more personal note, thank you to my close family: even if they forget the topic of my work every other week, their support has never wavered. I would not be writing this without them. Thank you to my friends and my chosen family. I reminisce our regular talks about dropping everything and opening a queer bookshop. Thank you to Kim Seokjin for reminding ARMY that it is all right to struggle and do things at their own pace. A final thought goes to the 4th floor of the Champs Libres library, in which I studied most afternoons. I have come to know it better than my own flat.

To conclude, and in reference to Ian Lucas's own acknowledgments in *OutRage!: An Oral History* (1998), I would like to thank all the homophobes without whom...

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INTRODUCTION

The 1967 Sexual Offences Act in Britain and the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York City in the US are often held as the two events that started the LGBTQ+ movement in both countries (Robinson, 2006:446).¹ As a matter of fact, the early 1970s saw the setting up of the Gay Liberation Front (1970-1974), a militant organisation which broke with the homophile groups that came prior.² The GLF emphasised the importance of coming out and proudly claim one's identity; coming together to form a community; and take part in the wider liberation movement fighting for equality for all minorities (ibid., 464-5). It was a democratic, non-hierarchical group with a radical agenda for the time: compared to the moderate Homosexual Law Reform Society created in 1958 which advocated for the decriminalisation of homosexuality (McCann & Monaghan, 2020:43), the GLF fought for visibility and liberation (Donnelly, 2008:183).³ Crucially, the organisation produced street theatre performances, introducing the use of theatricalities to draw attention in LGBTQ+ protests (idem). Following the beginnings of the movement with the GLF, the 1970s also witnessed the introduction of a commercial scene with bars and discos, that further participated in the development of a community (Cook et al. 2007:188).

After this decade of "limitless hedonism" (Knowles, 2010:43), the 1980s introduced important challenges for LGBTQ+ people: the AIDS crisis, and the premiership of Margaret Thatcher from 1979 to 1990, whose moral values were in opposition to the "liberalising attitudes to sexuality" (Robinson, 2007:95) of the decades that preceded (see also Durham, 1991:2; Weeks, 1981:375). The AIDS crisis started in 1981 and the government did not launch an official and large information and prevention campaign until late 1986: the mid-1980s were consequently marked by moral panic in Britain (Weeks, 1981:381-3), with the

1 In this dissertation LGBTQ+, or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer is the term used to talk about (LGBTQ+) people, organisations or the community. It was preferred to "gay community" or "lesbian and gay community" as it is more inclusive, and it was preferred to "queer community" as it does not hold the same political background, a crucial distinction in this work. Using LGBTQ+ despite its historical novelty is a conscious choice to highlight the often forgotten minorities inside the community – bisexuals and transgender people – who fought for equality alongside lesbians and gay men. To avoid too many repetitions, the "LGBTQ+ community" may be referred to without its adjective, as it is the only community mentioned in this work. Similarly, "members of the community" are LGBTQ+ people. Other terms may be used when they are politically relevant. OutRage! for instance, introduced itself as a 'queer rights direct action group' (OutRage! Archives. "About OutRage!").

2 Homophile, was a "term coined in the 1920s to refer to same-sex attracted people and it meant 'same love'" (McCann & Monaghan, 2020:38). Homophile organisations, more specifically, were focused on assimilation, integration, respectability and tolerance (ibid., 43).

3 For instance, their Manifesto demanded equality before the law, protection in the workforce, gay and lesbian sex education, and the freedom to "hold hands and kiss in public" (Lent, 2001:82-3).

help of tabloids that renamed the disease “the gay plague” (Sanderson, 1995:43-4). As a result, public attitudes towards homosexuality declined in the 1980s, with “32 percent admitt[ing] to being less tolerant of homosexuals” (Clements & Field, 2014:541-2).⁴ Moreover, a new piece of legislation called Section 28 of the Local Government Act was introduced by the Conservative party in 1988, which prohibited the intentional promotion of homosexuality by local authorities (Durham, 1991:115, 117; UK Parliament, 1988[a]). Section 28 symbolised the Conservatives’ desire to make homosexuality less visible in society. However, this led the LGBTQ+ community to unify and protest in large numbers in the late 1980s, which resulted in the creation of major organisations such as Stonewall (1989-now) and OutRage! (1990-2011) (Preston, 1999:11, 20; Sinfield, 2014:271).

At the same time, the word “queer” began to be used in relation to AIDS activism in the US with the group ACT UP, founded in 1987 (McCann & Monaghan, 2020:93). Indeed, because the disease did not only impact LGBTQ+ people, there was a need for an activism that did not limit itself to specific identities but rather focused on practices (ibid., 92-3). This emerged in a context influenced by post-structuralism. As an anti-essentialist theory, it rejected the idea that identities are innate and it criticised social categories for masking the differences that exist between individuals or within groups (Meyer et al., 2002:85). Foucault, one of the leading figures of the post-structuralist theory contented that homosexuality was made in the 19th century, developing a sexual practice into an identity which also encompassed other aspects of a person’s being (Foucault, 1978:43; McCann & Monaghan, 2020:29).⁵ In opposition to that, the de-essentialised “queer” identity found in ACT UP gathered a multiplicity of sexual identities and practices that stood at the margin of society, united by their differences, and their “vulnerability at contracting [AIDS]” (McCann & Monaghan, 2020:103). Moreover, in its direct actions, the group addressed a wide variety of issues like “race, gender, poverty”, “media representation, health care reform” or “immigration law” (Halperin, 1995:63). Some ACT UP members who wanted to focus more on homophobia, formed the group Queer Nation in March 1990 and used the term in their activism as well, which emphasised the expression of anger and taking back power (McCann

4 Survey by Gallup in June 1988 (idem).

5 Talking about “the homosexual”, Foucault writes: “[n]othing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions [...]; written immodestly on his face and body” (1978:43).

& Monaghan, 2020:107).⁶ Queer Nation mostly drew a binary division between “queers” and “straights” to denounce heteronormativity (ibid., 113).⁷

The founders of OutRage! were inspired by this new queer activism (Preston, 1999:47-8) and they established the organisation in May 1990, following a series of unresolved murders of gay men including that of actor Michael Boothe (OutRage! Archives. “Challenging Homophobia.”). It was a “broad based group of queers committed to radical, non-violent direct action and civil disobedience” (OutRage! Archives. “About OutRage!.”). They exclusively fought against homophobia and discrimination towards LGBTQ+ people, while defending their right to stand at the margin and lead a different, non-heteronormative lifestyle as well (idem).⁸ They challenged homophobes and the homophobic and discriminatory structure of institutions – like the British Armed Forces, but they were also libertarian in their wish for everyone to have the freedom to do what they want – such as joining the military for example (Lent, 2003:29, 31; OutRage! Archives. “Protest as Performance.” 1999). This approach was necessary in the 1990s, as the growth of the LGBTQ+ commercial scene and the neoliberalism of the previous decade, which encouraged individualism and personal liberties, contributed to depoliticise the community (Cook et al., 2007:212; see also McCann & Monaghan, 2020:155; Weeks, 2016:8). OutRage! never stopped seeking for the transformation of society with “New Queer Politics” for queer and heterosexual people alike (Tatchell, 1992), by advocating for the legal recognition of relationships outside marriage or sexual freedom and diversity, but the group also took part in campaigns for assimilationist reforms like same-sex marriage (OutRage! Archives. “Our History.”; “Wedding Card.” 2011).⁹

OutRage!’s activities were diverse, from taking on cases of individuals suffering from discrimination, providing help and information to callers, and lobbying people in power (OutRage! Archives. “Our History.”). However, just like the GLF, the group was non-hierarchical and its activism was mainly focused on direct actions: they organised numerous high-profile actions like the 1990 Kiss-in, the 1991 Turn-in, the 1992 Wink-in, the 1994 “Tell

6 In this dissertation, homophobia is understood as the “[h]ostility towards, prejudice against, or (less commonly) fear of homosexual people or homosexuality” (OED “Homophobia”). This may include discrimination – the “[u]njust or prejudicial treatment of a person or group” (OED “Discrimination”).

7 Heteronormativity is “a system of inequity derived from the heterosexual/homosexual binary” that “privilege[s] heterosexuality” (Ott & Mack, 2010:216). Michael Warner, who coined the term, wished to describe “the pervasive and largely invisible heterosexual norms that underpin society” (McCann & Monaghan, 2020:11).

8 This is in contrast to the GLF, which belonged in a wider liberational movement (Lent, 2003:32).

9 OutRage! itself denounced “the assimilationist and conformist politics of the mainstream lesbian and gay rights movement”, but it can be argued that they participated in it to some extent (OutRage! Archives. “Our History.”).

the Truth” outing campaign or the 1998 Interruption of the Easter Sermon (Lucas, 1998:231-4; OutRage! Archives. “Archbishop of Canterbury Interrupted.” 1998).¹⁰ Furthermore, the queer organisation typically adopted a theatrical and over-the-top aesthetic in their happenings, further establishing its roots in the LGBTQ+ community, and developing a style of activism that was visually different from that of other groups and movements (see Lucas, 1998:239). OutRage! proclaims that their “witty, daring, and irreverent style [...] has elevated activism into an art form” (OutRage! Archives. “Our History.”).

This dissertation focuses on OutRage! for multiple reasons. While the situation of LGBTQ+ people from the late 19th century to the 1980s is regularly referred to in works of art, the political situation of the two following decades has been less documented, possibly because of the gradual depoliticisation of the community in the 1990s. To learn more about its concerns and struggles, I decided to take the point of view of an LGBTQ+ political group. OutRage! was chosen because it was the main queer organisation fighting for the rights and the emancipation of LGBTQ+ people in Britain in the early 1990s.

Former Lecturer in Politics at the University of Sheffield Adam Lent argues that, in comparison to the GLF, OutRage! focused on media stunts to achieve their objectives and their main purpose was “to invite media attention rather than mass support” (2003:34).¹¹ The interest of the community for the media dates back to the 1980s: until then, they controlled the narrative on LGBTQ+ rights, giving activists little space to explain themselves and argue for their own lives (Sanderson, 1995:231). Frustrated by this situation, organisations and activists of the late 1980s learnt how to use the media to communicate their ideas (idem). Therefore, when talking about the activism of a UK queer organisation in the 1990s, the central position of the media as an outlet to diffuse ideas cannot be forgotten. Interviewed in 1999, OutRage! member Marina Cronin clearly defined this as their strategy:

We’ve come to the realisation that the only way to fight homophobia is to do things that speak to everyone ... So you have to do something that grabs the headlines. Technically a lot of what we are doing is a publicity stunt but not for self-publicity but to publicise an issue that people may not know about. (Lent, 2003:34)¹²

10 OutRage!’s actions were similar to that of other LGBTQ+ organisations. ACT UP (and the GLF) also organised kiss-ins, while Queer Nation was well-known for its outing campaigns (McCann & Monaghan, 2020:103, 107).

11 In this dissertation, “the media” specifically refers to the mainstream press, the radio and the TV, which are media outlets that report news stories to a large audience, likely to report OutRage!’s activities to the general public.

A (media or publicity) stunt is an event specifically organised to gather attention (idem).

12 Other members of the group made similar statements. Fernando Guasch explains that they tried to gather any kind of publicity, good or bad, as the objective was for LGBTQ+ people and their concerns to be represented in the media (idem). David Allison also argued in 2001 that “[u]sing the media successfully was – and is – an integral part of [their] activism” (OutRage! Archives. “The Future of OutRage!.” 2001).

The group carefully thought about their actions to “give the journalists a strong story, and a powerful visual element to provide the photographers with a good picture” (Lent, 2003:34). From the perspective of the media, protests and social movements as a whole “present dramatic visuals that easily fit the key news value of conflict” (Arpan et al., 2006:1). News media and social movements are “deeply intertwined”: if the latter seek news coverage of their protests to have a larger impact, it is also considered by some that the “primary role of the media is to report, or even trigger, social movements” (idem). Hence, each party gains from the other and OutRage! sought that relation. Looking at “media-movement interactions” allows one to see how an organisation strategically creates their public identities through their actions and the way the media construct a reality based on that (Barker-Plummer, 1996:28). However, this is usually studied from the point of view the media. Barker-Plummer, Professor in Media Studies at the University of San Francisco, observed that many research papers on feminism question “feminist representations in mass media” but “far fewer studies ask whether and how movements themselves construct political identities, how they contribute to, or struggle against, their news representations or how news and feminism interact historically” (1996:28).

Literature can be found on the visibility and perception of LGBTQ+ people in the media. For instance, gay rights activist, journalist, and author Terry Sanderson reviews how the British media treated male and female homosexuality in *Mediawatch* (1995). In a 2021 article, Páraic Kerrigan, Assistant Professor at the UCD School of Information and Communication Studies and Maria Pramaggiore, Professor of Media Studies at Maynooth University, investigate how gay Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar was perceived by domestic and international media in 2019. Kerrigan also published *LGBTQ Visibility, Media and Sexuality in Ireland* in 2021, which analyses the way LGBTQ+ lives appeared on the media in Ireland from the 1970s to Varadkar. Looking at the other perspective, in an article on the media strategies used by the US Women’s movement between 1966 and 1975, Barker-Plummer decides to focus on the way a movement is covered, considering how an organisation uses the media “as a resource” (1995:9). In other words, the author chooses to look at how a political organisation manages its own image. Barker-Plummer’s work in 1996 on *The Dialogic of Media and Social Movements* was also crucial to the development of this dissertation, as it introduces a way of analysing the communications between social movements and the media industry. However, no literature was found on the relationship between the media and LGBTQ+ organisations from the point of view of the latter. Some authors mention OutRage!’s strategy to use the media but no extensive study was found on the

subject (Lent, 2003:34; Sanderson, 1995:231). This dissertation thus wishes to participate in filling this gap.

The centrality of the media in OutRage!’s activities clearly appears in the primary sources of this work. It includes *OutRage!: An Oral History* (1998) written by one of its members, Ian Lucas, in which he reviews the development of the group from 1990 to 1996 and interviews other members. On top of Lucas’s work, 269 posts were retrieved from 1995 to 2011 on OutRage!’s website.¹³ 850 pictures dating from 1990 to 2011 were found on their *Flickr* page.¹⁴ 75 photographs and scans of badges, leaflets, flyers and placards were also collected from *Speak Out London*.¹⁵ Finally, 26 scans of various documents from 1990 to 1995 were sent from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences (Appendixes 1-26).

This study of OutRage! is part of critical media studies: it is “an umbrella term used to describe an array of theoretical perspectives” which “are united by their skeptical attitude, humanistic approach, political assessment, and commitment to social justice” (Ott & Mack, 2010: 15). Indeed, this work considers what leads journalists to report certain events. A special concern is placed on the construction of news stories by the political activists themselves and not by the media industry, in order to have their voice heard by the general public and achieve their own objectives. This dissertation questions the interactions that lead to the production of news, the political and practical interests of the media industry and journalists, and the power relations over the report of social movements. At the same time, at the core, this work belongs in queer studies because it explores the way a queer organisation advocated for LGBTQ+ rights. Here, “queer” is an umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer studies. First starting as lesbian and gay studies only, this field was “pluralist”, “disputatious”, “full of tensions and visions” but with “enough shared values and perspectives to keep [researchers] plugging on together” (Sandfort et al., 2000:4). Activist, historian, and sociologist Jeffrey Weeks asserts that the field is about differences, the political claim for “sexual justice”, the “questioning of [...] the heterosexual norm”, “contesting existing knowledge” and “the creation of space” (ibid., 4-10). Lesbian and gay studies expanded over time to include other sexual and gender minorities. This dissertation touches on these different points as well, from OutRage!’s self-branding to their pursuit of – media and public – space and their relation to LGBTQ+ politics, culture and the community. Thus,

13 (www.outrage.org.uk and its earlier version https://www.petertatchell.net/lgbt_rights/rosecottage/OutRage-archives/index.htm).

14 (www.flickr.com/people/outrage/).

15 (www.speakoutlondon.org.uk/gallery/tags/outrage/).

this work is at the intersection of these two fields of studies, which is why this dissertation is titled, “Sister, Sister, This Is an OutRage!”: OutRage!’s Media Strategies for Queer Emancipation.¹⁶

What media strategies did OutRage! use to make journalists report their direct actions advocating for LGBTQ+ issues? To provide answers to these considerations, first, the organisation is going to be contextualised. Then, the second chapter, “Protest as Performance”, analyses the strategies that OutRage! adopted to gather attention. Finally, the last chapter, “Direct Action Works”, deals with their politics through their activities against institutions and homophobic individuals.

¹⁶ According to Ian Lucas, Cardinal Hume said “sister, sister, this is an outrage!” during a 1992 protest led by OutRage! at the Vatican Embassy in London (1998:134). This is further detailed in part III.1.c.

I. CONTEXTUALISING THE BRITISH QUEER POLITICAL GROUP

OUTRAGE!

Before examining the media strategies that OutRage! used to advocate for LGBTQ+ equality and queer emancipation, it is necessary to be aware of the movement as well as the philosophical, political and socio-economic context it is inscribed in. This chapter first aims at understanding the links between OutRage! and its community from the 1950s to the late 1980s. Indeed, its creation was influenced by the 1967 Sexual Offences Act and the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act, which limited gay and bisexual men in their sexual freedom because of police arrests. The 1970s group the Gay Liberation Front then had a large influence on the community, and more specifically OutRage!, with their focus on theatricality during their direct actions. Finally, the 1980s, marked by the AIDS crisis and Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act, led to a renewed interest in activism in the LGBTQ+ community. Then, in a second part, the creation of OutRage! is related to the context of the 1990s: the premierships of John Major and Tony Blair; the depoliticisation of the community following the neoliberalism of the 1980s; improving public attitudes towards homosexuals; and the growth of the LGBTQ+ commercial scene, which gave people non-political ways to interact and experience their identity. Finally, the queer theory and its adaptation by activists is going to be discussed before looking at the group's structure and objectives.

I.1. The LGBTQ+ Movement: A Brief Historical Perspective

I.1.a From 1533 to 1967: The (De)criminalisation of Homosexuality

For gay history in Britain, two events framed this period: the passing of the Sexual Offences Act in 1967 and the Stonewall riots in 1969. These events have subsequently become mythologized in both popular memory and historical study so that they become markers of the beginning of gay politics. (Robinson, 2006:446)

An overview of Wilde's trials, the Wolfenden Report and the 1967 Sexual Offences Act is necessary to see how homosexuality was (de)criminalised, as these events led to the development of the Gay Liberation Movement in 1970 and continued to impact the community until the early 2000s.

In Britain, sodomy became illegal with the 1533 Act of Henry VIII – also called the Buggery Act (Chevallot, 2019), “which classified it as an illegal act between man and woman, man and man or man and beast” (King, 2003:684). If the law was not a specific attack on homosexual relationships, historical researcher Isabelle Chevallot remarks that “male homosexual convictions were the most common and publicised”, and “punishable by death” (2019). The 1533 Act was then replaced by the Offences Against the Person Act of 1828, which specifically criminalised male-on-male intercourse (British Library, “Timeline”). In 1861, an update of this act “revok[ed] the death penalty for homosexual acts between men and replac[ed] it with a prison term of hard labour between 10 years and life” (idem). Some twenty years later, this anti-homosexuality law was completed by a new one, the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act, known for being the piece of legislation used ten years later to incriminate Oscar Wilde, one of the most well-known British homosexuals of the 19th century. This amendment made “any acts of gross indecency with male persons” illegal and it lowered the minimum term of hard labour to two years (idem).¹⁷ It was a step above the Buggery Act, as any kind of sexual relationship between men became illegal (Clements & Field, 2014:523-4).¹⁸ These different laws were passed at a time when values of purity were held in Victorian Britain. As Weeks mentions, “homosexual feelings” for men potentially meant “the threat of exposure, potential prosecution and social disaster” (1981:127). Each new prosecution was scandalous, and Oscar Wilde, became the embodiment of a morally-wrong sexuality that was not acceptable in Victorian society, “a public image for the homosexual transgressor” (ibid., 128). However, if his reputation was tarnished for one part of the population, he became a symbol of another kind for LGBTQ+ people. Weeks explains that the scandals and the trials made homosexuality salient to the British public, and most importantly to the members of the community:

There was clear evidence in the later year of the nineteenth century of the development of a new homosexual consciousness and sense of identity among a minority of homosexually inclined individuals, and a crucial element in this was undoubtedly the new public salience of homosexuality, dramatised by the major legal cases and the wave of scandals. (idem)

The trials of Oscar Wilde not only made homosexuality more public and recognisable; it led people to become more conscious of their own homosexuality and of their belonging to a minority group (idem). Wilde became a hero for generations of gay men (David, 1997:5).¹⁹

¹⁷ Oscar Wilde was given the minimum sentence when he was prosecuted (British Library, “Timeline”).

¹⁸ It is noticeable that from the beginning, lesbian relationships were never criminalised (Clements & Field, 2014:524; Weeks, 1981:131). Weeks explains that in 1921, there was an attempt to criminalise lesbian relationships as well but it did not go through: a worry was that it would give women ideas, so it was better to leave it unnamed and unknown (idem; see also CivicLeicester, 2014c:02:05).

¹⁹ The museum Queer Britain symbolically welcomes its visitors with the prison cell door of Wilde, both representing the “icon” he was for “many LGBTQ+ people” and “the doors he opened for later generations”

Nevertheless, despite this, relationships between men were “largely considered taboo” in Britain before 1957 when the Wolfenden Report on homosexuality was released (Clements & Field, 2014:524). Liz Stanley, Professor in the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Edinburgh, highlights that “popular feeling against it [was] very strong... on the whole people regard[ed] homosexuality as a revolting or incomprehensible form of behaviour” (qtd. in idem).²⁰

This changed, as the 1885 Criminal Law Act was increasingly questioned, especially after the convictions of well-known men at the time, like Alan Turing or Lord Montagu (British Library, “Timeline”).²¹ Lord Montagu explains that in the 1950s, LGBTQ+ people had to be “very secretive” but spaces existed in which men exchanged personal information in private: “[t]here were all-male dancing clubs and I would go to the theatre, to films. I had a double life in many ways” (*Evening Standard*, 2007). He adds that at the time, the police were actively trying to charge male homosexuals with officers posing as “gay men soliciting in public places”, creating an atmosphere of “paranoia” (idem).²² Thus, a community existed, but it remained hidden and scar(r)ed from experiences in public spaces. After he was first arrested and acquitted in 1953 for “offences against [a] 14-year-old boy”, Lord Montagu was once again arrested a year later for “conspiracy to incite certain male persons to commit serious offences with male persons” (idem) under the 1885 Act. The public trial was widely reported in the media and people sided with Lord Montagu and the other men who had been charged with him (idem). He was sentenced to 12 months of imprisonment, but the response to the trial seriously questioned the validity of the act in post-WW2 Britain. The Wolfenden Committee, formed by the government, and its subsequent report directly followed the trial.

The Wolfenden Report

The 1957 report “recommend[ed] the decriminalisation of gay sex between consenting adults over 21, except in the armed forces” (British Library, “Timeline”). It was the first time that an official account endorsed the – partial – decriminalisation of homosexual acts. It should be noted however, that, although it promoted social and moral reforms, the report was

(Staples, 2002). It is the first national LGBTQ+ museum in the UK, which opened in 2022 (idem).

²⁰ This led the research organisation Mass Observation to remove the topic of homosexuality in their 1949 questionnaire (Clements & Field, 2014:524).

²¹ Alan Turing was the creator of the first computer “Enigma” which broke the secret code used by the Nazis for their military communications during the Second World War. His condemnation is recounted at the end of the film *The Imitation Game* (2014). Lord Montagu opened and owned the National Motor Museum in Hampshire in 1952 (Barker, 2015).

²² Also known as “police entrapment”, still practised in the 1990s (see III.1.a).

conservative: it “regretted [...] the ‘general loosening of former moral standards’” and deplored potential damage to the family, considered to be “the basic unit of society” (Weeks, 1981:306-7). Indeed, Weeks observes that “the problem the Committee was established to consider was not how to liberalise the law [...], but whether the law was the most effective means of control” (ibid., 311). Therefore, the Wolfenden Report did not wish to promote homosexuality but to prevent it from disrupting public order. In Westminster Palace, its reception reflected the ingrained homophobia of many of its members (David, 1997:188). Writer Hugh David reports the reaction of one MP who declared that “incest [was] a much more natural act than homosexuality” (idem). The recommendations were only supported by a third of the votes in 1960, and they were once again rejected in 1962 (idem).

On the other hand, the Wolfenden report brought “a ray of hope” and “the gay ‘community’ began to emerge in something like its present form” (ibid., 190). However, this should be put into perspective as LGBTQ+ people still lived dangerous, private, and unspeakable lives (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:18, Sinfield, 2014:266). Moreover, visible symbols of homosexuality were rejected by members of the community as well, possibly because they did not want to be associated with others: for example, the flamboyant actor Quentin Crisp was found “offensive” for perpetuating “the stereotype of a male homosexual” and was rejected by “most homosexuals and heterosexuals, with the consequence that he became an outcast from both groups” (Sullivan, 1990:207, 211). LGBTQ+ people had to put on a facade and they “sometimes [were] the first to endorse homophobic ideology” (ibid., 213). Effeminate men supposedly attracted attention on themselves and “contributed to the bad reputation of homosexuals” as a whole group (ibid., 216). The author points out that in the 1950s and 1960s, members of the community had difficulties with their identity, as their activities were illegal and they did not have a positive role model to follow (ibid., 215). Nevertheless, because it was unspeakable, sexuality held an important place in their lives at the same time, which thus created a sense of community among them (Sinfield, 2014:266). They all lived similar experiences and were subject to the same discriminatory laws. On that account, it may be argued that the state helps some communities to develop themselves because of their shared negative experiences:

If we can move beyond the crudest biological determinism, we recognize that the process of turning physical features or social practices into ‘identities’ is forged from the interaction between people and that state. By forcing some people to sit in the back of the bus, wear a yellow star, or hide their sexual orientations, states create the conditions in which particular identities develop. States can create identities by endorsing or prohibiting religious or sexual practices, by regulating access to social goods, and by setting rules of interaction between groups and individuals. Within these parameters, activists choose how to define themselves, by alliances, claims, and tactics. (Meyer et al., 2002:5)

Their common situation prompted LGBTQ+ people to create spaces in which they felt seen and safe. By forcing them into private and secluded locations, the state created the conditions for a movement to emerge. A year after the Wolfenden Report was published, the homophile organisation Homosexual Law Reform Society (HLRS) was founded (Weeks, 1981:340).²³ It promoted the “legalisation of same-sex relationships” in the UK, with its first meeting being “attended by over 1,000 people” (British Library, “Timeline”). The charity the Albany Trust was created the same year to support the HLRS. This marks the beginning of an LGBTQ+ political movement in the UK with its first major reform in 1967.

The 1967 Sexual Offences Act

The Sexual Offences Act was passed under the Labour government of Harold Wilson (1964-70). It “decriminalised homosexual acts between two men, both over the age of 21, in private” (UK Parliament, 1967[a]).²⁴ Therefore, the practice of homosexuality was restricted in terms of privacy, age and in the number of men involved.²⁵ Moreover, gay and bisexual men also feared prosecution because they could still be charged for indecency like Wilde, or for soliciting if they exchanged contact information in public (Weeks, 1981:343). Between 1967 and 1976, “the recorded incidence of indecency between males doubled, the number of prosecutions trebled and the number of convictions quadrupled” (ibid., 346). After the law was passed, “it became much easier to bring about prosecutions for soliciting and gross indecency and the penalties given were increased” (qtd. in Robinson, 2006:451). The act did not represent “changes in attitude”: it was meant to clearly define the line between “what was a private matter of conscience and what was a public matter of criminal activity” (Robinson, 2007:36). This became especially clear in 1972 when the newspaper the *International Times* was trialled for “publish[ing] contact advertisements in which homosexuals indicated their wish to meet others” (Weeks, 1981:346). The House of Lords deliberated that the Sexual Offences Act did not make homosexuality legal, it “merely exempted from criminal penalties” (qtd. in idem). The police used the act to over-police gay and bisexual men until OutRage! and other organisations protested against it in the early 1990s.²⁶

23 McCann & Monaghan note that homophile organisations used lobbying tactics and were focused on “[a]ssimilation, integration of homosexuals into society, constitutional rights, respectability, tolerance, safety, end to police violence” and “building transnational homosexual communities” (2020:43).

24 However, it was still forbidden if the men were in the military or the merchant navy (Robinson, 2007:40). Also, the Act only applied to England and Wales: it was extended to Scotland in 1980 and to Northern Ireland in 1982 (CivicLeicester, 2014b:02:00).

25 Heterosexuals and lesbians could have legal sexual relationships if the participants were both over 16 (British Library, “Timeline”).

26 Further discussed in part III.1.a.

Nevertheless, the law was a fundamental change for the LGBTQ+ community. It is comparable to the impact that the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1967 Abortion Act had on their respective communities:

In the UK the effect of the Abortion and Sexual Offences Acts on women and gay men was rather like that of the 1964 Civil Rights Act on the American anti-racism movement and later the nascent women's movement. [...] [T]he two 1967 British Acts offered women very conditional control of their fertility and only limited sexual freedom to gay men. But instead of discouraging them or, using a term of the time, 'co-opting' them into quiescence, all three spurred greater resistance by at least naming the rights they couldn't yet confer. (Merck & Guy, 2021:17)

In a similar fashion to the other two, the Sexual Offences Act reinforced the sense of community that had emerged with the Wolfenden Report. Because they were aware of the gap that distanced them from having the same rights as heterosexual people, it led them to act and resist against the system that was pushing them to the margins of society. Retrospectively, the Sexual Offences Act as well as the 1969 Stonewall riots in the US became mythologised in order to "construct a unity of experience" with a shared history that everyone could endorse (Robinson, 2006:446, 451). The events that came prior, like the creation of the moderate Homosexual Law Reform Society after the Wolfenden Report or Wilde's symbolism should not be forgotten, but it was after these two central landmarks that the Gay Liberation Movement began (Robinson, 2006:451). The US Gay Liberation Front (GLF) was "formed [in 1969] directly in response to the [Stonewall] riots" (idem), and in London, its UK version followed just a year later (Lent, 2001:79).

I.1.b The 1970s: The Gay Liberation Movement

What changed for gay men in the seventies? As time goes by, it becomes increasingly difficult to fully understand or appreciate just how dramatically things did change, and the number of people who, in one way or another, were affected by the changes. The casual use of the term 'gay men' is itself a product of the climate of the seventies. Before then we were, even to ourselves, at best 'homosexuals', more often 'queers', 'poofs' or 'nancy-boys'. The idea that we constitute a minority group in society with a right to live visibly gay lives as equal members of society no longer seems radical. But less than twenty years ago you could almost count on two hands the number of people who were prepared to affirm this principle, and, probably on one finger those who were prepared to state this openly as gay people. (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:232)

John Shiers, who became a gay activist in the 1970s, tries to describe how significant that decade was for the community, starting with the way its members referred to themselves: they began to use a positive term to come out – openly declare their homosexuality, a radical action at the time. People now had a collective identity and were part of a community with an

emerging cultural sphere. The 1970s were an era of political change, thanks to the Gay Liberation Movement. It politicised LGBTQ+ people around their oppression, led them to affirm their sexuality, and challenged a homophobic society (ibid., 234). These ideas were central to the movement. Quoting Weeks, Knowles, a graduate student in History at the University of Birmingham, adds that “Gay Liberation stressed ‘openness, defiance, pride, identity – and, above all, self activity’” (2010:21). One of the aims of the movement in the 1970s was to create spaces in which gay identity “could be sustained” (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:6-7). It was radical in its tactics and in its way of introducing equal treatment for homosexuals in the realm of politics, with specific demands for change. Nevertheless, it is too reductive to say that it was a movement solely focused on the oppression of homosexuals. At the core, Gay Liberation was about “the equality of all people” and it entered a wider context of social movements fighting for minorities which included the Civil Rights Movement and the Women’s Liberation Movement (ibid., 51).²⁷ In Britain, it was led by the GLF, whose activism not only marked the 1970s but also influenced that of the early 1990s.²⁸

The Gay Liberation Front

The GLF started with a meeting at the London School of Economics in October 1970 (Lent, 2001:78). It marked a change in the LGBTQ+ community because the group was radical in its “commitment to promoting gay liberation” (Donnelly, 2008:183). Indeed, Knowles argues that while other organisations like the HLRS “had ‘tiptoed’ through the liberal 1960”, the Front actively advocated to normalise homosexuality, be visible and achieve equal rights and treatment, as expressed in their influential Manifesto (2010:21).²⁹ Quoted below are five of the demands as they were formulated in November 1970:

- that all discrimination against gay people, male and female, by the law, by employers, and by society at large, should end
- that all people who feel attracted to a member of their own sex should know such feelings are good and right [...]
- that gay people be as legally free to contact other gay people, through newspaper ads, on the streets, and by any other means they want, as are heterosexuals, and that police harassment should cease right now [...]
- that the age of consent for gay men be reduced to the same age as for heterosexuals

²⁷ Both of these movements were important and inspirational for OutRage! (OutRage! Archives. “Challenging Homophobia.”).

²⁸ This is mentioned in part I.2.d, with OutRage!’s structure and type of actions.

²⁹ Their Manifesto left a strong mark on the LGBTQ+ community in the decades that followed (British Library, “Manifesto”).

- that gay people be free to kiss and hold hands in public, as are heterosexuals. (Lent, 2001:82-3; Holliss, 2022)³⁰

The radicality of these demands for the early 1970s is made evident by the time it took for them to be achieved. For example, the age of consent – 21 for gay and bisexual men and 16 for lesbians and heterosexuals after 1967 – was equalised 30 years after these demands were formulated (UK Parliament, 2000). Similarly, discriminations by employers were made unlawful in 2003 (UK Parliament, 2003).³¹ Consequently, it can be said that the GLF “was radical in respect of anticipating a reconfiguration of sexuality and gender on egalitarian principles” (Sinfield, 2014:267).

The GLF advocated for their objective through various means: from asking to be present in psychiatrists’ meetings or in local councils, to making gay people come out to liberate themselves from a heteronormative lifestyle (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:51, 234; Knowles, 2010:22).³² Indeed, the Front disputed heterosexual hegemony in society as much as it wrestled with the LGBTQ+ community itself. The GLF encouraged people to live freely, express their identity, and take pride in their sexuality (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:51). They wanted “to show the diversity of gay people” in order to “challenge stereotypes” (Knowles, 2010:22). The Front aimed to challenge oppression following a “three-stage plan” established by Jeffrey Weeks, who was a member of the GLF: “i) coming out, ii) coming together, and iii) identifying and addressing the roots of oppression” (Robinson, 2007:69). As Professor in Collaborative History at the University of Sussex Lucy Robinson explains, this plan goes from the personal to the political, by challenging the identity of LGBTQ+ people, creating a community, and finally politicising the movement to stand against oppressive societal conducts (idem).³³

Looking at the Front’s organisation, they did not have a “rigid” or hierarchical structure (Robinson, 2006:459). In their weekly meetings gathering 200 to 300 people (Brittain, 1971), the members could freely share their ideas and they collectively discussed and agreed on their public activities (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:56-7). This emphasises the

30 Although this dissertation wishes to reflect the diversity of the community through the use of the term “LGBTQ+”, the Manifesto clearly highlights that the 1970s movement was centred around the lives of lesbians and gay men.

31 Arguably, some of the GLF’s requests have still not been met. Considering the last one quoted above, homosexuals face discrimination and violence in the streets when their homosexuality is assumed or when they show signs of affection for a person of the same sex (see Bachman & Gooch, 2017).

32 Cant & Hemmings specifically say that they challenged “the roles of the heterosexual nuclear family and the ideal of monogamy” (2010:51).

33 This is a reference to the phrase “the personal is political” popularised by the feminist Carol Hanish in 1970 (Kelly, 2022). It is linked to second-wave feminism which pointed out that the similarity in women’s personal experiences could be explained by the unequal system of power relationships between men and women: they argued that their personal situations and problems were political (idem).

group's desire to be democratic, giving a vote and a voice to everyone who was interested in the objectives of the GLF. Additionally, their meetings were focused on politics and "comradeship" (David, 1997:227-8). Contrarily to being a gathering of homosexuals who wanted to explore their sexuality and meet people, it was a place that welcomed new members as part of a minority, thus focusing on power dynamics and the political aspect of their identities. Keith Birch, a member of the GLF, explains that the plurality of ideas that resulted from the meetings and the consciousness-raising groups was impressive to him:

The people who came to GLF were overwhelmingly male, white, young and appeared independent of family and other restrictions. They were students, people new to the city and those who had dropped-out; also people dissatisfied with the lesbian and gay subcultures and the political and social movements which ignored our sexualities and experience. Whatever its base, GLF felt enormously diverse in culture and ideas. (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:52-3)

Nevertheless, as Birch mentions himself, there was a dichotomy between the diversity of ideas that the GLF proposed and the lack thereof in the origin of most of its members, who "were middle-class white men" (Robinson, 2007:69). Some women, like Janet Dixon, left the group in 1972 because of the space that men took for themselves. In the Front, they felt like they were "servicing" and "giving their energy to men" instead of giving it to the objectives of the Front, leading some of them to leave in order to create a lesbian organisation (idem). This reveals that the GLF had some difficulties putting in practice its democratic and equalitarian ideals.³⁴

In addition to the consciousness-raising groups and the weekly meetings, the Front organised protests and performances that attracted attention in a defiant way. Birch reaffirms that throughout their actions, the underlying goal of the Front was to be proudly, publicly and politically gay: "[d]emonstrations, dances or communes were all part of our politics. Any event, or simply wearing a lesbian or gay badge in the street, was a political statement of our existence and identity" (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:56-7).³⁵ The demonstrations of the GLF differed from that of other political groups (Robinson, 2006:459). Indeed, the organisation developed a more "performative approach" to their actions: in other words, they used theatricalities (like dressing in drag or acting) to draw attention (idem).³⁶ Actions relying on

34 It is an issue that OutRage! also struggled with in the 1990s (see part I.2.d).

35 Communes were places wherein members could live together as a community and share what it meant to them (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:54). They specifically created spaces for LGBTQ+ people to interact, raise their consciousness, and further their political involvement in the movement. Nevertheless, just like in the GLF, the communes lacked diversity: "[o]nly one or two women ever became long-standing members of the commune group and though there were people of diverse nationality, there was only one Black member" (ibid., 53).

36 Drag is typically the art of performing exaggerated versions of gender expressions like masculinity or femininity. Based on that, the GLF started the practice of "radical drag", "which involved dressing up in women's clothes but without the false breasts, wigs, shaved skin and glamorous gowns", to question gender roles even more (Lent, 2001:85).

such features were thus called “street theatre” (Donnelly, 2008:183; Lent, 2003:34). An example of such performances were the “kiss-ins” on the London Underground, during which LGBTQ+ people kissed each other in public at the same time (Lent, 2001:85). These “deliberately confrontational tactics” were especially reported in the press for their shock value (idem).

The success of the GLF led to the creation of local branches in other cities like Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol and Leeds (LSE Library). The groups earnestly fought its community to live proudly and politically think their sexuality, but most generally they campaigned against a homophobic system that oppressed them. While the GLF was extremely influential in the early 1970s, it was short-lived: by 1974, the London-branch was no longer active following internal disagreements over politics. Over time, the weekly meetings became a place “dominated by cruising and fashion display, with the politics coming second place” (Robinson, 2007:87).³⁷ Nevertheless, the Front had a significant impact on the Labour Party and other left-wing political parties as they made LGBTQ+ lives visible to society. People were not going to go back into the closet: they were out, part of a community, and they had their own demands which the Left “was no longer able to ignore” (ibid., 88). For instance, members of Labour founded the Gay Labour Caucus in 1975 to lobby inside the party (LGBT+ Labour). The GLF was also very influential in the creation of other organisations dedicated to the community in the decades that followed like ACT-UP or OutRage!. The latter was heavily inspired by the radical movement that the Front led and wanted to revive the flame and the excitement of the time (Lent, 2003:24).

Gay Identity, Life and Community

The Gay Liberation Movement made LGBTQ+ people feel that they belonged in a community; that their ways of living could be celebrated; and that their identities did not have to be hidden away. The community was especially important, for it meant that people could meet, share and organise with others, as well as feel legitimate to occupy the public sphere. Thanks to the Front, but also other organisations like the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE) or the presence of LGBTQ+-related news in mainstream media and gay magazines, homosexuality had indeed stopped being “a taboo subject” by “the early seventies” (Cant &

³⁷ A cruising spot is related to the activity of cruising, the act of searching for a casual sexual partner in the streets, usually performed by homosexuals (OED “Cruise”).

Hemmings, 2010:88). It was in this context that coming out became central for the lesbian and gay community:

[Coming out] sought to dissolve the privacy of sexual taste, to make sexuality a public issue. Through its militancy and the carnivalesque way in which it demonstrated its new sense of collective consciousness it attempted to break the taboos about public displays of homosexual love and affection. (Berridge & Strong, 1993:22)

Weeks explains that coming out “was at once the most simple and the most fundamental activity of the new sexual politics of the 1970s” (2000:79). It was a political statement: heterosexuals were introduced to LGBTQ+ people around them, making the topic personal to everyone, while, at the same time, participating in the development of a community and a movement fighting for equality. Nevertheless, “British culture remained broadly hostile” to this (Cook et al., 2001:191). It was deemed acceptable for LGBTQ+ people to exist and have private relationships, but homosexuality should stay confined, as it was seen as a risk for others.³⁸ Moreover, coming out was not an easy experience for everyone either and would sometimes harm parent-child relationships (idem). Many parents saw homosexuality as a “tragic and/or abhorrent” choice, and only a minority “c[a]me to terms” with it (idem). On the other hand, Dennis Altman, gay rights activist and Emeritus Professor of Politics at LaTrobe University, writes that in the 1970s, LGBTQ+ people knew what their newfound identity entailed: “to be a homosexual in our society is to be constantly aware that one bears a stigma” (qtd. in Weeks, 2000:79). Coming out was considered to be a freeing experience, but it was also a choice that could have negative consequences on one’s personal and professional life.

Coming out – and coming together – led to the expansion of the LGBTQ+ scene between the 1970s and the 1980s (David, 1997:245). This was a major step for the development of the community: according to Beverley Skeggs, Distinguished Professor of Sociology at Lancaster University, its members “learn that most space is heterosexual”, meaning that they are conscious of their difference from the norm, ultimately leading them to hide parts of their identity (1999:214). However, having their own space releases LGBTQ+ people from the pressure of abiding by heteronormative rules. Thus, during the 1970s, gay pubs and clubs were founded: they were “hugely significant for gay men” (Cook et al., 2007:191), even if they “were routinely subject to police harassment” in an attempt “to

³⁸ This is apparent when looking at an opinion poll published by *Gay News* in 1975: if the majority supported the 1967 act, 45 percent of the participants believed that “there should be curbs on gay men working in teaching and medicine”, and “the conception of gay men being a danger to children endured” (Cook et al., 2007:191). It is noteworthy that both teachers and healthcare providers are commonly trusted professionals who can easily influence others in vulnerable positions.

constrain an emerging gay culture, or at least to keep it underground” (Cocks, 2016:279).³⁹ On the contrary, the LGBTQ+ community continued to make their culture public, as the first London Pride Parade showcased in 1972: the event was about unity “in the face of a homophobic, hostile society” (Staples, 2002).⁴⁰

Finally, if the premise of a community started to form before the 1970s, the emergence of organisations, newspapers and a commercial scene during Gay Liberation contributed to the development of a collective identity. A “[c]ollective identity is made up of shared ‘cultural capital’ that members acquire through the deployment of knowledge within the movement and use to constitute themselves in their own terms” (Meyer et al., 2002:267). A sense of belonging emerges when its members share cultural capital and relate to it through their common experiences (Dyer, 2002:15). This is why, despite the existence of LGBTQ+ gatherings before, it was only thanks to the evolution of the movement in the 1970s that the community could expand. Just like the GLF, organisations like CHE, the London Gay Switchboard, and magazines such as *Gay Left* and *Gay News* played a central role in this matter.

The Committee for Homosexual Equality (CHE), created in 1969 and focused on LGBTQ+ legal and social equality, had a different approach to the GLF, as they focused on lobbying tactics and apolitical actions in order to gain support (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:260).⁴¹ CHE “was afraid of going too far, lest straights be offended” and preferred to express themselves at “the disco” (Sinfield, 2014:267). While this was criticised by members of the community – such as the writers of the socialist journal *Gay Left* (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:260) – CHE attracted a lot of people: by 1972, they became “the largest lesbian and gay organisation in the country” (Robinson, 2007:79), with sixty local groups and a total of 2,800 members (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:260). It correlated with the beginning of the fall of the GLF, giving space for CHE to become the leading organisation in the UK (Lent, 2001:208).⁴² The London Gay Switchboard, created in 1974, “provided both telephone information and

³⁹ This became the theme of the 1978 song titled “Glad to Be Gay”, in which Tom Robinson Band denounces discriminations and physical and psychological violence against LGBTQ+ people yet, at the same time, encourages them to celebrate their sexuality and be defiant (Tom Robinson Band, 1978). The song – which popularised the group – was a reflection of the 1970s for the community and it became an anthem for LGBTQ+ people in the UK (Heibutzki; Tatchell, 1998a).

⁴⁰ Two years prior, the GLF organised the first Pride event in New York and other large US cities to celebrate the anniversary of the Stonewall riots (Lemmey, 2020).

⁴¹ CHE changed its name from the Committee for Homosexual Equality to the Campaign for Homosexual Equality in 1971 (British Library, “Timeline”; Cant & Hemmings, 2010:260). It is still a working organisation today (CHE).

⁴² As explored in part I.2.d, Stonewall was similar to CHE in its approach to activism.

counselling to gay men and women” (ibid., 90).⁴³ Their work was especially important in the 1970s and 1980s: 13% of LGBTQ+ youth had their first contact with another homosexual person thanks to them, according to a survey made in 1984 (Cook et al., 2007:189).⁴⁴ Moreover, the organisation helped a lot of members of the community deal with delicate stories of discrimination, loneliness or rejection (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:149-50).⁴⁵

Finally, *Gay News* and *Gay Left*, two publications of the 1970s made by and for LGBTQ+ people developed the cultural core of the community. *Gay News*, published bimonthly (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:201), was the first LGBTQ+ newspaper in Britain, founded in 1972 by CHE and GLF members (British Library, “Timeline”).⁴⁶ It “reported on discrimination and political and social advances” and they also “campaign[ed] for law reform” (idem). Quickly recognised for its “quality and professionalism”, the magazine became a fundamental part of the community and “a defining feature of gay life in the UK” over time (Lent, 2001:90). However, the newspapers ceased publication in 1983 because of financial complications (Berridge & Strong, 1993:24; Lent, 2001:93). On the other hand, *Gay Left* was launched in 1975 (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:212): the aim behind its bi-annual publications, developed in ten issues over the course of five years, was to “examin[e] the links between socialism and gay liberation” (*Gay Left*). Bob Cant, who wrote for the journal, recounts that it gathered a “group of nine gay men” who wanted to analyse homosexual oppression through the lens of Marxism, by focusing on the relations of power between the oppressors and the oppressed (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:212).⁴⁷ *Gay Left* served as the link between the formation of the community in the 1970s and the development of an LGBTQ+ political movement and conscience.

To summarise, the creation of the British GLF in 1970 led to the emergence of a politicised community and a collective identity. The Front claimed space and demanded equality between LGBTQ+ and heterosexual people through various actions. It also tried to change how people saw themselves, by emphasising the need to come out and proudly claim

43 It later became the London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard (Lent, 2001:90) and it is now known as the Switchboard LGBT+ Helpline (Switchboard LGBT+ Helpline).

44 Switchboard helped numerous people get helpful, reliable information during the AIDS crisis in the 1980s (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:152-3; Lent, 2001:90).

45 The 8th episode of *RuPaul’s Drag Race UK* season 5 (airing on BBC Three) celebrated the work of the Switchboard by putting in drag some of its hotline workers, which highlights how significant it is for the British LGBTQ+ community (Grech-Smith, 2023).

46 *Gay News* was created in reaction to the lack of news stories on LGBTQ+ people (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:198-9).

47 Mandy Merck specifically points out the fact that “the *Gay Left* collective” was a “male-only group” but she also adds that “a number of women were included in the collection of essays they later published” (Merck & Guy, 2021:22).

their identity. With the development of their own culture, the community expanded thanks to shared places, writings and political events. Nevertheless, it continued to be subject to increased repression following the 1967 Sexual Offences Act (Cocks, 2016:279). Moreover, if the Labour Party entertained “good public relations with gay politics” after 1974, the Conservatives’ desire to keep society away from moral vice – here represented by homosexuality – led them to be “the most militant anti-gay, anti-pornography and anti-permissive spokesmen” (qtd. in Robinson, 2007:115, 146).⁴⁸ In 1979, Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan left 10 Downing Street, replaced by the Conservative Margaret Thatcher who marked the LGBTQ+ community in the 1980s by her delayed reaction to the AIDS crisis and the introduction of Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act, which prohibited the promotion of homosexuality by public authorities (Local Government Act 1988[a]).

I.1.c The 1980s: LGBTQ+ Lives in Danger

[T]he strongest sense of community often develops in groups that find the premises of their collective existence threatened and who construct out of this a community of identity that provides a strong sense of resistance and empowerment. This is the exact situation in which British lesbians and gay men found themselves in the 1980s. (Knowles, 2010:15)

Before looking at the two crises that marked the lives of LGBTQ+ people in the 1980s, it is relevant to mention the moral aspect of the political ideology associated with Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990, and its impact on the community. Her policies became known as Thatcherism, which can be described as the combination of “neo-liberalism in economic matters and authoritarian conservatism in social policy” (qtd. in Evans, 2019:2). They “promised to overcome what was perceived as a deep-seated crisis of British society and state” (Weeks, 1981:374). Thatcherism is not only regarded as a coherent economic and social project but also as an ideology, a “collection of beliefs” as the *Daily Telegraph* wrote when she left office in 1990 (qtd. in Evans, 2019:3). To go further, Thatcher was, above all, focused on politics, “which demanded more flexibility than ideology”: “her inconsistencies were grounded in calculations of political advantage” (idem). Nigel Lawson, chancellor of the Exchequer under Thatcher from 1983 to 1989, defined Thatcherism as such:

The right definition [of Thatcherism] involves a mixture of free markets, financial discipline, firm control over public expenditure, tax cuts, nationalism, “Victorian values”, privatization and a dash of populism (ibid., 4).

⁴⁸ Robinson develops that for the far-right group the National Front, the opposition was even stronger, as homosexuality threatened “heterosexual marriage and traditional gender roles” (2007:116).

Lawson named the “Victorian values” as one of the constitutive elements of Thatcherism: the Prime Minister herself used that term during the 1983 general election campaign to reaffirm her views on the traditional and heterosexual family unit, a symbol of 19th-century Britain under Queen Victoria’s reign (Weeks, 1981:375). Indeed, moral reforms were “seen by New Right theorists as a necessary corollary of economic liberalism” (idem).⁴⁹ This is especially important for the LGBTQ+ community, which kept on questioning heteronormativity and the nuclear family model that Thatcher believed in: her government was “strikingly opposed to the politics of feminism and gay liberation” (Janes, 2012:213). Martin Durham, Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University of Wolverhampton, contends that politicising morality was “secondary to more pressing economic and social policy objectives” in the Thatcherite project (1989:65), but in his work titled *Sex & Politics: The Family and Morality in the Thatcher Years*, he does not minimise the importance of the moral aspect of Thatcherism: “Margaret Thatcher’s rhetoric of Victorian values and traditional morality invited the suggestion that Conservatism in Britain too was turning to moral majority politics” (1991:2). Peter Tatchell, an activist in the Gay Liberation Front, and later, one of the core members of OutRage!, shares a similar point of view, calling Thatcher’s moral policies “the Conservative Government’s family values crusade” (Preston, 2001:34). Evidently, Tatchell’s remark must be taken with a pinch of salt, but it offers an insight on the way LGBTQ+ activists may have perceived Thatcher’s attacks on the community, namely the lack of initial response to the AIDS pandemic and the amendment of Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act.

The AIDS Crisis and the Conservative Government’s Answer to it

The AIDS crisis had a considerable effect on the LGBTQ+ community in the 1980s, as it impacted many of its members: 30,000 to 50,000 people were infected with the virus and 2,779 lived with AIDS by the end of the 1980s – although not all of them were part of the community (Knowles, 2010:39).⁵⁰ Additionally, it led to cultural changes for LGBTQ+ people, and especially for gay and bisexual men who were the most directly impacted by the

49 The New Right, named in response to the “New Left counterculture of the 1960s” was a coalition of Conservative politicians “who voiced opposition on a variety of issues including abortion, homosexuality, [...] and most forms of taxation” (Cunningham). It represents 1980s politics in the US and the UK, under the presidency of Ronald Reagan (1980-1988) and the premiership of Margaret Thatcher.

50 In LGBTQ+ films and TV shows about the 1980s, the community is often associated with AIDS. *Philadelphia* (1993), *Holding the Man* (2015), *It’s a Sin* (2021) are examples of that.

disease (*idem*). To understand how it impacted the community, it is necessary to look at the government and the media's response to AIDS.

In October 1981 in the UK, the first death of a patient with the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was reported (Brand, 2021). It was later discovered that AIDS-related deaths followed an infection by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which was first found in “the gay populations of the east and west coasts of the United States” (Berridge & Strong, 1993:23).⁵¹ It spread to other LGBTQ+ people worldwide, but also to other communities like drug users or haemophiliacs, since the virus can be “transmitted through bodily fluids such as blood, semen, vaginal fluids, anal fluids, and breast milk” (History.com Editors, 2021). Nevertheless, since it was first detected in gay men, people directly connected the virus to them: Weeks reveals that before being called AIDS other names were used for the disease like “gay cancer” or “GRID” for “Gay Related Immune Deficiency” (Berridge & Strong, 1993:23).

In July 1983, deaths related to AIDS were still relatively low in Britain, with 14 cases reported (Winston, 2021). Two months later, “the number had risen to 24” (*idem*). In 1984, when people could then be tested for HIV, the results were “alarming”: “initial testing revealed that perhaps as many as three-quarters of people with haemophilia already had HIV, as did some of their sexual partners” (*idem*). Reported as “the gay plague” by tabloids (CivicLeicester, 2014b:01:00; Winston, 2021), its development in other communities than that of gay men and drug users – the most-affected ones – frightened the general population (Berridge & Strong, 1993:26). According to Weeks, three phases marked the public reaction to the health crisis in Britain (1981:381-3). During the first phase, from 1981 to 1983, “the response to AIDS was to pretend it did not exist”: the government did not react or respond to the “warnings from doctors and from gay organisations” (Small, 1987:16).⁵² Weeks links this delayed response to the Conservatives' moral opposition to the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s and to the disease's close link to the LGBTQ+ community which was “increasingly assertive, but politically unpopular” (2016:88).⁵³ The media and the government both played a role in describing AIDS as “essentially a problem for the gay community”, which also revealed their homophobia (Small, 1987:12). The second phase from 1983 to 1986 is

51 The cause of AIDS, HIV, was discovered in 1984 (Winston, 2021). Following this, a test determining if a person already had antibodies in their body was quickly developed and approved in the UK (*idem*).

52 Knowles evokes the possibility that Thatcher herself “vetoed an early advertising campaign around AIDS”, comparing it to “writing on a lavatory wall” (2009:40). In other words, it would be useless and inefficient.

53 In relation to the sexual revolution, Weeks argues that “AIDS appeared when sexual mores were in unprecedented flux, old social disciplines were declining, and literally millions of young people were in movement and willing and eager to experiment with their sexual behaviour” (2016:88).

characterised by a moral panic.⁵⁴ LGBTQ+ people – and especially gay men – were discriminated against because of fear. Weeks mentions that this feeling “was legitimate” since, at the time, there was no scientific research on AIDS (Berridge & Strong, 1993:26). Nevertheless, the role of sensationalist newspapers in stigmatising the community should not be minimised (idem).⁵⁵ Headlines such as “I’d shoot my son if he had Aids, says vicar” ran by the conservative tabloid the *Sun* in 1985 demonstrates how some media outlets used the disease to sell (qtd. in Winston, 2021).⁵⁶ This had an impact on public opinion: in 1988, 48 percent of the participants surveyed by Gallup believed that homosexuality was one of multiple “very serious social problems in Britain”, 28 percent more than in 1981 (Clements & Field, 2014:525).⁵⁷ Finally, the third phase is characterised by the 1987 massive health campaign launched by the government, as the crisis was starting to noticeably impact the heterosexual community (Small, 1987:17). The government initiated a £20M plan to inform the public on the disease and how to prevent it (Winston, 2021).⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the LGBTQ+ community was never addressed once, despite being the most affected by the virus (Watney, 1987:72-3). As a result, and because AIDS had been anchored in Britain for a few years already, the response to the virus became more calm in the early 1990s: it had become normalised (Berridge & Strong, 1993:3).⁵⁹

The handling of the crisis by the institutions in power impacted LGBTQ+ people and put a stop to the new freedoms they were enjoying: this was mostly due to the discriminations they faced, and fear of the virus itself (Lent, 2001:199-200; see also Knowles, 2010:39). It was “a serious blow to morale amongst gay men” (Lent, 2001:199). Moreover, LGBTQ+ people also had to face more discrimination than before, following the moral panic surrounding the disease. Some members of the community shared how their lives were affected by it: one stated that “gays and lesbians face[d] nothing short of a lynch mob”, while another reported that, as a lesbian, “[she’d] been beaten up three times in the past few

54 For Weeks, a moral panic designates “the focus on a condition, person or group of persons who become defined as a threat to accepted social values and assumptions” (Berridge & Strong, 1993:26).

55 Cook wishes to carefully talk about the media’s coverage of AIDS, with on the one hand “tabloid homophobia” and on the other, “more cautious television coverage” (2017b:270).

56 Simon Watney points out that some tabloids also did not correctly disclose the amount of victims: in September 1987, the *Star* counted more than a 1,000 deaths related to AIDS when the broadsheet the *Guardian* only reported 572 (1987:72).

57 Tatchell states that by the mid-1980s, “two thirds of people said they believed homosexuality was always or mostly wrong” (CivicLeicester, 2014b:01:10).

58 The campaign included a flyer sent to every household, “Don’t die of Ignorance” ad spots – like the one representing the AIDS monolith (The Central Office of Information, 2006), billboards and the promotion of condoms (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:244; Knowles, 2010:40-41). Note-worthily, the campaign was not supported by members of the Cabinet or Margaret Thatcher (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:244; Cook, 2017a:59; 2017b: 244).

59 With new medical research and discoveries, it became possible to treat AIDS and minimise its impact and expansion in the human body (Weeks, 2016:90).

months” and that “lesbians and gays [were] becoming the scapegoats of society” (Knowles, 2010:42). The community as a whole lived through similar intimidating and homophobic experiences, and they could only rely on themselves to care for one another as the government did not immediately react to the crisis.

However, instead of dividing them, this prompted the community to unify and fight together. People massively responded by defining the problem and sharing knowledge and information; by volunteering in HIV/AIDS groups as well as fundraisers; and by providing a supporting network to others (Knowles, 2010:43; Preston, 2001:19; Weeks, 2016:89-90). In 1982 for example, one of the first deaths related to AIDS in Britain was that of Terrence Higgins (Winston, 2021). A trust in his name was created in 1983 by his (male) partner and friends “with the intention of preventing others from having to suffer as Terry had” (Terrence Higgins Trust; see also Berridge & Strong, 1993:27). Focused on funds for research and awareness of the virus, the trust was the first response by the LGBTQ+ community in the UK (Terrence Higgins Trust). Weeks also mentions how important “pretended families” were during that time: people were tied by the love and care that each member had for one another (Preston, 2001:19). These families and this internal response to the crisis unified the community in a way that did not exist before, and this would translate to politics, after the introduction of Section 28 in 1988.

Section 28: Moral Values Turned into Law

The 1988 Local Government Act, introduced by the Conservative David Wilshire a year prior, became known for its Section 28 (Weeks, 1981:379). It specified the following:

Prohibition on promoting homosexuality by teaching or by publishing material

(1) A local authority shall not—

(a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality;

(b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship. (Local Government Act, 1988[a])⁶⁰

The law was introduced because the Conservatives were concerned with the inclusion in schools of books such as *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* by Susanne Bösche (1981), a

⁶⁰ Subsection (2) specified that AIDS prevention fell outside of this regulation: “Nothing in subsection (1) above shall be taken to prohibit the doing of anything for the purpose of treating or preventing the spread of disease” (idem).

The film *Blue Jean* (2022) exemplifies how this law may have impacted LGBTQ+ people working in schools.

story about a child living with two men, which was found in the teachers' resource centre of an Inner London Education Authority (Booth, 2014). During the 1987 general election, Thatcher's party challenged Labour by declaring that they wanted to "force kids to read books" such as *Young, Gay and Proud* by Sasha Alyson (1980) and *Black Lesbian in White America* by Anita Cornwell (1983) (idem). The aim of this campaign was to discredit the party as immoral (idem). This law also followed Thatcher's "exasperation with 'loony left' education policy" and she eventually said that "[c]hildren who need to be taught respect for traditional values are being taught that they have an inalienable right to be gay" (qtd. in Sanderson, 1995:64). "Loony Left" was a term used to describe some radical left-wing politicians like Ken Livingstone, the main figure of the Greater London Council (GLC) from 1981 to its abolition in 1986, who vehemently fought for the rights of minorities – along with left-wing local authorities and councils in other cities (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:225).⁶¹ In 1985, the GLC published a charter called *Changing the World* which denounced heteronormativity and proposed 142 recommendations to fight discrimination against LGBTQ+ people (Knowles, 2010:33-4). It "echoed many of the GLF's early demands" (Cook et al., 2007:193): one of the recommendations, for instance, mentioned that "lesbians and gay students should see reflected in the curriculum the richness and diversity of homosexual experience and not just negative images" (qtd. in Knowles, 2010:34). Knowles links it to the introduction of Section 28 in Parliament (idem).

Section 28 directly mirrored Thatcher's wish to return to "Victorian values" and to focus on "the unit of the family" (Preston, 2001:11).⁶² Crucially, the clause did not ban homosexual relationships but it prohibited its promotion in local authorities and thus "challenge[d] the claims of the vastly expanded lesbian and gay community as it had developed since 1970" (Berridge & Strong, 1993:29). Its main goal was to make homosexuality less salient in society, following the moral panic of the 1980s. Weeks stresses on the fact that Section 28 was passed when "hostility" towards the LGBTQ+ community was already high because of the AIDS crisis, and it "reached its culmination with the debate over Section 28" (1981:379). This new piece of legislation was first confusing: "many local authorities were never sure what the 'promotion' of homosexuality actually meant" (King, 2003:685). It was difficult to draw the line between promoting homosexuality and simply mentioning its existence, leading to "self-censorship" (Weeks, 1981:380). On the other hand,

61 The term was then used to describe the Labour Party by the media – and the Conservatives – during the 1987 general election (Sanderson, 1995:53).

62 The Prime Minister herself was in favour of the clause despite her "other ministers' hesitancies" (Durham, 2005: 117).

Section 28 never reached its intended goal since its enactment was followed by a very important wave of protest and politicisation in the LGBTQ+ community. In a seminar about Section 28, Weeks summarises its effect for the community:

I think Clause 28 had massive unintended consequences for the Thatcher government. [...] [I]n an attempt to stop the flow of progress, it actually made that progress possible. Because it dramatised the situation of lesbian and gays it created a huge response from the community itself, it put new things on the agenda, and it I think it's a key, probably the key, symbolic event in the history of sexuality of the last 30 years because it actually forced people to draw lines and to say on which side they were and in doing that it actually made a new politics of lesbian and gay life possible. (Preston, 2001:20)

The clause was seen as “progress reversed”, which “infuriated people” (ibid., 39). Yet, instead of silencing the LGBTQ+ community it “became a symbol of a revolution stalled” and it “stimulated an unprecedented burst of growth” (Weeks, 1981:380). It represented the repression that lesbians and gay men had been facing since the beginning of the AIDS crisis. Therefore, Section 28 was arguably “ineffective” (King, 2003:685), “counterproductive” for the Thatcher government (Sanderson, 1995:66), as it “had the opposite intended effect” (Knowles, 2010:9). Coupled with the moral panic around AIDS created by the government and the tabloids, the clause made it possible for the LGBTQ+ community to unify and develop a new political agenda.⁶³

Unification, Politicisation

Coming back to Knowles’s reflection on the development of a strong sense of community, the AIDS outbreak and Section 28 contributed to unify and empower LGBTQ+ people, because their collective existence was threatened. The health crisis had already created links, because even though it mostly impacted gay and bisexual men, other members of the community were also discriminated against and lost partners, friends or members of their pretended families. On the other hand, Section 28 had direct repercussions on everyone, which both united and strengthened their relationship (Godfrey, 2018; Knowles, 2010:47; Sinfield, 2014:271). Thus, they defended their right to be openly and freely homosexual, in part with the creation of political organisations such as OLGA (David, 1997:264).

OLGA, or Organisation for Lesbian and Gay Action, was formed in 1987 following a proposal by LGBTQ+ activists Peter Tatchell and Lisa Power during the Legislation for Lesbian and Gay Rights Conference, with the hopes of starting a political movement (Lent,

⁶³ This section only draws a general picture of the 1980 but in an article dedicated to AIDS, Cook goes more into detail on the differences, contradictions and fractures inside and between the media, the government, as well as the cisgender-heterosexual and LGBTQ+ communities (2017b:270).

2001:200-1; Lucas, 1998:5). Coinciding with the introduction of Clause 28, OLGA organised its first demonstration in January 1988 which gathered 10,000 protesters and led to thirty-two arrests (*idem*). The organisation collapsed quickly because of internal divisions but this first protest was very effective. Coupled with the 20,000 people who marched against the clause in Manchester in February, the 50,000 in London in April (Knowles, 2010:46) and the 30,000 people at the Pride Festival of 1988, the late 1980s saw the development of an LGBTQ+ political voice and the arrival of a lot of new people “into political activity” (Lent, 2001:201). The clause originated “the largest mobilisation of opposition since the 1970s” (Weeks, 1981:380).

After OLGA, “three extremely high profile groups” were created around the same time: ACT UP, Stonewall and OutRage! (Preston, 2001:11). First came ACT UP – AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power – in January 1989, formed two years after the one in New York (Berridge & Strong, 1993:31; Lucas, 1998:7). ACT UP, as its name suggests, was more focused on the AIDS epidemic: it led “a series of zaps and protests against those it regarded as denying their fair treatment to people with HIV and AIDS” such as “drug companies, the press and the government” (Lent, 2001:201).⁶⁴ This style of activism, similar to that of the GLF in the early 1970s, was meant to be sensational and to “attract headlines” (Winston, 2021; see also Berridge & Strong, 1993:31). Successfully so, the group was able to garner a lot of publicity and “celebrity support” in its first year of activities (Lent, 2001:201). Stonewall was then established five months later (Preston, 2001:11) with the “intention of facilitating the repeal of Section 28” (Knowles, 2010:47). Early on, they also drafted a bill to lower the age of consent (Lucas, 1998:9), which highlighted the organisation’s wish to move beyond Clause 28. Finally, OutRage! was created in 1990 following the events of the 1980s and after a year of heightened prosecutions in 1989 and the unresolved murders of fourteen gay people since 1986 (Lucas, 1998:14).⁶⁵

Nevertheless, if this part emphasised the activism on the late 1980s, the community expanded throughout the decade (Sandfort et al., 2000:8). It paradoxically happened under a government “hostile” to it (*idem*, Berridge & Strong, 1993:31). This may be linked to multiple factors: the epidemic, the political opposition, the “expansion of the economy and the

⁶⁴ A zap is “a form of protest action that draws on visibility and spontaneity” that was “first used by gay and lesbian rights activists in the US” (Carter, 2021; see also OED “Zap”). In the 1970s, the GLF often performed zaps as well (Lent, 2003:34; Robinson, 2006:459).

⁶⁵ 1989 was the year with “highest ever number of arrests and prosecutions for consensual sexual activity between men since records began” (qtd. in Janes, 2012:212) with around 3,000 convictions (see also Appendixes 13-15; Lent, 2001:202). This is further discussed in part III.1.a. Stonewall and OutRage! are going to be further analysed in part I.2.d.

integration of gay culture into the mainstream of the market”, or “the growing maturation of the community” (Sandfort et al., 2000:8). Weeks points at the creation of “homosexual organisations, social facilities, publications” and the evolution of “a new self-confidence and sense of identity amongst lesbian and gay men” (Berridge & Strong, 1993:24). In 1985 already, the Pride march gathered 15,000 people (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:206).

In the mid-1980s, two organisations influenced the movement and its relation to left-wing politics: Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) and Lesbians Against Pit Closures (LAPC) (Kelliher, 2014:241). LGSM was formed in 1984 by Mike Jackson and Mark Ashton – “the first out gay Secretary of the Young Communist League” (Robinson, 2007:6), during the miners’ strike of 1984-5 against pit closures (Kelliher, 2014:241; LGSM). They raised money for the miners and they were in direct relation with strikers across the country but especially in South Wales, and LAPC donated their funds to the Rhodisia Women’s Action Group in Worksop in Nottinghamshire (LGSM).⁶⁶ These two organisations and the miners found a “political connection” based on their common experience as marginalised social minorities (Robinson, 2007:167). LGSM and LAPC focused “on socialist issues that did not directly touch the LGBTQ+ community” and had links with Labour and other left-wing parties (Kelliher, 2014-244).

Finally, *Gay Times* (1984-now) and *Capital Gay* (1981-95) marked the decade for LGBTQ+ publications (Bishopgate Institute; Clews, 2012). *Gay Times* is “Europe’s longest running” LGBTQ+ publication, released monthly and treating all matters of relevance for the community, from political concerns to more trivial news (The BBC, 2019b). In the first editions, Terry Sanderson wrote a column called “Mediawatch”, in which he gave an account of what national media reported on LGBTQ+ issues (idem). *Capital Gay* was a weekly newspaper in London and Brighton, which “sought to serve all sections of the community, not just the most lucrative markets” (Clews, 2012). They promoted the Switchboard, an important resource in the 1980s as they provided the community with comfort, safe accommodation and information on HIV/AIDS (David, 1997:193; Staples, 2002; see also Cant & Hemmings, 2010:142-154). Moreover, *Capital Gay* was one of the first publications to write about HIV and AIDS (Clews, 2012).

For the LGBTQ+ community, the 1980s was a decade divided between loss, frustration and empowerment. The AIDS crisis was a blow to the hedonism of the 1970s and a

⁶⁶ The film *Pride* (2014) relates the story of the political association between Welsh miners and LGSM and LAPC.

brake to the growing commercial scene in the biggest British cities. The Conservative government's slow response to the crisis and the antagonising reports of the press towards gay men's promiscuous lifestyle angered the community. The 1988 Local Government Act further enraged people because it aimed to minimise the promotion of homosexuality, following an increasing belief that it was a problem in Britain. However, this sparked a new wave of activism similar in some aspects to that of the early 1970s, from which rose influential political organisations. By the end of the decade, the community was wider, more unified, politically active, and outraged at the discriminations they faced. Adding to this, the queer theory conceptualised in the 1980s ensuing the works of Foucault and the post-structuralist current also heavily influenced the identity and political objectives of a part of the community, including OutRage! (see Halperin, 1995:62). The next part thus focuses on the political, cultural and philosophical landscape of the 1990s in Britain, in relation to the creation and development of OutRage!.

I.2. The 1990s in Britain: Political, Philosophical and Cultural Changes

I.2.a The End of 18 years of Conservatism and Cool Britannia

After 11 years as Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher left 10 Downing Street in November 1990 following a general dissatisfaction with some of her policies like the poll tax, and a lack of trust from her cabinet and her party on her capacity to lead and unify the Conservatives towards a new victory in the 1992 general election (Evans, 2019:140, 143; Preston, 2001:11). John Major, a candidate for leadership of the party and Thatcher's "own chosen successor", won the election, making him the new Prime Minister (Evans, 2019:143). Major was seen as more "understanding of the needs of ordinary people" than Thatcher (Reitan, 2003:117). Eric Evans, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Lancaster, argues that his more moderate style of governing was well-regarded after Thatcher's premiership:

In the short term, John Major proved a great relief, because he was *not* Thatcher. Many commentators considered that his emollient, consensual style was precisely what the nation needed after more than a decade being dragged around Margaret Thatcher's political assault course. (2019:147)

It was under his leadership that the Conservatives won the 1992 general election, “considered unwinnable under Thatcher” (ibid., 148) and he stayed in office until the 1997 general election, which Tony Blair, the leader of New Labour, won in a landslide (Grant, 2011:386). The next part focuses on Major’s social policies, linking them to Thatcher’s to draw a summary of 18 years of Conservatism.

John Major and the End of Moral Conservatism

Major’s policies both marked a continuation and a contrast to Thatcher’s. He followed her path on the expansion of the free market, privatisation and meritocracy, but he also included public services in his policies, stating for example his attachment to the NHS (Major, 1991).⁶⁷ Aside from his policies touching on public services and the economy, Major dealt with moral debates on “abortion, single parenthood” or “sex education” (Durham, 1991:4). Unlike Thatcher, he seemed open to changes in British society (Sanderson, 1995:71), proposing a vote on reducing the age of consent for sexual relationships between men in 1994 for instance (Weeks, 1981:394).

1997 marked the end of 18 years of Conservatism. If John Major’s less vigorous style of governing was a welcomed shift from that of the Iron Lady, he “came not only to be associated with weak leadership but to be indelibly equated with a prolonged and chronic leadership crisis that became the defining condition of his government” (Evans, 2019:151; see also Sanderson, 1995:74). “The government had completely run out of steam” according to John Newbiggin, special advisor for the Secretary of State for Culture under Blair (Rachel, 2019:301). Reflecting on the subject, Blair himself claims that after 18 years in power, the Conservatives “were never going to be able to represent something new” at a time when it was needed (ibid., 302). He adds that Labour’s 1997 victory was almost inevitable, which was understood by both (New) Labour and the Conservatives (idem). The Labour party was already favoured to win the 1992 general election, had it not been for the new leadership of Major and for the events that marked his first year and a half – the war in Iraq and lowered inflation (Evans, 2019:148). By 1997 however, the Labour party’s new identity and leader attracted voters. The defeat of 1997 was a “humiliation” for the Conservative party according to Evans: Labour polled five million more voters than them and they consecutively also lost

⁶⁷ In a report on the consequences of Thatcher and Major’s economic policies on poverty, Professors of Social Policy Alan and Carol Walker state that “over the last 18 years, [...] they have jointly been responsible for the biggest increases in poverty and social exclusion since the Second World War” (1997:2).

half of their seats in the Commons, making New Labour rule with 419 seats to 165 (2019:153). As Major and his government were unpopular and deemed ineffective by the election year, the results were a relief for the British public, hoping for “an entirely new start” with Blair as Prime Minister (idem), “a new era in British political life” (Grant, 2011:386).

Tony Blair’s “Cool” New Labour

Blair became the leader of the Labour party in July 1994 and he considerably modernised its image (Reitan, 2003:158). He represented a “sea change politically, where the cynicism of old politics and the snobbishness and lack of egalitarianism in the British political system would change” (Rachel, 2019:446). He reformed the Labour party itself, modifying Clause IV of the Constitution of the Party in 1995: the phrase linking it to “socialist ideas”, “common ownership of the means of production”, was replaced by “power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many, not the few” (Adams, 1998:144-5).⁶⁸ The new Clause IV symbolically represented the transition that was occurring inside the party, rebranded “New Labour” to further establish that new political direction (Rachel, 2019:83). This “offered hope for an entirely new start” (Evans, 2019:155). Coincidentally, the party’s attractiveness was also linked to the cultural revolution that was happening in the 1990s, called Cool Britannia.

For British author Daniel Rachel, Cool Britannia is best represented by the 1997 image of Noel Gallagher, leader of the band Oasis, shaking the hand of Tony Blair at Downing Street after his victory: the “youngest British Prime Minister in the 20th century” (Grant, 2011:386) associated with “one of the decade’s cultural icons” (Rachel, 2019:xv). Cool Britannia was a brief period of time (1994-97) during which British people felt proud and patriotic as UK pop culture became internationally popular (ibid., xxvi). The movement included singers, artists and works of art, athletes and even ideas, like the Spice Girls and their Girl Power, Oasis, David Beckham, or Alexander McQueen (ibid., xv). Nevertheless, it cannot be separated from the political realm: many links can be made between Cool Britannia and New Labour since the party took advantage of the overall feeling of hope and renewal that the cultural revolution – and the probable end of the Conservative government – brought to Britain (Arday, 2020:15). Cool Britannia, which was an underground movement until 1997 when New Labour claimed it, was used for political gains (Rachel, 2019:xxix). At the time, “politicians began to understand the impact of subcultures in helping to steer political agendas” (Arday 2020:20). It

⁶⁸ The phrasing “socialist ideas” had been adopted in the 1918 Constitution of Labour (ibid., 144).

was a “media-marketing tool” for Tony Blair not only to appeal to voters but also “to unite Britain” under the cultural and political shift that were happening at the same time (Arday, 2020:20).

After one year in office, Tony Blair was criticised for not carrying a project that radically differed from that of Thatcher and Major (Rachel, 2019:405, 411). Instead of representing a “sea change”, he was deemed as “just another political centrist who was selling something with a shiny label” (ibid., 446). Cool Britannia ended with the feeling of hope that surrounded the 1997 general election (idem). Indeed, Blair believed that instead of “interfer[ing] with the market”, the party’s role was to work with it to make it more “dynamic” and “provide people and businesses with the means of success” (qtd. in Reitan, 2003:159). Blair built on the political strategy of John Major called the Third Way by LSE sociologist Anthony Giddens, which connected “Thatcher’s market orientation and ‘Old’ Labour’s commitment to state-sponsored social justice” (Lund, 2008:43, 55).⁶⁹ Giddens, who defined the concept in the late 1990s, called it “an attempt to transcend both old-style social democracy and neoliberalism” (1998:20).⁷⁰ The author asserts that both Bill Clinton in the US (1992-2000) and Blair embraced this modern approach to politics, trying to attract electorates from the left, right and centre (ibid., 19).⁷¹ With New Labour, branded as the “‘one nation’ party” (Reitan, 2003:178), Blair moved it away from socialism and trade unions to turn it into “the party of fiscal responsibility, free enterprise, and social reform” (ibid., 158), thus pleasing multiple electorates and “shift[ing] Labour nearer to the centre of the British political spectrum” (Evans, 2019:157). This reflected the economic and political changes following Thatcher’s years in power (ibid., 2; Grant, 2011; 386). Labour did not offer an “alternative” to the continuation of neo-liberal politics: rather, the party adjusted to the economic changes brought by Thatcherism and proposed an adaptation (Evans, 2019:155).⁷²

Looking at social progress at the end of the 1990s, attitudes to minorities evolved, and New Labour reflected that change. Waheed Alli, life peer for the Labour Party, hints at the

69 Major himself called Blair a “political kleptomaniac” in his memoir because he “would appropriate Conservative language and steal [their] policies” (qtd. in Lund, 2008:43).

70 Further detailing Giddens’s thoughts, Brian Lund writes that “the Third Way accepts, even welcomes, a market economy but seeks to combine social solidarity with a dynamic economy, stresses equal opportunities not equal outcomes, promotes pluralism in welfare supply and concentrates on wealth and income creation not their distributive pattern” (2008:44).

71 Tony Blair and Gordon Brown – who became Blair’s successor in 2007 – were inspired by Clinton’s 1992 presidential campaign in the US, as the Democratic party tried to appeal to the centre of the political spectrum with subjects like “education, health care, pensions, public disorders and crime” (Reitan, 2003:158).

72 This apparently led Thatcher to define New Labour as a “safe capitalist enterprise”, similar to the US Democrats (Evans, 2019:157). Commentators also saw Tony Blair as “Thatcher’s political child” (idem). Multiple authors wrote on Blair’s economic policies and the proximity with Thatcher (Evans, 2019:162; Reitan, 2003:159; Whitton 21-2, 25-7).

idea that Britain became a more inclusive society under New Labour (Rachel, 2019:450).⁷³ First, the 1997 general election saw 119 women becoming MPs, “compared to 24 women elected in 1974” (Grant, 2011:387). Immigration and the “officially adopted ideology of multiculturalism” made Britain a more diverse society as well, with 10% of the population not born in the UK (idem). Finally, there was hope for LGBTQ+ people, because “[a]ttitudes to homosexuals also underwent a radical transformation” in the 1990s (idem). At first, the relations between Labour and the community were complicated following the 1980s. The party did not fully endorse Peter Tatchell, Labour candidate at the by-election of Bermondsey in 1983, because of his far-left politics and his homosexuality (Robinson, 2007:154-61). Furthermore, Robinson adds that to distance themselves from the term “Loony Left”, the Labour front bench supported the Conservatives’ intention to pass the Section 28 bill without a vote (2007:171).⁷⁴ Therefore, if some LGBTQ+ activists like Mark Ashton of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners were close to the Left and sought its support for their activities, others like Tatchell were wary of it (ibid., 164). In the early 1990s, “gay politics remained locked in its symbolic association with radicalism” (ibid., 179). Nevertheless, a feeling of hope emerged as New Labour publicly supported LGBTQ+ rights: during his campaign, Blair promised to legislate “an equal age of consent”, “the repeal of Section 28”, “and an end to the ban on gays in the military” (OutRage! Archives. “Invoice to New Labour”, 1997).⁷⁵ The next section looks at the LGBTQ+ community in the 1990s and 2000s and the way it was affected by these political, economic and cultural changes.

I.2.b LGBTQ+ Lives in Bloom?

The 1990s and the early 2000s were to prove a period of unprecedented change both in popular attitudes and in the regulation of sexual activities. The sexual transition, after a hiatus at the level of public policy of nearly thirty years, was gathering pace once again. (Weeks, 1981:391)

In the late 1980s, the LGBTQ+ movement had become larger and more politicised, with the creation of organisations such as OutRage!, Stonewall and ACT UP. They drew attention to the inequalities before the law that existed for the community. The 1990s and

⁷³ Inclusion is “an all-encompassing concept that embraces super-diversity across a spectrum of intersections such as race, ethnicity, culture, disability, sexuality, religion, and class” (Arday, 2020:22).

⁷⁴ The by-election is further detailed in part II.2.

⁷⁵ According to OutRage!, Labour was slow to deliver on its promises and they “backtrack[ed] on its prelection commitments” (idem). For example, member Alastair Williams mentions that in May 1997 “a Labour spokesman told the *Daily Telegraph* that the party had no commitment to equalise the age of consent” (idem). A month later, “the government confirmed that it would seek to uphold the exclusion of homosexuals from the armed forces when the ban is challenged in the European Court of Justice” (idem).

especially the 2000s brought legal change to LGBTQ+ people, around thirty years after the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, which decriminalised homosexuality in private for men over 21. Pieces of legislation were progressively adopted, starting in 1994 with the age of consent lowered to 18 years old for male homosexual relationships (UK Parliament, 1994; 1967[b]). Other laws ensued in the following decade – like the repeal of Section 28 in 2003 (UK Parliament, 1988[b]).⁷⁶ After the emphasis on Victorian values, the 1990s opened up “a landscape where the culture of restraint had all but disappeared” (Weeks, 1981:391). In 1991 John Major symbolically welcomed to 10 Downing Street Sir Ian McKellen, actor, gay activist, and founding member of Stonewall, to discuss LGBTQ+ rights (Sanderson, 1995:71). The Conservative government, under Major’s leadership, was willing to listen to the community.⁷⁷ Afterwards, the shift from the Conservatives to New Labour in 1997 introduced a wave of possibilities and a feeling of hope for more openness, and acceptance (Rachel, 2019:450). This part deals with the improvement of the lives of LGBTQ+ people and important changes towards the community in public opinion.

Lent notes that the commercial LGBTQ+ scene of the late 1980s and early 1990s “catered to a multiplicity of gay-lifestyles” (2003:46). In other words, they promoted and celebrated a freedom of actions that people did not have access to before. One of the consequences of the growth of the commercial scene was the lack of political involvement that ensued as people did not need to join organisations to find a community like in the early 1970s with the GLF (*ibid.*, 45). They could experience joy and friendships in apolitical contexts, at bars and clubs, and, at the same time, benefit from “the successes and advancements” of the campaigns of LGBTQ+ organisations from afar (*ibid.*, 45-6). This was also due to the neoliberalism of the 1980s that promoted individualism: Hannah McCann (Lecturer in Cultural Studies at the University of Melbourne) and Whitney Monaghan (Assistant Lecturer in Film and Screen Studies at Manosh University) argue that this ideology “encouraged a turn away from structural accounts of oppression, towards individual and depoliticised accounts” (2020:155). The politicisation of the late 1980s had led to the creation of organisations and a renewed interest in activism, but it died down in the following decade as, increasingly, members of the community did no longer feel openly threatened in their daily lives. Researchers in queer history Matt Cook et al. mention the difference between the “socially transformative hopes” of the 1970s and the lack of interest in LGBTQ+ politics in the 1990s, as perceived by GLF member Peter Tatchell:

⁷⁶ These legislations are reviewed in part III.1.b.

⁷⁷ The “community” in this case was represented by Stonewall, the conforming face of the LGBTQ+ movement (see Amos, 2021:38:35). This is further detailed in part I.2.d.

[He] hit out in 1999 at the ‘amoral hedonism and historical amnesia’ that he saw dominating gay culture. He claimed that the single-issue campaigns betrayed the transformative politics of the 1970s, and there was a widespread indifference to homophobia and sexual repression both at home and abroad. Gay life had been depoliticised for all but a relatively few activists. (2007:212)

Therefore, in the 1990s there was a growing detachment from activism in the community. For example, the London Pride parade, which became increasingly popular during that decade, turned into a free festival for LGBTQ+ and heterosexual people to enjoy, celebrating the diversity of sexuality and lifestyles (David, 1997:268).⁷⁸ To put it differently, the march was “stripped of any political significance” (idem). OutRage! actually criticised the organisation of the festival by the Pride Trust in open letters in 1996 and 1997. They agreed that Pride “should have a Mardi Gras-style flavour” (OutRage! Archives. “Open Letter.” 1996) but they deplored that the event was not political enough and that the benefits mostly profited non-LGBTQ+ companies and organisations that did not necessarily show support for the community (idem; “An Open Letter to the Pride Trust.” 1997).

Moreover, the media also started to introduce more lesbian and gay stories on TV and radio shows, attesting to the fact that they were gradually being included in mainstream discourse. Examples of that are *Gay and Lesbian London* on Greater London Radio (1993); *Gaytime TV* on BBC2 (1996); the inclusion in 1996 of a gay character (Sean Myerson) in the soap opera *The Archers* on BBC Radio 4; a revival of the game show *Blankety Blank* hosted by drag queen Lily Savage from 1997 to 2002 on BBC1 (and then ITV); or the 1999 series *Queer as Folk* on Channel 4, relating the lives of gay men in Manchester (Cook et al., 2007:210; Stonewall, 2016).

In addition, the depoliticisation of the community was linked to a growing support for equal rights and opportunities by the general population. Ben Clements and Clive Field, researchers in politics and history, recorded a positive change in surveys from the early 1990s to the late 2000s (2014:541). After a drop in the 1980s, there was renewed support in 1991 in favour of hiring homosexuals in different professions, with almost 50 percent of the participants agreeing that they should be hired as doctors and clergy (ibid., 533). Teaching positions were more controversial, following the introduction of Section 28, but by 1993, 55 percent believed that it was acceptable to have homosexuals as teachers in schools, a number that increased to 83 percent in 2012 (ibid., 534). In 1990, 31 percent of the people surveyed did not want to have homosexuals as neighbours, but the number decreased to 24 percent in 1999, 23 percent in 2008 and finally, 10 percent in 2010 (ibid., 535). Around 65 percent also

⁷⁸ In the mid-1990s, the Pride Parade “regularly topped 40,000” attendants (David, 1997:268).

thought that homosexual relations between consenting adults should be legal in 1991 and 1993, but the census does not indicate the age of consent (21, 18 or 16) (*ibid.*, 536). Lastly, on the topics of same-sex marriage and adoption by homosexual couples, the censuses show once again growing acceptance from the early 1990s to the early 2010s (*ibid.*, 537-41). The authors link these results to the overall increasing support in Britain for “equality and diversity in all forms”, as well as a “progressive diversification, individualization, and globalization of sexual behavior” (*ibid.* 543).

These changes in the government, in the media, and in public opinion led the community to feel a sense of security in living their homosexuality freely and authentically (*ibid.*, 542). As a direct consequence, Cook et al. point out that “it became in some ways more difficult to protest about marginalization and homophobia” (2007:212). Indeed, if members of the community did not feel their oppression, they would not participate in actions. This led OutRage!, for example, to reduce their direct action activities in the late 1990s and increasingly focus on law reforms, lobbying tactics, and the oppression of LGBTQ+ people in other countries. This depoliticisation continued in the following decade: Weeks evokes that members of the community moved to large cities and “built their lives as if they were fully equal citizens, assuming rights and responsibilities often in advance of the law, but creating facts on the ground that the law ultimately had to respond to” (Weeks, 1981:406). The 2000s were filled with reforms in favour of equality, protecting the rights of LGBTQ+ people (British Library, “Timeline”).

Yet, it should be noted that this comfort was still threatened by bullying, homophobia and attacks. This was a common experience within the community: in studies from the early 1990s, 90% of lesbians and gay men in the US reported that they had been “targets of verbal abuse and threats”, and “well over one third [were] survivors of violence related to their gayness” (Fassinger, 1991:162). Cook et al. add that if LGBTQ+ people were able to feel safe, it was also because they prudently avoided homophobic contexts:

By carefully arranging where you studied, lived, worked and socialized in the later 1990s and early 2000s, it was possible largely to avoid feeling personally isolated or ridiculed because of the sex and relationships you were having” (2007:213).

The authors argue that in the 2000s, there was “a sense of schizophrenia” because homophobia was no longer common in politics and the press, replaced by words like “inclusion” and “diversity”, yet homophobia still persisted, “entrenched” in society (*idem*). Attacks on LGBTQ+ remained, as demonstrated by the five murders of gay men by the serial-killer Colin Ireland in 1993 (Lucas, 1998: 154), the bombing of a gay bar in Old Compton

Street in 1999 (OutRage! Archives. “Soho Bomb.” 1999), or the murder of Jody Dobrowski on Clapham Common in 2005 (Cook et al., 2007:213).⁷⁹ OutRage!’s creation was motivated by such acts.

I.2.c Post-Structuralism and the Queer Theory

Perhaps the most appealing aspect of a queer identity is the refusal to name what that identity means. In other words, a queer identity celebrates the difference and diversity of the individuals who are oppressed by the heterosexist mainstream without fixing or essentializing that identity. (Slagle, 1995:97-8)

In the 1980s, the word “queer” started to be used by AIDS activists (McCann & Monaghan, 2020:91). It followed the works of French philosopher Michel Foucault whose first volume on *History of Sexuality*, initially published in 1976, was translated into English in 1978. His work greatly influenced the LGBTQ+ community as it proposed the development of a new identity devoid of an essence – in opposition to the lesbian or gay identities. However, before analysing queer identity, it is relevant to introduce the philosophical current at the origin of Foucault’s work – poststructuralism – as well as the question of identity.

(Post)structuralism

The philosophical current emerged in France in the 1960s as an answer to structuralism (Aitken & Valentine, 2006:122; Sarup, 1993:3). In the Anglophone world, it is especially associated with the French theory which included philosophers like Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze, Jean Baudrillard and Michel Foucault (Fournier, 2022:54). Poststructuralism does not have a manifesto (Aitken & Valentine, 2006:122) but it may be described as “a theory, or a group of theories, concerning the relationship between human beings, the world, and the practice of making and reproducing meanings” (Belsey, 2002:5). It came as an answer to structuralism, which appeared in the 1950s with Claude Lévi-Strauss, who adapted Ferdinand de Saussure’s theory of structural linguistics to social sciences (Cervulle & Quemener, 2015:23; Harcourt, 2007:3). Lévi-Strauss’s approach can be summarised in four principles, which defined the direction of structuralism (1963:33). The first one states that structures of relations “operate at the level of the unconscious” (Harcourt, 2007:5). As such, languages may be studied as “objective phenomena” in relations to “other

⁷⁹ Colin Ireland’s crimes and the 1999 bombing are further reviewed in part III.1.a.

social facts” since language escaped “the control of the speaking subject” (idem). The second principle advances that “meaning in language derives from the relationships of difference and similarity between terms and not from the terms themselves” – again, occurring unconsciously (ibid., 4). For Lévi-Strauss, it meant that behaviours cannot be isolated and their meaning comes from their differences and similarities with other behaviours (idem). The third one posits that “the relations of difference and similarity form a structure or system” (Lévi-Strauss, 1963:33). Finally, the last tenet builds on that idea, as “general laws with universal characters” can be deduced from that system (Harcourt, 2007:5). Lévi-Strauss tried to “derive general applicable laws” from systems and social phenomena (ibid., 6). This last principle is the one that became the most controversial and that gave birth to poststructuralism, with “the rejection of such notions of general laws” (idem).

In opposition to that, poststructuralism rather focus on “the gaps and ambiguities in the structures of meanings” (Harcourt, 2007:17). French philosopher and sociologist Jean-François Lyotard defined postmodern “as incredulity towards metanarratives” (1984:xxiv). He believed that “the society of the future” is plural and heterogeneous, that it cannot be explained with simple frameworks (idem). Similarly, Michel Foucault interrogates “regime[s] of truths” (qtd. in Weir, 2008:368). From an historical point of view he asks how and why things have been defined as true in different times and what power structures influence our knowledge and our understanding of the world (Harcourt, 2007:18, 21). The idea of truth is thus questioned, following the theory of deconstruction by Jacques Derrida: the goal is not to find truths but to challenge them, to understand how they have been built and how they shape society (Aitken & Valentine, 2006:299-300). This is applied to truth and other structures: power, authority, the subject, or identity (Sarup, 1993:3). Poststructuralists also go against binaries and what is deemed normal, “obvious” or “natural”: on the contrary, they “expose all such claims as contingent, provisional, subject to scrutiny and debate” (Aitken & Valentine, 2006:298). For instance, John W. Wylie, Professor of Historical and Cultural Geography at the University of Bristol, takes heterosexuality and homosexuality as a binary, with heterosexuality being thought of as “normal” in many cultures (Aitken & Valentine, 2006:301). As a result, the author explains that in relation to it, homosexuality becomes “a secondary and deviant condition” (idem). However, homosexuality “is in fact at the very heart of the meaning of what it is to be heterosexual” because heterosexuality is constructed in relation to its opposition to homosexuality (idem).⁸⁰

80 The binary associated with the words “homosexual”, “heterosexual”, “male” and “female” was later questioned by authors such as Judith Butler and Sue-Ellen Case, who “have argued that queerness is something that is ultimately beyond gender” (Doty, 1993:xv).

Poststructuralism also interrogates identities, thus following the anti-essentialist theory (Aitken & Valentine, 2006:122). Essentialism posits that “for any particular social category”, “there is an underlying essence defining the ‘real’ or ‘true’ nature of the category’s experience” (Pickering, 2008:21). This may be understood in the form of traits associated to social categories (women, homosexuals, people with disabilities, etc.) which then turn into stereotypes that may be used as defining features to refer to a social group (*idem*). Mary Bernstein, Professor of Sociology at the University of Connecticut, and Michael Pickering, Emeritus Professor of Media and Cultural Analysis at Longborough University, both argue that essentialism does not take into account the variety of experiences of individual members in a particular group like their belonging to another social category (Meyer et al., 2002:87; Pickering, 2008:22). For example, the LGBTQ+ community is thought of as white, male and middle-class, thus ignoring differences in race, gender and social class.⁸¹ Bernstein further contends that, as such,

[b]y advocating for rights based on an identity such as “woman” or “gay,” identity movements reinforce the identity on which the movement is based and, as a result, fail to recognize diversity, homogenize and ignore differences within the identity category, and inhibit the creation of a “politics of commonality” (Gitlin 1994, 1995; Kimmel 1993; Phelan 1993) among diverse groups. (Meyer et al., 2002:85)

The political changes in the mid-20th century, “the collapse of European state socialism and the rightward reorientation of politics in the Western social democracies”, transformed the construction of identities (and especially collective ones), focusing on diversity, difference, and pluralism (Jenkins, 1996:19). Therefore, anti-essentialism, the belief that “identity is not fixed, immutable or primordial, that it is utterly socio-cultural in its origins, and that it is somewhat negotiable and flexible”, emerged and led to their (re)construction (*idem*). It is in this context that a queer theory was formulated.

Queer Theory

The term “queer” started to be used by scholars in 1990: it is primarily associated with Teresa de Lauretis, Distinguished Professor Emerita of the History of Consciousness at UC Santa Cruz, who talked of a “queer theory”, thus distancing it from the “gay and lesbian studies”, too focused on the unified experience of gay men (Cervulle & Quemener, 2015:49-50; de Lauretis, 1991:ix; see also McCann & Monaghan, 2020:2).⁸² Therefore, to think

⁸¹ White is the “unmarked norm in gay communities” (qtd. in McCann & Monaghan, 2020:101).

⁸² The queer theory was also marked by authors such as Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, David Halperin or Michael Warner, who deconstructed identities and binaries – of gender and sexual orientations (Cervulle & Quemener, 2015:41, 50-1; McCann & Monaghan, 2020: 2, 5, 11).

“queer” is to move the perspective from the centre to the margins and question the unity behind sexual identities. Nevertheless, the queer theory is “difficult to define”: it does not accept one truth, one meaning (McCann & Monaghan, 2020:1). There is not a single queer theory either, but a collection of voices and perspectives that transgress “categories and boundaries” (ibid., 2).⁸³ Having said that, McCann & Monaghan state that generally, the queer theory “operated as a wish and a hope for a different kind of thinking and engagement with questions of sexuality, gender, identity, power and the politics of oppression” (2020:3). The introduction of the queer theory in academical fields followed the beginning of queer activism in the late 1980s.

The word “queer” started as an adjective synonymous to “strange”, “odd” or “peculiar”, before it became an “anti-gay insult” (Irvine, 2003) in the 20th century (see also Lewis & Stephenson, 2017:105; OED “Queer”; Rand, 2004:290-1; Weeks, 2016:48). It was regularly used against LGBTQ+ people, but also by members of the community, until “gay” became the word of choice with the Gay Liberation Movement (Weeks, 2012:525). In the 1980s however, AIDS activists started to use “queer” to define themselves. Indeed, it was seen that the disease impacted gay and bisexual men, LGBTQ+ people, and other communities as well. As a result, ACT UP, (created in 1987 in the US) felt the need to use a word that efficiently referred to people living with and combatting against AIDS (McCann & Monaghan, 2020:93). Going further, American sociologist and historian Cindy Patton writes that “once you contracted HIV your sexuality was irrelevant: non-normative status was then attached to you via the virus” (ibid., 102). In ACT UP, “queer reflected one’s place in society, one’s vulnerability to contracting the disease, which was not as simple as sexual identity” (ibid., 103). This led to the development of new political objectives that had the possibility to gather everyone at the margins, in order to question heteronormativity and the binary division between a moral lifestyle and sexually-deviant ones.

Moreover, by the late 1980s, “gay” had lost the radicality it was first associated with (Lewis & Stephenson, 2017:105). “Gay” was becoming normalised and “[queer] asserted a right – or at least a claim – to be different” (idem). In the late 1980s, “queer” “signal[ed] a remarkable return of the repressed as part of new manifestations of grassroots activism” (Weeks, 2012:525). Indeed, “queer” is linked to the wave of activism following the AIDS crisis and “anti-gay backlash” (Weeks, 2016:48) with groups like ACT UP, Queer Nation, and

⁸³ The connection with poststructuralism is clear: scholars are not unanimous on whether the queer theory is the same as poststructuralism [...], but “there is significant overlap between these types of thinking and theorising” (McCann & Monaghan, 2020:8).

OutRage!, which launched a new era of militancy similar to that of the early 1970s (McCann & Monaghan, 2020:107). Nevertheless, the main distinction was that queer activism strove to celebrate the differences associated with being at the margins of society, when the Gay Liberation Movement sought to draw similarities with heterosexual people and become mainstream (Slagle, 1995:86-7).

Anti-essentialists criticised the movements of the 1970s centred around an identity that led to the development of identity politics by the left, which were for the liberation of “marginalized groups” (Lewis & Stephenson, 2017:106). Identity politics focused on social minorities – communities of people with the same (or a similar) social identity – and their struggles. Therefore, this emphasised the diversity of oppressions and united various groups (Jenkins, 1996:19, 29). However, if identity politics participated in achieving the recognition and acceptance of marginalised identities and their specific demands (Lent, 2003:41), this approach also fragmented the liberation movement of the 1970s and early 1980s (Preston, 2001:11). Indeed, it divided social minorities into distinguishable identity groups, each focusing on the discriminations they faced. Moreover, identity politics tend to erase the links between different movements and the diversity of its members inside each of them. As mentioned prior, the idea behind the queer theory was in direct opposition to that.

Originally, “queer” was not just a rebranding of “gay” identity: while the latter sought to highlight similarities between members of the community, the former refused to have an essence and rather aimed to represent what was at odds with the norm (Halperin, 1995:62; Rand, 2004:293; see also Weeks, 2012:526). The conception of queer as a de-essentialised identity echoed the anti-essentialist philosophical current of the time. In *Saint Foucault, Towards a Gay Hagiography*, American queer theorist David Halperin evokes the development of the figure of “the homosexual” in Foucault’s work which was deprived of an essence, thus only accentuating a sense of otherness (1995:61). Standing at the margin, the figure of the homosexual cannot be defined by what it is (for it is only difference): hence it may exclusively be defined by “where it is and how it operates”, making it “a de-essentialized identity that is purely positional in character” (ibid., 61-2). Thus, Foucault and Halperin, believed that one should become queer, or in other terms that one should willingly position oneself at the margin of heteronormativity (Halperin, 1995:79). Doing so, it is possible to reflect beyond the spectrum of sexual identity, and focus one’s activism on what stands at the margin. Because of this Foucault “argued against concentrating too much political energy on the struggle to obtain specific juridical ‘rights’ for lesbians and gay men” (idem).

Queer Nation

ACT UP's activism was indeed central in the development of a queer theory. Halperin argues that

AIDS activism links gay resistance and sexual politics with social mobilization around issues of race, gender, poverty, incarceration, intravenous drug use, prostitution, sex phobia, media representation, health care reform, immigration law, medical research, and the power and accountability of 'experts' (1995:63).

However, after them, other organisations which gathered queer activists were created, but focused on homophobia. Queer Nation, established in early 1990 by members of ACT UP, explores this aspect.⁸⁴

While ACT UP focused on HIV and AIDS, the founders of Queer Nation were interested in "direct actions focused on 'bias crimes' against gays and lesbians", "[p]rompted by the 122% increase in antigay incidents since the beginning of the year" (idem). Consequently, they felt a need to specifically address issues regarding sexual politics (Halperin, 1995:63). Just like the GLF and ACT UP, Queer Nation had a democratic structure that was "non-hierarchical and decentralized", with the aim of giving a voice to all marginalised people (Slagle, 1995:89). The organisation advocated the practice of coming out, which they thought was fundamental and necessary because it both revealed the ever-existing presence of queer people in heterosexual spaces and they saw it as a way to fight against homophobia (ibid., 90). For example, Anthony Slagle, Professor in the English Department at the University of Puerto Rico, mentions their "Queer Nights Out", when queer people would go to straight bars and, on cue, kiss one another to make their presence known and reappropriate the space into their own (ibid., 96).⁸⁵ However, Queer Nation was controversial in the LGBTQ+ community because they played with stereotypes associated with the community: some believed that they reinforced them while others thought that they challenged them, by "carrying them to extremes" (ibid., 93). The group itself wished to make their difference with heterosexual people apparent, to be visible in a "heterosexist system" in order to prompt change (ibid., 96, 99-100).

The flyer "Queers Read This", passed anonymously at the 1990 New York Pride marked the organisation, a few months after its creation.⁸⁶ It did not aim to define the

⁸⁴ Queer Nation is most often associated with the "resignification" of the word "queer" (Rand, 2004:289).

⁸⁵ This is similar to the kiss-ins organised by the GLF.

⁸⁶ The flyer was "published anonymously by queers" (Queer Nation, 1990:1). Rand reveals that Queer Nation "did not necessarily claim responsibility" and that not everyone agreed with its content inside the group, but the

objectives of the group but to challenge every person of the community to turn the homophobia they had been experiencing into “queer rage” (Rand, 2004:295) by giving a new meaning to this discriminatory word, thus moving the power from the oppressor to the oppressed and subverting its meaning (Tatchell, 1992). When they use this word, they “refus[e] to use” the terms of “the dominant structure” and they position themselves at the margin already (Slagle, 1995:93). In other words, their self-determination was in itself a defiance to the normalisation that had become associated with “gay”.⁸⁷ Finally, giving these flyers to members of the LGBTQ+ community also means that they hailed them as “queer”, leading them to reconsider their identity “with its potential for empowerment and risk” (Rand, 2004:291).

In “Queers Read This”, the authors encourage LGBTQ+ people to radically challenge “straight” people, who can “do whatever they please and fuck without fear”, by “frighten[ing]” and “[t]erroriz[ing]” them into giving them the same privileges (Queer Nation, 1990:1). The group separates queer identity and heterosexuality, promoting everything that is queer, at the margin: “[w]e must look at our lives and see what’s best in them, see what is queer and what is straight and let that straight chaff fall away!” (idem). This is linked to the writings of sociologist Steven Seidman, Professor at State University of New York at Albany, who mentioned that queer people do not unite behind one identity but behind “their opposition to disciplining normalizing social forces” (qtd. in Slagle, 1995:93). Queer Nation developed a “queer consciousness”: the self-realisation of what it means to be queer and to belong at the margin of society (ibid., 92).

The group first defines queerness by claiming their “freedom to be public, to just be who [they] are” and expressing what they fight against: AIDS, “homophobia, racism, misogyny, the bigotry of religious hypocrites and our own self-hatred” (Queer Nation, 1990:1). Secondly, they state that “being queer means leading a different sort of life”, “being on the margins, defining ourselves” (idem). Finally, they mention that it is about sexual pleasure and diversity (idem).⁸⁸ Therefore, the group’s queer identity is first conceptualised by its political objectives, its place at the margin of society, and its diverse practices. Put

flyer is nonetheless “generally attributed” to Queer Nation and “understood to be representative of the group’s purpose” (Rand, 2004:289).

87 This may be connected to the essay of French theorist and feminist Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind* (1980), in which she refuses to use the word “woman” to talk about lesbians, because it only carries meaning “in heterosexual systems of thought and heterosexual economic systems”, thus coming to the conclusion that “[l]esbians are not women” (110). Similarly, “gay” is only meaningful in its relation to heterosexuality, while queer has the possibility to disrupt the heteronormative system, starting with its oppressive binary oppositions.

88 They write: “[b]eing queer is ‘grass roots’ because we know that everyone of us, every body, every cunt, every heart and ass and dick is a world of pleasure waiting to be explored” (idem).

differently, for Queer Nation, being queer seems to be about what you do and where you stand and not about what you are. Erin J. Rand, Associate Professor in the department of Communication and Rhetorical Studies at Syracuse University, advances that the flyer “constructs an individual queer identity but also posits an imagined community of queers” that does not rely on one’s personal essence or their prior identification as queer, but on their identification with these mostly political claims (Rand, 2004:292). The community of queers is constituted of people that are united by their differences and their opposition to the norm and to LGBTQ+ assimilationists (*idem*).

Nevertheless, the queer identity put forward by Queer Nation was different from that proposed by ACT UP and queer theorists. Indeed, the flyer opposes queer and gay identities, but by doing so, it reduces the scope of the former, as being queer is associated to being an angry lesbian or gay person: “[w]ell, yes, ‘gay’ is great. It has its place. But when a lot of lesbians and gay men wake up in the morning we feel angry and disgusted, not gay. So we [ha]ve chosen to call ourselves queer” (Queer Nation, 1990:3). They declare that the meaning of “gay”, which is to be happy, is in discord with their outrage. In this way, it may be argued that the queer identity is not deprived of an essence: Queer Nation does not challenge gay identity but changes it to fit new political concerns and their activism (Halperin, 1995:66). It is also noteworthy that the flyers were handed out during the Pride Parade, so their target audience was LGBTQ+ people, and more specifically those who have the courage and privilege to march. “Queers Read This” emphasises the importance of anger and the use of violence, when needed, to achieve their objectives (Queer Nation, 1990:4). They proclaim that heterosexual people have led them to think that “good queers don’t get mad” and that they should “BASH BACK” and “let [themselves] be angry” at the homophobia, violence and discriminations they are subject to (*idem*). Their anger seems to be both directed at a “heterosexist world” and at “straight” people directly, as the name of the last page, “I Hate Straights”, points out (*idem*). Heterosexual people are held as the representatives and accomplices of a heteronormative system that oppresses LGBTQ+ people. By calling them out instead of the system, the authors create a binary between “straights” and “queers”, which further turns it into an essentialised identity: indeed, by opposing heterosexuals and not heteronormativity, queer people may be defined by who they are and not what they are against.⁸⁹ Moreover, Rand mentions that if the authors of the flyers aimed to be gender-neutral, the article called “Where Are You Sisters?” (Queer Nation, 1990:3) “implies that the

⁸⁹ With this generalisation, they are also neglecting the sexual diversity performed by heterosexual individuals.

remainder of the flyer is written by and for men” (Rand, 2004:298).⁹⁰ Finally, if race and gender are mentioned in the flyer as oppressions that queer people are against, the group does not actually seek ways to fight them (Rand, 2004:299).⁹¹ For instance, they do not address the specific oppressions that LGBTQ+ women or people of colour are subjected to (idem).⁹² Therefore, this queer identity, which is supposed to be for everyone with the ambition to disrupt a heteronormative society, seems to be primarily directed at angry white, middle class, gay men who do not want to assimilate (idem).

Based on this flyer, Queer Nation’s politics were not broadly transformative but they renewed an interest in LGBTQ+ activism by accentuating on their anger in the face of homophobia. Their queer identity aimed to be diverse and revolutionise society, but in practice, “queer politics often reinforce an identity and exclude those who are not white and middle class” (Meyer et al., 2002:87). Moreover, it marked a separation with gay identity, which was reflected in the age and location of activists. “Queer” was still used as an insult in attacks towards members of the community, which made some uncomfortable at the reappropriation of the word by a part of the (urban) movement: not everyone could call themselves queer (Cook et al., 2007:207). The media also focused on the age and style of queer activists, who were younger and easily distinguishable by their outfits (Rand, 2004:302). They were contrasted with other LGBTQ+ people who did not adhere to the queer terminology and represented a more moderate – and mainstream – part of the community (idem). Rand notes that queer identity was both defined by queer people – who set themselves in opposition to assimilation – and by lesbian and gay people who did not want to be “mistaken for queers” (idem). As such, in practice, Queer Nation’s queer identity gained an essence as it increasingly became associated with a youthful, angered and radical part of the community. It is crucial to note the difference between the figure of the homosexual introduced by Foucault and the development of this queer identity, as there were ruptures between the queer theory and queer activism.⁹³

90 Rand states that in the meetings and actions of Queer Nation, women were “included only peripherally”: “their identities as women preclude – at least to some degree – their identities as queers” (2004:299).

91 Another source of oppression, social class, is not mentioned at all in the manifesto (idem).

92 This is a reference to the concept of intersectionality coined by Professor of Law at UCLA and Columbia Kimberlé Crenshaw: she considered the specific oppressions that black women faced because of their colour and their gender (1989:140).

93 Based on this theoretical knowledge, similar distinctions are made in regards to OutRage!’s own queer identity and activism in parts II.1 and III.1.

I.2.d An Introduction to OutRage!⁹⁴

OutRage! was established after an informal discussion between queer activists Simon Watney, Chris Woods and Keith Alcorn, as they talked about the need for a UK organisation similar to Queer Nation (Lucas, 1998:15; Preston, 2001:47-8). They set up a meeting in early May 1990 gathering between 30 and 35 people (Appendix 3; OutRage! Archives. “Challenging Homophobia.”), among whom members of other organisations such as Stonewall, CHE, GALOP (the Gay London Police Monitoring Group), former members of the GLF, and the gay press (Lucas, 1998:16; see also Robinson, 2007:175). It is crucial to remember that months prior to its creation, thousands of LGBTQ+ people, angered by the government’s management of the AIDS crisis and its coverage in the media, protested against the discriminatory Section 28 propelled by Thatcher in an attempt to re-establish Victorian values. However, the group was specifically founded as a response to two things: the unresolved murders of fifteen LGBTQ+ people since 1986 (and especially that of actor Michael Boothe, on the 30th of April 1990) as well as the increase of arrests and convictions of men for taking part in consensual homosexual activities (Appendix 1; Lucas, 1998:13-4; OutRage! Archives. “Challenging Homophobia.”).⁹⁵ Not only focused on the police, it was committed to “campaign against all forms of homophobia and to work for the emancipation of all queers” (OutRage! Archives. “Our History.”). Lent states that OutRage! “was largely a revival of the core group of the early 1970s” with similar strategies and actions, but it should be added they also took inspiration from late 1980s queer organisations like ACT UP and Queer Nation (Lent, 2003:24, 34).⁹⁶

Statement of Aims

At the first meeting, OutRage! decided on a Statement of Aims that defined the direction the organisation would take:

⁹⁴ This dissertation solely focuses on OutRage! London. Based on their general meeting of the 23rd of August 1990, it appears that activists in Manchester planned to create an OutRage! branch in their city (Appendixes 5, 7; see also Lucas, 1998:55). Lucas also mentions that in 1991, students in “Liverpool, Coventry, Hull and Scotland” were interested in starting local OutRage! groups; however, no further information was gathered on any of them (idem).

⁹⁵ Including the resolved murder cases, Cook et al. report that between 1986 and 1989, *Gay Times* “counted fifty-five murders of gay men in Britain” among which twenty-eight in London (2007:205).

⁹⁶ In their introduction on the website, OutRage! states that they “took their inspiration variously from the suffragettes, the American black civil rights movement, and from ACT UP and Queer Nation in the US” to develop their own organisation (OutRage! Archives. “Challenging Homophobia.”).

OutRage! is a broad based group of queers committed to radical non-violent direct action and civil disobedience to:

- Assert the dignity, pride and human rights of queers
- Fight homophobia, discrimination and violence against us
- Affirm our right to sexual freedom, choice and self-determination. (OutRage! Archives. "Challenging Homophobia.")

Defining themselves as a "broad based group", OutRage! emphasised that they wanted to be a global, all-encompassing organisation that also welcomes people of diverse origins. One may suppose that this way, they wanted to create an inclusive environment, and, by extension, they tried to distinguish themselves from earlier groups such as the GLF, criticised for their lack of diversity. In their statement, OutRage! clearly defined their primary methods: street actions, like protests, stunts or zaps. They aimed to organise peaceful yet provocative public performances as well. The group committed minor infractions and tried to use "imaginative, witty and sometimes shocking tactics" for their campaigns to bring attention to their objectives (OutRage! Archives. "Our History."). For example, they contravened the 1967 Sexual Offences Act by publicly kissing or winking at one another during their 1990 Kiss-in and 1992 Wink-in actions, hence playfully commenting on their disapproval of the act itself (see Appendixes 27, 32, 34).

OutRage!'s objectives were further divided into three in their statement of aims. First, through their actions, they wanted to assert the humanity of LGBTQ+ people as human beings deserving of respect and rights. Second, they advocated against "homophobia, discrimination and violence". Indeed, as the third chapter of this dissertation argues, the group fought against institutionalised homophobia and homophobes, pushing for pieces of legislation in favour of equality. However, OutRage! member Peter Tatchell explains that their agenda sought to go beyond equality "on heterosexual terms": they strove to "renegotiate the values, institutions and laws of straight culture, challenging not just homophobia but the authoritarian and puritanical nature of social institutions" (Lucas, 1998:238). Finally, they wished to affirm their right to "sexual freedom, choice, and self-determination". This may be compared to the activism of the decades prior: indeed, the GLF drew attention to the right of LGBTQ+ people to declare their homosexuality, and Queer Nation celebrated sexual diversity. Moreover, both groups emphasised their right to self-determine and gather members of the community under a (politically-charged) identity.

In a few words, OutRage!'s concerns were focused on the place of LGBTQ+ people in society, with an emphasis on fighting homophobia and discriminations by continuously

putting pressure on individuals and institutions to achieve long-term outcomes, as Tatchell explains:

I'd liken OutRage!'s direct action strategy to a form of non-violent guerilla war. We're a small organisation confronting immensely powerful homophobic individuals and institutions. We cannot hope to defeat them in a full-frontal assault. What we can do, through a war of attrition, is harass and wear down the supporters of homophobia and the institutions that sustain discrimination. (Peter Tatchell in Lucas, 1998:238)

As the organisation was active for more than two decades, their agenda changed and evolved to fit the issues relevant to their time. In its first year of organising, OutRage! was mostly focused on the police (Lucas, 1998:231). In the following years, they organised multiple high-profile actions of civil disobedience to defiantly fight for legislation in favour of LGBTQ+ equality, against discriminations at work or in the police, and against homophobia in the Church (see Lucas, 1998:231-5). In 1994 and early 1995, they developed a strategy for outing – disclosing someone's homosexuality without their consent – which drew a lot of attention to the organisation (Lent, 2001:206-8). In the second part of the 1990s, OutRage! pushed once again for equal rights with the arrival of Tony Blair as Prime Minister (OutRage! Archives. "Letter to Tony Blair." 1997); they campaigned against homophobia in other countries like Romania or Zimbabwe ("Queer Demo Stops Romanian National Opera." 1996; "Zimbabwe's President Mugabe Detained." 1999); and they renewed their interest in the Church of England ("Archbishop of Canterbury Interrupted." 1998). In the 2000s, OutRage! was no longer as popular and they did not gather the same number of members, so they were less active (OutRage! Archives. "The Future of OutRage!." 2001). They directed their attention to homophobic lyrics in music, protesting against Eminem for example (OutRage! Archives. "Eminem's Songs Promote Prejudice."), as well as against famous Jamaican reggae singers in the Stop Murder Music campaign, in collaboration with the Black Gay Men's Advisory Group and J-Flag ("Stop Murder Music." 2004). They continued to campaign for LGBTQ+ lives in other countries as well, including Iraq, Russia and Uganda (OutRage! Archives. "Gay Iraqi Victims." 2006; "Moscow Pride Demo." 2006; "Protest Against Uganda's Homophobic Witch-Hunts." 2006). Finally, they carried on their fight against Anglican homophobia (OutRage! Archives. "Anglican Homophobia Protest." 2008) and they protested for marriage and partnership equality ("'Equal Love' Campaign Launched." 2010). In 21 years, OutRage! targeted hundreds of institutions, companies and people for homophobic comments, actions or laws.

Structure of OutRage!, Inner Groups and Members

OutRage! “always attempted to be [...] democratic, egalitarian, non-hierarchical”, hence following the structure of other direct-action groups like the GLF (Lucas, 1998:237). They did not have any paid staff to run the organisation either: with an annual budget between £4,000 and £8,000 for the rent, the telephone bill and the press liaison, everyone was a volunteer (ibid., 209, 236; Robinson, 2007:176).⁹⁷ OutRage! was open and accessible to everyone, with weekly meetings anyone could participate in (Lent, 2001:203; Lucas, 1998:236). Lent explains that this “radical democracy” was both a strength and a weakness: while it allowed everyone to feel involved by freely sharing their opinions and voting on every matter, it also meant that some interventions were not as constructive as others (idem). The organisation decided to have sub-groups – open to everyone as well – which focused on different subjects so that they could run the weekly meetings more efficiently: five groups were first created: Office & Administration, Fundraising, Media & PR, Action, and Policing Initiative (Appendix 4).⁹⁸ It was common for OutRage! sub-groups to have humorous or provocative names, taking after the focus groups of Queer Nation: after a restructuring in January 1991 called the “Queer Nation cell structure” (Lucas, 1998:231), the fundraising team was called QUID, later in May, the office team working on finance became QUANGO (Queer Accountants Never Go Out) (ibid., 57), while the Policing Initiative was renamed PIG (ibid., 39) (see also Rand, 2004:300). Other sub groups were also created the same year like PUSSY (Perverts Undermining State Scrutiny) created on May 23rd, mostly led by lesbians and focused on anti-censorship, or QUARRELS (Queers Underground Asserting the Right to Ride Every Line Safely), which performed an action in August claiming LGBTQ+ spaces in the London Tube (Lucas, 1998:88, 90). This list is non-exhaustive, but a wide variety of groups existed, focused on specific tasks, or actions.

On top of these, focus groups emerged in late August 1991. Unlike the ones previously mentioned, these groups were first made by minority members inside the LGBTQ+ community who wanted to target specific discriminations that they faced, living at the intersection between sexuality, gender, race, class or disability. The addition of focus groups was a response to the claim that OutRage! failed to address women’s issues in their meetings and actions (Lucas, 1998:94). This was a critique that had already been made by lesbians in the GLF and the same problem arose once again inside the 1990s group. Stonewall co-founder

⁹⁷ This was OutRage!’s budget for the first six years at least.

⁹⁸ The “Media & PR” sub-group is further examined in part II.2.

The presence of a Policing Initiative group reflects OutRage!’s primary concern with the police.

Lisa Power drew the comparison between the two direct-action groups on this matter: white, middle-class men were proud that the organisation was “open and democratic” when in reality, it was difficult for other members to express their opinion (Lucas, 1998:42).

As Professor of Sociology at the University of Essex Ken Plummer, stated in 2003, LGBTQ+ culture is “white, male and middle class”: if one is different from the unmarked figure of the homosexual, that person is marginalised in the community, as this culture is not directed to them (qtd. in Richardson, 2009:530). Other authors emphasise that point as well. For Weeks, “white racialized sexuality is the silent, unmarked norm” (2016:70). Furthermore, transgender people are marginalised compared to the cisgender members of the community (Mills, 2006:256). People of colour’s “personal and sexual identities” are also constructed by “the fantasies of white men”, so they exist in relation to white men (Cant & Hemmings, 2010:130). Similarly Yik Hui, a Chinese lesbian woman, says that people do not see her “whole”, for “if you’re a lesbian you’re white, and if you’re Chinese you’re exotic” (ibid., 109). It is deemed important in this dissertation to note that LGBTQ+ culture is white, male and middle-class and that people who live at the intersection between sexuality and another social minority may not feel seen or represented inside the community (idem). In a 1999 seminar called “Section 28 and the revival of Gay, Lesbian and Queer Politics in Britain”, the intervention of the American artist and activist Del LaGrace Volcano touched upon the lack of diversity in the 1990s organisations:

What I’m hoping is that there will be some room for a queer politics that doesn’t actually focus on who you have sex with and will become more inclusive, people will be able to feel welcome. A lot of what I’ve found in groups like this is people say well we invited people that are black and Asian and disabled, we invited them but they didn’t come, and nobody ever looks at the reason why those people do not feel included. (Preston, 2001:42)

Del LaGrace Volcano points at the fact that despite the organisations’ wish to be inclusive, they do not actually take into consideration the problems that the unmarked members of the community face. As a result, minority members feel the need to create groups that focus on their own struggles because they are not listened to by the larger community. OutRage! did not stand out for its intersectional actions either: Lucas mentions that some meetings were centred on women’s campaigns within the organisation, but they were inconclusive (1998:94). OutRage! member Megan Radcliffe says that it was “a while, middle-class, male group, always has been and always will be” (ibid., 95). Alan Jarman, another member, talking about trying to have more black people join the group, contends that “[t]he black communities saw OutRage! as white, middle-class gay men, with a few women thrown in for good measure” (ibid., 128). In an attempt to change that, and because the group was

facing pressure from its members, groups like LABIA (Lesbians Answer Back In Anger), ETHNIC (Expanding the Non-Indigenous Contingent), LINK (focused on disabled people) or the working-class caucus were formed in OutRage! (ibid., 240).⁹⁹ However, this re-structuration was criticised by some members as soon as it started. For example, Megan Radcliffe thinks that the focus groups were only created to avoid more complaints and Graham Knight notes that LINK did not know anything about the issues that people with disabilities faced (ibid., 95).

Focus groups were abolished less than a year after their creation, in June 1992. Over the year, OutRage!'s meetings were being overtaken by some far-left activists who wanted to use the popularity of the group to highlight issues that did not deal with discrimination towards LGBTQ+ people and homophobia (ibid., 126; Lent, 2001:205). The main group to do so was LGCARF (the Lesbian and Gay Campaign Against Racism and Fascism), which was seen as "a disruptive element and intent on using OutRage! meetings for its own ends" (Lucas, 1998:126). Other LGBTQ+ organisations like the GLF had been abolished following similar political disagreements and Tatchell's own personal feelings towards Labour (Robinson, 2007:6). He proposed to vote a motion for the dissolution of all sub-groups except for the administrative ones (QUID and QUANGO), to only create groups for specific actions when need be, and "not to re-discuss this issue within 12 months" (ibid., 129). The motion also emphasised the importance to remain a non-hierarchical organisation whose focus was set on LGBTQ+ issues only (idem). 37 out of 41 members in attendance voted in favour of the position and focus groups were never reintroduced in OutRage! afterwards (idem). Nevertheless, "the disputes" over the existence and the work of focus groups "led to the withdrawal of some key activists and most damagingly this included a considerable number of the lesbians" and resulted in the group becoming "a largely, but not entirely, male-dominated body for the rest of its existence" (Lent, 2001:205). In 1994, ex-members formed the organisation the Lesbian Avengers which sought to be provocative as well: it held its first action at Queen Victoria's monument to poke fun at her statement that "lesbians do not exist" (National Citizen Service).¹⁰⁰

After a year of trying to be more open and inclusive, OutRage! decided to come back to its former way of working. In his interview with Lucas, Tatchell does not seem to take well the criticism that it was "a white, male, middle-class club" (Lucas, 1998:240). Focusing on

⁹⁹ LABIA, led by lesbian members, became the most successful focus group (ibid., 95-6).

¹⁰⁰ Once again, a similarity can be drawn between the women who left the GLF to form their own organisation and the founders of the Lesbian Avengers.

the organisation's main attempt at being more inclusive and attentive to the unheard voices of minority members, he defends that focus groups did not gather every person of colour or every lesbian in OutRage! and that a large number of people agreed to the dissolution, including minority members (idem). At the same time, it can be argued that their suppression may have impacted the organisation's focus on intersectionality and that it discouraged minority members from proposing alternative points of view.

The introduction of focus groups and their subsequent failure because of divisive politics show that OutRage! had trouble being egalitarian for all its members, leading to the departure of some, including most of the women. It is therefore important to keep in mind that while they wanted to form an inclusive organisation, they had difficulties in attracting minority members because their concerns were not intersectional to begin with. It is therefore a group mostly representative of white, middle-class queer men.¹⁰¹ Outside the years 1991 and 1992, their structure only changed very slightly. They tried to be democratic, non-hierarchical and egalitarian throughout their 21 years of existence but in reality, OutRage! was quickly driven by a core group made up of the most active members who unofficially ran the organisation, which challenged the total democracy they were aiming for (Lent, 2003:36). Nevertheless, they never had a leader, even if Tatchell had a very prominent role in the group – especially as time went by (Lent, 2001:205), and they tried to keep the focus on OutRage!, rather than on specific members, in their relations with the media (Lucas, 1998:237). They continued having weekly meetings and two affinity groups necessary to run the organisation efficiently (QUANGO and QUID). In conclusion, their structure relied on both: a small body of volunteers doing administrative missions and leading their political direction; and a larger number of volunteers participating in the weekly meetings, preparing and engaging in a variety of activities, most of them direct actions.

Popularity of the Group

In its first years, OutRage! was both popular in the LGBTQ+ community and relatively well-known by mainstream media because of their high-profile, media-driven actions: Lent indicates that following their massive Kiss-in happening in September 1990, they “took up the position of the leading gay and lesbian group” (2001:203). In August 1990,

101 It should be added, however, that when most of OutRage!'s demands for equality were met with legislation in the UK, the queer organisation furthered its interest in LGBTQ+ communities outside of the UK. Therefore, over time they also took a clear interest in the situation of immigrants.

their meetings “regularly dr[e]w in 50 or 60 people” (Appendix 3). Its highly publicised status also meant that it was subjected to homophobia. After their first year, OutRage! received a lot of support from the community not only because of their regular actions but mostly because of the homophobic reactions the group was confronted with (Lent, 2001:203).¹⁰² Over time however, OutRage! became less popular, especially after their outings in 1994-1995.¹⁰³ While their outing actions were the most covered in the media, they created disputes inside the organisation and “under intense media scrutiny and criticism over the next few days, OutRage fell apart” (Lent, 2001:208). The dissolution of focus groups and the move from the Lesbian and Gay Centre had already damaged the organisation, but the outing campaign made OutRage! unpopular within the LGBTQ+ community together with the media industry and the general public. The number of members at the weekly meetings decreased in the second part of the 1990s: Ian Lucas points out that OutRage! did not have the same popularity it had in its first years (1998:220, 240). In an article published in *Outcast magazine* and included on their website, David Allison, journalist and member of the organisation, regrets that it “no longer has eighty bodies at its [weekly] meetings” (presumably between 1990 and 1993) and that in 2001, they had to resort to using a chatroom on the website for their weekly meetings, with only one monthly gathering in person (OutRage! Archives. “The Future of OutRage!.” 2001).¹⁰⁴ The same year, Lent commented that the main reason why the group survived was “largely because of the unremitting energy and commitment of Peter Tatchell, surrounded by no more than a handful of activists”, adding that “much of the imagination and vitality that once existed seem[ed] to have gone” (208).¹⁰⁵ As a result, they performed more stunts and zaps than high-profile happenings because they had less activists and resources. To conclude, OutRage!’s most successful years were in the early 1990s, before internal disputes on the inner structure and methods of organising fractured them, giving Stonewall the space to flourish as the most popular LGBTQ+ group in the UK (Lent, 2001:209).

102 In *OutRage!: An Oral History*, Lucas finishes his acknowledgments with “[a]nd for all the homophobes without whom...” (1998:ix). This reveals the centrality that homophobia played in OutRage!.

103 OutRage!’s outing campaigns are detailed in part III.2, but in a few words, after they outed 10 bishops in late 1994, Peter Tatchell privately sent a letter to senior Bishop David Hope encouraging him to come out and similar letters were sent to 20 MPs. The press investigated and specifically named MP James Kilfedder as one of the recipients in March 1995. On the same day, he died of a heart attack.

104 OutRage! first held its meetings at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre, which declared bankruptcy in late 1992 and closed (Lucas, 1998:151). They moved to their new offices in Central London in May 1993, after holding meetings in different places, which disrupted the organisation according to Nick Cave (*ibid.*, 152-3, 233). By 2001, they held their meetings at the Central Station pub (OutRage! Archives. “The Future of OutRage!.” 2001). As a result, OutRage! lost a lot of members and they also recognised that meetings in pubs did not encourage (new) people to join, which is why they moved online (*idem*).

105 Tatchell’s centrality in OutRage! is going to be further detailed in part II.2.

OutRage! and Stonewall: Differences and Similarities

It is difficult to talk about OutRage! without mentioning Stonewall, as both of them marked LGBTQ+ activism in the 1990s and 2000s – with Stonewall still existing to this day. The two UK organisations are often compared in the literature and the activists themselves seemed to entertain a rivalry (Lucas, 1998:16, 239; Phillips, 1992). Stonewall was created in May 1989, following the protests against Section 28 (Preston, 2001:11). Looking at both its structure and strategy, Stonewall was close to the homophile organisations CHE or the HLRS (Lent, 2003:35; Robinson, 2007:176).¹⁰⁶ If OutRage! was perceived as a group of angry activists whose actions were counter-productive (Miller, 1998), Stonewall, on the other hand, “was the respectable face of homosexuality”, leading them to become a powerful lobbying group invited to Downing Street and Westminster Palace for example (Robinson, 2007:176). Their tactics differed from that of OutRage!: they put pressure on politicians to change legislation by focusing on “rational persuasion, letterwriting, postcard campaigns, petitions and education of public opinion through contributions to newspapers and television and radio programmes” (Lent, 2003:35).¹⁰⁷ Moreover, Stonewall was clearly and solely focused on reaching equality on heterosexual terms (Lucas, 1998:238): in other words, they did not try to transform society on their own terms but lobbied for society to be inclusive of the community (Robinson, 2007:177).¹⁰⁸ Robinson argues that Stonewall’s approach was “based on an abstract principle of human rights” that does not need “personal involvement or experiential authenticity”: supporting them was equal to supporting the advancement of human rights, which “appealed to everyone who wants to live ‘in a modern, tolerant society at ease with itself’” (2007:177). Coming back to the idea that the 1990s LGBTQ+ organisations were reformist, Stonewall was indeed principally focused on proposing new legislation to improve the lives of members of the community whereas OutRage! stood at the intersection between transforming society and reforming institutions (Knowles, 2010:11-2).¹⁰⁹

Stonewall had a structural hierarchy and full-time employees “working towards the advancement of the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of lesbians and gay men” (Robinson, 2007:176). It was a charity that received funds from public institutions, as well as donations: in 1997, Tatchell mentioned that Stonewall had an annual budget of

¹⁰⁶ Lisa Power declares that Stonewall, just like OutRage!, was based on organisations from the US, including the Human Rights Campaign and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, two advocacy groups for the LGBTQ+ community (Preston, 2001:47).

¹⁰⁷ It should be stated that OutRage! also did some lobbying but it was not one of their primary actions or a type of activism that they promoted (Appendix 13; OutRage! Archives. “Letter to Jack Straw.” 1999).

¹⁰⁸ Their assimilationist agenda was criticised by more radical protesters (Lucas, 1998:238), “especially when Ian McKellen accepted a knighthood in 1989 in the midst of the Clause 28 furore” (Cook et al., 2007:208).

¹⁰⁹ OutRage!’s politics are the focus of part III.1.

£400,000, which allowed them to have employees, offices and a higher budget for their campaigns (Lucas, 1998:236; see also Robinson, 2007:176).¹¹⁰ Therefore, it was perceived as a professional association but at the same time, they were also seen as elitist because they were disconnected to the members of the LGBTQ+ community, whom they did not help in their daily lives (Robinson, 2007:177). Unlike OutRage! for example, one had to be co-opted by Stonewall to become a member of the organisation (idem).¹¹¹

In conclusion, Stonewall and OutRage! varied in their structures and their forms of activism with notable differences on the type of equality they wanted, but Lent comments that despite their contrasting strategies, “their ultimate goals did not differ that greatly” (Lent, 2003:35). Their work complemented one another: OutRage!’s actions drew attention to LGBTQ+ issues which made Stonewall able to further discuss the topics privately (Lucas, 1998:239). Moreover, the two organisations also had to adapt to the realities of the 1990s: the LGBTQ+ community was already well-established and people did not feel the need to take part in political organisations. This means that Stonewall and OutRage! gathered fewer activists because people did not have as much of an incentive to join them (Lent, 2003:45). Therefore, they had to rely on new, different methods to spark the attention of the general public and lawmakers. Stonewall turned to the “modernisers of the Labour party” and adopted “the strategy of conventional lobbying”; conversely, OutRage! depended on “the media appeal and skilful design” of their well thought-out actions “to attract attention and effect change” (Lent, 2003:43-4).¹¹²

110 In 1995, Lucas writes that Stonewall’s budget was £200,000 (Lucas, 1998:209).

111 As a result, Sanderson asserted the following in 1995: Stonewall is “undemocratic and has no right to claim that it represents the gay community” (231).

112 Stonewall’s connection with the Labour Party was revealed when Angela Mason, director of the association between 1992 and 2002, was made Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 1999 (Lent, 2001:209).

II. STRATEGIES TO GATHER ATTENTION: “PROTEST AS PERFORMANCE”

Our witty, imaginative, daring and irreverent style of nonviolent civil disobedience has elevated activism into an art form: protest as performance. (OutRage! Archives. “Our History.”)

Peter Tatchell wrote a chapter titled “Protest as Performance” in *Making A Scene: Performing Culture Into Politics* (2000), edited by Henry Rogers, professor of Contemporary Art and Queer Studies at the Glasgow School of Art, and David Burrows, Professor of Fine Art at UCL (OutRage! Archives. “Protest as Performance.” 1999). This phrasing was already used by OutRage! on their websites to describe their actions, but in his chapter, Tatchell goes further, explaining that the organisation connects culture and performance to political ideas, making their protests both “educative and entertaining” (idem). Very important to the group, this concept is not new in the history of the LGBTQ+ movement – and in political contestations in general, as it was mentioned before with the Gay Liberation Front. In the early 1970s, they did street theatre to express their ideas and their own selves through performances (idem). Therefore, OutRage! enters a tradition of LGBTQ+ direct actions wherein the art of the theatre is a fundamental part of the act of protesting in itself.

It is also a way to attract the media by re-imagining what demonstrations may look like. OutRage! goes further than the GLF in the way they acted for the media: performance is a means to gather attention.¹¹³ The group was resolute to distinguish their actions from typical left-wing protests that they thought were not impactful enough. In an interview with Ian Lucas, Tatchell said that they were aware that traditional demonstrations do not gain the attention of the media unless they draw wide numbers (Lucas, 1998:239; see also OutRage! Archives. “Protest as Performance.” 1999). This chapter focuses on this idea of performance, considered from the conception of the action to its actual manifestation. To be impactful in the streets, the members of OutRage! needed to thoughtfully organise themselves, which they did by establishing their own queer identity mostly with merchandise, allowing people to easily identify the group. They were adamant to interact with the public – or, in this case, journalists and photographers, to build expectations and be reliable. Finally, they prepared their actions by focusing on style and dramatics, using the theatre as a source of inspiration to create entertaining and memorable performances for the media to report. The first part draws a light

113 Attention from the media, but also the participation of the audience watching the street performances: the presence of a large crowd is an indication of a protest’s “appeal and effectiveness” (OutRage! Archives. “Protest as Performance.” 1999).

on the way OutRage! creating their brand. Then the relationship that the organisation entertained with journalists is considered. The third part deals with news values and the theatrical aspects of their performances, before looking at case studies to better understand how all of these elements interacted in their actions.

II.1. Creating a Brand

OutRage! created a brand around themselves, by designing a logo, placards and banners, using a specific colour scheme and making merchandise for its protesters. Thanks to this, they were not only able to make themselves recognisable and heard, they stabilised their expenditures in a short amount of time as well (Lucas, 1998:25). A month after their creation, they did not have a space, an established structure, or money yet (ibid., 21). As mentioned before, the group did not receive funds from the government, leading them to resort to donations and sales. They not only needed it to run the organisation – with a place for meetings and material for their administrative activities like answering phone calls or mails and writing press releases – but also to make costumes, props and placards for their actions (ibid., 22). The first step was to establish an identity: the organisation was originally just called the “10th of May Group” (ibid., 18). A member came up with the name “OutRage!” and it was chosen because it both expressed how outraged they were at homophobia and LGBTQ+ discriminations, and the outrageous type of actions they wanted to lead (Appendix 2; OutRageLondon, 2012a:00:01).¹¹⁴ As Tatchell remarks,

[t]he name was meant to symbolize that we were out as lesbians and gays and were filled with rage at the injustices which were perpetrated against us. Together, the word symbolized the outrage we felt about homophobia, and the outrage we intended to cause in fighting back against it. (idem)

After this, a logo was subsequently created (see Appendix 3 for example), “deliberately referential” to a Jean-Paul Gaultier’s T-shirt design of the same year, which aimed to mark OutRage! as fashionable (Keith Alcorn in Lucas, 1998:18).¹¹⁵ The organisation had a name and an image that epitomised their identity. Following this, in order to both settle their financial needs and have a “media-friendly image”, OutRage! sold merchandise (idem).

114 In Lucas’s work, two members take credit for the name: Simon Watney and Keith Alcorn. Watney says that he worked for a gay magazine in Melbourne called *Outrage*, while Alcorn asserts that he just thought of the name (idem).

115 A T-shirt from Jean-Paul Gaultier that reads “Gaultier Jean’s Paris” may give an idea to the reader of the kind of design OutRage! was inspired by (see <https://www.etsy.com/ca/listing/1235593664/1990s-jean-paul-gaultier-90s-gaultier>). However, the exact T-shirt referenced by Keith Alcorn in Lucas’s work was not found.

Sale of Merchandise

To begin with, the organisation sold T-shirts at £6 each at their stall, an “immensely successful” concept (Lucas, 1998:23). Activists proudly wore T-shirts that expressed their non-heterosexuality, their place at the margin, but also their political involvement, often with humour as exemplified in Figure 1 (see also Appendixes 20-21). As Lucas reveals, in the early 1990s, “it was cool to be queer” (idem).



Figure 1: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 30th of April 1992 in Central London (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4521965700/in/album-72157623731662231).

Two members of OutRage! wearing and selling merchandise.

On the photo above, one of the members in charge of the stall is wearing OutRage!’s logo, and the other one has a “Silence = Death” T-shirt.¹¹⁶ On the T-shirts they are selling, one can read, from right to left, “Queer to Eternity”, “Trade Entrance at Rear”, and “Queer as

¹¹⁶ Silence = Death is a reference to a poster made by a collective of artists in New York City in 1987 which highlights the necessity to talk about HIV and AIDS to prevent deaths (Emmerman, 2016). It was used by ACT UP in their campaigns, and the message was also adapted by the American queer artist Keith Haring in 1989 (Finkelstein et al., 1987; Haring, 1989).

Fuck”.¹¹⁷ Some of the T-shirts are humorous, destined to people who understand the jokes and references. The lewd meaning of “trade entrance at rear” for instance may only be salient to LGBTQ+ people, who then feel a sense of belonging because they are “in on the joke”.¹¹⁸ Other T-shirts rather focus on the trend of using the word “queer”, sometimes alluding to elements of pop culture at the same time. “Queer to Eternity”, for example, is the “queerification” of the title of the film *From Here to Eternity* (1953). One may argue that in doing so, OutRage! is diverting mainstream references, giving them a new queer life, and challenging their heteronormativity.

As a whole, the T-shirts are meant to provoke a reaction and be daring, from reappropriating pop culture to making sexual innuendos and using swear words. This encompasses the group’s own chosen position in society, which was to be at the margin and to shock. The T-shirts had multiple purposes: first, they participated in defining “queer fashion”. They became more identifiable as a group, while, at the same time, standing out and showing their difference with the moderate part of the community (Rand, 2004:302).¹¹⁹ Second, they encouraged people to be proud: these fashion statements are indicative of the public space LGBTQ+ people occupied, a century after Wilde’s trials (David, 1997:268). Non-heterosexual people now proclaimed their identity and their place at the margin. Finally, the T-shirts also promoted OutRage! to the community, passers-by, and the media. As Lucas notes, “OutRage! was not only being mentioned in the papers, but its visibility was enhanced by its logo appearing on people’s chests in the streets. OutRage! was fashionable, and fashion-conscious” (Lucas 1998:23).

Based on the success of these sales, the queer organisation created badges and ID cards to make more money and “have some fun” (Lucas, 1998:23). The ID badge was described as an “essential accessor[y]” in a promotional leaflet from early 1992, sold at £1.50 (Appendix 21). The front includes a photo and the name of the bearer, OutRage!’s logo, and it reads “Queer as Fuck” and “Valid for Life”. The back reads:

117 Based on Appendix 21, the T-shirt on the bottom left is an image of two young girl standing next to one another, smiling, with the description “Every Dyke’s Got to Start Somewhere”. The reference could not be deciphered. The T-shirt on its right “Dyke with...” was not deciphered either.

118 “Trade” is a word part of the Polari slang mostly spoken by “camp gay men” (Baker, 2019:8). It describes a man who usually does not identify as gay (at least a man who does not speak Polari), but who would have casual sexual intercourses with other men, generally penetrating the other partner (ibid., 15, 70). Its meaning has changed over time, as it is now commonly used to talk about attractive men, typically with masculine features (see RuPaul et al., 2023:00:23:40 for example).

119 Rand also notes that, as a result, queer people became scapegoats more easily – presumably for the general public and the media, while lesbians and gay men could “align themselves with mainstream (heterosexual) society” (idem).

Her Britannic Majesty’s secretary of state hereby identifies the bearer of this card as ABSOLUTELY QUEER and requests and requires all those whom it may concern to allow the bearer to pass freely without let or hindrance to afford the bearer such assistance and protection as may be necessary. (Appendix 21)¹²⁰

With this ID resembling office cards for workers, to be queer becomes a privilege in public spaces, thus self-reversing the idea that they have less privileges than others. OutRage! also sold badges which promoted the queer group (“OutRage! lesbian and gay action against homophobia”). However, the most successful accessory was the whistle. Indeed, they were significant for OutRage!’s budget. In the general meeting of August 23rd 1990, the financial report reveals that the whistle sales “resulted in a profit of over £1000” with 1,340 sold in “almost 20 lesbian and gay venues” (Appendix 7). Therefore, the group voted to buy 1,200 more whistles to sell. In pie charts reviewing the funds from June to August 1990, it appears that they accounted for 52% of the total income of £4,608.88, while T-shirts and other accessories accounted for 12% and 15% respectively, which, combined, was about half of the sales of whistles (Figure 2).

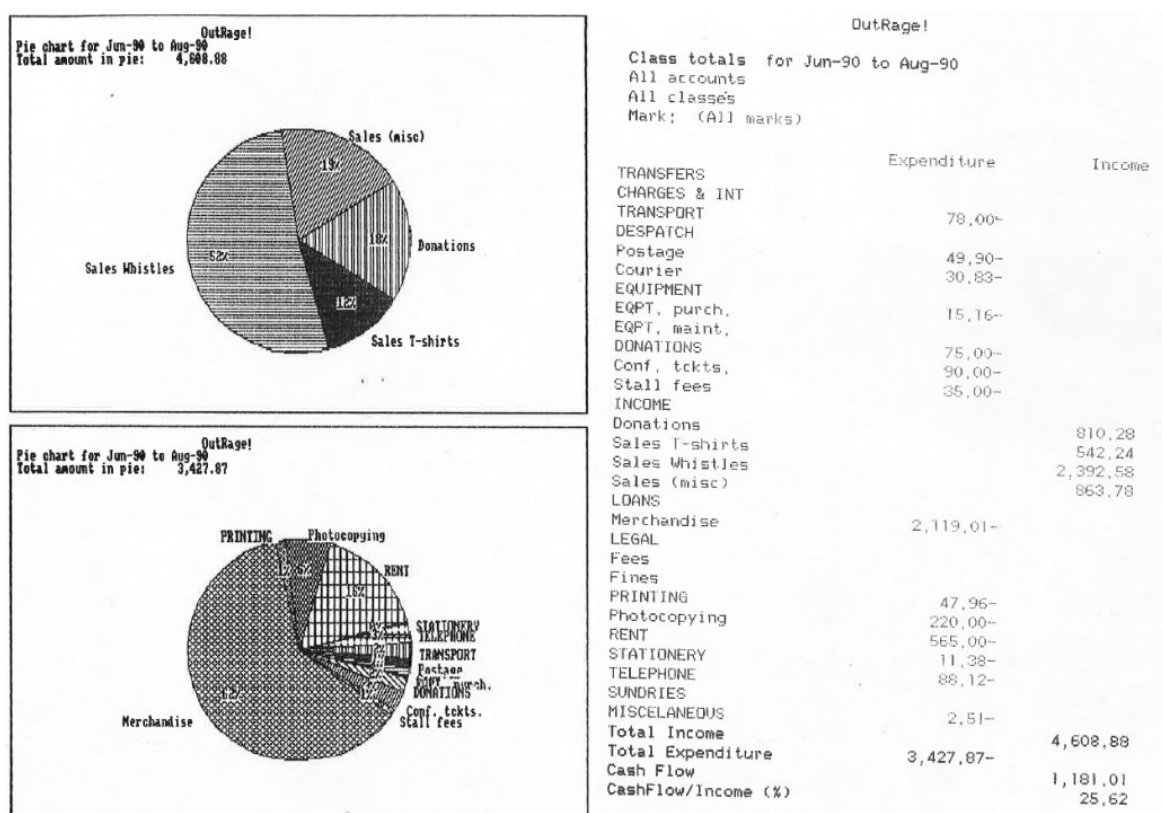


Figure 2: Financial report on OutRage!’s incomes and expenditures from June to August 1990. Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).

120 It is interesting to note the use of the adverb “absolutely” before queer, which introduces the idea that there are different degrees of queerness.

Inspired by New-York LGBTQ+ activism, OutRage! decided to add whistles to their actions. Keith Alcorn, explains that they were signs, just like the red ribbons for the struggle against HIV/AIDS (Lucas, 1998:23). They were audiovisual clues for protesters to recognise themselves and to make passers-by aware of the cause. Whistles were successful because they sold very well and were cheap to produce, but also because they reached a lot of people by extension.¹²¹ One can see why: they demand attention. Since they make a very loud noise, they easily stop someone from talking to look around and see where the sound comes from. The queer group organised whistle patrols in night clubs – the first one taking place on the 27th of July 1990 (ibid., 231) – which were useful in “raising people’s awareness of OutRage! being around” (ibid., 23-4). During these events, everyone blew their whistle at the same time, creating a cacophony (idem). This way, they could reach a lot of LGBTQ+ who were not necessarily activists and they created a bond through this simultaneous action (idem). The whistles “became a feature of nearly all OutRage! demonstrations, and standard fare on Pride marches” (ibid., 25).¹²²

The members were serious about the underlying objectives behind the sale of these accessories:

With anti-gay violence in the background, OutRage! hit upon a scheme which allowed queers to believe that they were doing something to stop the violence, to foster a sense of community, to give another queer ID badge to wear, and to have some fun. (ibid., 23)

Lucas draws attention to the political element lying under the harmless merchandise: the visibility of LGBTQ+ people, acting together against violence. Buying a T-shirt for instance was a form of promotion (not only for OutRage! but for the movement as a whole) and a way to monetarily participate in the struggle. For Lisa Power, people saw that the organisation “wanted to protect their community” (ibid., 24). Moreover, the tone of the accessories fit the image they wanted to build: noisy, provocative and witty.¹²³ At the same time, with these items, they constructed a queer identity that was marketed and, by extension, essentialised. OutRage! capitalised on the popularity of the queer activism of the late 1980s and early 1990s, encouraging people to proudly, defiantly, and fashionably identify as queer. Consequently, the focus moved away from what queer does to what queer is, from what

121 “The whistles were cheap to buy, Day-Glo coloured plastic attached to brightly coloured shoe laces, tied in a safety knot which could be ripped off to prevent choking” (Lucas, 1998:25).

122 An example of that can be heard throughout Steve Farrer’s video of the protest of the 26th of February 1991 (Steve Farrer, 2012).

123 Based on their website pages, by 1997, whistles and ID cards were no longer sold (OutRage! Archives. “Merchandise.”).

OutRage! does to who they are. By publicising their identity, they drew more attention to themselves than to their objectives.

Colour Scheme and Self-definition

In addition to the merchandise, which helped OutRage! define themselves and create cohesiveness, the organisation also developed three defining colours and a design for placards to look more harmonious and professional. The placards were simple, with short, engaging slogans in black, printed on white paper, with the logo almost always visible (see Appendix 28).¹²⁴ It is apparent that they tried to send out a clear, easily-readable message. All of them were thus similar, but the group printed a few versions for each protest, with different takes on the same issue. For instance, during an action following the decision of the Houses to lower the age of consent to 18 for gay and bisexual men in 1994, one can read multiple messages on the placards, leaning on each other to form a complete, thoughtful picture (see Appendix 29). The placards during this performance read “18 Is Not Enough”, “Equality Now”, “16”, “Gay & 16, Equal Age of Consent Now!” or “Teenage Sex Criminal”. The diversity of messages on placards is usually something to be expected in protests, as people come with their own point of view on the matter they are defending, but this point highlights OutRage!’s control over the narrative and their acute knowledge of photo operations for the media. Indeed, having the same placard design creates unity and allows the audience to decode the messages with ease.¹²⁵ Moreover, the placards participated in a colour scheme that naturally appeared in a lot of their protests: black, white, and often pink with the whistles, pink flags, and the pink triangle on their banner, as visible on Figure 3, which is a photograph that wholly represents the brand of OutRage!.¹²⁶

On the photo, the members are wearing the T-shirts with the logo of the organisation as well as more humorous and provocative ones like “Queer as Fuck” and “Queer with Attitude”. Around their necks, one can also see that they have whistles and an ID card for the member in the middle. The colours of the T-shirts, like that of the placards, are black and white. The activists are surrounded by four pink flags that frame them. It is supposed that black and white (for the placards and the T-shirts) were used because of their simplicity and

¹²⁴ These placards are very similar to the ones ACT UP made for their events, so it is probable that OutRage! took inspiration from them (Todd, 2019:86-7).

¹²⁵ Linked to this, the arguments made about the branding of the organisation should not be forgotten, as they also participate in creating visual messages.

¹²⁶ Figure 3 is in black and white but Appendix 30, on the other hand, showcases the pink colour mentioned here.

for the contrast easily decipherable by people and camera lenses. In the middle, OutRage!'s banner is visible, with a succinct description of their main objective. The pink triangle references the one homosexuals had to wear in Nazi Germany (Waxman, 2018).¹²⁷ In the 1980s and onwards, this triangle became “the most important symbol of the international gay rights movement” and was part of the logo for the 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights (Newsome, 2017). The same year, the triangle was turned upside-down (with a side on the bottom) by the Silence = Death collective (Brooklyn Museum). ACT UP's manifesto highlights the link they draw between the “oppression and annihilation” of homosexuals in 1930s Germany and in 1980s America (Waxman, 2018).



Figure 3: Photo taken by Steve Mayes in the early 1990s in front of the Marble Arch near Hyde Park (Flickr, Protests from 1990, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4544112851/in/album-72157623731662231>).

OutRage! members wearing merchandise and holding their banner and pink flags.

Placards at the Kiss-in of the 5th of September 1990 showcase this “Silence = Death pink triangle” (Appendix 32). In a video from a protest led by OutRage! on the 2nd of October 1990 in front of New Scotland Yard, a banner which precedes the one on Figure 3 appears with the same triangle as well (Thames News, 2022). It is supposed here that they followed the lead of ACT-UP and Queer Nation, who used this new version instead of the earlier one

¹²⁷ The movie *Bent* (1997) with Ian McKellen highlights the story of homosexuals being sent to concentration camps. A pink triangle was sewn onto their outfits.

(Queer Nation). However, OutRage! decided to use the original triangle later on, as visible on Figure 3. One may think of a few reasons for choosing this version and not the other one. First, the “Silence = Death pink triangle” was specifically connected to the AIDS struggle and OutRage!’s objectives were different to those, as expressed in the main objective on the banner. Second, while the upside-down version is connected to AIDS activism the “Nazi pink triangle” may be a reminder of the evolution of their struggles as well as their position at the margin, as queer people. This triangle, just like the word “queer”, was repurposed by activists as a badge of pride and anger.

A subsequent banner appears on some photos from the 1990s, which showcases a rebranding for OutRage! (Appendix 31). That banner does not have a pink triangle but a diagonal rainbow line. On the bottom, it reads “Queers fighting homophobia”, and on the left and right side, the words “Equality” and “Freedom” appear in pink. It is supposed that the banner was made after the one on Figure 3, mostly because of the presence of the word “queer”, which was not used right away in OutRage!’s statement of aims. Indeed, the organisation started to use a different terminology in their statement, from “lesbians and gay men” to “queer” a few years after their creation (OutRage! Archives. “Challenging Homophobia.”). Lucas recorded discussions over the terminology in 1991 but the members took a long time to come an agreement (1998:57-8). Some members of OutRage! believed that “queer” was “sexy, challenging, a form of radical chic”, a way “to take the power of the word away from oppressors” (Lucas, 1998:57). On the other hand, others felt uncomfortable with the word, which was still used against the LGBTQ+ community (*idem*). The discussions were heated, a member even threatening to light himself on fire because he thought that the organisation was part of the oppressors for using “queer” (*ibid.*, 58).¹²⁸ Therefore, it is safe to say that OutRage! only officially started to advertise itself as a “group of queers” in 1992.

This was an important change for the members, who had already branded themselves aesthetically and politically in the few months that followed their creation, using different terminologies. The move towards “queer” a year later served several purposes. First, OutRage! was inspired by Queer Nation and they used the term “queer” to construct their image. While the name “lesbians and gay men” may have felt more inclusive at first, as they wanted to be welcoming to new members, by 1992, OutRage! and the word “queer” were well-established in the community, and this new denomination was closer to their political views. Moreover, Martha Irvine, journalist for the Associated Press, mentioned in 2003 that

128 Chris Woods mentions that “[e]veryone reached for a light” at that moment, denoting the intensity of the discussions and the type of humour that reigned in the organisation (*idem*).

for young people, “queer”, used as an umbrella term for LGBT people, “encompasses even more” than that: it includes everyone on the spectrums of sexuality and identity who does not recognise themselves in the terms “lesbian”, “gay”, “bi” or “transgender”.¹²⁹ It is probable that, outside of the political connotation of “queer”, the group wished to be more inclusive by using this term instead of “lesbians and gay men” as the latter excludes some sexual and gender identities. This renaming is noteworthy because it strengthened OutRage! as a cornerstone of the queer activism of the 1990s.

A Case Study: the 1990 Kiss-in at Piccadilly Circus

The Kiss-in performed in front of the Eros Statue exemplifies how the branding elements participated in OutRage!’s media strategy. This action is purposefully the first one to be analysed in this dissertation because it marked the arrival of this new organisation in the LGBTQ+ British scene and it was a defining moment for the group (NCS): it was a very successful action that brought OutRage! a lot of attention (Lent, 2001:203).

Lucas reports that the idea of the Kiss-in started with Patrick McCann, a member of the group, who got inspiration from the die-ins performed by ACT UP, wherein people gathered in the streets and laid down, pretending to be victims of AIDS (1998:32).¹³⁰ Although McCann does not mention it, the GLF also organised kiss-ins on the London Underground (Lent, 2001:85). Wanting to make the action more “fun and media-friendly”, McCann thought that they could do one to protest against the ban from kissing a person of the same sex in public, specifically in front of the statue of Eros, the God of Love (Lucas, 1998:32). With his testimony one can already see that the action was created with the presence of the media in mind. McCann’s idea became “hugely popular within the group” and the members planned the Kiss-in for the 5th of September 1990, with the police present as well (idem). They publicised the event to attract people to join, including journalists, so that they could record the performance (ibid., 32-3). OutRage! member Adam Jeanes jokes that Tatchell was displeased with the leaflets because they did not include “Printed & Published by OutRage!” (ibid., 32). While it is anecdotal, it confirms that the organisation had set rules when it came to publishing material, with attention put on self-promotion. After publicising the Kiss-in, it became the source of a lot of attention from the media, as revealed in the weekly meeting of

¹²⁹ Irvine writes “gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered” in the article, which is why LGBT is used here instead of LGBTQ+ (idem).

¹³⁰ A die-in is represented in the film *120 Beats per Minute*, which takes inspiration from the late 1980s and early 1990s activities of ACT UP Paris (Campillo, 2017: 01:52:10-01:54:00).

the 23rd of August (Appendix 6). This theatrical performance demonstrates OutRage!'s imaginative and daring aspects. Instead of marching against the ban, the group decided to widely perform the act, thus attracting attention on the existence of this law, making fun of it and normalising homosexuality in the public space. Figure 4 and Appendix 32 illustrate the performance.



Figure 4: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 5th of September 1990 at Piccadilly Circus (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4521330051/in/album-72157623731662231).

A banner in the foreground reads "OutRage! says queer is cool!" while women are kissing on the Statue of Eros in the background.

Steve Mayes, the photographer, framed the atmosphere that OutRage! wished to create: the Kiss-in was supposed to be fun, daring, new and enticing, and to gather a lot of attention. It seems like the participants in the picture are saluting the crowd on Figure 4. The placards and banners clearly advertised the group, with members also wearing their merchandise. It may be supposed that whistling sounds were heard during the performance, which added more excitement and attention to the performance. The participants took up a

central public place of London and made it their own space literally kissing under the protection of the Greek god of love, Eros. Mayes created a symbolic image that represents the popular early days of the queer organisation. The banner, “OutRage! says queer is cool!”, both publicised the event as “queer” and “cool”. Furthermore, the success of the performance reinforces the message that “queer” is indeed “cool”. Other adjectives may be added to define the term based on this Kiss-in: queer is young, queer is provocative, and queer is here.¹³¹

The Kiss-in gathered around 400 people (Lent, 2001:203) and the press widely covered the event, even if it was sometimes negative (Lucas, 1998: 34). Lucas recollects that the *Guardian* captioned a photo “Kiss Of Death?” presumably linking this display of homosexuality to AIDS – despite the fact that HIV is not transmittable by kissing (qtd. in idem). Sanderson reports the *Independent*’s review: “last night’s gay ‘kiss-in’... is unlikely to increase public support. Unless homosexuals wish to alienate the public, they should conduct themselves with restraint” (qtd. in Sanderson, 1995:161). These articles did not disturb the queer organisation: Tatchell told Lucas that “bad publicity isn’t always as bad as it seems. There may be some short-term damage but the longer-term effect is to help normalize homosexuality” (Lucas, 1998:240). The Kiss-in was a step forward for OutRage! and Keith Alcorn explains that it became an example for the rest of their happenings:

We knew we’d discovered a formula for actions that would bring large numbers of people out, get people very excited, get huge amount of press coverage and generate a debate about the issues we were campaigning on, not just making a spectacle of ourselves. (Lucas, 1998:33)

Alcorn points out how this performance reflected OutRage!’s goals. By focusing on its media aspect, they were able to start a conversation on kissing publicly for LGBTQ+ people and they drew attention on themselves, as a new, upcoming organisation that wanted to disrupt heteronormativity. From the advertisement of the Kiss-in to its realisation, the group was very clear about the unified message it was sending to the media. It reaffirmed the direction OutRage! was taking in regards to their relationship with the media industry: instead of fearing it, the members were going to use its codes for their own benefit.

In conclusion, OutRage! consciously developed a brand (exemplified on Figure 3) that made the organisation more visible, fashionable and well-defined. This happened in the group’s first few months of existence, when it had to reach out to the LGBTQ+ community and the media to make their activism known, and, more practically, when they needed funds to establish themselves. The sale of T-shirts and whistles made the group noticeable to a wide

131 “Queer is here” is a reference to the slogan “We’re here, we’re queer, get used to it” popularised by Queer Nation (Stanley, 1991).

audience. The T-shirts called for attention with their provocative and humorous messages, and the whistles created a curious and participatory disruptive cacophony of noise while at the same time being responsible for around 50% of OutRage!'s funds. The merchandise played a very important role in their brand, from giving it an aesthetic to reinforcing its main traits: "witty, imaginative, daring and irreverent" (OutRage! Archives. "Our History."). Therefore, OutRage! defined its brand on a superficial and a deeper level, introducing their values and methods of actions with their merchandise, but most importantly establishing and characterising queer identity. At the same time, they were also part of an effort to make the group more professional: this is especially visible with the placards whose simple but unified design drew attention to their content. They created a cohesive and complete image that could be easily read and understood by an audience, which further helped their efforts to make the news. This was exemplified in the Kiss-in, which introduced the centrality of theatrical, camp and shocking aspects in OutRage!'s street performances.¹³²

II.2 Facilitating Interactions with Journalists

The OutRage! agenda is about promoting public awareness and debate concerning homophobic discrimination, generating discussions. The most effective way to achieve that is to do something that gets the issue reported. (Peter Tatchell in Lucas, 1998:239)

As a media-savvy group, OutRage! developed methods to be covered on the radio, television and in the press. Carefully deciding the way they performed each of their actions, they thought about the way they could attract media attention and efficiently spread their ideas. Whether good or bad, they believed that in the long run, any kind of press was beneficial to their cause (Lucas, 1998:240). One of the differences that Tatchell draws between OutRage! and other LGBTQ+ organisations is that they did not have a "paranoid attitude" about the media, and rather used it to their benefit instead of avoiding it (ibid., 238). The media had started talking about LGBTQ+-related issues following the 1980s and the queer group used this opportunity to go further. They acknowledged the media's homophobia – as it was seen with the AIDS crisis – but, acting cautiously, they decided to use the industry in their favour (ibid., 237). In the first few months the group created a Media & PR subgroup to better work on their relationship with the media and their coverage. It was defined as such:

132 This is the focus of part II.3.

OutRage aims to make sure that the media starts to pay attention. Working with the press and TV, we aim to give lesbian and gay rights the profile they deserve. We aim to present ourselves effectively, and to exploit the media's love of 'action' events, and there are plans for future workshops on how we can best work with the media to achieve our goals. The group meets on Sunday evenings. (Appendix 4)

From this description, it is possible to say that OutRage! was deliberate in their actions to become newsworthy. A few elements stand out: the queer organisation was “[w]orking with the press and TV”.¹³³ Indeed, they were careful to always invite at least one journalist and a photograph to all of their actions and they also published a lot of press releases. Peter Tatchell, “journalist by profession”, had an instrumental role in working with the media (Lucas, 1998:237). Moreover, the “exploit[ation of] the media's love of 'action' events” was an important element that drove a lot of protests: they tried to make sensational, high-profile performances. This part on the relationship between OutRage! and the media touches on the way the members efficiently addressed them to send out a clear message, and Tatchell's centrality in this aspect.

Media training

“Unambiguity” is a leading factor in most news article: “journalists are trained to write the ‘intros’ to their news stories in an ambiguous way”, making it “perhaps inevitable that so many news stories should appear unambiguous” (Harcup & O’Neill, 2001:269-70). Thus, it is a skill acquired by professionals. Nevertheless, some events may be less ambiguous or clearer than others: OutRage! sought to make the journalists’ task easier and influence them in the process. Their wish to use the media led the members to learn about them and the way they could use them for their own benefit. For example, Allison mentions that the members were prepared for interviews, with “the rule of ‘who, what, when, where and why’” (OutRage! Archives. “The Future of OutRage!.” 2001). This way, reporters quickly had all of the information they needed and the members could also take some time to make friends with them to have them on their side (*idem*). Moreover, they had to be articulate, at ease in front of a camera and well-informed of the event taking place (*idem*). Some of them also directly contacted journalists or media outlets and asked if they were interested in a story (Lucas, 1998:136). The communication activists in OutRage! understood that they needed efficiency, reliability and connections to be seen by the media and build a long-term anti-homophobia campaign. This training may be compared to the “media kits” of the National Organization for

133 This includes national media outlets like the tabloids the *Sun*, the *Evening Standard* or *News of the World*, broadsheets such as the *Guardian*, the *Independent* or the *Telegraph* and broadcasters like the BBC or ITV, to name just a few. OutRage! was also in contact with the LGBTQ+ press like *Gay Times* or *Capital Gay*.

Women (NOW), but in a smaller scale. NOW is a feminist organisation founded in 1966 in the United States that used media strategies to “give the general public an honest picture of the Feminist Movement” (according to them), reach support and recruit new adherents (qtd. in Barker-Plummer, 1995:12-3). To do so, they made media kits which were addressed to the local branches of the organisation, so that they would have the tools to make themselves heard by the media (Barker-Plummer, 1995:13). Barker-Plummer explains that these kits included various types of advice to understand how to communicate with the journalists – like “prepar[ing] a handout so that reporters get the facts straight” – and how they could take advantage of the way “news discourse was structured” to find their issues reported (ibid., 13-4).¹³⁴ Also part of the media kit, NOW encouraged activists to have representatives befriend journalists and “coordinate media relations”, and they advised them to plan their activities taking the point of view of editors (ibid., 14). A clear parallel can be made between NOW and OutRage!, as both organisations had coordinators to direct the group’s media strategies and teach the members practices. For them, appealing to the media took a central place in their activism.

OutRage! made sure to invite reporters to their protests but since their early days, they also had in-house journalists and photographers who “challenged the media silence, and its hostility, to gay issues” (CivicLeicester, 2014a:02:35). The most notables – during the 1990s – were Steve Mayes and John Hunt (OutRage! Archives. “OutRage! Is 20!” 2010).¹³⁵ Mayes’s photographs are especially recognisable, most of them being black and white, while Hunt took photos on “an early digital camera” (idem). Both of them recorded OutRage!’s public actions, thus promoting the group in their own leaflets and letters to their supporters, and providing the media with photographs that literally cast a favourable light on their militant deeds. Figure 5 highlights Mayes’s style and humour in a photo taken for the organisation – or the LGBTQ+ press.

On the left side of the picture, one can see protesters marching, including Tatchell, wearing the T-shirt “This faggot’s not for burning”, and a man in a nun outfit (a Sister of Perpetual Indulgence) holding a pink flag.¹³⁶ In the back, OutRage!’s banner is visible. The

134 The author includes an example from a 1971 NOW document of what is and is not “newsworthy”: “[t]he beginning of a survey of employment practices may or may not be news -- but the conclusion will be. A charge that some company discriminates against a woman may or may not be news -- but the announcement that an [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission] complaint has been filed will be” (ibid., 14). This question of newsworthiness is further studied in part II.3.

135 Based on the photos retrieved from the archives, it seems that Steve Mayes left OutRage! before 1998, after which John Hunt became the main photographer. Most of the photographs in this dissertation were taken by Mayes.

136 The T-shirt is most probably part of OutRage!’s collection, alluding to pop culture: Margaret Thatcher’s famous 1980 phrase “This Lady’s not for turning”, which was already a reference to Christopher Fry’s play *The*

middle of the picture is an almost empty pavement, with billboards the right side. The one in the foreground is an advertisement for Skol, a beer-making company. On the poster, the round face of a woman winks as a speech balloon reads “Bottoms up!”, inciting the viewer to drink their beer in one go.



Figure 5: Photo taken by Steve Mayes during a march in Hackney, East London. Date unknown (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4544462440/in/album-72157623731662231).

OutRage! activists marching in Hackney in front of an ad spot for Skol.

The framing of this photograph is conspicuous, as one would expect the protest to be in the centre. However, doing so, Steve Mayes adds another meaning to the ad and makes a pun by putting it in relation to the OutRage! protest. Indeed, a bottom, in LGBTQ+ slang, usually refers to the person who is penetrated during homosexual intercourse (OED “Bottom”). Hence, Mayes is playing on the double meaning of the expression “Bottoms up”, both telling readers to finish their drinks and get in position if they are “bottoms”. This second reading is only possible because of the protest happening, which puts into the forefront the lexical field of homosexuality. Probably more destined to the LGBTQ+ community than to the “heterosexual” press, Figure 5 is an example of how Mayes intentionally framed his

Lady's Not for Burning (1948).

The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence are going to be discussed in part II.4, in relation to drag.

pictures to add meaning – in this case, humour.¹³⁷ They were thus important tools for the group to be in control of the narrative.

David Allison also stresses how locations impacted OutRage!'s performances, as he states that “attractive, relevant locations” simplify the work of photographers (OutRage! Archives. “The Future of OutRage!.” 2001). Just like placards, they are part of the message, a visual clue for the viewers to grasp the context of the protest. For OutRage!, it was another way to efficiently carry out their message, both thinking about the journalists and readers. Most of their actions took place in significant places: for example, it was mentioned that the 1990 Kiss-in was performed at Piccadilly Circus. Visually, they promoted the liberation of homosexuality in one of London's most recognisable public spaces and, with the statue of Eros in the background, they implicitly commented on the universality of love and sexual desire. Locations are not only important for the photographs, they are political. Protests against Church homophobia took place in religious spaces: for instance, in 1992 they invaded the Vatican Embassy in London on 4th of August, and on the 20th of September, they attempted a crucifixion at Westminster Cathedral (Lucas, 1998:233).¹³⁸ These locations meaningfully related a queer organisation to religious spaces and in doing so, OutRage! made a political statement: LGBTQ+ people are proudly stepping in spaces that were previously denied to them.

Reliability of OutRage! as a Source and Peter Tatchell's Role

On top of their methods to create a relationship with the press and be newsworthy during their actions, they made a very large amount of press releases before and after their events. Their role should not be understated: they allowed the organisation to connect with journalists who could expect to have basic information on their actions including relevant quotes from some members. OutRage! issued hundreds of press releases in twenty-one years. The ones from 1996 onwards were available on their website. Out of the 269 blog posts archived, it is estimated that around 200 of them were press releases.¹³⁹ With these, it can be stated that the organisation created a relationship based on reliability with journalists, who

137 Although it is not mentioned here, many other aspects and indicators may have prompted Steve Mayes to capture this particular angle: the presence of OutRage!'s banner, or the fact that it captured a lot of protesters. In any case, Mayes made a deliberate choice taking this picture, highlighting certain things and forgetting others.

138 These two events are analysed in part III.1.c.

139 While the relationship between the media and OutRage! is emphasised here, the publication of these press releases on their website shows that they were also destined to the people interested in OutRage!'s activities who could thus get a record of their actions.

could report on their activities with the help of OutRage!. At the same time, the organisation also pre-scheduled a lot of their actions, in order to attract protesters and journalists as well who could thus expect to have a newsworthy story. The leaflet promoting the Wink-in in March 1992 is an example of the group's planning (Appendix 27). Because journalists are under time pressure, they become more dependent on "news sources willing and able to preschedule their activities" (Hall et al., 1978:57; see also Hartley, 1982:75-6). Moreover, it is probable that some of the members became well-known, trusted sources for news reports, as they were included in many press releases. Reviewing those from the website, the members who reappear the most often are John Hunt, David Allison, John Beeson, Brett Lock and Peter Tatchell.¹⁴⁰

Peter Tatchell's role in the group is of utmost importance. Lent explains that

[o]ver time, OutRage's direction was increasingly driven by Peter Tatchell who had his schooling in the GLF itself. An Australian immigrant to Britain who had fought and lost the notorious Bermondsey by-election for the Labour Party in 1983 in the face of intense homophobia, Tatchell was singlemindedly committed to the cause of gay rights and liberation (Tatchell, 1983, 1999). (Lent, 2001:205)

Australian-born Tatchell moved to London in 1971 when he was 19 years old to escape his drafting into the army for the Vietnam war (Amos, 2021:00:14:00; OutRage! Archives. "Peter Tatchell.").¹⁴¹ In Melbourne, he was already part of the protests against his country's engagement in the conflict, which is when he understood "how you can mobilize people, get media coverage, put people in power under pressure, and persuade public opinion to change" (Amos, 2021:00:13:25). As soon as he arrived in London, he saw a flyer for a Gay Liberation Front meeting, that he joined right away (ibid., 00:14:55). As a member of the GLF, he helped organise protests and he took part in major events like the 1973 World Youth Festival in Communist East Berlin, during which he made a speech on gay liberation (ibid., 00:21:50; OutRage! Archives. "Peter Tatchell.").¹⁴² Tatchell started protesting for human rights – but more specifically LGBTQ+ rights – on a wide scale at a young age.

He became well-known in Britain in the mid-1980s, after he was introduced as the Labour Party candidate for the 1983 Bermondsey by-election, following Bob Mellish's resignation (Williams, 2022). Although Bermondsey was a "Labour stronghold" (Amos,

¹⁴⁰ John Hunt probably left OutRage! in 2000. David Allison's name appears from 1995 to 2011. John Beeson was especially quoted between 1998-99. Brett Lock is first mentioned in 2006 and he is credited for photos.

¹⁴¹ A documentary called *Hating Peter Tatchell* by director Christopher Amos was made about Tatchell's activism, from his teenage years to the Football World Cup in Moscow in 2018. It includes archive photos, videos and interviews with Peter Tatchell and people who became acquainted with him, like actors Ian McKellen and Stephen Fry, as well as former Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey (1991-2002).

¹⁴² Tatchell states that he saw the "LGBT+ freedom struggle" as a global one, not only a national one (Amos, 2021:00:20:45). This is visible in OutRage!'s protests about the situation of LGBTQ+ people in other countries, as previously mentioned.

2021:00:23:30), Tatchell lost the election to the Liberal Simon Hughes, most probably because of the outpouring homophobia he was a victim of (Fern Tomlinson, 2013a:00:52; see also Lent, 2001:90; Sanderson, 1995:100; Williams, 2022). Tatchell was the Secretary of the Bermondsey Labour Party and, despite objections inside the party, he was chosen as the district's candidate (Fern Tomlinson, 2013a:6:55). His views at the time led him to be seen as an "extremist" by the media and the public: For example, he proposed a national minimum wage; comprehensive equality laws (to prevent discrimination, including against LGBTQ+ people); and a "negotiated political settlement" in Northern Ireland (ibid., 2:00-3:30). Most importantly, he was against the gentrification of the Riverside of Bermondsey by large companies, rather advocating for the development of facilities for the working-class community in place (ibid., 3:30-4:30).¹⁴³ The press vilified Tatchell for his views and he was called "Red Pete" (Sanderson 1995,100). However, they also believed that he was gay, an angle that was thus used to lower his chances of winning the election (idem). Sanderson reveals that although they did not have any proof, the conservative tabloid the *Sun*, ran a story about Tatchell going to the Gay Olympics in San Francisco (idem). Tatchell states that tabloids sent young boys to his doorstep to get a compromising picture of him (Fern Tomlinson, 2013b:2:25). This was followed by a wave of homophobia from all sides: he was smeared in the media and mocked by his opponents and some in the Labour Party; he received death threats, his personal information was leaked, and his home was attacked; finally, offensive graffiti were made against him in the Bermondsey district (Amos, 2021:00:25:00; OutRage! Archives. "Peter Tatchell."). According to his biography, because of his homosexuality and his status as a far-left candidate, "he was subjected to more media smears, dirty tricks and violent assaults than any other political candidate in Britain in the last 100 years" (OutRage! Archives. "Peter Tatchell."). On a wider level, focusing on the consequences of the by-election, Peter Tatchell's experience demonstrated that the Labour party was not open to LGBTQ+ politics (or politicians) yet (Robinson, 2007:155).¹⁴⁴ In line with the moral conservatism of the 1980s brought by the New Right, "broadsheet reports combined Tatchell's revolutionary politics with allusions to his 'personal shortcomings' distancing him from traditional 'family values'" (ibid., 162). Stephen Fry declares that the by-election pushed back members of the gay community in the closet, who were afraid of receiving the same backlash (Amos, 2021:00:28:15). Putting it back in context, the election

143 That was a crucial point for Tatchell, because the companies which were investing in this redevelopment were the ones that attacked him the most (ibid., 5:00).

144 It was mentioned that in the 1970s, the Left could not but listen to the demands of the GLF because of their political impact. However, it appears that a decade later, it was no longer the case, which may be linked to Thatcher's and the Conservatives' influence on British politics and Labour's wish to distance themselves from the "Loony Left" nickname and appeal to more voters.

was also held towards the beginning of the AIDS outbreak, when the general population was made aware of the disease by the media. The event is part of a decade of backlash for the LGBTQ+ community.

Peter Tatchell's involvement in OutRage! meant to change that, as he hoped to recreate the excitement that came with the GLF twenty years earlier (Robinson, 2007:175). He was part of the founding members in 1990 and never left the organisation until its dissolution (OutRage! Archives. "Peter Tatchell."). Early on, he became one of the main figures of the group. Tatchell understood that the media were important for OutRage! and that, to make themselves known, they had to use them. Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sports under Blair from 1997 and 2001, and the first British MP to come out in 1984, highlights Tatchell's "genius for picking up things that are gonna create a headline" (Amos, 2021:00:41:05). Examples of this are numerous, from the homosexual kisses in the streets that led to publicised arrests (ibid., 00:40:30) or the disruption of the 1998 Easter Day Sermon (OutRage! Archives. "Archbishop of Canterbury Interrupted." 1998), to the citizen's arrests of Mugabe performed by Tatchell himself in 1999 and 2001 ("Tatchell Confronts President Mugabe." 2001; "Zimbabwe's President Mugabe Detained." 1999).¹⁴⁵ His expertise in the media industry was an asset for OutRage! and his commitment to the struggle led him to unofficially become the centre of the organisation.

Lucas's interview with him in 1997 for his book attests to his dominant position in the group (1998:236-40). Lent notes that "increasingly, Tatchell became the public face of OutRage and in its less glorious days in the late 1990s, its de facto leader" (Lent, 2001:205). He always played a central role in OutRage! although his ideas and directives were not always positively viewed by other members, LGBTQ+ people, or the public in general, especially in regards to outing, as developed in part III.2 (Brown, 1995b).¹⁴⁶ Considering Tatchell's early activism, his position inside the queer organisation was a result of his relentless commitment to human rights but also his work as a journalist (see Lent, 2001:208). Tatchell told Lucas that

¹⁴⁵ The Interruption of the Easter Sermon is detailed in part III.1c.

Tatchell performed two citizens arrest of President Mugabe of Zimbabwe on the charges of torture of LGBTQ+ people in his country (idem). He wanted to publicise the situation of the community there by invoking international law (Section 134 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 in the UN Convention Against Torture 1984) which "allows for the arrest in Britain of any person who commits an act of torture anywhere in the world" (OutRage! Archives. "Zimbabwe's President Mugabe Detained." 1999). While the 1999 attempt did not have a large impact (idem; see also *LBC*, 2017), the 2001 arrest, which was filmed and showcases Tatchell being beaten by Mugabe's bodyguards, appeared on prime time television leading him to become a "national treasure" (Amos, 2021:00:59:10) according to Chris Smith (see also Jackson, 2012; Osbourn, 2001; Scott, 2001; The BBC, 2019a).

¹⁴⁶ Once again, OutRage! did not have a leader, but one may assume that Tatchell's position was such that his propositions held more power than the others'.

he supervised a lot of the media work in OutRage! because it was his profession, and even if they wished to include varying voices in their press releases and interviews, he mentioned that he was the most available member so the media made him into some sort of leader (Lucas, 1998:237). Adding a well-known name to a story is arguably better for journalists, since it is relevant to the audience, attracts attention, and sells more (Harcup & O'Neill, 2021:279). Moreover, in organisations that do not have a leader, media outlets may take the liberty to choose one themselves for the audience. Barker-Plummer noticed this in the younger branch of the women's liberation movement, which created structure-less organisations (1995:20). Even though they did not have a leader, the media wanted a voice of authority so they decided on their own figurehead, Gloria Steinham, "a talented journalist, sympathetic to feminism, but a virtual unknown in movement circles" (idem). In comparison to the picture Barker-Plummer draws of Steinham, Peter Tatchell was a very active member of OutRage!, but similarly to her, a leader position was attributed to him by the media.¹⁴⁷ Over time, he became the most reliable source and the face of the group for the media. Tatchell's participation cannot be forgotten when talking about OutRage!'s use of the media to their end.

To conclude, the group sought to use the media industry for their own benefit, as they believed that they could get a lot of publicity for their actions and their objectives if they followed their rules. They acknowledged how the media industry worked and they tried to please the media by working hands in hands with journalists and photographers, providing clear and unambiguous information on their protests. Because of their consistency, they had a constant spot in the news and they became a reliable source on LGBTQ+ issues for journalists, with leading figures such as Peter Tatchell, who became the face of OutRage!. David Allison encapsulates the group's media presence and their dependability with this following statement: "[c]olourful and imaginative actions followed each other in quick succession and media saturation meant that we gradually ceased to be 'OutRage, the gay pressure group' and became just 'OutRage!'" (OutRage! Archives. "The Future of OutRage!." 2001).

147 In 1994, Fernando Guasch even reaffirmed OutRage!'s structure in an article to the *Guardian* on outing: "[b]ut don't call us Peter Tatchell's group. We're non-hierarchical. There are no leaders" (Steele, 1994).

II.3 Answering the Media's Expectations

Because some of the activists were journalists by professions, OutRage! understood how to communicate with the media. Going further, they knew how to organise actions that were interesting and relevant enough to be newsworthy. As a result, they developed high-profile street theatre performances that delved into LGBTQ+ culture because they were inscribed in the camp aesthetic. This part dives into these different elements to understand how OutRage!'s theatrical actions relate to news values.

Newsworthiness and News Values

The media do not simply and transparently report events which are 'naturally' newsworthy in themselves. 'News' is the end-product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories. (Hall et al., 1978:53)

In 1965, sociologist Johan Galtung and political scientist Mari Holmboe Ruge published a groundbreaking article called "The Structure of Foreign News" in which they tried to understand what makes the news, based on articles on foreign affairs found in Norwegian newspapers. They were the first ones to write a paper which drew attention on this process (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001:264). The main question they aimed to answer was "how do 'events' become 'news'?" (Galtung & Ruge, 1965:65). To do so, they developed twelve factors that they thought had an impact on the newsworthiness of an event. They deal with different aspects: how important or large the event is, how meaningful it may be for the audience, how unexpected it is, whether it is the continuation of prior ones, whether elite nations or elite people participated in it, or whether it has negative consequences (Galtung & Ruge, 1965:65-70). An event is more probable to be considered newsworthy if it gathers multiple factors (ibid., 71). For instance, in mainstream, national British newspapers, a story about the destruction of a main bridge in London which includes the presence of the Prime Minister is more likely to make the news than the inauguration of a small bridge in rural Scotland with its local mayor. The first one gathers multiple news values and as such, it is considered especially relevant and newsworthy to its audience.

Galtung and Ruge's writing became fundamental in the media industry, as events were selected to make the news based on these factors (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001:262). However, in their 2001 article revisiting this significant work, Tony Harcup (author and Emeritus Fellow in

Journalism Studies at the University of Sheffield) and Deirdre O'Neill (Former Senior Lecturer in Journalism and Media at Huddersfield University) noted that Galtung and Ruge's findings were limited, because they solely focused on foreign news and the reporting of events, and that their factors were hypothetical instead of being based on measurable evidence (idem).¹⁴⁸ Thus, Harcup and O'Neill aimed to overcome the shortcomings they saw in this 1965 work. The two authors emphasised the idea that journalists do not report the news but produce them: "they construct facts, they construct statements and they construct a context in which these facts make sense" (ibid., 265). The authors point out that journalists do not report a reality but create one for their audience: an event has as many realities as the number of reports it is the subject of. Based on the work of Cultural Studies theorists Stuart Hall et al. in *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (1978), Harcup and O'Neill define news values as elements forming "a 'deep structure' or a 'cultural map' that journalists use to help them make sense of the world" (idem). In other words, they are a way for journalists to decide how they can produce a narrative that makes sense of the world: in daily newspapers for instance, they are going to make stories based on real events that, put together, create a meaningful review of the day for their targeted audience.

For their article, Harcup and O'Neill looked at 1,276 news articles published in March 1999 in three newspapers: the tabloid the *Sun*, the middlebrow the *Daily Mail* and the broadsheet the *Daily Telegraph*. They linked each news article to one – or multiple – of the twelve factors mentioned by Galtung and Ruge and examined which of them represented the types of news article found in the British press in the late 1990s (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001:267). They discovered that the leading news values are the unambiguity or clarity of the stories, the reference to elite people, the frequency of the event reported and the reference to something negative (ibid., 269).¹⁴⁹ Of central importance in their findings was the reference to elite people and nations: more than half of the total number of articles focused on the elite (idem).¹⁵⁰ However, Harcup and O'Neill added a nuance to the meaning of elite people, as the British press was interested in politicians, institutions ("such as the United Nations, the Vatican, Oxbridge," etc.) but also celebrities (ibid., 271). The authors named these two news

148 They point out, however, that some of their hypotheses may have become true because of the paper's influence on the industry (idem).

149 The factors that followed in their research were, in order: the reference to persons; whether the story follows a prior one on the same matter; the unexpectedness of the story; its cultural proximity; the reference to elite nations; the potential impact of the matter reported; whether the story is what the audience wants and predicted to happen; and its place in the composition of the newspaper (idem).

150 The same authors revisited their 2001 research in 2017 with articles from the British press as well, which included more newspapers and news stories shared by social media users. Reviewing their own set of news values, they found that stories with the power elite and celebrities had become less popular than that which contained bad news, an element of surprise, or which were entertaining (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017:1478).

values, “the power elite” and “celebrities”, the first and second most essential ones to define the “newsworthiness” of a story (ibid., 279).¹⁵¹ What follows is the complete set of news values that they introduced:

1. THE POWER ELITE. Stories concerning powerful individuals, organisations or institutions.
2. CELEBRITY. Stories concerning people who are already famous.
3. ENTERTAINMENT. Stories concerning sex, showbusiness, human interest, animals, an unfolding drama, or offering opportunities for humorous treatment, entertaining photographs or witty headlines.
4. SURPRISE. Stories that have an element of surprise and/or contrast.
5. BAD NEWS. Stories with particularly negative overtones, such as conflict or tragedy.
6. GOOD NEWS. Stories with particularly positive overtones such as rescues and cures.
7. MAGNITUDE. Stories that are perceived as sufficiently significant either in the numbers of people involved or in potential impact.
8. RELEVANCE. Stories about issues, groups and nations perceived to be relevant to the audience.
9. FOLLOW-UP. Stories about subjects already in the news.
10. NEWSPAPER AGENDA. Stories that set or fit the news organisation’s own agenda. (ibid., 279)

These news values are important to consider the way OutRage! led their actions. Indeed, as this part argues, the organisation was well-aware of the media industry’s practices and organised events that answered their demands in terms of newsworthiness. This dissertation comes back to these different news values when considering why some of OutRage!’s protests were “popular”, “successful” or “attracted the media’s attention”. For instance, they deliberately referred to the power elite and celebrities or included elements of surprise in their protests, which were often follow-ups of prior news stories as well. It may also be added that their continuous attempts at being on the news participated in making their issues relevant for the audience. In the next part, the performance aspect of their actions is introduced, which is directly linked to the news values of entertainment and surprise.

Street Theatre and Camp

OutRage! included elements of the theatre in their performances to help convey their message. A few aspects can already be picked up from the 1990 Kiss-in: acting (kissing other people on demand) and using the location as a device to generate a story. they did not limit

¹⁵¹ Then, these news values are usually coupled with others that make stories more or less newsworthy. As the 1965 article already suggested: the more news values there are, the more likely an event is to appear in the press (Galtung & Ruge, 1965:71).

themselves to that however: they used costumes, props, blocking, and speeches – or monologues. This extensive use of theatrical features may be explained by the fact that many members of the group worked in the creative field (OutRage! Archives. “Protest as Performance.” 1999).¹⁵² Appendix 33 shows for example OutRage!’s ingenuity and craftsmanship, as they made a large caricatural sculpture of Tony Blair’s face, with Pinocchio’s nose, to defy the Prime Minister’s “broken promises” in regards to the protection by law and action of LGBTQ+ people.¹⁵³ Some of these elements were light-hearted and amusing while others attempted to provoke a shocking reaction from the audience, with the objective of getting attention from the media for disruption. OutRage!’s public performances were all political, which links them to street theatre.

Indian playwright Safdar Hashmi, who theorised street theatre, contends that it started after the 1917 Russian Revolution when director Vsevolod Meyerhold produced a performance in a city square that “combined elements of circus clownery with revolutionary poetry” (Hashmi, 1989:6). The creation of street theatre may be linked to this event because as Adakkaravayalil Y. Eldhose, Assistant Professor in English and Comparative Literature at Mar Athanasius College in India, argues, it is intrinsically political:

In recent times this form has been used to propagate social and political messages and to create awareness among the masses regarding critical sociopolitical issues. Street theatre can be broadly defined as a politicised form of street performance. Street plays break the formal barriers of a proscenium theatre space and approach the people directly. (2014:340-1)

Eldhose and Hashmi both differentiate street performances like “snake charmers” or “acrobatic sequences” (ibid., 340) from street theatre because the latter is “political in nature” (Hashmi, 1989:6). Moreover, these authors explain that it departs from traditional plays, because the artistic quality matters less in these performances as they primarily focus on the message (Eldhose, 2014:342; ibid., 7, 9).

Nevertheless, street theatre has commonalities “with the tradition of theatre developed by Picastor and Brecht” (Hashmi, 1989:9), also known as epic (or dialectical theatre) (Reinelt, 1996:9). It emerged in the 1930s with communist playwright Bertolt Brecht who included a politic dimension in his works (ibid., 10). To put it simply, for Brecht, “the essential point of the epic theatre is perhaps that it appeals less to the feelings than to the spectator’s reason” (Willett, 1957:23). He wrote plays that dealt with (contemporary) historical events, that

¹⁵² Tatchell names “lots of out-of-work actors, graphic artists, scriptwriters and costume designers” (idem).

¹⁵³ In a press release, OutRage! deplores the lack of action on: homophobic hate crimes, Section 28, the military ban against gay and bisexual men, partnership rights for queer people, protection against discrimination at work and parenting rights (OutRage! Archives. “Pride March: Pinocchio Blair.” 1999).

entered a sociopolitical context (Reinelt, 1996:10). He questioned theatre itself with techniques that broke with the tradition of dramatic theatre or with what generally felt familiar to the audience and thus, he surprised them with the unexpected (ibid., 10-12; see also Willett, 1957:37).¹⁵⁴ Doing so, he introduced the “possibility of change” (Reinelt, 1996:10): in other words, by turning a light on the form of his plays, he made the audience aware of the structures they are in (such as traditional theatre or capitalism) and of ways to disrupt them. His purpose was to ask questions, to make people think and reflect (see Willett, 1957:121). Similarities may be drawn with street theatre: its political nature as well as its proximity with the spectators and the live reactions establish a special relation between them and the actors (Eldhose, 2014:344).

After 1917, Hashmi explains that street theatre appeared in some countries during periods of turmoil (1989:6). He mentions for example that in the USA, “it became very popular with the Mexican farm workers and Negroes as an instrument of struggle and organisation” (idem). It “appeared in France during the turbulent late sixties” and in the UK, “it continued to be popular at workers’ gatherings and university campuses” (ibid., 6-7). Therefore, it may be inferred that it was a popular practice used by social minorities in some Western countries in the early 1970s, when the Gay Liberation Front appeared. Lent mentions that it was their public performances that “won the GLF most of its press coverage” (2001:83). As a result, street theatre became part of LGBTQ+ activism, a way to express discontent through art in the public space. It is especially interesting to bridge it to the notion of camp in order to see further connections between the community and the idea of performance.

Although camp is difficult to discern and to define, Susan Sontag, American writer and critic, tried to put words on the concept in the 1964 essay *Notes on “Camp”*. In her introduction, she says that “the essence of Camp is its love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration” (1964:515). She describes camp as a “way of seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon” but she also emphasises the idea that camp is not about beauty but about style (ibid., 516).¹⁵⁵ It may be found in a wide variety of things, from behaviours to movies, clothes, songs, furniture or novels (ibid., 517). Moreover, if camp is in the eye of the beholder who sees or misses it, Sontag considers that some things are camp while others are not. Hence, it may be inferred that camp is mostly subjective even if it has distinctive features as well.

¹⁵⁴ Brecht’s first conception of the epic theatre (and its differences with dramatic theatre) is found in his essay called *The Modern Theatre Is the Epic Theatre* (Willett, 1957:37).

¹⁵⁵ Camp also has an element of seriousness, for one cannot make fun of something if it is not taken seriously (Ott & Mack, 2010:231).

Activist and journalist Jack Babuscio actually names four attributes to camp: irony, aestheticism, theatricality, and humour (209:119-28).¹⁵⁶ Most importantly, camp is about perceiving the idea of “Being-as-Playing-a-Role” (Sontag, 1964:518). In other words, to be is to act and perform. When a person knows that they are playing themselves, then they can defy the codes. Camp is “the metaphor of life as theater” (idem).

Sontag expands on the link between camp and the LGBTQ+ community, explaining that even though camp taste is not homosexual taste – it is “much more” than that, there are “affinities” between the two and “homosexuals, by and large, constitute the vanguard – and the most articulate audience – of Camp” (1964:526). To go further, Babuscio asserts that camp is ironic in the incongruity between the thing or person and its context of apparition (2019:120). What is camp is also out of place, which is a feeling shared by LGBTQ+ people. The idea of life as theatre is familiar to many, who had to hide their sexuality from other people to protect themselves. As a result, they have to act and perform heterosexuality, by reproducing its conventions. Camp is about standing at the margin and a lot of members of the community may relate to that idea. Therefore, it is plausible that LGBTQ+ people generally pay closer attention to acting and enjoy playing with the codes. To put it differently, camp relates to the condition of LGBTQ+ people and it is “a form of cultural resistance [...] by means of parody, exaggeration, amplification, theatricalization, and literalization of normally tacit codes of conduct” (Halperin, 1995:29). Moreover, as alluded to previously, popular homosexual figures in the late 19th and early 20th centuries like Oscar Wilde, Lord Montagu and Quentin Crisp were well-known for their effeminate manners. They were then performing gender by reproducing and reappropriating behaviours usually associated with women, which is incongruous in heteronormative society.¹⁵⁷ Considering that, it is no surprise that Sontag believes that camp was “more or less” invented by LGBTQ+ (and more specifically gay) people (1964:526). In addition, Babuscio affirms that camp is “a relationship between activities, individuals, situations, and gayness” (2019:118-9).¹⁵⁸

A definition of camp may be introduced:

156 To be camp, a person or thing does not have to gather the four elements, but it is more likely to be camp if so (Ott & Mack, 2010:232).

157 The concept of gender performativity was developed by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) (mentioned in Ott & Mack, 2010:218-20).

158 Even though Babuscio contends that one’s gayness is intrinsic to camp, he writes elsewhere that camp gathers elements “that express or are created by, a gay sensibility” (ibid., 118). As such, both terms may be interchangeable to describe camp. The author defines gay sensibility as “a heightened awareness of certain human complications of feeling that spring from the fact of social oppression”, and directly deriving from one’s gayness (idem). Babuscio is clear about the centrality of a gay sensibility to the concept of camp.

[W]e may define camp as a collection of stylistic elements that, as they happen to converge around and/or within a specific media text, resonate with the experiences of queer individuals living within a heteronormative social system. (Ott & Mack, 2010:231-2)¹⁵⁹

Consequently, it may be said that camp is intrinsically linked to the experience of LGBTQ+ people, as they live in a heteronormative system that marginalises them. In reaction to it, camp may be recognised by the unnatural, excessive stylistic elements that play with this power relationship.

Now that these concepts are more clearly defined, one may see why an organisation like OutRage! is especially subject to perform street theatre and play with the camp aesthetic, since they systemically consider the marginalisation of LGBTQ+ people in their activism. Tatchell actually includes “re-inventing the queer tradition of camp and theatricality” as one of the major themes of OutRage!’s direct actions (OutRage! Archives. “Protest as Performance.” 1999). However, if camp is usually found in apolitical works or contexts – Sontag says that “the Camp sensibility is disengaged, depoliticised – or at least apolitical” (1964:516), OutRage! wanted to use “camp as an instrument in the service of lesbian and gay liberation” (OutRage! Archives. “Protest as Performance.” 1999). Therefore, while the theories on camp should be kept in mind when defining their actions, the organisation aimed at breaking and reimagining its codes as well. Indeed, they connected the concept of street theatre, political in nature, with the camp aesthetic to create performances that best showcase their point of view on society. It may also be seen how camp elevates the idea of street theatre to a certain extent: for instance, Eldhose mentions that street theatre usually uses “fewer props and costumes”, yet OutRage! heavily relied on those elements to be camp as the next part highlights (2014:342). Therefore, the form of their actions felt very personal to their identity as an LGBTQ+ political group, and this aspect was interesting for the media as they had the potential to surprise and entertain the audience while relating to relevant events and political debates of the time. This dissertation considers these theoretical elements to analyse the group’s direct actions.

159 The authors add that to be camp, a text does not have to “be explicitly queer in content or even created by queer individuals” and that, going back to Sontag, a work may be camp, but camp is primarily a way of seeing (ibid., 232).

II.4 Case Studies: The Form of OutRage!’s Actions

The 1998 Lambeth Conference Pier Action

The protest at the 1998 Lambeth Conference is a helpful example to introduce camp in an OutRage! action because it almost solely relies on theatrical elements, and especially costumes and drag, to be disruptive. The group took part in the opening of the Lambeth Conference in London, which is a gathering taking place every ten years for the bishops of the Anglican Communion, under the leadership of the Archbishop of Canterbury – George Carey in 1998. OutRage! faced Carey a few times before this conference, including their interaction a few months prior when they interrupted the Easter Sermon in April, calling out the homophobia of the Archbishop and the Anglican Church.¹⁶⁰ During this thirteenth conference at Lambeth, around 750 bishops “arrived at Festival Pier on London’s South Bank to take a boat trip down the Thames” on the 28th of July (OutRage! Archives. “Lambeth / Festival Pier.” 1998). For this event, OutRage! decided to protest on the pier to get the attention of journalists, but also to be seen by the bishops themselves. The group was present to directly challenge the Anglican Church on their opposition to equality for homosexuals. In figure 6, their demands are clearly expressed on placards.

Calling out George Carey, the most influential figure in the Anglican Church, OutRage! is trying to get attention on LGBTQ+-related issues that they are pushing forward in Parliament, like the question of the age of consent. Indeed, on the 22nd of July, by 289 to 122 votes, the Lords overturned its equalisation at 16 years old voted by the MPs (OutRage! Archives. “House of Lords Besieged.” 1998).¹⁶¹ Two-third of the Lords Spiritual voted against the law (OutRage! Archives. “Lambeth / Festival Pier.” 1998).¹⁶² Therefore, OutRage!, accompanied by other LGBTQ+ rights groups, “demanded a ‘Queer Reformation’ to end church support for antigay discrimination” (idem). The thirteenth Lambeth Conference actually debated the stance of the Anglican Church on homosexuality. They passed Resolution 1.10, which states that even though homosexuals exist – including within the Church – and are “loved by God”, “homosexual practice” is “incompatible with Scripture”, and that the Church does not want to legitimise or ordain same sex unions (Lambeth Commission, 2005).

¹⁶⁰ OutRage!’s advocacy against Church homophobia is discussed in part III.1.c.

¹⁶¹ The age of consent was set to 18 years old for homosexual intercourses and 16 for heterosexual intercourses at the time. Part III.1.b examines OutRage!’s fight for an equal age of consent in more details.

¹⁶² The Lords’ decision came after OutRage! performed a four-hour “vigil for equality” outside the House. After the vote, the organisation then besieged the place (OutRage! Archives. “House of Lords Besieged.” 1998).

Focusing on the form of the protest and not its content, OutRage! is recognised by their white placards with black capital letters efficiently describing their main points, with their logo visible on the bottom of each sign. However, the most important aspect is the people dressing up as Church members, as visible on figures 6 and 7.

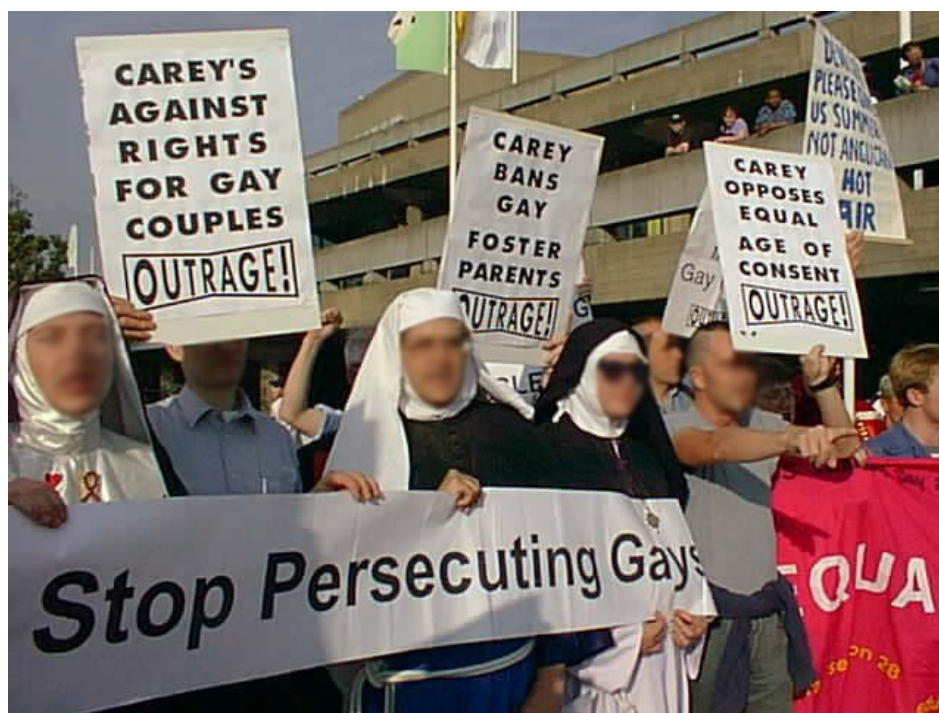


Figure 6: Photo taken by John Hunt on the 28th of July 1998 at Festival Pier in London (*Flickr*, Lambeth / Festival Pier, 28-July-1998, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4568688868/in/album-72157623969310526).

Protesters, including Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, holding placards against the homophobia of the Archbishop and the Church of England.

Multiple activists wore costumes that represent different positions within the church, from nuns to priests. The outfits, especially for the priests, are not exact replicas of the ones that actual members of the Anglican church may wear, but they used the same elements like the mitre on the head, or the Cassock-Alb (the white robes). Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence are part of the protest as well, demanding, as part of their tenets available on their website, “[t]he expiation of stigmatic guilt, and [t]he promulgation of universal joy” (Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence). Just like the priests, they are challenging the norms. On figure 6, they appear in black and white habits, with a visible red ribbon on the chest, a symbol of support for the fight against HIV, and one of the nuns is also sporting a ribbon in the colours of the rainbow flag. These details on the nun habits make the link between the Anglican Church and LGBTQ+ activism in a provocative and playful manner. First, it is provocative because OutRage! members are not celebrating the Church by wearing such outfits, they are using

them to draw attention on themselves and their protest, turning the cameras from the Anglican bishops to these fake religious figures. Secondly, these activists are challenging the position of the Church on homosexuality by adding elements of support to these symbolic outfits, thus reappropriating them and the beliefs they are associated to, in order to fit OutRage!'s own views. Moreover, the sisters are especially relevant when talking about camp because they are in drag, meaning that they are wearing clothes assigned to the other gender, according to societal norms. If the art of drag is usually associated with heightened gender performativity (from wearing a lot of makeup to reproducing behaviours), the men dressing as Sisters confuse gender roles and challenge social conventions (see Ott & Mack, 2010:220).¹⁶³



Figure 7: Photo taken by John Hunt on the 28th of July 1998 at Festival Pier in London (*Flickr*, Lambeth / Festival Pier, 28-July-1998, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4568052121/in/album-72157623969310526).

Two men in Anglican vestments kissing in front of placards denouncing homophobia.

The theatrical elements – the costumes, the drag and the priests kissing – participate in creating a queer, unnatural and exaggerated aesthetics. In such a context, it is incongruous and ironic to find this, making it also humorous and disruptive. Therefore, these elements are considered to be camp and political, an idea obviously reinforced by the placards and the protest in itself. Finally, this performance is newsworthy as well because it is entertaining, surprising, and relevant to the audience.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Because they do not wear makeup, wigs or fake breasts, this type of drag may be linked to the radical drag performed in the 1970s by GLF members (see Lent, 2001:85).

¹⁶⁴ It may also be argued that for some media outlets, it was a follow-up of the Lambeth conference.

1992 Wink-in and Applications for Queer Partnerships

The protest at the 1998 Lambeth Conference underlined the link that OutRage! draws between the camp aesthetic, theatricality, and their political activism. Other performances further established that connection like the 1992 Wink-in. Taking place on the 5th of March, it was part of the Equality Now campaign whose content is explored in part III.1.b. In a few words, it aimed at having a political impact in the upcoming general election of 1992 by making high-profile actions that pushed for key law reforms (Lucas, 1998:101).

The Wink-in was the third Equality Now action. Just like its name suggests, it was inspired by the success of the 1990 Kiss-in. It aimed at shedding light on Section 32 of the 1956 Sexual Offences Act, that limited the freedom of cruising and soliciting (ibid., 108). Section 32 specifically addresses solicitation by men, stating that “[i]t is an offence for a man persistently to solicit or importune in a public place for immoral purposes” (UK Parliament, 1956). At the same time, publicly exchanging contact between men was forbidden. The 1967 Sexual Offences Act did not decriminalise these acts, which drew even more attention on them. Adding to the high numbers of convictions of 1989 previously mentioned, Lucas reveals that “463 men were convicted and 117 cautioned for cruising and chatting up other men” (1998:108). The Wink-in was therefore supposed to publicise these acts. To do so, OutRage! relied on grand, amusing, and shocking theatrical features. The author mentions the use of “elaborate props” such as “large ‘winking’ eyes on sticks, large placards with telephone numbers on to exchange, and the erection of a Wendy house to contain and conceal ‘bonk-ins’ involving more than gay men” (idem).¹⁶⁵ Other placards drew attention to the political aspect of this fun and light performance, like the one mentioning that the protesters were “defiant sex criminals” under the law, as visible on Appendixes 34 and 35.¹⁶⁶ Martin Maynard, a member of OutRage! who participated in the Wink-in, emphasises the theatrical aspect of the action: indeed, on top of the props that they brought, which included the creation of a set for the bonk-ins, they also performed for an audience (Lucas, 1998:109). The protesters winked at each other, exchanged numbers and kissed in front of passers-by and cameras (see OutRageLondon, 2012c:00:00-00:12). This takes the 1990 Kiss-in a step further by allowing the protesters to create a whole storyline from the first exchange of glance to sexual

165 A bonk-in was a place in which protesters pretended to have sexual intercourse.

166 It also appears that some participants wore black masks around their eyes, probably to accentuate the winks and to emphasise the criminal aspect of their acts at the same time (Appendix 34; OutRageLondon, 2012c).

intercourse. While the bonk-ins may have shocked the audience, the action was meant to be light-hearted. Figure 8 gives the viewer an idea of the atmosphere.



Figure 8: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 5th of March 1992 at Piccadilly Circus (*Google Arts & Culture*, artsandculture.google.com/asset/outrage-wink-in/6gF0FRJzyypkVw).

Two men holding placards featuring large eyes on them and kissing in front of a camera.

This photograph was chosen for this study because it reflects OutRage!’s approach to their actions, transcribed by Steve Mayes. The Wink-in is camp and an example of street theatre as well, based on the definitions mentioned prior. The performance of the actors and the props play a significant role here, with the humour lying in exaggeratedly winking at numerous people, while also holding placards of protuberant eyes with eyelashes. The strength of this action is found in its ridiculous aspect, yet it conveys a strong political message at the same time. Steve Mayes himself says that “[t]he idea of taking a banal activity such as winking I thought was very shrewd” (Lucas, 1998:109). Figure 8 showcases the media aspect of this Wink-in with the camera on the left side filming the two men kissing. With this shot, Mayes points at the presence of journalists at the Wink-in; the performance of the participants specifically for the cameras; and the interest of the media in this unusual, surprising, and lively queer action. OutRage! entertains the media with catchy images that draw attention because they set their performance apart from typical demonstrations, adding

an artistic aspect to this political event.¹⁶⁷ When the action ended, the queer group delivered a letter to the leaders of British political parties with ten measures to make discrimination unlawful, underscoring that an “estimated 12.5 million lesbian, gay and bisexual citizens” have power in the upcoming general election (idem). This happening was newsworthy primarily because of its entertaining and surprising nature, a common feature in OutRage!’s street theatre performances.

Their following action was also part of their Equality Now campaign: the registration of lesbian and gay partnerships at the Westminster Registry office (Lucas, 1998:110).¹⁶⁸ With the help of long-term couples, they held five wedding ceremonies in front of the Office on the 19th of March 1992, with the partners in tuxedos and bridal gowns standing under an altar. Around them, people held placards that read “Legalise our love” and “Legalise Queer Partnerships” (Appendix 36; OutRage! Archives. “Protest as Performance.” 1999). Mayes states that this action was not about feelings but about “legal recognition of partnerships for very pragmatic reasons – insurance, property, very rooted on real identifiable, quantifiable issues” (Lucas, 1998:111). Here as well OutRage! used the camp aesthetic with props, elegant costumes, and same-sex couples acting to make their street theatre action more engaging and media-friendly. They mimicked the act of marrying, proving one’s love to another, in order to highlight their legal fight for equality.¹⁶⁹

Disrupting in Style: The 1996 Romanian Boycott

The three previous actions all showcased how the queer group used the apolitical camp aesthetic in their activism, thus expanding the spaces in which LGBTQ+ culture may be found. However, camp was only one way for OutRage! to express themselves, and camp may be considered as a subpart of their theatrical protests. In this section, a final action reveals the organisation’s taste for sensational happenings while stepping away from a solely camp aesthetic at the same time. This emphasises the group’s versatility, and at the same time, it reaffirms one of their main media strategies: protest as performance.

167 Tatchell reports that two days later, OutRage! received a “call from a tour company” because they wanted to know if they were going to repeat the action to send tourists (OutRage! Archives. “Protest as Performance.” 1999).

168 OutRage!’s position on same-sex marriage is the focus of a section in part III.1.b.

169 Tatchell jokingly referred to the event years later: “[a]nd, of course, it was a challenge with panache and pizzazz! The lesbian couples both wore bridal gowns, and the gay male partners were resplendent in tuxedos and top hates [sic]. Camp or what!” (OutRage! Archives. “Protest as Performance.” 1999).

OutRage! prepared an action during the Romanian National Opera's performance at the Royal Opera Hall on the 20th of October 1996, to protest against Romania's anti-LGBTQ+ legislation (Lucas, 1998:219). Indeed, in a press release, they explain that "the Romanian Parliament threaten[ed] to maintain prison sentences of between one and five years for private, consensual homosexual acts," conflicting with their previous promise that they would decriminalise homosexuality when the country entered the Council of Europe in 1993 (OutRage! Archives. "Queer Demo Stops Romanian National Opera." 1996). The amendment proposed to Parliament also sought to criminalise "homosexual 'propaganda, association or other acts of proselytising'", which would seriously limit the freedom of LGBTQ+ people in the country (idem). In response, twenty to thirty members of OutRage! and the Lesbian Avengers interrupted the performance of the Romanian opera, with foghorns, slogans and a large banner that read "Romania! Stop Jailing Queers!" (idem). 1,000 leaflets in English and Romanian were thrown from the top balconies to provide the audience with information on the cause of their action, to promote a boycott on Romanian wine – their largest export – as a means of pressure on their government, and to create a dramatic scene as well.¹⁷⁰ The reader must imagine the disarray initiated by the two queer organisations, interrupting the opera with protesters on the scene shouting as hundreds of leaflets were dropping from the ceiling (Lucas, 1998:219). It is crucial here to see that the activists did not use many different props, but rather relied on the atmosphere and the theatrical diffusion of information to create a dramatic, memorable moment that approximately lasted ten minutes (*The Independent*, 1996). The event, promoted by the Romanian government, aimed at bringing attention to the cultural landscape of the country, but OutRage! saw this as an opportunity to generate "global awareness [on] Romania's abuse of lesbian and gay civil rights" (OutRage! Archives. "Protest as Performance." 1999). The action was not photographed, but it made a significant impact in local and international news: in a postscript to the original press release published on their website, the queer organisation reveals that it was the most notorious action on the matter, receiving international attention on the abuse and "messages of thanks from homosexual rights groups in Romania" (OutRage! Archives. "Queer Demo Stops Romanian National Opera." 1996).

170 The boycott was formally called in January 1997, with the collaboration of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) (OutRage! Archives. "ILGA and OutRage! Launch Boycott." 1997). They targeted "the markets of Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Canada, Holland, Israel, Australia, Switzerland, and Poland" (idem).

Conclusion

OutRage!'s strategies to be in the media's eye were numerous, as the second chapter of this dissertation established. They decided early on to use the media for their benefit, as they saw it as a means to champion their cause. By appearing in media outlets, they thought that they could make people listen to their arguments and that it would have a long-term positive effect. In the short-term, they were also able to see results, especially in regards to the amount of arrests of gay and bisexual men. To begin with, OutRage! aimed at creating a clear brand that was visible and attractive through sales of merchandise, as exemplified in Figure 3 (see also Appendix 30). This answered a basic need for the organisation to have funds for their activities and it participated in making OutRage! unique and well-defined for everyone, including the media. They were easily recognisable and identifiable so that journalists could rely on them for information and readers could possibly remember the group and its leading spokespersons over time. Moreover, they actively tried to interact with journalists, as they pre-scheduled their events, carefully and skilfully communicated information with journalists, took clear and unambiguous pictures for the media to use, and created press releases for each event. Understanding the need for their actions to be effortlessly interpreted, they put a lot of attention in choosing relevant locations and they constructed a coherent overall image as well, with placards, banners and merchandise. This eased the interactions on an individual level between journalists and OutRage! members.¹⁷¹ On a second level, the queer organisation carefully directed their actions – that can be described as performances – to attract the attention of mainstream media. Following the tradition of LGBTQ+ protests, OutRage! heavily relied on theatricality – and the camp aesthetic, including in their zaps and media stunts. This way, they contrasted with more common happenings. Many of their happenings may be called street theatre, which link political street protests to the act of performing. The GLF already organised such activities in the 1970s, but OutRage! changed the target audience from passers-by to the media. Therefore, the 1990s activists communicated with the media industry on a system level. They played to the media's requirements to create stories out of events by acknowledging what makes the news: entertainment and surprise.

It should be noted that the actions presented in this part all date back to the 1990s. In the mid-1990s and early 2000s, OutRage! saw a decrease of members and activities. This means that they could not organise the same protests as before. Although the group never depended on a large number of participants for their actions, their public performances still had to be changed because of their declining status. Fewer members not only meant fewer

¹⁷¹ Barker-Plummer introduces the idea of interactions between the media and movement activists (1996:28).

protesters but also fewer hands to make props, placards and banners, and a lack of diverse ideas to reinvent the organisation. Looking at the photos of OutRage!’s protests from the 2000s that were retrieved for this dissertation, it appears that there were less people and they did not use as many theatricalities as before. On the other hand, OutRage! continued the camp and theatrical traditions, even if they did so on a more modest scale: for instance, they made placards with printed photos of world leaders Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Pope Benedict XVI on which they added vivid make-up to make them look more effeminate (see Appendix 37 for example).¹⁷² This demonstrates that despite their more limited resources, they tried to honour their core values and the protesting style they had adopted in the early 1990s.

This part focused on the form of OutRage!’s protests, understanding how the group made them in order to draw the attention of the media. The following part, on the other hand, highlights the content of their actions by looking at the way they confronted some of their “enemies” to further the advancement of LGBTQ+ rights. Therefore, it will be seen how they used their media strategies in the pursuit of queer emancipation.

¹⁷² Tatchell held Pope Benedict XVI’s picture at the 2006 Europride. The placard on Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of Iran at the time, was showcased at London’s 2008 Pride parade (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/2639475196/in/album-72157605994039273>). OutRage! denounced the both of them for their homophobia.

III. OPPOSING HOMOPHOBIA: “DIRECT ACTION WORKS”

Twenty years after the birth of the lesbian and gay liberation movement, we still face police harassment and ‘queer bashing’ violence [...]. We are still treated as second class citizens and denied the equal protection of the law. (Appendix 10)

In their website introduction, OutRage! included the phrase “Direct Action Works” as a justification for their style of protesting (OutRage! Archives. “Our History.”). A lot of OutRage!’s nonviolent direct actions interested the media because the queer organisation thoroughly interacted with them to meet the needs and expectations of the industry with well-prepared, inventive and entertaining performances. If this second chapter focused on the work behind the actions and the form that they took, the final chapter of this dissertation highlights their public campaigns to oppose homophobia. The group coordinated protests about a wide variety of subjects, but they also kept the focus on specific institutions to put pressure on them. To do so, they did not shy away from challenging elite institutions, companies, and people like the police, the Royal Mail, the BBC, Archbishops, or MPs to receive attention from the media and consequently have a larger impact. The elite was indeed the most important news value in the British press in 1999, according to Harcup and O’Neill. Therefore, it was a way for OutRage! to be covered by reporters and to get results for the LGBTQ+ community by demanding equality to powerful institutions.

This chapter thus considers the specific subjects they addressed by taking a look at the actions that marked these campaigns. The objective is to see what political ideas the organisation put forward for the media to relay, and the way they expressed these ideas through creative protests. Therefore, it is an analysis of the form and content of OutRage!’s long-standing campaigns against designated antagonists. Moreover, it is an opportunity to see the way they tried to transform society with their queer politics, and the way they adapted to assimilationist reforms which provided them with more visible results. OutRage! adapted their actions to be relevant and timely. This dissertation dives into the organisation’s fight against institutional homophobia before taking an interest in the politics of outing, calling out the hypocrisy of homosexuals who held positions of power in politics or in the media.

III.1 Institutional Homophobia

Institutional homophobia refers to the ways in which 'governments, businesses, and educational, religious and professional organisations systematically discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or identity.' This form of homophobia is enforced through laws and codes that treat homosexuals as second-class citizens. (Schanerman, 2010:148)

Based on this definition, the concept refers to the discrimination of LGBTQ+ people by social institutions on multiple levels with laws and/or practices. For example, one may say that homophobia is institutionalised in the police when the concerns of the community are not taken seriously, when homosexual and bisexual men are over-policed, and when LGBTQ+ police officers also face discriminations at work. As it may be seen, homophobia exists on different levels. Furthermore, this example highlights that institutionalised homophobia connects different institutions at the same time: facing discrimination at work is due to the lack of equal protections for members of the community, which is a government's measure that impacts the experience of people in the workforce as a whole. Nevertheless, it is first necessary to discuss OutRage!'s political direction, between New Queer Politics and conformism.

OutRage!'s Political Direction

It was mentioned that the group took inspiration from the queer activism of the late 1980s, which is reflected in their own political identity. Building on the conversation on Queer Nation, they were especially inspired by their leaflet "Queers Read This" (Phillips, 1992): in 1992, in a manifesto about what he calls the "angry and assertive New Queer Politics", Peter Tatchell argues that identifying as queer is a way to face oppression and oppressors by taking back the power of the insult, but it also aims to go beyond the "politeness of 'gay'", as it makes homophobia more visible. Tatchell thus implies that in comparison to "queer", "gay" is too assimilationist, which is one of the main differences between these two types of activism (idem). He questions why the LGBTQ+ movement asks for "integration into mainstream heterosexual society" when it is the "prejudiced heterosexuals and homophobic social institutions that ought to change" (idem). Thus, he explains that there are advantages to being queer and live outside of heteronormativity, and that queer politics go "beyond equality" (idem).¹⁷³ Tatchell asserts that the extension of

¹⁷³ The author lists some advantages: for example, queer people are "more sexually adventurous", they have "safer sex", and "a broader network of friendships which cut across class and race" (idem).

heterosexual laws for LGBTQ+ people is “a desirable first step” but that “it has limitations” because it does not actually take their lifestyle into consideration (idem). Finally, the author mentions that New Queer Politics are for all of society: since sexuality is a spectrum and people feel a wide variety of desires that they “express” or “repress”, it is advantageous for heterosexual people to be freed from what limits their sexuality (idem).¹⁷⁴ They would also benefit from “‘Queer’ emancipation” (idem).¹⁷⁵ In an interview with Lucas, he adds: “[w]hat we want is a new agenda which will not only safeguard the human and sexual rights of lesbians, gays and bisexuals, but ultimately do likewise for straight people as well” (Lucas, 1998:238).

At the same time, there is a discontinuity between Tatchell’s manifesto and OutRage!’s actual politics. First, despite its place in the queer movement, the organisation had a “libertarian ethic” which solely focused on homophobia and the LGBTQ+ community, in opposition to ACT UP for example (Lent, 2003:29-31).¹⁷⁶ Lent explains that by the end of the 1980s, “the influence of the New Right, consumerism and identity politics” led groups to focus on their own interests rather than on “a universal liberation through mass struggle” (ibid., 41). He states that OutRage! first struggled to find its path, considering both the “tight focus” on homophobia and the “broader battle” that includes an intersection with class, race and gender, but that they finally decided on the former, reflecting the political and organisational changes of the past twenty years (idem). As a result, its political actions solely reflected a renewed radicality in the movement and not the transformative and intersectional ambitions of AIDS activism and queer theoreticians. It was indeed closer to Queer Nation’s understanding of queer identity: a renewal of gay identity.

It appears that OutRage! stood at the middle between the ambitious New Queer Politics and the libertarian, conforming politics of the 1990s. Some of their actions showcased the radicality of their objectives like the 1991 Queer Wedding Festival, the Turn-ins at police stations or the Equal Age of Consent at 14 campaign.¹⁷⁷ They highlighted the different lifestyle of LGBTQ+ people and clearly asked for reforms that accommodated to it. On the other hand, OutRage! also launched more reformative campaigns that only aimed for equality

174 He writes that “sexuality is primarily culturally conditioned” and that no one is “wholly attracted to one sex or the other” (idem).

175 Heterosexual people suffer from a system that prevents them from “relating sexually and emotionally” to people of the same sex as them (idem). “Queer” emancipation allow “everyone to experience the joys of queer desire without guilt or discrimination” (idem).

176 Even though OutRage! and the GLF were often compared, the two organisations had different objectives. Moreover, the 1990s group avoided the comparison because they “needed to emphasise the newness of [their] approach” (Robinson, 2007:175). This might explain why the GLF is not named as one of their inspirations in their introduction (OutRage! Archives. “Challenging Homophobia.”).

177 Mentioned in part III.1.b.

on heterosexual terms, and favoured everyone's right to choose their own path, like serving in the armed forces or same-sex marriage.¹⁷⁸

Therefore their politics were sometimes contradictory, as the following parts detail. OutRage! pointed at the homophobia in different institutions during their protests. They defined identifiable enemies with homophobic beliefs, laws or practices to create easily-understandable news stories with protagonists and antagonists. They also used different practices depending on the institution they faced, provoking their enemies in varied ways. First, the homophobia in the police is studied. Then, this dissertation dives into homophobic laws, before looking at the Catholic Church and the Church of England, and finally, the media industry.

III.1.a The police

The LGBTQ+-related murders in the late 1980s and early 1990s alarmed the community by their frequency, their brutality and the lack of response and protection from the police to solve them (Richardson, 2002). *Gay Times* reported 55 murders of gay and bisexual men between 1986 and 1989 in Britain, half of them in London only (Cook et al., 2007:205). In 2002, Colin Richardson, former editor of *Gay Times*, recalls the murder of Christopher Schliach in September 1989 who was stabbed “more than 40 times” in his home, and the murder of Henry Bright a month later, stabbed to death at home. In January 1990, William Dalziel was killed in a street in West London, and Ian Erskine, missing since December 1989, was found dead in a plastic bag a few months later (Lucas, 1998:13). Michael Boothe's death in April sparked outrage, not only because it came after the violent murders of other gay and bisexual men, but also because of his fame, as an actor who occasionally starred in movies and TV series like *Dr. Who*, and whose homosexuality was obvious to everyone (idem). He was “kick[ed] to death” (OutRage! Archives. “Challenging Homophobia.”), ganged upon by “around six men” (Richardson, 2002) at night in a public toilet in West London, known for being a cruising spot. Boothe's murder directly led to the creation of OutRage! (Hobday, 2020), whose first meeting took place less than two weeks after (Appendix 3). Following this, two other men were killed in the first few weeks of May leading OutRage! to hold their first demonstration on the 7th of June about policing (Lucas, 1998:19-20; OutRageLondon, 2012b). It gathered around 30 people at a tube station near the Hyde Park Corner toilets, a cruising spot (Lucas, 1998:19-20). From their very first action, the queer organisation understood the

¹⁷⁸ Also mentioned in part III.1.b.

need to select engaging locations to get the attention from the media, as they chose to protest where the murder happened instead of New Scotland Yard (*ibid.*, 19). Visually, OutRage! denounced gay-related murders and defended a cruising area. In August and December of the same year, they led two other demonstrations to ask the police to solve crimes and denounce police entrapment (*ibid.*, 37-8).

Related to the police's (lack of) response to these crimes, OutRage! was also angry at the upsurge in arrests and convictions of gay and bisexual men. They felt that it was disproportionate and that the police were more focused on arresting LGBTQ+ people than on protecting them (see Preston, 2001:35). While some men were murdered for their sexuality, the police led "entrapment campaigns" in cruising spots – like the one at Hyde Park Corner toilets – to arrest others (Lucas, 1998:13). In Autumn 1991, Tatchell concluded an extensive research on the number of arrests of gay and bisexual men in 1989 in England and Wales, based on the statistics provided by the Home Office.¹⁷⁹ According to his report, there were more than 3,000 prosecutions, 2,700 convictions for "consenting homosexual behaviours", 380 cautions and 40 to 50 prison sentences (Appendix 11; see also Appendixes 12-16).¹⁸⁰ The number of convictions for "indecentcy between males" was nearly four times higher than that of 1966, a year before the 1967 Sexual Offences Act (Appendix 11).¹⁸¹ Between 1985 and 1989, the number of convictions doubled (*idem*). In addition, 1989 not only recorded "the largest ever increase in such arrests on a previous year" but was second to the record of the "greatest number of arrests" of 1955 (Lent, 2001:202; see also Cook et al., 2007:206).¹⁸² In comparison to heterosexual sex offences, Tatchell highlighted that "men who commit consenting homosexual offences are four times more likely to be convicted than men who commit heterosexual and violent sex offences" (Appendix 10). As a result, the author suggested that there was a "police vendetta against the gay community" (*idem*).¹⁸³ Furthermore, he revealed that, according to The Home Office, this increase might be explained by a decision to specifically stop these offences (*idem*). It should be reminded that the response to the AIDS crisis and Section 28, enacted the previous year, had a significant

179 Tatchell made this research with the thought that for the organisation to be credible and effective, they needed to have "good research which identified very clearly the scale of discrimination and violence against lesbians and gay people" (Lucas, 1998:38).

180 Tatchell counted all the consenting relations between men over 16, hence following the laws heterosexual people were subject to and not the restrictions of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act. As the author says, "[n]one of these men would have been convicted if their partners had been women" (Appendix 16).

181 As previously evoked, the 1967 Act was a way to police the LGBTQ+ community more efficiently by redefining private matters from morally public wrongdoings.

182 Cook et al. add that including other convictions "for sodomy, soliciting and procuring", the total number of arrests was around 3,000 in 1989, coinciding with Tatchell's research (2007:206).

183 This both shows Tatchell's anger and his personal connection and bias to the cause.

impact on the LGBTQ+ community, which was consequently more negatively seen in the late 1980s than at the turn of the decade (Clements & Field, 2014:525). In conclusion, it may be inferred that the police were particularly severe on homosexual behaviours. They practised homophobia on two different levels: on the one hand, LGBTQ+ people were more policed than heterosexual people because of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act; and, on the other hand, the police also did not put enough resources to protect the community against physical attacks and murders.

OutRage!'s antagonising relationship with the police continued until at least the late 1990s. On the 6th of February 1991 for example, the queer group organised a provocative Turn-in at the police station in Bow Street, "where Oscar Wilde had been taken a hundred years previously" (Lucas, 1998:52). This location allowed the organisation to draw a popular parallel for the media between the arrest of Wilde and their own situation, commenting that the police still unjustly criminalised LGBTQ+ people. During this performance, people turned themselves in for being "sex criminals" who committed the crimes of "procuring, soliciting, or [having] under-age sex" (idem). Going further, the protesters confessed "ludicrous offences" to mock the police and therefore question the legitimacy of the real misconducts gay and bisexual men were arrested for (idem). Because the action gathered around 500 people, including celebrities like publicly-gay film-maker Derek Jarman and singer Jimmy Somerville, it caught the attention of the press, and the police did not arrest anyone as a result (ibid., 53). If the first two protests against the police were anger-driven and seemed to ask for help and fairness, the Turn-in, on the other hand, only aimed at pointing out discrimination towards the LGBTQ+ community in a joyful manner. With this high-profile action, they put pressure on the police, thus shifting the power relations. Two other Turn-ins were performed by OutRage! in 1992 and 1994, following the success of the first one (Lucas, 1998:233-4).¹⁸⁴

Their early 1990s actions against the police had immediate results: in the following years, the community – and especially gay and bisexual men – became less targeted by the police. In the long term, the "joint campaign by OutRage!, Stonewall and GALOP" (Cook et al., 2007:211) participated in reducing "the number of men convicted for consenting gay behaviours", which fell "by two thirds" (NCS). Conversely, members of the community were still victims of murders: in 1993, five men were killed by the "gay slayer" Colin Ireland and the following year, "eleven men died in an arson attack on a LGBTQ+ cinema in Clerkenwell" (Cook et al., 2007:205). The clear-up rate for these murders based on sexuality was also significantly lower, at 55%, against 92% for all murders (idem). Colin Ireland's

¹⁸⁴ As they were more focused on equalising the age of consent, they are studied in the following part.

crimes especially shocked and scared the community. In March, Peter Walker was killed in his flat with his wrists tied; two months later, Christopher Dunn was found wearing bondage gear, leading the police to call it an accident; in June, Perry Bradley, Andrew Collier and Emanuel Spiteri were found dead in their flats as well (Lucas, 1998:154). OutRage! criticised the lack of openly LGBTQ+ officers appointed to the investigation, which, they thought, could help the police build trust with members of the community to resolve the case faster (*ibid.*, 154-5). At the time, the queer organisation was part of the London Lesbian & Gay Policing Initiative, aimed at improving their relationship with officers and lobby against harassment and homophobia inside the institution (*ibid.*, 155). However, they felt that the police did not do enough to change and they saw that the media relied on this initiative to “stress the close liaison” between LGBTQ+ people and officers, leading them to leave the policing group (*idem*). It was negatively-seen by other members of the community. From OutRage!’s point of view, they did not want to be associated in a “PR exercise for the Metropolitan Police” and it was a way to make a statement on this hypocrisy and reaffirm their own values. OutRage! and the police’s fragile relationship was damaged by the case of Colin Ireland, caught in August 1993 (Kirby, 1993). A year later, Scotland Yard accepted to monitor LGBTQ+-related aggressions (Cook et al., 2007:205).¹⁸⁵

In 1999, the London LGBTQ+ community was targeted by another attack, committed by right-wing extremists: on the 30th of April, a nail bomb exploded next to the Admiral Duncan, a gay pub in Soho in the borough of Westminster (OutRage! Archives. “Soho Bomb.” 1999). Three people died and 80 were injured as a result (*idem*). This bombing followed two others that targeted ethnic minorities on the 17th and 24th of April (*idem*). In response, on the 7th of May, OutRage! organised a Vigil of Remembrance to pay respects to the victims of the April bombings, which gathered a “1000 people of all races and sexualities” (OutRage! Archives. “April Bombings.” 1999). However, after the attack, Tatchell vented his indignation in press releases at the failure of the police to properly warn the community prior to the blow (OutRage! Archives. “Police Failed to Warn Gay Public.” 1999; “Soho Bomb.” 1999). Indeed, following the two previous bombings, the police suspected that Old Compton Street, a renowned LGBTQ+ area, could be the next target (OutRage! Archives. “Police Failed to Warn Gay Public.” 1999). According to Tatchell, the police “alerted some gay businesses and organisations” but only communicated their concerns in a letter with Stonewall which arrived on the day of the attack (OutRage! Archives. “Soho Bomb.” 1999).

¹⁸⁵ Based on an article from the *Guardian*, OutRage! had already proposed the idea in August 1990 (Boycott, 1990). They wanted their attacks to be monitored “in the way racially-motivated crimes [we]re recorded” (*idem*).

They did not warn the organisations working with them through the London Lesbian & Gay Policing Initiative either (*idem*). Finally, Tatchell blamed the police for not warning the community as a whole which, according to the author, “lulled many lesbians and gay men into a false sense of security” (*idem*).

This series of attacks on members of the community, from the 1980s murders to the 1999 Soho bombing, reveals the contentious relationship between queer activists and the police. In the early years of the group, the over-policing of the community was also heavily criticised. These two points are clearly showcased in OutRage!’s early demands: “Protection, not persecution!” and “Policing without prejudice” (OutRage! Archives. “Challenging Homophobia.”). The queer organisation continuously tried to use the media to draw attention on these matters: in its earlier years, OutRage! published research on the over-policing of gay men and organised high-profile events such as the 1991 Turn-in. Afterwards, they employed lobbying tactics like writing press releases to publicly condemn police failures.

III.1.b The State

If OutRage! protested against enemies and institutions on a wide range of subjects, it is arguably its activism for legislative reforms that generated the most visible results for the LGBTQ+ community as a whole. In this case, the queer organisation’s designated enemy was the Parliament, the government as well as companies, and they held large, witty, and shocking protests to seek the media’s attention. The Equality Now campaign is an interesting starting point to discuss the key legislation that OutRage! supported. It was an idea proposed by Tatchell before the 1992 general election to raise awareness on discriminations and push for equality (Lucas, 1998:101). Lucas points out that it set out a directive line for the group to coordinate their actions towards a goal over a few months (Appendix 25). The original proposal was met with resistance from some members and it evolved as the meetings went by but it continued to be a lengthy project with continuity (Lucas, 1998:102-3).¹⁸⁶ The Equality Now campaign started on the 6th of February with a march on Parliament, during which 45 people were arrested: Lucas evokes that “[t]he aim of the march was to secure as much media attention as possible, and OutRage! knew that peaceful protestors being arrested would make headlines” (*ibid.*, 104), revealing the basic premise of the whole campaign by extension (see

¹⁸⁶ The project led to the creation of a specific group meeting on Tuesdays that worked well, while the rest of the organisation “petered away” (*ibid.*, 103).

also Appendixes 22-24).¹⁸⁷ Equality Now was filled with actions that showcased how OutRage! voiced their demands during the general election and gained traction. It ended on the 12th of July after five months with a march on Downing Street (Lucas, 1998:233).¹⁸⁸ It tackled many different subjects: Section 28, the revision of the 1956 and 1967 Sexual Offences Act and an equal age of consent for homosexuals, the right to join the British Armed Forces, discrimination at work, and same-sex marriage (ibid., 232-3).

Section 28

Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act prohibited homosexuality from being promoted by local governments. Although Section 28 “had not led to court action” by 1992, there were “several instance of self-censorship, where local councils had prevented homosexuality from being discussed or ‘advertised’” (Lucas, 1998:115). OutRage! also counted 35 times wherein “lesbian and gay applications for grants and facilities” were denied (Appendix 38). Therefore, to protest against the infamous law that sparked the LGBTQ+ activism of the early 1990s, OutRage! organised an outrageous action in front of the headquarters of the Conservative party. They proposed a Homo Promo, to provide people with the possibility of experiencing homosexuality. The flyer for the activity read:

Sample a ‘free trial offer’ of homosexuality / Hear the stories of straights turned queer / Rejoice at being saved from hetero hell. (Appendix 38)

The group thought that Section 28 was an attempt at making homosexuality less salient in society, by fear that it would propagate: as a result, they gave people the opportunity to try it for themselves. They organised a stall wherein they sold OutRage! merchandise (Figure 1) and they paraded in front of the headquarters with lewd placards showcasing sensual pornographic images that read: “Once Ridden... Forever Smitten”; “Gay Sex... It’s the Real Thing”; “Lesbian Sex... Finger Licking Good”; “Dyke... Just Do It”; or even “Cock S**king... The Taste of a New Generation” (Appendix 39; Lucas, 1998:115). These are parodies of popular slogans in advertisements that the British audience could recognise: “Once Driven, Forever Smitten” by Vauxhall; “It’s the Real Thing” by Coca Cola; “Fingers Lickin’ Good” by KFC; Nike’s “Just Do It”; and “The Choice of a New Generation” by Pepsi. Just as they did with their merchandise, OutRage! anchored their message in popular culture

¹⁸⁷ Lucas reports that OutRage! always discussed with the police to see what they could do with their support. For the 6th of February, the police told them that walking into Leicester Square would lead to arrests, so the organisation prepared leaflets with legal guidelines for protesters (1998:104).

¹⁸⁸ It also ended after the general election, which took place in April.

and “queerified” it to provoke a reaction from the public. Some protesters also made a speech, including Daniel Curry who explained “why queens were much better than heterosexuals” (Lucas, 1998:116).¹⁸⁹ This very provocative yet light-hearted action was meant to taunt the Conservatives, and they provided the media with impactful, surprising and entertaining images for their audience.

This Equality Now action was OutRage!’s only protest of substantial size on Section 28, possibly because the law was mostly a symbol of homophobia which did not greatly impact the lives of LGBTQ+ people.¹⁹⁰ After the election of Tony Blair, they participated in lobbying the new Labour government, which had promised to nullify the law (OutRage! Archives. “Letter to Tony Blair.” 1997; Robinson, 2007:188). It was repealed in Scotland first in 2000, and then in the rest of the United Kingdom in 2003 after 15 years (UK Parliament, 1988[b]), especially thanks to the lobbying work of Stonewall, which was close to the Labour Party (Lent, 2001:209). By that time, the Conservatives as well were in favour of the repeal: Durham remarks that Michael Portillo, leader of the opposition, publicly claimed in 2000 that the party “should respect all Britons, regardless of their sexual orientation” (2005:98). Finally, in 2009, David Cameron, who became the Conservative Prime Minister a year later, apologised for Section 28 at a Pride event (Janes, 2012:212).

An Equal Age of Consent

Following the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, homosexual intercourse in private between men was decriminalised: the age of consent for gay and bisexual men was set to 21 years old, while it was 16 for heterosexual men and women and lesbians. For the Equality Now campaign, OutRage! planned the action “Drop your trousers and bend over for your Member” in front of Parliament on the 16th of April (Lucas, 1998:114). The tongue-in-cheek protest consisted of activists in a row bending in direction of Parliament, and revealing their white boxer shorts to spell “Equality Now!” (Appendix 40). The composition of the image clearly conveys the intention and the message of the action. Meant to provoke, the initiative “annoy[ed] some Tory MPs” and the picture taken by Steve Mayes was also “quite widely used” (Lucas, 1998:115). The protesters then moved to the Cannon Row police station to

189 In this context, “queens” is synonymous to effeminate gay men.

190 In 1998, OutRage! used placards during the Pride parade to denounce Section 28 and they protested in front of the London Oratory School (OutRage! Archives. “Homophobic Response.” 1998). Based on flyers retrieved, it is also believed that they had at least another protest on Section 28, but no evidence of it was found (Appendix 28).

stage a Turn-in and ask the police to arrest them for underage homosexual intercourse, similar to the one they had performed in February 1991.

The idea of the Turn-in was performed once again in 1994, after Parliament voted to lower the age of consent to 18 (Weeks, 1981:394). Prior to the vote set on the 21st of February 1994, Stonewall and OutRage! had put pressure on MPs to equalise the age of consent at 16 (Lucas, 1998:171). However, another amendment setting the age at 18 as a compromise was put forward in the Commons (*idem*). The two LGBTQ+ groups co-organised a “peaceful presence” outside Parliament on the day of the vote, which gathered around 5,000 protesters waiting for the results according to Lucas (*ibid.*, 171-2; see also Appendix 26). If Stonewall was satisfied with the reduction of the age of consent to 18, OutRage! did not see the vote as a win, as they advocated for 16 (*ibid.*, 173). Therefore, in May, they performed a third Turn-in, for teenagers, at Charing Cross Police Station to point at the illegality of their acts (Figure 9).



Figure 9: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 7th of May 1994 in front of Charing Cross Police Station (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4544447036/in/album-72157623731662231).

OutRage! activists asking for an equal age of consent at 16 in front of cameras.

On top of the placards demanding total equality, one can see the whistles and a “Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill” being burnt right in front of photographers. This way, the queer group displayed their anger to the media and re-established their radical

political positioning. Mayes wanted to show how media-friendly the Turn-in was by capturing cameras in his picture. Journalists could take vibrant and lively images of a protest that gathered multiple news values: surprise, magnitude, relevance and it was a follow-up of the February vote as well.

In 1996, OutRage! sought to make the news once again by launching a campaign on the 13th of February for an equal age of consent at 14 for everyone, arguing that many European countries already had an age of consent inferior to 16 (Lucas, 1998:214; Pilkington, 1993). At the same time, they asked not to prosecute people under 14 “if both partners consent, and there were no more than three years’ difference in their ages” (idem). Although it benefited everyone, the law was especially made for gay and bisexual men, following an unofficial statistics orally repeated by Marina Cronin of OutRage!, according to which “two thirds of gay men have sex before the age of 16, one third of lesbians, a lot of straights” (Lucas, 1998:214). Furthermore, they “called for better sex education in schools” (idem). This was a way for OutRage! to transform society for all: they did not just ask for equality, they demanded it on their own terms. However, member Marina Cronin makes clear that this campaign was launched in order to have the age of consent discussed again by the media, the general public, and politicians:

The campaign was really a press campaign, just to get the issue aired. [...] There was never a question that we would get an age of 14, it was more of an idea, to wake people up, not to agree with everyone else. We felt that the age of consent debate had died. We thought the only way people will start talking about it again is to do something radical. (Marina Cronin in idem)

This new proposal infuriated people, including members of the LGBTQ+ community who thought that they needed the equal age of consent at 16 before asking for more (idem). Yet, OutRage!’s bid was successful, as the issue “initiat[ed] controversy and debate within the gay community” and drew a new light on the unequal law (ibid., 215). In the following years, the queer organisation continued to challenge the government and the Parliament. In 1998, the Houses voted once again for an equal age of consent at 16 and OutRage! took part in a vigil outside. Waiting for the results with placards in hand, they declared “16 is just a start” and “scrap all anti-gay laws” (OutRage! Archives. “Vigil for Equality.” 1998). One may suggest that the first placard was both a nod to the other discriminatory law that had to be reformed and their own proposal for an age of consent at 14.¹⁹¹ By 1999, OutRage! had stopped campaigning for a reduction at 14 years old: they argued that advocating for a specific age “was not helpful”, “putting the emphasis instead on improved sex education and the

191 If the MPs’ vote in June was “in favour of equality”, the Lords voted against the reduction in July (OutRage! Archives. “House of Lords Besieged.” 1998).

protection of young people against abusive relationships” (OutRage! Archives. “OutRage! Backs Equality at 16.” 1999). As such, they adapted their political discourse to that of other LGBTQ+ groups, which made the movement seem more unified on this question.

Thus, OutRage! continued to protest for the equalisation of the age of consent, which, as a result of the efforts of the Conservative Baroness Young (Cook et al. 2007:211), was halted in the House of Lords in 1999 and 2000 (OutRage! Archives. “Age of Consent Bill Flawed.” 2000; “Lords Oppose Equality Again.” 1999), until it was acted in 2001 after Tony Blair “invoked the Parliament Act to overrule the House of Lords” (Lent, 2001:209).

The Right to Serve in the Armed Forces

OutRage!’s Equality Now action asking “for equality for lesbians and gay men in the military” was a “contentious” one according to Lucas: while some members argued that it was important for LGBTQ+ people to have the liberty to pursue a career in the military and to ease the minds of those in fear who were serving in the closet, others disagreed to participate for pacifist reasons (1998:106). In a 1997 opinion piece, they declared their scepticism towards the British Armed Forces, a “hetero institution” that “denies democratic rights”, “tolerates bullying”, “discriminates”, and “suppress[es] popular movements for social justice and national liberation” in other countries (OutRage! Archives. “Against Queer Militarism.” 1997). They also criticised the military for being “an instrument of State power”: “[t]he State is homophobic” and they saw it as their duty to defy it (idem). Consequently, OutRage! encouraged civil disobedience: “queers are under no obligation to join the military to protect those who refuse to protect us” (idem). Their anti-military position, based on their Manichean vision of society – queers against a heterosexual and oppressive state – is clearly expressed in this piece.¹⁹² At the same time, the organisation was an advocate for the right of LGBTQ+ people to serve in the armed forces. Coming back to the notion of OutRage!’s libertarianism, their stance on this specific topic is an example of Lent’s argument: they refused to limit the ways in which members of the community desired to live (Lent, 2003:29).

Helped by Rank Outsiders, an organisation of LGBTQ+ Army veterans, OutRage! wanted to reclaim past heroic military officers “who were thought to be gay or bisexual”, including Herbert Kitchener, Douglas Haig, Bernard Law Montgomery and Louis Mountbatten (Lucas, 1998:107). In Appendix 41, protesters can be seen next to a statue of

¹⁹² This opinion piece also clearly showcases OutRage!’s wish to transform society and not to participate in it because it was made by – and for – heterosexual people.

Lord Mountbatten with placards reading “Equal Rights for Lesbian & Gay Personnel” and “For Queens and Country”. They played on different meanings of queen(s): Queen Elizabeth II, effeminate gay men, and drag queens. OutRage!’s camp style was reflected on Douglas Haig’s statue as well, as it “was draped with a pink feather boa” (OutRage! Archives. “Protest as Performance.” 1999; see also Lucas, 1998:107). Moreover, the organisation sent out press releases that provided statistics on the mistreatment of LGBTQ+ people in the military (Lucas, 1998:107). If the action “was a really boring zap” according to David Arnold and other members of the group, it got “amazing publicity” (idem). Even if it is not the subject of this part, it may be interesting to suggest here that the media took an interest in this protest because it dealt with outing. OutRage! did not actually make public the sexuality of these military figures – who had all passed away by 1992, but they capitalised on the speculations that circulated around them, gossiping on a private matter. This allowed the media to create relevant, surprising and entertaining stories about elite figures.

On Appendix 41, it should also be noted that the man standing in the middle is holding a wreath to remember the lives of LGBTQ+ soldiers who died when Britain needed them, while the country rejects their service in peacetime (Lucas, 1998:107). This symbol of respect for military victims was used again by OutRage! in 1995 when they started the yearly tradition of celebrating a Queer Remembrance Day in November (ibid., 212). In 1990 already, a wreath had been laid at the Cenotaph “in memory of gays killed during the Holocaust” (Lucas, 1998:231). The queer organisation took this idea further five years later by celebrating the lives of LGBTQ+ soldiers who fought for their country during World War 2 (idem).¹⁹³ OutRage! invited Sharley McLean, a 72-year-old Jewish lesbian, to lay the wreath with 16-year-old Marina Cronin, in order to make the event more poignant for the media (Figure 10; idem). It highlights that LGBTQ+ people have existed for generations and it draws attention to their past persecutions and present discriminations. Furthermore, it sends a message of unity, and strengthens the idea of a collective identity with a shared history. The triangular wreath was a nod to the pink triangle that trans women and gay or bisexual men had to wear during the Nazi regime.¹⁹⁴ The usual placards were replaced by a single pink triangle that read “Never Forget”. The members, solely wearing the “OutRage!” T-shirts, stood still with a solemn expression on their faces. They watched the two women laying the wreath on the

193 OutRage!, in association with other organisations, took the opportunity to shed a light on the fact that gay men who survived the Holocaust did not receive compensation and that “the years spent in the camps were subtracted from their pension entitlements” (Lucas, 1998:212).

194 It is probable that transgender women (who had not medically transitioned and were most likely perceived as gay men) had to wear the pink triangle as well. It is a personal decision to include them in this narrative.

ground, as passers-by peeked at the scene from afar.¹⁹⁵ This performance could be considered to be street theatre: if it is in complete contrast to their usual protests since the tone of this action was sober and dignified, it gathers elements of the theatre (costumes, props, acting and a speech) and it expresses a clear political point of view.



Figure 10: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 12th of November 1995 at the Cenotaph (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4544098685/in/album-72157623731662231).

Marina Cronin and Sharley McLean laying a triangular pink wreath at the Cenotaph.

After 1995, the group continued this tradition, sensibly reusing the same props over the years.¹⁹⁶ In 1997, almost 300 LGBTQ+ people joined the commemoration according to the organisers (OutRage! Archives. “Queer Remembrance Day.” 1997). Over time, the Queer Remembrance Days became focused on military discriminations and homophobia. In 1999, Tatchell argued that these actions challenged four things:

1. macho militarism and military homophobia,
2. the ban on lesbians and gay men serving in the armed forces,
3. historical revisionism [...],
4. the Royal British Legion’s refusal to acknowledge the contribution of queers to the fight against Nazism, and its condemnation of queer remembrance ceremonies as ‘insulting, offensive and distasteful’ (OutRage! Archives. “Protest as Performance.” 1999)

¹⁹⁵ The wreath was accompanied by a note: “In remembrance of the lesbian, gay and bisexual military personnel and civilians who died fighting Nazism, and the thousands of homosexuals who were exterminated in Nazi concentration camps” (www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4521951738/in/album-72157623731662231).

¹⁹⁶ Sharley McLean was even re-invited in 1997 (OutRage! Archives. “Queer Remembrance Day.” 1997).

OutRage!'s struggle for military service was emphasised by specific actions focused on the ban, but most importantly by their commemorations at the Cenotaph, that aimed at remembering, and most importantly highlighting to the media the presence of LGBTQ+ soldiers in the British Armed Forces. Therefore, they made a comment on the homophobia of an institution that did not accept or recognise their contribution. The Queer Remembrance Day also showcased another image of OutRage!, that contrasted with their usually provocative and lively actions. The British Legion described the action in 1997 as "distasteful", "offensive" and "bound to offend many former soldiers" (OutRage! Archives. "Queer Remembrance Day." 1997). The ban on lesbian, gay and bisexual people joining the military ended in 2001 but they had to keep it a secret, following the same principle of the 1994 "Don't Ask Don't Tell" American policy (British Library, "Timeline"; Human Rights Campaign).

Employment Equality

Homophobia and discriminations of LGBTQ+ people in the workforce were lawful in the 1990s. OutRage! addressed this issue by taking on the case of Alison Halford in 1992, a police officer "who had been denied promotion nine times and had been the subject of disciplinary proceedings" (Lucas, 1998:112). She was also victim of homophobic remarks at her workplace and a file was kept on her about her relationship with another woman (idem). OutRage! took a different approach to their usual actions and organised a traditional picket in front of Scotland Yard. However, they embraced it by having members dress up as workers of various professions to comment on the lack of protections for LGBTQ+ people of all work fields (Appendix 42; idem).¹⁹⁷ A letter was publicly delivered to the Department of Employment as well, which stated that, based on a 1986 survey, "25 per cent of lesbians and gays had experienced discrimination at work, with 6 per cent having been dismissed from their jobs because of their sexual orientation" (Lucas, 1998:112). It urged the British government to follow other European countries in establishing anti-discrimination laws for LGBTQ+ people in the workplace (idem). Although OutRage! activist Fernando Guasch – and Ian Lucas – commented on the "dullness" of the picket, the action was once again successfully relayed by the media, possibly because the case of Alison Halford – and that of other workers facing discrimination – were already "being featured in the mainstream media"

197 If this was another example of the police's homophobia, the picket aimed at challenging discrimination in all workplaces and not just point at the police (Lucas, 1998:112).

(ibid., 112-3). Moreover, this may be linked to the large presence of the group in the news at the time with their other Equality Now actions and to their experience in making media-friendly protests with a relevant location and a theatrical approach.

A few months later, OutRage! took an interest in the case of Steven Watts, an employee at the Royal Mail, who faced intense homophobic abuse at work (ibid., 140). The company did not comply to their equal opportunities policy for Watts, and trade unions did not help him in his struggle either (idem). Therefore, the queer organisation took on his individual case to publicly protest for employment equality. They decided to invade the Royal Mail House with fog horns, whistles, and placards that featured stamps on which was written “Deliver on your promises” and “Stamp on homophobia” (Appendix 43). Steve Mayes notes that they “made [their] mark in such a strong way that they had to take notice”: Watts’s case was immediately resolved, which was one of the only occasions when the group achieved their objective right away (Lucas, 1998:141). Lucas argues that this case was important because the question of employment discrimination was brought to the attention of the general public and, as a large, nationwide company, the Royal Mail’s response to OutRage!’s action set a precedent for others to implement and respect equal opportunities policies for their LGBTQ+ workers as well (idem).

In conclusion, when OutRage! advocated for employment equality, they fought against individual companies – by working on the cases of specific workers – and the government to access legal protection on a national level. Following the success of Watts’ case against the Royal Mail, other people started to contact them, and it was an opportunity for them to help members of the community and make a public statement on discriminations in the workforce.¹⁹⁸ The Employment Equality Relations Act was passed in 2003 and it protected members of the community from discrimination based on their sexual orientation or their gender identity (UK Parliament, 2003). It is relevant to note here that it was the European Union that forced the UK to implement an equal age of consent and allow lesbian, gay, and bisexual people to serve in the military (Cook et al., 2007:211). In 2000, the European Union also set up a directive on employment, to “combat discrimination based on religion or belief, age, disability and sexual orientation on the labour market”, which prompted Britain to legislate its own 2003 Act (EU Parliament, 2000). It may be said that the European Union forced Tony Blair to deliver on his 1997 promises towards the LGBTQ+ community.

198 For example, Lucas briefly mentions the case of David Morgan, working at Haringey Council (1998:152).

Same-sex Marriage

The struggle for same-sex partnerships and marriages was recurring in OutRage!, which held multiple actions to legalise them. Their position on the matter evolved over the years, from queer unions in 1991 to same-sex marriages twenty years later. Weeks explains that the AIDS crisis and the question of being legal parents for lesbian couples prompted the subject in the community, as a legal necessity to protect themselves (1981:407-8). For instance, Sarah Hews, a member of OutRage!, mentions the problems that same-sex partners face in health facilities:

When I worked as a nurse, I saw the partners of lesbian and gay patients excluded from the hospital bedside by parents who disapproved of their relationship. There were instances where hospitals ignored the wishes of homosexual patients and their partners. They took the side of homophobic parents who were granted next of kin status and abused that position to deny the wishes of their lesbian and gay children. (Lucas, 1998:110)

Therefore, wishing that the issue was addressed during the 1992 general election, they organised public applications for marriage of long-term lesbian and gay couples to turn a light on the theatricality and camp aspect of the event, as developed in part II.4 (Appendix 36).

Before that performance of street theatre, on the 12th of June 1991, OutRage! organised a Queer Wedding Festival in Trafalgar Square, which widely differed from their 1992 Equality Now action (Lucas, 1998:61). Indeed, while the weddings at the Westminster Registry Office emphasised the right for LGBTQ+ to marry, show their commitment and be protected by the law (ibid., 110), the 1991 action was closer to a celebration of queer life (ibid., 61). It honoured “not only long-standing relationships, but also one-night stands, friendships, sex-friendships, threesomes, S&M relationships” (ibid., 61). People could come dressed up in wedding attires or in “Radical Drag, Leather, Feathers, Chains, Urban Glamour” (idem). The whole action was another example of street theatre, as full weddings were performed, with vows – traditional and amusing ones like “I promise to share my Body Shop kiwi fruit lip balm with you” – and songs like Gloria Gaynor’s “I Am What I Am” (ibid., 62). Nevertheless, OutRage! primarily publicised “the way in which queer couples were discriminated against, including denial of custody, adoption, immigration, inheritance and tenancy rights” (idem). These rights, symbolically written on a document, “were theatrically snatched by a ‘judge’” because they are “only for boy-girl couples”: they “don’t allow presents like these for lesbos and poofers” (idem).¹⁹⁹

199 “Lesbos and poofers” are derogatory terms for lesbians and gay men.

OutRage! challenged the idea of marriage as generally established in society and made it “queer” in that performance. In other words, they associated it with aspects of queer culture. They wished to promote the diversity of queer lives as well as their pride in being at the margin of the heterosexual family unit. Just like the Homo Promo or the Wink-in, in its earlier years, the group organised multiple high-profile performances that celebrated queer identity and defied heterosexual norms. They wanted to be perceived by the media and the general public as different, liberated, proud and happy, with actions advocating for queer equality and against homophobia. These intentions stood out in the 1991 Queer Wedding Festival, reinforced by their theatrical style of protesting which pleased the media. Some disagreed with the action: on the one hand, one man objected that it was “a mockery of gay relationships” – hence asking for a more toned-down event representing love in long-standing relationships – while founder of OutRage! Chris Woods thought that the issue “veered too much towards assimilationist politics” (Lucas, 1998:62-3). The group stood in the middle between two contradictory political directions.

Later actions show the queer organisation both proposing alternatives to marriage and moving closer to assimilationist politics as a legislation on same-sex marriage drew nearer (OutRage! Archives. “‘Equal Love’ Campaign Launched.” 2010; “Same-Sex Marriage Challenge [sic].” 2006; “Unmarried Partners Act.” 1997). In 1997, Tatchell wrote an opinion piece in which he argued for an Unmarried Partners Act instead of same-sex marriage or registered partnerships (“Unmarried Partners Act.” 1997). For the author, LGBTQ+ people should be able to get married if they want to, but the institution of marriage is flawed, as people increasingly get a divorce:

OutRage! opposes the ban on gay marriage because it is a form of homophobic discrimination. We support the right of same-sex couples to get married if they wish. But we don’t see marriage as some wonderful deal, as straights claim. We certainly do not believe that queers should copy a fundamentally flawed heterosexual institution. (idem).

Similar to the opinion piece on the military, OutRage! defied the institution, but they also adopted a libertarian position, accepting that some same-sex couples desire to be part of it. In 2005, the Civil Partnership Act came into effect in Britain, which gave the right to – exclusively – same-sex couples to have their relationship recognised before the law and acquire the same rights as heterosexual married couples (UK Parliament, 2004[a]).²⁰⁰ When the law was introduced by the Labour government in 2004, OutRage! denounced it for not

²⁰⁰ Weeks notes that this was a way to give same-sex couples the right to marry without changing the institution of marriage, thus “by-pass[ing] the fervid hostility of the churches and morality campaigners seen in other countries” (1981:407). The act was especially successful, with “nearly 16,000 civil partnerships” registered in the first year and more than 45,000 by the end of the decade (ibid., 409).

being inclusive of everyone, mentioning that queer politics are a way to “free all of society”, including heterosexual people who do not want to conform to the institution of marriage (Robinson, 2007:188). In 2010, they launched the Equal = Love campaign, asking for same-sex marriage and a Civil Partnership Act for heterosexual couples as well (OutRage! Archives. “‘Equal Love’ Campaign Launched.” 2010). Over the course of two months, “eight couples fill[ed] applications at register offices” every week (idem). After they were all refused, they participated in a joint legal action at the European Court of Human Rights (idem; OutRage! Archives. “European Court Case Launched.” 2010). The eight couples posed before the registry offices, dressed in formal attires to simulate their wedding day. This action was not as theatrical as the 1992 wedding application because by that time, the group only had a handful of members and less resources. However, they still tried to lead ingenuous and timely protests with eye-catching props to appeal to the media. For instance, in front of Buckingham Palace in 2011, OutRage! members held a giant wedding card that read “[c]ongratulations William & Kate on your Wedding Day. We wish you a happy life together. You can get married, gay people can’t. We are banned by law. We ask you to support marriage equality. Equal=Love” (OutRage! Archives. “Wedding Card.” 2011). Same-sex marriage came into effect three years later in 2014 (UK Parliament, 2013) and heterosexual partnerships also became lawful with the 2019 Civil Partnership Act (UK Parliament, 2004[b]).

Conclusion

The question of same-sex marriage and the recognition of partnerships was a divisive one in OutRage!: they were conflicted between advocating for assimilationist reforms and transforming society.²⁰¹ This rupture between two political directions was apparent in the struggle for other legislative changes, such as the right to serve in the military. To begin with, the name and the idea behind the Equality Now campaign already reveal their conforming politics: they are not asking for emancipation but equality through reforms, contradicting Tatchell’s 1992 article on New Queer Politics in the *Independent*. Their ambiguous politics may be summarised with one project: OutRage! pushed for an Equal Rights Act to outlaw “discrimination, incitement to hatred, and discrimination on the specific grounds of sex, race, class, religion, political opinion, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, and HIV

²⁰¹ This division clearly appears when comparing some of their opinion pieces and their actual direct actions. Nevertheless, it should not be surprising that OutRage! adapted their political views depending on whom they addressed – their supporters or mainstream media.

status” (OutRage! Archives. “Equal Rights Act.” 1997).²⁰² It was an ambitious project which included the creation of a new “Department for Equal Rights, headed by a Minister of Cabinet” and “separate secretariats to deal with different aspects of discrimination” (idem). One may argue that this idea was assimilationist because, if the aim was to provide protection and resources for people at the margins to be recognised, it promoted the integration of LGBTQ+ people in a heteronormative society as well, following its codes. It did not advocate for the transformation of institutions to include diverse lifestyles: even if this act would serve as a stepping stone for more changes, it only asked for equal treatment. 13 years later, the 2010 Equality Act passed, with the purpose to protect people from all kinds of discriminations in society and the workforce (UK Parliament, 2010).

The Equality Now campaign was one of OutRage!’s most central actions, with a major action every fortnight (Lucas, 1998:114). It turned a light on the way they performed their political views in high-profile actions often inscribed in the tradition of street theatre. It also drew attention to the leading reforms the group advocated for throughout the years. Overall, the campaign was a success, as OutRage! was able to get the attention of mainstream media on LGBTQ+ issues (ibid., 119). Lucas jokes that “[i]t left its organizers exhausted, but with stacks of photographs, props and newspaper clippings” (idem). In terms of legal improvements for the community, the success was limited in the short term, but, as it was seen, OutRage!’s demands were met over the next decades.

III.1.c The Christian Churches

OutRage!’s “ongoing campaign against religious homophobia” started in 1991 with the affinity group the Whores of Babylon, created on the 24th of February, whose objectives were to battle “the promotion of hatred and violence by religious organisations against homosexuals”, “stop the silent support of homophobia by religious organisations”, and “force them to take a stand on issues of importance to the gay community” (Lucas, 1998:73). The zaps and performances that OutRage! organised to challenge religious organisations were

202 It was a political strategy to include all kinds of discrimination so that it would be more likely to be accepted in Parliament: “since the Equal Rights Act guarantees equality for everyone, it [is] difficult for opponents to dismiss it as a minority concern or to caricature it as pleading for special rights” (idem). Peter Tatchell had already campaigned for a similar act in his 1983 campaign in Bermondsey (Fern Tomlinson, 2013a: 2:25).

mostly directed against the Church of England and the Catholic Church.²⁰³ The first action was against the “most prominent religious group in the UK”, the (Christian) Church of England, headed by the King or Queen of the country (Lucas, 1998:73). The Whores of Babylon, wanted to make an impact by choosing it as their first target, and it coincided with the enthronement of the new Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey (Lucas, 1998:74). Lucas explains that even though he was seen as a liberal by many for his positive stance on female priests, he had affirmed that practising homosexuality was a scandal, leading OutRage! to question his homophobia, and, by extension, that of the Church of England, as its main representative (*idem*). On his enthronement day in April, the Whores of Babylon organised a zap outside the Cathedral of Canterbury, with around 60 protesters who performed “the burning of gay and lesbian martyrs” (Dave Hulbert in Lucas, 1998:74). Therefore, OutRage! repurposed the popular imagery commonly associated with the Church and made it their own by burning LGBTQ+ people – or martyrs of religious conservatism. In most of its actions against religious homophobia, the queer organisation continued to use features of the Church – its language, imageries, and attires – to provoke its enemy and create compelling headlines. This was the beginning of the crusade against the Church of England, personified by homophobic figureheads like Carey. The direct-action group organised other performances against the Church of England in 1991, including an exorcism at Lambeth Palace and two zaps at St Michael’s Church in the district of Belgravia (Lucas, 1998:232).²⁰⁴

In 1992, they continued their activism against religious homophobia by invading the Vatican Embassy in London on the 4th of August (Lucas, 1998:233). Prior to the event, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, working with the Pope, had issued a document that “referred to homosexuality as an ‘objective disorder’”, adding that discrimination against homosexuals was not unjust in some areas, like “in the placement of children for adoption or foster care, in employment of teachers or athletic coaches and in military recruitment” (*qtd.* in Lucas, 1998:133). As a response, OutRage! had sent a letter to Cardinal Basil Hume, Archbishop of Westminster from 1976 to 1999, asking him if he “endors[ed] the Vatican’s statements” and if “the Catholic Church in the UK in future [would] oppose legislation for lesbian and gay human rights (*idem*). The Cardinal was awaited at the Embassy soon after, and the group took it as an opportunity to organise a zap against the Catholic Church for their discriminatory statement towards LGBTQ+ people (Appendix 44). Cardinal Hume was

203 The UK National Census of 2001 revealed that Britain was mostly Christian, with around 72% of the population identifying as such (ONS, 2015). This may explain why OutRage! focused on them. Nevertheless, they also protested against fundamentalist Muslims in 1994 and 1995 (Lucas, 1998:186, 211).

204 The Lambeth Palace exorcism took place on the 7th of August and the two zaps at St Michael’s Church took place on the 17th of November and the 1st of December (*idem*).

surrounded by queer activists holding placards to denounce the prejudice of the Vatican towards the LGBTQ+ community. Steve Mayes jokes that when Hume realised he was surrounded by queer activists, he cried “sister, sister, this is an outrage!”, which was ironically accurate (Lucas, 1998:134). They also used the language of religion against the Church itself with statements such as “Stop crucifying queers”. Instead of confronting the institution as a faceless, homophobic entity, OutRage! chose a well-known representative of the Church, presenting a clear storyline to the media with an identifiable enemy. This action gathered multiple news values, as it included the power elite, an element of surprise – or shock in this case, it was relevant to the audience (since it is a major religious institution in Britain), and finally, it was a follow-up to their other actions against Christian churches.

After these first altercations, the direct-action group continued to protest against the Church of England and the Catholic Church throughout the 1990s. For instance, in September 1992, they attempted a crucifixion at Westminster Cathedral, advertising the performance with a leaflet that read “Holy shit!” and “Join the OutRage! queer crucifixion and stop their Papal Bullshit!” (Lucas, 1998: 136, 233). Indeed, they planned to crucify a lesbian at the Cathedral, thus making a statement on religious homophobia while creating a sensational picture for the media. Although the police had refused the idea, the activists still made a crucifix that they confiscated and walked on (Appendix 45).²⁰⁵ It produced a meaningful image for the protesters, as Mayes commented on the police protecting the Church and literally stepping on LGBTQ+ rights. Even without the main prop, OutRage! was able to convey their message with the help of other theatricalities: a few participants held a gay man (David Arnold) in the air, surrounded by Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. He wore a crown of thorns, a “Queer to Eternity” T-shirt, and white boxers, as visible on Figure 11.

In this performance, OutRage! made use of traditional signs associated with the Church, from its language (“Holy”, “Crucify”), to its members (the Sisters), accessories (the crown and the crosses), and imageries (the crucifixion).²⁰⁶ They developed a queer, satirical version of it. The religious imagery produced here had multiple purposes: it poked fun at, and provoked, the Catholic Church by twisting their symbols; it denounced their homophobia; it introduced a queer-friendly alternative reality; and it made for entertaining images for the media. A similar action was carried out a year later on the 4th of April 1993 during Palm Sunday, where they successfully put a lesbian on a cross, in front of a crowd of people present

205 Following part III.1.a, it is relevant to point out that the police used homophobic slurs against the protesters such as “Piss off you fucking queer” (Lucas, 1998:137).

206 It is conspicuous that the two activists OutRage! crucified wore this “Queer to Eternity” T-shirt. It could be an intentional reference to the after life.

to celebrate the last Sunday before Easter (Appendix 46; Lucas, 1998:136-7). The same elements reappeared once again in that performance, which was arguably more successful, because it was timed during a “high-profile media event”, a day when OutRage! were also “being filmed for a programme on volunteering, *The V Word*, for Channel 4” (Lucas, 1998:136). The crucifixions met a few news values (the power elite, entertainment, surprise, relevance), making these two performances especially newsworthy for journalists.



Figure 11: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 20th of September 1992 not far from Westminster Cathedral (Flickr, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4544747980/in/album-72157623731662231).

A gay man with a crown of thorns being carried by other protesters and surrounded by Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence.

One of the last main actions against the Catholic Church took place on the 29th of November 1994, a few days before the World AIDS Day (ibid., 192).²⁰⁷ In Westminster Cathedral, the group argued for the preventive effects of condoms on STIs, and especially HIV/AIDS, with their slogans “Condoms save lives”, “Condoms stop AIDS” and the launch of more than fifty helium-filled condoms inside the Cathedral (Appendix 47; idem). Instead of using religious features, OutRage! added their own to the church. These provocative props created a theatrical and meaningful image for the media which touched on two different subjects and how they might relate.²⁰⁸ Indeed, with this action, they drew attention to the Church’s opposition to the use of contraceptives in an innovative way, focusing on its

²⁰⁷ Dated at the 27th in Lucas’s chronology of OutRage!’s protests (Lucas, 1998:234).

²⁰⁸ If the helium-filled condoms made for a theatrical picture, they also troubled the church personnel, who had difficulties removing them while some condoms popped and fell on church-goers (idem).

consequence on people's health: religious morals have an impact on the handling of the AIDS crisis. After this action in late 1994, the group's attention "would shift away from the Catholic Church, and shift squarely to the Church of England in an uncompromisingly confrontational manner" (Lucas, 1998:185). Based on Lucas's chronology of events and the articles retrieved from the website, OutRage! did not specifically protest against the Catholic Church after 1994. The last comment on Catholic homophobia came in a document produced by Peter Tatchell in 1998, in which he identified dates from 1986 to 1996 that highlighted the Church's stance on homosexuality (OutRage! Archives. "Catholic Homophobia." 1998). For example, in 1992, the institution condemned "unjust" discriminations, but at the same time, Tatchell pointed out that it disapproved legislation in favour of homosexuals (as the letter OutRage! received in 1993 also revealed). In 1994, the Church did not support the "European Parliament's support for the repeal of antigay legislation in member states" either, with the Pope describing homosexuality as an "aberrant deviation". Furthermore, Tatchell mentioned Cardinal Hume's 1994 opposition to an equal age of consent, stating that homosexual consenting acts between adults "are morally wrong". Therefore, even though the Church's opposition to homosexuality did not waver, OutRage! decided to diverge their attention to other religious institutions like the Church of England which possibly had more relevance to the British public and could produce faster and more palpable results.²⁰⁹

Hence, OutRage!'s "public attack" on the Anglican Church started in late 1994, when they disrupted the enthronement of the Bishop of Guildford, John Gladwin (Lucas, 1998:193). The queer organisation wrote to "prominent members" of the Church to know their opinion on: lesbian and gay fostering, "the bishops' vote against an equal age of consent in the House of Lords", and the support of the Church 'for anti-gay cults' (idem). Gladwin refused to comment which prompted them to act: protesters walked to the front of the church at the start of the service, shouted their slogans with fog-horns, and threw stink bombs (idem).²¹⁰

OutRage! organised other actions throughout the years, but their most notable one against the Church of England was the disruption of Archbishop Carey's 1998 Easter Sermon.²¹¹ As mentioned earlier, they were critical of Carey for his position on LGBTQ+ issues. In a protest against him on the 20th of April 1997, protesters pointed out his refusal "to

209 This was also linked to their November 1994 outing of Anglican bishops discussed in part III.2.b, which had resounding immediate results.

210 It is apparent here that the Church of England and the Catholic Church had similar points of view on homosexuality at the time.

211 OutRage! organised a few actions against the Church of England from 1995 to 1998 but there is less information on them and they also repeat the same criticism they had for the Catholic Church, with similar methods and slogans as well, like "Stop crucifying queers" (see OutRage! Archives. "Gays Invade Lambeth Palace." 1997).

meet representatives of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement” or the fact that “priests in loving homosexual relationships ha[d] been forced out of the Church” (OutRage! Archives. “Gays Invade Lambeth Palace.” 1997). In an attempt to create a bigger headline and highlight Carey’s discriminatory positions, OutRage! disrupted his televised Easter Sermon on the 12th of April 1998. Tatchell says that the organisation tried to meet with the Archbishop since his enthronement, without success, so they decided to “challenge him” (Amos, 2021:00:48:30). Seven protesters climbed the stairs to the pulpit and Peter Tatchell was able to reach the microphone and deliver his own sermon with the cameras turned towards him (AP Archive, 2015; OutRage! Archives. “Tatchell Stands Trial.” 1998).



Figure 12: Photo taken by David Hoffman on the 12th of April 1998 at the Cathedral of Canterbury (www.petertatchell.net/lgbt_rights/rosecottage/OutRage-archives/gall98.htm#cant_pulp).

Peter Tatchell giving a sermon about Archbishop Carey’s homophobia, surrounded by protesters holding placards.

The other protesters held placards with information on Carey’s homophobic views. Journalist Adrian Arbib reveals that he was asked – presumably by OutRage! – to “be ready” at the front of the Cathedral for the sermon, probably because they knew the attention their zap could gather (ibid., 00:49:00). According to Arbib and Carey, Tatchell was able to speak

for a few minutes, in silence, before the audience exclaimed “Out! Out! Out!” and the protesters were forcibly carried outside by officials (AP Archive, 2015; idem 00:49:30). During his own sermon, Tatchell mostly focused on Carey’s positions on homosexuality and human rights, and he directly questioned the Archbishop’s faith. On tape, he can be heard saying the following:

Dr Carey supports discrimination against lesbian and gay people. He opposes lesbian and gay human rights. This is not a Christian teaching. [...] Dr Carey’s opposition to gay and lesbian human rights. I ask you, I beseech you... (AP Archive, 2015)²¹²

If OutRage! was faced with a disapproving audience, David Allison, one of the protesters, contends that the stunt was not made for them in an article published the next day in the broadsheet the *Guardian*:

[T]he people who attend these sorts of events would take a negative attitude because the very fact they are there implies they support the attitudes of the Church. We were not preaching to that audience; our protest was aimed at the wider audience outside the church. (Miller, 1998)

Indeed, the protest was created for the media, and it was effective since “it made front page”, as Arbib remarks, adding that they “love all that kind of stuff” (Amos, 2021:00:50:45). This action suits multiple news values: the focus on the power elite, the element of surprise, and its magnitude and relevance. For example, the *Guardian* published an article on page 4 named “Gay activists storm Carey pulpit” which included a photograph of the moment (Miller, 1998). A few days later, on the 18th of April, there was a follow-up article on page 30 with Tatchell and Fanshawe (a broadcaster, writer and member of Stonewall) titled “head to head: does direct action protest advance the gay cause”. As both titles suggest, OutRage!’s approach was criticised by journalists, who considered that it was too forceful and disruptive to help the cause (idem).²¹³ Tatchell was also interviewed on TV and he continued to defend the action – “we put the issue of the church’s homophobia on the public agenda” – in front of other people criticising the violent and disruptive method he used (Amos, 2021:00:51:45).

The attacks against Dr. Carey were unrelenting, as this media stunt indicates. Queer activists protested against him as the representative of the Anglican Church to challenge his views, and, by extension, that of the Church and its members. In other words, they sought to

212 This is not Tatchell’s complete address, the video was cut after he said “this is not a Christian teaching”. By that time, Tatchell was already being removed from the pulpit, his voice echoing in the Cathedral (AP Archive, 2015). However, in another recording, right before being carried away, he can also be heard saying in the microphone: “It is wrong for Dr Carey to say that people who are lesbian and gay should be discriminated against at work” (Amos, 2021:00:50:15).

213 Tatchell was also charged for “indecent behaviour in a Church” under “Section 2 of the Ecclesiastical Courts Jurisdiction Act of 1860” (OutRage! Archives. “Tatchell Stands Trial.” 1998). In court, Tatchell defended his right to free speech. He was fined £18.60 and he also had to pay £320 in costs (The BBC, 1998).

reach millions of religious people by putting their agenda on the forefront of the Church of England's priorities. In the Lambeth Conferences of 1998 and 2008, the Church's stance on homosexuality was actually touched upon, with the latter calling for a "moratorium on the consecration of gay bishops and the blessing of same-sex unions, as well as on 'border crossing' by opponents of widened gay inclusion in the Communion" (Vanderbeck et al., 2011:675, 686). In conclusion, throughout OutRage!'s existence, the Christian Churches (and especially the Church of England) kept a central place in their protests: they are elite organisations that hold a lot of power in society and as such, they attract a lot of media attention. They repeatedly used religious features to provoke the Church, cast a light on homophobic religious discourse, and create striking headlines and images for mainstream media.

III.1.d The Media

OutRage! desired to use the media to achieve their objectives, but they were also critical of them, as part of an industry that seldom reported the stories of LGBTQ+ people, unless the event – a protest or a change in the law for instance – had sufficient magnitude (Sanderson, 1995:22).²¹⁴ This is because the media "tend [...] to reproduce symbolically the existing structures of power in society's institutional order" (Hall et al., 1978:58). Journalists usually focus on the sources provided by the people in power because of two practical reasons: they are under a time constraint and they are expected to deliver objective, impartial news stories (ibid., 57-8; see also Temple, 2008:117). Therefore, they rely on institutional sources that reinforce the structures in power, leaving less space for LGBTQ+ organisations, for instance, to be in the news. During the 1980s, the interests and lives of the members of the community were not only untold in the media, they were victims of a societal consensus – the idea that all of society approximately shares the same cultural knowledge, perspective and interests – that homosexuality was a threat to society, following the government's response to the AIDS crisis and Thatcher's traditional view of the family unit (Hall et al., 1978:55). By relaying the discourse of structures in power, media outlets produced homophobic news stories that aligned with their own agenda. Indeed, the journalists' personal opinions and the media's political agenda(s) are at stake here. It is relevant to recall the negative impact of the media's response to the AIDS crisis in the perception of homosexuality. Although members of

214 Here, "magnitude" must be understood as one of the news values mentioned by Harcup and O'Neil.

the community tried to educate journalists from various media outlets, the tabloids “continued to use the crisis as a political tool”, presumably because it was more profitable and it conformed to the newspapers’ agendas (1995:43-4). According to OutRage!, tabloids coined the term “Gay Plague” and they fuelled the debate on Section 28 (OutRage! Archives. “Sex, Homophobia, and Media Lies.” 1997). Right-wing newspapers also used homosexuality for political gains in the 1980s, depicting it through a series of “‘crises’ and ‘threats’”, starting with the appointment of Ken Livingstone as head of the Greater London Council in 1981 (Sanderson, 1995:52). Sanderson believes that the media’s homophobia comes from the audience it is trying to appeal to as well: because the 1980s saw the emergence of widespread homophobia, the media continued its negative reports on the LGBTQ+ community (ibid., 34). A cycle appears, with the media creating, or amplifying, the “threat” of homosexuality in mainstream discourse, fuelling homophobia, and then developing more news stories on the subject for lucrative gains.

Multiple times, OutRage! organised actions against media outlets to forcefully challenge the industry. In September 1991 for example, some members organised a picket outside the *Guardian* headquarters (Lucas, 1998:84). An article written by Rupert Haselden led them to act: called “Gay Abandon”, it argued that the AIDS crisis and gay men’s inability to have children had prompted them to have casual, unprotected sex, in an attempt to give meaning to their existence and live more excitedly without having to care about their future (Cash, 1991; Stannard, 2000). Nevertheless, Steve Stannard, who had already left OutRage! but co-organised the picket, explained in a letter published in the *Guardian* in 2000 that they did it because the newspaper consistently failed “to give credible coverage to the broad experience of lesbian, gay and bisexual lifestyles” and to “provide space for a reply to Haselden”. The newspaper, shocked by the number of letters they received and the unusual picket outside their offices, received the protesters in a meeting with Peter Preston, the editor (Lucas, 1998:85). Co-organiser Dave Bunnett states that Preston was receptive to their arguments and that over time improvements were felt, even though he refused to hire LGBTQ+ journalists (idem). Preston held other meetings with “long standing readers and, separately, representatives of lesbian and gay organisations” which “led to a quantum leap in the quality and diversity of the paper’s coverage of [their] lifestyles” (Stannard, 2000).²¹⁵

215 In January 1992, OutRage! also picketed and infiltrated the *Evening Standard* during their award ceremony, following a homophobic review of Derek Jarman’s new film and “a series of anti-gay and anti-AIDS articles and reports” (Lucas, 1998:121). It is unsure whether their picket was successful or was even reported, but their protest received public support by some celebrities during the ceremony (idem).

Finally, in April 1993, the British queer group organised multiple protests against the BBC. It first started by disrupting the phone-lines of the popular BBC television programme *Crimewatch* (ibid., 146). This was in protest to the BBC airing anti-gay reggae singer Shabba Ranks after he called for “the crucifixion of gays” on Channel 4 (Chaudhary, 1993; idem).²¹⁶ This first action was hardly successful, as the protestors “crimes” were not broadcast, but it prompted them to invade the BBC headquarters a week later (Lucas, 1998:146-7). They were not able to find the newsroom they were searching for, but some protesters were able to enter into the room of the Director General, John Birt, and get “a good photograph of the lock above the Chairman of the BBC’s seat with a poster – ‘BBC incites hatred’” (ibid., 147).²¹⁷ In the following days, however, the BBC released the *Extending Choice Charter* which only mentioned lesbians and gay men once, demonstrating their lack of interest for the reporting of their issues.²¹⁸ Tatchell sent a letter with “a six-page list of complaints”, challenging the lack of reports of LGBTQ+-related issues by the broadcasting company (Sanderson, 1995:22). Subsequently, they received numerous letters asking for improvements. This was also due to the fact that they did not report the March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation on the 25th of April 1993 that had gathered around a million people (Lucas, 1998:147-8). The BBC’s refusal to broadcast the march may indeed be surprising considering the size of the event: looking at news values, it meets multiple, including the magnitude of the event, or the presence of the power elite and celebrities. It is possible, on the other hand, that the BBC did not perceive the protest as relevant for its British mostly-heterosexual audience.

In June, the BBC agreed to hold a meeting with three members of OutRage! (ibid., 147). The members had demands, including that same-sex partners be counted as relatives, protection from discrimination and flexibility at work for people living with HIV and AIDS, as well as anti-homophobia training, but the officials were not receptive to them at the time of the meeting (ibid., 148). Fernando Guasch believed that “[t]he news agenda [was] almost certain to continue to rate newsworthiness in strictly heterosexual terms” (idem). However, it is notable that the Pride Festival of the following year was “extensively covered by all the major radio and television news and current affairs programmes” (Sanderson, 1995:23). As mentioned before in part I.2.b, the community was also more represented on screen, through

216 The BBC defended themselves by saying that the song he performed on *Top of the Pops* did not reflect his views (Chaudhary, 1993). OutRage! had also sent a dossier on homophobic incidents to the BBC and had asked to meet with senior management before their action, but they had refused (idem).

217 Once again, it is unsure whether OutRage!’s action was covered by other media outlets, but the BBC denied that they had entered the Broadcasting House (idem).

218 No trace of an *Extended Choice Charter* released in 1993 was found.

the inclusion of LGBTQ+ characters and personalities on TV shows, the radio, and newspapers. This gradual change led to the normalisation of homosexuality in the media (Lucas, 1998:240).

For both the *Guardian* and the BBC, change occurred after OutRage! organised zaps against them and held a meeting with officials afterwards, supposedly because they believed that high-profile protests against the homophobia of media outlets would not be reported, considering that OutRage!'s criticism held for the media industry as a whole. This is why the group tried to enter the BBC's newsroom and directly address the general public by themselves instead of relying on journalists that do not necessarily defend their interests. However, while they wanted the media to be more open and empathetic to their issues, they needed the media to report them as well, which highlights the ambiguous relationship that the queer organisation had with the industry. They aimed at making a change by amplifying their voice in mainstream media, but they dealt with an industry reluctant to (positively) communicate the struggles of the LGBTQ+ community. Through their actions against the *Guardian*, the *Evening Standard* and the BBC, it is apparent that OutRage! wanted to raise the awareness of journalists on their bias towards homosexuality as a relevant subject. This was a sensitive issue because of their own reliance on mass media.

Conclusion

OutRage! used various techniques to denounce their enemies' homophobia in the news. For the police, they used research to prove their bias towards the LGBTQ+ community as well as provoking actions in front of police stations and cruising spots. To draw attention to discriminatory law reforms, OutRage! prepared high-profile actions, trying to portray themselves as radical queer activists who wish to transform society but also pushing for more assimilationist reforms. They prevented (Arch)bishops from giving sermons and they performed blasphemy against the main Catholic Churches in Britain when they satirised religious discourses. Finally, they zapped specific media outlets to have their issues covered.

III.2. Outing: “A Catalyst for Social Change”

Outing is queer self-defence. We have a right, and a duty, to expose hypocrites and homophobes (OutRage! Archives. “Outing is a Catalyst.” 1996).

Outing is arguably one of OutRage!’s most central campaigns because of its very extensive coverage by the media, its results, and because it was a very divisive decision within the organisation and inside the LGBTQ+ British community as a whole (Lucas, 1998:200; Robinson, 2007:176).²¹⁹ Outing or “the involuntary expulsion of gay public figures from the closet” (Watney, 1991) was coined in 1990 by the *Time* magazine when Michelangelo Signorile revealed Malcolm Forbes’s homosexuality after he passed away (Sanderson, 1995:86). It became common in the US, performed by queer organisations such as ACT UP and Queer Nation (Brown, 1995; Robinson, 2007:176), meant to punish celebrities and people in power who enjoyed “straight privileges at the expense of the rest of the gay population” (ibid., 86; see also Watney, 1991).²²⁰ As Sanderson remarks, “[a]ny closeted politician who supported anti-gay initiatives could no longer feel that he was invulnerable in his treachery” (1995:87). For OutRage!, the tactic was a way to call out hypocrisy and homophobia by the elite who showed support for anti-LGBTQ+ laws (Lent, 2003:40). Officially, the queer organisation only coordinated one actual outing action in November 1994, but they are linked to an attempt at outing 200 celebrities in July 1991, and they were heavily criticised for sending letters to MPs and Bishop David Hope encouraging them to come out in early 1995. The death of Unionist MP James Kilfedder in March 1995 is attributed to the pressure he felt as a result of these highly-covered outing campaigns (Donegan & Sharrock, 1995). At the same time, the group never wavered from its position that “outing is a catalyst for social change” and that their campaigns were justified, successful, and an act of self-defence (OutRage! Archives. “Outing is a Catalyst.” 1996).

These actions show the limit to OutRage!’s influence on the media. This dissertation first emphasised the queer organisation’s strategies and campaigns to put LGBTQ+ equality on the forefront of the media’s attention. However, their outings demonstrate OutRage!’s difficulty to deal with the way they were perceived under pressure, and ultimately, the media’s power in controlling what is acceptable for the purpose of gossip and entertainment, and what

219 Journalist Andrew Brown declared that “[o]f all OutRage’s activities, it is only outing which makes the straight media take notice” (1995b).

220 Outing was one of the main actions of Queer Nation (McCann & Monaghan, 2020:107)

is a politically-driven violation of people's privacy. This final part first dives into the outing campaigns of 1991, 1994 and 1995 before examining the media's reception of outing.²²¹

III.2.a The FROCS's Outing List: A Hoax?

OutRage! started to take an interest in outing in 1991. It was thought that when people are in a position of power their sexuality should be public knowledge, because it would have a positive impact on the LGBTQ+ community (Lucas, 1998:63). It questions the "representation of gay men and lesbians in the media" (idem). Chris Woods reported the moral justification of Gabriel Rosetti – who contributed to a lot of these campaigns – for outing celebrities:

[P]eople in positions of authority who were

- 1) denying their homosexuality while being known active homosexuals,
- 2) using their position of power to oppress other homosexuals and
- 3) enjoying the privilege of homosexuality at the same time. (ibid., 63-4)

The limitations for outing were clear, but there was no consensus amongst the community that revealing someone's sexuality was justifiable, considering the consequences it might have on people's individual lives in contrast with the gains for the LGBTQ+ community as a whole (Amos, 2021:00:43:15, 00:45:10-00:46:00). Lynne Sutcliffe, a member of OutRage!, explains that as someone who was still in the closet herself at the time, "the idea of somebody outing [her] was really scary" (Lucas, 1998:64). It was a moral dilemma that OutRage! could not resolve, so they decided not to organise or participate in outing campaigns in their name, but, of course, members could do so by themselves if they desired (idem). This is how FROCS – Faggots Rooting Out Closet Sexuality – came to be (Brown, 1995; Lucas, 1998:66).²²²

The FROCS members were collecting names, to make a long list of celebrities and elite people – based on the categories made by Harcup and O'Neill – by asking others if they knew some who were lesbian, gay, or bisexual (Lucas, 1998:64). They did not specifically

²²¹ These outing campaigns are going to be examined based on primary sources that mostly present the point of view of OutRage!. This must be kept in consideration during the analyses.

²²² FROCS consisted of four activists: Patrick McCann, Shane Broomhall, Dave Hurlbert, and "Lofty" (Lucas, 1998:65-6). However, in public, they claimed that they "had several dozen if not several hundred members" (ibid., 66).

look for oppressors. They thought that coming out “would remove the stigma of gayness” and help the community (Lent, 2001:206). Lent further argues that the outing “seemed to emanate from a general distaste for those who engaged in the self-oppression of remaining closeted” (idem). This is in contrast to OutRage!’s libertarian activism: this outing was closer to the principles of the GLF, who urged homosexuals to come out (idem). Around the same time the conservative tabloid *News of the World* reported that some posters of celebrities were displayed in the streets with the description “Absolutely [Q]ueer” underneath their photo (Sanderson, 1995:89). The *Face* magazine was interested in a photomontage of Australian singer and actor Jason Donovan, wearing a “Queer as Fuck” T-shirt (Lucas, 1998:64-5). Lucas says that “[i]t was clear that outing was a media story, and that the media were interested in why, when and – most importantly – who would be outed by the gay community” (ibid., 65). Sanderson comments that outing

had all the elements of a successful tabloid story. It would enable the public’s apparently endless appetite for information about the sex lives of celebrities to be fed while, at the same time, allowing the papers to adopt a ludicrous tone of righteousness. (1995:90)

It was believed that this method was very likely to make the headlines. It was not newsworthy in the way that Galtung and Ruge thought about the term in 1965, but in 1990s Britain, it objectively corresponded to multiple news values.²²³ However, before FROCS was ready to release their list, a *Sunday Times* journalist asked Tatchell about the rumour that “an underground gay group was about to out 200 top people in public life”, even if he did not know about it at the time (Lucas, 1998:65). Tatchell ethically agreed with outing and he got involved with FROCS by giving advice on how to deal with the media for example, but he refused to actually be part of the group (idem).²²⁴ For him, outing had the power to transform society: if people were shown overwhelming presence of LGBTQ+ people in different elite institutions, it could help the community demand equality on their own terms (ibid., 66). Others in OutRage! who learnt about the tactic thought that “a mass outing could discredit the group” (Lent, 2001:206). The *Sunday Times* released a story on the 28th of July: “Gays threaten to ‘out’ MPs in poster campaigns”, stating that FROCS was making 200 of them, “including 52 MPs, 8 judges and 12 senior church figures” as well as policemen, “actors and even a member of the Royal Family” (Lucas, 1998:66; see also Sanderson, 1995:90). The group was not as advanced as the weekly newspapers made it seem but the media relentlessly

223 Namely “celebrity”, “entertainment”, “surprise” and “magnitude”. Other news values may be added like relevance or the newspaper’s agenda – if it is a tabloid for example, which is more interested in gossips or “personal matters” (Temple, 1996:65).

224 Tatchell and Broomhall had a discussion on keeping the identity of FROCS hidden, to protect them against legal action and to create a further element of mystery for the media to write stories about (idem).

asked for details: Tatchell and Patrick McCann, whose telephone numbers were known, were trailed by journalists (Lucas, 1998:66-7).²²⁵

However, despite the unmistakable interest in the story by the media, “[t]he tabloids were unequivocally critical of the threat to out” and FROCS was condemned both by mainstream media and LGBTQ+ organisations like Stonewall (idem). On the one hand, journalists were privately harassing their sources for more information because the economic potential behind this story was tremendous, but on the other hand, they publicly exposed the initiative for being morally wrong. Centre-left broadsheets however, produced more unbiased articles, arguing about the method and the reason it existed, with the *Independent* writing that “that gay men and lesbians are prepared to consider using it at all signifies the desperation they feel at their lot” (ibid., 68).

Under pressure and unable to deliver on the promises of the *Sunday Times*, FROCS secretly came up with the strategy of holding a press conference to attract journalists and state that it was a hoax (Lucas, 1998:68). The idea was to denounce the media’s hypocrisy and their over-interest in the story, which was sourced in their homophobia, according to Patrick McCann (ibid., 68-9). On the 31st of July their announcement thoroughly disappointed the press: McCann evokes that “there was a complete buzz” in the room, with journalists ready to make calls to write their story (ibid., 69). He adds that “[a]s soon as it became clear that it was a hoax, there was an audible groan” (idem). As Sanderson writes, the hypocrisy of the press was made clear with this campaign:

This campaign was called out by the press as ‘spiteful and vicious’, ‘bitchy and scabrous’, ‘downright nasty’, ‘McCarthyism’, ‘despicable and vicious’, ‘cruel’ and ‘an unacceptable infringement of privacy.’ “Such excitement – but where was this campaign? How was it to be successful without the help and co-operation of the very newspapers that condemned it? A few posters, seen by a tiny minority of the population, hardly warranted distress on this scale, but the papers were on a roll – even though very little was actually happening. Hundreds of column inches were devoted to outing during the week. (1995:91)

Sharrock, who addressed the story on the 1st of August 1991 for the *Guardian* (on page 3) reported the confusion behind the campaign – “[w]as it always intended to be a hoax or did the perpetrators lose their nerves?”, the disappointment felt by the *Sunday Times*, but also the media’s frenzy for the story. He stated that the *Independent* “made it front page news”, the *Guardian* wrote two articles discussing the campaign, the *Sun* “urged Peter Tatchell back inside the closet”, and Matthew Parris “described the FROCS stunt as a gift to silly season journalists” in the *Times* (idem). He added that Peter Tatchell and Michael Cashman – an actor

²²⁵ McCann recalls that they suspected that they were “being tapped or being traced” and Tatchell adds that “[t]here were always reporters lurking outside [his] flat in cars” (idem 67).

close to the Stonewall association – were going to debate the issue on BBC2's *Newsnight*, and Radio 4 invited one of the FROCS members as well (*idem*).

Lucas explains that “[n]obody had foreseen the amount of press interest, the anger and scale of response to outing” (1998:71). The media’s reaction to the story was such that outing could not be denied as a potentially viable tactic to attract attention on the elite’s homophobia. The attempt showed that there was a story behind outing and the overwhelmingly negative response may be interpreted as a wish – by the media – to keep secret the existence of LGBTQ+ people in every corner of society (*idem*). OutRage! neither condemned or condoned the action and outing was left aside for three years, before being discussed again.²²⁶

III.2.b The 1994 “Tell the Truth” Campaign

The queer organisation pondered once again the question of outing in 1994: the practice was well-established in the US and OutRage! had seen the media frenzy around FROCS’s campaign. What prompted them to reconsider their position was the vote on the age of consent in February, to which at least 12 of the MPs who voted against an equalisation at 16 were known to be part of the LGBTQ+ community (Lent, 2001:206-7; Lucas, 1998:190). The members of OutRage! saw this as a “betrayal” (Peter Tatchell in Lucas, 1998:190) and they established that, for them, it was only morally acceptable to out the elite if they were “gay in private but antigay in public” (OutRage! Archives. “Outing is a Catalyst.” 1996). As such, they focused on the negative consequences of hypocrisy and homophobia on the community. They also wanted to have evidence from multiple sources of the person’s non-heterosexuality (Lucas, 1998: 190). The group believed that they needed more confrontational tactics to face homophobes and such outings were “a form of self-defence” (Lent, 2001:206-7; see also Amos, 2021:00:43:40; *idem*). Their conditions for outing were close to Rosetti’s justification in the early 1990s but the British queer organisation only adopted it a few years later.²²⁷

Therefore, OutRage! gathered a list of ten bishops, “four of them retired” (Duval Smith, 1994), whose homosexuality (or bisexuality) was credibly sourced “mostly from

²²⁶ In their press conference, FROCS apologised to Tatchell and “other members of the lesbian and gay community for using them as go-between to perpetrate this hoax”, presumably so that there would be no consequences for OutRage! (Sharrock, 1991).

²²⁷ Apart from the reasons already established, this change may also be linked to OutRage!’s maturity as a queer radical group which possibly gathered more like-minded members over time.

within the Church” (Peter Tatchell in Lucas, 1998:190). They decided to reveal their names at the “opening of the General Synod in November” (idem; see also Lent, 2001:207). Queer activist Phil Jones argued that this outing was “probably the least exciting action in terms of what people do that OutRage! has ever done” (Lucas, 1998:191). Less than twenty protesters picketed the place, with ten placards naming different bishops and asking them to “Tell the truth!” (see Figure 13). There were other placards about homophobia in the Church, to provide more context surrounding the outing. Contrarily to their other actions, the members were dressed in everyday clothes and did not wear merchandise either: the action was “quiet and subtle” and the focus was solely put on the placards (Lent, 2001:207).

The results of the “Tell the Truth” campaign were immediate: “within a week, senior church officials were on the phone to the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement and to OutRage! suggesting a dialogue” (Peter Tatchell in Lucas, 1998:191). Lent details the productive discussions LGBTQ+ organisations had with the Church as a result of the outing campaign:

[T]he group was invited to meet with a committee of bishops, to submit a consultation document on gay rights and legislative change, and the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement was asked to bring formal proposals to the House of Bishops assembly in January. That meeting produced a public statement condemning homophobic prejudice and calling for a churchwide debate on the issue. (Lent, 2001:207)



Figure 13: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 30th of November at the Church House of Westminster (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4524264648/in/album-72157623731662231).

Protesters holding placards with the name of ten bishops, asking them to “tell the truth” about their sexuality.

OutRage! member John Jackson argued that “[t]he Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement said [OutRage!]’d achieved in the space of a few weeks what they couldn’t achieve in years, which was to get themselves taken seriously” (Lucas, 1998:191; see also the *Guardian*, 1995). For the queer organisation, it was another proof that direct actions worked and the Church of England became a main target for OutRage!, as it was seen before, because they could see change happening. The Catholic Church also reacted to the outings: in March 1995, Cardinal Hume “honoured homosexual love provided it was not practised” (Schwartz, 1995). For Sanderson, “Tell the Truth” was “one of the most effective outing campaigns ever conducted by the British gay community” (1995:ix). Nonetheless, in retrospect, changes were visible in the Anglican Church, but as it was argued in part III.1.c, while it started to accept homosexual officials after the action, it still condemned homosexual intercourse and the pursuit of relationships. It could be argued that at the time, the Church profited off of the symbolism of having homosexual bishops – with others coming out after the action – while at the same time defending anti-LGBTQ+ beliefs and reforms (OutRage! Archives. “Outing is a Catalyst.” 1996).

Moreover, if the Church accepted to talk with LGBTQ+ organisations in the face of a public scandal, the action was negatively perceived by the media (Sanderson, 1995:ix-x). For Sanderson, the press focused on “the legitimacy” of outing” and questioned “who should be persecuted and who should be spared” (idem). On the other hand, in 1997, Tatchell denounced the lack of reaction from the press to homophobic discriminations by the Church (OutRage! Archives. “Outing – the Truth.” 1997). After the outing, he told the press that it was “a very mild and moderate form of protest, by comparison with the terrible persecution of lesbians and gay people by the Church over the last 2,000 years” (Steele, 1994). The conservative broadsheet the *Daily Telegraph* and tabloid the *Mail* “condemned the tactic as ‘homosexual terrorism’” the day following the event (Sanderson, 1995:ix-x), with the former, according to Tatchell, calling OutRage! “fascistic” and “stormtroopers” and comparing them to Nazis (OutRage! Archives. “Outing – the Truth.” 1997).²²⁸ Nevertheless, the *Guardian* was more receptive to the tactic: “it was one of only two newspapers to reproduce some of the names in its columns” (Sanderson, 1995:ix). Throughout the month of December, journalists of the centre-left broadsheet published articles on outing. Two days after the event, in a column called “Everybody’s talking about... Outing”, Alex Duval Smith pedagogically explained the

²²⁸ Lucas notes that although OutRage! was the only organisation to publicly out people in Britain, other groups also kept information on the sexuality of public personalities (Lucas, 1998:197).

tactic and OutRage!’s action, answering common thoughts the public might have. The following day, Jonathan Steele reported the queer organisation’s wish to give more names, including some outside of the Anglican Church. The author incorporated OutRage!’s point of view as well as that of Stonewall and *Gay Times*, which were both against outing (idem). The main quote highlighted in the article denounced the tactic for relying “on the same witchhunt mentality as tabloid journalism” (idem). On the 10th of December, Edward Pearce expressed a negative opinion on the practice in a column named “Keep the closet door closed”, but on the 27th, Bobby Pickering admitted that he “admir[ed] Peter Tatchell”: even if he does not protest against the Anglican church, he is “glad there are gay men who do” and he believes that people should come out of the closet.²²⁹ The number of articles on outing should be noted as a mark of continued interest for the tactic, even weeks after the action.

III.2.c MPs and Bishop Hope Encouraged to Come Out

David Hope’s Coming Out

Their apparent success led OutRage! to go further. After the public outing of bishops, Tatchell, in the name of the group, sent a letter to the Bishop of London, David Hope – the third most senior member of the Church of England (Lucas, 1998:194). He opted for a different technique with Hope, handing him the letter in person, which “urg[ed] him” to come out because it was “the right thing to do” without threats to out him publicly (idem). Indeed, it was believed that Hope’s own coming out would be more impactful and introduce important changes inside the Church (OutRage! Archives. “The Outing of Bishop Hope.” 1996). In January, Hope invited Tatchell to have a meeting, which was “amicable and friendly” according to the latter (idem), and they left “on a very warm-hearted note” (Lucas, 1998:194). However, the journalist Clifford Longley contacted Hope declaring that OutRage! was going to out him (OutRage! Archives. “The Outing of Bishop Hope.” 1996), and the *Independent on Sunday* implied a connection between the gay clergy and Hope in an article soon after (Lucas, 1998:194). The queer organisation’s claims that they planned on outing more bishops, “including a top name”, might have caused this investigation by the media (The *Guardian*, 1995).²³⁰ It led the senior Bishop to hold a press conference on the 13th of March (Lucas,

²²⁹ Pickering went on to say: “I think we need to think about ‘outing’ more as a public service. A way of protecting all of us from men and women driven mad and bad in their closets” (idem).

²³⁰ Moreover, despite Tatchell’s intention behind the initial letter, it was perceived by Fernando Guasch as blackmail (Lucas, 1998:195).

1998:194). He explained that OutRage! pressed and intimidated him to come out and he described his sexuality as a “slightly grey area” (ibid., 194-5; see also Amos, 2021:00:44:40). Nevertheless, in April, Hope told the *Daily Telegraph* about his communications with Longley which had prompted his reaction (OutRage! Archives. “The Outing of Bishop Hope.” 1996).

The *Guardian* reported the event at least three times on the 14th of March, on pages 1, 3, and 21. On the first page, journalist Walter Schwarz addressed Hope’s press conference in an article called “‘Outed’ bishop attacks Tatchell”. Although it can be said that the journalist mostly relayed Hope’s point of view, he incorporated Tatchell’s defence with an extract of the initial letter, and the article mentioned the need for the Church to discuss homosexuality and the positive change that happened following the outing campaigns (idem). Nevertheless, the author also emphasised the negative impact of outing on individuals, stating that Timothy Bavin, one of the ten bishops outed in November, had “left his post to become a monk” (idem).²³¹ On the third page, the article named “Campaigners claim fresh victory on bishop’s ‘ambiguous’ sexuality” reported Hope’s difficult position inside the Church, as a figure who “had worked hard to ensure equality on issues concerning homosexual clergy and laity – often at considerable personal cost” and who had to deal with lobbies “on both sides of the homosexual issue” (The *Guardian*, 1995). The article lamented the conditions in which the Bishop came out, reporting extracts from Tatchell’s initial letter as well (idem). It ended by reviewing the Church’s position on homosexuality and their refusal to discuss with LGBTQ+ organisations in the years prior (idem). On the other hand, below this article, a review of the Bishop and OutRage!’s perspectives was included. Hope was portrayed as “badly shaken and uncharacteristically angry”, “deeply distressed and hurt” during the press conference, and he was “praised” for “his humility, mildness and willingness to listen to critics” as a senior church member (idem). Conversely, OutRage!’s description as “the militant gay pressure group which claimed another success when it goaded David Hope”, in comparison to the Bishop’s column, leaves a negative impression on the reader (idem). As the article focused on personalities and antagonised Hope and Tatchell, the larger question on the Church’s homophobia was left in the background.

Two years later, Tatchell deplored that the media had not firmly questioned Hope’s version of the facts and that they had acclaimed him right away for his coming out: he stated that “grey” was not a sexuality and that the Bishop had not been honest enough about it (OutRage! Archives. “Outing – the Truth.” 1997). He noted that “everything Dr. Hope [had] said [had been] taken at face value by the press” while “the media [had] sought to demonise

²³¹ This was denied by the monk himself in an article by Andrew Brown for the *Independent* (1995a).

[him] and undermine OutRage!’s credibility” (idem).²³² The author mentioned that he had been vilified by the media, the *Sunday Times* naming him “the enemy within” or “public enemy number one” for example (idem; see also Amos, 2021:00:55:20). Finally, he asserted that the journalists had had a predetermined negative opinion on him and on outing, which had led to numerous biased articles that had not transcribed OutRage!’s objectives behind the campaign.²³³

Based on the *Guardian*’s articles and Tatchell’s own review, it may be said that this campaign was evidently damaging for the group as the strategy behind Bishop Hope’s outing was not well-received by the media.²³⁴ The campaign against ten bishops was not only perceived as an attack on individual church members, but more widely on the Church as a homophobic institution. On the contrary, David Hope’s case was framed as a personal condemnation. Moreover, because he came out and blamed OutRage! for it in a press conference, he depicted himself as the victim and the media could easily relay his emotionally-charged statement, which appealed to their audience. Hope was described as sincere, open to critiques, and as a defender of the LGBTQ+ community inside the Church, so his “outing” was strongly questioned.

The Letters to the MPs and James Kilfedder’s Death

In early 1995, OutRage! gathered information on twenty LGBTQ+ MPs who had voted against an equal age of consent at 16 in 1994, or for Section 28 in 1988 (Lent, 2001:208). In a letter resembling the one David Hope received, the MPs were invited to come out on their own terms in “STRICTLY PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL” sealed envelopes in January (Appendix 48) (Lucas, 1998:197). At the same time, they sent a press release to media outlets, without the names of the MPs, to inform them about the action (Lucas, 1998:197). According to Phil Jones, OutRage! was “adamant that [they] wouldn’t under any circumstances say who was on the list, publicly” and Tatchell did not think that the letters threatened the MPs to come out either (Lucas, 1998:199). From another perspective, they put

232 For instance, he declared that the *Times*, had refused to publish his version of the facts in a letter (idem).

233 His point of view seemed to be verified by Suzanne Moore’s article in the *Guardian* released on the 16th of March 1996, which set forth that Tatchell had been “crucified” following Hope’s press conference. Sanderson shared a similar impression in his work (1995:ix-x). Finally, Tatchell’s unpopularity was also evoked on *Hating Peter Tatchell*: he faced a strong opposition to his tactics on televised talk shows (Amos, 2021:46:00-47:30).

234 OutRage! considered it a success, publicly declaring two years later that their “plan [had] worked like a dream”: [w]e wanted the Bishop of London to come out and for the Church to accept and support him. That’s exactly what happened. We created a situation where the entire Anglican leadership felt compelled to rally round the Bishop and give him its official blessing” (OutRage! Archives. “Outing is a Catalyst.” 1996).

pressure on their recipients because of the “Tell the Truth” action in November: it was the context around these letters that menaced the MPs, including the fact that the media was aware of them. Journalists were known for being inquisitive, based on the previous outings.

Initially, MPs did not respond to the claims or contact OutRage! and the letter was not published in the press either (Lucas, 1998:199). Nevertheless, when the media mentioned outing once again when the bishops met to discuss homosexuality in March, Tatchell “drew attention to the letter sent two months earlier” and it made the news (*idem*). A *Belfast Telegraph* journalist investigated the story (*idem*; Lent, 2001:208). If Tatchell did not reveal any of the names, he disclosed that he had sent a letter to a member of one of the Northern Irish unionist parties, “the small one, which you can count the number of MPs on one hand” (Lucas, 1998:199). This led the newspaper to publish a story on James Kilfedder on the 20th of March.²³⁵ The MP died on a train between Gatwick and Victoria and newspapers such as the tabloid the *Daily Mail* speculated that it was because of the outing story (*ibid.*, 199-200). On the 22nd of March, the *Guardian* published an article on its first page called “Heart attack MP ‘received letter from OutRage!’”, in which the authors described the event, gave details about Kilfedder’s homophobic votes as an MP, and questioned the group’s morals and unity on the tactic of outing (Donegan & Sharrock, 1995) The article ended with a quote from the MP’s sister on his troubled love life, hence participating in speculations on his sexuality (*idem*).²³⁶

Phil Jones asserts that following the event, the queer organisation lost control of the outing campaign and the media scrutinised members of the organisation (Lucas, 1998:200). According to Sanderson, there were “many thousands of column inches and dozens of television features” – about the March events (1995:ix-x). OutRage! also had internal difficulties which were reported in the news. For instance, a member declared: “[i]t has got out of hand, [...] [w]e should get back to what we do best, which is issue-based, radical gay politics” (Donegan & Sharrock, 1995). More members took the responsibility of communicating with journalists as well, which led to some mistakes: according to Steve Mayes “a number of statements were made which were damaging, stupid, dangerous, but absolutely understandable” (Lucas, 1998:200). Nevertheless, officially, the group’s radical position was clear and resolute, even if it was in dissonance with that of the general public:

Why should we feel sorry about the death of a bigoted MP? Anyone like Kilfedder who victimises the lesbian and gay community will get no sympathy from us. (OutRage! for the *Pink Paper* on the 24th of March 1995 qtd. in *ibid.*, 200)

²³⁵ He was the leader of the Ulster Popular Unionist Party (UPUP).

²³⁶ The article refers to another one page 2 titled “Tatchell is derided” (Donegan & Sharrock, 1995). The letter sent to the twenty MPs was also published on that day (Appendix 48).

After the commotion around Hope's coming out and Kilfedder's death, the group, and especially Tatchell, were libelled in the media including in centre-left broadsheets like the *Independent* and the *Guardian* (Sanderson, 1995:ix-x). Moreover, "156 Labour MPs signed an early day motion condemning OutRage!'s tactics" (idem). Lent reports that the group fell apart as a result of these two outing campaigns (Lent, 2001:208). The outings of David Hope and the MPs put them under intense scrutinisation and their morals were questioned. After finding a justification for outing in 1994, the mainstream media's unexpected and forcibly negative reaction to their tactics led members of the group to reconsider their position: outing for politically-motivated reasons was considered too radical. Sanderson posits that "the press are interested in outing only when it is on their own terms and suits their own purposes" like during Tatchell's by-election of 1983, whose outing was also political but served their purpose and that of the elite, who did not want Tatchell as MP (1995:99-100).

Conclusion

OutRage!'s outing campaigns show the group's limitations in controlling their image in the media both because of their political methods, which do not align with that of mainstream news outlets, and because of their difficulty at handling over-scrutiny. In 1991 already, the FROCS group was unable to lead their outing campaign to its end because journalists investigated the story, created expectations, and pressured the members before they were ready to disclose the names. In 1994, they were able to successfully do their first outing campaign, which was both covered and criticised in the media. It initiated discussions with (and within) the Anglican church and it was a victory for them who considered their results to be more important than their bad reputation in the news (see Lucas, 1998:240). However, the later attempts at urging Bishop David Hope and twenty MPs to come out – which saw the death of MP James Kilfedder – attracted further slander and scrutiny on the queer organisation. Compared to their "Tell the Truth" campaign, Hope and Kilfedder's cases focused on the impact of outing on the individual, thus moving away from OutRage!'s political objectives.

Outing was a form of punishment for hypocrisy but it was mostly a means to push elite LGBTQ+ people to help the community in their struggle for equality instead of campaigning against. Just like the GLF, they aimed at challenging people to politically consider revealing their sexuality, but the 1990s British media industry put too much pressure on both the

perpetrators and the victims of outing. One must see that the two 1995 incidents were caused by OutRage! for persuading elite people to come out after outing ten bishops, and the media, whose investigations were the determining factor in both cases. Moreover, the media's contribution is necessary for outing: the industry's hypocrisy is revealed through their heavy participation (for lucrative reasons) in its coverage – from the action in itself to the follow-ups – and their criticism of it.

Following the outing campaigns of the mid-1990s, OutRage! and Peter Tatchell never stopped defending the tactic: in 1996, Marina Cronin explained in which cases outing was acceptable and she argued that the organisation's actions led to changes in the Anglican church (OutRage! Archives. "Outing is a Catalyst." 1996). Going further, in his 2021 documentary, Tatchell remarked that

[t]his charge of counterproductive tactics has always been used, you know, against every rising social movement. It was used against the Suffragettes in Britain. It was used against the black Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Most historians accept that the catharsis of those direct-action protests was the necessary spark to generate public awareness about the scale of discrimination and to build momentum for change. Whatever the critics may say, the outing campaign was incredibly effective. As far as I know, none of those bishops ever again said anything anti-gay. (Amos, 2021:00:47:30-00:48:15).

In 1997, OutRage! deplored the fact that the new regulations to control the paparazzis' activities following the death of Princess Diana "[had] only one purpose: to protect the rich and famous, especially the royals" (OutRage! Archives. "Sex, Homophobia and Media Lies." 1997).²³⁷ For them, it did not tackle the "far more serious problem of prejudiced, inflammatory, distorted and fabricated news stories" (idem). They asked the Press Complaints Commission to not only protect the privacy of the elite but to also support LGBTQ+ people who were victims of these media practices by giving them the right to reply (idem).²³⁸

OutRage! condemned an outing as well, organised by the conservative tabloid the *News of the World* in 1998 against then Minister of Agriculture Nick Brown, because he had always supported the movement for equality (OutRage! Archives. "Outing of Nick Brown Condemned." 1998).²³⁹ On the other hand, Tatchell wrote an article on the sexuality of Cabinet minister Peter Mandelson in early 1998, after multiple outings that "Blair's principal

237 Those regulations show that the invasion of privacy by the press (and especially tabloids) was an important problem in Britain at the time. OutRage!'s campaigns exploited that factor.

238 They said that during the outing campaigns of 1994 and 1995, they had been "powerless to do anything" because they had not been given that right (idem).

239 Before the news was released, Nick Brown revealed his homosexuality to the media, similarly to David Hope. He was supported by Tony Blair and the Labour Party and as a result, the overall response of the media to *News of the World* seemed to be negative and not homophobic, which was a surprise to Downing Street (Lashmar, 1998).

electoral advisor” (Reitan, 2003:158) refused to address (Tatchell, 1998b).²⁴⁰ According to him, Mandelson was not a fervent defender of LGBTQ+ rights and “[t]here [was] a general feeling within the gay community that Mandelson [was] not doing as much as he could to help secure equality” (idem).²⁴¹ As a result, Tatchell probably felt comfortable confirming the rumours about the MPs sexuality. Therefore, years after their campaigns, the group continued to talk about the unfair treatment of the media towards LGBTQ+ people and the invasion of privacy when it was for gossip and not politically-motivated, and some members still publicly expressed their outrage at elite members of the community who did not use their position of power to promote equality.

240 Tatchell mentions that he was first outed in “a front page story” by the *News of the World* in 1987 (idem). In the 1990s, the *Independent on Sunday* and the *Daily Telegraph* were interested in the subject (idem). Some months after Tatchell’s article, he was unintentionally outed on *Newsnight* on BBC2 by Matthew Parris (BBC, 2010). Mandelson presumably only opened up about his sexuality in the 2000s.

241 Some people blame him for “degay-ing Labour Party policy” (idem). Tatchell implicitly leads his readers to do the same, as he follows those rumours by writing that “Labour’s 1997 election manifesto ditched key gay rights commitments that had been in its 1992 manifesto, including the all-important promise to outlaw discrimination against lesbians and gay men in housing and employment” (idem).

CONCLUSION

OutRage! believed that to reach their objectives and occupy public space, they could depend on the media to relay their ideas and initiate a discussion. They stood in the middle between two political directions: the New Queer Politics, or the transformation of society following the development of queer activism in the 1980s, and assimilationist reforms. On the one hand, the organisation put queer and LGBTQ+ lives in the limelight, with happenings such as the 1990 Kiss-in or the 1992 Wink-in. Moreover, if they did not dictate the way people should live, they were not hesitant to express criticism towards homophobic institutions. At the same time, they also participated in campaigns to demand access to institutions that epitomised heteronormativity like marriage, which was a point of contention inside OutRage! since some members saw it as too assimilationist (Lucas, 1998:63). It may be said that the organisation was constantly adapting their politics to both be true to their queer roots and to provide visible change for the LGBTQ+ community through reforms, a reflection of the influence of neoliberalism and individualism on activism.

To have their political ideas and actions reported in the news in a favourable way, they entertained close relationships with journalists, they were eager to act as a reliable source of information, and they created an easily recognisable identity inspired by other queer organisations. OutRage! was adamant to show that they were a group of queers, from their merchandise to the radicality of their direct actions, in opposition to the other, more conforming LGBTQ+ organisations like Stonewall. Just like the Gay Liberation Front, Queer Nation and ACT UP, OutRage! made the link between political contestation and LGBTQ+ culture. This was most visible in their actions that bridged elements of the camp aesthetic to street theatre, in which they used theatricalities and humour to make political statements and appeal to journalists. One of the objectives of their actions was to be newsworthy. It may be said that at the same time that they tried to influence the media with their strategies, the industry as well had an impact on the group's identity and performances. Member of OutRage! Dave Hurlbert believed that they had to “do something unusual [...] in order to get any coverage” (Lucas, 1998:19). Therefore, OutRage! wanted to be perceived as a queer group with outrageous actions, even if the scope of their actual demands did not always echo that radicality.

OutRage! had interactions with journalists and the media industry as a system (see Barker-Plummer, 1996:28). Their methods aligned with the economic interests of the media

industry: they provided journalists with newsworthy and media-friendly actions that had the potential to engage large audiences and in return, their performances made the news. However, the exchange was different regarding their political concerns. While OutRage! held radical, self-liberating objectives, mainstream media are more moderate and publish or broadcast different views to their audience. This challenges the positive reception of their actions, especially in conservative news outlets. Moreover, the media do not usually positively portray provocative direct actions (Arpan et al., 2006:1-2). On the other hand, it should be noted that OutRage! did not necessarily wish to be well-seen by the media: the group wanted to be seen as radical. They tried to steer the narrative by producing press releases, voicing their point of view in reports, and being in close relationship with journalists, but the main intention behind their actions was arguably to just be in the public eye, so they were not afraid of bad publicity. Nevertheless, their outing campaigns show that the power dynamic between the media industry and the group was obviously unequal: ultimately, the media controlled the narrative.

Going further than the scope of this dissertation, this leads the reader to question how the media looked at OutRage!. John Hartley, Professor of Media and Communications at the University of Sydney, mentions the way journalists understand the world based on news values (1982:80-2). The concept of societal consensus is central here: it introduces the notions of unity, or “the assumption that we [...] all have roughly the same interests in the society” (Hall et al., 1978:55), and fragmentation, or the idea that there is a plurality of voices and that institutions and people (the elite) hold more power and importance than others (Hartley, 1982:82).²⁴² An organisation, like OutRage!, which demanded change and tried to disrupt the status quo by promoting a different lifestyle, is therefore a dissident voice or a threat, depending on the perceived violence of their protests (ibid., 83). It may be argued that when they organised humoristic, light-hearted direct actions, they challenged the status quo, but when they led more shocking or provocative performances – like their outing campaigns, they threatened society. Professor of Politics and Journalism at Staffordshire University Mick Temple mentions that from a Marxist perspective, “there is a systematic bias in the news in favour of [the] ruling class” and “there is a conscious control over media content by the owners and controllers of the media” (1996:116). Conversely, “dissenting views are represented as untypical deviant or ‘radical’” (idem). Therefore, the presence of some

²⁴² Temple mentions that from an elitist perspective, “one set of ideas tends to dominate, but that this is not a conscious process” (Temple, 2008:116). In other words, hegemonic ideas are covered in a variety of news outlets without much distinction because they are unconsciously held as the only acceptable views, “seen as common sense by journalists themselves” (idem).

dissenting voices does not threaten the overall system since they are marginalised for not conforming.

It is visible that the interests of the elite – and that of the media as an economically-driven industry – are leading factors in the creation of news stories, whether it is conscious or unconscious for journalists. It may be inferred that the political agendas of OutRage! and the media were in rupture: the former antagonised institutions and the elite for being homophobic while the latter defended them and their interests. OutRage!’s dissent was not visibly censored in the media, and the success of their strategies was highlighted by the group’s recurring presence in the news: their voice was newsworthy. They created conflict, surprise, entertainment, and the media found their actions relevant for their audience. In spite of that, their political ideas were marginalised by their own radicality.²⁴³

This work was limited by the time constraints and the access to archive documents, but to go further, it could be extended to the reception of OutRage! by the media, to have more insight on all of their strategies and explore how they worked, as well as the way the organisation changed their practices in consequence. A comparison between OutRage! and Stonewall could also be made: their different forms of activism and political views would be reflected by the media strategies they used. This dissertation contributed to the research on the relation between the media and the LGBTQ+ movement, from the point of view of a political organisation. It moves the focus from the industry to the activists: in other words, it challenges the idea that the process of news-making is solely controlled by the media. Without underestimating the power of the industry, it argues that there are important interactions between activists and media actors that influence the report of events, from prescheduling direct actions and the daily communications with journalists to the making of street theatre performances that directly take into consideration the interests of the industry. OutRage! did not transform society with their ambitious and ideal New Queer Politics, but they were able to make the media report their issues to the British population, and their activism contributed to changing attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people in the 1990s and 2000s and to the enactment of reforms for equality.

243 It may be argued that, in comparison, more conforming LGBTQ+ organisations were seen as acceptable by the media and the elite, creating animosity between OutRage! and Stonewall.

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LGBTQ+ Lives on Screen

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APPENDIXES



" OUTRAGE is a broad-based group of lesbians and gay men committed to radical non-violent direct action and civil disobedience to :

- * Assert the dignity, pride and human rights of lesbians and gay men;
- * Fight homophobia, discrimination and violence against lesbians and gay men;
- * Affirm the rights of lesbians and gay men to sexual freedom, choice and self-determination."

Throughout the 1980's, British lesbians and gay men have been steadily subjected to increasing harrassment and open vilification by bigoted politicians, and substantial sections of the British Press. A steady torrent of hatred against us, and direct incitements to violence, has resulted in a growing number of attacks on members of our various communities. In the past twelve months alone there have been no less than 15 unsolved murders of gay men in Britain, killed for the "crime" of being gay. Britain's archaic and profoundly undemocratic political system ensures that we are not regarded as a social constituency with rights, but rather as fair game for any amount of abuse and insult. Trumped up arrests of gay men for "indecent" offences are at their highest for over thirty years, and it is clear that the situation is getting worse throughout the United Kingdom.

In these grim circumstances, OUTRAGE has been formed as an organisation campaigning for what should be regarded as basic, democratic civil rights. For far too long we have accepted a situation in which we are pawns within a legal and political system that regards us either as an electoral "liability", or else as intrinsically criminal and degenerate. We insist that the law exists to protect the vulnerable. We insist that everyone should enjoy the same rights in a fully democratic society. We

Appendix 1: OutRage! introduction (statement of aims, context of creation) encouraging people to join the organisation (first page). Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).

- 2 -

insist that Britain will not be a democratic society until our lives are valued as highly as those of any other section of the population.

On top of escalating levels of prejudice and violence, which have been carefully orchestrated by newspaper columnists, "religious" leaders, and the Moral Minority, we have also been living through a growing health crisis. As the American writer Douglas Crimp has argued :

" Seldom has a society so savaged people during their hour of loss (. . .) The violence we encounter is relentless, the violence of silence and omission as impossible to endure as the violence of unleashed hatred and outright murder. "

OUTRAGE has been formed to assert and affirm that the quality of our lives should not be subject to the whims of politicians or bigots of any persuasion. We are campaigning for an end to discrimination against lesbians and gay men in all forms, from the field of sex education in schools and the iniquitous Age of Consent laws, to health care provision, insurance, and the right to bring up our own children. We insist that consensual sexuality should be respected in all its richness and diversity, and that this richness and diversity is one of the most fundamental and valuable aspects of our species. We refuse to be treated as second-class citizens, and we will continue to campaign to these ends until the bigotry and prejudice that sadly prevail today are regarded as one of the most barbarous aspects of the weakness of British democracy in the late twentieth century. We are OUTRAGED, and we continue to be OUTRAGEOUS in defending our fundamental human rights as women and men, black and white, young and old. We welcome all lesbians and gay men who agree with these aims to our meetings, and seek your active support in our historic struggle for full, irreversible constitutional rights.

Appendix 2: OutRage! introduction (statement of aims, context of creation) encouraging people to join the organisation (second page). Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).



Lesbian & Gay action to fight homophobia.

History

OutRage was set up by lesbians and gay men concerned at the growing level of homophobic violence found throughout Britain, and the lack of any organisation able to tackle that homophobia head-on. The first meeting took place on May 10th at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre. The 30 people there **agreed unanimously to form a non-violent direct-action/civil disobedience group, dedicated to fighting all forms of homophobia.**

By the time OutRage's first action took place at **Hyde Park Corner** on June 7th, we were well-established. The impact of our **cottage protest**, drawing attention to the scandalous use of police resources against gay men at a time of escalating attacks, led the Met to call off its operation at Hyde Park and to reassess its relationship with lesbians and gay men.

After making a good impact at **Pride**, we were back on the streets on July 10th, this time in **Ealing**. The actor **Michael Boothe** had been murdered for being a gay man in the wrong place at the wrong time. 400 lesbians, gay men and supporters, co-ordinated by Ealing Lesbian & Gay Forum, marched through the borough to demand that the violence ends.

Next, OutRage hired a double-decker bus to ship supporters down to **Brighton**, for the **International Congress for the Family**. On Sunday July 15th, with temperatures in the 90s, we kept up a seven-hour picket on the Congress, infiltrating the meeting and greeting delegates with banners, placards, and the wittiest slogans in years. Helped by Brighton Area Action Against Section 28, we made sure that the bigots of Brighton knew that lesbians and gay men were not prepared to tolerate them any longer. We demanded that lesbian mothers were accepted as real parents, and made sure that Brighton would remember our visit.

To follow up our cottage protest, and to work towards progress with the police, OutRage and **GALOP** are also working on a joint project, the **Lesbian & Gay Policing Initiative**, which aims to bring every lesbian and gay group in London together. The Initiative should provide a platform for future negotiations, and the project is expected to end in the autumn with a Symposium on Policing, which should chart the way forward for relations between lesbians, gay men and the police. And on **August 16th** we picketed **New Scotland Yard** to demand that the police monitor anti-gay hate crimes, an action that received positive media saturation and helped to build pressure for the Met to change its ways.

OutRage is also holding **Whistle Patrols**, which made their debut on July 27th. Since then, over 1,300 whistles have been sold in almost 20 lesbian and gay venues, the first stage in a planned outreach programme to the lesbian and gay scene. As well as a fund-raiser, the whistles are designed to be used when lesbians and gay men are in danger. It's a way of empowering ourselves, something that OutRage wants to see happen.

OutRage today

As OutRage has grown, it has adapted. Our weekly Thursday meetings regularly draw in 50 or 60 people, and we expect to keep growing. Central to OutRage is our decision to be run entirely from the floor - we agreed on a system where everyone in OutRage could vote on all issues, and where nothing could progress without the majority agreement of OutRage members. And although OutRage groups are carrying out more and more work, every decision must still be approved at our weekly Thursday night meetings. **Remember, even if this is your first time at OutRage, you can take part in any debate or discussion, and vote on any subject.**

Appendix 3: OutRage! introduction (history, structure, aims, main actions) from the 2nd of August 1990 (first page). Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).

Clearly it's difficult to run an organisation on this scale through one meeting, and so five Groups have been set up to target specific areas.

These groups are

Fundraising - Demonstrations, letters, publicity and office hire all cost money, so OutRage's Fundraising Group is vital to our success. Meeting every Monday evening, the Group is exploring imaginative ways to make money to fund OutRage's vital work. We are also exploring ways of using Fundraising to raise our profile in the community, and to incorporate outreach work.

Media & PR - OutRage aims to make sure that the media starts to pay attention. Working with the press and TV, we aim to give lesbian and gay rights the profile they deserve. We aim to present ourselves effectively, and to exploit the media's love of 'action' events, and there are plans for future workshops on how we can best work with the media to achieve our goals. The group meets on Sunday evenings.

Action - At the heart of OutRage is our ability to respond quickly and effectively to events, carrying out zaps and actions which highlight our concerns. The Action Group, which meets on Wednesdays, looks at possible actions; plans those approved; works with other concerned groups; and makes sure that everyone knows what's going on.

Office & Admin - OutRage has its own office on the 3rd floor of the Lesbian & Gay Centre, available for use by all members. It's fully equipped (typewriters, PCs, filing, phones etc) and is staffed by volunteers most evening between 7pm and 10pm. The office will be able to provide the back-up needed to ensure OutRage's success, but it does depend on people giving a few hours every few weeks to make it work.!

Policing Initiative - Working with GALOP, OutRage is attempting to bring London's 80 or so lesbian and gay groups together so that a democratic forum can be set up, opening the way for negotiations with the Metropolitan Police on relevant issues. There are plans for a Policing Symposium in the autumn, as well as an open letter, signed by all groups, to be delivered to Sir Peter Imbert in September. The Initiative needs a lot of initial input from OutRage, who are co-ordinating much of the project.

All Groups are open to new members, and we encourage people to get involved in any area which interests them. Ask a Convenor to point out a member of a Group you're interested in if you want to know more.

The Future

Plans being worked on by OutRage at the moment include:

ACTIONS: The Metropolitan Police; Harry Greenaway MP; Dr George Carey, Archbishop-Elect; lesbian motherhood and the law; a mass kiss-in to protest at discriminatory laws.

EVENTS: More Whistle Patrols; self-defence classes; benefits; profile-raisers; merchandising; outreach.

In the end, it's up to you what gets added to the list. If there's something which you think needs to be done, put it to a Group or a main meeting, and it could well be taken up. OutRage's only limit is the amount of time people are prepared to put into it!

(OR1 2/8/90)

OutRage!**Agenda****General Meeting 16 August 1990**

1. 19:30: Welcome and Introduction to Newcomers
2. 19:45: General Meeting Introduction - Keith Alcorn
 - Identification of journalists
 - Identification of police
 - Group purpose
 - Approval of 16 August Minutes
 - Select meeting facilitator
3. Approval of Agenda
4. Finance Report
5. Collection
6. Action Committee Report
7. Policing Initiative
8. Action Newspaper Report
9. OutRage! Manchester Visit
10. Select Prague Delegate
- 15-Minute Break
11. Fundraising Committee Report
12. Media Committee Report
13. Office Committee Report
14. New Business

Appendix 5: Agenda of the general meeting held on the 16th of August 1990. Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).

OutRage!**Minutes from general meeting of Thursday, 23 August 1990**

The meeting was convened at 19:40.

1. Four journalists identified themselves.
2. Minutes from 16 August General Meeting approved by consensus.
3. **Changes to the Agenda**
It was proposed that in future meetings Action items be placed just after the weekly Finance Report, ahead of all other Agenda items. It was agreed, however, that for this meeting the lesbian group issue would retain its place at the top of the Agenda. Motion carried with one opposed, two abstaining.
4. **Finance Report**
No written report was available. The Co-Treasurer, however, recommended further support of the Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners Again (LGSMA) by authorising £12.50 towards rental of a book stall at their forthcoming sale, and asked that this be discussed during the Fundraising Committee's report.
5. **Increasing Lesbian Involvement**
The Group discussed ways to attract and retain more lesbian members, whether or not a special lesbian group is appropriate, and whether or not a special pre-meeting get-together would be effective. It was agreed that outreach to women is necessary, as well as to racial minorities and the disabled.

Welcoming Newcomers

It was proposed that each Thursday at 19:30 the Group spend 15 minutes with women and men who are attending an OutRage! General Meeting for the first time. At 19:45 the regular meeting will commence. Volunteers (including women and men) will meet with the newcomers, either in the meeting space, in the OutRage! office, or any other space that seems appropriate, and welcome them to the Group, either en masse, or in separate women's, men's, or disabled groups, as appropriate. Motion carried with no opposition and 3 abstentions.

Special Lesbian Outreach Meeting

It was proposed that the Group hold a special General Meeting within the next two months, geared specifically to attracting and welcoming new Lesbian members. Motion carried with 2 abstentions.

6. **Action Committee Report**

A report was distributed to members.

The Committee has received a letter from Gay Rights in Prisons, and will consider the possibility of a future action around rights for gay prisoners.

The next action will be the Kiss-In at Piccadilly Circus, 5 September, at 18:00. Volunteers are sought to act as stewards and legal observers. It was announced that there is massive media interest in this action.

The Committee announced that there are three actions in the planning stages:

1. Ealing/MP Greenway demonstration
2. Demonstration at Wells Cathedral against Archbishop-elect Carey
3. Lesbian custody

7. **Policing Initiative**
Shane Broomhall contacted Brian Kennedy of the Gay Business Association (GBA) to determine whether or not the Metropolitan Police have asked them to define which lesbian and gay groups are "bona fide" and to recommend which groups should be involved in the community forum group the police are setting up. Brian Kennedy said no such request was made, and the GBA has no intentions of recommending particular groups over others. Mr. Kennedy has invited an OutRage! representative to attend the next GBA meeting, which will take place at the end of September.
- Chris Woods volunteered to co-ordinate the Group's Policing Initiative, and suggested this de facto committee begin meeting regularly.
8. **CPS Highbury Gaybashing**
A sub-group met to discuss this issue, but reached no decisions. It was agreed that the Group not plan action until the actual court case is held.
9. **Selection of Prague Convention Delegate**
Deferred until the next General Meeting.
10. **Self-Defence**
Discussion deferred.
11. **Action Newspaper**
A sub-group to discuss possible actions against the paper will meet Sunday 26 August. One suggestion is to approach the paper's advertisers, another to produce a satire version of the paper.

The Group broke for 20 minutes.

12. **Finance Report**
The Group has a surplus at the moment. Whistle sales have resulted in a profit of over £1000.
13. **Fundraising Committee Report**
1,340 whistles have been sold to date.

Increasing allowance for whistles

It was proposed to authorise the Fundraising Committee to increase their rolling whistle fund to £410, to allow the Committee to purchase a bulk quantity of 1200 whistles at a £75 discount. Motion carried, 18 pro; 9 con; 3 abstain.

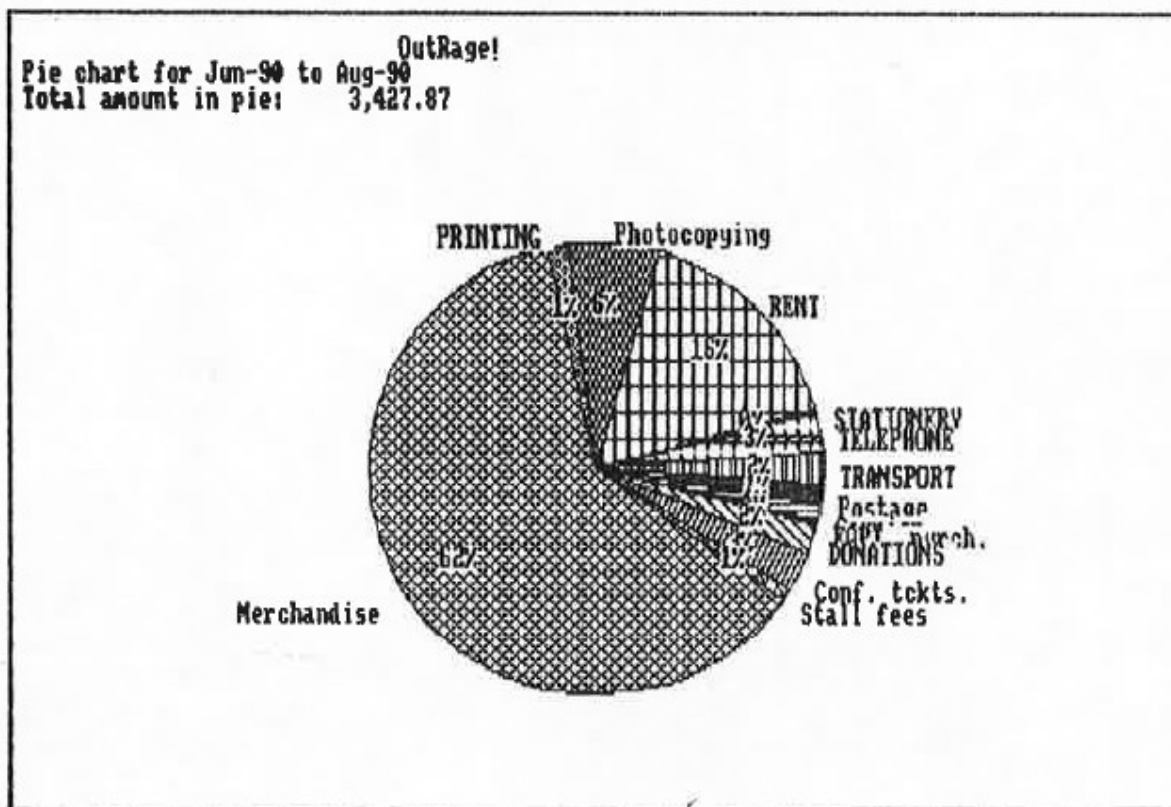
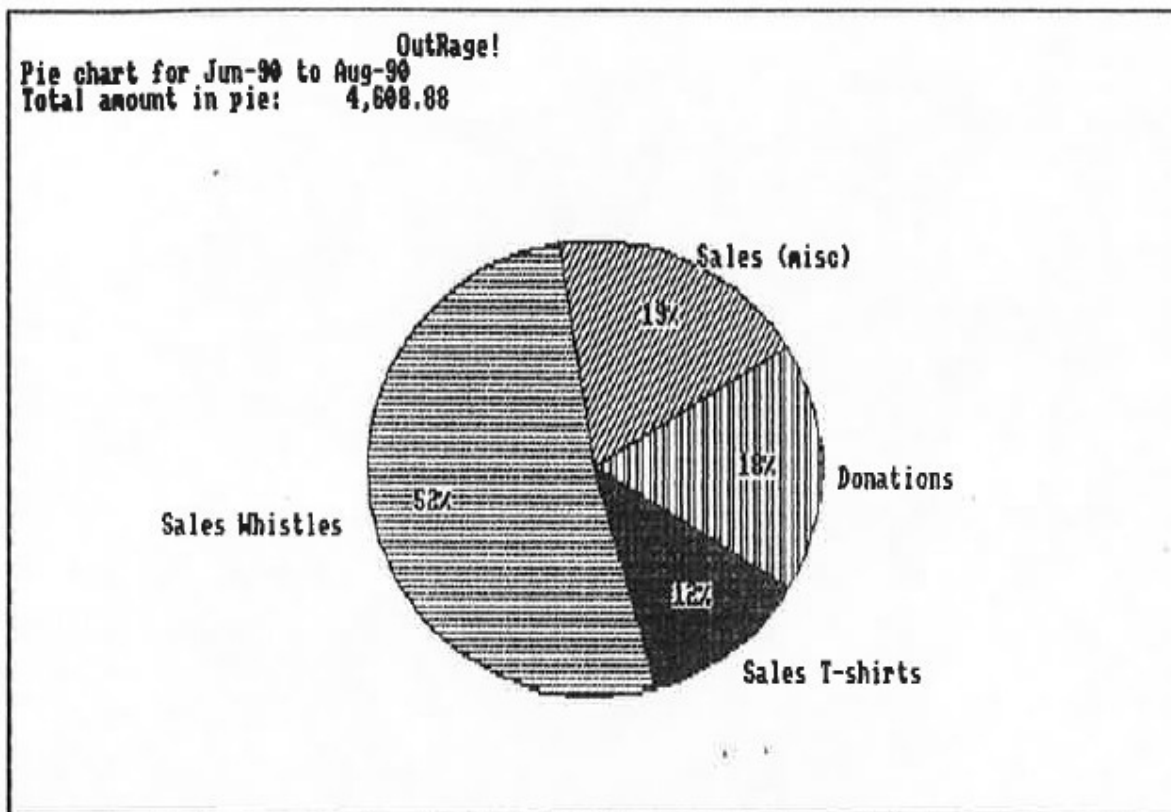
Benefits

There will be an OutRage! night on Friday, 31 August and Saturday, 1 September. Members were asked to attend, especially on Friday night. There will be a future benefit at Manhattan's Music Bar, date to be determined.

Manchester OutRage!

The Committee has been contacted by a group in Manchester planning a 10 September meeting for all local lesbians and gay men interested in forming a group. The Committee proposed sending four delegates, two men and two women, with the Group funding their transportation to and from Manchester. The vote: 13 pro; 8 con; 12 abstain. The Group could not determine whether this was a vote for or against the proposal - whether or not the abstentions counted against or for the measure.

The meeting was adjourned at 22:20.
Minutes submitted by Dave Hurlbert.



Appendix 8: Pie charts on OutRage!’s incomes and expenditures from June to August 1990. Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).

OutRage!

Class totals for Jun-90 to Aug-90

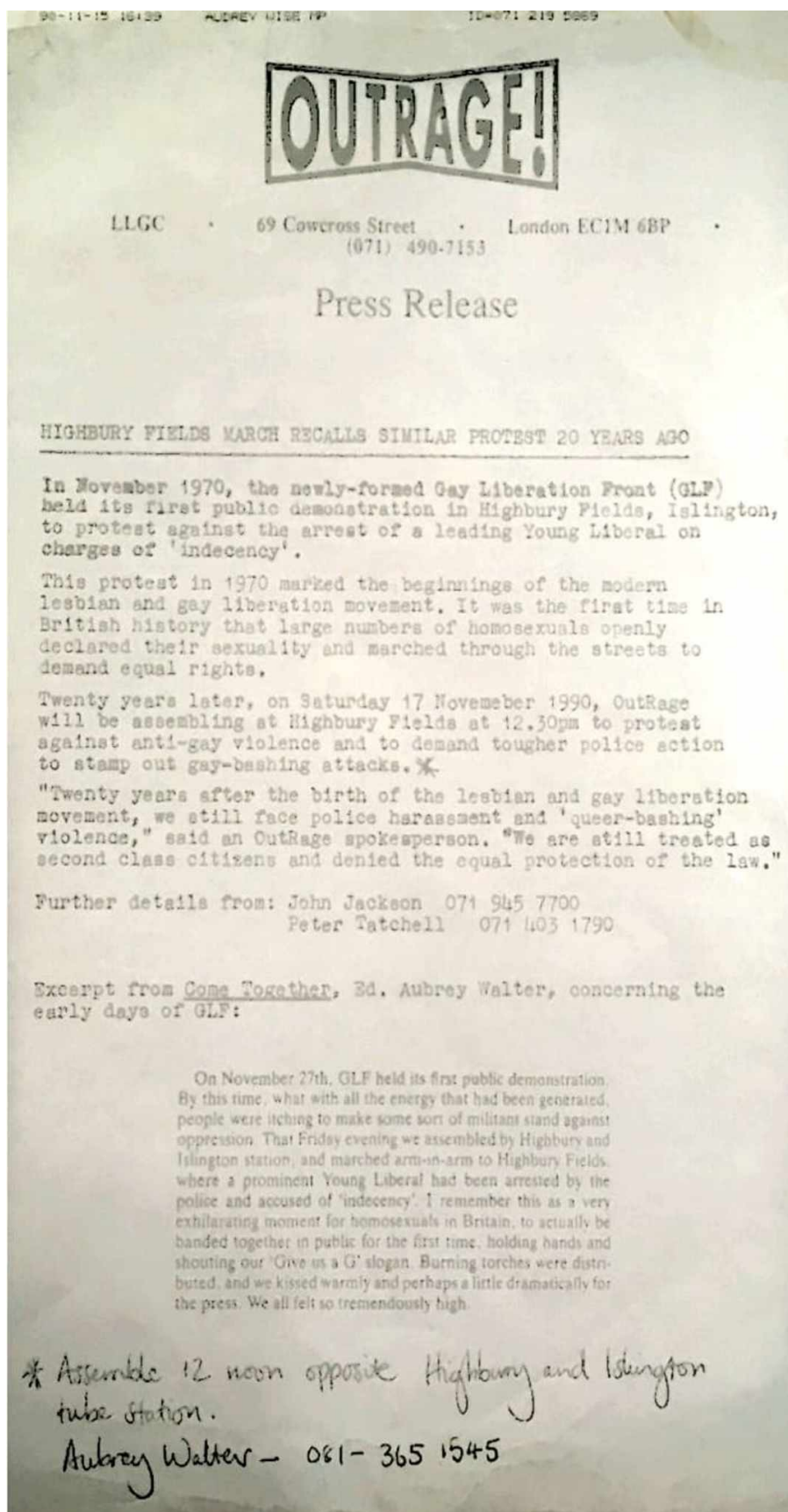
All accounts

All classes

Mark: (All marks)

	Expenditure	Income
TRANSFERS		
CHARGES & INT		
TRANSPORT	78,00-	
DESPATCH		
Postage	49,90-	
Courier	30,83-	
EQUIPMENT		
EQPT, purch.	15,16-	
EQPT, maint.		
DONATIONS	75,00-	
Conf. tckts.	90,00-	
Stall fees	35,00-	
INCOME		
Donations		810,28
Sales T-shirts		542,24
Sales Whistles		2,392,58
Sales (misc)		863,78
LOANS		
Merchandise	2,119,01-	
LEGAL		
Fees		
Fines		
PRINTING	47,96-	
Photocopying	220,00-	
RENT	565,00-	
STATIONERY	11,38-	
TELEPHONE	88,12-	
SUNDRIES		
MISCELLANEOUS	2,51-	
Total Income		4,608,88
Total Expenditure	3,427,87-	
Cash Flow		1,181,01
CashFlow/Income (%)		25,62

Appendix 9: Financial report from June to August 1990. Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).



Appendix 10: Press release on the upcoming Highbury Fields March on the 17th of November 1990, reminiscent of the GLF March in November 1970. Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).

RESEARCH REVEALS ANTI-GAY BIAS

Peter Tatchell has conducted a one-year research project on arrests of gay men for consenting homosexual behaviour. His research, based on official Home Office figures, is the most extensive investigation into homosexual offences for more than a decade.

It presents, for the first time, concrete evidence of anti-gay bias likely in the criminal justice system, with gay men more likely to be convicted and imprisoned than heterosexual men who commit comparable offences.

Peter Tatchell's research is based on government statistics for England & Wales in 1989 - the latest year for which full figures are available.

In summary, this research reveals that consenting homosexual relations between men over 16 resulted in an estimated:

- * 3,500 prosecutions.
- * 2,700 convictions and 380 cautions.
- * 40-50 prison sentences.
- * Among those victimised were 31 men aged 21 or over who were jailed for consensual gay sex with other men aged 16-21. Dozens of teenagers were also penalised: 185 were convicted, 147 cautioned and 23 imprisoned for the predominantly gay consensual offences of buggery, soliciting, indecency and procuring. These prosecutions of teenagers make a mockery of the government's claim that Britain's harsh anti-gay laws exist to 'protect' young people. If that's the case, why are these teenagers being prosecuted?
- * In 1989 the criminalisation of men for consenting gay behaviour cost the taxpayer:
 - * £2 million for 3,500 prosecutions.
 - * £1 million for the imprisonment of 40-50 men.
- * This squandering of public money on the prosecution and punishment of gay men for victimless acts comes at a time when most police forces are facing budget crises, and when thousands of serious violent crimes (including queer-bashings) are being left unsolved.
- * Anti-gay bias within the criminal justice system is indicated by the following evidence from the government's criminal statistics for 1989:
 - * 10 per cent of all convictions for sexual offences are for consensual gay behaviour - though this behaviour comprises only 13 per cent of recorded sex offences.
 - * Men who commit consenting homosexual offences are four times more likely to be convicted than men who commit heterosexual and violent sex offences.
 - * The average police clear-up rate for the mainly consensual gay offences of buggery, procuring and indecency is 97 per cent, which is 28 per cent higher than the average clear-up rate for rape and indecent assault on a woman. This extraordinarily high clear-up rate for victimless homosexual offences is suggestive of a police vendetta against the gay community.
 - * Compared with men who have consenting sex with girls under 16, men who commit the consensual offence of "indecently between males" with partners over 16 are five times more likely to be prosecuted, and three times less likely to be let off with a caution.
 - * Convictions for victimless homosexual indecency rose by 106 per cent between 1985-89. According to the Home Office, this can be partly explained by the decision of some Chief Constables to "target" these offences. Comparable heterosexual behaviour is rarely, if ever, targeted by the police.
 - * As a result, the number of convictions for consenting homosexual indecency was nearly four times greater in 1989 than in 1966 - the year before the ostensible decriminalisation of male homosexuality.
 - * Men who have consenting sex with 13-16 year old boys nearly always get charged with "indecent assault" (despite the boys being willing participants); whereas an "indecent assault" charge is almost never brought against men who have consensual sex with girls in the same age range.
 - * Prison sentences for consenting homosexual relations with men aged 16-21 are sometimes as long as for rape, and often twice as long as the gaol terms for "unlawful sexual intercourse" with a girl aged 13-16.

Appendix 11: Peter Tatchell's 1991 research on the criminalisation of LGBTQ+ people in 1989, based on official figures provided by the Home Office. Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).

OUTRAGE!

LLCC • 69 Cowcross Street • London EC1M 6BP •
(071) 490-7153

Press Release

Monday, 7 October 1991

DEMANDS FOR GAY LAW REFORM TO MAJOR & BAKER

NAPO, Stonewall, OutRage & Campaign for Homosexual Equality issue 'open letters' to the Prime Minister and Home Secretary

Calls for homosexual law reform have been made today (7 October) in 'open letters' to the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary from the National Association of Probation Officers and the three main organisations which lobby for lesbian and gay human rights - the Stonewall Group, OutRage, and the Campaign for Homosexual Equality.

The release of these letters coincides with the opening of the Conservative Party Conference. It is calculated to pressure the government to take action against anti-gay discrimination within the criminal justice system - as revealed in a one-year research project just completed by Peter Tatchell (details attached).

NAPO and the three lesbian and gay organisations are all calling on the Home Office to mount its own investigation into the criminalisation of gay men for consenting homosexual behaviour which, in 1989, reached near-record levels.

They are calling for this internal Home Office inquiry to lead to the presentation, by late 1992, of concrete proposals for the repeal of all discriminatory anti-gay laws, and the enactment of new legislation which treats heterosexual and homosexual behaviour equally and without distinction.

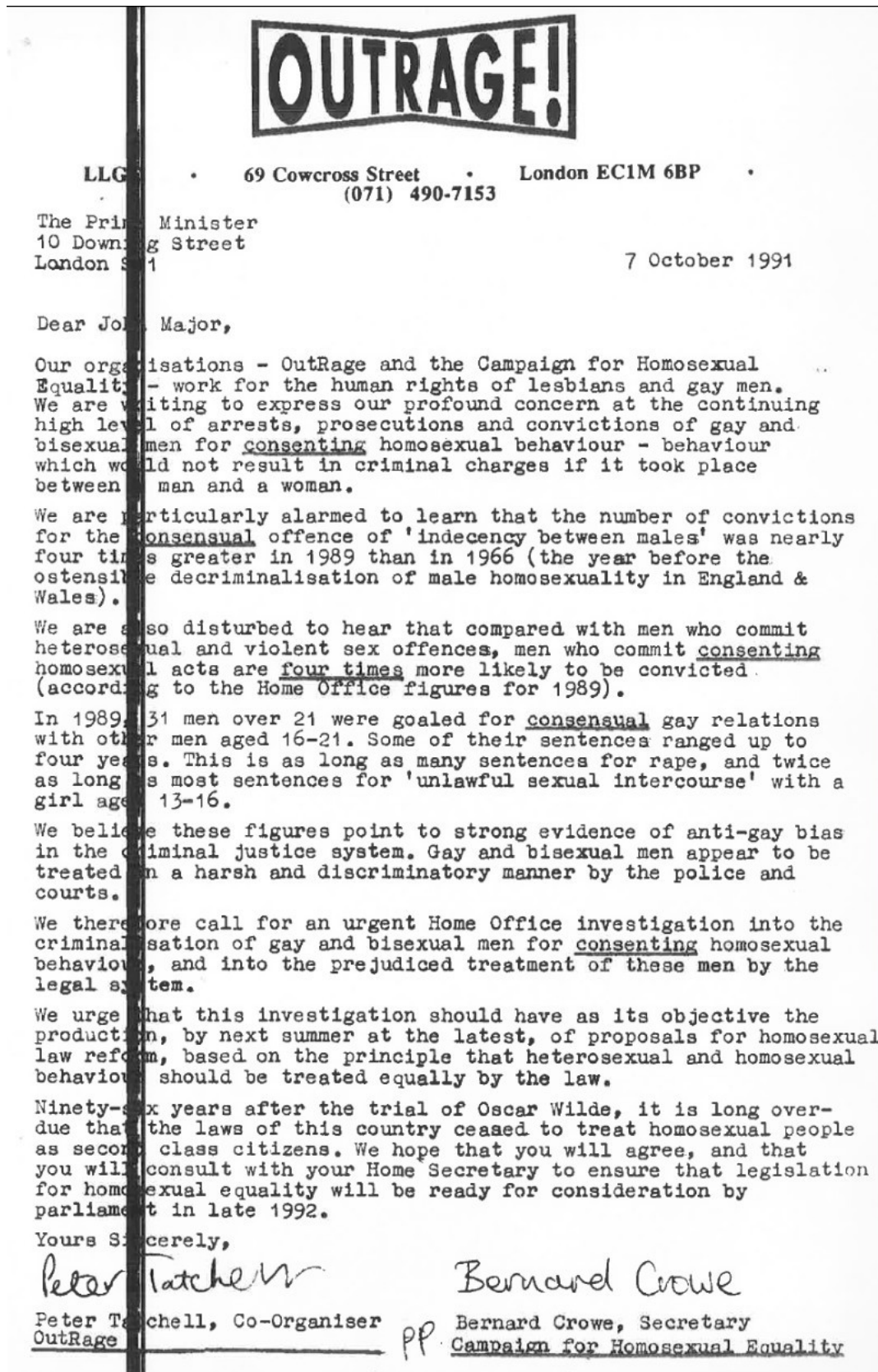
According to Peter Tatchell, author of the research and OutRage activist:

'Gay men are not treated fairly by the law. They are arrested for behaviour which would not be an offence for heterosexual men and women.'

'Compared with heterosexual men who commit consensual offences, homosexuals who commit similar offences are less likely to be cautioned and more likely to be prosecuted. Their rates of conviction are four times higher. They are more likely to get a custodial sentence. Sometimes the prison sentences for consenting homosexual offences are as long as for rape.'

Further information: Peter Tatchell OutRage 071 - 403 1790
Tim Barnett) Stonewall Group 071 - 222 9007
Anya Palmer)
Harry Fletcher NAPO 071 - 223 4887

Appendix 12: OutRage! press release from the 7th of October 1991 demanding law reforms to Prime Minister John Major and Home Secretary Kenneth Baker, in collaboration with NAPO (The National Association of Probation Officers) and Stonewall. It is based on Tatchell's research on the criminalisation of consenting homosexual behaviours in 1989. Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).



Appendix 13: OutRage! letter to Prime Minister John Major from the 7th of October 1991, demanding an investigation on the criminalisation of homosexual activity, in collaboration with the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE). It is based on Tatchell's research. Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).

7 October 1991

The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Baker
 Home Secretary
 The Home Office
 50 Queen Anne's Gate
 London
 SW1



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PROBATION OFFICERS

3/4 Chivalry Road, Battersea, London SW11 1HT
 Telephone: 071-223 4887
 Fax: 071-223 3503

Dear Kenneth Baker

I am writing to you to add the voice of the National Association of Probation Officers to the call from a number of organisations including Stonewall and Outrage for a reform of the law as it relates to consenting homosexual behaviour.

An analysis of Home Office official statistics for 1989 shows that consenting homosexual relations between men over the age of 16 resulted in 3,500 prosecutions, 2,700 convictions and 308 cautions. In addition between 40 and 50 men were sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

Amongst those so dealt with, were 31 men aged over 21 who were jailed following consensual gay activity with men aged 16 to 21. It also appears that many teenagers were also penalised. The figures suggest that 185 were convicted and 23 were imprisoned. The statistics suggest that one third of all sexual offence convictions are for consensual homosexual relations.

In 1989 the cost of prosecuting consensual homosexual offences was approximately £13 million.

I am sure that you are aware that attempts were made to amend the law during the passage of clause 31 of the recent Criminal Justice Act. Your colleague John Patten indicated at the time that he thought it inappropriate but indicated some willingness to consider reform in the future.

The National Association of Probation Officers would welcome a Home Office Research Project into the treatment of lesbians and gay men by all the agencies of the criminal justice system.

The project would focus on the appropriateness of the law, the protection of persons involved in consensual sexual activity, the age of consent and any other areas of discrimination. NAPO hopes that the research would lead to recommendations on homosexual criminal law reform with a view to a Bill in the 1993 legislative programme.

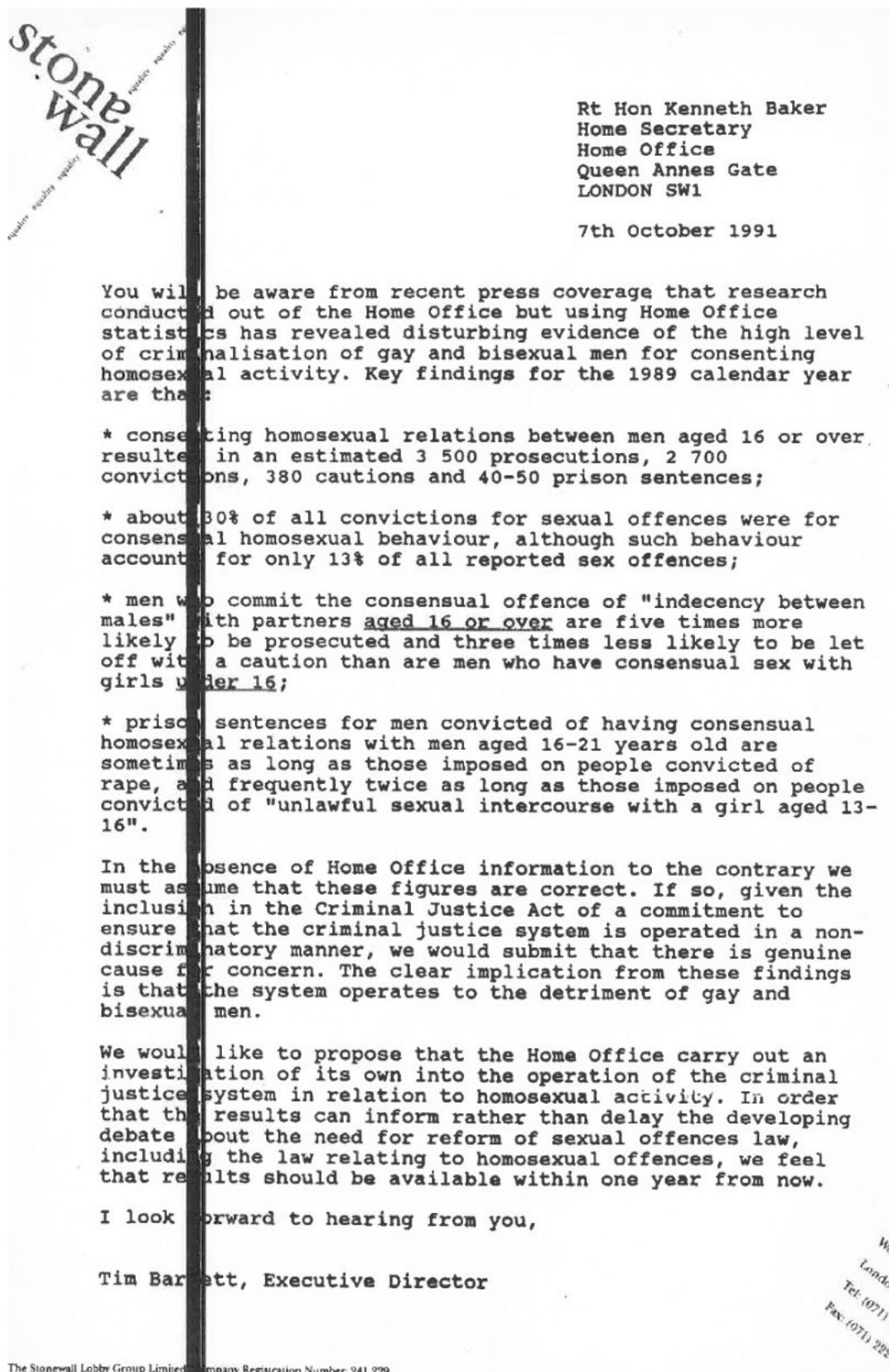
Thank you for your attention.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Harriet Fletcher
 Assistant General Secretary

Appendix 14: NAPO letter to Home Secretary Kenneth Baker from the 7th of October 1991, demanding an investigation on the criminalisation of homosexual activity, in collaboration with OutRage! and Stonewall. It is based on Tatchell's research. Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).



Appendix 15: Stonewall letter to Home Secretary Kenneth Baker from the 7th of October 1991, demanding an investigation on the criminalisation of homosexual activity, in collaboration with OutRage! and NAPO. It is based on Tatchell's research. Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).

Anti-gay Britain

The rights of lesbians and gay men are being eroded: **PETER TACHELL** sets out the facts of a new intolerance

BRITAIN has more laws which discriminate against lesbians and gay men than any other European country, East or West. More homosexuals are convicted because of their sexuality in Britain than anywhere else in Europe.

In Britain, during 1989, an estimated 3,000 men were convicted for consenting homosexual relations, attempting to meet each other, and expressing acts of affection in public.

None of these men would have been convicted if their partners had been women. Some of them were imprisoned for up to five years for consenting, and often loving, relationships with other men aged between 16 and 21.

The total of approximately 3,000 convictions last year is the highest since the mid-fifties when male homosexuality was still totally illegal. It is three times greater than the number of convictions in the years immediately prior to the passage of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act which supposedly legalised male homosexuality.

What we are witnessing is a stealthily recriminalisation of gay sexuality.

Contrary to popular perceptions, the 1967 Act decriminalised male homosexuality only in certain specific and restrictive circumstances. It applied only to England and Wales (the law was not extended to Scotland until 1980 or Northern Ireland until 1982).

It still excludes those serving in the armed forces and the merchant navy. Over the last three years, an average of six gay service personnel have been dismissed from the armed forces every month, some after serving military custodial sentences of several months, for committing homosexual acts which are entirely lawful in civilian society.

Sexual acts between men also remain completely illegal if either of the partners are under the age of 21. In contrast, the age of consent for heterosexuals and lesbians is 16 years.

In 1988, 23 men over the age of 21 were imprisoned for consenting sexual relationships with other men aged between 16 and 21. The maximum sentences received ranged from three to four years.

Male homosexuality also continues to be a criminal offence if more than two people are present, or if the sexual acts occur in a place where other people could have access.

This tight definition of privacy means that sex between men is lawful only if it takes place in a

person's own home, behind locked doors and windows, and with no other people present in any part of the house.

Invoking these restrictions of the 1967 Act, the police raided a private birthday party at the home of Martin Johnson in Acton, West London, in October 1982. On the grounds that sexual activity between men was taking place in the bedrooms, and that more than two people were present in the house, the police arrested all 37 guests (although they later dropped the case.)

The legalisation of homosexuality is further contradicted by the frequent and repressive use of other sexual offences law against gay men.

According to Section 32 of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, it is unlawful for a man to "persistently solicit or importune in a public place for an immoral purpose." Despite legalisation, homosexual behaviour is still deemed by the law to be an "immoral purpose." This means that it is a criminal offence for a gay man to make any form of contact with another man in a public place with a view to arranging sexual relations (irrespective of whether they actually have sex).

Judges have interpreted importuning as including contacts ranging from chatting-up and passing notes, to smiling and winking at another man.

This results in the legal anomaly that it is a criminal offence for homosexuals to meet each other for the purpose of arranging sexual relations which are perfectly lawful. In 1988, 545 men were convicted of importuning.

Other discriminatory sexual offences laws include the statutes against "gross indecency" in public places. These laws apply only to gay men. From 1980-89 more than 12,000 men were cautioned or prosecuted for "indecently between males."

In December 1988, a 37-year-old man was given a nine-month suspended sentence for gross indecency. Arrested again, he was imprisoned for 18 months by Northampton Crown Court in July 1989 for "fondling and kissing" another man in a deserted church courtyard in the middle of the night.

General laws, which were never intended for the control of people's sexuality, are also increasingly being used against lesbians and gay men.

In October 1989, a 33-year-old

gay man, Joseph Stewart, was fined £50 by Aberdeen Crown Court on the grounds that his wearing of items of women's clothing constituted behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace.

In April 1988 Andrew Cotton and Philip Anderson were each fined £40 for giving each other a good-night kiss in a London street. Passing judgment at Bow Street Court, Sir David Hopkin, the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate for London, ruled that two men kissing in a public place contravened Section 5 of the 1986 Public Order Act which prohibits insulting disorderly, abusive or threatening behaviour likely to cause public alarm or distress (the Act was originally introduced to protect the public from street rioting and football hooliganism).

In addition, the police have recently started bringing charges against gay men under century-old statutes such as the Town and Police Clauses Act of 1847, the Ecclesiastical Courts Jurisdiction Act of 1860, and various ancient local bye-laws.

One such bye-law, in the London Borough of Richmond, makes it illegal for a person to remain in a public toilet "longer than is necessary". In early 1989, more than 150 men were charged with this offence in Richmond alone.

As well as discriminatory sexual offences laws, and the prejudiced enforcement of other legislation to repress our sexuality, lesbians and gay men are subject to much broader legal discrimination which goes beyond the issue of sexual behaviour.

We experience discrimination not merely because of what we do sexually, but also because of who we are. Our mere existence and identity as lesbian and gay people, irrespective of whether we have sex, is deemed by society to be a sufficient reason to justify pervasive and institutionalised legal inequality:

- The law offers lesbian and gay men no safeguards against discrimination. It is therefore legal, by default, to discriminate against homosexuals in employment, housing, education, and the provision of other public and private services.

- Lesbians and gay men have no protection comparable to the Race Relations Act and thus, in the absence of any laws to stop people from inciting hatred against homosexuals, it is *de facto* lawful to stir up prejudice against lesbians and gay men.

- The foreign partners of British lesbians and gay men have no right to immigrate and establish permanent residence in the UK with their lovers, regardless of the length and strength of their relationship.

- The Government refuses to recognise the persecution of homosexuals, in countries such as Iran, as a legitimate ground for granting political asylum and has therefore repeatedly turned away lesbian and gay refugees fleeing victimisation in their home countries.

- The importation of homosexual literature into the UK is subject to much stricter censorship than comparable heterosexual material, with the result that serious gay-themed books and journals are regularly seized and banned as "indecent" by Customs.

- The law does not recognise or protect long-term committed lesbian and gay relationships. Homosexual partners therefore have no legal rights with regard to welfare benefits, taxation, inheritance, compassionate leave, tenancy or next-of-kin visiting rights in hospitals and prisons.

- While there are no official legal restrictions on lesbian mothers and gay fathers having access to or custody of their children following a divorce, in practice judges often rule that a person's homosexuality renders them "unfit" to be parents and, as a result, their children are taken away from them by the courts.

- Lesbian and gay couples in long-standing, stable relationships are banned from adopting children, irrespective of their parenting abilities.

- Homosexual school pupils are denied the right to objective and sympathetic counselling under the Department of Education and Science Circular 11/87 which stipulates: "There is no place in any school in any circumstances for teaching which advocates homosexual behaviour", which presents it as the 'norm', or which encourages homosexual experimentation by pupils."

- Local authorities are forbidden to "intentionally promote homosexuality" or to promote the teaching in school of "the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship".

No other country anywhere in Europe has so many laws to repress its lesbian and gay communities. On the contrary, many other European countries now have positive protection for lesbians and gay men in the form of laws which recognise homosexual partnerships and which outlaw discrimination and incitement to hatred.

Appendix 16: Press article written by Peter Tatchell following his research on the criminalisation of homosexuality in 1989. Date unknown (probably late 1991). Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).

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(071) 490-7153

Photographs available from:
 Bob Gannon 071-733 4858
 Jean Fraser 071-254 2474
 Gordon Rainsford 071-229 1680
 Richard Maude 071-354 3357

Press Release

Thursday 31 October 1991

GAY PROTEST AT STATE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

Two gay activists* were arrested this morning (Thursday 31 October) in Parliament Square, Westminster, after they held aloft banners calling for homosexual law reform as the Queen made her way to the State Opening of Parliament.

Shortly before the Queen's State Coach entered Parliament Square, five protesters from the lesbian and gay rights group OutRage raised banners demanding: 'Lesbian And Gay Equality Now' and 'Gay Law Reform Now'. They chanted slogans: 'Repeal Anti-Gay Laws' and 'Legislate Lesbian And Gay Equality Now'.

"We are outraged that the Queen's Speech contains no proposals to repeal anti-gay laws and ensure equal citizenship for the five million lesbian and gay people of this country," says protest organiser Peter Tatchell, who was one of those arrested.

"Britain has more anti-gay laws than any other country in Europe. It's time those laws were scrapped. Lesbians and gay men are fed up with being treated as second class citizens. We want the same rights as heterosexuals," he added.

"Ninety-six years after the trial of Oscar Wilde, homosexual equality is long overdue. We call on the government to legislate an equal age of consent for heterosexuals and homosexuals, anti-discrimination laws to ban job refusals and dismissals on the grounds of sexual orientation, the decriminalisation of homosexual relations for members of the armed forces outside of barracks during off-duty hours, the prohibition of incitement to hatred against lesbian and gay people, and legal recognition and protection for homosexual partners to give them the same rights as married heterosexuals," says Peter Tatchell.

* Those arrested were Peter Tatchell and Steve Mayes (071-831 3633). The other protesters were Megan Radclyffe (071-636 4444 x320), Katherine Lockwood (081-533 5071) and Graham Knight (071-609 8401). Steve Mayes and Peter Tatchell were taken to Rochester Row Police Station. Held for 3 hours, they were later released without charges.

Appendix 17: Press release on the arrest of two activists (Peter Tatchell and Steve Mayes) following a protest at the State Opening of Parliament by the Queen on the 31st of October 1991. Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).

OUTRAGE!

69 Cowcross Street London EC1M 6BP
(071) 490-7153

PRESS RELEASE For Immediate Release

17th November 1991

Contact: Aamir Ahmad - home: 081 673 2180
work: 0628 39151
Martin Harrington : 0932 852747
Ian Lucas : 081 444 0656

Activists Protest Against Scheme To "Cure" Homosexuals

Forty activists from the lesbian and gay direct action group OutRage! disrupted the Morning service at St. Michael's Church in Belgravia, London. They were protesting at the Church's involvement in an American inspired scheme to "cure" homosexuality. *Cherter Square*

The activists mingled with the congregation and loudly revealed themselves immediately before the sermon. The Reverend Christopher Guinness, a member of the brewing family who is running the scheme, was due to give his first address at the Church but was interrupted.

The demonstrators rushed to the front of the Church after Martin Harrington, one of the leaders of the action, took control of the microphone from Guinness. They then blew whistles and displayed placards with slogans such as "God Made Me Queer" and "Why Not Cure Blacks?" while kissing and cuddling each other. "Guinness's scheme tries to turn lesbians and gays straight by encouraging them to hug each other. We wanted to show that cuddling is an expression of our happiness with our sexuality" says co-organiser Aamir Ahmad.

The demonstrators were surrounded by the congregation who tried to forcibly eject them. A press photographer was attacked and slightly injured.

Diocese Comm. Officer
LLCC
Rob Marshall
222-8661
10831-872043
Tim.

071-730-8889
Vicar Prior.
David [unclear]
a m p n
100 congregator

Bishop of London
Rt Rev. David Hope

honorary clergy *expects high standard*

Appendix 18: Press release on the disruption of the morning service at St. Michael's Church in Belgravia, London, on the 17th of November 1991 (first page). Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).

1 '91 16:29

071 831 4468

NETWORK

003/003

when his camera was pushed into his face and another had his camera broken. "I was disgusted by how quickly a Church that is supposed to preach love and forgiveness turned to violence," commented Harrington.

The service was disrupted for fifteen minutes until Church leaders agreed to hold discussions with the activists. "Guinness said that he will consider our views but frankly I do not believe he sees the seriousness of the issue," said Ahmad, "Lesbians and Gays who are unhappy with their sexuality due to the stigmatisation they get from society are turning to people like Guinness. Instead of helping them come to terms with their sexuality, he is telling them that it is sinful and that they should renounce it. When they cannot change their feelings these vulnerable people are driven towards self-hatred, depression and maybe even suicide."

The police were called and arrived as the protesters were leaving and promised to protect the activists from the more aggressive members of the congregation. The demonstrators continued their vigil outside the Church until the service ended.

"I spoke to one of the gays on Guinness's course" said Ian Lucas, "He claimed that he was not yet heterosexual but was interested in my feelings about my sexuality and was grateful to receive details of counselling services by qualified practitioners.

"It is important to realise that this scheme is being organised by the Church of England and not by some of the other churches that are viewed as being more extreme" said Lucas, "We are alarmed that such a mainstream body should have taken on this issue."

No!
Another
mundane lie!

The scheme is backed by the Bishop of Fulham, Rt Rev John Klyberg, but has been widely criticised within the Church. A spokesperson for Archbishop Carey has said "The archbishop would be appalled were the church to indulge in any victimisation of those of homosexual orientation". The Rt Rev David Jenkins, Bishop of Durham said that "there are a number of homosexual people who are so by their very nature, and so they [the scheme organisers] could be inflicting real violence on people."

OutRage! have promised an on-going campaign attacking the Church on this issue.

End.



Please send my unusual merchandise (see over) to the address below. I enclose a cheque or postal order for the appropriate amount.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POST CODE: _____

TEL: _____
(in case of difficulties with order)



OutRage! is a broad-based group open to all lesbians and gay men committed to radical non-violent direct action and civil disobedience to:

- assert the dignity, pride and human rights of lesbians and gay men;
- fight homophobia, discrimination and violence against lesbians and gay men;
- affirm the rights of lesbians and gay men to sexual freedom, choice and self determination.

In the last year OutRage! has:

- campaigned against the revised criminal justice bill (section 25) with a mass turn in of "sex criminals" at Bow Street police station;
- drawn attention to unequal partnership rights (legal and social) for lesbian and gay men with the ironic "Queer Wedding" in Trafalgar Square;
- fought the Isle of Man authorities for the legalisation of homosexuality
- challenged the Church of England on its ingrained homophobia with the ritual burning of faggots at the enthronement of Archbishop Carey, the exorcism of Lambeth Palace to remove the spirit of hate, and argued against the use of miracle "cures" for same-sex love;
- initiated public debate on schools and the plight of gay teenagers deprived of positive help and support by the state education system;
- and much much more....

OutRage! general meetings are open to all every Thursday at 7.30pm at the London Lesbian & Gay Centre.
OutRage!
69 Cowcross Street
London EC1M 6BP
071 490 7153



MAIL ORDER FOR
LESBIANS & GAY MEN

Fab fun additions for your wardrobe



Militant fairies and stropdy dykes beyond
the high street

Appendix 20: OutRage! promotional leaflet from early 1992 (front). Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).

OutRage! T-shirts are made in unusually heavy weight 50/50 polycotton, printed with durable slogans suitable for a range of social situations: on the streets, in the bars, fun for parties and the work-place. Tried and tested by activists these T-shirts never fail to get a reaction.

TRADE ENTRANCE AT REAR

QUEER as FUCK



OUTRAGE!



ESSENTIAL ACCESSORIES

"Queer as Fuck" I.D. card kit: Worn on a chain round the neck, stuck on your hat or carried in the hand, these cards give the bearer radical authority and attract massive attention. Kit includes: card (with space for your photo) and easy-to-seal tough plastic lamination.

The ubiquitous whistle on its distinctive day-glo cord, as a safeguard and an ornament.

And of course Badges proclaiming "OutRage! lesbian and gay action against homophobia."

OUTRAGE!

T-SHIRTS:

		M	L	XXL	£
QUEER AS FUCK	£8.75	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	___
OUTRAGE!	£6.75	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	___
TRADE ENTRANCE AT REAR	£5.75	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	___
QUEEROS	£5.75	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	___
MODESTY IS A CHECK TO VICE	£5.75	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	___
EVERY DYKE'S GOT TO START SOMEWHERE	£5.75	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	___

ACCESSORIES:

I.D. CARD KIT	£1.50	___
OUTRAGE BADGE	£1.50	___
WHISTLE	£1.50	___

DONATION TO SUPPORT ACTION AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA _____

TOTAL: _____

Please return this order form with a cheque or postal order made payable to OutRage!, at 69 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6BP

Appendix 21: OutRage! promotional leaflet from early 1992 (back). Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).

OUTRAGE!

LLGC • 69 Cowcross Street • London EC1M 6BP •
(071) 490-7153

Dear OutRage! Supporter,

With a General Election due soon, it is vital that we intensify our efforts to win lesbian & gay human rights. However, instead of a defensive campaign which merely reacts to the homophobic attacks of our opponents, we need to go on the offensive and set our own assertive agenda for equality.

Towards this end, OutRage! is organising an on-going "Equality Now!" campaign. It will start in February and continue through to the General Election. We are writing to request your participation, particularly in the launch event of this campaign:

MARCH ON PARLIAMENT TO RECLAIM LESBIAN & GAY HUMAN RIGHTS
Thursday, 6 February 1992
Assemble 1pm sharp
Bow St Police Station
Bow St London WC2

It is our intention to "March on Parliament" in defiance of the Sessional Orders which forbid demonstrations while Parliament is sitting. So long as the law violates lesbian & gay human rights, we are not prepared to obey the law. Indeed, we believe that we have a moral obligation to expose a legal system which continues to treat us as second class citizens. What we'll be doing is issuing a direct demand to Parliament to give us back the human rights it has taken from us.

The "March on Parliament" will probably be interpreted by the police as an illegal procession. However, if people are arrested we expect that they will be released later without charge (as happened at the OutRage! protest at the State Opening of Parliament). If charges are laid, we are fairly confident that people will be acquitted since the Sessional Orders do not ban all demonstrations - only those "likely to to cause obstruction or disorder". The police will give a warning, if they decide to arrest us. At that stage those who do not wish to risk arrest, can leave the immediate area and give us moral support from the sidelines. There will be legal cover on the day.

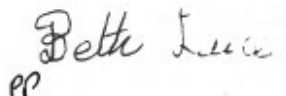
We are dependent on the participation of people like yourself for the success of this and future actions. Please let all your friends know and encourage them to join us.

If you can afford a donation to help to fund the campaign, please forward it to OutRage! at the above address, using the enclosed form.

Thank you for your continuing support and solidarity.



David Allison



Sarah Graham

OUTRAGE!

LLGC • 69 Cowcross Street • London EC1M 6BP
(071) 490-7153

Press Release

GAYS TO DEFY LAW IN MARCH ON PARLIAMENT

Civil Disobedience Campaign Demands Legislation
For Lesbian & Gay Equality

POLICE THREATEN ARRESTS

Margret Thatcher Look-Alike To Send Off Marchers

"MARCH ON PARLIAMENT TO RECLAIM LESBIAN & GAY HUMAN RIGHTS"

Thursday 6 February 1992
1pm sharp

Bow Street Police Station
London WC2

* Film-maker Derek Jarman and pop singer Jimmy Somerville will join the OutRage "March On Parliament To Reclaim Lesbian & Gay Human Rights" on Thursday 6 February, commencing at 1pm.

This march will take place in defiance of the Sessional Orders which forbid demonstrations near parliament while MPs are sitting.

It is the launch event of an on-going Suffragette-style civil disobedience campaign to demand the repeal of all anti-gay laws and the enactment of legislation for lesbian and gay equality.

"So long as the law discriminates against lesbians and gay men, we are not prepared to obey the law," says OutRage co-organiser, Peter Tatchell.

"We are demanding that parliament give us back the human rights it has taken from us", he added.

* Plus Jeremy Corbyn MP and Andrew Puddhephatt,
general secretary of Liberty.

The marchers will carry a letter addressed to the Prime Minister, John Major, demanding that parliament "repeal all homophobic laws and introduce legislation to protect lesbians and gay men against discrimination".

The "March On Parliament" will assemble at 1pm outside Bow Street Police Station, where Oscar Wilde was charged with consenting homosexual offences in 1895.

"Ninety-seven years after the trial of Oscar Wilde, full legal equality for lesbian and gay people is long overdue", says co-organiser John Jackson. "We're fed up with being treated like second class citizens".

The police have warned they will arrest the protesters if they attempt to march to parliament.

"The march will go ahead, regardless of what the police threaten", says Peter Tatchell. "The ban on demonstrations near parliament is petty and undemocratic".

"We feel no obligation to respect the law when it refuses to respect our human rights", Tatchell added.

At the point the marchers enter the Sessional Orders area, where demonstrations become illegal, a pink ribbon strung across the road will be ceremoniously cut by a Margret Thatcher look-alike (Stephen Lind in Thatcherite drag).

The march will conclude with the handing in of the letter to the Prime Minister at the St. Stephen's entrance to the House of Commons, followed by a lobby of MPs inside and a "Vigil For Lesbian & Gay Equality" outside.

The attached briefing - Anti-Gay Britain - gives a summary of the main aspects of legal discrimination against lesbians and gay men.

FURTHER INFORMATION: PETER TATCHELL 071 - 403 1790
JOHN JACKSON 071 - 490 7153 (2-5pm)

Appendix 24: Press release on the March of Parliament on the 6th of February 1992, starting the Equality Now campaign (second page). Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).

JOIN THE OUTRAGE! "EQUALITY NOW!" CAMPAIGN 1992

The run-up to the general election is the moment when the government and the political parties are most open to influence. Now is the time to step up our campaign for lesbian and gay equality.

The aims of the OutRage! campaign are to:

- (a) *Expose and challenge State homophobia.*
- (b) *Pressure the government and political parties to support reform.*
- (c) *Promote public awareness and debate about homophobic discrimination.*
- (d) *Get our demands for equality on to the general election agenda.*

If you believe that lesbian and gay human rights are worth fighting for, we urge you to participate in the following OutRage! actions:

1) Thursday 6 February 1pm

Theme: MARCH ON PARLIAMENT TO RECLAIM LESBIAN & GAY HUMAN RIGHTS

in defiance of the Sessional Orders which forbid demonstrations while MPs are sitting.

Action: Meet at Bow Street Police Station WC2, at 1pm, and march to Parliament; each person to carry a placard with a specific equality demand (e.g. equal age of consent, partnership rights etc.). Conclude with a 1 hour vigil outside St. Stephen's entrance.

2) Thursday 20 February 1pm

Theme: STOP MILITARY HOMOPHOBIA, - Repeal the ban on lesbians & gay men in the armed forces.

Action: Mass application by lesbians & gay men to join the armed forces at the Army Careers Information Office in The Strand (opposite Charing Cross Station) beginning at 1pm, followed by a STRIP to reveal the rejected lesbian & gay bodies.

3) Thursday 5 March 1pm.

Theme: REPEAL SOLICITING LAWS.

Action: Mass WINK-IN at Piccadilly Circus at 1pm and then march to New Scotland Yard Broadway SW1 for sit-in outside main entrance. Exchange of giant cards with names & telephone numbers, followed by frenzied bonking in portable Wendy House.

4) Thursday 19 March 1pm.

Theme: LEGAL RECOGNITION & PROTECTION FOR LESBIAN & GAY PARTNERSHIPS.

Action: Mass application to register partnerships by lesbian & gay couples at Westminster Registry Office, Westminster Council House, corner Marylebone Rd & Gloucester Pl. NW1 (near Baker St tube) at 1pm.

5) Thursday 2 April 1pm.

Theme: MARCH TO DEMAND THE OUTLAWING OF ANTI-GAY JOB DISCRIMINATION.

Action: Meet at Dept. of Employment Caxton House, Tothill St, SW1 at 1pm, followed by a one hour vigil outside St. Stephen's entrance. Action to expose discrimination against Alison Halford, Deputy Chief Constable of Merseyside because of her alleged lesbianism.

6) Thursday 16 April 1pm

Theme: MARCH FOR EQUAL AGE OF CONSENT.

Action: Assemble at Home Office, corner Queen Anne's Gate & Tothill Street SW1 at 1pm for teenage KISS-IN. March to Parliament, led by lesbian & gay teenagers. Finish with a one hour vigil outside St. Stephen's entrance.

7) Thursday 30 April 1pm.

Theme: MARCH FOR REPEAL OF SECTION 28

Action: Assemble at Tory Party H.Q. Smith Sq. SW1, 1pm, to "PROMOTE HOOSEXUALITY", and proceed to Parliament for a one hour vigil outside St. Stephen's entrance.

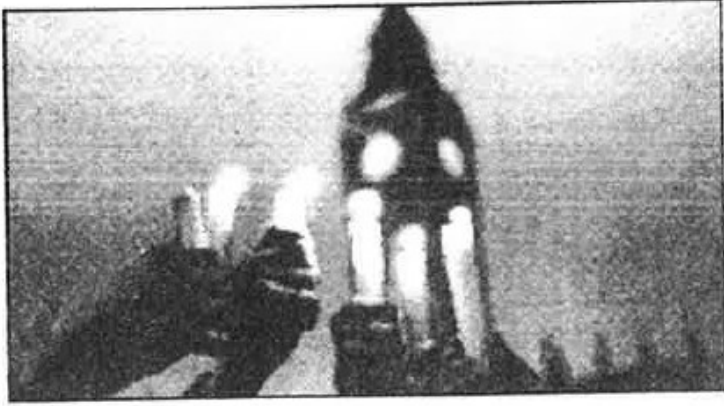
Further information available from OutRage!, 67-69, Cowcross St., London EC1M 6BP (071-490-7153)

Appendix 25: Outline of the program for the Equality Now campaign, from early February to late April 1992.

Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).

known, can we please move forward

Are you satisfied with 18?



One year after MPs voted
against an equal age of consent

WE WANT EQUALITY!

Join the mass candlelit vigil & lobby
Tuesday 21 February 95
House of Commons 6-8pm

16 NOW

OUTRAGE!

Supported by: NUS; Lesbian & Gay Switchboard;
The Pride Trust; Gay Men Fighting AIDS, Lesbian
Avengers; Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE);
Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence; Lesbian & Gay
Christian Movement; UK Coalition of PLW
HIV/AIDS; Lesbian & Gay Employment Rights;
GLF Information Service; Gay & Lesbian
Humanist Association

4 Capital Gay Friday February 17th 1995

Appendix 26: OutRage! flyer published in *Capital Gay* promoting a mass candlelit vigil for an equal age of consent at 16 in front of the House of Commons on the 21st of February 1995. Document retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Accessed 19 Oct. 2022).


EQUALITY NOW!

Join Jimmy Somerville, Tom Robinson & their friends from

OUTRAGE!

at the

"Wink-In"



Repeat the anti-gay soliciting laws!

**1pm Thurs 5 March
Piccadilly Circus**

Stop arresting lesbians & gay men for cruising, chatting-up,
winking, smiling & exchanging names & phone numbers

CRUISING IS NOT A CRIME!

For further details tel: 071 490 7153
Printed and published by OutRage!, 69 Cowcross St., London EC1M 6BP

Appendix 27: OutRage! Wink-in leaflet from 1992 (LSE Library archives, *Google Arts & Culture*, <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/outrage-wink-in-leaflet/PAFJUJwxwFBqGg?hl=en>).

28 = HATE

OUTRAGE!

**SCRAP
SECTION 28**

Appendix 28: Placard "28 = Hate"; "Scrap Section 28" (*Speak Out London* archives: www.speakoutlondon.org.uk/gallery/28-hate).

A typical OutRage! placard: a short message in black accompanied by the logo.



Appendix 29: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 7th of May 1994 in front of Charring Cross Police Station (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4544743090/in/album-72157623731662231).

OutRage! activists holding placards for an equalised age of consent at 16.



Appendix 30: Photo taken by Steve Mayes. Date and location unknown (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4544480002/in/album-72157623731662231).

The main colours used by OutRage! on the banner, placards and whistles: black, white, and pink.



Appendix 31: Photo taken by Steve Mayes. Date and location unknown (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4543849849/in/album-72157623731662231).

One of OutRage!'s banners: a diagonal rainbow, the phrase "Queers fighting homophobia", and the words "Equality" and "Freedom" in pink.



Appendix 32: Photo taken by Sean Smith on the 5th of September 1990 at Piccadilly Circus (*The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/10/outrage-turns-30-lgbt-activists-seek-truth-over-police-role>).

Activists publicly kissing in front of OutRage! banners during the Kiss-in.



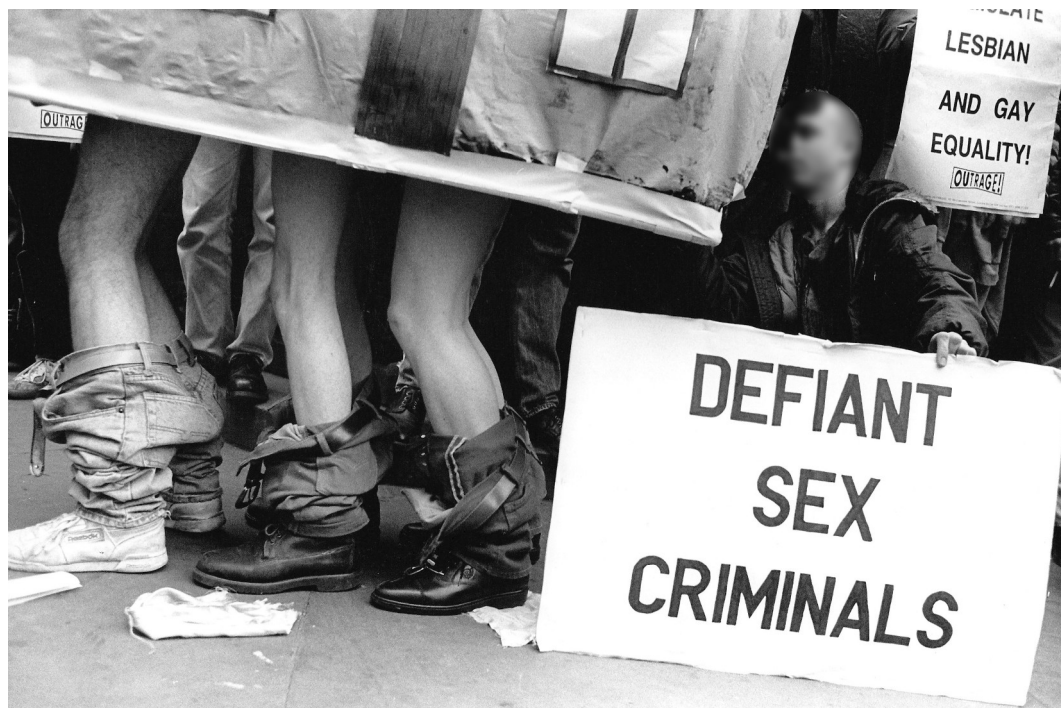
Appendix 33: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 28th of June 1999 in Central London (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4543846405/in/album-72157623731662231).

OutRage! at the Pride March protesting against Tony Blair's inaction for LGBTQ+ rights.



Appendix 34: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 5th of March 1992 at Piccadilly Circus (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4544736588/in/album-72157623731662231).

Protesters holding placards with large eyes or with their name and phone numbers on it during the Wink-in. Another placard reads “Defiant Sex Criminals”.



Appendix 35: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 5th of March 1992 at Piccadilly Circus (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4544734798/in/album-72157623731662231).

People standing in a Bonk-in with their pants down, pretending to have sex during the Wink-in.



Appendix 36: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 19th of March 1992 in front of the Westminster Registry Office (Flickr, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4524268698/in/album-72157623731662231).

Two brides in wedding dresses kissing under an altar. At the back, activists hold placards reading “Legalise Our Love”.



Appendix 37: Photo taken by Andy Harley for *UK Gay News* on the 1st of July 2006 in London (*Flickr*, EuroPride, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/180752762/in/album-72157594185827162).

Peter Tatchell at the Europride holding a placard with the face of Pope Benedict XVI in black and white, with coloured make-up edited on it, including bright green swastika earrings. It reads "Pope 'Betty' Benedict XVI, Queen of Homophobia".

EQUALITY NOW!

**STUFF
SECTION 28
OUTRAGE!**

HOMO PROMO

- ☆ SAMPLE A "FREE TRIAL OFFER" OF HOMOSEXUALITY
- ☆ HEAR THE STORIES OF STRAIGHTS TURNED QUEER
- ☆ REJOICE AT BEING SAVED FROM HETERO HELL

Demand The Tories Repeal Section 28

Section 28 has been used by local authorities more than 35 times to deny lesbian and gay applications for grants and facilities. Many teachers are now afraid to give factual information about homosexuality in class.

**1pm THURSDAY 30th APRIL
Tory Party HQ, Smith Sq, SW1 (Westminster tube)**

printed by OUTRAGE!, LLGC, 67-69 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6BP tel/fax: 071 490 7153
Weekly meetings held in LLGC every Thursday night 7:30 ALL WELCOME.

Appendix 38: OutRage! flyer for the Homo Promo, taking place on the 30th of April 1992 in front of the headquarters of the Conservative Party (*Flickr, Flyers & Leaflets, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4546318480/in/album-72157623916937464*).



Appendix 39: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 30th of April 1992 in front of the headquarters of the Conservative Party (*Flickr, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4543848439/in/album-72157623731662231*).

OutRage! activists protesting against Section 28 with lewd placards referencing famous brand slogans.



Appendix 40: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 16th of April 1992 in front of Westminster Palace (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4523647619/in/album-72157623731662231).

Protestors bending to the MPs with their pants down. Their boxer shorts read "Equality Now!"



Appendix 41: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 20th of February 1992 at Mountbatten Green (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4543834475/in/album-72157623731662231).

Protesters in front of Lord Mountbatten's statue for the right to serve in the Armed Forces.



Appendix 42: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 2nd of April 1992 in front of New Scotland Yard (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4544741218/in/album-72157623731662231).

Protesters picketing for police officer Alison Halford, victim of homophobia and discrimination at work.



Appendix 43: Photo taken by Steve Mayes in November or December 1992 at the Royal Mail House in Old Street, London (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4526077085/in/album-72157623731662231).

OutRage! invading the Royal Mail House for discriminating against LGBTQ+ workers.



Appendix 44: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 4th of August 1992 at the Vatican Embassy in London (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4544469264/in/album-72157623731662231).

OutRage! members surrounding Cardinal Hume with placard denouncing homophobia.



Appendix 45: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 20th of September 1992 at Westminster Cathedral (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4544755712/in/album-72157623731662231>).

Police officers standing on a cross made by OutRage! to protest against the Catholic Church.



Appendix 46: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 4th of April 1993, in front of Westminster Cathedral (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4544100381/in/album72157623731662231).

A lesbian crucified in front of Westminster Cathedral, surrounded by Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence and placards denouncing the Vatican and the Pope's homophobia.



Appendix 47: Photo taken by Steve Mayes on the 29th of November 1994, inside Westminster Cathedral (*Flickr*, Protests from 1990, www.flickr.com/photos/outrage/4544115291/in/album-72157623731662231).

OutRage! members disrupting a Church service with helium-filled condoms and placards arguing for the use of protections to fight HIV/AIDS.

MPs have duty to come out, says OutRage!

Letters urge homosexuals to make morally responsible choice to 'live with integrity'

This is the full text of the letter sent by OutRage! to 20 MPs:

OUTRAGE! has received information which suggests that you may be gay or bisexual. This information comes from sources which we believe to be reliable and credible.

We urge you to make the morally responsible choice to come out voluntarily.

There is nothing wrong with being lesbian, gay or bisexual. Hiding one's homosexuality reinforces the idea that to be gay is shameful.

This adds to prejudice which promotes intolerance,

encourages discriminatory laws, and gives legitimacy to homophobes and queer-bashers.

With so few gay public figures being truthful about their sexuality, many homosexuals find the pain of isolation is intensified and can develop feelings of low self-esteem.

Closeted politicians deprive vulnerable lesbian and gay teenagers of positive role models when they are trying to come to terms with their sexuality.

More openly gay public figures would boost these young people's self-confidence and prevent the psy-

chological damage which often leads to depression and attempted suicide.

Fear of "coming out" is far worse than the consequences. It need not damage an MP's political career. Indeed, being honest can contribute to a reputation for courage and integrity.

Since Chris Smith MP came out, his majority has increased tenfold and he has been steadily promoted within the shadow cabinet.

John Major has said that being gay is no bar to an MP holding a ministerial position in his government.

Many people will rightly ask: if an MP is not being truthful about their sexuality, what else are they not being truthful about?

The vast majority of voters respect honesty and the po-

tential loss of votes from a declining number of bigots is likely to be outweighed by the support of broad-minded electors.

Coming out removes the stress of leading a double life and the fear of exposure by political opponents and the press.

Secrecy and sexual dishonesty offer great opportunities for the media to sensationalise an MP's private life. Being open allows gay MPs to lead honest and dignified lives and denies the press the scope for scandal-mongering.

As Michael Brown MP has recently stated, "coming out" has lifted a great psychological burden.

The adverse consequences he feared have not materialised. He now wishes he had come out a long time ago!

MPs contemplating coming out may wish to consider doing so with several of their colleagues, thus removing the possibility of an individual being a target of the tabloids.

Once there are several openly gay MPs in Parliament, voters will judge them on their policies, not on their sexual orientation.

Coming out is empowering and fulfilling. *It is the ethically right thing to do.*

You have a duty to yourself for your peace of mind, as well as a moral obligation to other lesbians and gay men, to be open about your sexuality.

We wish you the personal strength and courage to live your life with openness, honesty and integrity.

OutRage!

Appendix 48: Article from the *Guardian* published on the 22nd of March 1994.

OutRage!'s letter sent to 20 MPs, urging them to come out.

Appendix 49: Lists of Organisations and Activists

LGBTQ+ Organisations Mentioned in this Dissertation

ACT UP (London): Founded in 1989. “ACT UP London is a diverse, non-partisan group of individuals united in anger and committed to direct action to end the HIV pandemic, along with the broader inequalities and injustices that perpetuate it.” (<https://actuplondon.wordpress.com/about/>)

Albany Trust: Founded in 1958. “Albany Trust is a specialist counselling and psychotherapy charity, focusing on a positive approach to sexuality and relationships.” (<https://www.albanytrust.org>)

Black Gay Men’s Advisory Group (BGMAG): Founded in 2003. It “was an organisation for black gay men. It was founded in 2003 to advise health workers and organisations but activities expanded to a variety of ‘life chances’ and related services.” (https://lgbthistoryuk.org/wiki/Black_Gay_Men%27s_Advisory_Group).

Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE): Founded in 1964. “It played a key part in the campaigns leading up to the decriminalisation of male homosexual activities in 1967. Thereafter it broadened its activity, and in 1969 it was renamed the Committee for Homosexual Equality.” (<https://www.c-h-e.org.uk/>)

Gay Liberation Front (GLF UK): 1970-1973. “In 1970 an LSE student founded the UK branch of the Gay Liberation Front, a protest group that demanded equal rights for LGBT people, and for all.” (<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsehistory/2023/04/25/the-gay-liberation-front/>)

Gay London Police Monitoring Group (GALOP): Founded in 1982. “[T]he Gay London Police Monitoring Group was created, in part to expose the systematic harassment of the gay and lesbian communities by the police, but also to educate those communities about their rights.” (<https://galop.org.uk/about/history/>) Now called GALOP – the LGBTQ+ anti-abuse charity.

Homosexual Law Reform Society (HLRS): 1958-1962 “The Homosexual Law Reform Society (HLRS) was formed in 1958 to campaign for the Government to implement reforms recommended by the Wolfenden Report, published the previous year.” (<https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/>)

[relationships/collections1/sexual-offences-act-1967/homosexual-law-reform-society-pamphlet](#))

International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA): Founded in 1978. “ILGA-Europe are an independent, international non-governmental umbrella organisation uniting over 700 organisations from 54 countries across Europe and Central Asia.” (<https://www.ilga-europe.org/about-us/who-we-are>)

Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG): Founded in 1998. “J-FLAG is a human rights and social justice organisation which advocates for the rights, livelihood and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Jamaica.” (<https://www.equalityjamaica.org>)

Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (LGCM): Founded in 1976. “We believe that expressing our gender and sexuality with integrity is important as a way to grow in love and discipleship; we long for the day when Christians fully accept, welcome, affirm and offer equality to everyone in their diversity.” (<https://www.onebodyonefaith.org.uk/about-us/>). Now called OneBodyOneFaith.

Lesbian Avengers (London): Founded in 1994. Mostly active in 1994-5. “[T]he Lesbian Avengers were a direct action group focused on lesbian visibility and survival.” (<http://www.lesbianavengers.com/about.shtml>)

Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM): Founded in 1984. “Founding members Mike Jackson and Mark Ashton had organised a bucket collection to support the striking miners on the June 1984 London Pride march and decided that more needed to be done to raise awareness of the miners’ cause in the London lesbian and gay community.” (<http://lgsm.org/about-lgsm>)

Organisation for Lesbian and Gay Action (OLGA): 1987-early 1990s. Formed as a result of the late 1980s anti-LGBTQ+ reform and sentiment felt by the community in the UK. The group asked for legislative change and was especially known for organising large demonstrations in 1988-89 (Lent, 2001:200-1).

OutRage! (London): 1990-2011. “OutRage! is a broad based group of queers committed to radical, non-violent direct action and civil disobedience.” (<https://outrage.org.uk/about>)

Queer Nation: Founded in 1990. “Queer Nation is a direct action group dedicated to ending discrimination, violence and repression against the LGBT community.” (<https://queernationny.org/history>)

Rank Outsiders: Founded in 1991. “An organisation that supported many veterans” part of the LGBTQ+ community who had been “forced to resign from the army.” (<https://www.attitude.co.uk/culture/film-tv/rank-outsiders-forced-out-documentary-sky-army-436971>). Later renamed the Armed Forces Lesbian and Gay Association (AFLaGA).

Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence: Founded in 1979. “The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence® are a leading-edge Order of queer and trans nuns. We believe all people have a right to express their unique joy and beauty.” (<https://www.thesisters.org>)

Stonewall: Founded in 1990. “At Stonewall, we stand for lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning and ace (LGBTQ+) people everywhere. We imagine a world where all LGBTQ+ people are free to be themselves and we can live our lives to the full.” (<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/what-we-stand-for>)

Switchboard LGBT+ Helpline: Founded in 1974. “We have provided support and information to millions of people since our phone started ringing in 1974. Throughout our history, we have been at the forefront of supporting our communities in facing the issues of the day.” (<https://switchboard.lgbt/about-us>)

OutRage! Members

The members on the following lists were activists who took part in the history of OutRage! by participating in (at least) one meeting or protest. The lists were based on Ian Lucas’s *OutRage!: An Oral History* (1998), the posts available on OutRage!’s website, and the archive documents retrieved from the Hall & Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics and Political Science (Appendixes 1-26).

OutRage! members mentioned in this dissertation

Keith Alcorn; David Allison; David Arnold; John Beeson; Dave Bunnett; Nick Cave; Marina Cronin; Fernando Guasch; Sarah Hews; Dave Hurlbert; John Jackson; Alan Jarman;

Derek Jarman; Adam Jeanes; Phil Jones; Graham Knight; Brett Lock; Steve Mayes; Martin Maynard; Patrick McCann; Lisa Power; Megan Radcliffe; Steve Stannard; Lynne Sutcliffe; Peter Tatchell; Chris Woods; Simon Watney.

Other members of OutRage!

Ahmed Aamir; Ajay; Stuart Colley; Steve Cook; DICE; Simon Edge; Sarah Graham; Martin Harrington; Toby Hopkins; Rob Kemp; Kevin; James Kierney; Edward King; Beth Lane; Katherine Lockwood; Aubrey Walter.