

Creating feminist culture: Australian rural lesbian-separatist communities in the 1970s and 1980s

The emergence of the women's movement in Australia in the late 1960s and early 1970s opened up new opportunities for the creation of lesbian communities. While these were predominantly urban, the 1970s also saw the creation of rural womenslands. Part of a transnational phenomenon in this period, these rural communities were built on feminist commitments to separatism, collectivity and the forging of a lesbian culture which also defined similar communities in the US and across Europe. However, despite their common ideological origins, rural lesbian-separatist communities were also shaped in significant ways by their local context and this article will explore the ways in which regional differences, such as the harsh physical environment and the remote location, defined the Australian womenslands. Tracing the tensions between the urban and the rural in Australian lesbian feminist theory and practice, the role of the womenslands in the development of lesbian feminist ideology and their symbolic importance in Australian lesbian feminist culture will be explored.

The late 1960s had witnessed an upsurge in radical left activism in Australia, fostered by the counter-culture, and women participated in a range of protests against Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, in support of Aboriginal land rights and other issues. However, by 1969, women in Australia, as elsewhere, were becoming increasingly frustrated with the failure of the Left to recognise gender inequalities and began to form women-only groups to explore the ways in which they were uniquely oppressed as women. Early Australian feminist activism in this period focused on issues such as equal pay, abortion rights, free child care, and women's freedom of movement in the public sphere, but a number of broader values emerged which mirrored those of the international movement. Many women's movement activities were planned and carried out in women-only contexts, reflecting a desire to develop a political agenda

in an environment where women did not have to share or cede the floor to men. Early feminist networks were often structured around consciousness-raising groups, which encouraged women to explore the ways in which the challenges and frustrations of their daily personal lives were shared in common with other women and could form the basis of a broader political claim. Finally, in an attempt to move away from the hierarchical structures that existed in patriarchal society, women's movement activities were organised collectively, and groups sought to reach decisions by debate and consensus.¹

The emphasis on women-only spaces and activism for women's rights meant that the women's movement offered an attractive and supportive space for women who already identified as lesbians as well as for others who wished to explore their sexuality. Personal accounts suggest that for some, particularly younger urban lesbians, the movement offered access to lesbian friendship networks and opportunities to meet potential lovers at a time when profound taboos around homosexuality had left many Australian lesbians isolated. Lesbians were an active presence in the movement throughout the 1970s and 1980s but acknowledgement of lesbian issues and concerns remained muted in the early 1970s, amid fears that an association with same-sex desire could tarnish the reputation and appeal of feminism. By 1973, growing tensions prompted some Australian lesbian feminists to articulate an increasingly vocal and angry demand for recognition and lesbian feminist collectives and newsletters were formed in a number of Australian cities.²

The most active and influential of these was the Radicalesbians, which emerged in Melbourne from the Gay Women's Group.³ The group had been formed by women in Gay Liberation but in 1973, they relocated to Women's House, expressing a growing sense that their interests were

more closely aligned with feminism than with mixed lesbian and gay politics. A crucial catalyst for this shift was the arrival of three women, Kerry Higgs, Jenny Pausacker and Robina Courtin, returning to Melbourne after a period of travel to the UK and elsewhere. While overseas, the women had explored a number of key US radical feminist texts, including Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*, and they brought a strongly radical feminist perspective to the group.⁴ This was reflected in a name change in mid-1973, to the Radicalesbians, and in July of that year a conference was organised in Sorrento, Victoria, which drew over sixty women from Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and elsewhere. The Sorrento conference offered an opportunity to debate and put into practice lesbian feminist theory. In the 'Radicalesbian Manifesto', drafted by the group and debated at the conference, the Radicalesbians asserted their belief that sexism was the root cause of all oppression, that 'coming out' was a vital tool in the fight against oppression and that both leadership and the nuclear family were destructive institutions. They declared:

We want more than equality. We want Revolution. Male power, embodied in the male institutions of our present culture, is aggression. To ask for equality is only to get into that – into ruthlessness and non-caring. So forget about that concept of power and talk about collective feminist consciousness; about development as people in strength and love... So we want to establish our own alternative feminist culture. We want a distinct feminist community where we can learn to be / act ourselves as people. We are not going to be seen through the eye of male culture. And there's no point in conquering male culture when we can create our own.⁵

The conference itself offered opportunities to put this vision of women's culture into practice: it was organised in a leaderless and structureless way, women explored non-monogamous sexual intimacy with each other and, between discussions about feminist theory and lesbian experience, women entertained themselves singing songs with women-centred lyrics. When the weekend

came to a close, this process continued in cities across Australia, with lesbian feminist communities developing around women-only houseshares and lesbian feminist collectives.

The desire to create a women's culture reflected a broader international shift from radical feminism to cultural feminism over the course of the 1970s and a parallel move from critiquing gender constructions to celebrating an essential femaleness.⁶ In Australia, as in the US and elsewhere, the practice of a separatist lifestyle was seen by many proponents as the only effective form of feminist revolution. In the New York Radicalesbians' influential essay, 'Woman Identified Woman', an all-woman separatist community was presented as fundamental to revolution, in enabling women to complete a feminist journey to find themselves.⁷ Dana Shugar explains: 'For Radicalesbians, then, the creation of a new self ... would bring about a community of women capable of achieving the feminist revolution.'⁸ In the US, this thinking fostered the creation of thriving lesbian feminist communities and cultural forms, from feminist bookshops to women-only coffee houses, as well as the emergence of a wave of rural separatist communities across the country. Gill Valentine has argued that: '[T]he aim of separatism [in the US] was seen as best fulfilled in rural areas – because spatial isolation meant that it was easier for women to be self-sufficient and purer in their practices in the country than in the city, and because essentialist notions about women's closeness to nature meant that the countryside was identified as a female space.'⁹ However, in Australia, separatism was a largely urban phenomenon and the viewpoint that separatism was best achieved in rural areas was not clearly expressed. Instead, Australian separatist communities were either assumed to be urban or constructed without reference to an urban / rural distinction. The call for the creation of an alternative feminist culture, articulated in the Australian 'Radicalesbian Manifesto', made no reference to the physical location of this culture and there is no suggestion that the ideal separatist community would be rural. In contrast, once the first womensland had been established in NSW in 1974, the utopian vision of

the womenslands as a refuge from the patriarchy articulated by some of its residents, raised some questions in the wider lesbian feminist community about the relationship between rural communities and feminist activism, with many women regarding the womenslands simply as a temporary refuge from their primary responsibilities as urban activists. It was not until the end of the decade, as expectations of an imminent feminist revolution began to dwindle, that increasing numbers of women came to regard the lands as a potential longer-term way of life. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, women began to move to the lands in growing numbers, but even in this peak period of occupation the numbers of women who lived there permanently were small.¹⁰ Estimates vary, but by the early 1980s, there may have been between 50 and 60 women permanently resident on the womenslands, with visitors swelling the numbers to around 100.¹¹

Nevertheless, rural women-only communities represented a central symbolic place in Australian lesbian feminist culture. Large numbers of women from lesbian and feminist communities across Australia visited the lands at least once and many participated in large gatherings there. In a summary of her involvement in lesbian feminist activism in Sydney since the 1970s, Sally recalled:

As a baby dyke in 1975, I had my first exposure to anything political when I visited Amazon Acres women's Mountain farm, a wimmin only farm outside of Wauchope, NSW. This was the honeypot for a baby dyke – strong confident women in flannelette shirts, swimming in pools or walking around naked. And me, admiring lots of bare nipples and feeling a little young, yet confident in helping to build things to be shared by all the women at the farm.¹²

Sally's recollection of her visit to Amazon Acres as a defining moment in her lesbian feminist identity echoed that of many women in Australian lesbian feminist communities in this period

for whom the womenslands represented a crucial reference point in the formation of their sexual and political identities. However, while the womenslands in North America have been documented in oral history and archival collections, as well as, more recently, by historians, geographers and feminist scholars, those elsewhere have received much less attention and the Australian womenslands in particular have only been discussed in one previous article.¹³

The US scholarship, although noting the shared aims and values of many of the womenslands, has also pointed to the diversity between communities, and Catriona Sandilands has argued in relation to the separatist communities in Southern Oregon: '[T]he ... community as a whole can be characterised by an ongoing dynamic between a separatist utopian ideology and an everyday practice of subsistence culture located in its particular geographic place.'¹⁴ For this reason it is important to pay close attention to the ways in which rural lesbian separatist communities emerged as culturally different in different locations. Focusing on a cluster of three womenslands in Northern NSW, this article will explore the unique challenge posed to the Australian womenslands by local factors, such as the remote and harsh environment of the Australian bush and the tensions inherent in the relationship between the urban and rural in Australian radical lesbian separatism. While the communities' founders envisaged the womenslands as an opportunity to enact and develop the theories and practice being debated in urban lesbian feminist communities at this time, the isolated and intimate nature of the womenslands created an intense environment which pushed lesbian feminist ideology to its limits and beyond.

The establishment of womenslands

A number of rural separatist communities were established in Australia in the mid and late 1970s, including one in Western Australia, a farm in South Australia, another in Victoria and at least three communities in NSW.¹⁵ The first separatist community in Northern NSW was

founded in early 1974 on Mount Firestone, near Wauchope, by a collective of young, white, working- and middle-class women involved in the lesbian feminist communities in Sydney and Melbourne. Kerry Higgs, of the Melbourne Radicalesbians, was a driving force behind the project, contributing the grant money she had received from writing the first Australian lesbian novel, *All That False Instruction*, to put down a deposit on the land. She then collected a group of interested women who lived in Radicalesbian shared houses in Melbourne and Sydney and they travelled together to view the site. In January 1974, *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter* contained a short article by Kerry describing the site and outlining plans for its purchase. She explained:

Amazon Acres is 1000 acres of red fertile earth ... It has permanent water rising in natural springs, and these feed several creeks, one of which runs across the plateau, and two of the creeks have beautiful waterfalls. There are two shacks, fairly strong and O.K. temporarily. Other huts will probably be built soon, including a large round stone house. About 40-50 acres have been cleared and a few vegetables have been planted in hopeful anticipation.¹⁶

Although the article sought to present the new womenslands in the most appealing light, it is nevertheless clear from this description that the physical environment of Amazon Acres differed in some significant respects from that of many womenslands overseas. In contrast to many of the North American womenslands in this period, which typically consisted of 50-100 acres of agricultural land, often with existing houses on site, Amazon Acres was 1000 acres of largely uncleared bushland, located in a remote and environmentally challenging area. The nature of this physical environment, and the broader cultural context of Australian conceptualisations of the bush as a site of white masculine endeavour, meant that while the women who founded Amazon Acres shared much of their ideological framework with sister communities overseas, the Australian womenslands ultimately differed significantly from their counterparts in the US and Europe.¹⁷

Following the publication of the *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter* article, the initial purchase of Amazon Acres was made using money donated by women involved in the feminist and lesbian communities in Australia. Appeals for funds were published in feminist newsletters and fund-raising events were held. As in many such rural separatist communities, the land was purchased collectively with the aim of breaking down class and economic barriers to the countryside. Therefore, many of the contributors never lived on or visited Amazon Acres, and contributed on the basis that the land was being purchased for the benefit of all women everywhere: the community was open to women to visit or live there regardless of their ability to make a financial contribution to the lands. This conceptualisation of the womenslands as collectively owned by all women reinforced the symbolic importance of the lands as a community resource for the wider lesbian feminist community in Australia. It was not until the early 1980s that a more formal structure was created on Amazon Acres, with the formation of a closed collective which included all those women who had contributed financially to the lands since 1974. While the lands remained open to any woman who wished to live there and participate in the community, legal decisions relating to the land itself could only be taken by the collective.¹⁸ In the late 1970s, a second community, the Valley (or The Vallee), was founded in neighbouring land down in the valley below Mount Firestone, and a similar collective philosophy was adopted there. In 1981, the decision to purchase the land in the valley, which had previously been squatted, prompted an advert in feminist journal *Refractory Girl*, requesting financial assistance. The advert explained:

We have always felt that this land should be open for women and children, irrespective of whether they have money or not, but now we are faced with having to buy this land, or leave. If this land is to be secured for women in the future, we need your help. We have raised \$15 000. The land costs \$30 000. We must raise \$15 000 urgently.¹⁹

While financial assistance was necessary at the outset to make the purchase of land possible, thereafter practical skills were also highly valued. Labour on the land and in the maintenance of

everyday life was carried out on a shared basis, a system which Catriona Sandilands has argued, in relation to the Oregon women's lands, enabled women to overcome the gendering of specific tasks, and to develop a more complex working relationship with nature.²⁰ In March 1982, the third community in the area was established when about 20 to 30 shareholders bought another thousand acre plot. Again, many of the shareholders, some of whom were from overseas, never lived on the land, and ultimately only 13 women lived there permanently. The community was named Herland, after the Charlotte Perkins Gilman book, and, unlike Amazon Acres and the Valley, was structured from the outset as a separatist co-operative for women and girl-children only.²¹ Despite some philosophical differences between the three lands, a strong sense of collective community formed between them, and celebrations and cultural events drew women together from the different communities.

Relationship with the land

Early accounts of the womensland emphasised its attraction as a rural idyll; a retreat from the pressures of urban life and a sexist society. In her January 1974 article, Kerry described the mountain as 'good for farming, very beautiful and very remote.'²² In a further article the following year, the collective claimed: 'Women who love the country can live in an unspoiled environment and take part in organic farming. Women can feel freer than in the cities where there are the pressures and judgements of a sexist society.'²³ Chris, who was part of the founding collective, recalled: 'Going back to the land and not participating in capitalism as such, was the best thing you could do. So I guess that idea of living on the land was still there from that '60s hippie, and ... Radical Left activism, which we'd all been involved in.'²⁴ This conception of the rural environment contrasted the countryside, as a simple, pure 'female' place, with the man-made corruption and dangers of urban life. In the early 1970s, Australian lesbian feminists were linking feminist and environmentalist ideas in a critique of patriarchy as environmentally destructive. In a contribution to the Radicalesbians' publication, 'Melbourne Feminist Collection

1', Kerryn asserted: "Man" has all but exhausted the resources of the earth, "man" has destroyed his (and our) environment, polluted the air and the water, wiped out animals, birds and fish as if we had no relationship to our environment; Man has been blinded by his own achievement to the destruction it has achieved.²⁵ Jenny similarly argued that feminism and ecology 'aren't separate categories: they're part of the same process, the same response to what we see. Because civilization and all it implies is man-made. Women are organic' and claimed that 'radical feminist communes working a hard living from the land' represented an alternative to ecological disaster.²⁶ Photographs of women at Amazon Acres in the 1970s reflect this ideology, showing naked women lying on the rocks and swimming in the rock pools and waterfalls.²⁷ Chris emphasised this freedom to commune with nature as deriving specifically from the absence of men in the community. She recalled: 'you can walk around at night without fear of being attacked or raped. People don't realise how deep that is in your psyche, when you're moving around in a heterosexual world. That we had this - a kind of a freedom there, that other women have never experienced, that was a liberating experience.'²⁸ Later accounts also drew on Australian Indigenous conceptions of the land and its meaning to highlight the bond which women were felt to enjoy with the land. In a 1981 article appealing for funds to help purchase The Valley, the description of the land and community concluded with the lines: 'Land of my childhood, place of my dreaming / Bound to exile, I turn to you', alluding to Indigenous 'dreaming' stories which refer to the land and animals and pass on important knowledge, cultural values and belief systems to later generations.²⁹ However, the lesbian feminist communities which founded the womenslands were dominated by white women and the direct influence of Indigenous culture on the community was therefore relatively limited.

By the 1980s, notions of the earth as essentially feminine played an important part in a developing philosophy of women's relationship with the land. A number of spiritual events were held which drew on pagan, Celtic, Wicca and local Indigenous and Maori culture to celebrate the

earth and the place of the women on it. Jean Taylor recalled visiting The Valley in 1985 and described attending a 'winter solstice hangi under the Fig Tree, which attracted about 50 womyn from all three of the lands.'³⁰ Although Jean provides no further detail, the hangi presumably reflected the traditional Maori oven dug in a pit in the ground, in which food was slowly baked over hot stones covered over with earth. Another visitor to The Valley described a week-long drumming and healing celebration which was held as a fundraising event to meet the first payment due on the land.³¹ In the mid-1980s, the womenslands were also an organisational centre for Women for Survival, a women's anti-nuclear group, whose newsletter was produced from The Valley.³² In 1985, an article in the newsletter entitled, 'We Create our Healing' described the damage done to the earth by humans and outlined the need for healing, which should be undertaken by the women at the camp lying together and dreaming of healing the earth. The author urged: 'The block to our flow is our separateness. To touch each other's essence. This magic dream our medicine.'³³

However, while utopian visions of the land and nature as essentially female emphasised women's bond with the land, the practicalities of rural life in Northern NSW required more complex negotiation. Although Kerry Higgs had grown up in country Victoria, the majority of women who made up the urban lesbian feminist communities which founded the womenslands would have been unaccustomed to country life. In the context of extreme temperatures, regular droughts and predominantly unfertile land, the reality of life in the Australian bush could be daunting. Diane, who was amongst the first group of women to go up to the lands, and who visited there regularly in the early 1970s, recalled:

Kerry and some of the others who stayed there didn't even live there because it was ... quite inhospitable, it was very hard to get there ... There was a couple of huts that we could sleep in, but people camped there and there was lots of leeches and different things like that. So scary.³⁴

As Diane recalled, there were two old loggers' huts on the lands which were used by the women in the early 1970s, but the majority of women slept in tents or other temporary structures. At some point in the late 1970s or early 1980s, the women had built a large hexagonal structure, known as the 'hex', which was used as a communal space for meetings, cooking and other shared activities, but it was not until the late 1980s that individual women began to build yurts and other dwelling places to sleep in.

Debates about women's responsibilities towards, and stewardship of the land produced a variety of opinions from the outset. Some acres on the Mountain had already been cleared when the women came there in 1974, and there was a stated intention in the initial *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter* article to begin growing vegetables, but the purpose of this agricultural project seems to have been less clearly agreed. Diane complained that:

A bunch of us who were involved who were working in Sydney kind of wanted to earn some money, like grow a tomato crop or ... a potato crop or something, and Kerryn and some of the others were on about like not using any fertiliser, even any rock dust [which] is a very low impact sort of thing that keeps the bugs off the tomatoes and stuff, so not using anything like that and ... [t]hen there was a disagreement, so we stopped going.³⁵

Debates over whether the land should be farmed to produce an income for the community, or simply as a form of subsistence, reflected varying views on how the community should relate to the land more broadly. While some women regarded the womenslands primarily as an opportunity to found a community of women, others had strong views about living sustainably on the land. Indigenous practices of land management, which have focused on using natural resources in such a way that they are renewed and not exhausted, provided a blueprint for one possible way in which the community could live on the land, and some women argued for attempting to return the land to its natural bush state. Ultimately, the women attempted to grow

a range of crops on the land, from vegetables to provide food for the community, to marijuana to fuel the pot-smoking habits of some residents. In a 1975 article in *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter*, the Amazon Acres Collective reported that they had:

Established vegetable gardens, compost heaps, a herb garden and orchard. Our harvest has included lettuces, carrots, cabbages, broadbeans, peas, onions, garlic, strawberries, zucchini, parsnips and a tomato! Built a goat shed and installed Patience, the milking goat. Built a chicken shed and yard.³⁶

However, this description of a thriving subsistence culture is contradicted by personal accounts of food production on the lands and the community never achieved full self-sufficiency. Jean Taylor recalled that, when she visited The Valley in 1985, she did 'not quite [know] what to expect because most of the news I'd ever heard about Amazon Acres and The Vallee was negative ... and they still hadn't managed to establish a vegetable garden after several years of trying ... I discovered that everything I'd ever heard about the place was true and then some.'³⁷

In a subsequent account of her attempts to create a vegetable plot at Amazon Acres, Chris Sitka described being continually hampered by native wildlife, from the currawongs (black, crow-like birds) that pecked up many of the seeds, to the wallabies and possums that ate the developing plants. Ultimately, she claimed, despite building progressively larger fences around the plot, and sometimes sleeping there at night to protect the crop, '[a]fter our first year of gardening I'd eaten five home grown Tiny Tina tomatoes, three small carrots, one bean and lots of wild nettles from outside the garden.'³⁸ While other women may have enjoyed slightly more success, the presence of native wildlife and other environmental conditions meant that the land proved unsuitable for food production in sufficient quantities and food supplies for the community primarily had to be bought and carried up from the nearest town.³⁹ These difficulties impacted on the long-term nature of the community, preventing the formation of the type of self-sufficient separatist women's culture envisaged by the founders. Unable to adequately feed themselves or generate an income from the land, residents were forced to maintain links with local towns, where women

travelled to purchase supplies, receive benefit payments and, in the later 1970s and 1980s, take up paid employment.⁴⁰

Separation from men

If questions of land management and cultivation had not been explored in advance, ideas about the women's community on the lands drew on more broadly debated conceptions current in the urban lesbian feminist communities at the time. From the outset, the three communities in Northern NSW were conceived as women-only, although definitions of separatism shifted over the course of the 1970s and 1980s. In the first announcement in *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter*, Amazon Acres was described as 'a place where women can go to get stronger, as a break from the struggle with male culture.'⁴¹ When The Valley was being bought in 1981, its residents described it as 'a community of seven women and four children.'⁴² Early residents of the womenslands also described the community in these terms. For Chloe, Amazon Acres had originally been bought 'so we could all get away from the patriarchy', while Chris reflected:

In our minds - certainly my mind - was the idea that we would find a very isolated place, and that happened to be on a remote mountaintop, where we felt we could retreat. That we would basically secede from patriarchy. The patriarchal world was so oppressive and corrupt that we couldn't possibly live in it. So we would just create our own world.⁴³

Drawing on separatist ideas which were gaining influence in urban lesbian feminist communities in Australia at the time, the women who founded Amazon Acres hoped that it would provide a unique environment in which women could retreat from the patriarchal world and explore new ways of living and relating as women. This approach to separatism reflected the practice then current in feminist circles in Melbourne and Sydney, where women-only political organising had been the norm since the late 1960s. Jenny argued that the early adoption of separatist practice in mainstream feminism in Australia reflected a uniquely Australian approach to gender, claiming:

That was the kind of feminism that was appropriate to Australia, that it's feminism within a very gender separated society. So men and women working together for a juster society was a bit ... how would you do that? Because [at a typical Australian barbeque] the men are down there, with the lamb chops, and the women are up here buttering the bread. So yeah. Women working together on stuff just makes innate sense in a separated culture.⁴⁴

Urban feminist activism in this period was structured around women-only spaces such as rape crisis centres and refuges, while political ideas were shaped in women-only collectives and at consciousness-raising groups. As Chris explained: 'it was just seen as an essential for women to empower themselves, to separate themselves. Because women were just so conditioned to be subservient to men that they would never overcome their subservience in a mixed group.'⁴⁵

The womenslands were therefore imagined as providing both a space away from men in which women could explore themselves as women and an opportunity for women to learn new skills and undertake for themselves those tasks which patriarchal society conventionally assigned to men. Shar articulated this philosophy in the *Wimmin for Survival* newsletter, produced from Amazon Acres in 1985:

Living out here has taught me to have confidence in what I can do and be. It has taught me that I can and will survive and I have only just begun my passion, my magic, and my spirituality which is vital to my survival. To live with other womin who are also discovering these things is important to me. It is essential that we learn from each other and try to piece together the knowledge that has been lost through Patriarchal times. That we discover all the strength and magic that our great-grandmothers and their great-grandmothers before them knew and lived by. That we be one with our environment.⁴⁶

For many women who lived on or visited the lands in this period, it was the opportunity to acquire practical skills which they particularly valued. Megg, who was involved in the womenslands in the early 1980s, explained:

The Womenslands for me was this fantastic place ... I lit my first fire - open fire - up on the hill, and somebody showed me how. We carted water ... That space, where as a woman you didn't have to fight to learn to do something practical and useful, was actually very precious.²⁴⁷

The womenslands represented a space in which women aimed to live as autonomous beings, growing and cooking their own food, building their own shelters and caretaking the land and although these goals were not always fully achieved, individual women recalled the attempt as an empowering experience.

Definitions of separatism remained relatively fluid in Australian lesbian feminist communities for much of the 1970s. In 1978, Liz Ross reported to the *Melbourne Women's Liberation Newsletter* that a recent discussion day on lesbian separatism 'ended in more questions asked than answered.' Although 'the women at the meeting appeared to accept a fairly "strict" definition of a separatist as one who had no contact with men at all and who saw lesbian separatism as a political solution to the patriarchy ... most then found that few if any women they knew, who claimed to be separatist, fitted that definition.'²⁴⁸ Sandra, who lived in lesbian feminist collective houses in Sydney for much of the 1970s, recalled that although separatism was regarded as 'politically important', women typically negotiated a degree of separation from men rather than complete separation. She explained:

What women did at the time, including myself, was that they kind of limited their relationships with men that were important to them. For example, in my case my father, ... I didn't have very much to do with him and ... people's brothers, and so on, they had

various, various degrees of interaction with them, but we did think at the time that it was, it was better to separate off from men.⁴⁹

This form of separatism was possible in the larger urban communities in Melbourne and Sydney, where women could practise a predominantly separatist lifestyle in women-only collectives and social spaces, while maintaining intermittent contact with specific men outside of those spaces. When the women from these urban communities founded the womenslands, they did so on similar separatist principles.

However, by the late 1970s, the day-to-day practice of separatism on the womenslands had become a more controversial issue, with contentious debates occurring as to whether men should be allowed to visit the lands and whether women should be able to bring their boy children to live there. This failure of consensus appears to have been prompted by a number of factors. Chris suggested that perhaps the separatism policy had not been clearly discussed at the outset so that divergent views had always existed side by side, or alternatively that some women 'changed their mind later. Once they weren't involved so much in creating something new, but they were actually living there, then some of them wanted their family to be able to come to the place where they lived.'⁵⁰ Certainly, the pressures of living in a small and isolated rural community seem to have exacerbated some of the contradictions in a philosophy of separatism which had originated in an urban setting. In contrast to women living in urban communities, who were able to maintain intermittent contact with male friends and relatives, outside of separatist spaces, the possibilities of interaction with men for women living on the womenslands were simultaneously more limited and more public. Inviting a man to visit the womenslands impacted on all the women in the community, and the remote and inaccessible nature of the land made a brief visit problematic. These tensions were probably developing over the course of the decade but the debate was sparked into a much more heated dispute by the arrival of a new wave of women in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Laurene, who was part of this group, suggested that

this new influx of women had produced a shift in thinking. She recalled: 'We were completely separatist when we came back from Europe. We'd lived in complete women's communities throughout Europe and travelled all around in packs of women.'⁵¹ For Laurene it was the influence of international lesbian feminist culture, and particularly the separatism being practised in the women-only communities she had visited in Wales and Denmark, that sparked debates about separatism in NSW. In these communities, she recalled, she and the other Australians she travelled with, participated in a 'more radical lesbian style of separatism' which encompassed being 'self-sufficient from patriarchy as the goal.' The women aimed to 'stop male pollution, in all forms, being an influence on our lives and minds', suggesting the growing impact of cultural feminism on womenslands overseas. The Danish lands emphasised 'growing food and creating vegetarian self-sufficiency' and both the Welsh and Danish lands had a spiritual element 'in the Wicca, astrology, herbalism and healing rituals most women were involved in.' It was this aspect of the culture which Laurene linked with a new progressive separatism. She recalled:

I think it was more to do with Wicca women, like witch women, like the power of women.

It was more about – it wasn't necessarily anti-male in such a way. It was more about our power. Like we were fabulous and great and we actually could change the world just by who we were.⁵²

On their arrival in the NSW womenslands, these women advocated a more essentialist model of separatism than had been previously accepted on the land: a model which Laurene characterised as 'no men; no meat; no machines'. These women argued that men, and in some cases, boy children, should not be allowed to set foot on the land in order to preserve it as a women's culture. Within the broader philosophy, some women also advocated vegetarianism and the rejection of machines on the grounds that agricultural technology was both environmentally invasive and fundamentally patriarchal. Laurene recalled: 'if you had your chainsaw, you could get suddenly abused for using it - you know, men's machine... It was men's killing machines.'⁵³

Although interconnected, the debates about men, vegetarianism and machines were resolved in different ways. Ultimately, Amazon Acres, or The Mountain, took the decision to allow male visitors and boy children, and those women who believed strongly in the importance of an exclusively separatist culture moved to newly formed neighbouring communities, The Valley and Herland. Debates about machines and meat, although less divisive, continued for longer, with different women advocating and practising a variety of viewpoints.

Women's relationships

The formation of a women-only community offered opportunities to imagine and create a women-centred way of life. Drawing on both the model of womenslands overseas and the philosophies and practices of the urban feminist communities they came from, the founding members of the NSW womenslands sought to organise the community according to collective principles. In the 1970s, many women visiting or living on the land slept together in the loggers huts. Cooking and eating were undertaken communally, and this way of life facilitated discussion and collective decision-making. International and Australian radical feminist literature emphasised collaboration as an inherently female quality, in contrast to the hierarchies which structured patriarchal society, and collectivity was a fundamental organising principle in feminist communities of the period. Therefore, all issues relating to the use of the land and the functioning of the community, were debated collectively by the women residing there.⁵⁴ Chris recalled:

Well, the concept of consensus ... had been developed in Women's Liberation. The idea was everyone was equal, there were no leaders. So whatever decision we made, we would all talk about it til we [had] ... thrashed out every little nuance of the politics of it. Until we would all decide and agree. So we'd been in ... collectives ... where you would make decisions about how to run a Rape Crisis Centre, how to run a women's refuge? ... So that was taken with us to the womenslands.⁵⁵

However, the principle of consensus posed considerable challenges for the community. Deborah recalled consensus as fundamentally problematic, and her inability to cope with the practice prompted her to withdraw from her early involvement with the womenslands. She explained:

The collective experiment, if you like, in theory it's really good, you know everybody agrees to things, it's very female on some level, how you talk it through, you talk it to death until you all come to the same agreement. But there was what I call the tyranny of the dissenter, where you only had to have one person not agree and you were just completely, I hesitate to say emasculated, you just couldn't proceed, you couldn't go any further, nothing would happen because one person would disagree.⁵⁶

As Deborah implied, the principle of collective decision-making was based on an assumption that each individual shared common feminist values, which included a commitment to listening to and respecting the views of other women and working towards a common goal. In certain cases this could prove problematic, if individual women were not committed to consensus or if differences of class, race, age or experience meant that women did not share a common vision or values. Nevertheless, the community on the NSW womenslands remained committed to consensus as the underlying principle guiding decision-making throughout the 1970s and 80s.⁵⁷

Intimacy

While collective decision-making aimed to promote equality between women, intimate sisterhood was another central aspect of the envisaged community. In the Radicalesbian Manifesto, drafted by women who attended the first Australian Radicalesbian conference in Sorrento, Victoria, in 1973, it was stated:

We want to overcome the division between women – to touch, relate, to give strength and validity to each other. We want women to be able to relate to women on all levels. We want to relate as individuals, not as elements in a correct ideology. Fucking with another woman just removes one more barrier in our minds, enables us to learn to love our woman-selves in another woman.⁵⁸

Physical affection, emotional intimacy and sexual intimacy were understood as existing on a spectrum of woman-identification which was the basis of a women-only community. Drawing on ideals of intimacy which women had been debating and enacting in urban lesbian feminist communities, the women on the lands sought to break down heteropatriarchal models of relationships. Feminist critiques of sexism emphasised male sexual possession of women as fundamental to women's oppression and lesbian feminists sought to move away from possessive models of intimacy such as marriage and committed monogamous relationships.⁵⁹ As the Radicalesbian Manifesto claimed: 'We do not condone any manifestation of the ideals of monogamy or the nuclear family within our own relationships.'⁶⁰ Although some women remained in monogamous couples, the dominant philosophy of intimacy in the early 1970s, on the womenslands as in the urban communities, was non-monogamy. In a paper on 'Primary Relationships' given to the Radicalesbian conference in 1973, Jenny and Sue argued that sexual relationships should not be regarded as inherently more important than other types of relationships:

We have to break down the sanctity of relationships which involve genital sexuality. We are responding sexually to everyone, whether this involves fucking or not ... We believe that the primacy of genital sexuality, the idea that it is a consummation, is a male trick. And believing this, jealousy begins to be truly meaningless, precedence in relationships begins to be truly meaningless, fucking begins to become a real part of our lives.⁶¹

Sexual intimacy, from this perspective, was therefore both less significant than in conventional approaches to relationships, but potentially present in all interactions with other women.

Influenced by these ideas, a variety of models of intimacy were practised on the womenslands, ranging from long-standing couples to serial monogamy, 'bed-hopping' or clusters of non-monogamous lovers. Chris recalled:

Sometimes there were these groupings, where there would be one particular popular woman, and she would have a number of partners. They would all - because they idealised this one woman so much, they would tolerate the other partners, and they saw themselves as a kind of a family. I can think of one instance where that's happened, and they saw themselves as a family with - it was almost - in one instance, it seemed to me almost like a cult leader.⁶²

Other women moved fairly rapidly from one sexual partner to another, participating in a succession of fairly brief, overlapping affairs. Although this type of sexual practice was reinforced by a broad ideological consensus, non-monogamy proved a source of considerable conflict in the community. The complexities of sexual intimacy with more than one partner required a high degree of honesty and communication to negotiate, and the widespread acceptance of non-monogamy as the 'politically correct' model of intimacy meant that women who were uncomfortable with such relationships often felt unable to articulate their dissatisfaction. As Laurene explained:

[M]any hearts were broken ... I'm guilty myself, I must admit, of not being in any way responsible for other people's emotions ... we were very promiscuous, a lot of us. We had multiple partners and no loyalty to anyone, of course. It always caused such trauma and such heartbreak because jealousy was as equal amongst us as it was amongst anybody.⁶³

Many women in urban communities also recalled the jealousy and pain which arose from experimenting with non-monogamy. However, these difficulties may have been enhanced on the womenslands by problems of proximity in a small isolated community of women. In a paper

for the Radicalesbian conference entitled 'Rules and Relationships', Jenny collected some informal rules which Radicalesbians in Adelaide had suggested were necessary in the negotiation of non-monogamous relationships. These included:

1. Feminist lesbians who are fucking together don't:
 - Pash on in public places
 - Go everywhere together
 - Live together / sleep together every night ...

Furthermore, those involved in 'multiple fucking relationships' agreed that 'you don't want to know either everything or nothing about your lover's other lovers.'⁶⁴ These rules, however, were particularly difficult to maintain on the lands, where women could not escape the spectacle of their lovers or former lovers being intimate with other women, and any pain or anger at the ending of a relationship had to be expressed and worked through in the presence or proximity of both parties. Laurene recalled: 'You had a lot of trauma on the lands because of people suddenly being attracted to somebody else ... Always there was someone with a broken heart yelling or screaming.'⁶⁵

Despite this, sexual intimacy remained an important aspect of the women-only culture on the womenslands and was highlighted by many of the women who described their time there. Leigh, who lived there as a child with her brother and mother in the mid-1970s recalled: 'Mum had a crew cut and seeing her in bed with another woman was normal.'⁶⁶ Laurene also recalled sexual intimacy as common:

For some people it was a real free-for-all ... the whole thing about safe sex and stuff wasn't an issue for women - or pregnancy or contraception. So I think we had wild sex. That was one of the greatest things, I think, that was about being a lesbian back then when everyone was lesbians and the Radicalesbians - sex was absolutely magnificent because it was uninhibited... That was before the notion you had to have toys or anything like that.

It was just passion and intensity, I guess, is my experience. I can't say that's everyone's, eh? But I'll tell you it was mine. I had some fabulous sex.⁶⁷

By the later 1970s and into the 1980s, increasing numbers of women moved away from a commitment to non-monogamy in favour of more settled couple relationships. However, as early feminist critiques of monogamy had suggested, this form of intimacy posed its own challenges in the formation of a cohesive community of women. Couple relationships were regarded as undermining the autonomy of the two women involved and women complained that when members of the community formed a couple, they 'merged' their identities together. Couples were also perceived as excluding other, particularly single, members of the community and forming alliances within the couple against the rest of the collective. Laurene described a period in the 1980s, when she lived on The Mountain with just three couples and found the group dynamic extremely problematic:

There were six of them, all in couples except for me. They all hated each other. Everybody just hated each other. So I'd try and negotiate my way around all the three different hatreds and animosities. This lot were separatists, this lot wanted men and meat and this lot wanted meat but no men ... So they would have these meetings where you ended up things getting thrown and yelling and all that... Then one lot left. They went off ... to Her Land... Then they all turned on me... so I left because I thought, leave them to it, leave them at war themselves.⁶⁸

Although the attempts to work out new ways of expressing emotional and sexual intimacy between women posed a number of challenges for the community, some women also recalled the experience as immensely rewarding. Chris reflected:

[O]ne thing about the relationships we developed there, [they] were very powerful. Not just talking about sexual relationships, but creating what you might call a family, an

alternative family... We lived a very intense life together, and we had to live with women we didn't necessarily like, we didn't necessarily agree with... It had also that culture of living in a very remote bush area, where you were dependent on each other for your survival... So you developed a strong connection - you knew someone inside out, and this is my experience since I've lived there. That when I get to know women in the city, I feel it's a very shallow knowing... When I still see women, who I lived with on the womenslands ... it really feels like a family person, like a sister ... this kind of feeling of intimacy and familiarity, it is still really powerful.⁶⁹

The womenslands beyond the 1980s

Although the lands were the site of a vibrant community of women in the 1970s and 1980s, with between 60 and 100 women living there, internal conflict and the challenges of daily life on the land gradually took their toll. Chris, who lived on the lands between 1985 and 1989 claimed: 'It had tapered off by about 1990'.⁷⁰ In her article, based on interviews with a Herland resident named Wicca, Judith Ion links the decline in the 1990s with a building boom which had taken place on the lands in the mid to late 1980s. She claims that construction of the first building commenced in Herland during the rainy season in 1983 and took twelve months to complete. It was a communal effort undertaken by the women on Herland, with the assistance of women from the surrounding lands, and it enabled many women to learn new skills. As a result, a number of women across the lands were inspired to build yurts and similar structures for sleeping in. While the degree of effort involved in carrying materials and tools across the inaccessible bush on foot signalled the commitment of women to these communities, Wicca also suggested that the building of individual structures marked the beginning of a breakdown in the sense of community. Ion explains:

She considers the building boom and its aftermath mark a shift from the communal lifestyle to one more focused on the individual. When women began to cook for

themselves in their own kitchens and sleep alone (or with a lover) in their own structures, the sense of community somehow shifted. Eventually, without the regular (impromptu or otherwise) communal campfire gatherings, music making and sense of togetherness that had existed in the early days, life on Herland became an isolating, lonely experience for many women.⁷¹

The shift away from a collective way of life, identified by Wicca and Ion, would undoubtedly have undermined the community, as did the often intense debates over separatism and other ideological issues and the increasing use of drugs and rising levels of violent confrontation which some residents recalled.⁷² However, the gradual decline in the 1990s also reflected a loss of energy in the urban lesbian feminist communities which had created and fostered the womenslands in the preceding decades. Faced by a changing economic and political climate in the late 1980s and 1990s, as well as responding to their own shifting needs and priorities as older women, many of those who had been actively involved in creating lesbian feminist communities and culture began to redirect their energies into careers in mainstream politics, education or social work and to form long-term monogamous relationships. As a result, women moved away from collective houseshares and had less time and flexibility for participation in activism or visiting the womenslands. In the decades since the 1990s, the womenslands have come to occupy a different place in the Australian lesbian feminist imaginary: less as the site of an ongoing permanent community and more as a shared heritage and resource which the community can draw upon in times of need. In 2001, the womenslands were the site of a festival which attracted over 300 women to the mountain and similar community events are planned there in the future.⁷³

Conclusion

While the womenslands of northern NSW shared much of their philosophical framework with sister communities overseas, aiming to create a utopian women-only community structured

according to feminist principles of collectivity, the specificities of the Australian physical and cultural environment rendered them unique. The size and isolation of Amazon Acres, the Valley and Herland shaped the outcomes of experiments with separatism and intimate relationships in particular ways, challenging an assumed consensus on the importance of complete separation from men and the value of open sexual intimacy between women. Although emerging from the dynamic lesbian feminist communities which sprang up in Australia's cities in the 1970s, the rural separatist communities helped to redefine the parameters and concerns of radical lesbian feminist politics in the 1970s and 1980s through their engagement with an extremely challenging natural environment and a confrontation with themselves in a tight-knit isolated community. Equally, their survival into the present and continued commitment to the principles of consensus and women-centred community have served to locate the womenslands in a central, iconic place in Australian lesbian feminist culture. The impact of the Australian context in shaping these womenslands in unique ways demonstrates the significance of regional differences and the importance of remaining sensitive to the local as well as the transnational in our explorations of feminist cultures and communities in this period.

¹ Ann Curthoys, "The Women's Movement since 1970," in *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, eds. K. Saunders and R. Evans (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992); Gisela Kaplan, *The Meagre Harvest: The Australian Women's Movement 1950s-1990s* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996); Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999); Katy Reade, "'Struggling to be Heard': Tensions between Different Voices in the Australian Women's Liberation Movement in the 1970s and 1980s", in *Contemporary Australian Feminism*, ed. Kate Pritchard Hughes (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1994), 198-222.

² Rebecca Jennings, *Unnamed Desires: A Sydney Lesbian History* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2015).

³ See Robert Reynolds, *From Camp to Queer: Remaking the Australian Homosexual* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002).

⁴ Interview with Jenny Pausacker on 23 May 2013; Interview with Robina Courtin on 12 June 2013; Interview with Diane Minnis on 30 December 2012; Chris Sitka, 'A Radicalesbian Herstory', <http://users.spin.net.au/~deniset/alesfem/s1sitka.pdf> accessed 4/6/14.

⁵ “The Radicalesbian Manifesto” [Australia], 2, Papers from the 1973 Sorrento Conference, <http://users.spin.net.au/~deniset/alesfem/s2radlesps73.pdf>, accessed 4/6/14.

⁶ Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Verta Taylor and Leila J. Rupp, “Women’s Culture and Lesbian Feminist Activism: A Reconsideration of Cultural Feminism”, *Signs* 19, no. 1 (1993): 32-61.

⁷ Radicalesbians, *The Woman Identified Woman* (Pittsburgh: Know, Inc., 1970).

⁸ Dana R. Shugar, *Separatism and Women’s Community* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 32.

⁹ Gill Valentine, “Making Space: Lesbian Separatist Communities in the United States,” in *Contested Countryside Cultures: Otherness, marginalisation and rurality*, eds. Paul Cloke and Jo Little (London: Routledge, 1997), 111.

¹⁰ Interview with Chris Sitka on 29 May 2013; Interview with Laurene Kelly on 19 February 2013.

¹¹ Jean Taylor, *Brazen Hussies: A Herstory of Radical Activism in the Women’s Liberation Movement in Victoria 1970-1979* (Melbourne: Dyke Books Inc, 2009), 329; Chris Sitka, correspondence with author, 3 June 2014.

¹² Interview with Sally Colechin by Digby Duncan on 24 November 2008, Pride History Group Collection.

¹³ Joyce Cheney, ed., *Lesbian Land* (Minneapolis: Word Weavers, 1985); Dana R. Shugar, *Separatism and Women’s Community*; Catriona Sandilands, “Sexual Politics and Environmental Justice: Lesbian Separatists in Rural Oregon,” in *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice: Gender, Sexuality and Activism*, ed. Rachel Stein (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 109-126; Gill Valentine, “Making Space”. On Australian womenslands, see Judith Ion, “Degrees of separation: lesbian separatist communities in northern NSW, 1974-95,” in *Sex in Public: Australian Sexual Cultures*, ed. Jill Julius Matthews (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1997), 97-189. They also receive a brief mention in Bill Metcalf, “Single-Sex, Secular Intentional Communities in Australia,” *Communal Societies* 32, no. 2 (2012): 146-78.

Archival evidence relating to these communities is scarce, and women have typically been reluctant to discuss their involvement in the womenslands, which continue to exist, due to concerns about hostility from the wider local community and the often heated disagreements which emerged within feminist communities in Australia around the issue of separatism.

¹⁴ Sandilands, “Sexual Politics”, 115.

¹⁵ Bill Metcalf, “Single-Sex, Secular Intentional Communities in Australia”; “Lesbian Feminist Village in S.A.,” *Rouge* 6 (1980): 20.

¹⁶ Kerry, “Amazon Acres, Mount Firestone,” *Sydney Women’s Liberation Newsletter* (January 1974), 5.

¹⁷ Kay Schaffer, *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1988) and Bronwyn Hanna, “Re-gendering the landscape in New South Wales,” a Report for the

Department of Environment and Conservation (2003),

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/cultureheritage/genderedLPLitrev.pdf>, accessed 12/5/14, argue

that the Australian bush has been represented in two modes: primarily as a site of white masculine endeavour and, to a lesser extent, drawing on Western concepts of Mother Earth.

¹⁸ Interview with Laurene Kelly.

¹⁹ "Women's Land," *Refractory Girl* (May 1981), 45.

²⁰ Catriona Sandilands, "Sexual Politics", 118-119.

²¹ Interview with Laurene Kelly.

²² Kerry, "Amazon Acres, Mount Firestone", 5.

²³ "Amazon Acres," *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter* (March 1975), 10.

²⁴ Interview with Chris Sitka.

²⁵ Kerry, "Male Culture / Male Values", *Melbourne Feminist Collection 1* (July 1973),

<http://users.spin.net.au/~deniset/alesfem/s3mfemcoll73.pdf>, 34-5.

²⁶ Jenny, "What's the Alternative?," *Melbourne Feminist Collection 1*, 48.

²⁷ Heather Anne Grey photographs, PXA 1127, State Library of NSW.

²⁸ Interview with Chris Sitka.

²⁹ "Women's Land," *Womanspeak* 6, no.2 (1981), 3.

³⁰ Jean Taylor, *Brazen Hussies*, 331.

³¹ Judith Ion, "Degrees of separation", 106.

³² Christiane Edith Sitka, Archive No.141, Victoria Women's Liberation and Lesbian Feminist Archives,

Biographies, 3, <http://www.vwllfa.org.au/bios-pdf/arch141-sitka.pdf>, accessed 13/5/14.

³³ Chris, "We Create Our Healing," *Wimmin for Survival* newsletter (1985?), 10-12, Chris Sitka Papers, Mitchell

Library, MLMSS 8866, Box 6.

³⁴ Interview with Diane Minnis.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ "Amazon Acres," *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter*, 10.

³⁷ Jean Taylor, *Brazen Hussies*, 330.

³⁸ Chris Sitka, "An Australian Bush Garden," in *Garden Variety Dykes: Lesbian Traditions in Gardening. An anthology*, ed.

Irene Reti and Valerie Jean Chase (Santa Cruz: Herbooks Feminist Press, 1994), 12-15, quotation on 13.

³⁹ Although self-sufficiency was an ideological dream for many of the women on the lands, it was not a practical necessity: the availability of unemployment benefit meant that women could choose to live in the bush without the pressure of being self-sustaining.

⁴⁰ Ion, "Degrees of separation".

⁴¹ *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter* (March 1974), 6.

⁴² "Women's Land," *Refractory Girl* (May 1981), 45.

⁴³ Interview with Chloe Bardsley on 1 May 2012; Interview with Chris Sitka.

⁴⁴ Interview with Jenny Pausacker.

⁴⁵ Interview with Chris Sitka.

⁴⁶ Shar, in *Wimmin for Survival* newsletter (1985?), 7, Chris Sitka Papers, Mitchell Library, MLMSS 8866, Box 6.

⁴⁷ Interview with Megg Kelham on 27 February 2013.

⁴⁸ Liz Ross, "Lesbian separatism; Lesbians and Separatism," *Melbourne Women's Liberation Newsletter* (March / April 1978), 10.

⁴⁹ Interview with Sandra Mackay.

⁵⁰ Interview with Chris Sitka.

⁵¹ Interview with Laurene Kelly.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ The ownership structures on the womenslands were complex and varied between the different communities. On Amazon Acres, a small number of substantial donors were named on the legal deeds, while many other financial contributors were not. Herland was the only community which aimed to accurately represent all donors as legal owners, but there were still exceptions.

⁵⁵ Interview with Chris Sitka.

⁵⁶ Interview with Deborah [pseudonym] on 13 November 2008.

⁵⁷ Interview with Chris Sitka.

⁵⁸ "The Radicalesbian Manifesto", 1.

⁵⁹ See Rebecca Jennings, "Womin Loving Womin: Lesbian Feminist Theories of Intimacy", in *Intimacy, Violence and Activism: Gay and Lesbian Perspectives on Australasian History and Society*, eds. Graham Willett and Yorick Smaal (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2013), 133-146.

⁶⁰ "The Radicalesbian Manifesto", 2.

⁶¹ Jenny and Sue, “On Primary Relationships,” Papers from the 1973 Sorrento Conference,

<http://users.spin.net.au/~deniset/alesfem/s2radlesps73.pdf>, accessed 4/6/14.

⁶² Interview with Chris Sitka.

⁶³ Interview with Laurene Kelly.

⁶⁴ Jenny, “Rules and Relationships,” Papers from the 1973 Sorrento Conference,

<http://users.spin.net.au/~deniset/alesfem/s2radlesps73.pdf>, accessed 4/6/14.

⁶⁵ Interview with Laurene Kelly.

⁶⁶ Claire Scobie, “Children of the Revolution,” *Sunday Life* (18 June 2006), 15.

⁶⁷ Interview with Laurene Kelly.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Interview with Chris Sitka.

⁷⁰ Jean Taylor, *Brazen Hussies*, 330.

⁷¹ Judith Ion, “Degrees of Separation”, 110.

⁷² Interview with Laurene Kelly.

⁷³ Ibid.