



Fifth issue
SWAC ATTACKS !



SWAC ATTACKS ! Fifth issue

Cover: Zero

Back cover: Zero

Writing and revision: Adore Goldman, Astrea Leonis, Céleste Ivy, Cherry Blue, Érika, Gina Flash & Melina May.

Translation: Adam Hill, Adore Goldman, Céleste Ivy, Cherry Blue, Francesca, Fred Burrill, Jaggi Singh, Melina May & Tess McCrea.

Visuals et photos: Céleste Desrosiers, Céleste Ivy, Cherry Blue, Fashion Freak Designs, Imara, Tiger Opal & Zero.

Layout: Astrea Leonis

Coordination: Adore Goldman & Melina May

Legal deposit :

- Bibliothèque et Archives
nationales du Québec, 2024

- Bibliothèque et Archives
Canada

ISSN for print: 2816-2374

ISSN for PDF: 2816-2382



2 de Pentacle, drawing by Tiger Opal

Table of content

4-5	Join Your Local Whore Committee !
6-17	Inquiry Report: Massage Parlor and Strip Clubs Militant Inquiry in Massage Parlors: Collectivizing Our Resistance Adore Goldman, Melina May, Susie Showers & Astrea Leonis Inquiry: Working Conditions in Montreal Strip Clubs Cherry Blue
18-19	Honey mon miel Gina Flash
20-21	Arts Zero & Imara
22-25	<i>Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Workers' Rights</i> - A Review A Manifesto for Angry Hookers Cherry Blue
26	Photo Cherry Blue & Céleste Ivy
27-33	The Virgin and the Whore: Workers in Struggle Against Labor Invisibility Adore Goldman & Melina May
34-39	Explore Bibliotherapy: Understanding Therapy Through Books Érika

For all our links :

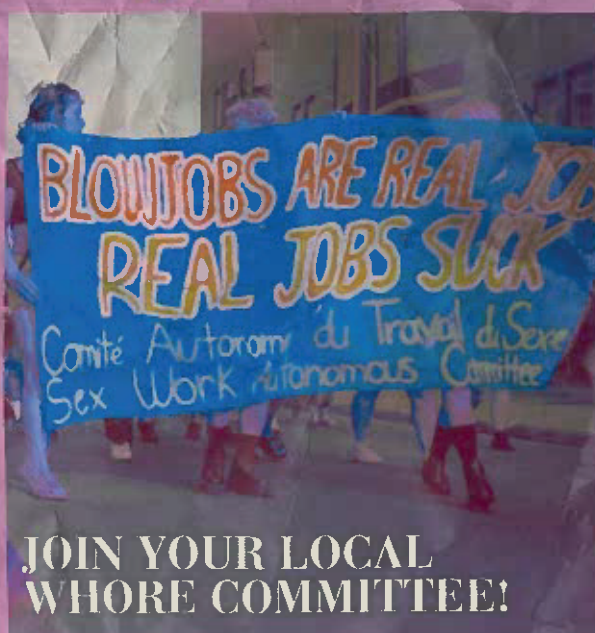


The bosses who take the side of
the clients instead of the workers

The arbitrary rules in our
workplaces that change all the time

The dismissals for the most
ridiculous reasons

IT'S ENOUGH !



**JOIN YOUR LOCAL
WHORE COMMITTEE!**

At the Sex Work Autonomous Committee (SWAC), we've had enough of sex workers (SWers) enduring the mood swings of their bosses. That's why we've been organizing since 2019 for better working conditions in the sex industry. After five years of fighting for decriminalization, unionizing our workplaces can no longer wait: we will make the state listen and we will win!

OUR BODIES, OUR STRUGGLES! STRATEGIES FOR ORGANIZING

Mobilizing our colleagues is the foundation of our work towards better conditions

In the face of abusive bosses and violent clients, we fight within our workplaces. For the past year, SWAC has been conducting workers' surveys of conditions in massage parlors and strip clubs. Through this process, we aim to find new ways to organize and create committees within these spaces, with the goal of unionizing.

The SWAC Attacks! magazine - A tangible tool for mobilizing our colleagues

An annual 100% by-and-for whores magazine: from writing to layout, we're working hard to create a tool to mobilize our colleagues and share our reflections and creativity. After launching the magazine, we distribute it in bookstores, community organisations, sex shops, and our workplaces in Montreal and beyond. The magazine is free, available in French and English, and can also be found on our website.

**BECAUSE THESE DAILY
INJUSTICES MUST END**

**BECAUSE WE NEED
PROTECTIONS AND RIGHTS**

**BECAUSE WE ARE TIRED OF OUR
WORK BEING DENIED AS REAL
WORK**

BECAUSE ONLY STRUGGLE PAYS

**WE WHOREGANIZE
TOGETHER!**

WRITE TO US TO JOIN THE FIGHT
cats.swac.mtl@gmail.com

In solidarity with struggles for the liberation of all
Even in a future where sex work is fully decriminalized, the fight will continue: we will not be free until everyone is free. As we face multiple forms of oppression, the collective strength of SWers must be rooted in solidarity with other struggles against the penal systems, policing borders, transphobia, sexism, colonialism, housing and land evictions, and the oppression of all under white supremacy. We participate in actions with allied collectives to build solidarity, while respecting these groups political autonomy.

Against systemic marginalization, we stay visible!

In recent years, we've organized actions and demonstrations on several occasions: to demand the end of the curfew during the peak of COVID-19, during the constitutional challenge to sex work laws, in response to an international prostitution abolitionist summit, and more.

For the decriminalization of sex work

We demand the same rights as other workers: paid sick leave, parental leave, holidays. We want the ability to report abuses by our bosses and clients, using the same mechanisms as other workers.

The SWAC is an organization of solidarity and grassroots organizing made up of current and former SWers. SWers from all areas of the field are welcome: strip clubs, massage parlors, escort agencies, independent workers, online and camming creators, sugar babies, BDSM practitioners and prodommes, outdoor workers, etc.

We organize on the ground in Tiohtiàk:he-Mooniyang (Montreal).

We meet once a month, both in person and online.

We are neither an NGO nor a community organisation, and we receive no government funding. SWAC has no paid employees or elected officials. This means we have full autonomy and take collective responsibility for the actions we propose.

**FOR ALL
OUR LINKS**



Inquiry Report

Massage Parlor

Militant Inquiry in Massage Parlors: Collectivizing Our Resistance

Interviews by Adore Goldman, Astrea Leonis, Melina May and Susie Showers

Analysis written by Adore Goldman and Melina May

Translation by Tess McCrea

As a movement, we have too often kept quiet about our poor working conditions, fearing that prohibitionists would weaponize this information to deprive us of agency and discredit us. Our silence doesn't mean we haven't resisted daily: whether at work or at home, we have implemented tactics to fight against abuse, violence, or simple everyday frustrations.

This year, the Sex Work Autonomous Committee (SWAC) conducted a militant inquiry in massage parlors to document working conditions. We conducted 14 interviews with massage workers, primarily in Montreal. The goal was to understand the tactics workers use to resist workplace abuse, and to transform this analysis into collective action strategies.

Our initiative is inspired by the tradition of worker inquiry, combining knowledge production and political organizing. We make no claim to scientific objectivity. Instead, we deliberately side with our colleagues, as our approach is also a form of collective workplace organizing. This is co-research where knowledge is created "bottom up".

Before proceeding with the analysis of the data collected, it is essential to situate ourselves as investigators. We who designed this project come from different work environments. Although some of us have been massage workers, we currently do not work in that field. We

are independent escorts with experience in employer-controlled environments, such as strip clubs or massage parlors. This analysis and the organizational proposals presented are the result of our discussions with massage workers during the investigation and our experience in the sex industry. We hope these ideas can serve as a starting point for broader discussions on organizing sex workers (SWers).

SOCIAL COMPOSITION

Entry into the Sex Industry

Among the reasons cited by the participants for entering the industry, one constant emerges: economic needs. Many mentioned being full-time students or wanting to leave low-wage jobs in service and hospitality for higher earnings in fewer hours. Some were introduced to the industry by a friend already working in it.

For others, precarious situations pushed them to choose sex work. One participant described facing a major employment constraint that prevents full-time work. Because social assistance couldn't meet their basic needs amidst rising living costs, sex work became a way to alleviate financial distress. Another person cited their precarious immigration status as a reason to take



Self-portrait by Imara

undocumented work, helping cover costs related to regularizing their status in Canada. One participant wanted to get out of an abusive relationship.

For nearly half the participants, massage parlors were their entry point into the sex industry. However, many didn't stay long. Faced with abusive conditions in massage parlors, many turned to independent work to improve conditions and income. This is a common path in the industry, whether by choice or because a boss fires them after a conflict; the idea of taking control of one's work (schedule, rates, conditions, etc.) appeals to many.

Sex Work and Precarity

The realities faced by the workers interviewed are a far cry from the glamorous image shown in some popular media. Reality is much more complex. While it can improve economic conditions, SWers

often combine multiple income sources to maintain a standard of living they consider decent. Their income remains unstable and precarious.

Indeed, many participants found it hard to estimate their earnings due to a high level of monthly variability. Workers often juggle multiple hustles, combining massage parlor work with independent escorting, stripping, camming, or creating sexual content online (e.g., OnlyFans).

Half the participants also had jobs outside the sex industry, in fields like healthcare, culture, research, and agriculture. Some were students receiving loans and bursaries, while one relied on social assistance with severe employment constraints. In this way, sex work becomes a means to supplement insufficient income in order to live with dignity.

That being said, with the instability comes the advantage of flexibility. One massage worker noted that despite difficult working conditions and unstable income, quick cash and flexible hours made it worthwhile. This point is essential to bear in mind as we continue the fight. Indeed, this kind of freedom is increasingly sought after by workers of all kinds today. This reflects an aspiration for more free time and shorter working hours, which helps explain the attraction of massage parlor work, and sex work more broadly. Maintaining this flexibility must be central to our demands, as it is an advantage that workers do not want to lose.

WORKING CONDITIONS

This part of the analysis offers an opportunity to reflect on how work is organized in massage parlors: how is it divided? What are the power dynamics? We also asked participants about their experiences with working conditions. The main issues raised were related to hygiene and violence.

Organization of Work

The Boss:

Massage parlor owners are men, women, and in one case, a queer person. Women owners are often former massage workers or secretaries.

Employers are frequently described as abusive, narcissistic, and invalidating. There was no notable difference in that regard according to gender, though women were said to have a more nurturing side, according to those interviewed. Many bosses were described as manipulative people who engage in psychological games to exploit employees. In several instances, bosses



made demeaning comments about the massage workers' looks or weight, or made racist remarks. Another common grievance was that bosses tend to support clients over their workers in situations involving violence. Moreover, in at least two massage parlors, employers had sexual relationships with workers, which led to power imbalances and instances of abuse. Workers noted that bosses often play favorites, deepening divisions and creating an unhealthy work environment.

In some cases, the employer was absent from the workplace most of the time, and it was the secretary who managed the premises and took on the role of the boss.

The Secretary:

Secretaries are generally in charge of greeting clients and handling room payments. They are almost always women. Secretaries can be allies to massage workers when it comes to sharing information about clients. Some, for instance, warn workers if a client has a history of violence. In certain massage parlors, there is also a manager who acts as a bouncer.

However, in some cases, particularly when the boss is absent, secretaries also enforce discipline. Five massage workers reported being subjected to violence, especially psychological violence, at the hands of secretaries.

The Massage Workers:

Massage workers are the backbone of their workplaces. Without them, there would be no massage parlor. They provide erotic massages (including masturbation), with or without extras¹.

In massage parlors that offer extras, workers typically negotiate services directly with the client, who then pays them directly. Generally, it is the workers who determine the price, but some parlors set a minimum or maximum rate. One parlor even established a pricing chart for each extra service. Sometimes, employers pressure workers to lower their prices. In some cases, workers discuss and agree together on rates for each service. However, some respondents reported preferring to avoid talking about their services to prevent tension or competition with colleagues. For example, a few workers mentioned that certain extras, like barebacking², were taboo.

In one parlor, the employer attempted to have extras paid by clients directly to the secretary at the time of room payment. This change was not well-received by the workers, who lost their ability to negotiate with clients. This situation led to significant protests and several firings. This arrangement does not appear to be the norm in massage parlors.

Workers in parlors that do not offer extras stated that clients generally expect extras to be provided. They reported having to constantly refuse these requests, prompting some workers



1 Extras are sexual services of various types, for example: blowjobs, vaginal penetration, anal penetration, French kissing, and barebacking (penetration without a condom).

2 Penetration without a condom.

to prefer parlors where extras are allowed. If they themselves did not provide extras, they strongly suspected others of doing so. And if some workers did offer extras, they did so despite the risk of being reported by clients to management and subsequently fired. Additionally, in these parlors, having condoms is forbidden, forcing SWers who offer full services to hide them.

Another part of the massage workers' job is housekeeping. They are generally expected to clean the rooms, showers, and sometimes do the laundry after each session. Often, cleaning other common areas is a responsibility assigned to nobody, so some workers take it upon themselves to do it. We will elaborate further on housekeeping tasks in the next section.

Cleanliness and Hygiene

The results of our inquiry regarding cleanliness and hygiene are split into

two extremes: some participants reported being very satisfied, while others reported being disgusted. As previously mentioned, massage workers handle a significant portion of the housekeeping in massage parlors. After an appointment, they are required to disinfect the mattress, change the sheets, empty the trash, put towels in the wash, and complete other basic tasks. A frequently mentioned issue was the lack of cleaning supplies and tools, which makes it difficult to perform these duties.

When it comes to general maintenance, one thing was clear: these tasks are generally neglected. In this category, participants mentioned duties such as cleaning showers, mirrors, floors, and common areas. As noted earlier, responsibilities and roles in massage parlors are ambiguous; this work is rarely assigned to anyone in particular. With the exception of one massage parlor that reportedly has a cleaner come in every two weeks, the cleaning

is usually done by massage workers, or sometimes by the secretary, highlighting the gendered nature of these tasks. Moreover, this labor is unpaid: apart from direct compensation from clients, no remuneration is provided for this recurrent maintenance work. Yet, the massage parlor charges clients for use of the rooms.

Some participants reported extreme unsanitary conditions in their workplaces, caused by infestations of rats and bedbugs, mold, water leaks, cracks in the ceiling and floors, etc. In response to these hazardous working conditions, workers' complaints are rarely addressed: either the employer outright ignores their requests, or does a half-hearted job at best.

Violence and Insecurity at Work

The violence experienced in massage parlors is multifaceted, and sometimes insidious. All respondents reported having experienced violence, which came from clients, receptionists, bosses, and, more rarely, from their colleagues or the police.

Clients in massage parlors are the primary perpetrators of violence. The most frequently reported acts were sexual and physical assaults: forcing acts that were not previously negotiated, removing or attempting to remove condoms, choking, restraining, and hitting. Several respondents also mentioned economic abuse, such as refusal to pay, haggling over rates, and theft. Additionally, psychological and verbal abuse, including derogatory remarks, death threats, and racist, homophobic, and misogynistic comments, were common.

From management, meaning secretaries and bosses, the reported violence

was primarily economic, verbal, and psychological. An issue that came up repeatedly is the financial sanctions imposed by management. In one massage parlor, the boss imposed a \$20 fine if a condom wrapper was left in the room. Other reported abuses included practices forbidden by labor regulations: requiring longer shifts, forbidding workers from going outside during the entirety of their shift, harassment, closing the parlor without notice, arbitrary dismissal, surveillance of communal spaces via microphones, assaults, etc. Several massage workers decided to leave of their own accord, tired of being belittled for their appearance. Body hair, hairstyles, wearing high heels, lingerie, and makeup – massage workers are expected to conform to standards of femininity imposed by the boss and secretary.

More rarely, the feeling of insecurity came from coworkers' behavior. Some respondents mentioned that the whorearchy³ creates power dynamics between “decent” massage workers and those who are looked down upon for their practices. These acts are sometimes judged as dirty or impure, and at other times seen as a way to get all the clients.

Finally, external factors can create insecurity for workers. Notably, some mentioned constant police surveillance, with officers sometimes photographing workers' license plates. Some massage



3 Whorearchy refers to the hierarchical system in which sex workers are ranked. This ranking depends on proximity to clients (for example, sex workers who provide full services), interactions with the police, and also on class, race, and gender norms. Thus, street-based sex workers find themselves at the bottom of the scale. At SWAC, we aim to fight against these ways of thinking that undermine solidarity among sex workers.



Self-portrait by Imara

workers reported police raids on their parlors, where officers posed as clients to receive services.

COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL
RESISTANCE STRATEGIES

Massage workers resist on a daily basis. Faced with an authoritarian boss and the absence of rights, sex workers must find ways to regain control. Individual strategies reported ranged from pretending to have their period to finishing early, to committing acts of vandalism. Sometimes, resistance also meant leaving their workplace to work as independent escorts, or finding a safer parlor. These strategies are an expression of a refusal of work that must be acknowledged as such if we want to turn it into collective resistance strategies.

During interviews, massage workers shared their strategies for supporting and organizing with their colleagues. They shared important information about pushy and violent clients and how to work with them while maintaining boundaries. One person’s experience also benefits others when it comes to confronting the boss or the secretary about their abusive behaviors. Several reported grouping together to discuss their conditions, formulate proposals, select a representative to speak to the boss, or speak together as a united front. For example, in one massage parlor, workers united to demand the extermination of bedbugs in their workplace. In another setting, workers protested against the introduction of the policy of clients paying for extras at reception. In that case, workers organized meetings to discuss the situation and decide who



would speak to the employer. Very often, this strategy ended in dismissals.

Finally, some mentioned organizing outside of massage parlors with colleagues to give each other advice and help secure better job opportunities by sharing information about safer environments, or ways to work independently. A few massage workers also mentioned organizing through SWAC.

So, What Now? Our Proposals

This analysis of massage workers’ labor provides useful insights for the political organization of sex workers in the workplace. These proposals are meant to be discussed in groups and adapted to different settings before being put into action. Nevertheless, we believe it is important to present them in order to move beyond mere data

collection and advance the fight to improve our working conditions.

First, working organization could be negotiated with the employer. Regarding extras, workers would benefit from discussing the rates they want to set for each service, and imposing them on the boss. The decision to allow extras in a parlor should also be a collective one, determined by the massage workers. Additionally, housekeeping tasks should either be fully covered by the employer – since the client pays for the room rental – or be compensated. Standardizing the rates for extras would also help increase solidarity.

Next, violence remains a major issue to combat in massage parlors. The primary problem is that violent clients are often tolerated because they provide income for the parlor. Worse still, a

client’s history of violence is often not disclosed to new workers. We believe that the right to refuse a client should be fundamental, and should include access to the client’s history. The decision to ban a client from the parlor should be left to the workers. Violent incidents could be documented and shared between parlors in the form of a blacklist.

However, given the issue of wrongful dismissals in massage parlors, achieving these gains will not be easy. To succeed, unity among massage workers is essential. In the cases we studied, the dismissal of the most militant workers brought mobilizations to an end. Therefore, organizing against dismissals is critical.

We believe that the creation of an autonomous union is essential for the organization of SWers. This isn’t for the legal protections it provides, since our work is illegal, but because of the powerful and necessary organization it enables. Through a union, we can carry out collective actions and shift the balance of power in our favor. Pressure tactics such as strikes, picketing, collective resignations, and more could be considered. These actions disrupt the normal course of operations and jeopardize the employer’s revenue, thus forcing them to make concessions. This way, we can negotiate new working conditions and fight back against repression, such as wrongful dismissals.

From the beginning, we have said that sex work is work! The workers’ movement has fought in countless ways against employers. SWers are creative and will undoubtedly develop powerful tactics to bring these strategies to life in their workplaces.

Inquiry Report

Strip Clubs

Inquiry: Working Conditions in Montreal Strip Clubs

by Cherry Blue

Translation by Fred Burrill

I've been dancing for three years now, mainly in Montreal, and I've seen enough to know that the way it often gets talked about is far from the reality of the industry or ignorant of the most important issues. There's a tendency to overfocus on the client-dancer relationship, but the most obvious power abuses are usually elsewhere. Following SWAC's workers' inquiry into massage parlor conditions, I thought it could be useful to do something similar for strip clubs. I therefore had the pleasure of undertaking interviews with several Montreal dancers - Delilah, Dua, and Cleo - who discussed the realities of the industry and reflected on their experiences. This article is a melting pot of their sometimes diverging but often similar observations.

Security, Management and the Labor Surplus

Most of the dancers interviewed started working out of economic necessity, as their jobs in restaurants or the creative industry didn't pay enough and were too demanding. One of the interviewees specified however that she had dreamed of becoming a dancer since she was a child. They all agreed that, in terms of time and energy vs. salary, dancing is the best possible job available to them. Nevertheless, like all sex workers, they are impacted by the absence of

Fashion Freak Designs



regulations in the industry. For example, there are no sick days or protections in case of injury. Delilah mentioned that it's exhausting having to always wear high heels and dance on the pole:

There are so many ways to get hurt or to be put in danger. I have to be careful to conserve my energy and not book too many nights. As a rule, clubs let us skip shifts if we're sick, but some are really strict and make us prove we're ill. Otherwise, we can be barred. Some managers pressure us to work a lot of shifts per week; others are more lax. In general, the expensive, "classy" clubs are the most strict.

Several of my interviewees also mentioned that dancers are sometimes fired for ridiculous reasons and that managers are often disrespectful toward them.

Dua recounted how one of her co-workers was let go because she talked back to a client who said something racist to her. They also all mentioned the relatively poor sanitary conditions in the clubs. But the interviewees especially underlined how managers and security are generally not there to help them if they need assistance. Cleo described her experience: "In certain clubs, even if I'm screaming in the private booth, they don't hear me or they don't care. They kick out clients who don't buy drinks, but when it comes to the dances, we're basically our own bosses." With few exceptions, management generally doesn't intervene when clients don't respect the limits of the dancers or refuse to pay. There are certain disrespectful regulars who spend a lot at the bar, and that's all that matters to the club - their own money.

Fashion Freak Designs

When I asked them if their experiences varied from club to club, they told me that the clients are basically all the same, good and bad, but the real difference was between managements. Managers abuse their power, dehumanizing and denigrating their employees. Some interviewees had been fired for having broken an arbitrary rule or for some other nebulous reason, without warning. Frequent rule changes seem to be part of the manager's power trip; they generally make little sense. For example, one club removed the curtains from the private booths during Covid-19, and then never put them back. This

affects both the club and the dancer's revenues, for no clear reason. Another club is now insisting that dancers book their appearances more than two months in advance, where most clubs instead require only a week's notice. All the interviewees agreed that managements were abusive, although to varying degrees at each place. Cleo commented that she was happy to have started dancing at 25, because she knows how to assert her limits and to not waste her time. She sees managers abusing 18-year-old girls, flirting with them more and putting more pressure on them. She also talked to me about DJs and their habit of interrupting private dances by calling dancers on stage at random moments. "There's only one club in Montreal where the DJ just does his job, waiting for the girls to be ready to come on stage, but everywhere else

we're always at risk of losing money from the private booths because we get called on stage. It kills the mood for the clients and so the private dance stops there."

All the dancers interviewed noticed an increase in solidarity between dancers, pointing out that this phenomenon is poorly understood in popular culture. One of the interviewees said that she could see her club unionizing. Another remarked that "the smaller the club, the greater the solidarity, but the bigger clubs can be brutal and competitive. The competition creates





rivalries. But in general, I see more mutual aid than competition.” I also asked my interviewees if this general goodwill between workers extended to other parts of the sex work industry, and the answers were mixed. Some of their colleagues are proud to say that they don’t do “more” than dancing, basically saying “I’m not that kind of girl.” Delilah pointed out however that the industry seems to be changing: “the younger girls I work with do more full service than the older ones, as the culture is becoming more open to that sort of thing. Maybe it’s that attitudes are changing, but it’s also probably because of the recession; it’s getting harder and harder to make a living as a dancer.” Many dancers do other forms of sex work but hide it at the strip club. They’re definitely exposed to the judgment of the clients, ranging from those who make moral critiques of them to those who always demand full service in the strip club, where it’s generally forbidden.

Despite the sometimes difficult conditions, all the interviewees agreed that interest in working in the clubs is growing: more and more girls want to dance. Also, clubs book more girls each night. They talked about this hyper-saturation of the labor market possibly being due to the popularization of dancing on social media, especially the multiplication of pole dancers - strippers or otherwise. There’s also maybe less stigma amongst younger people. So the industry is more competitive; fewer and fewer girls get “selected” to dance, reinforcing inequalities in who can access the clubs. Delilah remarked that “there’s lots of fatphobia, ageism, racism,

and transphobia in the industry, and especially in the strip clubs. I wish there was at least one trans-friendly club.”

Handling Stigma & Looking to the Future

The interviewees were generally not out to their families or their colleagues in their other workplaces. They talk about stripping to people who are open to sex work, but outside of this bubble, people are shocked or fascinated. Cleo explains: “Sometimes, I feel like explaining my work, sometimes not. It’s hard with guys I’m seeing, they say, ‘Oh, you’re a naughty girl.’” Some talked about experiencing a loss of sexual desire, having less interest in being erotic. One dancer specified that it’s also a health question: she gets yeast infections if she does too many lap dances, so that turns her off of sex. Another point mentioned was the psychological difficulty of being in relationships with men when you’re a sex worker: “It’s easy to find yourself in a toxic relationship, because they get jealous or they don’t respect us fully, even if they sometimes say the opposite.”

As for their financial situations, some are saving up or are going to school in preparation for life after sex work, while others are taking it day by day. They all have personal projects outside of stripping. One explained: “A lot of girls spend all their money. I try to save, but I’m always getting hurt or I need care, so it’s not



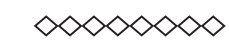
easy.” Another told me she preferred to concentrate on collective resistance than to work as much as possible to have a financially stable future.

Towards the Political Organization of the Strip Club

Finally, I asked them what they thought about decriminalizing sex work. They were all in favor, seeing it as a way to have access to more stable rights at work. However, one of the interviewees had some broader concerns:

In principle, I believe in decriminalization, but in practice I’m not sure. At the end of the day, it would be a good thing for everyone’s safety, but it could take away some of the things that I like about this work. Sex work is work, but it’s not a job; it happens outside of professional norms. I like the no-strings-attached part, I don’t want a boss and I want to choose when I work, so this clandestine reality works for me. I’m happy to not pay taxes and not finance the government’s huge military budget. I worry too that management will take a bigger part of our income. I think the fact that strip clubs aren’t regulated plays in our favor in terms of what we can earn. That said, maybe the possibility of forming a strong union would help us. I understand too that I have the privilege of having other options, and that decriminalization would probably create safer spaces for more marginalized workers.

Another dancer agreed that we would probably end up making a bit less money, but that we could also get unemployment and sick days, making it worth it in the end. Comparing our reality here in Montreal to strip clubs outside of Quebec, she pointed out that we’re quite lucky: “It’s the only place in the world I know where they don’t take a percentage of our earnings, only a bar fee, around \$20-60. On that level, we’re really privileged.” However, she also argued that we need rights and security, and that decriminalization is the only way to get this. The road might be long, and there will be highs and lows, but a better future where we can have both good salaries and better working conditions seems possible if we get organized. Two strip clubs in the United States have already unionized. The strippers at Star Garden in LA, after a year and a half of being on strike, included demands such as a cut of the bar profits, freedom to choose their own schedules, getting rid of bar fees, rules around firings and more protection from the clients. “We fought for it, we worked for it, we bled for it, we cried for it. We made history¹,” said one of those dancers. It’s not unreasonable to believe that we can do it too.



¹ Emma Alabaster and Natalie Chudnovsky. (2024). *What happened after the nation’s only unionized strip club reopened in North Hollywood – 6 months later*, from <https://tinyurl.com/57hsumpk>

Photos:

Coat and bag from Fashion Freak Designs,
Love me for who I’m not collection
Model: Luna Sebbar, Photographer: Carol Ribeiro



Honey mon miel

by Gina Flash

(original text in italics)
Translation by Céleste Ivy

I don't write everything
that I think about
and then
I die



and I don't know how to explain the streaks metal leaves on my tired skin, so I'll settle for grinding on those men *like a fucking demon* I write to this lover "yesterday I slid on the clients *like a fucking demon* I don't know if I'll even have the strength to make love to you" I think about that string tying me to the chair or wrapped around my ankles I think about my ankles wrapped around the legs of the chair I think about what my friends will have to share if I too fall off this balcony month of november 2024 I write down the list : a couple of thongs full of stripper's ass juice (hommage à Vickie Gendreau) - the complete Nana manga collection covered with my tears - my jewelry - two BPD cats like me - some very serious books - the glitter slipped between their pages - my cameras - the porn still on it I find my friends lucky



stomping on that stage like i slide on the back of that very ugly man covered in oil: I introduce myself as a null space in between boredom and collapse *and when I do they make it rain* the rain spreads over my face and smears the makeup I apply slowly at the beginning of the *shift* that is my life

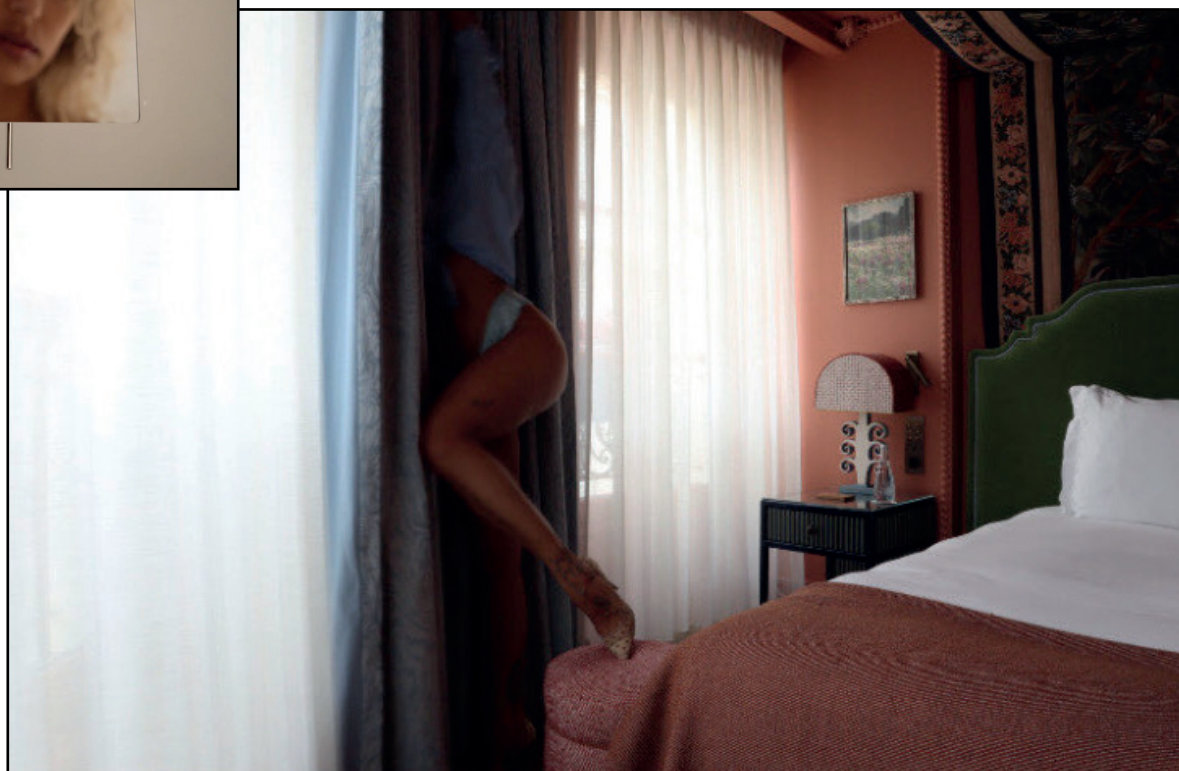
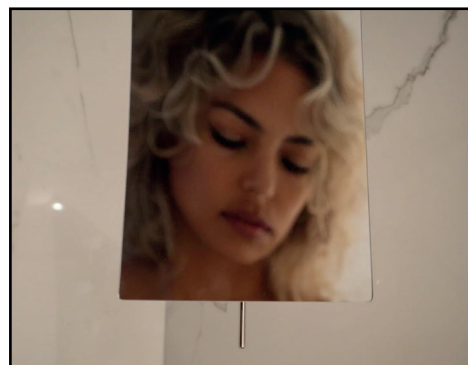


a sex worker for all dogs - always someone to pleasure - why can't I come to the party ?

honey mon miel
don't worry
if you tip me well
you'll also be
in my next poem



Cherry Blue & Gina Flash



SELF-PORTRAITS

Imara

PORTRAIT OF A COLLEAGUE

Zero



*Revolting Prostitutes:
The Fight for Sex Workers' Rights* - A Review

A Manifesto for Angry Hookers

by Cherry Blue,
Translation by Adam Hill

For many of us, a real cornerstone for the politicization of SWers, *Revolting Prostitutes*¹ by Juno Mac and Molly Smith is one of the few books on sex work of relevance and nuance. I set out here a survey of the first three chapters that highlights certain key points. Instead of denying it, the authors acknowledge the violence in the sex industry and make the case for a total decriminalization of sex work as the first step towards improving the living conditions of SWers.

Symbolism vs. Reality

In the first instance, they make a distinction between the professional dimensions of sex work and their stereotypical representation. They argue that most abolitionists - anti-prostitution activists - seek to build an argument based on metaphorical associations with sexuality and its monetization, without considering the importance of working conditions for the practice. Such moralizing positions take many forms, but the myths undergirding the imagined “prostitute” often prove to be dangerous and disconnected from reality. The prostitute is usually represented as dirty and corrupt, which gradually denies her of her inner worth (p. 11). This odious stereotyping can easily be attributed to a political agenda that seeks to be rid of those exchanging sexual

services for money or shelter, notably through “rescue industry” discourse, according to which every SWer is a victim to be saved and therefore in the same bracket as orphaned children and abandoned animals (p. 9).

In response to these preconceptions, many SWers portray their work in terms of “sex positivity” and empowerment. Those who emphasize the role of pleasure in their work, though, are in fact articulating a defensive response to stigma, while only the most privileged can afford to choose their clients and find enjoyment in the work (p. 13). This position ends up harming SWer communities by not representing the experience of the less privileged, casting a veil over precariousness and the demands of those who wish to obtain better working conditions. Further to this, these assumptions create the illusion that customers and workers share the same interests (p. 32). But the person selling sex needs the transaction more than the customer, which makes workers more vulnerable. In the end, SWers unhappy with their current conditions end up feeling stuck between the “happy hooker” who enjoy certain privileges, and the abolitionists who seek to deny their rights (p. 36).

The Dangers of Carceral Feminism

Both pro-decriminalization and anti-prostitution feminists often articulate their positions by drawing on legacies of violence. Anti-prostitution feminists

assert that the best possibility of justice against male violence is found in carceral feminism. This school of thought supports putting forward a set of punitive laws, because “exited women come to be regarded as the ultimate symbol of female woundedness, with the criminalisation of clients as feminist justice” (p.13). However, this ignores the police violence - material and historical - against women and racialized people. This is particularly true for migrant SWers, who are criminalized and at risk of deportation if they need to report sexual abuse. “For sex workers and other marginalised and criminalised groups, the police are not a symbol of protection but a real manifestation of punishment and control” (p. 16): laws are not just symbolic, they have a demonstrable impact on police power - its violence and use of profiling.

Some might argue that the Nordic model - criminalizing the purchase of sexual services - only targets clients and not SWers. In which case, this model would not harm the latter group. But any approach that aims to reduce money changing hands in the sex industry makes those who offer sexual services take on the consequences of lower demand - and this is true both in terms of their working conditions and their income (p. 54).

Pushing Back on Lazy Assumptions: Whoring is Working

The arguments that abolitionists make often involve obfuscating the professional aspect of this practice: “Don’t say sex work, it’s far too awful to be work” (p. 42). Labor and awfulness are positioned as antithetical; if sex work is strenuous, it can't be work. This argument forgets that waged labor is generally a form of exploitation; bosses profit from the

work of their employees by paying them less than the income that they generate. Thus, it is unreasonable to consider any and all work, including sex work, is morally good by default (pp. 45-46).

Both bad clients and abolitionists seem to think that there are no limits placed by SWers in the sexual act, as if the latter put themselves at the disposal of all the wishes of the client, who is able to do whatever he wants with their bodies. Although it would be shocking to say the same thing about a massage therapist, we don’t mind perpetuating this false account of sex work. The authors quote an escort named Nikita: “Part of believing me when I say I have been raped is believing me when I say I haven’t been” (p. 45). They explain that in today’s society, penetration is always assumed to be an act of domination. If the act of penetration is always already perceived as degrading, sex work will inevitably be framed negatively and misogynistically. We have much to gain from modifying our shared assumptions about penetration, which is not intrinsically a “denigrating” act for the person who is penetrated.

An Economic Necessity

It can also be dangerous to fail to recognize the economic and material factors that motivate SWers. The idea that, because they are too weird and broken (p. 48), SWers are incapable of making good decisions for themselves not only robs them of their agency, but prioritizes punitive reforms over a feminist utopia. Smith and Mac cite the example of a court in Sweden that took custody of a SWer’s child away from her abusive father, who eventually killed the child’s mother (p. 47).



1 Juno Mac et Molly Smith. (2018). *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Workers' Right*, Verso.

Although it is true that SWers are more likely to have experienced sexual trauma/abuse at the hands of their family, those that have chose to pursue sex work do so not because of some “permanent damage” that leads to self-destruction, but because of the economic precariousness that is more widespread among victims of such abuse. Other jobs offered to women, especially those without qualifications, are generally underpaid. Women are more likely than men to be unemployed or underpaid. Faced with these obstacles, sometimes the only viable option is sex work: “Anti-prostitution campaigners should take seriously the fact that sex work is a way people get the resources

they need” (p. 52). This scenario plays out with higher frequency for racialized women and LGBTQIA+ people, resulting in their overrepresentation in the industry.

The Problem of Borders

Mobilizing to defend the rights of SWers must involve consideration of the situation for migrants. In 2021 in the United States, the anti-sex trafficking budget amounted to more than 1.2 billion USD - mainly for “information campaigns” and not to help survivors - while in 2013, the budget for SWers rights was 10 million globally (p. 59). Since SWers are considered to be offenders as well as victims, the U.S. government prevents anyone who has sold sexual services in the last ten years from entering the country, in the same bracket as spies, Nazis and terrorists (p. 81). Crossing into the U.S. is always anxiety-inducing for a SWer: border agents can search their phone for evidence without needing any proof or warrant.

In the world of sex trafficking, it is important to distinguish between kidnapping and voluntary migration. The scenario in which a young white girl is kidnapped and abused in another country is ultimately very rare. Most sex trafficking involves people looking to immigrate and pay smuggling networks to do so, often facing sexual exploitation since being undocumented means having few to no

rights. We should not place blame on these migrants and instead change the system that prevents them from migrating legally and accessing the same rights as those with citizenship.

Fuelled by stories perpetuated by the media and popular culture, some argue that there is a system enslaving young white girls today that is even more serious than the slavery of African Americans. However, this falsehood is very dangerous and distracts us from the fact that “the direct modern descendant of chattel slavery in the US is not prostitution but the prison system” (p. 76). Indeed, there are more African Americans incarcerated in the United States than there were slaves in 1850. Moreover, the appropriation of the term “abolitionist” by so-called anti-prostitution feminists, in reference to the fight to abolish slavery, is an attempt to gain moral legitimacy via the suggestion that the two struggles are equivalent. However, anti-prostitution groups are generally made up of white conservatives, whereas those impacted by criminalization are often African Americans (p. 78).

Ultimately, the root of the problem is that borders “make people vulnerable, and that vulnerability is what abusive people prey upon” (p. 64). In other words, the criminalization of undocumented migrants directly creates the market for sex trafficking.

The nation-state finds a scapegoat (in this case the trafficker) to distract people from the actual problem: borders and the prison system. So it is important to keep in mind that the distinction between sex trafficking and sex work should not encourage the belief that the arrests of trafficking victims are any more justifiable; we must be critical

of borders and the role they play in migrants’ precarity. This forms the essential disagreement between carceral feminists and pro-rights feminists: “We disagree not only on the solution, but on the problem: for carceral feminists, the problem is commercial sex, which produces trafficking; for us, the problem is borders” (p. 83).

The distinction that is often made between sex work and sex trafficking provides ready evidence that our solidarity is too often granted solely to SWers with citizenship. It is all too easy to avoid the question of sex trafficking: this blindspot allows us to ignore the gray areas that threaten to delegitimize us in the eyes of society at large. However, there needs to be space for migrant SWers within our struggle if we want to improve rights for all: “There is no migrant solidarity without prostitute solidarity and there is no prostitute solidarity without migrant solidarity” (p. 86).

The authors believe that politicizing a SWer takes about two minutes. They live or come into close contact with situations of injustice and oppression, which motivates them to get involved in political organizing. Unfortunately, only a handful of activists can afford to be public with their demands and are granted more of the credit for their actions. We should always be alert to the voices of all SWers, regardless of their backgrounds or modes of communication. Disgruntled whores, precarious whores, migrant whores; you are not alone.

It was a good day, Céleste Desrosiers, photo by Tanata





Cherry Blue & Céleste Ivy

The Virgin and the Whore: Workers in Struggle Against Labor Invisibility

Interview with Leopoldina Fortunati
by Adore Goldman and Melina May
Translation by Jaggi Singh

Oil Painting - Zero



Leopoldina Fortunati is a workerist¹ activist, feminist-Marxist, and sociologist. In the 70s, she was actively involved in the groups Potere Operaio and later Lotta Femminista in Italy. Active in the International Wages for Housework Campaign, she wrote the book The Arcane of Reproduction: Housework, Prostitution, Labor and Capital². In this text, Fortunati works with Marxist concepts to show how the reproduction of labor power is structured within the family, as well as outside of it, through sex work.

We wanted to ask Fortunati about her analysis of sex work in The Arcane of Reproduction and its relevance to current struggles. Here is what she had to say.

A&M: In The Arcane of Reproduction, you show how the domestic labor of housewives within the capitalist family creates surplus value by reproducing labor power. Indeed, cleaning, washing, caring for children, cooking - all this unpaid labor provided to the worker and to future workers - is appropriated by Capital. Thus, the capitalist saves on the reproduction of their labor power. Women, therefore, find themselves both subject to the capitalist and dependent on men's wages to survive. Of course, this model has become more complex with women entering the labor market and the creation of social services, but the majority of social reproductive labor is still performed by women, and work within the family remains essential to the reproduction of the labor force.

In your analysis, what is the role of prostitution in the process of reproduction, and how does it relate to the unpaid sex work within the capitalist family? Are

◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇

1 For all underlined words, please refer to the glossary at the end of the text to better understand the Marxist concepts.

2 Leopoldina Fortunati. (1995). *The Arcane of Reproduction: Housework, Prostitution, Labor and Capital*. Autonomedia

there historical links between the struggle of sex workers and the struggle for wages for housework?

Leopoldina: To begin with, I have always said that prostitution has a function on a productive, social, and political level. On a productive level because it is the same process that exists in households. The only thing that changes is the payment, but a payment for which women pay the high cost of social contempt.

The entire history of monetization predates capitalism by several centuries, back to the Roman Empire and even Ancient Greece. Prostitution arises with monetization. A friend of mine in Washington is currently researching this history. In their research, it's clear that this process, for the first time, allowed women to build a dowry. Because monetization put the marriage market in crisis, it was [initially] adolescent women who were about to marry who prostituted themselves for a period of time in temples to earn money.

If we return to capitalism, there has always been great pride among the working class regarding the money earned in factories. It was money earned through blood and sweat. It was considered a sin for women to do sex work, to be proud of the money they earned. So, we understand that even if the material productive process of organizing domestic labor and the process of prostitution is exactly the same, there is this small detail that acts as a key to pit women against each other. It is a monetization that has always been used against the lack of monetization of domestic work. Of course, on the political and social levels, the two spheres, while identical, are set up to be played against each other.

Oil Painting - Zero



For me, it was really clear when we started feminist struggles that the first fight to undertake was to be united because unity among women is fundamental. If we accept being divided, if we accept having these two spheres in opposition, we will never achieve anything. I must say that in the early 70s, the need to restore unity in the women's struggle, to not accept being pitted against each other, was very clear, and there was a tremendous struggle during those years. For example, prostitutes in France occupied a church to protest the living conditions they were forced to endure³. In my region,

◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇

3 She makes reference here to the occupation of the Saint-Nizier church by the sex workers of Lyon in 1975. To learn more: Lilian Mathieu. (1999). "Une mobilisation improbable: l'occupation de l'Église Saint-Nizier", *Revue française de sociologie*, vol. 40, no.3, p.475-483. in *Luttes XXX, Inspirations du mouvement des travailleuses du sexe*, 2011, Les Éditions du remue-ménage.

[Padua, Italy], there was a network of prostitutes' committees fighting for independence, for autonomy in managing their bodies and their money, that is, to destroy the figure of the pimp. So, we always fought together. We were in the same mobilizations, meaning they even came to our mobilizations, those of the committee [for wages for housework], etc.

It has been different for feminist movements in general. Feminist movements have always had a lot of problems, in the same way that they now have problems with trans people - particularly trans women. It's terrible. There have always been problems in the political vision of feminist movements in general because they thought that their struggle was different, and that naturally led to nothing. Simply to the weakening of each other's struggles.

In our networks, we were fully aware of the necessity of this unity of struggles and of understanding how to organize a political program that united us. For example, the struggle for abortion rights was something we all had in common, as well as the struggle for the right to contraception, the struggle for the right to decide our sexuality, and the struggle for wages for housework.

The struggle for wages for domestic work was important, even for sex workers, because it is important for women to have money at home. Otherwise, they are always in competition downward, because if there is nothing [for the sexual labor done at home], naturally, even when you decide to do sex work, the prices are low. Whereas, if there is money, you have more possibilities to negotiate.

A&M: Among your observations, you explain “the apparent antithesis between productive labor and reproductive labor.” In this system, Capital presents reproductive work (both sexual and social) as a natural force: the reproduction of male labor power is framed as a personal service rather than employment. You write: “[...] women’s struggles have faced greater difficulty in exposing the mechanisms of exploitation, precisely because of this specific complexity of women’s relationship with capital.” Unlike paid labor, where the worker directly receives wages from Capital, the housewife exchanges her reproductive labor with Capital through the intermediary of the worker. This creates the isolation of housewives and, consequently, an additional challenge in organizing with others who perform the same work.

Similarly, in the sex industry, many of us work alone, isolated from our colleagues, and when we do have some semblance of a workplace, the criminalization and surveillance of it make organizing particularly difficult.

Moreover, nowadays, technologies play a predominant role within our households, social services, and our sexualities. As you write:

The power of men as a social group has been reassembled through these technologies, which function as tools of reproductive labor, enabling the direct penetration of capital into the immaterial spheres of individual reproduction⁴.

◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇

4 Leopoldina Fortunati. (2023). *Les femmes et la communication numérique: où en sommes-nous?*, *Revue Ouvrage*. Retrieved from <https://www.revue-ouvrage.org/femmes-communication>

For sex workers, technology has become indispensable: a significant portion of the work has moved online, through the use of social media, advertising platforms, or erotic content sales platforms like OnlyFans.

In your research, you explore, among other things, the impacts of technology on sexualities. How do these technologies mediate gender relations, particularly through the use of the Internet and other information technologies? What parallels can you draw between the organizational challenges faced by housewives and those encountered by sex workers? How can these challenges be overcome?

Leopoldina: Working in isolation is increasingly the norm. It's either the brothel, like in the factory, or the profession, which resembles the condition of housewives, meaning each of us works at home or on the streets. But alone!

It's clear that digital technologies have a significant impact on women: they push them backward in terms of communication. We've regressed after the advent of computers and the Internet. Men are still more knowledgeable than us because computers belong to their tradition.

A second factor is the terrible social isolation caused by all these technologies, especially in the home, where it has worsened. There are many families who sit around a table to eat, and each person is on their mobile phone. They are present and absent at the same time.

Work platforms have modernized the role of pimps. They are the [new] pimps. They are the ones profiting from women's labor. They have modernized it through technology, but it's the same role. They take the money, and since there is intense isolation, there's no longer the physical security that pimps used to guarantee in some way. This marks a shift in the organization of sex work. We've gone from the division of labor in sex-factories to isolation. Now, it's much harder to organize and act collectively because we don't know where to find one another. On the other hand, we are controlled by these platforms. At the same time, if they were shut down, many would be impacted because they depend on them; these platforms hold significant power over the control and management of sex work.

At the same time, there is a sort of normalization of sex work because it is more accepted through technology and is treated differently, culturally and socially, within civil society. This issue needs to be studied seriously because there are academic articles that address these technologies but fail to understand the political significance of what is happening. How do you get in touch? How much money does the platform keep, and how much does it give you? In other words, it's about studying the details of the contract.

A: It seems to me that there's also something interesting regarding who works for these platforms, especially those who are directly employed, likely mostly male programmers. In comparison, we earn our income through the platform, which takes a share of that money, but we have no labor law protections.

Leopoldina: So, there is a lot more social isolation because a significant part of sex work has become immaterial and online. Massages and a few other activities continue. We need to understand the proportion of workers engaged in online versus offline work, as I don't know, but I get the impression that many young people prefer online work because there's no physical contact: it's simply a narrative they create in front of the camera.

M: Yes, even when you do in-person work, you'll have a whole online job to do to promote your services, then feeding your escort persona by doing social media, etc.

Leopoldina: And then there's the idea that you, you're free, you can do it whenever you want, whenever you have free time. Whereas [in-person] sex work has specific hours, it's in the evening when people aren't working or during times when people are on their work break.

There is also a lot of unpaid digital sex work. It's built into the physiology of the internet. And many people don't know the difference between activity and work; they think it's a matter of personal expression. Above all, there's a lot of confusion among young people, who do a lot of unpaid sex work, thereby creating massive competition.

And another important thing is that many states are shifting to the right. The right is about God, family, and social order. For example, there have already been terrible signs regarding abortion in the United States, but also everywhere else. There's a step backward in this area, and I expect it will also impact sex work. That's why we need to be even more united, all of us in the same political program, in the same struggle, etc. Because otherwise, we risk being really weak.

A&M: In our workplaces, it is common to have colleagues who hold salaried positions in social services, such as teaching and healthcare. For many of us, sex work serves as a supplementary job to another that doesn't pay well enough. The widespread lack of recognition for reproductive labor, whether it is performed at home, in massage parlors, or in hospitals, weakens the most marginalized populations and exposes those who perform it to exhaustion and various forms of violence.

In your opinion, how does the fight for wages for housework represent an important and necessary point of convergence today to unite women in struggle?

Leopoldina: This goal is fundamental, even for sex workers, because otherwise, they face competition. That's why, afterwards, there's a general weakness among women everywhere, whether in sex work or in jobs outside the home. We are always in the lowest-paid, most precarious professions, and so on. Naturally, who is the ideal person to accept crumbs instead of real money?

And so the issue is this: if someone organizes something, others must support them. That is, if you organize political initiatives, for example in front of massage parlors, we need to come and support you, and you need to support us,

for instance, if we organize a women's strike. In this way, the struggles of one become the struggles of the other, that they are united with each other politically. And gradually, they must become part of the political program of the network at the international level.

A&M: It's a way to maintain autonomous struggles while bringing them together.

Leopoldina: It's very important for each group to undertake their own struggles, but what's equally important is that these struggles are part of the same program and that others support them.

Oil Painting - Zero



Glossary:

Workerism: Workerism is an Italian Marxist current, active mainly in the 60s and 70s. This tendency advocates for workers' autonomy from political parties and trade unions, prioritizing instead the organization of workers' committees within factories.

Labor power: Labor power is the commodity that a worker sells to the capitalist, the only one they possess. It is their physical capacity to work. Labor power is a unique commodity because it is the only one capable of creating value.

Surplus value: In the Marxist tradition, surplus value is the value created by a worker that the capitalist appropriates. For example, in an 8-hour workday, a worker may produce a value equivalent to their wage during the first 4 hours, while the remaining 4 hours generate surplus value, which the capitalist pockets. Marxist feminists have argued that domestic labor and sex work, by reproducing the commodity "labor power," are also sources of surplus value, as they are essential to the functioning of the capitalist system.

Capital, capitalist: Capital refers to an accumulation of money that generates more money. The capitalist is an individual or entity that owns the means of production and employs workers to generate surplus value.

Reproductive labor: Refers to all activities and services that serve to reproduce human beings as well as "labor power," such as childcare, domestic work, sex work, and elder care, whether this work is paid or unpaid.

Monetization: The process by which money - in the era of gold and silver - is introduced as a means of paying for a commodity.

Explore Bibliotherapy: Understanding Therapy Through Books

by Érika
Translation by Adore Goldman

Bibliotherapy, or therapy through books, is a therapeutic approach that uses reading to help individuals in their journey through various psychological, emotional, and/or personal difficulties¹. This method aims to initiate an internal process through directed reading, allowing the readers to find resonance in the stories and better understand their own experiences². It seeks to fill a gap by creating an echo between the text and personal lived experiences. According to Marcel Proust, bibliotherapy is a “curative discipline,” capable of stimulating psychic and emotional vitality, thus suggesting its potential to awaken inner resources in readers³.

In this sense, reading becomes a regenerative force and an essential aid in restoring psychic and emotional vitality⁴. For some people, reading is primarily an intimate moment, a tête-à-tête with the book and with oneself⁵.

Reading also helps overcome difficulties, with a long list of benefits. Reading meets a variety of needs, whether they be for repair, qualification, self-affirmation, confirmation, glorification, projection into the future or past, sublimation, exploration, identification, education, disidentification, depersonalization, and more⁶.

WHY BIBLIOTHERAPY?

The Reasons and Goals of the Approach

The initiative of bibliotherapy, specifically by and for SWers, takes on its full meaning within the context of SWAC’s annual magazine. The books and (auto) biographical references offered aim to foster a sense of community and reduce the loneliness SWers may experience, whether caused by geographical or psychological isolation. Thus, this bibliotherapy not only addresses readers’ individual issues, but also serves as community cohesion.

The books proposed will be presented with a summary to help better understand my personal reflections, in which I will share the emotions and impacts these readings had on me. My goal is not only to convey the content of these works, but

◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇

1 Ouaknin, M.-A. (2016). "Chapitre II. À l’ombre des mots en fleur", Dans :, M. Ouaknin, *Bibliothérapie: Lire, c’est guérir* (pp. 47-53). Paris: Le Seuil.

2 *Ibid*

3 *Ibid*

4 *Ibid*

5 *Ibid*

6 *Ibid*

also to show you how they made me feel. This approach seeks to not only introduce the books, but also create a more intimate connection, showing how these stories resonate in my own journey. I hope these shared experiences touch you, provide comfort, inspiration, or simply a moment of connection, thereby bringing us closer and strengthening our sense of community and solidarity as SWers.

WHO AM I?

What Experiences Shape my Reflections?

I am a cisgender, heterosexual, middle-class white woman from the South Shore of Montreal. I am a psychosocial interventionnist engaged in the field of sex work, with three years of experience working at a community organization that is dedicated to improving the living conditions of SWers. My ongoing academic background, a certificate in feminist studies, another in critical sexuality studies, and a bachelor's degree in sexology, allows me to approach issues facing SWers from an intersectional perspective. I have contributed to various research projects related to the community, with COCQ-SIDA. Additionally, my personal experience of ten years in the sex industry, including two years in an escort agency and eight years as a part-time independent escort, enriches my understanding of the realities of SWers. This combination of academic, professional, and personal experiences provides me with both theoretical and practical insights into sex work issues, while remaining grounded in real-world realities.

Ninguna mujer nace para puta, María Galindo and Sonia Sanchez, 2007

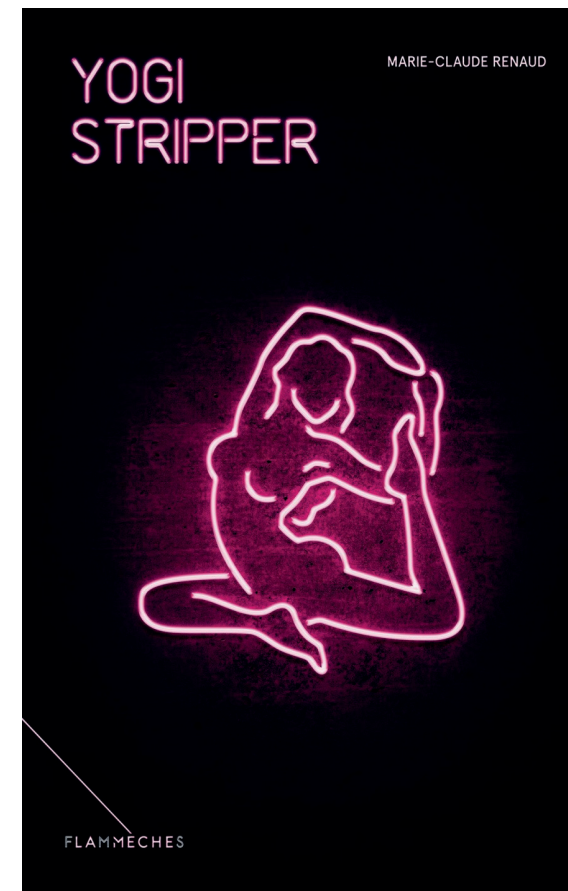


SUMMARY: The phrase originated in Bolivia and spread to Argentina. “No woman is born to be a whore” is the slogan on a banner carried by María Galindo and Sonia Sánchez during protests and debates. It is also the title of this book, in which these two figures of contemporary Latin American feminism analyze, from the perspective of the whore, the political, ideological, and philosophical processes that push prostitutes out of public life. This deep immersion into the world of prostitution offers the reader new analytical concepts. The authors openly denounce all the profiteers of this system: the “prostituters” (the state and patriarchy) and the parasites (unions, churches, and NGOs). By defining “the street” as a political territory, they propose new ways for SWers to form connections, organize and rebel.

PERSONAL REFLECTION: I found this book particularly enlightening from a cultural perspective, as it offers a glimpse into the reality of SWers in Latin America, a context I was unfamiliar with prior. What struck me most was the way the authors highlight the role of government institutions and the state in maintaining the precarity of sex work. They rightly emphasize that despite minimal government aid, such as food and condom distribution, the state fails to provide real opportunities for education and training, further exacerbating SWers vulnerabilities.

The authors do not only emphasize and denounce profiteers, they also offer ways to transform this reality. By defining the street as a political territory and encouraging organization and rebellion, María Galindo and Sonia Sanchez provide powerful tools for empowering Bolivian SWers. This constructive and militant approach resonates deeply with me because it exhibits our ability to act and advocate for the rights of our community. *Ninguna mujer nace para puta* is thus a source of inspiration and a call to action for more recognition and better working conditions for all SWers.

Yogi Stripper, Marie-Claude Renaud, 2023



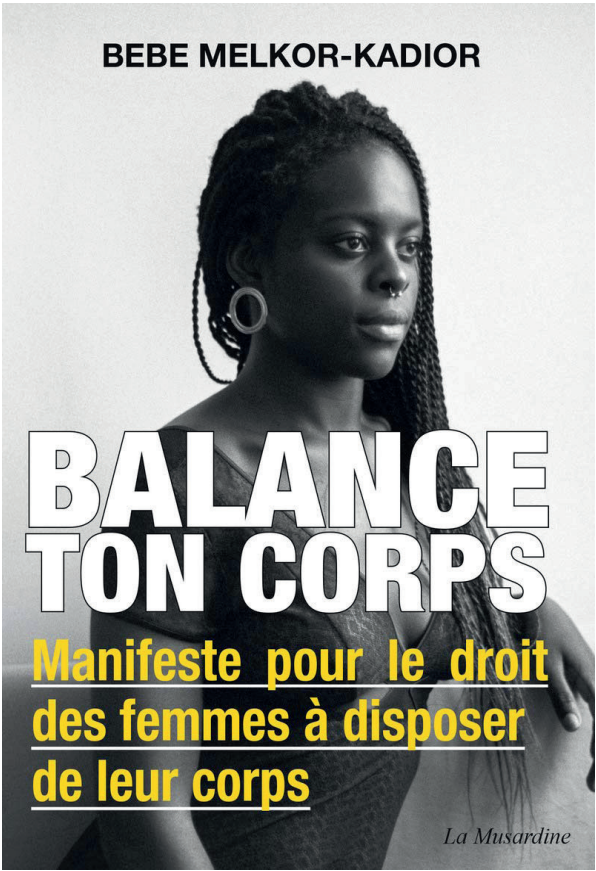
SUMMARY: “It wasn’t just the money that made it enjoyable. All this desire focused on my little self intoxicated, poorly nourished ego... in addition to the sensory, sensual, and sexual pleasures that reached levels never before explored.” The ups and downs of an improbable double life. From her beginnings as a stripper in countryside bars to her success in Montreal’s largest clubs, Marie-Claude Renaud reveals the behind-the-scenes of this sultry world, frankly and without judgment. With spontaneity, she opens up about her difficult relationships with addiction, food, her body image, and recounts her tumultuous explorations of psychedelic drugs. Finally, having found relative peace in yoga, she also discovers a certain hypocrisy to the yogi community, which she does not hesitate to denounce! Honest, captivating, funny, and highly sincere, *Yogi Stripper* invites us into a life governed by an irresistible need for freedom.

PERSONAL REFLECTION: The author immerses us into the backstage of her double life with great sincerity, revealing the ups and downs of her journey in the world of Montreal’s strip clubs. What particularly struck me was her refreshing honesty when it came to her approach to managing her addictions and her relationship with psychedelic drugs. She openly shares her challenges with drug use, both in her personal life and through her work, offering a rare and valuable insight into this reality.

Marie-Claude Renaud does not shy away from addressing the bodily pressures one can feel in the industry, which can affect our body image and eating habits, describing how these aspects can influence our well-being. Her story, both frank and impactful, is filled with emotions and humor, making difficult subjects more accessible and less taboo. The way she explores her internal contradictions and personal discoveries, especially her experience with yoga and the hypocrisy she encountered, adds an extra dimension to her testimony.

Yogi Stripper is an inspiring read that offers an honest and liberating perspective on the challenges we may face in our work. The book encourages self-reflection and personal growth, while addressing often hidden aspects of our professional reality with lightness and authenticity.

Balance ton corps : Manifeste pour le droit des femmes à disposer de leur corps, Bebe Melkor-Kador, 2020

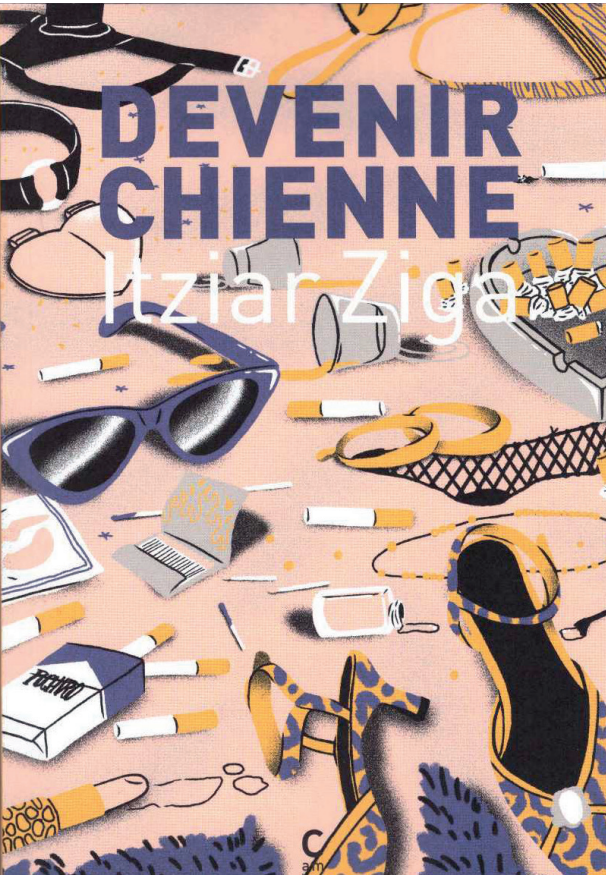


SUMMARY: This book is the manifesto of Bebe Melkor-Kador, an Afro-feminist sex worker, who argues for body freedom and unashamed sexuality. After the #MeToo movement and the liberation of speech around female sexuality, new voices of pro-choice feminism are rising. Bebe Melkor-Kador is one of them. At only 24 years old, her extensive experience as a sex worker and her inclusive vision of feminism led her to develop her life philosophy: the great principles for being a slut, a sharp critique of our “prude society”, a plea for sex education for young people and the emergence of positive masculinity. Throughout the text, the author lays the foundations for her ideal world: a society where sex is no longer taboo but a topic like any other, taught in schools to create enlightened citizens. A tangible testimony that shapes a new feminist thought, challenging and of its time.

PERSONAL REFLECTION: Bebe Melkor-Kador’s manifesto offers a refreshing and bold perspective on sex work, sexuality, and feminism. Her Afro-feminist approach brings a crucial intersectional dimension often overlooked in mainstream discussions on these topics. The author skillfully weaves together sex education, positive masculinity, and a sexually liberated society, offering an innovative vision that will resonate with many SWers. Her proposal for a society where sex is no longer taboo, instead a topic like any other, is both stimulating and necessary. Her vision of positive masculinity is a fascinating aspect of the book. She explores how challenging mainstream toxically masculine behaviours can improve gender relations and help destigmatize sex work.

What makes this book particularly appealing to SWers is the way Bebe Melkor-Kador directly addresses the realities of the industry. She provides a candid, non-judgmental look at sex work while advocating for greater recognition of our rights. Although her vision may sometimes seem idealistic, it inspires one to imagine and work towards a world where sex work is recognized, respected, and integrated into our social fabric like any other profession.

Devenir perra, Itziar Ziga, 2009



SUMMARY: Itziar Ziga grew up in a neighborhood in the Spanish Basque Country, surrounded by toxic clouds and neon green wastelands. She loves feather boas, sometimes dresses up as a trucker, and refers to herself as a bitch. This book exudes a contagious freedom and enthusiasm. It is a testimony of joyful activism marked by cross-dressing and street performances, and carries the brutal demands of those who remain on the margins of a society that condemns them. Prefaced by Virginie Despentes and Paul B. Preciado, *Devenir Perra* is both a collective portrait and an autobiographical essay. Itziar Ziga describes the experience of a subversive femininity, hyperbolic and humorous. Prostitution, veiling, sexuality, trans identity, and social precariousness are themes that run through the text, in a resolutely intersectional and anti-assimilationist approach.

PERSONAL REFLECTION: This is a true literary punch that promises to shake and inspire SWers, alongside anyone who challenges societal norms. This book is a bold, uncompromising celebration of subversive femininity and queer activism. The intersectional framework of the book is another strong point. By weaving together themes like trans identity, social precariousness, and marginalized sexualities, Itziar Ziga creates a rich and complex portrait that reflects the diversity of experiences within SWers’ communities.

For SWers seeking a read that validates their experiences while pushing them to reflect and act, *Devenir Perra* is a must. It is a manifesto for those who remain at the margins, and a call to pride and solidarity.

Bibliographical references

Bebe Melkior-Kador. (2020). *Balance ton corps: Manifeste pour le droit des femmes à disposer de leur corps*. La Musardine.

Itziar Ziga. (2009). *Devenir perra*. Editorial Melusina.

María Galindo and Sonia Sanchez. (2007). *Ninguna mujer nace para puta*. Lavaca.

Marie-Claude Renaud. (2023). *Yogi stripper*. La Mèche.

