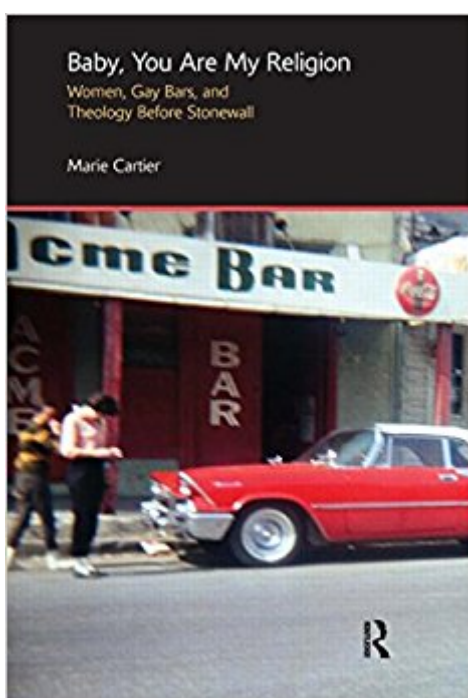


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# Baby, You Are My Religion: Women, Gay Bars, And Theology Before Stonewall (Gender, Theology And Spirituality)



## Synopsis

Baby, You Are My Religion argues that American butch-femme bar culture of the mid-20th Century should be interpreted as a sacred space for its community. Before Stonewall—when homosexuals were still deemed mentally ill—these bars were the only place where many could have any community at all. Baby, You are My Religion explores this community as a site of a lived corporeal theology and political space. It reveals that religious institutions such as the Metropolitan Community Church were founded in such bars, that traditional and non-traditional religious activities took place there, and that religious ceremonies such as marriage were often conducted within the bars by staff. Baby, You are My Religion examines how these bars became not only ecclesiastical sites but also provided the fertile ground for the birth of the struggle for gay and lesbian civil rights before Stonewall.

## Book Information

Series: Gender, Theology and Spirituality

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Routledge; 1 edition (December 1, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1844658945

ISBN-13: 978-1844658947

Product Dimensions: 9.1 x 6.1 x 0.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars 12 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #163,027 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #55 in Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Gay & Lesbian Studies #59 in Books > Gay & Lesbian > Nonfiction > Bisexuality #114 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Religious Studies > Gender & Sexuality

## Customer Reviews

"Baby, You Are My Religion is written with passion and seeks to add a more spiritual dimension to the genre of cultural histories written about the place of lesbians in the gay bar scene. The accessible prose, supplemented with a sizable list of theoretical and theological definitions, in addition to the entertaining and provocative interviews, makes for an undemanding, yet fun, read." —Marcie Bianco, Lambda Literary Review "Cartier's book offers new wisdom and rejuvenation to those activist religious scholars searching for a religious history of LGBTQ inclusion only to find that one does not exist." —John Erickson, Claremont Journal of Religion "This

book provides a good slice of history, social interactions and limitations that were placed on gay women as they tried to live with their sexual identities. It is a good introductory book with an interesting overview of gay women's lives and the gay bar scene... This book is a rich addition to the gay women's literature as well as theological discourse." Grace Ji-Sun Kim, Earlham School of Religion, USA "In this history of LGBT oppression in America from the 1940s to the 1980s, Marie Cartier does much more than remind us that before the 1969 Stonewall riots, the gay bar was the only social space that allowed lesbians to be themselves. She makes a compelling case that it was also a space where theology was done." - Therese Bjoernaas, Journal of Religion and Theology "impressively multi-faceted meditation on lesbian bar culture." "Cartier honors the women whose lives she records and makes a valuable contribution to the study of American religion." "teases out how butch-femme bar culture generated a spirituality based in relational self-definition." "Given the complexity of the task Cartier undertook, her accomplishment is substantive." "Cartier's book merits attention from historians of LGBT America and theorists of religion, for the richness of its primary material and the probing questions it poses about the functions and forms of religion." The Journal of American Culture - Jennifer Rycenga

Marie Cartier is a scholar, visual /performance artist, queer activist, poet and theologian who has been active in many movements for social change. She teaches in Film and Media at UC Irvine and Gender and Women's Studies at California State University Northridge.

I simply CANNOT put this book down. I'm learning some very interesting information about some of my friends. Although I usually can read only large print books, I'm reading on unaware of that supposed fact, although with the aid of a magnifying glass on some of the very small print. The theology part I compare with "sacred place/space"...the unifying word being "sacred". The extensive annotation also impressed me. I will go back to my wonderful book after I finish my VERY POSITIVE review.

I have waited for a book of this caliber, content and history to be written and published. I had perfect moments listening to Melissa Etheridge, reading BABY, YOU ARE MY RELIGION and sipping coffee. Thanks to all who shared your stories and to Dr. Marie Cartier for your love of community and commitment to being the vessel, the messenger and the scribe.

Out of the closet and into the bars.. our sanctuaries.. Thank you for bringing back all those

memories of so long ago. Your book is wonderful, a validation; a must read for all gays, lesbians and those that love them. Jennie

A must read to understand where we are today..cheers!

In Marie Cartier's opus, *Baby You Are My Religion: Women, Gay Bars, and Theology Before Stonewall*, Cartier provides an accessible and thought provoking analysis of mid-20th Century American butch-femme bar culture, how it should be interpreted as a sacred space for its community, and the various movements it spawned as a result. Set in a time when homosexuality was still deemed as a mental illness and likened to perversion and molestation, bars were the only place where gay and lesbian individuals could not only find community but also discover and shape their individual and sexual identities that the outside world defined as sinful. Much more than a space where gay and lesbian individuals could gather, bars, specifically before the Stonewall Inn Riots of 1969, were a site of corporeal theology, thriving sexuality, and communities that ultimately birthed the gay and lesbian civil rights movement that we know today. Cartier's thesis points to the fact that although varying religious and LGBTQ communities are often depicted as at odds with each other, in the space of the bar, the sacred meet the profane and more importantly, where sinners ultimately became saviors. Marie Cartier's book will not only stand the test of time but also, as I predict, start showing up on the bibliographies of upcoming and future students interested in sexuality, gender, religion, and theology. Cartier's book offers new wisdom and rejuvenation to those activist religious scholars searching for a religious history of LGBTQ inclusion to only find that one does not exist. Marie Cartier's epigraph, from her one woman show *Ballistic Femme*, signifies the various ways in which gay and lesbian individuals find religion; while some find it in church and others in a bar, it is often found within the object one falls in love with, regardless of their sex: "I've had butch women say to me, 'Baby, you are my church. You are my religion.' Cartier shows that the sacred space we are often looking for is not only where we are located but also who we are there with that allows us to experience the divine. While the proverbial 'last call' in Cartier's final chapter rings true, her book, *Baby, You Are My Religion*, inspires her readers to have another symbolic drink of the knowledge she has presented and come back often to revisit the stories of the unknown women who help to shape out modern day LGBTQ movement.

If a researcher does 25 interviews with all different people, it is generally considered an extensive study. This author interviewed over 100 LGBT people (most were lesbians) and the results are here. I know the author, I was interviewed by her for the book and I was very impressed by the extensive research and history recorded here. I had never before heard bars compared to a church or religion. I admit to being quite skeptical of her theories when I first heard them but when she quite skillfully compared the Lesbian Bars of the 50's to the local pubs of Ireland saying each were a sacred space for its community (often the "only place" where things happened) I was convinced. I really appreciated her discussions about the unique difficulty for LGBT people being labeled "sinners" first and foremost. There are many books on Gays and religion but I have never read anything like this before.

In this thought-provoking book, Marie Cartier combines her considerable talents as doctor of theology, activist and teacher to put forward the idea that women's bars in the harshly oppressive pre-Stonewall era served as a sanctuary on the same order as ecclesiastical sacred spaces. To succeed in drawing parallels between two such seemingly disparate elements may at first seem implausible, but succeed she does. Cartier interviewed over 100 individuals and incorporated their stories into this scholarly and impeccably researched work in the fields of theology, and ecclesiastical and social history. The book has extensive references, footnotes, bibliography, demographic charts and appendices. Cartier quite blew me away with her originality of thought and stunning analysis. Truly a groundbreaking work for future scholars, and an intelligent and fascinating book for the rest of us.

Marie Cartier's work is amazing. The women she interviewed are heroes to the life of Gay women and men. They are inspirational to say the least. The world they lived in back then and the horrible suffering they had to go through. It really was what opened the doors for the LGBT community to live a free and open life today. It was not for them freedom would not have come about. It is sad and it is horrible, my heart breaks about their story. This is also history, and important history. We can all learn from it. Cartier's book is an important document that is a must read and a must to use in gay studies. I highly recommend this book to everyone, academic or otherwise. It is insightful and educational, but most of all it is important to understand the world was dark back then and how the gay bar was an important physical location for them.

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