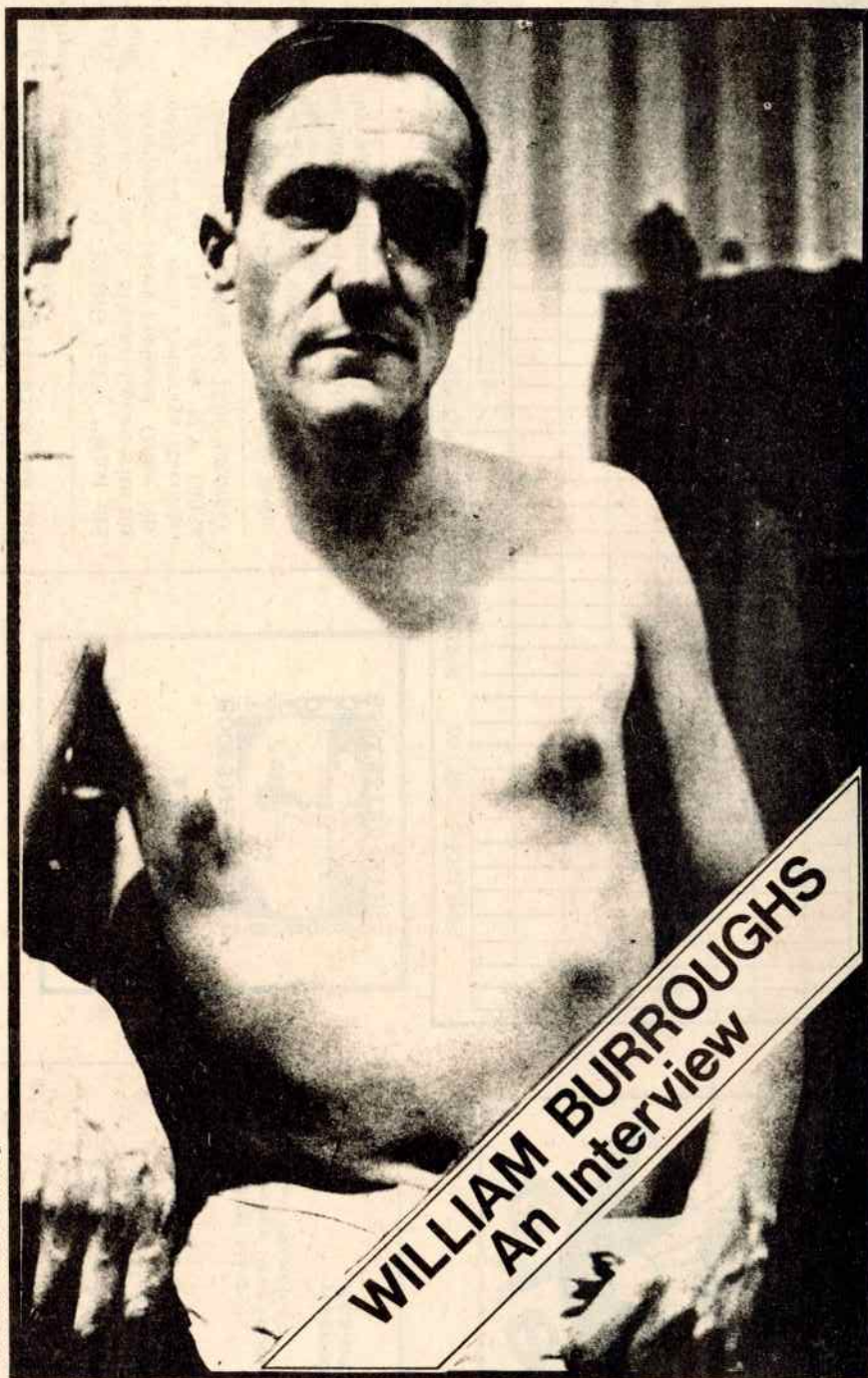


GAY SUNSHINE

A JOURNAL OF GAY LIBERATION



William Burroughs, E. 7th St., N.Y. 1953
Photo by Allen Ginsberg

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William S. Burroughs was born in St. Louis in 1914 and graduated from Harvard. His books include *Naked Lunch*, *Nova Express*, *The Soft Machine*, *The Ticket That Exploded*, *The Wild Boys*, *Exterminator* (1973) and *Yage Letters* (the last with Allen Ginsberg).

Burroughs' cut-up writing method and his friendship with Beat writers Jack Kerouac, Neal Cassady, Allen Ginsberg and others was detailed in the Gay Sunshine interviews with Allen Ginsberg (Issue No. 16) and Harold Norse (Issue No. 18.)

Burroughs has been an expatriate for the past several years, living mainly in Paris, London and Tangier. The present interview was taped in London in early 1973 especially for Gay Sunshine. The interviewers were Australian writer/poet, Laurence Collinson, who has lived in England for several years and is presently in residence at the Karolyi Institute in Venice, France; and English writer/journalist, Roger Baker.

In the following text the interviewers' questions are in italics, while Burroughs' responses are in regular typeface.

Could you tell us something about your own past and present sexual encounters?

BURROUGHS: I've lived for many years in Mexico and in North Africa. And there the scene was I usually had one boy friend for quite a long time. I had one for a year, two years — something like that. If I have a boyfriend who is satisfactory, I don't feel like anything else. Not a question of love or being faithful or anything of that sort. It was just enough. So while I was in Tangier where there were lots of boys available, I had about ten or, at most, fifteen different people over a period of five years.

Was this also happening during your junkie period?

BURROUGHS: No. Nobody is sexy on junk. No sex at all.

And when you say "boy", do you mean an actual boy?

BURROUGHS: More properly a youth. Most of my boys have been between the ages of 18 and 25; a few younger.

Nowadays, do you do something similar, or do you have a settled partner?

BURROUGHS: Oh yes, I've had several boys while I've been in London, always much younger than myself.

Apparently Japan is the ideal place for older men. I've talked to people who have lived there for years, and they say it really is the place for men over a certain age, because they have a sort of respect for older men you don't find in the West. Tangier, Morocco, is a sort of Mecca for the English. I've known lots of Englishmen stuck in some little town in the country where they have to toe the line, and they go to Tangier for vacation. Then they're insatiable. Sex always has to be paid for. You keep the boys, buy them clothes — things like that. The whole thing is that the boys don't have any money.

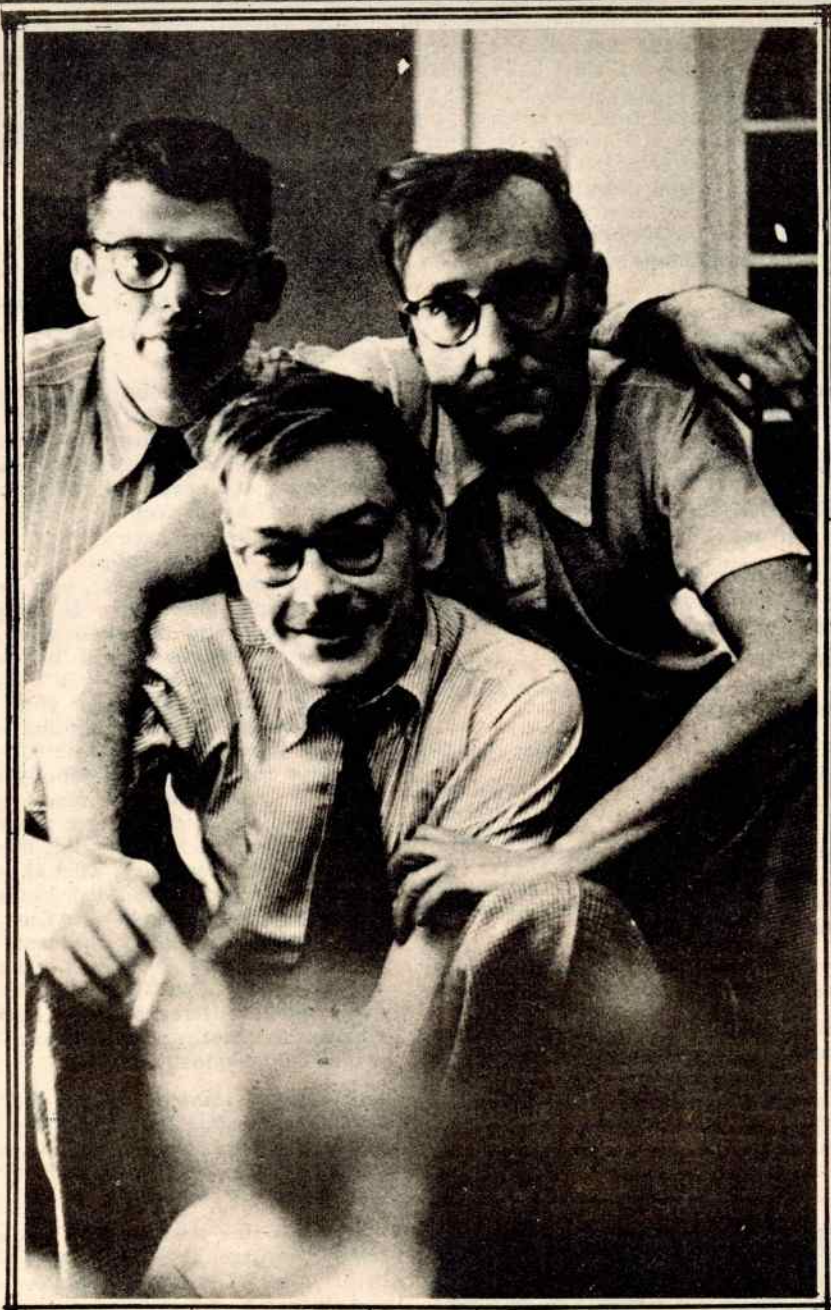
You know, homosexuality is a worldwide economic fact. In poor countries — like Morocco and parts of Italy — it's one of the big industries, one of the main ways in which a young boy can get somewhere. If he's lucky and gets a rich lover, he can then go on and get rich himself. Naturally, the homosexual is taking advantage of the fact that people are poor. But in view of the situation that exists, why not? It's not in my power to change the economy of Morocco or other poor countries.

But is it not possible to have a relationship with a young man of that age without considering the economic factor?

BURROUGHS: It's quite possible in an affluent society and does occur. But in Morocco we have a boy who is working at hard and dull work which will bring him \$30 a week. He can earn \$15 in ten minutes [through sex.] If I was young and poor, I'd certainly turn a few tricks rather than work in a factory all day. I had a number of jobs during the war and most jobs are absolutely unbearable. I could only stick them for a week. It's just unbelievably awful: you sit there and do some absolutely meaningless and uncomfortable thing for 8 hours; and worse still is the white collar work, like being a filing clerk. That was the dullest job I ever had in my life. I fucked up their whole office system. The only job I was ever able to keep for any length of time was as an exterminator — cockroaches and bugs. I'd work in my own time and usually finish in two hours. The rest was easy, walking around, talking to people. I'd go see ten different apartments in a day.

Is this possibly why there's so much pest imagery in your work?

BURROUGHS: Yeah. I had that job for eight months. The only job I enjoyed.



From left: Allen Ginsberg, Lucien Carr, William Burroughs, N.Y., 1953.
Photo by Francesca Carr

WILLIAM BURROUGHS: AN INTERVIEW

Do you regard writing as a job?

BURROUGHS: Very definitely a job. There's the whole business side; it's a job that's hard to make a living at. For example, if I were as well known in any other field as I am in writing, I'd be making five times as much money, at least. Sometimes I feel that I might have done something else. Hell, if I were a plumber I'd be making three times as much money as I am at writing — in the States at least.

My first book was *Junkie*. I wrote it when I was 35. The next book after that was *The Yage Letters*. There was quite a long period when I was doing very little, because I was using junk so heavily — not conducive to writing. After I took the apomorphine cure and got back to Tangier, in 1956, that's when I really started writing full time. And from then on I've really done very little else.

Can you live in Tangier on very little these days?

BURROUGHS: Prices are going up there as everywhere else. It's three or four times as expensive now as it was in 1956 but still much cheaper than London. It's cheaper if you cook in, get someone in to do the shopping and cook. For \$5 a day you'll get a lunch for five with enough left over for dinner for two of three. Arab style cooking, of course.

Is the Arab world's concept of a homosexual quite the same as in the Western world?

BURROUGHS: No, it's quite different.

We are trying to present ourselves as individuals, whereas to the Arab homosexuality is more of a genital thing and doesn't really spill over into their concept of the family, the home...

BURROUGHS: It's much more casual. It is common for married Arabs to have homosexual affairs, but these are casual. They don't have a word for loyalty.

Do they have homosexual relationships on a permanent or semi-permanent basis?

BURROUGHS: Yes, I guess they do, though I can't think of many.

Are their relationships mainly with boys or with older men?

BURROUGHS: Mostly with boys. It is considered quite normal for someone to like women and boys.

Allen Ginsberg says you've become a hero figure, or guru, of the gay liberation movement. Do you feel this is so?

BURROUGHS: My participation has been in writing so far. I haven't taken part in demonstrations, but I feel they are useful. Naturally I'm all for gay civil rights — it goes without saying.

Do you think there is any real future in a movement that is not a revolutionary one — for everyone, not just gays?

BURROUGHS: I don't like to seem pessimistic, but it's my feeling that no revolutionary movement in the West has any real chance of success. There are a number of reasons for this. For one thing, the industrial process has gone too far. After a certain point of industrialization, a revolution from the bottom — that is, from the streets, the barricades — is completely impractical. Even Mexico has reached that stage. This simply means that the people who are in a position of power can hold down 99% of the population by sheer force if they have to, if they have the weapons to do it. In the old days anyone could go down to his basement and make his own weapons, a spear, a bow and arrow, a crude gun. But he can't make automatic weapons. He can't make tanks, planes. He can't make heavy weapons. The only viable weapons for a revolution now are biological and chemical weapons.

What about the revolution in Cuba?

BURROUGHS: Cuba was, of course, a country that had not reached that stage

of industrialization; there are such countries in South America. There are now more CIA men than guerillas in South America, swarming all over each country, to be sure that revolution doesn't happen, and infiltrating the guerilla groups and operating the government forces there.

There was a lot of controversy in gay circles here and in the States about the Cuban revolution and the oppression of gays in Cuba. Ginsberg was kicked out because he was homosexual.

BURROUGHS: Well, the whole military structure of the West naturally brings about a situation where it is essential for Marxist countries also to have a military establishment. That's what the whole cold war is about — the strength of the conservatives in both camps.

What sort of biological weapons do you envisage?

BURROUGHS: Well, biological and chemical weapons are, of course, chemicals gases and germs, or bugs. They need not be indiscriminate. It is within the range of bio-chemistry now to create selective pestilences that would attack, say, only whites, only colored, only females. Certain groups are much more liable to certain diseases than others anyway.

In your books and interviews you express very strong anti-establishment feelings. Do you feel that Gay Liberation has anything to contribute to — using your own terms — the overthrow of Them by Us?

BURROUGHS: Well, yes I do. I don't think a political revolution as such is possible in the West at the present time. That could only be possible in a completely chaotic state, say if we started a war. Drop five atom bombs on the United States and the chaos would be unbelievable. In a situation like that, perhaps.... But there is also the possibility of a cultural revolution that would make changes — the fact that young people growing up now are going to be the people of the future. That is the real area of hope; it lies with the new generation. They're just not making those old style conservatives any more. In another 30 years many of them will have passed away. And I don't think there's an unlimited supply coming on to take their place.

I think that Gay Liberation, the breakdown of censorship and so on are very important cultural factors. And this includes the fact that many young people today just accept that some people are gay. Forty years ago, when I was in college, there was no acceptance at all. You just shut up about it. People might know, but never mention it. You got the situation of these queens saying: "Nobody knows anything about me." Well, they did. You didn't talk about it, and the idea of claiming it as a right was out of the question. But now Allen Ginsberg gets up before an audience of college students and talks about how he jacked off Peter Orlovsky last night, and they all cheer. Forty years ago they'd have been ridden out on a rail. So that is a terrific change.

Your own books deal with homosexual experience and are widely read and accepted.

BURROUGHS: Indeed. And Genet's *Notre Dame des Fleurs* is a best seller.

Can we talk a little about your interest in Scientology? Many ex-Communists took it up as a new religion. I found Scientology pamphlets almost incomprehensible. It was only reading what you have written about the reactive mind that made any sense whatever to me.

BURROUGHS: Scientology is a religion. They call it a religion. When I found out that it was a religion, I quit. I'm not interested in religions.

The whole thing in Scientology is this instrument called the E-meter, which is actually more or less a bio-feedback. A lot of ordering after a certain stage, when you are ordering yourself, all you are doing is seeing your reaction to whatever it is. Suppose you had an encephalograph that shows you your reactions when you consider certain material. This is exactly what the E-meter does, but they will not admit that this is a bio-feedback.

They attach some mystic importance to it. I held the cans as if I were going through some peculiar embarrassing joke. But the way you write about it, it had some significance.

BURROUGHS: I think it has. You see, it is passing a small charge of electricity through the brain and through the body and by repetitive emphasis is directing the current towards certain brain areas, and is also a form of electric brain stimulation; and we know that electric brain stimulation can accomplish almost anything. Did you see the article in *The Observer* about Professor Delgado, the one that stops the bull? He's got electrons in the bull's scalp, in the bull's

brain. He presses a button and the bull charges. He presses a button and the bull stops. They've done this with people; they can make them frightened, or sexually excited, or produce any emotional reaction simply by pressing a button.

Do you still hold to what you wrote about the reactive mind?

BURROUGHS: Ron Hubbard's concept of the reactive mind I don't hold with at all. Of course, it's partly what Freud called the unconscious.

The concept of the two contradicting messages — that seems to make a lot of sense. The contradiction makes people powerless.

BURROUGHS: Well, there's no question about that. What anxiety is, is contradictory signals. That's what causes the feeling of shakiness and powerlessness; you are getting simultaneous signals that are contradictory. The lines of communication within the body are from bodily processes to the back brain which is the emotional centre, and then to the front brain. The cat wakes up; it's hungry. The hunger is communicated to the back brain, then its front brain goes into operation to find some food. You can never give a front brain order to the back brain and to the body, and the more you try the worse it gets. I mean, of someone's hand starts shaking and he tries to pull himself together, as they say, he can't because that's not the way in which communication works; you are simply calling the wrong line.

[At this point William Burroughs reads his essay published in *The Gay Liberation Book*, in response to the question: "Have you any further thoughts on gay liberation?" He then follows this by reading his notes on what people find sexy:]

BURROUGHS: What is sexually exciting to someone is essentially a film...I was asked to write an article on what is sexy, but I never quite got it together, though I made some notes [He reads:] "What is sexy to an individual human creature? An old film, a film usually laid down in early childhood on a reception screen. Take for example this story, rather typical, passed along to me by the usual means, a street pick-up: This highly placed civil servant paid boys to don uniforms and treat him like a boy in reform school. They were, in fact, given a very precise script for certain words, like 'You little bastard.' You see, he always wanted to be a Borstal boy not an old school tie. [Ed. Note: Borstal is the British reform school institution; an 'old school tie' is the upper class public school institution.]

He is tied to that little piece of film as the only way he can achieve ejaculation. He may be sick of it, disgusted by it, may even laugh at it — but not while it is going on. Anybody ever explain why sex and laughter are incompatible? Who can laugh and come at the same time? I've only seen one boy who could do this and his name was Ali. He called me 'Master' — he was being ironic, of course, for he was the master. He disappeared before I could learn his secret. I feel sure the highly placed civil servant did not have any secret. In his case the film was, and is, a dreary slavery. It may be much wider and include a whole shifting gamut of scripts, but it's still a film.

The whole question of what is, and is not sexy, and the question of so-called normalcy, have been placed in an entirely new light by recent discoveries in the area of electric brain stimulation. Stimulate the sex centres of the brain and anything in sight is sexy — even a psychiatrist. There was an 11-year old boy who became very amorous toward the psychiatrist under electric brain stimulation. In fact, subjects have been conditioned to react sexually to an old boot.

Now, back to our film analogy. That piece of film is quite literally wired to the sex centres of the brain. With electric brain stimulation we should be able to plug into another film. So here's the man with his boot — turn off the current and it's just an old boot. Enter the psychiatrist with a naked bunny girl. He turns on the current full blast and the man is cured. Or is he? Well, let's leave the current off. He examines the naked girl critically: beautiful! he feels some sexual excitement, but — um — you know, put your clothes on, dear and you'll be sexier. Dodges sideways and brings up a knee to his groin, and his slight sexual excitement evaporates.

Well, what happens if all the old films of prohibition and excitement were removed from a person. What would his sexuality be without those films? I don't know. Let's see. Speaking for myself, the one thing I find sexy is creation, to create on paper a sexy person — sexy to me, that is. And if it is a real creation, it will be interesting to other readers as well. I do not share Genet's sexual tastes, but his petty pimps and thieves are creations made with love and consummate artistry, and I will say that any writer who has not

masturbated with his own characters will not be able to make them live on paper. If the writer tries to write a character who'll be sexy to the reader but not to him, it will not live on paper; it'll simply be a piece of someone else's film. I don't think people realise to what extent our previous ideas about sex have been really annulled by these discoveries. The knowledge is now available and one could literally reprogramme someone."

To what end?

BURROUGHS: The question is: is he satisfied with his film? If he is, there's no reason to alter it. If he's not, well, I don't think many people are.

A lot of people cling to the film because it's the only thing they know.

BURROUGHS: It's the only thing they've got. Tell me why they can't get it off...

You either let them stay with it, or try and break them from the habit into something more satisfying.

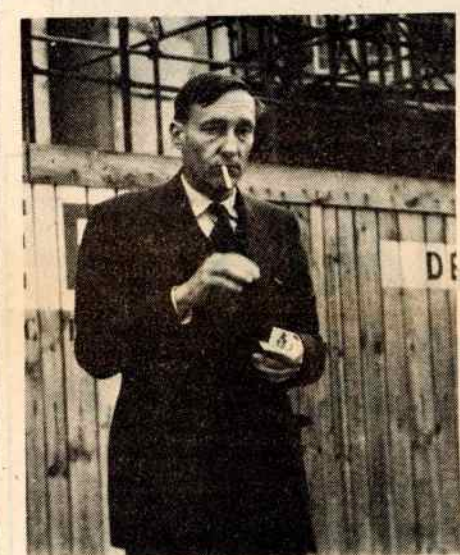
BURROUGHS: As I said, at least into a film that has a wider range and could give them more satisfaction.

Would you like to have your film changed?

BURROUGHS: Well, not my sexual programme necessarily. But there are certainly some things I'd like to change. I think all of us to a certain extent have been crippled by early conditioning, and there are always traces of that in me that I'd be glad to get rid of.

Very hard to get rid of. It would require immense practice.

BURROUGHS: Yes, but quite possible if a state of society existed in which patterns were not forced on the child. But we are certainly a long way from that. The whole family structure — I mean whatever sort of hangups the parents have, they will pass on to their children.



WILLIAM BURROUGHS Photo: Bryon Gysin

What are your feelings about matriarchal/patriarchal societies?

BURROUGHS: I think there are lots of things that need to be said that haven't been said. One of them is the assumption that homosexuality is disapproved of in a patriarchal society. This is not true at all. The only patriarchal society that I know exists today is the Arab, and of course they're tolerant. America's certainly no patriarchal society, neither is England. To whose advantage is it that homosexuality should be disapproved of? It is to the advantage of the female sex, no question about that.

I've just noticed in *The Gay Liberation Book*, and I've heard it from other sources, partly from Reich, that the patriarchal society was anti-sexual in general. I say the opposite — all matriarchal societies are anti-sexual in general and specifically anti-homosexual. It's to the advantage of women. They want to get married, for Christ's sake. So the more of a damper there's put on sex in general and the harder it is to get it outside marriage, the better chance they have — no question of that.

But is the female urge to get married natural, or is it part of the social structure? Why should women want, above all things, to get married?

BURROUGHS: That's the point, of course, that the women's lib people are always making. It's conditioned by a lot of factors in the West. They want to get married so they're settled financially, so they have security. Certainly the whole social structure in the West is moulded in that direction.

In your earlier work, especially in The Job, you prophesy many of the ideas that are now commonplace in gay liberation and women's liberation circles, particularly about the nuclear family and the role of the father and the mother who are crippling the child.

BURROUGHS: There is no doubt that this is what the family does. R.D. Laing and David Cooper have gone into all that extensively and I think very much to the purpose. But no one has come up with a really viable substitute for the biologic family. It's partly economic.

But it's essential to the economy that the biological family continue.

BURROUGHS: Exactly, exactly!

Once you get people acting on their own initiative then what goes civilization as we know it.

BURROUGHS: A good thing, too, probably. But to return to the effect of gay militancy. A factor many of them don't seem to have taken into consideration is the huge, top-heavy concentrations of people in urban centers. How many millions of people have to work just to get food into the shops, into restaurants, to create power etc. and keep all those people alive. Now if everybody dropped out and did their thing, then millions of people would be starving overnight. So if you think in terms of a political situation, whatever your political programme is, you are going to have to keep those people on that job doing the same thing. Or get somebody else to do it — right? But so many of the modern militants don't seem to think in those terms. The Marxists did. They had very definite ideas about what they were going to do about food distribution etc. And if you're going to have to keep everybody doing just about the same thing they're doing now, there isn't going to be a helluva lot of difference. It doesn't make much difference to the individual whether the means of production is state owned or individually owned.

In a sense I think it does. I feel more antipathy towards the idea of my working bringing profits to an individual than to the state. I feel it's wrong for a particular person to exploit me.

BURROUGHS: Alright. You are, say, a factory manager in Russia. There's not a helluva lot of difference between that and the same job in a company owned by an individual. You probably wouldn't make so much money in a state owned factory. Your position wouldn't really be changed, and who cares whether the railroads are, for example, owned by the state or by individuals. Many are owned by the state in Europe — doesn't make any difference to the individual who works there or to the individual who travels on the railroads. I just don't see that as any solution. It wouldn't make any changes in the lives of most individuals.

But by transferring many enterprises to state control, a government can to some extent rationalize them. For example, housing in Russia is much less expensive than it is here.

BURROUGHS: There's that factor, of course. The capitalist economic system is supposed to [do many things.] You know, we've been brought up to the idea that a good product will be produced and will find buyers. Well, that's not true at all, because of the lobbying of vested interests. The real estate lobby has prevented any cheap housing in the States. Every time anyone has come out with a really cheap practical prefabricated house, he gets frozen out by the real estate lobby. It's not in their interest to produce houses that are cheaper, houses that will last.

Of course, over-population is one of the biggest problems here [in Britain.] Say 20 million people could support themselves reasonably well. Now there are about twice that number. That, of course, means the cycle of more and more pollution, and less and less food to feed more and more. And it's going to take progressively more and more money to buy less and less, because there is less and less. The end of money will come when no amount of money will buy anything. It would be quite possible to calculate when this will occur. The whole value of money is in other people not having it. If everyone had money, it would have no value, which is also why people in positions of wealth and power can't make too many concessions. You would say: well, why don't they shut the militants up by legalizing marijuana and giving them sex — sex centers where they can go and get a satisfactory sex partner, as often as they want. Because if they did, money and power would lose their value. Money and power only have value if someone else doesn't have it.

Are you opposed to the use of amphetamines?

BURROUGHS: I think it's terrible stuff. I hate it myself. I hate the sensation. It depends on how much, of course. One spasmole day is very little. When you get people taking a lot of it, it destroys their appetite. It's very bad for their health in any large quantity. A very small quantity, though, is easily absorbed and shouldn't cause any problem at all.

I think apomorphine would be tremendously useful if it could be in general use, helpful to people who are insecure in their own personalities. And if they started experimenting with it, synthesizing it, they could develop much more powerful varieties and no doubt could eliminate the nausea factor. Nausea isn't necessarily a major factor if you take the stuff orally and regularly; you need never be sick, and yet you get the same good effects. Dr. Dent pointed out that there is no need for anyone to be sick to have the benefits of apomorphine. He'd regulate the dose and find out the dose that would produce vomiting; then he would start dropping it until he got the highest dose people could tolerate without vomiting. People vary considerably in their reaction. Some can only take a 40th of a grain, others up to a 10th. People who can take more are very rare. An injection of a 10th will almost always produce vomiting. You can't get it without a prescription, and it is hard to get because it is a drug that has no exhilarating or narcotic effects. Except if you are in a state of acute anxiety or metabolic disturbance. Then the removal of those states can have an exhilarating effect. It seems to me to be the only drug that is useful in curing alcoholism and particularly drug addiction.

Do you mind talking about work in progress?

BURROUGHS: No. I've just completed a novel called *Exterminator!* published in New York in Spring, 1973. I'm not doing anything in particular just now. I've also just completed assembling and describing my archives for sale to a university or to an individual collector. That took five months. I had Barry Miles, who is an expert. He worked on Ginsberg's archives. The catalog alone has 400 pages.

Exterminator! is very much a continuation of *The Wild Boys*. Always when I write a book there are a lot of manuscript pages left over. I always have a lot left over from previous books. And it's largely that material that went into this new book; *The Wild Boys* is a sort of homosexual *Peter Pan*.

The imagery in your books of boys screwing each other and great spurts of come going all over the room strikes me as romantic...

BURROUGHS: It is romantic. Of course, sodomy is much more widespread among oriental people and the Arabs, and also in Mexico and South America. It's regarded as the rational thing for people to do together, rather than sucking. In fact, the Arabs feel that cock sucking is a terrible dirty thing to do. They don't approve of it at all. It's the cultural pattern. I found this to be true in Arab countries and in South America.

I feel that something that should be investigated are ways of increasing sexual enjoyment. One of these is certainly Reich's orgone accumulator. These could be greatly potentiated by using magnetic iron, an experiment I haven't made. Magnetic iron, instead of just sheet metal, would pass a whole magnetic field through the body. But there's no question that the orgone accumulator, even in its present state, does enhance sexuality. On my lecture tour and in my writing, I'd like to get people actually experimenting with some of these things, like the orgone accumulator, because I think they could turn up something Reich's experiments are very easy to perform. Orgone boxes are very simple to build — just a wooden framework, a box big enough for you to sit in, with a small opening for ventilation; or you can have them big enough for two people and completely lined with sheet metal. I've also seen them made with steel wool, but I don't like that; it's a mesh and the mesh peels and you are always getting in there and some piece of wire sticks into you. You stay in for half an hour, fifteen minutes a day. Someone did build one for me, but it was such a huge object I had to get rid of it.

Reich observed that cancer was almost always a disease of sexual decline and therefore something that potentiated sexuality could be anti-cancerous. In his book *The Cancer Biopath*, Reich says that cancer is essentially a disease of sexual suppression and deprivation. If I had the money, I'd certainly set up an experimental workshop where I could experiment with some of these things. But I just don't have it. Undoubtedly something does happen to you. You feel healthier and sexier from using them regularly.

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Burroughs' Fiction

Arthur Rimbaud said that the poet makes himself a visionary through "long, immense, deliberate derangement of the senses." He arrived at this conclusion after several years of absinthe-drinking, opium-smoking, and cocksucking. Rimbaud was only 19 when he published his most famous work, a hallucinogenic prose poem called *A Season in Hell*, a chronicle of his fitful adolescence which included a pathetically sado-masochistic "love" affair with Paul Verlaine.

Although he did not come to literature quite as early in life as Rimbaud, William Seward Burroughs has embraced a similar aesthetic. He spent his season in hell in St. Louis before traipsing off to New York, New Orleans, South Texas, Mexico, London, and North Africa, shooting smack and stockpiling the experiences for a memoir of his own, *Junk*, published in 1953 under the pen name of William Lee. (Subsequent editions were retitled *Junkie* and published under the author's real name.) Burroughs' second book, a novel titled *Queer*, has never been published. One must assume, however, that it, too, is autobiographical.

Burroughs is nothing if not a visionary poet, creator of what he calls "a new mythology for the space age." He is a radical innovator whose techniques render his works all but inaccessible to the average reader, who insists that his fiction be "blessed" with "character," "atmosphere, form, and content." These are traditional values, and the traditional novel, as Robbe-Grillet has said, "is a ready-made idea... hence a dead idea." Burroughs foresees a future "in which people do not read at all or read only illustrated books and magazines or some abbreviated form of literature." McLuhan seconds the motion.

In abstract form, the fiction of Burroughs has anticipated such mass-traumatic social phenomena as the heroin "epidemic" of the 60's and 70's (and the subsequent failure of the methadone treatment for withdrawal); the decline of the family unit -- and its logical extension, the nation -- by the withdrawal of like-minded individuals into "preferential communities" (e.g. gay communes); the rise of pansexuality, and the last-ditch stand of the Creeping State, a control bureaucracy of power-addicts responsible for perpetuating what Burroughs calls "the American non-dream."

For Burroughs, legislation of morality is but another means by which the control-addicts maintain the status quo of their non-dream. Like drug-users, the sexual minorities are victimized by a "society (which) makes all these criminals deliberately," dumping them into concentration camps called "prisons." All crimes, in a sense, are "political" crimes. The greatest obstacle to getting rid of vice squads is the vested interest of the police in "making more laws and making more people criminals." Yet "if all the laws were enforced, they'd have practically everyone in concentration camps, and everyone else would be necessary to guard them...."

Lest this sort of thinking be misconstrued as more or less typical liberationist rhetoric, it should be pointed out that there is in Burroughs a marked disdain for all organized political movements. He uses the term "Divisionists" to describe an imaginary political party.

When Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* was tried for pornography in Massachusetts in 1966, Allen Ginsberg was asked to define "Divisionist" for the court. The poet answered: "They have one faction or one man who they refer to as the Sender, who is going to survive by inundating the world with his own replicas. He will divide in two and make replicas of himself. Wherever he travels he will have someone to talk to. He won't feel lonesome anymore."

The court asked if Divisionists were homosexuals.

"Yes," said Ginsberg. "The Divisionist is a parody of a homosexual situation also; but Burroughs is attacking the homosexuals in the book also."

Divisionists want to divide and conquer,

to inundate the world with the replica products of their proselytization. But Burroughs was to later acknowledge the oversimplification of "this crude and tentative classification." By 1969, he was ready to admit that the practice "doesn't stand up too well... and I wouldn't use the same categories." More than a decade had passed since the writing of *Naked Lunch*, and on the tenth anniversary of its publication, Gay Lib was born with the Stonewall Riots in New York. Interestingly enough, Lucian Truscott IV began his *Village Voice* account of the riots with the observation that "Sheridan Square... looked like something from a William Burroughs novel as the sudden specter of 'gay power' erected its brazen head...."



Burroughs on Beach, Tangier, 1957
Photo by Jack Kerouac

Also interesting is the fact that, prior to Stonewall and the subsequent rise of Gay Lib, Burroughs had not even so much as adumbrated his homosexual experience (unless this indeed be the concern of his unpublished *Queer*). *Junkie* was an autobiographical account of Burroughs' doper days, and the references to homosexuality in *Naked Lunch* were abstract, incidental, or esoteric, suggesting at most that the author was obsessed with kinky sexuality. *Nova Express*, *The Soft Machine*, and *The Ticket That Exploded* were variations on Burroughs' acid-etched blue-print/prophesy/warning of the imminent rise of the Nova Mob, whose control machinery would enslave us in a technocratic labyrinth masterminded by ad men, cons and carnies, Nova Cops, and power-addicts whose tactics include everything from electronic surveillance to computerized police-state terrorism, with its harassment.

But in *The Wild Boys* (1971), Burroughs gave us the first obvious and extensive glimpses into his own sexuality. Mixed into the book's farrago of Boschian landscapes and Swiftian satire are autobiographical reflections, nostalgic and pure. *The Wild Boys* is a perverse parable of one possible future world, one in which the Control system is short-circuited and the war-torn, famine-stricken planet is overrun and laid to waste by an evolutionarily advanced master race of indestructible pansexual hedonist-vandals who spill out of the *marshans* and *barrios* of North Africa and Mexico and bugger their way across two hemispheres. They are Liquefactionists, in a sense, for they destroy all who refuse to submit. As a very nervous Nova Cop puts it in the book, "The wild boy thing is a cult based on drugs, depravity and violence more dangerous than the hydrogen bomb."

Burroughs' fictional alter-ego in the book is Audrey Carsons, "a thin pale boy his face scarred by festering spiritual wounds." Audrey is brought out by John Hamlin, a schoolmate in St. Louis, no doubt the recurrent "John" or "Johnny" of so much Burroughs fiction. They make it in the shower one Saturday afternoon in October, 1929 (which would have made Burroughs fifteen at the time.) Audrey, though, is ageless: when the Wild Boys run amuck, he joins their ranks. He seems the symbol of innocence corrupted, not by Wild Boy perversity (an effect) but by Control (the cause).

The Wild Boys was Burroughs' most accessible work since *Naked Lunch*, and his most "novelistic". No doubt much of bad press that has greeted his new book, *Exterminator!*, derives from the fact that its publisher, The Viking Press, has insisted on marketing the work as "A Novel," which it is not. It is rather a tying-together of some loose odds and ends, shorter Burroughs pieces including fiction, articles, essays and poetry, most of which have been published "in somewhat different form" in periodicals as disparate as *Cavalier* and *Atlantic Monthly*. In them, Burroughs once again unlocks his word horde to spew stringent satire on everyone from L. Ron Hubbard, the "Sender" of the Divisionary Scientologists, to the 1968 Presidential candidates, or "Purple Better Ones."

While *Exterminator!* at least manages to bring together between two covers works we might have missed in such obscure or such not-widely-circulated magazines as *Mayfair*, *Antaeus*, and the *London Daily Telegraph*, there's nothing particularly outstanding in the collection, save perhaps an essay on parsimony ("The Disciplines of DE") and that rarest of Burroughs idioms, the short story ("The 'Priest' They Called Him"). In "Wind Die, You Die, We Die," Burroughs offers some good practical advice which should be taken to heart by those of us who cop out to straights with the old "Oh, I'm bisexual" riff:

"Under a dim moon and dim stars I walked down to a clearing over the sea where I had made love to a girl some night before. She could not have known that her romantic middle-aged lover was actually a stranded pederast who had experienced considerable strain in fulfilling his male role. Anything is better than nothing is a very bad approach to sex."

Burroughs' son, William S. Burroughs Junior, has written a book called *Kentucky Ham*, and comes across as a homophobe. After going the way of all needed flesh (methedrine, this time, instead of junk), young Burroughs copped a plea and got carted off to the Lexington, Kentucky cold turkey farm. His experiences therein provide at least half of the material for this dubious account of adolescent attempts to "increase my downward mobility."

Throughout the Lexington hospital section of the book, young Burroughs refers to gays as "fags" about five times by perfunctory count. At least twice he voices fears of being assaulted by fellow interns, one a "huge black son of a bitch, who was the kind of fella I was always afraid would rape poor me," the other "some two hundred pound slobbering moron (who) was going straight up my ass, mama."

Brought up by wealthy grandparents, Junior was shocked to visit Dad in Tangier at the age of twelve and to find him living in the Marshan (casbah) "with a houseful of fags." Very famous fags, mind you: Ginsberg, the Orlovsky brothers, Brion Gysin, Ian Sommerville and others.

Junior recalls being propositioned by one of his fathers' pals the first day on Moroccan soil. "...We were in the bar and I was apart being accosted by an aging fag. 'I know I'm old, but I really haven't lost my figure, dear. You know, half the old Tangerines knew you were coming and wondered what you looked like. Well Baby! I mean if you ever want your nuts blown???' This "fag's" grammar makes him an unlikely acquaintance of the elder Burroughs, and Junior seems to be flattering himself. Also, there's ample evidence that his memory is hazy -- methedrine tends to dull it, after all. For one thing, he consistently misspells Gysin's name. And we can only assume that the Michael "Paltman" he mentions was in reality Michael Fortman, a Louonier who collaborated with Burroughs Sr. on two sections of *The Ticket That Exploded*. Such are the dangers of shooting speed, brothers.

By curious contrast, there are at least two passages in *Kentucky Ham* which suggest at least a latent homosexuality. In the most obvious instance, Burroughs Jr. gives a detailed description of a fellow

intern in practically glowing (drooling?) terms: "...One blond-haired kid from Georgia who was built like a swimmer... was tall and quick and about nineteen." Then he admits to having "taken a liking to him for his good looks and innocence."

Even had he not betrayed his homophobia, Burroughs Jr. would have to be judged a poor excuse for a writer. His material is drained of its power by the author's syntactic ineptitude and by a glib, breezy style that smacks of an unlikely cross between Holden Caulfield and R. Meltzer. *Kentucky Ham* is a hodge-podge of cloying cutesinesses from the new Pop journalism.

—James Martin

[A record of William Burroughs reading from his own work, *Nova Express* and *Naked Lunch*, is available on ESP Disk 1050, 156 5th Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010. \$5.98.]

GAY SUNSHINE No. 21 Winston Leyland, Editor

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[Interview: William Burroughs interviewed by Laurence Collinson and Roger Baker.]

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SUNSHINE / FAG RAG ISSUE

In June, 1974, *Gay Sunshine* and Boston's gay lib paper, *Fag Rag*, will publish a special joint issue to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the Christopher St. riots (1969-1974) which sparked off the gay liberation movement. This special issue (about 50 pages) will have as its general theme: Where is the movement (where am I) at now and in what directions are we going? General editor for this special issue, which will be published in San Francisco and distributed nationally, will be Winston Leyland of *Gay Sunshine*.

We are now soliciting material for this special issue. Articles should be typewritten, double-spaced and no more than 15 pages. Deadline for submission of material is June 1st. We especially need in-depth political and personal accounts. Material should be sent c/o *Gay Sunshine*, Box 40397, San Francisco, Ca. 94140. Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope



CHRISTOPHER AND GARY

Photo by David Greene

GENDERFUCK and its delights

When I was about six or seven and old enough to read but not really understand, *Life* magazine did a feature essay on the homosexual. According to the discreet definition, a homosexual was a man who preferred the company of other men to the exclusion of women. I turned to my brother and said, "You know what you are, you're a homosexual." My mother, having overheard, yelled from the other room, "Don't you ever call anyone that." And there the matter was closed.

But it did seem as if my brother's closed group of friends were exclusively male, and he certainly never had anything to do with girls if he could help it. I mean, he and his friends ran around all day playing war and killing each other, or as a gang they beat up kids that were smaller, always trying to prove how much of a man they were. It did seem to fit the definition in *Life*. At least I knew that I couldn't be one. I liked girls a whole lot, even more than the other boys. Wouldn't I rather sit and play house or make potholders or play dress up? I knew that I couldn't be one, and I was glad not only because it didn't seem very good to my mother, but also because I didn't even want to be one if it meant giving up my girlfriends. It must have been a few years later when I realized that "sissy" was the same thing.

I have been an effeminate homosexual all my life, and I accepted and reveled in the effeminate part long before the homosexual. And a lot of other people knew about the gay part before I was sure myself. One of the differences between gay people as a group and other oppressed minorities and majorities is our supposed ability to hide; we can pass. No one is supposed to know unless we tell them. Honey, I have never been taken for a straight man. Even when I believed I was one, even when I tried so hard, tried to do all those things and be those images that straight society wanted and condoned.

When I walk down a busy street in my silver heels, fur chubby, feathers and fingernail polish, with my bracelets and my earrings and my jewels and my shirt open to show a small patch of chest hair, my eyes thickly outlined in black with a rainbow swatch over each and probably my beard not too closely shaven, then.....I am truth walking down the street. I say, look at me; and why not. Why shouldn't everyone see me? I like the way I look, the way I feel. That's the point. I like it and I want to share how good it is.

Oh it is more fun and it is so much nicer out there on the streets with the real sun and people who might never talk to me or me to them; but there they see me, and I parade for them, parade because I am beautiful, because this is me and because I won't let them force me into a dark bar or a lonely closet. I will be me always and I will show them me whenever I want to.

I don't want to tell other people what is good for them. But it does also seem o.k. for everyone else to look, to look and see me, see that I exist, that gender-fucking queens really are alive and well and kicking right here at home. If we don't even know each other on sight, how are we ever going to tell each other what we want and how we want to change it.

"You can learn more about yourself by spending a few hours in a dress than you can in your whole life in a pair of bib overalls and boots."

—John Coverdale

One of my first childhood recollections is that after confessing my ambition to the priesthood, a cousin of mine accused me of desiring only the skirts that went with the office. I was accused of wanting to be a girl. I wasn't sure then, but I did know that I did *not* want to be like the other boys. I knew that I was different and wanted to be different.

The Queens are that part of gay

society that can't hide. The Queens are the ones that are the most visible queers on the streets. The flaming Queens are the ones who get laughed at and jeered at; they are the ones used by straight society for a good hahahahahahaha. No wonder Queens are the first to be in the streets. What do we have to lose: your respect, our position in the community, our standing? We've got everything to gain, namely our rights over our bodies and how to use them.

"Fuck you Gay Liberation!!!!"

—Lee Brewster 1973 Gay Parade NY

I was in New York last year during Gay Pride Week. And with the other 30,000 gaypeople I marched in the parade. I hadn't lived in New York since 1969 and had only been back to visit a few short times. The person I was staying with did not want to (could not) march because he was a professor of math at one of the colleges. So I had the choice of either marching as one of the mass or as a supporter of an identifiable group. Having felt so much personally as a queen and having worked with and organized queens, I joined the ranks of Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) and Queens Liberation. There were two banners but the membership of each seemed to merge and readily exchange along the way. I saw that all along the way the loudest jeers and shouts were certainly directed at us, at those of us in dresses and skirts and sequins. Not only the straight people on the sidewalks but our own people seemed apologetic and ashamed of our blatancy. We had been in the streets before, we were always there. And after others left, we would still be there. The Queens were out there from the very beginning, making you laugh, getting their heads bashed in, entertaining you when you were bored or tired, making you smile because of joy and not a put down. And we will still be out there after your adult consensual law is passed. Because our lives, our sexuality, our true image can't be hidden in our apartments or our bedrooms; we wear it all the time. Just open your eyes and we are there.

For a while there was a group of transvestites, drag queens and people who did drag, that met regularly. We all got together and talked about clothes and makeup but mostly about our fears and our need to get beyond the rigid sex roles that society had defined for males. Gary came to "Manicure" (that was the name of the group — Man a cure) after he was thrown out of the Navy for being a transvestite. Gary and I live together now and here are some of the things we talked about when I was writing this article:

Christopher: Why did you start to do drag in the first place?

Gary: That's not a very good question. I can't come up with a political line.

C: No, not just politics. Why did you feel that you wanted to do drag?

G: I often ask myself that. I just am not sure, but I know it feels good to me.

C: In what way?

G: Well, I just enjoy the sensual feeling of the clothes themselves. Also I enjoy the sense of freedom to express certain emotions and feelings that are regarded as feminine, which I have difficulty expressing when dressed as a man.

C: So the clothes themselves, or your image in women's clothes helps you to express yourself?

G: Right.

C: Do you feel like a woman at those times?

G: No. I don't know how a woman feels. But it does make me more complete, more of a whole person.

C: Why do you think you have such difficulty feeling this completeness looking like a man?

G: I've been conditioned to associate the traditional masculine role with a man's appearance and it's very hard for me to break out of that.

C: Are the clothes, then, merely a tool to achieve this, or something else?

G: Well, I know I should say there is something else, but I just can't put it into words. The clothes themselves aren't magic. There is a mystique around what is masculine and what is feminine and the clothes are symbols which define those two roles in most people's minds.

C: Could you explain that more?

G: Clothes are the most apparent. They are what people immediately base their judgements on.

C: Do you then dress also to define yourself? Do you dress for other people?

G: Sure. I do dress for other people, but I dress more for my own satisfaction and that's more important to me than what other people think.

I take myself seriously. That is a hard thing for most people to understand. They always ask if I am on my way to a party. It is somehow inconceivable to them that I could look the way I do and not be doing it as a joke.

One of the most common things people shout at me on the street is: "Are you a boy or a girl?" I hope that people listen to themselves. That is exactly what my life is all about. It is my choice to not be a man, and it is my choice to be beautiful. I am not a female impersonator; I don't want to mock women. I want to criticize and to poke fun at the roles of women and of men too. I want to try and show how not-normal I can be. I want to ridicule and destroy the whole cosmology of restrictive sex roles and sexual identification.

Sometimes I think it works. I can't help but think that when I walk down the street I am a one person guerilla theater-revolutionary army attacking the entire straight structured world around me. And I also think that I win small battles. Why else would they get so upset, if they didn't know what was happening? Why else all those threats of violence, and the actual violence, if they didn't think that I could actually hurt them. I must be really affecting them or they wouldn't seem so confused and sometimes so frightened. This is also a two front battle: my gay brothers and sisters also seem scared and confused. One political acquaintance of mine said, "It's incredible. You look so weird but talk so normal." Yes, I am guilty until I can prove being ok, and that is because of the way I look.

There is no one like a queen to know the Blue/Pink dichotomy in our society. These man/woman roles can trap people into an unhappy and restrictive life style. Even though I have been gay for a long time, it was only last year that I broke through my own social conditioning and was able to play the so-called active role, the fucker rather than the fuckee. Being so effeminate I had just found it easier to mimic straight society and play the woman/passive sexual role. I played that role for six years. Looking back I can see that I did it because I too was trapped into thinking that the appearance of a person completely defined their sexual preference. I knew intellectually that it wasn't true, but I felt it. And then I fucked with a man who claimed to be straight, and I finally broke out of my own rigid pattern. I saw him only that once, but that single experience changed the way I looked at myself. It showed me that I really had choices; it showed me that things can change. And in my gut I felt the fallacy of traditional men's role (active, traditional male attributes) versus traditional female role (passive, traditional female attributes). I think that it also made me understand drag and genderfuck more because it made visible and experiential the nonsense of clear-cut opposites. It made me see that what I had assumed were mutually exclusive roles were the same thing.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

REVIEW

Cancer In My Left Ball by John Giorno. Something Else Press, Vermont, 1973. \$2.95 paperback.

The Dial-A-Poem Poets. 2 records LP. Giorno Poetry Systems Records, 222 Bowery, New York, N.Y. 10012. \$5.98

Reviewed by Charley Shively

As poetry is now done ways of experiencing a poem aren't many. In the beginning poetry came only in the mouth: someone chanted or sang the song to flute or lyre while others listened; these aural/oral, mouth/ear songs were both magical and practical. Christ was conceived in this way: Gabriel spoke into Mary's ear. Gay Hesiod's *Ways and Days* taught ploughing and loving in his song.

Writing and its changes came later. Some spontaneity went; texts came. And you could now see (visualize) a song: oral/aural/visual. Seeing became believing became reading became closing your door before you do it became poetry as written tablet, book. Poetry was something you did with a pen/pencil/penis. Writing. When you did it you jabbed eyes out with letters.

Still, writing brought freedom from memory. (The first poem I remember memorizing was: shall we gather more stately mansions o my soul and wrap shrouds bringing in the sheaves, swing low sweet chariot on an old rugged cross; then came *arma virumque cano* — for forty lines memorized I got a plus on my "B" in Latin, *magnum cum laude*). The song written is realized, real only in the reading of the text — at that particular time — not carried like luggage through Hell. Most poets don't memorize; most readers don't memorize; the poet/poet is ironically freer — though forever frozen, fixed, spayed.

John Giorno explodes poetry into another third realm of experience (better underline *experience* — and play with your anus or scratch yourself as you do). There are many ways and days in his songs — not afraid to use new media potentialities, possibilities, realities. The poem "Cum" (printed in *Cancer In My Left Ball*) first appeared with a cover of two boys masturbating to a porno book on a pillow with cum on one boy's stomach. "Cum" was first performed by John Giorno reading the words printed on the left hand column in the book with Michael Brody reading those on the right hand. The readers were enclosed inside a chalk circle. "We chanted and sang and screamed the words in mantric rhythms to each other." Six musicians played in another circle. Giorno writes that, "The audience sat on foam rubber cushions around us. We were lit with red fresnels, the musicians with purple and the audience with blue and green...Michael, the musicians and I did some Sunshine for the performance." Afterwards, a party with red wine and sponge cake.

Another way of getting everyone into poetry has been the Dial-A-Poem project. In New York City you could once just dial a poem by telephone. Although the various authorities (museum, state, Bell, etc.) eventually did the project in, you can still listen to some of the poems on a two disc record. Literally millions of people heard such poems by phone (700 selections from 55 poets; the LP has 27 poets with 29 selections). A new poet to audience relationship/experience. "In the middle of the Dial-A-Poem experience," Giorno explains, "was the giant self-consuming media machine choosing you as some of its food, which also lets you get your hands on the controls because you've made a new system of communicating poetry."

Every avenue of experience is searched and utilized to get into, to do, to be, to become the song, the experience. And especially new technology — or at least new to twentieth century poesy: lights, stimulation, stimulants, transubstantiat-

ing "drugs," the works.

Through it all I would like to get closer to John Giorno in his appreciation of come, prick, legs, lips, voice — tantric experience and all with and inside me. And I would like the poems better if done together in an "orgy" than on vinyl, on stage, in a chalk circle. Maybe it's just the law — you do have to be careful — but why not the whole experience, the whole self, the whole body coming — sacred crying, panting, cuming scream — into our, each other's, everyone's ears, eyes, mouths, anuses, arses, legs — dripping white / cum / white cum — why not? Imagine the sexual discipline, technology, abandonment, exercise, spontaneity, love required to do it that way. If not poets who? who could better redefine doing it? Giorno talks alongside a prison rebellion/ "ducking the falling debris"/ "still smoldering mattresses" /

*the performance
of ritual
the performance of ritual
and group
intercourse
and group intercourse
to attain
release
to attain release
through
orgasmic
self-control
through orgasmic self-control*
(p. 88)

Giorno wiggles around the debris and destruction of Babylon in reaching for illumination and meaning. Obviously, the billions of words — N.Y. Times, N.Y. Public Library, Congressional Quarterly, Manhattan phone book and Sears Roebuck catalogue — say both more and less than they say.

*Words
Words
have more to do
with lies
have more to do with lies
and misunderstanding
and misunderstanding
than with
communication
than with communication*
(p.57)

Poets of words work their worthless dictionaries and thesauri for deep symbols and meanings. Yet it's all there in the times, evening news, phone book — just shimmering there, on the surface.

*It is not
a question
It is not
a question
of going
into another
world
of going
of going
into another world
into another world,
this is
another
world
this is another
world
this is another world*
(p.41)

In "Guru Rinpoche" Giorno talks about how our reality can be found in our voice, our being, our reflection of reality, our reflection being reality, our being in reality, in our voices, our vowels, bowels, bowls of blood. Poetry, mediation become

*the transformation
of reality
the transformation of reality
into the vibrations
into the vibrations
of the human
voice
of the human voice*
(p. 49)

Tibetan guru Rinpoche has tutored a

host of poets, as he sips his beer, puffs his cigarettes and eyes the "pretty women's asses. Giorno is, along with Allen Ginsberg, Anne Waldman and others an initiate into Tibetan meditation. The principle of the mantra as it becomes poetry is that the sound itself has healing, cleansing, purifying powers; the vibrations of the human voice are not simply sounds or meanings or signs — they are the vehicle of transformation itself.

Two experiences especially lead seekers to ancient wisdom: death and sex. Death and sex are at the heart — they are the mainsprings in Giorno's poetry.

Giorno's first book *Poems* (1967) contained his "American Book of the Dead," the American analogue of the Tibetan *Book of the Dead*. *Balling Buddha* (1970) contains an incredible death meditation, "Purple Heart," with a Hippie Mom who puts a coke bottle in place of her baby's beating heart — to save it from this civilization's heartlessness. They were limiting the number of purple hearts in Vietnam. Now *Cancer In My Left Ball* (1973) comes announced with Giorno's own Death Row hospital bill. "As the cancer got started, grew, and was cut out in the same 2 year period in which the poems were written, I think there is some connection between the body that wrote them and the poem." Everything in *Cancer In My Left Ball* is in some ultimate sense a meditation on death, our nothingness, the nothingness, the ultimate meaninglessness in everything. There simply shimmering, being there.



John Giorno

Cancer and death; death and love — they are linked in ways we don't even know yet. Wilhelm Reich with his orgone boxes may not have refined his ideas into adequately "scientific" forms, but I think he was barking right. Something like one in every four of us will contact some form of cancer before we die. And most cancer strikes the sexual organs: throat, rectum, vagina, breasts, and other erotogenic zones. (Even lung cancer comes from sucking penis substitutes.) There is certainly a statistical correlation between the emotional state of the patient/poet and his ability to withstand the various kinds of cancer. (Those diagnosed schizophrenic have significantly fewer cases of cancer.) Interesting that Giorno neared death (I'd heard it was brain cancer) after Nixon was elected.

In the dissonance of death and before love, there is a search for freedom, the Weatherpeople, reform and what's called political action. Giorno has several celebrations of guerilla explosions in IBM and other offices; the Dial A Poem record jacket has a picture of Giorno with Ginsberg and others at a demonstration with riot police. Giorno did an enormous amount of work at the 1972 Miami Conventions; and for McGovern's campaign, he wrote and designed T shirts with Vietnamese casualties printed in red.

Out of the hospital he was off to Snow Lion, a Buddhist meditation retreat, and then to India. I would like to suggest that he might find a missing

link between death, love, political action, sex and other things in gay liberation, his own gayness — more answers there than in India. We have plenty of debris and destruction in our midst. But the gurus, mantra and books of wisdom have been more often than not escapes from faggotry into respectability without sanctifying and loving that which is deep within gay — within oneself.

Giorno's love/sex meditations have some discordant qualities that come from more than the TV commercials. His handling of women (and handling is the right word) is in tune with the weathermen and other men in our society as well as in India — but far out of touch with the growing circle of sisterhood spreading wider every day. Sometimes he catches beautifully sensuality and bodiness in love:

*they sucked
each
others
they sucked each others
tongues
tongues
they sucked each others tongues
and swapped
spit
and seapped spit
and swapped spit.*
(p. 37)

Even here one can wonder whether he really is digging, loving sucking spit, wrapping it into himself. Other times, he's clearly mean. Maybe, "The images are American cancer cells. The poems are a biopsy. The reality of the cancer transformed into words." Like when he sings:

*He grasped
He grasped
the man's
head
the man's head
and began
violently
and began violently
to fuck him
in the mouth
in the mouth.*
(p. 134)

True, this is partly exorcism — but why is the poet always fucking and never receiving (or almost never). Is it male dignity that can't allow his manhood to go? can't conceive himself a sexual creature?

Giorno's poetry has a manly quality that sometimes chills me. I particularly wince at the rush for planned wordhood — the need to control, hesitation to stop clinging to power over words, not wanting to let go. Marks of planning intrude in "Give it to me, Baby" — printed in both *Balling Buddha* (1970) and *Cancer In My Left Ball* (1973). "Baby" mixes sex, a recipe for shish kebab, some commercials, news stories, etc. together — brilliantly together, but the control of the author over the material is never forgotten; Most poets prefer to carry out the kinds of experiments that allow them to feel they are in full control, "rather than surrendering themselves to the situation," in Margaret Mead's words about scientists, "as one must in studying human beings as they actually live."

Giorno recognizes this. He understands that in order to float free from love, wanting, grasping, clinging to things & people — to float free from cancer, love and death

*requires
a gentle
"allowing"
requires a gentle "allowing"
rather than
a deliberate
effort
rather than a deliberate effort*

Yet he holds onto an image of control, male supremacy, fails to surrender his manhood — at least in his soul/ his published poetry/ his songs. The man remains, too triumphant.

[*Cancer in My Left Ball* is available by mail, postpaid, from Gay Lib Book Service; listing elsewhere in this issue.]



BOTTOMS UP

an in depth look at vd and your asshole

"I'm convinced that God loves and approves of gay men, and that's why he put the prostate gland right above the asshole so we could enjoy the pleasure of being fucked."

— a gay man from Berkeley

"Don't give him anything but love."

— slogan for anti-VD poster put out by
Los Angeles' Gay Community Services Center

The joy of anal sex is a mystery and sounds unpleasant unless your body has known it and adjusted to it. To the squeamish man who calls it "unnatural and "unhealthy" or fears being hurt, I would compare the ignored potential of the asshole to the many muscles and organs which seem useless only when we don't explore and exercise them. I would say, remember that your rectum has a mucous membrane lining, just like your mouth or a woman's vagina, which allows for a highly erogenous union of bodies once the fear of fucking and rimming is overcome.

It's really an incredible discovery. But unfortunately, there are at the same time very serious risks, in the form of a whole spectrum of anal VD: warts, anal syphilis, anal gonorrhea, herpes, hepatitis, and more that can be transmitted in gay love-making when two men don't know what precautions to take.

I decided I had to write this article when 2 friends of mine discovered warts in their assholes, neither of them having heard of anal warts before. Now, after a year of treatments, including hospitalization, they're still infected and still wearing invisible chastity belts on their backsides.

Getting into all forms of love-making, fucking and rimming (oral-anal) included, wouldn't be a hazard if we had more information on anal venereal disease. But medicine has largely shied away from it (and most other gay health needs), even more so than with "straight" or genital VD. Facts are scarce and research is slim. It wasn't until 1967 that statistics on male-to-male transmission of VD were compiled by the American Social Health Association.

Gays have been blamed for the epidemic spread of VD, when in fact only 3% of males with gonorrhea and 12% to 18% with syphilis name gay contacts, according to an article in *Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality* in March 1971. It hardly seems disproportionate to the number of gay men in the U.S.

Now, consider, even if these tales of gays infiltrating the nation's collective bloodstream with spirochetes were true, what the cause might be. Do statistics

take into account the fear of publicity and harassment that forces many men to hide their gayness and avoid seeking treatment? Do the facts consider the poor medical care that gays receive too often, in which the doctor will frequently overlook the possibility of anal infection?

If a doctor neglects to take an anal culture, the patient will usually have no way of knowing he's infected, because there are rarely any symptoms. He's then more likely to reach a serious, or even fatal, advanced condition. And this is only one of the complications of anal VD.

What's more, the rectum seems to retain viruses and bacteria much more than the genitals, because they thrive well in warm and moist regions, and also because it's so much harder to clean your asshole really thoroughly than all the other parts of the body.

So, again, it's very wise to know the ramifications of anal sex, to be able to fully enjoy it as a physical and/or spiritual self-expression, as much as any other type of love-making.

Reading this article needn't make anyone panic, or cease their preferred sexual activity, but rather be aware of possible risks, and to avoid them with the right precautions.

ANAL WARTS

Anal warts, especially, are an incredible problem. Even though they're an epidemic with gays, very little information is available, and their treatment sadly has not advanced very far from the days when hypnosis and lime juice were thought to cure the growths.

Warts are almost always the result of anal intercourse. Doctors know they're caused by a virus, but the virus hasn't been identified or isolated to the point where an efficient cure or vaccine has been developed.

Usually you'll see small tumors just outside the rim of the anus when you get warts. Unlike hand warts, they're pink or red, soft and moist with an indented, cauliflower-like appearance. They can sometimes form a large tissue mass. Some clear up quickly, others take years despite treatments. Sometimes there will be itching or bleeding, but most often you won't feel anything.

My friend recalled his experience: "When I first felt them, I assumed they were hemorrhoids. So I went out and bought some Preparation H. I'd never even heard of anal warts!" First, he went to a gay general practitioner who spent 6 unsuccessful months trying to kill the warts with acid. Then he found a good proc-

tologist who had to operate and even then spend six months more of weekly check-ups to burn or freeze recurring warts.

During that time, my friend couldn't be fucked by anyone for fear his infection would spread to others, as well as the possibility of the contact ruining the effectiveness of the treatment.

The hassle of warts is made worse, as with all anal VD, by the nature of the rectal canal. The mucous membrane lining of the rectum has no sensory nerve endings, so you can have them up inside your ass and never know it while they multiply and grow larger.

The rectum can be compared to an elastic tube that stretches and contracts, so in its normal folded state you wouldn't be able to feel all the way up your asshole to know if any warts have formed deep inside. Only a proctologist with his anoscope could do it.

When you spot warts or suspect them, go immediately to a doctor, or better yet proctologist. Most VD clinics can only diagnose them, and they aren't in a position to refer the names of good doctors. You have to call the local medical society for referrals, or any gay switchboard or community center for the names of good proctologists or gay doctors.

Bear in mind, treatment is crude at best. The freezing technique, called cryotherapy, is the newest and best. Dr. Bruce Friedman of San Francisco now uses this almost exclusively. "I'm very encouraged by it from two standpoints: 1) it can be done in the office, and 2) the amount of pain is minimal. And it's more accurate. I feel I can limit the treatment and know what I am treating."

Friedman said he hopes a vaccine or immunization for warts will be developed, "but it's not forthcoming." Friedman said, "I feel cryotherapy works not because we've destroyed warts but through the process of burning by freezing we're stimulating an immune reaction in the body."

Podophyllin, an acid, is the most common treatment. It's not very reliable as it affects people differently. It can severely burn and spread to other parts of the body. It should never be used on the tender inner rectal lining, only on the outside anal skin. When warts are up inside the rectum, freezing or electro-coagulation (burning with help of anesthetic) should be used.

If it sounds wretched, you're right. General practitioners are often ignorant of the problem, and they can waste your time with limited treatment, such as podophyllin, or by treating only those warts observable on the skin and not looking for intra-anal warts.

Anal warts treatment sadly has not advanced very far from the days when hypnosis and lime juice were thought to cure the growths.

Doctors should always take a gonorrhea culture and blood test for syphilis when treating warts. The rash which comes as a secondary symptom of syphilis looks just like warts. If the doctor mistakes them for hemorrhoids, which are inflamed blood vessels appearing as tabs of skin, you probably need a new doctor.

Surgery and hospitalization are often necessary for warts and that runs into hundreds of dollars, on top of your check-ups. Without Medi-Cal or medical insurance or a fat bankroll, the cost would be prohibitive.

Proctology clinics are located in San Francisco at University of California, Mt. Zion, Children's Hospital, SF General, St. Mary's and Presbyterian Hospital. In Los Angeles, the Gay Community Services Center's free clinic can treat warts.

Penile warts are much less common, and generally less of a problem, though under a tight foreskin they can be awfully painful. They can be transmitted to, or contracted from, a sexual partner very easily. Treatment is the same, but usually easier for the patient as access is direct.

ANAL CLAP

Anal gonorrhea strikes more often (same as with genital clap) than anal syphilis. In 80% of the cases, you won't have symptoms — very different from the burning discharge of penile clap. So, check-ups every 3 to 6 months are necessary if you're active. A doctor can't see the gonococci in the rectum but a culture will determine it.

(The symptoms of anal clap that rarely do occur are a moistness, discharge, or discomfort when shitting.)

Having no symptoms is dangerous because as an unknowing carrier you could infect many partners and possibly reach an advanced stage. Unchecked gonorrhea can cause blindness, sterility, or an infected prostate. At LA's Gay Community Services Center, a clinic patient had to be carried in. He was so ashamed of his infection, he'd let it go until his leg became temporarily paralyzed.

The clap is infectious and will live in your body until you're cured. If you've just fucked someone with anal clap, you can reduce chances of infection by pissing

because the gonococci enter only through the meatus (penis opening) in that condition. If you're being fucked by a man who's got a dose, you'll almost for sure contract it because the rectum is such a contained receptacle.

Rimming or sucking cock will rarely result in pharyngeal (throat) gonorrhea. When it does, a throat culture will define it and antibiotics will cure it as with all forms of the clap.

(To digress from anal VD, a word about penile clap: 50% of men with discharge complaints really have NGU, or non-gonococcal urethritis, which is the same as NSU. It's defined as any infection of the urethra not caused by the clap, and is usually a milder discharge, and not continuous like the clap. So always demand a culture.)

ANAL SIFF

Anal syphilis, too, rarely infects the body with any signs. In the primary stage, a chancre sore may appear, but unlike oral or genital chancres they're "atypical" and have no common characteristics, except that they're painless. When they form inside the rectum rather than the rectal opening (anus), they won't be visible. When chancres are visible (as well as "secondary" siff symptoms) they often resemble the symptoms of other diseases. Syphilis is called "the great imitator" and because it "mimics" other infections, a blood test or darkfield exam of serum from the sore are sometimes the only way to identify it.

Chancres will form precisely at the spot where the spirochete germ enters your body, anywhere from 10 to 90 (usually 21) days after contact. So you could have negative blood tests for weeks until the germs are numerous enough to be recorded. The chancre disappears if untreated, followed sometimes by a secondary stage of a skin rash. The rash usually appears as raised bumps all over the body, including inside of mouth, palms and soles of feet. Usually the rash won't itch and will be so mild as to go unnoticed; but it's highly contagious.

This same rash will resemble anal warts when it appears near the asshole. Other possible secondary symptoms: hair falling out, and a low-grade fever and swelling of lymph glands. Even without treatment, the

The mucous membrane lining of the rectum has no sensory nerve endings. In 80% of anal clap cases and 75% of anal siff, and often with anal warts, there will be no symptoms.

secondary symptoms vanish, like a chancre, within 2 to 6 weeks. Siff then becomes latent (no signs or symptoms) for years. Once it goes this far, you've a 33% chance of getting an advanced condition, which can lead to a fatal heart attack or paralysis, or insanity (remember Al Capone).

Remember, there's a very small (about 25%) chance that any of these primary or secondary symptoms will develop. And without any siff symptoms, you're still infectious and the spirochetes remain in your blood until cured.

FISSURES, ABSCESSSES & FISTULAS

The rectum is really vulnerable to a world of infections, when no precautions are exercised. Aside from the nature of the mucous membrane lining, further disease can flourish in what's called anal crypts. These are pockets leading to anal glands located where the lining of the bowel meets the skin, 1/2-inch inside the anus. When these become infected you'll get problems with fissures, abscesses and fistulas. These are very often caused not by sex but by diarrhea or other bowel problems.

A fissure is a split or tear in the anal canal, from an infected crypt. It appears like a small raw spot, and could be mistaken for a chancre. They require minor surgery to repair.

There's a theory, by an Englishman named Dr. Peter Lord, that says the relaxed muscles one gets from anal intercourse will make the body less, rather than more likely to get a fissure.

Abscesses develop when the infection of the crypt goes deeper, causing a highly painful swelling. Once a doctor drains an abscess and the pus is released, the patient's pain will subside. But in 85% of abscesses, once they're drained a fistula develops, which is a tunnel boring outward from the abscess infection. It must be surgically opened and troughed.

Fissures, abscesses and fistulas are not a large or significant problem and shouldn't be considered a major risk in anal intercourse.

HEPATITIS

When two men are rimming and the tongue and lips enter the partner's asshole, there's a definite possibility of hepatitis infection, caused by the bacteria and viruses in human feces. Rimming can also cause

oral syphilis and gonorrhea, pinworm, typhoid and salmonellosis, though none are as frequent as hepatitis.

Dr. Erwin Braff of San Francisco's City Clinic says "These infections of the gastro-intestinal tract are a very significant hazard that one doesn't really think of as being a venereal disease." He added that the incidence of the latter three isn't common enough to be considered a significant risk. Again, the rectum is very difficult to clean thoroughly, so you might say the cleaner the man the less chance of disease for the man who rims or fucks him.

Yellow skin, or jaundice, is the traditional hepatitis symptom, when really only 1 out of 3 persons get it. Common symptoms resemble a flu: no appetite, aches and pains, a fever, abdominal pains. The urine is very dark and feces become a light clay color. Hepatitis is serious, in that it can permanently weaken the liver, and can put you on your back for weeks with a long, slow recovery. Often when hepatitis symptoms have left or are slight, the person is still communicable.

HERPES

Herpes genitalis is still one more disease that anal sex can lead to. It's more common in women, but infects men with the same fever blisters, pinkish with a red border. Herpes are exquisitely painful if located on skin outside the anus (or on the genitals) but usually not felt at all if inside the rectum.

The blisters fester and merge together as they grow so that you can't sit down, let alone have sex, without agonizing pain. After 4 or 5 days they start to heal, and then another 10 days pass before they disappear without scarring. The sores won't be communicable unless they're open.

Herpes can return as they will lie in remission, and the virus can be reactivated by the chafing of buttocks (especially with overweight people), or from sex, or from irritating material in the feces which don't get washed off properly. So, unlike other VD, when herpes erupt it's not always because of the last sex you had, but rather the original infection could easily have been reawakened.

Herpes cure is a matter of simply alleviating the symptoms until the virus leaves the body and the disease cures itself. To stop their spreading, it's good to rub Sulfa cream on the sores, Vaseline on the skin near the sores. A tub of hot water helps too, as will a surface antiseptic or pain pills. Washing well instead of wiping with toilet tissue is good.

It's possible to get herpes in the mouth — either from rimming or sucking, or by transferring the virus from hand to mouth after urinating.

PROSTATE & SPHINCTER

The prostate gland, from which much of the erotic pleasure of anal intercourse stems, can become infected if the sexual partner uses undue force when penetrating the rectum, especially if fists or dildos are used. Any kind of rough sex could also injure the rectal lining, and here's where tears and splits resulting in abscesses or fissures might occur.

Otherwise, if the partner is gentle and takes his time, allowing the sphincter muscle to relax and the rectum to stretch and expand slowly, there's little chance of infection or damage. Lubrication (KY is best) is also a good way to facilitate fucking without really taking out any of the enjoyment.

A finger or tongue are the perfect preliminary. Boston's *Fag Rag* ran a story, "Rimming As An Act Of Revolution" by Charley Shively, which says it so well:

"Rimming is a wonderful way to prepare an anus for a penis. Who is so tight he cannot accept a tongue, soft and slippery and easy as it is in its message of love into the rectum? Once softened, resistance melts like butter in the summer sun. Stiffness becomes softness becomes yielding ecstasy."

The approach is what matters.

Approach, really, is the main consideration in all forms of sex and their relation to venereal disease. There's a saying that "the stiff prick has no conscience," but a man does, and if he wants to enjoy all forms of love-making, he'll want his sexual partner to share the joy of sex without fear of infection.

PREVENTION

Thus, prevention of VD is a two-way street. You take steps to protect your lover/partner from infection, as well as precautions to guard yourself. Preventing VD is a mixture of hygiene, caution and positive thinking.

- First of all, washing clean before and after sex is necessary, and fine for esthetic reasons too. A bath or shower enhances the natural body scents and makes the skin smooth and soft. Washing your asshole *before* sex will greatly decrease the chances of the man rimming you getting hepatitis or other gastro-intestinal diseases. To wash after sex with warm and soapy water will kill most siff and clap germs. And pissing after sex will eliminate any possible clap germs from the urethra.

- Of course, don't ball anyone who's infected with any of the above infections. You're not only courting the germs, but you'll possibly pass them on.

- A quick examination of your partner might reveal symptoms that he hasn't noticed.

- A periodic self-examination is wise, not only to protect yourself and partner, but to understand and be in touch with your body. Try kneeling on your bed, and looking backwards while holding a mirror to your ass and genitals. Lift your balls to get a better look.

When fucking, if the partner is gentle and takes his time, allowing the sphincter muscle to relax and the rectum to stretch and expand slowly, there's little chance of infection of the prostate.

- Check-ups can't be stressed enough, especially if you trick a lot or frequent the baths. Remember, you usually won't know when your ass is infected with VD unless a partner tells you he has it genitally, or if there are symptoms such as itching or discharge (very rare). *So even if you've no reason to suspect, even if you haven't balled in months, you should go for a blood test and gonorrhea culture. Always request that cultures from your mouth and asshole be taken.* Many public health clinics, such as San Francisco's City Clinic, see many gay patients, and take throat and rectal cultures of all patients as part of the routine.

- Always tell everyone you've balled once you have an infection, and encourage them to go for tests. If you don't tell them, then make it a point to give their name to your doctor or clinic worker, for the simple reason that you're protecting them and aiding in the abatement of the disease. The names of persons with any communicable diseases are required by state law to be confidentially reported to the Department of Health.

- As further prevention, most doctors will encourage using a rubber. This is really controversial, mostly because for most people a rubber negates the pleasure of sex. It should be said here, though, that it will be very effective in preventing most VD, including warts. (There needs to be research for a suppository as an alternative to rubbers. An antiseptic for the rectum or vagina, tasteless and odorless, inserted before balling, wouldn't be nearly as repulsive as a rubber.)

- A vaccine against warts, let alone one against the clap and syphilis, has yet to be developed, but would ultimately be the easiest and most efficient deterrent to infection. What's needed is public support and demand for continued research into such a vaccine.

- If you think you can cure siff or clap or any VD by treating yourself with tetracycline or penicillin at home, you're wrong. Don't try it: the amount or kind of antibiotic you take may be wrong, allowing the infection to linger. Seek out the best treatment. (In my research, I was told by a gay doctor and public health worker of cases where a man with an infected asshole was seeing a doctor who knowingly administered an ineffective treatment, because he got off on examining that particular man. This isn't that common, but along with all I've described here, it's enough to make me go out of my way for good treatment.)

- Your state of mind, or positive thinking, shouldn't be discounted as a means of prevention or partial cure. Try to mellow out and don't become too identified with the disease. The infection is possibly being maintained by the overwhelming depression that accompanies it, as by the virus or bacteria. Perhaps your attitudes and emotions will help where medicine cannot.

- Above all, don't be unnecessarily alarmed by all this information. Just take heed, and continue to enjoy.

—Edward Guthmann

GAY HEALTH SERVICE IN U.S.:

Berkeley, California. Free Clinic has gay medics available Friday nights. 2339 Durant Ave. Phone (415) 548-2570.

Los Angeles, California. Gay Community Services Center, VD Health Clinic. 1614 Wilshire Blvd. Phone (213) 482-3062.

San Francisco, California. City Clinic sees all patients, gay or straight, for VD, primarily syphilis and gonorrhea. 250 4th St. Phone (415) 558-3804.

Boston, Massachusetts. Gay Nurse's Alliance, c/o Homophile Community Health Service. Room 403, 419 Boylston St. Phone (617) 266-5473.

New York, New York. Gay Men's Health Project. 247 W. 11th St. (Basement). Phone (212) 691-6969.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Gay Nurse's Alliance. P.O. Box 5687. Phone (215) 978-5700.

Seattle, Washington. Seattle Counseling Service for Homosexuals. Phone (206) 329-8707.

This is a partial list. If you have names and addresses of more gay health services, send them to Gay Sunshine.

GAY WOMEN & MEN: How We Relate

They say we hate women, fear them, are disgusted by their bodies, want to live in a world without them, want to be like them, worship them, wish we were women ourselves. They "blame" our mothers (and tend not to mention our fathers) for our awful fate. There are women who are disgusted by us, threatened by us, intrigued by us, contemptuous of us, and supportive of us.

I have seen many generalizations about the relationship of male homosexuals to women. Much of this is sweeping dogma that has little connection to my own reality. It is impossible, I think, to generalize about this topic for the simple reason that there are so many different women. But, on the other hand, the feminist movement and the gay liberation movement have attempted to forge a *group identity* for women and for homosexuals. So accordingly it is worth exploring the way that these two categories of people interact, the way that they are inter-related.

I do not feel that I have ever hated women or have ever been disgusted by women's bodies. But I have met male homosexuals who have such feelings. Where does this come from? I think it comes from a male supremacist society, one which adores masculinity. A homosexual man failing to achieve the treasured and sought-after traits of masculinity, then, could easily become a person who hates the *visible* source of "femininity" — namely, women. The rabidly male supremacist homosexual must be, on some level, a self-hating person. As this self-hatred subsides — the essence of gay liberation — gay men can be more loving toward women.

There are some well established uniquely close relationships between gay men and women. For example, there is a significant number of male homosexuals who gravitate toward certain gay professions which have a unique relationship to women — hairdressing, fashion design, cosmetics, interior decoration. Because some men in these fields fit the so-called stereotype homosexual, there is a tendency or a desire within the gay liberation movement to dismiss or ignore such individuals — something which has always struck me as a bit anti-gay. Some feminists have suggested that men in such professions are complicitous in the exploitation of women, in that they help keep women in their most unliberated roles — sex object and housekeeper. These feminists may well be right; the fact that a woman seeks out a hairdresser voluntarily begs the question. Possibly, some gay men choose these jobs because they have cultivated an appreciation for what they imagine to be feminine standards of beauty. Ours has been a society of "real men" and "real women." A faggot who accepts this dichotomy, and who doesn't make it as a "real man," has only one other choice — being a "real woman."

This mentality, perhaps, motivates some transvestites (drag queens) and transsexuals (someone whose sex is altered surgically). Transsexuals like to think of themselves as women trapped in a man's body. Transvestism and transsexualism, however, are "extreme" choices, in the sense that few people have the inclination or the courage. So, for some gay men, a better choice in this incredible role-playing game is to help "real women" fulfill the female role most perfectly and most beautifully. Perhaps both faggot and woman, in such situations share a sense of joy, fulfillment and beauty — while perhaps on another level they share a sense of pain, inadequacy and ugliness. Possibly, of course, the gay men in such professions choose them for simpler reasons. For one thing, these are among the few professions where a homosexual has job security — he will not be fired if his sexual preference is known. In addition, gay men in such fields probably feel more comfortable being surrounded by wo-

men, simply because they perceive women as nicer, gentler and less threatening than most straight men. There is a unique level of intimacy, confidence and friendship, I am told, between male hairdresser and client.

I should take note of the fact that some women prefer the friendship of gay men because they discover that we can relate to them as people and not as sex objects. These same women are often disappointed, and sometimes angry, when we forsake their friendship in order to be with or search after a sex object (in this case, a man).

Some women prefer the friendship of gay men above all other kinds of relationships, and in camp language such women are called fruit flies or fag hags. Some fag hags — the term seems ugly to me, both anti-woman and anti-gay — develop strong friendships with one or more gay men. I can't say what motivates such women, or why they enjoy an evening in a gay men's bar. But I know some lesbians believe that fag hags are closet lesbians, that is, women who know they do not wish to be sexually dominated by a straight man but who are afraid to enter into the female side of the gay world. One comment I've heard about fag hags is that they are attracted to gay men for the challenge of it all — in the hopes of "curing" us or "making" us. Some gay men truly enjoy the company of such women, some are contemptuous of them, and some find such friendships convenient for straight-fronting (that is, putting on a heterosexual show) for family, employer, or social acquaintances.

Another special relationship between gay men and women is the incredible attraction of the gay male community for certain female entertainment stars. The late Judy Garland, of course, tops the list, and there is also Barbra Streisand, Liza Minelli, Bette Midler, Marlene Dietrich, Bette Davis, Katherine Hepburn, Joan Crawford and others. I have often felt alienated from the gay male community because I do not generally wor-

ship these heroines. Why do gay men love these women so? Some say it is because of the imagery of strong independence that some of these women project. Judy Garland was popular, I was told once by a friend, because gay men could identify with her tragic struggle to survive. Some say it is merely the image of style and stardom that these women project. Whatever the reason, it certainly is a cultural phenomenon of considerable importance, and it gives the lie to the statement that gay men have no place in their world for women.

Is a male homosexual the ultimate male supremacist? Or are gay men likely to be among the males most supportive of the goals of women's liberation? Both ideas have been expressed by feminists. One thing is certain: male homosexuals are preoccupied with the fact that on some level we are womanly, or we are considered womanly by this society.

I have heard men call their asshole a pussy, and I have heard men express revulsion at the idea of smelling or tasting or even looking at a vagina. I have met macho bi-sexuals who would just as soon fuck a woman as a man (any hole will do). Some of these bi-sexuals really prefer anal sex with women — which I believe they experience as the ultimate in domination and humiliation. In camp lingo, gay men use such terms as "Miss Thing" and the pronoun "she" as a put-down. Some drag queens mock women or impersonate women on the stage in order to make a living. (Some lesbians have stated that they feel that drag shows are exploitative of women.) But it is the butch image that is the sexual preference of most gay men, and many male homosexuals cultivate a masculine identity with care and pride (as in "I may suck cock, but I'm a *man*."). For most gay men it is still a compliment to be told, "Oh you don't act like a homosexual — I never would have guessed!" Most gay men are turned off to drag queens and to effeminate men because the male homosexuals' sex object, in the end, is a man. Some gay men are uncomfortable with

lesbians — or dislike them — are turned off to feminism because such women disrupt the well-established imagery of woman-kind. Even within the gay liberation movement, men have remained insensitive to the ways in which we embody a male supremacist society, and this has been a major factor in the establishment of an independent lesbian movement.

I say all of this to acknowledge the fact that male supremacist values, the internalization of stereotyped role-playing, infect the male homosexual community. A significant portion of gay men, at least superficially, have aligned themselves with men, have affirmed their manhood, and in so doing they ignore (at best) or combat (at worst) the goals of the feminist movement.

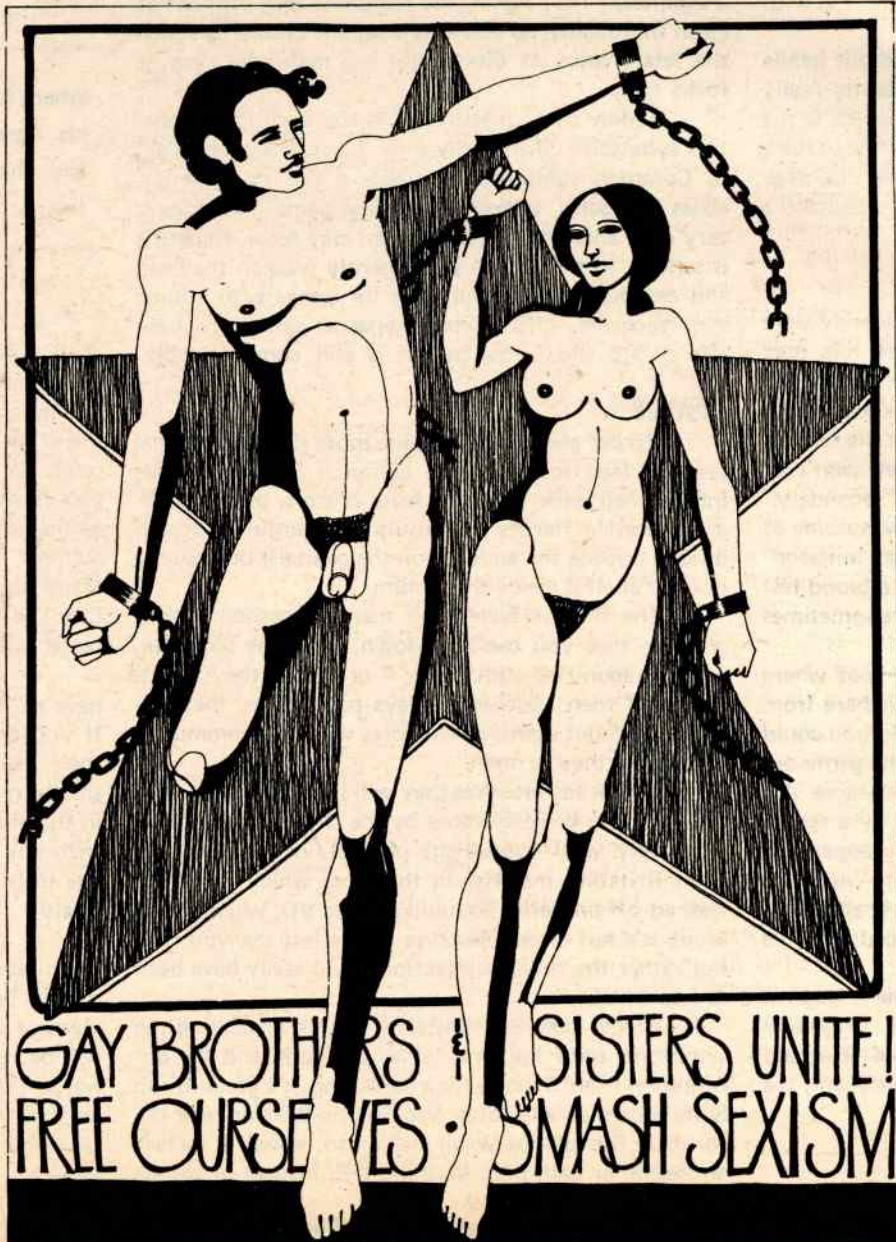
Gay liberation *without* feminism — and sadly this is the state of a significant part of the gay movement — cannot really deal with the source of homosexual oppression. For that source is the system of sex roles propagated by a male supremacist society. Gay men managing to obtain the privileges of straight men ("civil rights") may ultimately achieve the economic and political status given to heterosexuals. But, as long as the heterosexual nuclear family remains intact and respected, as long as the masculine image remains admirable, male homosexuals will continue to be marginal people. We will be misfits while others form their families; we will be cocksuckers and faggots (womanly non-men) while only those men who fuck women will earn the cherished label "man."

Gay liberation *with* feminism is the only logical solution to the problems we face as male homosexuals in this society. My argument here, despite all that I have said about male supremacy among gay men, is that there are many indicators of an already well-developed unity in practice between gay pride and strong, independent womanhood. In other words, we are already well along the way, as gay men, toward a beautiful and strong alliance with women.

Well I remember the yellow brick schoolhouse in Woodridge, N.Y., where I learned to read and write. On one side of the building, the boys played a modified baseball game called "three feet." You had to throw a ball against the wall; there were teams and if you didn't do well, your teammates would resent you. On the other side of the building the girls jumped rope ("Down in Mississippi, where the boats go push!" — see, I still remember). Was I a "male homosexual" at age 6? Certainly not, but I was a fairly all right. I threw a ball "like a girl." And I found my place quickly enough with the girls and the jumprope.

It was simple enough, I think — the boys rejected me, or I rejected them and their competitive games, and I felt at home and welcome among the girls. Well, maybe I didn't quite feel "at home," because on some level I knew it was "wrong" for me to jump rope with the girls. I knew I belonged on the other side of the school, but the girls offered me affection and acceptance. I know from conversations with many dozens of gay men that this experience is almost universal among us: early childhood friendships and feeling of ease with girls.

My problems with relating to girls began with the emergence of my sexual identity at puberty. To a great extent, my easy friendship with girls continued all through junior high school, high school and college. Many of these friendships were based on my attraction for the girls who, like me, "got good marks" in school. Later, some of it was political — my female friends were comrades in such groups as the Student Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy. But I also was becoming an overtly sexual being for perhaps the first time (being unaware of much childhood sexual feeling). Much of my erotic energy went toward males, and I had sex occasionally from age 13 on with boys (and once with an older man). But I tried very hard to be straight, and in so trying I found myself getting into relationships with some young women that can only be called contrived. In one case, when I was 16 or 17, I purposely



sought the company of a 13-year old girl who, in the parlance of the times, had a "bad reputation," and we used to dry fuck together. I dated and necked rather compulsively, though I didn't enjoy this semi-sex very much, and I anxiously awaited the day when I would lose my hated and frightening virginity.

Throughout this period, I was not a self-aware homosexual. I knew I had a "problem," but I did not identify myself as homosexual entirely. Even after a long homosexual affair with a college roommate, I hoped to strengthen my straight identity. I expected to find my gay feelings fade into the past, just as the books said they would. As a straight-identified man, I of course did not encounter homosexuals in openly gay situations, though it turns out that still another roommate of mine was a closeted homosexual. While I was living with him, I began a rather serious affair with a very nice young woman. I told her I loved her, and I suppose I did, and we even talked of marriage. But in all honesty I think what I really loved was the feeling of *belonging* that I had when I was with her in the company of my straight friends who had already formed into couples.

Shortly thereafter, I became fully integrated into a homosexual life style, and I ceased making love with women altogether. Actually, I did try from time to time, but I couldn't keep a hard-on. However, I found that as I became a more sexual and sensual person, women began to find me attractive — much more so than before. Since I no longer desired the sexual company of women but was afraid to tell them the reasons why, I found myself building barriers between myself and women. It became more difficult to have casual friendships with women. Especially as the cult of virginity waned in the mid-1960's, I found the casual company of women more and more difficult.

I did not like these barriers that I had built, and I did not really like the entire notion of a secret life. I was able, even before the gay liberation movement, to tell a few friends that I was gay — and most of these were women. And later, after gay liberation strengthened my sense of gay pride and identity, it was to women that I first opened up. It was easier telling women than telling straight men. This is another universal experience of male homosexuals. In our families, too, it is easier to tell our sisters than our brothers, easier to tell our mothers than our fathers. True, mothers wring their hands ("What did I do wrong?") and ex-girlfriends may feel a sense of loss and rejection, but there seems to be a level of understanding and acceptance of which men are not capable. And no wonder; did you ever hear of a woman beating up someone because he is a faggot?

I have noticed that my friendships with women I knew from our work together in the New Left in the late 1960's has in several cases been strengthened in this post-gay liberation period. We are able to talk more openly, it seems, not about current events or Marxian analysis, but about our immediate human experiences. With straight men I know from similar days gone by, the contact is often more strained — if it has continued at all.

I am close to three women in my family — my mother, my sister, and an aunt (my mother's sister). Our relationships after my coming out have vastly improved. This is no doubt a result of three factors: first, my ability at last to be open and honest; second, my familiarity with feminism and my ability to use this knowledge to communicate better with the women close to me; and third, my new-found ability to be less intellectual and to be in touch with my feelings and other people's feelings, an ability I associate with nurturing feminine aspects of my personality.

As many people know, there is a theory very popular among professional and amateur psychologists that male homosexuals are created by dominant, over-protective mothers. Before my contact with feminism and gay liberation, I was to a great extent victimized by this theory, and as a result I did not feel good about my mother. I think, at the outset, we

need to face up to the fact that most mothers can be described as "dominant and over-protective" if by that we mean that they are responsible for keeping up a home and assuming primary responsibility for giving a child affection (or any emotional response) and support. The entire line of thinking, I feel, becomes a sham.

I refuse to accept the notions of traditional psychology that certain behavior by parents will assure the sexual identity of a child. For example, I know of many cases of families with so-called dominant mothers and weak fathers where the children are quite heterosexual. I know of homosexuals who come from homes where the fathers are tyrannical and the mothers silent and prayerful, while such households also produce heterosexuals. On the other hand, I will not say — as some gay liberationists do — that what parents do is unrelated to a child's sexual identity. It may be a factor. And if we feel good about ourselves, how can we "blame" our parents for anything?

For me, the crucial fact is that my parents did not force too many sex role stereotypes on me. For example, my father never pushed sports on me, for which I am keenly grateful, though sometimes I wish I had a stronger, more athletic body. I think people perceived my mother as dominant, but I know that she does not run things. While gentle and not a tyrant, my father is much more likely to get his way in a given situation. Given the conditions of most twentieth century American marriages, however, my mother is quite an independent woman. I first heard the term "male chauvinism" from the lips of my mother. It was in the 1950's and I was only a boy. If I am not mistaken she was talking about a certain cousin of hers who, indeed is a male chauvinist. (My mother learned such vocabulary from her association, since ended, with the Communist Party. While she, true to the spirit of anti-sexist politics, has often used the ideology of anti-sexism in her personal life, the Party has attacked modern-day feminism in the name of its narrow brand of proletarian politics.)

My relationship with my mother, however, has not been all that great. My negative attitude toward my mother was quite simple; I knew that I was a sissy, I knew that being a sissy was a terrible thing, and somehow I associated my mother's care, affection and protective attitude toward me with the fact of my being a sissy. So I resented her and her ebullient affection, and most communication between us was spoiled by this dynamic. After coming out, and especially after understanding the undesirability of straight manhood, I was able to open up to my mother and to accept her affection. She can kiss me now as much as she likes, and I kiss her back not reluctantly but sincerely. My mother found out about my gayness accidentally — she spotted a gay liberation button I left carelessly on a sweater. I had been wanting to tell her anyway. She was not happy with the news, and she still has not recovered from the shock and disappointment. She is not one of those very rare mothers who will show up at a gay liberation march. But I think I have convinced her at the very least that there is much value in the improved communication between us, and she continues to respect and love me. She shares with me, too, in a way she did not before.

It is common for a male homosexual who is a fully grown man to live with his mother. While I once thought such an arrangement ridiculous, I could now seriously consider it. In general, I believe in communal living arrangements where there is a full age span from small children to old folks.

My sister and I (she's four years younger) were great friends and playmates throughout childhood. But when she became a sexual being, she entered into awesome conflict with my basically puritanical parents. From that moment on, there was a great barrier between me and my sister. I couldn't be open with her about sex, I believed, because I couldn't reveal my own truths. I didn't want to know her side of things because then I'd have been

obligated to tell about myself (out of the question). So I *seemed* to take my parents' side. Only many years later, after I came out, did we begin to get close again. Now we have a "no secrets" relationship which is by no means perfect but which is unusually solid for brother and sister.

My aunt (my mother's sister) is someone I consider one of my best and most loyal friends. I have felt that way about her ever since I was a small child. She was the first relative I told about my gayness, and her response was consistent with this established loyalty and trust. Perhaps her involvement with people in the theater and the dance has been a factor. She is an open, incredibly self-aware person. Last year, while I was on a visit to Florida, she and her husband were quarreling, as they often do. At her bidding, I went out with her several evenings to drink and dance at a nearby resort hotel. In the meantime, I discovered a lively gay dancing bar just a few blocks away from her apartment. Being somewhat bored by the straight scene she's taken me to for several nights running, I suggested we go to the gay bar. She immediately accepted, and we both had a very nice time together, socializing and dancing, not only with each other but with people we met at the bar. Many gay men I know have close, loving relationships with an aunt or a grandmother.

Perhaps one of the most important relationships I have had with a woman is with Karla Jay, a lesbian with whom I have worked together on various gay liberation projects. [Ed.: She and Allen Young are co-editors of the gay liberation anthology, *Out of the Closets*.] To the extent that this working and social relationship has been successful, it is in part due to my conscious efforts toward respecting Karla's autonomy as a woman and as a lesbian, and in not permitting the straight male world to assume that a man is always in charge. In any case, no matter what my intentions might be, Karla is not going to put up with any shit from me or from any man.

It is one thing for gay men to have private relationships with women. We are also confronted with the reality of a strong, vital, growing feminist movement. We are men, not women, yet we cannot and should not remain aloof from the demands of angry proud women. As a starter, we can read feminist literature and support the demands of the organized women's movement. We should see such demands as being in our own interest.

One small group of gay men who call themselves "effeminists" have argued that gay men should place themselves virtually in the service of women. These men, I think, envision a world run by women with men in subordinate positions. They want gay men to take the lead in this reversal of power. It is my understanding, however, that most feminists and most gay liberationists, most people of good will, seek a world of equality without power trips. That, presumably, is why we are busy combatting male supremacy. Having said this, I think it is worth pointing out that gay men are already more at home than straight men in such situations as cooking and housekeeping. It has been my observation that straight men

assume that women will serve them in certain areas, especially cooking and house-keeping. I do not think that gay men, when they live with women, make such assumptions, except married closet cases who can be typical husbands.

The area of child care and education, which our culture assigns to women, is of special interest to gay men. Many of us are exploring ways out of the trap set by society which separates us from the newer generations. It is no coincidence that among men who choose elementary education as a field, for example, the percentage of homosexuals is quite high. Many of the married homosexuals I have met say they are motivated largely by their love for their children. Some gay men seek out work in child care centers, although unfortunately many of these centers, whether run by agencies or parents, do not welcome homosexuals or anti-sexists on their staffs. There are gay fathers with the custody of their own children, and there are gay men who would like to adopt children, though this is usually impossible. Some gay men, of course, are not particularly interested in children. Although some may dogmatically label this as "privilege" or male chauvinism, it seems to me to be as much a matter of individual choice for gay men, as it is for straight married people or lesbians, to remain childless.

It is not always easy for a gay man to figure out how he relates to the half of humanity he is not involved with sexually — especially when society implies that sex is the main reason for men to relate to women. But relating to women is a part of gay life that is real and important, since we define "gay" as more than just a sexual preference. The relationship of gay men to women is, in many ways, entering a new era with the advent of gay liberation and the second wave of feminism. Our tendency to relate more easily to women on many levels is a well established fact, to the extent that we recognize and accept the parts of our personalities that are more "feminine." Still, ours is a society which teaches men that women are for fucking. If we accept this most male supremacist notion of women, then we have no use for women. As I said before, I believe there are a significant number of gay men who have such a view. (Straight men with such a view, perhaps the majority of straight men, do indeed have a "use" for women, but it is precisely within the confines of that word "use.")

I have indicated that gay men who are out of the closet, who have broken the barriers of shame, self hatred and secrecy, are able to discover equal relationships with women. If we have love and respect for all human beings, in their fullest dimensions, we can find rich and fulfilling relationships with women, perhaps the richest and fullest relationships we can have.

—Allen Young



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THE JOHN IN STERLING

The following were collected during the 1971-72 school year in the men's room of the Sterling Library at Yale University. The original correspondences are actually written on toilet paper and were passed by myself to others between the stall partitions. The parts I wrote are in italics.

— Rene Ricard

Hi! What do you enjoy?

The common things.

Well, that makes two of us. Rather than ask all the usual questions like what you look like, how hung you are and how old you are, why don't you take a look at me when I get outside the stall and if you like my looks, come on out into the cafeteria section and maybe we can cook something up. All right?

Do you go to Southern Conn.?

Why do you ask. Are the S.C.S.C. students getting a reputation around here or do you think you know me?

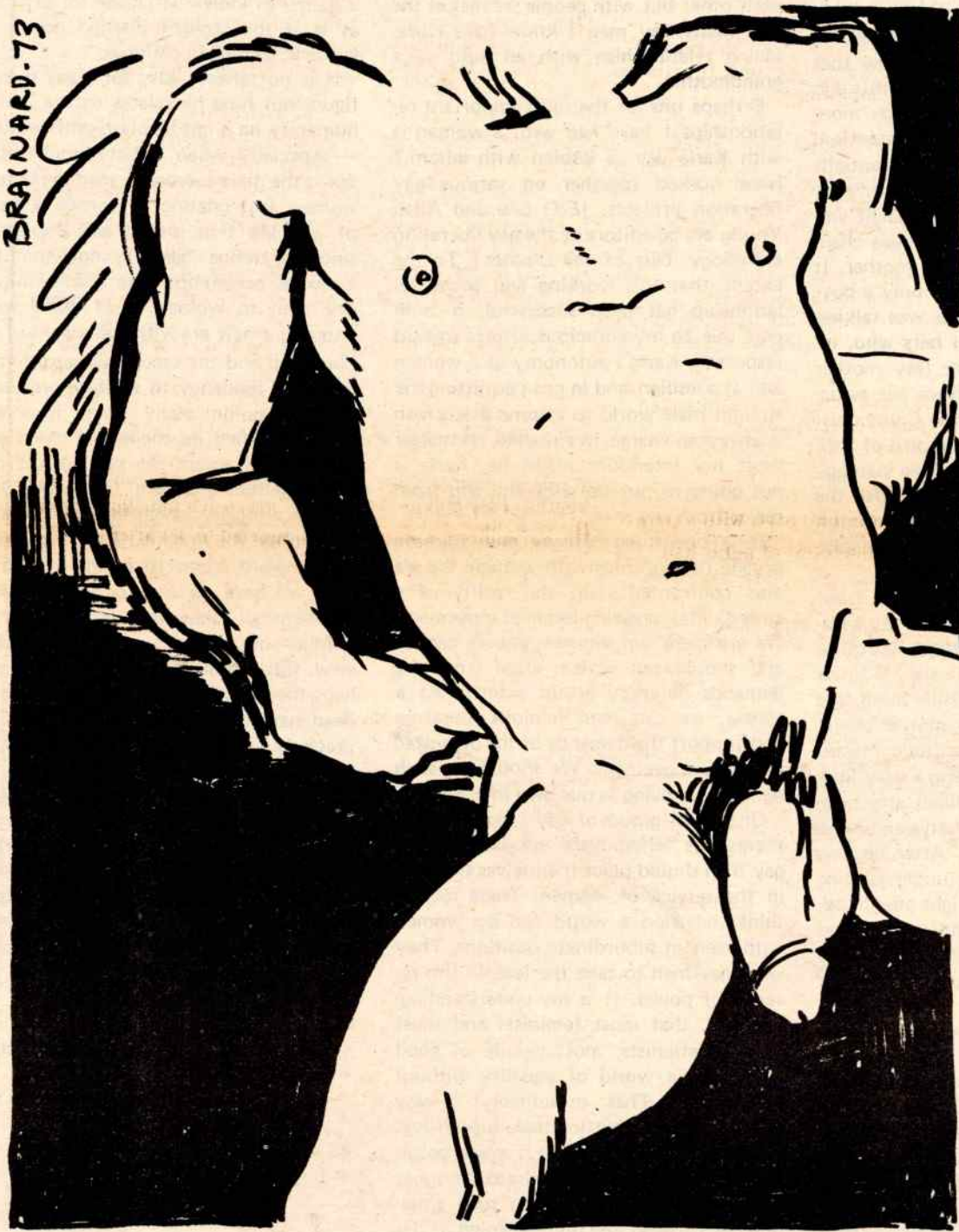
Yes, the latter.

Well, do I know you? and if so, who are you? Are you the person who lived on Lake Place and you chickened out outside?

Found out!

Well, if you want to have another go at it, let's split. If not, OK too. It's up to you.

BRAINARD-73



How old are you and what do you look like?

22. 6', 155 lbs. brown hair, blue eyes, uncut big cock About you?

21, 6'2", 160 lbs. brown hair, hazel eyes, 7" cock.

What are your sexual preferences?

Are you kidding? Are you cute?

Here's a picture — don't read the inscription.

I didn't read the inscription. Is it recent and faithful? School pictures tend to be half airbrush.

Yes, it is recent and faithful. My complexion is very clear. The only difference is that I'm not as tan as I was last October. Are you groovy?

Yes, I'm groovy as hell — has your hair grown? Which college are you in?

Yes, my hair is longer. I don't go to Yale. I go to Southern.

I guess that answers my next question - Have you a stack card?

Two friends of mine from Southern work here and I know they let me into the stacks because they've done it before.

I've got an apt. off campus.

Well, can we go there, assuming, of course, that I appeal to you and vice versa?

I wasn't planning a big romance, just a little reefer and lay

Yes, you had the same thought as I did, only I still don't like even a quickie with someone who is unappealing. That's all I meant.

?

?

6', 22, 7" Blue eyes.

Well, if you are that tall guy with the blond hair then you saw me walk out.

How's your meat?

My "meat" is about 6¼" long. I still know relatively little about you except age, size, etc.

I am a woman of mystery — some find me beautiful.

You sound a little strung out and you have managed to evade all my questions.

To remain elusive is to generate attention.

How profound — but I'm afraid you have lost mine.

?

?

Do you have a stack pass?

Yes.

Do you want to get sucked or suck?

In the stacks?

In the john up in the stacks, 6th floor, next to the elevator.

3M or 5M — leave the door unlocked — I'll come strip you and eat it all: balls, cock and cream!

You don't know what I even look like.

That's ok. You don't either. I'm 32, 5'11", 175, 7½" Very sexy. You?

22, 6'2", 8½" and handsome. But I don't like the idea of the stacks. I don't know the johns up there.

Believe me, it's great. Private — it locks — and no interruptions. I can do you till you shoot your load.

You can't kiss me and I won't reciprocate at all.

OK. Let me reach under and feel it.

Howdy!

Spoken like a true westerner.

It's purely illusory — I'm from Boston.

I don't hold it against you — let's fuck.

The hole's not big enough.

Well, we could sit here and pass notes all night.

Pretty boring — any ideas?

Yes, shall we rendezvous in 30 seconds in the main lobby?

Two such wits should get together.

What do you like?

What do you do?

Get sucked and suck — and you?

I even eat shit.

You sound full enough of it!

I really did last night for the first time, you cocky S.O.B.

O.K., O.K. I believe you. Do you want your cock sucked or what?

What do you dig?

I've got 7" I like fucking nice willing ass.

Let me see it thru hole.

Want to feel it slide up inside you? Do you have a place?

Let me feel it with my hand first.

Interested?

Describe yourself.

24, 5'9", 155 lbs., Dark Hair. You?

32 yrs old, 5½", 6'5" tall, 145 lb. Balding.

You may not be my type but mainly because I'm not too turned on by very tall thin guys.

Do you like underwear?

Just to prevent my cock from rubbing against my pants.

I mean lady's.

No. I dig fucking, enemas, dildoes and especially groups.

Do you like to give enemas?

Yes.

Do you have a bag?

No, I'm just visiting in town.

You see I only like to have them forced on me by someone using his own bag.

Sorry, no bag. I dig giving a big enema that you can just barely hold in. When you can't hold it anymore I fuck you.

In the bathtub?

Sure. What does that guy dig?

I'd like to find out.

Maybe we can have a threesome.

What's your pleasure?

Let's get married and go to the Poconos on our honeymoon.

HA HA. Well jack me off.

Where?

Not here, stupid. In the stacks.

I lent my stack pass to a civilian sissy.

So what do you propose?

This place is more popular.

Do you want me to jerk you off?

Get it ready to cum so I don't waste my breath.

Anytime.

Now

Now?

Now

Now

Now?

Blow job?

I take a long time to come. Will you rim me?

Rim?

Eat my asshole.

No, but I'll fuck it though.

Let me suck it.

No

Why?

I said NO THANKS.

This john is too small for the two of us. Go away.

Hi Hattie, Shit in my mouth?

How much do you pay?

Show it

Go away you pervert.

What's the other one like?

He seems cute.

You can't tell by the feet.

I saw part of his face.

Reach under.

What time is it?

Let's go for a drink.

OK

A DAY FOR A LAY

by W.H. Auden

[This erotic gay poem by the late W.H. Auden has circulated underground in manuscript form for several years. It was finally published in Avant-Garde magazine. We print it here to make it fully accessible to gay readers. A short appreciation of W.H. Auden, who died in late 1973, appeared in Gay Sunshine No. 20.]

He put down his glass and stretched his bare arm along
The back of the sofa. The afternoon sunlight struck
The blond hairs on the wrist near my head. His chin was strong
His mouth sucky. I could hardly believe my luck.

It was a spring day, a day for a lay, when the air
smelled like a locker room, a day to blow or get blown;
Returning from lunch I turned my corner and there on the near-by
Step I saw him standing alone.

I glanced as I advanced. The clean white T-shirt outlined
A forceful torso; the light-blue denims divulged
Much. I observed the snug curves where they hugged
the behind
I watched the crotch where the crotch intriguingly bulged.

Our eyes met. I felt sick. My knees turned weak.
I couldn't move. I didn't know what to say.
In a blur I heard the words, myself like a stranger speak
Will you come to my room? Then a husky voice, "O.K."

I produced some beer and we talked. Like a little boy
He told me his story. Present address: next door.
Half Polish, half Irish. The youngest. From Illinois.
Profession: mechanic. Name: Bud. Age: 24.

And here he was, sitting beside me, legs apart.
I could bear it no longer. I touched the inside of his thigh.
His reply was to move it closer. I trembled, my heart
Thumped and jumped as my fingers went to his fly.

I opened a gap in the flap. I went in there.
I sought for a slit in the gripper shorts that had charge
Of the basket I asked for. I came to warm flesh, then to hair
I went in. I found what I hoped, I groped. It was large.

He responded to fondling in a charming, disarming way.
Without a word he unbuckled his belt while I felt, and lolled
Back, stretching his legs. His pants fell away
Carefully drawing it out, I beheld what I held.

The circumcised head was a work of mastercraft
With perfectly bevelled rim, of unusual weight
And the friendliest red. Even relaxed the shaft
Was of noble dimensions with the wrinkles that indicate

Singular powers of extension. For a second or two
It lay there inert, then it suddenly stirred in my hand,
Then paused as if frightened or doubtful of what to do.
Then with a violent jerk began to expand.

By soundless bounds it extended and distended. By quick
Great leaps it rose. It flushed to its full size,
Nearly nine inches long and three inches thick,
A royal column, ineffably solemn and wise.

I tested its length and strength with a manual squeeze,
I bunched my fingers and twirled them about the knob,
I stroked it from top to bottom. I got on my knees.
I lowered my head. I opened my mouth for the job.

But he pushed me gently away. He bent down. He unlaced his shoes.
He removed his socks. Stood up, Shed his pants altogether.
Muscles in arms and waist
Rippled as he slipped his T-shirt over his head.

I scanned his tan, enjoying the contrast of brown
Trunk against white shorts taut around small
Hips. With a dig and a wriggle he peeled them down.
I tore off my clothes. He faced me smiling. I saw all.

The gorgeous organ stood stiffly and straightly out
With a slight flare upwards. At each beat of his heart it threw
An odd little nod my way. From the slot of the spout
Exuded a drop of transparent viscous goo.

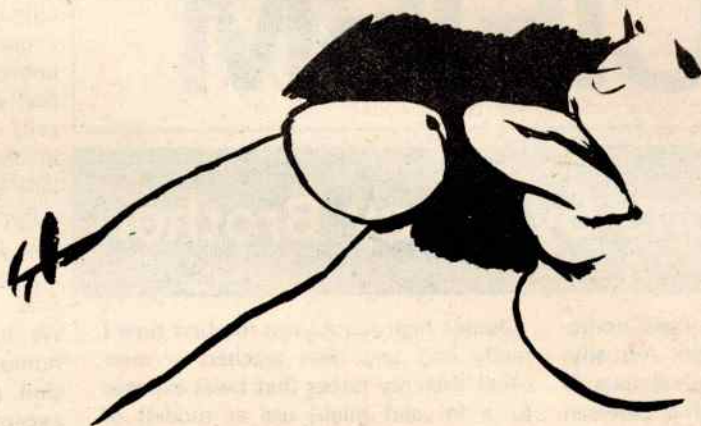
The lair of hair was fair, the groove of a young man,
A tangle of whorls and curls, luxuriant but couth.
Except for a spur of golden hairs that fan
To the heat navel, the rest of the belly was smooth.

Well-hung, slung from the fork of the muscular legs,
The firm vase of his sperm like a bulging pear,
Cradling its handsome glands, two herculean eggs,
Swung as he came towards me, shameless, bare.

We aligned mouths. We entwined. All act was clutch,
All fact contact, the attack and the interlock
Of tongues, the charms of arms. I shook at the touch
Of his fresh flesh, I rocked at the shock of his cock.

Straddling my legs a little, I inserted his divine
Person between and closed as tight as I could.
The upright warmth of his belly lay all along mine.
Nude, glued together, for a minute we stood.

I stroked the lobes of his ears, the back of his head
And the broad shoulders. I took hold of the compact globes of his
Bottom. We tottered. He fell on the bed.
Lips parted, eyes closed, he lay there ripe for the act.



BRAINARD - 70

Mad to be had, to be felt, to be smelled. My lips
Explored the adorable masculine tits. My eyes
Assessed the chest. I caressed the athletic hips
And the slim limbs. I approved the grooves of the thighs.

I hugged. I snuggled into an armpit. I sniffed
The subtle whiff of its tuft, I lapped up the taste
Of its hot hollow. My fingers began to drift
On a trek of inspection, a leisurely tour of the waist.

Downward in narrowing circles they playfully strayed
Encroaching on his privates like poachers, approached
the prick
But teasingly swerved, retreated from meeting. It betrayed
Its pleading need by a pretty imploring kick.

"Shall I rim you?" I whispered. He shifted his limbs
in assent.
Turned on his side and opened his legs. Let me pass
To the dark parts behind. I kissed as I went
The great thick cord that ran from his balls to his arse.

Prying his buttocks aside, I nosed my way in
Down the shaggy slopes. I came to the puckered goat.
It was quick to my licking. He pressed his crotch to my chin
His thighs squirmed as my tongue wormed in his hole.

His sensations yearned for consummation. He untucked
His legs and lay panting, hot as a teen-age boy,
Naked, enlarged, aching to get sucked.
Clawing the sheet. All his pores open to joy.

I inspected his erection. I surveyed his parts with a stare
From scrotum level. Sighting along the underside
Of his cock, I looked through the forest of pubic hair
To the range of his chest beyond, rising lofty and wide.

I admired the texture, the delicate wrinkles and the neat
Sutures of the capacious bag. I adored the grace
Of the male genitalia. I raised the delicious meat
Up to my mouth, brought the face of it hard onto my face.

Slipping my lips round the byzantine dome of the head
With the tip of my tongue I caressed the sensitive groove.
He thrilled to the trill. "That's lovely!" he hoarsely said.
"Go on! Go on!" Very slowly I started to move.

Gently, intently, I slid to the massive base
Of his tower of power, paused a moment down there
In the warm moist thicket, then began to retrace
Inch by inch the smooth way to the throbbing crown.

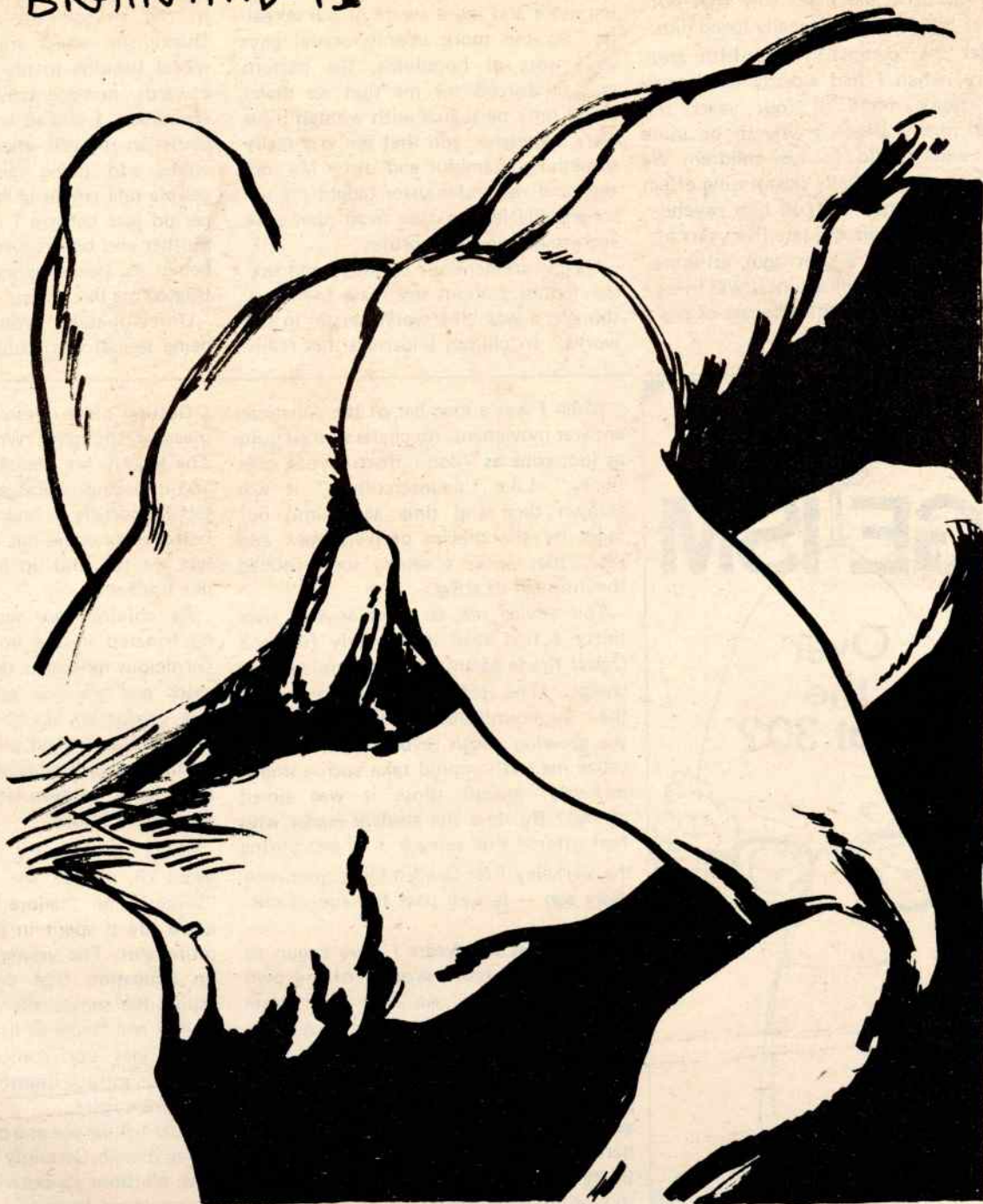
In dwelling excitements swelling at delights to come
As I descended and ascended those thick distended walls
I grasped his root between forefinger and thumb
And with my right hand tickled his heavy, voluminous balls.

I plunged with rhythmical lunge steady and slow,
And at every stroke made a corkscrew roll with my tongue.
His soul reeled in the feeling. He whimpered, "Oh!"
As I tongued and squeezed and rolled and tickled and swung.

Then I pressed on the spot where the groin is joined
to the cock.
Slipped a finger in his arse and massaged him from inside.
The secret juices of his body began to unlock.
He melted into what he felt. "Oh Jesus!" he cried.

Waves of immeasurable pleasure mounted his member in quick
Spasms. I lay still in the notch of his crotch inhaling his sweat.
His ring convulsed round my finger. Into me, rich and thick,
His hot spunk spouted in gouts, spurted in, jet after jet.

BRAINARD-73



PACIFISM

Observations by a Gay Brother

The question is: how are male homosexuality and pacifism related. Actually, the answer should be fairly obvious in view of the close relationship between traditional "masculinity," aggressive sexuality and violence. The stereotype of passive faggots standing around in gay bars waiting for their Prince Charming is all too well known. When I go into gay bars, I find myself, too, behaving in that pattern of the "passive faggot." Thus I generally can't stand to go to a gay bar where I don't know anyone. What I have been trying to do these past few months has been to come to an understanding of how this passivity and gentleness in my personality is related to my political stance of semi-pacifism and anarchism; and how this prevalent quality in so many gay men might be channeled as a liberating force in exposing society to an alternative from the typical straight male behavior pattern. Maybe by describing my long and continuing struggle, I may shed some light on this subject.

I was raised in a middle-class family with lots of religion. All of us kids learned quite young to love our religious mother and to hate our worldly father. Sexuality and aggressiveness seemed mainly in our father's sphere as well as being in touch with the world outside the home. Our mother, of course, was oppressed by her domineering husband, and we soon learned some of her methods of passive resistance to him. Since he had complete financial control (power to withhold our allowances) and physical power (he spanked us frequently), our number one weapon was to withhold all love and to rejoice whenever he felt embarrassed or miserable. We also constantly ridiculed him behind his back and made sure that not one of his six kids ever really loved him.

After my parents' twenty-fifth anniversary, when I had already lived away from home three or four years, my father finally began trying to be more open and candid to his children. We began to see the really devastating effect our hostility had had on him psychologically. He spent the last five years of his life (he died a year ago) drinking very heavily. His unhappiness was living proof to me of the effectiveness of passive resistance against a tyrant.

Junior high school was the first time I really had any men teachers — men other than my father that I was exposed to a lot and might use as models of adult masculinity. The principal of our school was an uptight, petty fascist and adult masculinity. The principal of our school was an uptight, petty fascist and also a sanctimonious Southern Baptist who read the Bible over the intercom every morning. Any boy who came to school in jeans or without a belt faced public humiliation by this man for breaking the dress code.

The gym teacher was more overt in his sadism. Boys were constantly getting "paddled" in gym classes for the most petty offenses. The teacher also encouraged older, more athletic boys (his favorites) to help control the weaker, smaller, or more nervous and less athletic ones like me. My friends and I preserved a small amount of self-respect by ridiculing those two dictators behind their backs.

The male music teacher was also a powerful influence on me in junior high; but for some reason I discounted him as a model of masculinity. He had no power in the school hierarchy. I imitated him somewhat, but it didn't make me feel very sexually attractive. His position seemed hopelessly "unmasculine" — teaching classes of mainly girls and acting so comfortably around them. When I thought of being sexual with girls, I felt uncomfortable and dirty — not able to make light jokes the way the music teacher did. The fact that he was married and had four kids still didn't help.

Junior high, of course, was also the time that my friends and I were becoming more and more aware of our sexuality. As the more openly sexual guys were sort of hoodlums, the pattern was reinforced for me that we males could only be sexual with women if we were aggressive, and that sex was really something shameful and dirty. My mother and my older sister taught me unforgettable lessons that most men were aggressive, oversexed brutes.

Having tremendous curiosity and sexual fantasies about my male friends, I thought I was "the worst person in the world." In church I learned that really

"pure" people suppressed their sexual urges. I did mutual masturbation with a couple of "wild" friends, who weren't a part of the intellectual crowd I generally hung around with. I soon learned that such behavior was homosexual and evil, and I'd better suppress it and get involved with girls if I wanted to be socially acceptable.

For a couple of years in high school I had an extremely close friendship with a guy who, like me, had no desire to get into the scene of dating and going. We had an unspoken agreement that homosexuality was out of the question, and we never mentioned sexuality except in the most oblique fashion. We worked hard at being cool and unemotional, even though we were very deeply attached to each other. Our relationship ended when I moved during my junior year.

I couldn't stand all the complacent, bourgeois people in the high schools I went to. I was very anxious to get high grades and go to a "good" college which thought was the key to becoming a respected adult. I held down my rebelliousness at school and was only creative and nonconformist after school hours. (Several years later, when I found myself in jail for awhile, I realized that I had really related to high school teachers as jailers.) My father was very uncomfortable with my nonconformity which made me love that part of myself even more. In my new high school, during my senior year, I became extremely close to another guy and soon realized that I was sexually attracted to him. That scared me so much that I began suppressing my homosexual feelings very consciously. I got involved in the civil rights movement, which seemed to be a way to be gentle and loving but still a masculine "hero."

At age 19, in 1964, I sent back my draft card, declaring I was willing to go to prison to show my opposition to the government, war, and the draft. I decided that I was an absolute pacifist, opposed to physical means of self-defense and even, in most cases, to raising my voice in anger. I had learned a lot from people who had done civil rights work in the South and had used non-violent methods in the struggle there. I was also into Quakerism, which reinforced and gave moral backing to my natural tendencies towards non-aggressiveness and passive resistance. I picked up the more or less Christian rhetoric about loving one's enemies and being gentle and kind to people one comes in contact with. In the period just before I went to prison, my mother and others were proud of me for being so peace-loving and gentle and treated me like a hero.

Unfortunately, women I thought of being sexual with told me that I wasn't

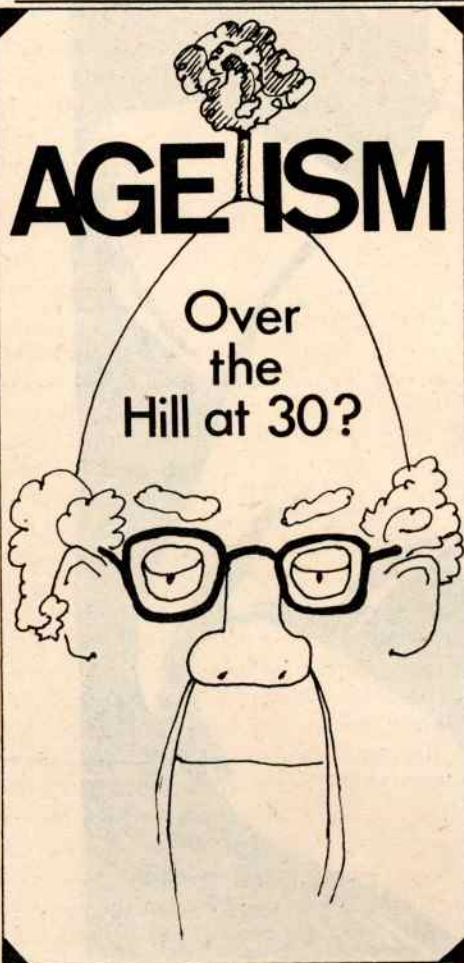
very masculine or sexually appealing. This fit in with the rest of my personality, since I equated masculinity with aggressiveness; nevertheless, it upset me to be so sexless. Some people called me "a faggot" for my very warm and close relationships with a couple of my male friends. I did feel sexual urges towards them, but I told myself that homosexuality was out of the question. No one would respect my political stands if I was gay, and it would wreck my image of being so moral.

I had a couple of sexual relationships with women who were the more active, aggressive partners in the relationship. My first real rebellion against heterosexual sex roles came at this time. I told my women friends that as a pacifist I didn't believe in violent defense against assault. I felt anyone who wanted to be defended should learn to defend herself, and I didn't want to have to defend women just because I was a man. One woman got pretty uptight about this; but my second girlfriend took it in stride and continued to look on me as a moral, masculine hero.

When a woman actually was attacked by a man near our house in the slums, my friends and I went running out to see what we could do. But just our presence frightened the man away, so we didn't have any confrontation. I was very upset but didn't question my pacifist beliefs. (After all, I didn't feel I was in danger of rape, being a man.)

When I got to prison, I thought I could continue being warm and affectionate towards other men just as I had been "on the street." That lasted just about a week, and then I began to run into trouble. A fairly gentle guy made some passes at me, saying that I turned him on sexually. I said I wouldn't have sex with him at this time in my life but it wasn't inconceivable at some future time. I thought I had impeccable heterosexual "credentials" since I had a steady girlfriend that I was supposedly in love with, and my friends on the outside felt I was a brave hero to be in prison. But several more guys also made passes at me. Finally, one of them maneuvered me into a locked room alone with him, where he raped me. I didn't know at all how to defend myself even if I had wanted to; but I felt my pacifist beliefs meant I shouldn't resist any attack. I was very freaked out and depressed by the whole thing. Someone rattled to the guards, and my attacker went to "the hole" — severe punishment status — while I was put in protective custody for four weeks.

After that I was sent to a different prison, at Petersburg, Virginia. There, too, I started out trying to be kind and gentle. Right away people started making passes at me again and saying that if I really wouldn't fight back, they would



When I was a member of the American antiwar movement, no cliché seemed quite as ludicrous as "don't trust anyone over thirty." Like "counterculture" it was thrown time and time again into our faces by the oracles of *Newsweek* and *Life*, that sheer triteness soon robbed the insult of its sting.

This advice not to trust anyone over thirty I first read in an early *Reader's Digest* tirade against those commie peace-creeper. (The patronizing monotony of their pronouncements on Vietnam and the growing youth revolt helped to radicalize me.) Who could take such a slogan seriously, except those it was aimed against? By now the student leader who first uttered that remark — in jest during the Berkeley Free Speech Movement nine years ago — is well past the age of mistrust.

In the last few years I have begun to face the inexorable process of my own aging. (Perhaps it was after Kent State that I first noticed.) At twenty-five I certainly *feel* older than I once did. It is pointless to bemoan the inevitable; age gives the promise of further growth, just as it brings deterioration and death. A part of me looks forward to turning thirty — and someday I hope I can look forward to being fifty.

Getting older doesn't conjure up many pleasant thoughts. What a drag it is.... The elderly are condemned to loneliness and uselessness because they are no longer self-supporting economic units. We had better re-examine our myths about aging, lest we too end up on the park bench, like bookends.

As children we were thoroughly indoctrinated in the importance of those pernicious mileposts that are supposed to mark our growing up: kindergarten at five, graduation at eighteen, independence at twenty-one. And we learn that no one is considered capable of full responsibility until forty, or even later. Gratification is well in the future.

Life's energies are focused upon the years of middle age, which determine "success" or "failure." More than half one's life is spent in preparation and in retirement. The young must waste years on education that conservatizes as it blunts the senses; the old are abandoned to the rest home as irrelevant old fogies. Thus does our consumer, achievement-oriented society disenfranchise these two large minorities.

Establishing age as a qualification carries its own logic. Certainly it can be defended with allusions to experience, but I remain unconvinced because I sense a hoax. In-

stead of living life as it comes and for its own sake, we are forced to a schedule, meeting deadlines that bracket our life's work. By the time the rat race is over at 65, we will be too exhausted to enjoy what little is left.

If we really believed that age brought wisdom, we would not treat the old with the cruelty that we do. They would not be a burden, an embarrassment, or a drain on our resources. We would honor them and try to learn from their lives. It is no accident that the Vietnamese called Ho Chi Minh "Uncle Ho," for "uncle" is their highest term of endearment toward the elderly.

But we who suffer the rootlessness of our modern age fear and despise the old. They are too uncomfortable a reflection of ourselves forty or fifty years hence. We recoil in horror at the image of our decrepitude. This culture's preoccupation with youth encourages us to project our insecurity upon these much abused scapegoats.

The cosmetics industry has profited handsomely by exploiting the anxieties of aging. Millions of people are desperate to seize the semblance of youth, if not its substance. They are deluding themselves. Like the "gorgeous gal" Joe Buck encounters in *Midnight Cowboy*,

soon rape me. I got very paranoid and told myself that I'd better try to act masculine if I wanted to stay out of trouble. To be masculine was to be cold and distant toward everyone and afraid of too much closeness. I felt people were constantly objectifying me sexually, and I trusted no one at all during the first month I was there. Since guards were around constantly, I was never attacked and didn't have to confront my pacifist beliefs too thoroughly.

I was in prison for a year and learned a tremendous amount about men, masculine behavior, and my relationship to the whole thing. I kept on hating violence and favoring peaceful reconciliation, more on pragmatic grounds than from fear. I found very little support for my gentle behavior. Everyone was boastful and aggressive in order to prove his masculinity. Those who weren't were secretly whispered to be "faggots." Some inmates openly imitated "feminine" behavior and sometimes prostituted themselves sexually to horny straight men. The prison stereotype was that they did it because they were weak, or else to get presents. I once told a prejudiced Jehovah's Witness friend that the masculine stereotype was so oppressive that I could see why some people would rebel against it to that extent; but most of the time I pretended that I couldn't understand those guys any better than anyone else could. I avoided all gay inmates socially like the plague, wanting to demonstrate to the aggressive male chauvinist majority that I wasn't a drag queen and would never be forced into prostitution.

After I had been seven or eight months in prison, my reputation seemed safe and I was no longer afraid of gay inmates. Also, around the same time I got a strong exposure to anarchist philosophy and I discovered that one doesn't have to be a pacifist "martyr" in order to oppose the draft and the military. I felt very liberated after I decided that in the future I would try to defend myself if sexually assaulted.

Then I became fairly good friends with a gay inmate who was not a drag queen. I was subconsciously aware of a strong identification with him in his rebellion against all the masculine behavior patterns in the prison. Unfortunately, soon both he and I went home on parole and I never saw him again. I never lost my terror of what it would be like to be gay in prison. By the end of the year, my gay feelings were still buried very deep, although I kept on being gentle and emotionally passive.

After prison, I hated men and masculinity very much. It was a real relief to relate closely to women and not have to pay attention to men. Within a year after my release from prison, I was having a sexual-emotional relationship with a woman which lasted four years.

In that relationship I came to see more clearly than ever how male sexuality is extremely bound up with aggressiveness, competence and boastfulness. All these are qualities I hate and have always struggled against in myself. The social expectations that people had of us because we were married (and later, parents) were all right for awhile (good for my ego to the superior half of the couple). But as time went on, my partner Jenny criticized my "inadequacies" more and more so that eventually the situation was intolerable. She really wanted to be "a wife" and have me be "a husband," even though she never liked the implications those roles had in our sex life. She was sort of confused, too, and enjoyed the lack of rigid roles in our behavior. But she said she couldn't have much respect for me as a person as long as I was unwilling to compete with the other men around.

I continued to have a strong, suppressed need to relate on a deep emotional, sexual level with other men like myself. In the later parts of my marriage to Jenny, I found a lot of joy in one gay relationship, but that was unfortunately with a guy 500 miles away. I was much too shy and insecure to relate to the highly sexualized bar scene. But then my friend told me there was a gay liberation movement with other freaks like myself. As soon as I made contact with the nearest Gay Liberation Front, I knew that it was time for me to stop playing sick games in my head. So at age 26, I finally came out of the closet simultaneously with leaving my marriage. It's been almost three years since then, and I've felt steadily more and more whole, in touch with myself, and glad for my gay identity.

A major aspect of sexual politics in this society seems to be that many women really don't enjoy having sex with men. Men are expected to be constantly horny and aggressively trying to persuade women to give in and have sex. I hate trying to persuade someone to do something she really doesn't want to do, or which will involve putting herself in a subordinate position to me. I feel much more positive and loving towards women since I haven't been trying to maneuver any of them into bed.

My growing contact with the women's movement has been a contributing factor in my abandonment of absolute pacifism. I was in danger of rape only when I was in prison, but women are in danger whenever they try to go anywhere alone. It seems like a real waste to me, to undergo humiliation and physical brutality or injury simply for an extreme ideal like refusing to defend oneself. I'm glad to hear about women learning self-defense. I know there are some nonviolent methods of self-defense and disarming one's attacker through love or not being afraid. But I

wonder how effective they are.

However, I'm still very much against war and nearly all organized violent defense that so often gets tangled up with the male role. Men always get so ego-involved in their ability to defend their mothers, their sisters, and their wives and families (not to mention their rich suburban homes and flashy cars or some expensive apartment in a high-rise just a mile away from the slums). I think poorer people have a perfect right to rob rich people. Here, too, sensitivity to suffering has often been considered part of "women's sphere." The image is of bourgeois housewives doing volunteer social work while their husbands are off competing in the marketplace and commuting past the slums; and the bourgeois children are "teacher's pets" in school while the poorer kids get constantly insulted by the teacher.

My ideal is still for constant conciliatory efforts, trying to defuse hostility and violent confrontations by bringing unfair or unreasonable situations out into the open before they reach the exploding point. But the whole middle-class "American Way of Life" is totally based on such inequalities. Oppression of gay people is just one more of those absurdly unreasonable situations that must be brought into the consciousness of straight people. Here, of course, I'm no longer talking abstractly about some other group but about myself and the brothers and sisters I love so much. So what I say and do is more likely to provoke people than was the case in my earlier political struggles.

Dealing with my own personal violence and feelings of hostility, I find that I feel much less frustrated and violent as I love myself more. I can love myself more as I've learned to deeply love others with a gay consciousness like mine. And I feel still better as I am able to be more open about my love and be accepted by straight people that I associate with. Then maybe I wouldn't have to suppress my violent feelings but instead would never feel them in the first place. Fighting against injustice is fighting for an ideal world where violent measures would not be such a temptation.

Gayness is not just sex! It's a peculiar state of mind that I carry around with me constantly — trying to respond lovingly to the beauty and gentleness in my brothers, and to bring out the gentleness in those who hide behind facades of gruffness. It's clear to me that only by being more and more gentle and unmasculine can we men cut down on our oppression of women and the consequent hatred of ourselves who act like gross, violent, frustrated, unloveable brutes.

— Jeff Keith

Review

Red Midnight Moon by Robert Peters. Empty Elevator Shaft Press, P.O. Box 27004, San Francisco, Ca. 94127. 1973

Reviewed by Louie Crew

Robert Peters is a craftsman with a heart. His latest chapbook is a delicious sampler of rich, personal moods. At least half of the thirteen polished poems celebrate efforts to reach out to another person. Sometimes the reaching out is admittedly tentative:

*like an irate mouse
kept from its nest
part of myself
hides from you.
I've not done well.
please understand....*

The reaching is frequently urgent:

*this force of selves
struggling
engenders sanity.*

Even when Peters complains of failure to communicate, his complaint defines the vitality of the act that has failed:

*....Why don't
these messages get through?
there is glue in the mailbox
it will stay, until we are old
and can't see, can't recall
the shrill nerve of this night
twilight, fraught.*

Peters' poetry is extremely tactile at the same time that it is very visual. He is fond of nettles, fur and mud. In *Red Midnight Moon* perhaps his most recurring figure is synesthetically the human eye, which both sees and is itself tactilely vulnerable. In the title poem the speaker strikes his eye with a blade of glass silver from the moonlight. In another, a lover's "eye absorbs light." In "so it goes," perhaps the most erotic in this collection, the naked eye eroticized is the means of fulfillment:

*eyelids
like rose petals, stroke
a lid, stroke a rose
lightly with the
pad of the finger,
let the eye close,
let the lid fall
softly shut, feel
it, loving it....*

In another poem, despair becomes "light slashing the retina." Peters constantly reminds that insight costs pain.

Red Midnight Moon is a handsome book, imaginatively printed in white on black pages, tastefully covered in midnight red. My lover and I like reading it late at night in the Georgia pecan orchards.

the facade is only as genuine as the wig and the false eyelashes. Self pity and self contempt are not far beneath the surface.

Preoccupation with aging fulfills its own prophecy. Of course, we all know that anxiety hastens physical degeneration. But I refer to the psychological — and spiritual — jading that is more common a consequence. Such people are bound to be oppressive. Like one acquaintance who would lie compulsively about his age and harp on his appearance, even though he was only thirty and still good-looking.

Remember *The Boys in the Band*? The obsession everyone had with growing old and losing his looks? Or the advertisements for hair transplants and facials that dot the pages of *After Dark*? In the gay ghetto what matters most is sheer physical attractiveness. A recent bath ad in *The Advocate* couldn't have put it more bluntly: "Beauty is only skin deep — and that's deep enough."

Several years ago, cruising in a YMCA, I refused the advances of an older man, who muttered at me, "You have hurt poor Mary." I didn't know whether to snicker or to scream. He was at once ludicrous and pathetic, part of a gay scene with which I had little in common.

Yet he was too painful a vision of my deepest fears to dismiss from my mind.

I had another, more painful experience shortly afterward, when I visited a friend whom I hadn't seen in a long time. Much to my horror I discovered that he was blindly in love with me, worshipping me because I was half his age, insisting that I be his lover. When I tried to explain that I did not want this kind of adoration, he became extremely defensive. He demanded to know whether anyone had ever loved me as much as he did. There was no way we would communicate and the relationship ended.

Both times my "youth" had made me the object of someone else's desires. In neither case could I accept the distorted image of myself that I saw reflected in their eyes. Whatever their motives, I was hurt and angered that my feelings weren't considered. (The absurdity of placing such importance on my age had already been demonstrated by a roommate who would taunt me because I was several years older.)

No doubt my own age-ism prevented me from handling these incidents any better than I did. Ever since childhood I have found it difficult to view older men as sexual beings — except for those people my parents warned me against, who per-

verted little boys. Alas, I never had the luck to be seduced. It might have made coming out much easier. That old admonition against taking rides from strangers, sure enough, still finds a response when I am propositioned while hitchhiking.

The recent discovery of the murder of the thirty-odd boys in Houston, Texas, again reveals the widespread extent of misinformation and prejudice. Dean Allen Corll was undoubtedly a pathetic, twisted man. Had he chosen to butcher women, however, few newspapers would have described him as a "heterosexual sadist" or "heterosexual mass murderer." Referring to his homosexuality without emphasizing the true aberrance of his behavior plays upon the severe homophobia that infects Anglo-American society.

But there wasn't much intelligent discussion. Homosexuality and pederasty were both commonly confused with homicide. To many, I am sure, Corll was an object lesson of the dirty old man who lusts after boys. Misquoting a Baylor University clinical psychologist in a telephone interview, United Press laid it all to "the syndrome of homosexuality, sexual abuse, and eventual homicide." Trust a neanderthal like Jeffrey St. John, on CBS radio, to blame the killings on gay

lib and its "revolt from male biology."

Cashing in on the hysteria, Dallas police soon announced the uncovering of a nationwide "boy prostitution ring." A self-righteous *Newsweek* rhapsodized at length about the "possible links to Corll [that] added one last layer of depravity to the whole case." Only toward the end did the article admit, deviously, that the two stories were unconnected!

Should we be surprised by this performance? Most people would find inconceivable the suggestion that Corll's victims and the boys in this "ring" may have acted willingly. Just as it is inconceivable that boys often seek out older men for sex. Even those liberals who like to Tolerate homosexuals break down into irrationality at the thought of adolescents enjoying sodomy.

The law is equally adamant. In Canada, Great Britain, and in the few American states that have eliminated penalties against homosexual acts, legalization applies only to consenting adults. Those under twenty-one are accorded no sexual rights. Any adult found with a minor is likely to receive harsh punishment, no matter what the facts of the situation.

There is a "link" between the murders in Houston and the call-boy operation in

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HARD GEMLIKE FLAME

Walter Pater & his Circle

[Ed. Note: Walter Horatio Pater (1839-1894), English critic and essayist, celebrated for the fastidious delicacy of his style, was born in London. Educated at Queen's College, Oxford, he settled in Oxford and tutored with private pupils. In 1864 he was elected to a fellowship at Brasenose College. Pater then began to write for the reviews, and his essays on Leonardo da Vinci, Botticelli, Pico della Mirandola, and Michelangelo, with others of the same kind, were collected in 1873 as *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (later called simply *The Renaissance*). The volume had a Conclusion which promulgated a sort of aesthetic gospel. The Conclusion reads (in part): "...The service of philosophy, of speculative culture towards the human spirit is to rouse, to startle it into sharp and eager observation. Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive to us, — for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic, life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen

in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?

"To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life....While all melts under our feet, we may well catch at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening. With this sense of the splendour of our experience and of its awful brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch. What we have to do is to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy of Comte or of Hegel, or of our own...."

"Well! we are all condemned, as Victor Hugo says: we are all under sentence of death but with a sort of indefinite reprieve — *les hommes sont tous condamnés*

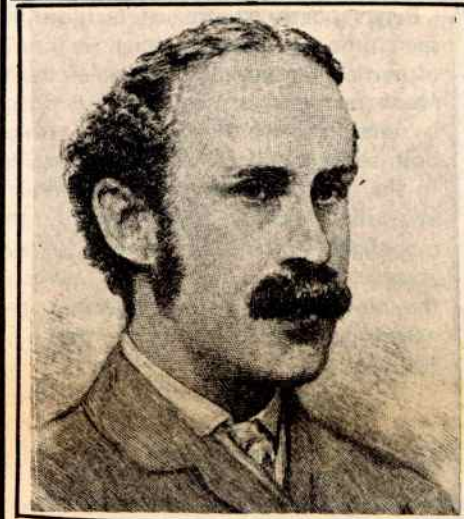
a mort avec des sursis indéfinis: we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest, at least among "the children of this world," in art and song. For our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time. Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrows of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which come naturally to many of us. Only be sure it is passion — that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of this wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake, has most; for art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake."

The publication of this volume made Pater the centre of a small group in Oxford. He had relations with the Pre-Raphaelites, of whom he was to some extent the heir, and he began to insinuate something of their spirit into his academic world. By the time *Marius the Epicurean* appeared in 1885 he had a following of disciples. *Marius* is his most substantial work. It is a romance of ideas in which

Pater's ideal of an aesthetic and religious life is elaborately set forth. *Imaginary Portraits* (1887) are shorter pieces of philosophical fiction in the same mode. *Appreciations* (1889) is a return to the critical essay. In 1893 came *Plato and Platonism*, a literary view of Plato. Pater's *Greek Studies* (1895), *Miscellaneous Studies* (1895) and *Essays from The Guardian* (1896) were published posthumously; also his unfinished romance *Gaston de Latour* (1896).

His life was almost all spent in Oxford, and he died there in 1894. Pater wrote with difficulty, correcting and re-correcting with infinite care. There is a reserve and reticence about his writing, maintained also in his personal life. The primary influence on his mind was his classical study, colored by a highly individual kind of Christianity, pursued largely as a source of refined artistic sensations. Oscar Wilde, George Moore, and the aesthetes of the 1890's were among his followers.

The following essay, written especially for *Gay Sunshine* by Rictor Norton, deals with Pater's personal life, specifically with his homosexuality.]



Walter Pater

In a remarkable anecdote, Frank Harris records that during a visit with Walter Pater at Brasenose College, Pater "seemed at times half to realize his own deficiency: 'Had I so-and-so's courage and hardihood,' he cried once, 'I'd have —.' Suddenly the mood changed, the light in his eyes died out, the head drooped forward again, and with a half-smile he added, 'I might have been a criminal — heh, heh,' and he moved with little careful steps across the room to his chair, and sat down."

Could Walter Pater — one of the most influential art critics in English history — have been a criminal? His more conventional contemporaries regarded his aesthetic vision as the product of an immoral imagination, and in this respect he was certainly a criminal in the field of art. One wonders about his life as well, though, of course, like Jean Genet, Pater would have been a saintly criminal, an archetypal high priest — dressed in robes of saffron, with purple grapes pressing against his pale temples — officiating at a sacred ritual of, say, castration. He would no doubt have admired the delicate crescent blade wielded by the transvestite priests of Cybele, the Phrygian goddess of frenzy and voluptuous languor. An orgiastic dream may well lie beneath the hard surface of Pater's gemlike flame.

If we look at Pater outside the context of the schoolbooks — look at him squarely in the eyes as a man, a poet, an aesthete, a treasurer of things foreign to English soil, rather than as the 'father' of a school of thought — we cannot, in all honesty, be quite certain that his sensibility would have blanched at perusing the Marquis de Sade's *120 Days of Sodom*. And we must bear in mind that in one of his *Greek Studies*, Pater appreciates, however coyly, not only the Divine Marquis, but also Gilles de Rais, that notorious ravisher of boys.

It is, in fact, quite probable that Walter Pater was in reality a criminal in Victorian England: i.e. a practicing homosexual.

Mark Pattison, in his diary for May 5, 1878, records that he went "to Pater's for tea, where [I saw] Oscar Browning, who was more like Socrates than ever. He conversed in one corner with 4 feminine looking youths 'paw dandling' there in one fivesome, while the Miss Paters & I sate looking on in another corner — Presently Walter Pater, who, I had been told, was 'upstairs' appeared, attended by 2 more youths of similar appearances." Query: was the threesome upstairs also 'paw-dandling'?

Surely we know what the fivesome in the corner was contemplating, for Oscar Browning three years earlier had been dismissed from his mastership at Eton under grave suspicions of pederasty. Concerning this dismissal, Pater had written to Browning in October 1875, that he was "very glad to hear, not for your own sake only but on public grounds, that you had decided not to leave Eton without a struggle." Struggle he did, but dismissed he was nevertheless — only to become a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge. The visit that Pattison described had occurred in the tenth year of the close friendship between Pater and Browning — to whom Pater had been introduced in 1868 by John Burnell Payne. It was Payne, a close friend of the homosexual artist Simeon Solomon, who drew some fine charcoal portraits of both Pater and Payne.

Walter Pater is not known to have had more than a passing acquaintance with any women except his sisters Hester and Clara (with whom he lived all his life) and Violet Paget, lesbian poetess (alias 'Vernon Lee'). Most of Pater's friends were young and handsome men and boys, many of whom, like himself, died bachelors, and many of whom were practicing homosexuals. The closest friend of his adolescence was J.R. McQueen. Unfortunately, we know little about the specific nature of their friendship other than it was "very close," for the numerous letters that Walter wrote to Mark from 1858 to 1862 were suppressed by the Miss Paters when Thomas Wright was preparing the first biography in 1907. Wright was allowed to examine some of the letters, but forbidden to quote directly or to paraphrase too closely their contents. But the half-words that remain in his biography suggest an intimacy that it would have been impolite to have delved into in 1907. The letters have since been destroyed.

The closest friend of Pater's adult life was Charles Lancelot Shadwell (born in 1840, one year Pater's junior), who became Pater's private pupil at Christ Church College in 1863. In 1864 Pater published *Diaphaneite*, modelled upon Shadwell's rare spirit, a portrait of an ethereal youth. In the summer of 1865, Pater and Shadwell, master and pupil, together toured Italy — Ravenna, Pisa, Florence — without the company of Clara and Hester. Shadwell spent nearly his entire life studiously engaged in painstaking research into the history of Oriell College, Oxford, of which he was a Fellow and later became Provost. He is the "C.L.S." to whom Pater dedicated his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* in 1873. Shadwell died in 1919, a bachelor.

Rupert Croft-Cooke, in his book *Feasting with Panthers*, tells of two close male friendships which Pater had in the later part of his life:

"In 1877, when Pater was a year or two short of forty, that dangerous age at which Wilde met Alfred Douglas, Pater met a man twelve years younger than he named Richard Jackson. Jackson believed himself a poet; he was also rich. He became devoted to Pater in a sentimental if not a passionate way and this devotion lasted for many years. [Pater's biographer] Wright believed that he was the original of Marius and in old age Jackson seemed to have claimed this quite seriously. If it is true it is shocking to know what the writings of Marius would have been like, for this is a quatrain which Jackson wrote at Pater's request as a song for his birthday —

Your darling soul I say is inflamed with love for me;
Your very eyes do move I cry with sympathy:
Your darling feet and hands are blessings ruled by love,
As forth was sent from out the Ark a turtle dove.

'I am glad to write about you,' he added, 'for owing to you my life has been enriched, its minstrelsy swelled....'

"Jackson introduced his young friends to Pater...[One of these] was Walter Blackburn Harte whom Pater first saw as an acolyte wearing a scarlet cassock in the chapel of St. Austin's. He seems to have been irresistible to all who met him, having literary ambitions and a cockney sense of humour. Pater said he had 'a darling personality' and asked him down to Oxford, but most of Harte's time was spent at Jackson's Camberwell home, for he found Pater's dull dreary rooms at Oxford 'a great disappointment.'

..A portrait shows a beautiful youth with curling lips, deep expressive eyes and a fine profile." Harte later emigrated to America and became in the 1890's a successful journalist.

We really don't know for sure that Charles Algernon Swinburne, with whom Pater became friendly in 1858, was homosexual. Swinburne is notorious for his desires to be whipped by prostitutes, but his biographers insist he hired only female prostitutes for such purposes. On one occasion, however, Swinburne asked Solomon to draw for him a set of pictures showing schoolmasters flogging boys. (These are contained in Swinburne's unpublished *Whippingham Papers*, which are locked up in the British Museum. The Trustees of the Museum will allow only Solomon's descendants to view them — but since Solomon doesn't have any descendants, one supposes they will be locked up forever.) Pater, Swinburne, and Solomon were members of The Old Mortality Club, a society for budding literati and a haven for homosexuals.

In 1861 Swinburne became acquainted with Lord Houghton, whose own collected poems contain passages not entirely heteroerotic. Swinburne borrowed from this gentleman's extensive library of erotica the complete works of the Marquis de Sade. Simeon Solomon, who at the time was residing as a guest at Fryston, Lord Houghton's country house in Yorkshire, was there introduced by Swinburne to Oscar Browning. Simeon and Oscar struck up a match, and together toured Italy in the summers of 1867, 1868 and 1869 — without the company of Swinburne.



Walter Blackburn Harte

In the early 1860's Solomon had been friends with the homosexual artist Edward Poynter, and had specially designed for him a series of homoerotic allegorical drawings. One of the better ones is a pen and ink drawing of "Love Talking to Boys," dated 1865, showing several lovely lads embracing while Eros — i.e. Cupid in an Edwardian silk waist-

coat with wings — encourages them. Most of the drawings have been lost — or locked up.

In 1865, the date of "Love Talking to Boys," Swinburne went up to Oxford and introduced his friend Pater to his friend Solomon. Solomon then and there drew a very good portrait of Pater, gave it to him, and decided to stay the night, and the next night, and the next. For the next several years he would return frequently to share Pater's rooms 'upstairs' at Brasenose, and then at London. As a measure of what Solomon's company may have been like: in 1866 he and Swinburne visited Dante Gabriel Rossetti in Cheyne Walk, and for a time disturbed Rossetti's work by chasing each other naked up and down the staircase.

Simeon Solomon (1841-1905) is often regarded as the central tragic hero-victim of the Age of Decadence. At the age of eighteen he had already exhibited a painting at the Royal Academy. This, however, was the height of his career, and his fall was slow and painful. In a letter dated August 20, 1917, Edmund Gosse (who incidentally was a repressed if not practicing homosexual; he contributed the essay on Pater for the *Dictionary of National Biography*, as well as the biography of the homosexual Renaissance poet Richard Barnfield) reminisced to Robert Ross (a close friend of Oscar Wilde) that Solomon "sometime during 1870" was threatened with legal proceeding for certain unspecified sexual activities, and that he had been forced to fly to Italy. Gosse's recollection is probably a bit faulty, for this likely refers to Solomon and Browning's hurried departure for Italy in 1869.

In 1873 Solomon was arrested for "indecently molesting" a man named Roberts in a public urinal north of Oxford Street. He was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment in Clerkenwell House of Correction, but the sentence was suspended and he was placed under the supervision of the police. In a letter dated June 6, 1873, Swinburne wrote to the Welsh squire George Powell that "I saw and spoke with a great friend of Simeon, Pater of Brasenose. Do you — I do not — know any detail of the matter at first hand? Pater, I imagine, did." In Gosse's recollection to Ross, Swinburne had dashed off to Oxford "to discuss Solomon with his [i.e. Solomon's] friend Walter Pater." We don't quite know what the discussions were, but in any event Pater was certainly informed of the facts (if he didn't know them before), and he nevertheless remained friends with Solomon for several more years, even welcoming him 'upstairs.' There is no hint in his correspondence or elsewhere that he was startled by Solomon's behavior. There is only a discreet silence.

Over the period of the next twenty-five years, Solomon got into more trouble because of sexual escapades, was imprisoned, and was incarcerated in an insane asylum by his concerned relatives. They relented and tried to arrange for him to escape, but he knew the doors had been unlocked for this purpose. So he went and locked them rather than play their game. He wasn't insane, and upon his official release he became a professional vagabond and hack artist. He sold Swinburne's erotic correspondence with him in order to make money. Every so often he returned home to get a new set of clothing, which he promptly sold and returned to his rags. For most of the remainder of his life he literally lived in the gutter, becoming a drunken pavement artist in Brompton Road and Bayswater, and selling matches and shoe-laces in Mile End Road.

Pater's masterwork, *The Renaissance*, was published in March 1873, several months after the scandal of Solomon's arrest. A number of people quietly murmured that there was an affinity between the hedonism advocated by Pater in his "Conclusion" of the study, and the pleasure-seeking of his "degenerate friend." Pater responded by suppressing the "Conclusion" in the 1877 edition, and in the 1888 edition he stated that the "Conclusion" was omitted because "it might possibly mislead some of those into whose hands it might fall."



"Love Talking to Boys," a pen and ink drawing by Simeon Solomon, 1865.

Mark Andre Raffalovich records that the art critic Sidney Colvin warned Raffalovich "to avoid making the acquaintance of men such as Walter Pater and John Addington Symonds." Symonds was generally recognized by his contemporaries as a homosexual — and this warning implies that Pater was similarly recognized. Raffalovich, himself homosexual [Ed. Note: his lover, poet John Gray, is said to have been the original model for Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Grey*] ignored Colvin's advice and became friends not only with Symonds and Pater, but with Oscar Wilde and Simeon Solomon as well.

Pater may well have been regarded by his contemporaries as a dangerous influence upon young men in the same way that Socrates was so regarded. In W.H. Mallock's *The New Republic* (1877) Pater is satirized as "Mr. Rose," who plays a role similar to that of the pederastic Pausanias in Plato's *Symposium*. The most damaging part of Mallock's satire was not his portrayal of Pater/Rose as a languid espouser of Pre-Raphaelite aestheticism, but his portrayal of Pater/Rose as a passionate apologist for *paiderastia*. Mr. Rose delivers a eulogy, for example, upon "life as a chamber, which we decorate as we would decorate the chamber of the woman or the youth [italics mine] that we love, tinting the walls of it in symphonies of subdued colour." Mr. Rose refers in passing to "the boyhood of Bathyllus" (the boyfriend of Anacreon), to "Narcissus, that soft boy," to "lean Aquinas in his cell," and to "a boy of eighteen whose education I may myself claim to have had some share in directing." Mr. Rose rises to sublime eloquence when it comes to a defense of "passionate friendship," in a passage quoted almost verbatim from Pater's own essay on the friendships of the homosexual art critic Winckelmann: "Think of the immortal dramas which history sets before us; of the keener and profounder passions which it reveals to us, of nobler mould than ours — Harmodius and Aristogeiton, Achilles and Patroclus, David and Jonathan, our English Edward [sc. *King Edward II*] and the fair Piers Gaveston, or, above, all, those two [i.e. *Socrates and Phaedrus*] by the agnus castus and the plane-tree where Ilyssus flowed."

All of these pairs of men are mentioned in Pater's own essays, and Mallock properly recognized them as homosexual pairs. Mallock's work was one of the most popular books of the day, and part of its popularity lay in people's recognition therein of the pederastic Mr. Pater. It seems more than likely that at least a hint of this suspicion lay behind a general ill-will towards Pater. His "decent" contemporaries simply refused to grant him his just rewards. In 1874, the year following Solomon's arrest, Pater was passed over for the Junior Professorship, a post which should normally have been his by right of seniority. In 1876 he was forced to withdraw his candidacy for Professorship of Poetry, because of the "immorality" of *The Renaissance* and for other reasons still unclear. In 1877 he was satirized by Mallock and almost physically shrank away in pain and hurt. In 1885 he was defeated in his candidacy

for Professorship of Fine Arts, even though he was now regarded by many as the foremost critic of fine art in his time. In fact, Pater met everywhere with a series of rebuffs and frustrations to such an extent that in the late 1870's he had noticeably developed, in the view of Laurence Evans the recent editor of his letters, "a guarded, evasive manner, a style or strategy or polite accommodation, a strategy of studied blandness."

Pater's blandness is really the perfectly composed lassitude of a fallen maenad. Nearly all of his criticism and fiction moves with the ritual frenzy of a Dionysian ceremony at whose center is the death of a beautiful boy. It is a theme with a 'dark message' that doesn't quite fit into the Gay Liberation (or even humanistic) scheme of things: but it nevertheless happens to be the central image of what might almost be called 'the homosexual aesthetics.' The theme is found not only in Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, but in a great deal of modern homosexual literature as well, with variations: Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, Tennessee Williams' *Desire and the Black Masque*, James Baldwin's *Another Country* and *Giovanni's Room*, William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, particularly Jean Genet's *Funeral Rites*, even Edward Albee's *Whose Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Sunny Jim), and Yukio Mishima's *Forbidden Colors* — in which there is a passage referring explicitly to Walter Pater. Not to mention a host of homosexual poems on the dying Adonis or Narcissus or St. Sebastian, in *Manroot* and *Gay Sunshine* as well as the early *Greek Anthology*.

In *A Study of Dionysus*, published posthumously and edited by Shadwell, Walter Pater leads us by careful insinuation and subtle seduction, from the sunny groves of Arcady to a dark glade in Thessaly where we may feast upon a fair youth. The *raison d'être* for this study is to apprehend the fullest possible meaning of a primordial fact: "That the sacred women of Dionysus [the maenads] ate, in mystical ceremony raw flesh and drank blood, to commemorate the actual sacrifice of a fair boy deliberately torn to pieces." Pater repeatedly glances the edges of the rite that he dare not name too directly. He refers, for example, to "the delicate, fresh, farm-lad we may still actually see sometimes, like a graceful field-flower among the corn," without quite acknowledging that Triptolemus, to whom this farm-lad is compared, was a corn-spirit of homosexual cannibalistic rites nearly identical with the Centipede refers to Neptune devouring the ivory-white shoulder of his boyfriend Pelops. He lusciously hints at "the dark and shameful secret society described by Livy, in which Dionysus' worship ended at Rome, afterwards abolished by solemn act of the Senate" — without explicitly mentioning that this was a homosexual secret society. Nowhere does Pater actually *come out* and tell us that his favorite deity Dionysus, whom he acknowledges was "somewhat womanly" and appealing to "feminine souls," was (and is) the most homosexual of all the gods.

Pater's praise of "virile youth" and "passionate friendship" in his studies of

The Golden Youth of Lacademon, *The Age of Athletic Prizemen*, and *Winckelmann* is a bit guarded, but nevertheless clearly homosexual. And the content of two short stories is almost explicitly homosexual — *Denys L'Auroix*, in which a Dionysus figure is literally torn to pieces, and *Apollo in Picardy*, in which a boy is accidentally killed by his lover just as Apollo killed Narcissus. These two stories are, in fact, quite bold when we realize that Genet and Burroughs had not yet taken up the theme.

We would never dare call Walter Pater a humorist, but whenever he approaches the sensuousness of beautiful boyhood with less indirection than usual, we can clearly see him camping it up; as in this description of an engraving of satyr-lads by Robetta: "Their puck noses have grown delicate, so that, with Plato's infatuated lover, you may call them winsome, if you please; and no one would wish those hairy little shanks away." It is not insignificant that Plato's "infatuated lover," as Pater very well knew from frequent perusal of his favorite work the *Phaedrus*, was not a *paederast*, but a *pederast* pure and simple. And from a perusal of John Payne Knight's *Worship of the Generative Powers* Pater equally knew that the thyrsus symbolized an erect penis and the pine cone atop it symbolized the glans. So he coyly warns us that "our fingers must beware of the thyrsus, tossed about so wantonly by Dionysus and his chorus, and that button of a pine-cone." Walter Pater, in his own way, created the camp style as much as did Oscar Wilde in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. We need to keep this in mind as we read him, to note that there is usually a sub-narrative of homoerotic reference based upon assumptions not shared by the "decent" reader. Pater, of course, is quite serious in his art, but he's never solemn, and the word unsaid keeps echoing between the lines.

Pater's studied blandness, his seemingly ethereal rather than earthly demeanor, has put his biographers off their guard, and they quite unreasonably assume that Pater was therefore chaste, cloistered, cold, and nearly a loner. But, in fact, a peripheral biography of Pater could be expanded with quite warm-blooded speculations concerning his close friendships with Arthur William Symonds, bisexual poet and critical theorist of decadence; with Francis Fortescue Urquhart, bachelor don nicknamed "Sligger" because of his sleek looks, model for Pater's short story "Emerald Uthwart," and a man who was so thoroughly a faithful friend to many young men that he should have been homosexual if he wasn't; with poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, one of Pater's private pupils, author of a number of fine ballads on boys bathing; with Thomas Humphrey Ward, whom he tutored in Plato for a month in 1867 in Sidmouth in a secluded cottage near the sea; with A.J. Butler, tutor to the son of the Khedive of Egypt and author of a translation of the homoerotic *Greek Anthology* that Pater recommended to Gosse because the latter "delights also in Greek things"; and others, especially his long friendship with Oscar Wilde from 1877 until at least the early 1890's. All the circumstantial evidence points to only one conclusion: that Walter Pater was a practicing homosexual, though after the scandal of 1873 he began to carefully guard his emotions. He may have even begun to recoil from himself because of the realization that such love can be crudely celebrated in public urinals as well as at symposiums of British schoolmasters and their pupils.

— Rictor Norton

Ed. Note: For more in-depth material on Walter Pater and other Victorian gay literati, read:

Feasting with Panthers, A New Consideration of Some Late Victorian Writers, by Rupert Croft-Cooke, Holt, Rhinehart & Winston, N.Y. 1967. \$6.50

Sexual Heretics, Male Homosexuality in English Literature from 1850 to 1900. An Anthology edited by Brian Reade. Coward-McCann, N.Y. 1971. \$12.50.

SPAIN: Medieval Ghetto for Gays

[Ed. Note: The following article on gay life in Spain was submitted by our German correspondent, Eckart Ranke, of the Gay Lib Center, Hamburg. He spent the winter of 1973-74 in Spain.]

Night life in a Spanish gay ghetto pub differs little from its counterpart in Germany. People get drunk, dance, exhibit themselves. Music blares. The inn, situated in the cellar of a side-street, is also visited by tourists.

While visiting one of these inns, I was surprised by a police raid. Uniformed policemen appeared unexpectedly from all sides. They always arrive in several transport cars at the same time. They encircled the pub and treated the innocent guests like bloodthirsty terrorists. Chairs and dishes fell and rumbled. Commands and gay screams mixed in a contrast of human sounds. The police arrested directly as many gays at the transport cars were able to contain. I was included among the arrested. The rest remained timorously in the pub.

Those of us arrested were pressed ungently into a common cell. The whole night passed. In the morning a number of Spaniards were allowed to leave the arrest cell. If they are able to identify and justify themselves and have not yet been noted down as suspected persons, they are released. Foreigners always have to wait because of their inability to negotiate with the officials. The common cell was dirty and cold, and we had to sit on the floor. There was only a piss-groove, no toilet. Those who don't possess humor are plaintively lamenting and accusing God, the world and their fellow prisoners. There is nothing to eat. But there is much time to talk, and I ask some questions:

Have you ever been arrested?

Yes, but in another town.

What happens if a person gets caught several times?

That's different. One is noted down.

One gets punished?

No, you must be able to identify yourself. You remain arrested if you cannot identify yourself.

Are homosexuals punished in Spain?

No, they don't get punished, for homosexuality doesn't exist in Spain.

It is said there exist concentration camps for homosexuals.

No, there are only concentration camps for criminals.

Are homosexuals criminals in Spain?

No, homosexuals don't exist in Spain.

You are not homosexual?

No, that doesn't exist.

But why have you been arrested?

Because the state protects us against crime.

I get no answer. As open-minded as the Spaniards have been in the ghetto pub, so reserved are they in the arrest cell. They are tolerantly waiting, as if experiencing something trivial. Nevertheless imprisoned foreigners tell terrible stories about tortures, mistreatments and operations of the brain. What is true. It is difficult to find out the truth in this military regime. Since the assassination of Prime Minister Carrero Blanco in December 1973, the average Spaniard is not open to political conversation. He is afraid of the guardians of the regime and of a new civil war. Whatever may be the case about the concentration camp rumors, it is certainly true that homosexuals are terrorized in Spain. It is not so much homosexuality itself which arouses the interest of the regime. It is their fear that homosexuals may be political revolutionaries. So at present persecution manifests itself in controls and acts of terror. It is left to the judgement of officials who is suspicious and who not. Nobody knows what really happens to suspected homosexuals. But everybody knows what happens to criminals. And to be homosexual is to be criminal in a military regime like Spain's.

The raids always take place where homosexuals assemble. Nearly everybody is released after a certain period of detention. But it is a dehumanizing thing for a human being to be able to survive only after having proved that he is not homosexual. It is credible that those Spaniards whose homosexuality has been proven are placed for treatment in concentration camps. This, however, is not easily demonstrable.

The close connection between church and military regime reinforces the utterly conservative traditions of Spanish Christian society. These standards prescribe to men and women their traditional roles: to enter marriage and to produce children.

They were the kind of men that my generation could have honored and much respected, had they been visible to us. That they were not was — and is — their tragedy and ours.

—John Kyper

GENDERFUCK (cont. from p. 4)

Link Books recently came out with a beautiful book of Photographs by Gilles Larrain titled *Idols*. (Link Books, N.Y. 1973, \$10 paper). It is a book filled with images; in fact, the entire text is only two paragraphs. The second of these paragraphs says, "If other people want to share in our joy and freedom, they're welcome to. There's strength and self-confidence in the way I dress. Suddenly I don't feel ugly any more."

I strongly identify with that statement and with the images in this book. These are not the female impersonators or mimics one can see at nightclubs or on TV. These are mostly people who are weird — weird in the sense of belonging to another world, another life. These are people who are almost impossible to laugh at as straight society laughs at the nightclub performer. The popularity of female impersonators in the straight world is the only socially approved way of mocking sexual roles without actually confronting them. In fact, straight so-

Sexual intercourse is allowed only in marriage and then solely for the act of procreation. All other kinds of sex are forbidden in Spain. Consequently, the above mentioned raids are not only directed against homosexuals but also against prostitution, group sex and other kinds of extramarital sexual intercourse. Even an individual who masturbates is considered demonic and unfit for this society. So it is easily understandable that an illegal sex market is prospering in Spain.

The consequences of this sexual oppression are, beside the nuclear shaping of the family, insufficient sexual knowledge, unbalance and dissatisfaction, which can be read in the faces of Spanish people. Violence against the human being by pressure into the man-wife role is seldom more clearly demonstrable than it is in Spain. The influence of the church, protected by the military regime, is unconditionally powerful in Spain. People are as badly exploited by present day Christian disciplinarians as in the Middle Ages. The Catholic Church demonstrates sado-masochism in a psychologically impressive way, despite the exception of some radical priests. Homosexuality is only one among many "evils" which are said to be begotten of the devil. And because the devil is prohibited in Spain, the country is also declared to be free of homosexuality. But homosexuality, though illegal, prospers and grows.

In a Spanish market an itinerant merchant sells clothes and drapery at his stand. But that is not the main attraction. He inspires a curiously gazing crowd with a doll which is garbed as a bandit. When he presses a button, the doll erects an overlong rubber penis. This male goliwog, which is made as ugly as possible, is offered for sale by the trader's words: "grande bandito!" This is an example of a public contempt for the penis. People laugh contemptuously about the male sex organ. The natural longing for sexual action as expressed in the erection of a man's penis, the natural beauty of the male sex organ, is associated with brutality and the crime of bandits and robbers. The Spaniard thus learns that it is immoral to express his libido. Consequently, it is criminal and punishable when a Spanish man behaves like a human being.

Some of the spectators laugh at the offer of the trader; others are magically

attracted by the performance. The latter are examples of the sexually oppressed. In their need they excite themselves at the material offered as moral discouragement. I am sure that clever businessmen are making capital out of oppression. The producers of the doll kill two birds with one stone: they support the horrible morality of sexual oppression legalized by the law and exploit the natural libido of oppressed people in an unscrupulous way. Of course, the "sex-bandits" are sold at inflated prices.

This is only one of many examples of the denigration of sex in Spain. There are others — on postcards, in comic papers, journals and books. This material is eagerly bought by the oppressed. It serves as compensation for natural sexuality which is prohibited. Thus the inhumanity of the moral legislation. Instead of diminishing criminality, society succeeds in promoting it by blocking the natural outlets for sex. The imagination of the individual is stimulated to criminal acts. All enlightened people know that sexual crimes are explainable by sexual oppression. Christian morality misroutes the sexual development of a human being.

Spain is ruled by military dictatorship. Therefore, the idea of gay liberation cannot be promoted in the same way as in other countries. There is no freedom of public opinion. All public meetings of homosexuals are prohibited. Even if three or four men, who act suspiciously gay, meet together, the police interfere and disperse the suspected persons. In many cases a temporary arrest results.

Thus there is no other choice than to organize a permanent underground movement or to influence the public and the regime from abroad. The example of the liberal Russian scientists and authors with their international support is apropos. One can learn from all this that it may be necessary for the international gay liberation movement to contact the progressive minded Spanish homosexuals where this is possible. I agree that one should not overrate the political power of those homosexuals who are engaged in the gay liberation movement.

The Spanish regime's struggle against homosexuality is only a pretense. They fear the revolutionary homosexual. They fear his outbreak from oppression with its consequences for the orthodox social order. Therefore, they try to uproot the "evil" and to extirpate homosexuality root and branch. The representatives of Spanish society are well conscious of the dynamic intellect of homosexuals. When this intellect is methodically used for the liberation of Spaniards and other oppressed people from Christian capitalistic social orders or other ideologies, the oppressors will fear for their very existence.

AGEISM (cont. from p. 13)

Dallas, something the media missed. No one chose to examine the desperation and secretiveness of many older homosexuals, which may help to explain the behavior of both Dean Corll and the affluent patrons of our ring. Why should anyone pay money for sex — or torture his partners to death? If they were convinced of the unnaturalness of their most natural feelings, and obsessed by the fear of discovery, might they have seen no alternative?

Assailing older gays as "closeted" misses the point, and worse, it continues a cycle of needless recriminations. Little could discourage communication as thoroughly as this! Instead, we should recognize them as the survivors of an earlier age. Their reticence was a normal response to oppression at a time when Authority was respected and few dared to stand up to Joe McCarthy or the local vice squad. Whatever their sympathies toward the movement, most of them now lack the options to change their lives.

One of my greatest regrets is that I knew no gay adults as I was growing up, no one I could look to for example. Jim Rankin vest evoked this sense of loss in an early *Gay Sunshine* article about the Metropolitan Community Church: "With some exceptions, the people...were older. People old enough to be my fathers,

ciety laughs at impersonators without realizing that it is they who are the joke. But these wonderful, beautiful exquisitely bizarre idols leave no room for doubt. They are no imitation of life as we know it. They are themselves and none of the photos asks your permission. They exist and if we can't accept that, it is our misconception not theirs. These are also the people who offend so much those gay and straight liberationists who insist on us all being alike, on us all looking like the Man wants us to. These are the people who should be shut away, and these are the people to be sacrificed and removed no matter which revolution wins. As Lyn Pedersen said, "Pity, our glory is in our fantastic variety."

—Christopher Long

PRISON RIGHTS

PETITION FOR GAY RIGHTS IN THE FEDERAL PRISON SYSTEM

We, the undersigned, demand an immediate end to those rules, regulations and practices of the Federal Bureau of Prisons which discriminate against prisoners on the basis of race, religion, political or sexual orientation.

Specifically, we demand of the Federal Bureau of Prisons:

1. An end to using a prisoner's gay sexuality as a basis for denying parole, early release to half-way houses and placement in minimum security institutions;

2. that gay prisoners not be punitively transferred from one prison to another solely because they were involved in a consensual relationship;
3. that prisoners caught in a homosexual relationship not be punished when the acts are between consenting adults;
4. that the Federal Bureau of Prisons abolish its rules and regulations prohibiting homosexuality between consenting adults.
5. that gay prisoners be allowed to organize in officially recognized social, political and religious organizations, with regular meetings and the right to invite outside speakers.
6. that prisoners be allowed to buy gay books, magazines and newspapers from any source;
7. that gay prisoners be allowed to receive and use clothing and makeup with which to express themselves.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

Return to Dave Goldberg
23 Cornelia St.
New York, N.Y. 10014

[Gay Sunshine endorses this petition]

Merle Miller is a troublesome and troubling man. He has been trouble for both gays and straights long before his famous public "coming out" in the *New York Times Magazine* in January, 1971 ("On Being Different: What It Means to be a Homosexual" — later published in book form) Miller had stirred what others would have preferred to remain placid waters. He was a world federalist when the Cold Warriors were arming themselves to defend a universe split, for what some thought would be generations, into East and West. He was a vigorous civil libertarian during the worst excesses of McCarthyism and 'Fifties Normalcy. Content to bite the hand that could have fed him, he wrote a masterful, witty exposition of the television industry, *Only You, Dick Daring*. His new book, *Plain Speaking, An Oral Biography of Harry S. Truman*, is a current best seller.

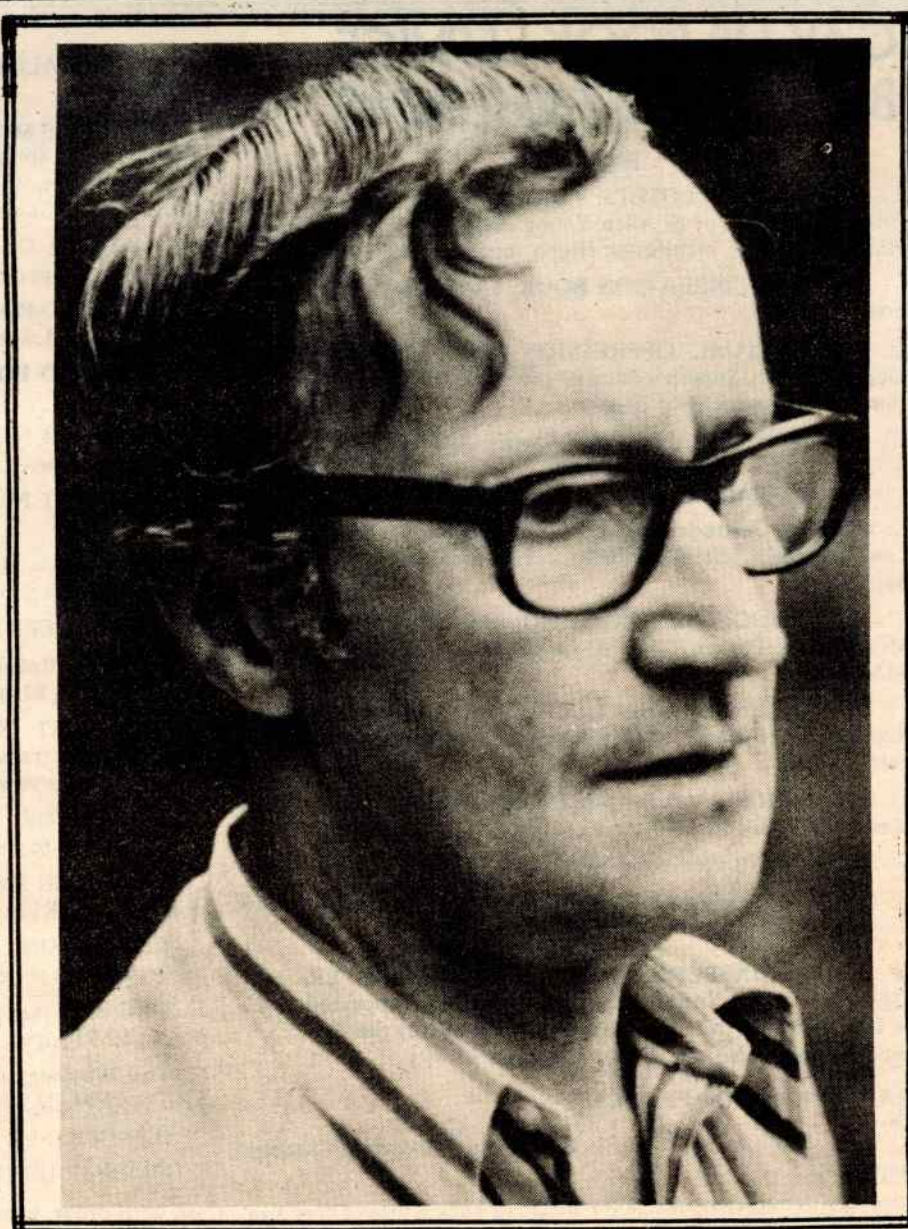
But none of Miller's bold ventures prepared his admirers, gay and straight, for his remarkable homosexual confession published almost three years ago. It was then that Miller began to trouble me and others involved in the gay liberation movement.

Miller was, and still largely is, an undigested intrusion into the "mainstream" of gay liberation, such as it is. Quite frankly, no one knows what to do about him. In the first instance, he just doesn't fit the "image" dually imposed by the media and the counterculture animus of the gay liberation movement itself. Short of hair, fiftyish, famous — almost Establishment, and with no visible capacity for the self-deception which invariably haunts some corners of any "movement consciousness," Merle Miller conforms to no recognizable type. It is this which troubles many people the most when they confront Miller for the first time.

It was the insistent honesty of "On Being Different," now expanded and published as a book, which affected so many readers in 1971. It is a deceptive essay, all the same, and tightly crafted. Its almost casual voice is opposed by a vigorous exposition of the personal pain, humiliation, self-doubt, courage and finally, the special redemption of being gay. Miller hid nothing as he probed his gay experience. "It was love I craved," he wrote with simple but persuasive clarity, "approval, forgiveness for being what I could not help being." It was this tone, somewhere between the apologetic and the polemic, which ran against the liberated grain of many of us in the gay movement. He angered us, articulated what we never want said, exposed us as well as himself to the injury others can inflict. He said all of the wrong things (which, of course, are ultimately all of the right things), and I shared the frustration of women's liberationist Gloria Steinem who asserted on The Dick Cavett Show, "It's all such a stereotype!" Perhaps it is, Miller replied quietly, but true nonetheless. Yet it was very easy for me to dismiss Miller's remarkable achievement as but another of those missives from the "Fifties Faggots" who want to bump themselves off, one way or another.

As remotely forgiveable as the edge of Miller's nonesty was to me at the time, caught up in my own personal liberation, his attitude toward gay liberation itself was not. "Gay is good. Gay is proud. Well, yes, I suppose," he had written offhandedly. And then the clincher: "If I had been given the choice (but who is?), I would have preferred to have been straight." There it was: the classic abdication; that final whisper from the depths of the gay heart that most of us have, in some desperate hour, uttered, and which the straight world takes as its own final vindication. These words of Merle Miller have been quoted to me numberless times by the straight audiences I have addressed on homosexuality. It was difficult enough having to defend the gay life-style to straights. Would this troublesome Merle Miller and his *New York Times* piece follow me, forcing me to fend off the arrows of prominent gays as well?

Merle Miller never regrets having written those oft-quoted lines, at least in that uncontentious way, but at the time I must confess that I was receptive when Dick Leitch, then executive director of the



"Miller knows all about killing, the worst kind of killing — not only the destruction of another spirit in hostility and indifference, but also in liberal 'tolerance', the final excuse of those who will not transpose themselves into the existential condition of another human being."

Merle Miller

New York Mattachine Society, wrote a devastating piece on Miller in *Gay* entitled, "Son of Boys in the Band." Leitch said all of the right things (which, again perversely, were ultimately all of the wrong things) about Miller's supposed "self-loathing" and the "old-style homosexual." But the comfort could not last. Miller's lucidity haunted me. It was (Existentialist I) too "authentic." The landscape of Merle Miller's experience and imagination were dotted with guideposts of such singular recognition that he could not ignore them, and neither I, nor Dick Leitch, nor anyone else could lightly dismiss them.

I first met Merle Miller when we did a TV show together. I had just returned from a weekend in New York, celebrating what sometimes passes for my "erotic liberation" in a wash of carnality, which included two outstanding beauties, one a magnificent man from a prominent dance company, and the other an actor-model of Wakefield Poole film fame. It was grist for masturbatory fantasy and hardly prepared me for the reality of Merle Miller. I was not prepared to be troubled, as some better part of me knew I would, by this quite extraordinary human being. He had earlier postponed the talk-show interview we were to do together for a Philadelphia TV show, so I expected him to be arrogant and cantankerous as well. But the presence of Merle Miller is even more persuasive than his words; from the moment I was introduced in the studio before the taping, I was intrigued and captivated.

What was it about Merle Miller in person that could so strongly evoke those intimations I had had about the great importance of his gay writing? Certainly not his apparent surfaces, a fascinating blend of warmth wit, intelligence, shyness and awkwardness. Awkwardness. Almost at war with his body, the body with which he was so distressed as a youth. ("I ate carloads of Wheaties hoping I'd turn into another Jack Armstrong, but I still could neither throw nor catch a baseball. I couldn't even see the thing; I'd

work-glasses as thick as plate-glass windows since I was three... I remained an eighty-nine pound weakling year after year.")

But then there were the contrary energies of expressive repose; a graceful, descriptive, absolutely non-faggot use of the hands. A lilting, mellow voice; not feminine, not unfeminine. Wonderfuleyes, unprotected even by those plate-glass spectacles. An unmistakable melancholy but so radiant with humor and energy, a kind of thwarted energy. Watching him as we chatted I resigned myself to not only putting up with Merle Miller, but to liking him, struck by his sincerity, by a kind of sensibility I had not encountered anywhere in the gay liberation movement.

I convinced few of my Philadelphia movement friends about these new feelings I had about Miller. Some even accused me of ingratiation, not without some foundation. I deeply admired Miller as a writer, had done some writing myself, and when he offered to read some of my stuff I was very flattered.

Miller and I began to correspond. Short expressive notes — one written as he hurried to New Mexico to testify before the legislature on homosexual law reform. He had taken a manuscript of mine with him and was enthusiastic about it. A couple of telephone conversations. "Dear friend," he would say, and I was warmed by the affection. Finally he asked me to visit with him at his home near Brewster, an hour or so from New York City. It was a Spring day, that day of our second meeting, not quite heady, but rich with light and smell. I was asked to drive to Brewster and call from town when I got there, as directions to the Miller house would be meaningless without this initial grounding in his own familiar terrain. Errands too. "Do you like cream in your coffee? Then stop at the deli in town before you come out and get some. Liquor too, whatever you like. And some wine, dry white wine. I haven't been away from the house in days."

I had expected, for what reason I don't exactly know, to find a restored

farmhouse — I had just read Edmund Wilson's *Upstate* — full of the unstructured disorder intellectuals are supposed to like: books all over, recordings, little lithographs. So when I finally emerged at the end of a winding gravel road amidst wooded knolls to see Miller emerge from a stark brick and glass shell, seemingly floating above rather than rooted in the land (a sort of cross between Phillip Johnson and the early Frank Lloyd Wright) I was again disarmed by the presence rather than the impression of Merle Miller. He led me into an immense, light-filled, colorful living room solidly and comfortably furnished. This Brewster house where Merle Miller prefers to be more than any other place was an open space, very secluded, but also very vulnerable to the humanizing world Miller's life and work has always evoked.

This was a day full of grace and ease for me. Miller put together a tasty little *coq au vin* from a *New York Times* cookbook. We ate and enjoyed the wine I had brought from town. I fended off continuous attacks of affection by "Novel," Miller's puppy. "I haven't had anyone here in weeks," he said in a second welcome, and I was very happy to be there. And lots of talk, about everything: vodkas and tonic; feeling — seven hours of it. Just the two of us. No intrusions.

I tried to be clever. "Are you 'George Lionel'?" I asked, referring to the protagonist of his recently published gay novel, *What Happened*. "You don't see a piano anywhere in this room, do you?" Miller replied. Miller's protagonist was a concert pianist. I thought he was testing my sensitivity to the delicate metabolism between the real and the fictional in his life, and I did rather badly. No, it wouldn't be that easy to find the real Merle Miller, translating him out of a character he had created. In any case, he was much more interested in talking about the novels of his companion of eight years, David Elliot, and he did that with great enthusiasm and charm. "He's a much better writer than I am, you know."

As I think of that Spring day in Miller's house, I'm not sure, at least not with any conviction, what new meanings of him I was able to weave into my consciousness. But I sensed from those easy-speaking hours in Brewster that Merle Miller has been hurt deeply in his gay heart. "To all those people who have tried to kill me, and to those who have not..." ran the dedication to *What Happened*. "There's not a killer among them," he wrote of the now famous TV Loud family in an *Esquire* article, and this was the "baseline" from which he judged human motivation.

Miller knows all about killing, the worst kind of killing — not only the destruction of another spirit in hostility and indifference, but also in liberal "tolerance," the final excuse of those who will not transpose themselves into the existential condition of another human being. Miller talks a good deal about his liberal friends and acquaintances, of their fears, prejudices and insensitivities, of their fundamental unwillingness to take leave of mendacity with him. He seems to sense that because they profess compassion for so many in the abstract, they save their ice and venom for those who find themselves beyond current liberal boundaries. It is, after all, largely among liberals that Miller has spent his adult life, among them that his homosexuality was finally defined, among them that its possibilities were limited. Thus for Miller coming out in the pages of that paradigm of liberal conscience, *The New York Times*, was something of a confrontation, a drawing of new boundaries which liberalism could no longer ignore. It was provoked by the words of a liberal/killer, Joseph Epstein in *Harper's Magazine*: "If I had the power to do so, I would wish homosexuality off the face of the earth." Miller had often been wounded by similar sentiments, and by not speaking up, he made them his own.

I sensed all that accumulated hurt the day we talked in Brewster. I sensed it in the affection he found in open and honest conversation, in the love he drew from it. I felt it deeply in his loyalty to

MILLER (cont.)

David, "the beautiful madman" who has stood by him, supported him in very difficult times.

The publication of *On Being Different* was an epiphany as well as a confrontation for Miller. From the day it was published, no one could ever see Merle Miller in the same way, regardless of what they had known previously of his homosexuality. And because no one would ever see him or his gayness as they had before, his meanings to himself also changed.

Coming to know Merle Miller further instructed me of the special position of the gay artist, a unique situation that the gay activist and polemicist is often not prepared to recognize. In the gay artist, as in all artists, there exists a certain capacity for spiritual remembrance in which the totality of a life experience is invoked in a kind of recapitulation. The liberation of Merle Miller's gayness required a reliving of past pain and doubt, a full reevocation of the self he had been, the self that wanted to be loved and loving, the self that "would have preferred to have been straight."

On Being Different is an artistic as well as (even more than) a political statement, because the artistic experience of its writing itself was an act of liberation. In a real sense, Merle Miller knew more fully what he had been and what he had become because of and within the writing experience. More than this, the literary act had an indispensable and continuing element: a reading audience out of which Miller's further self-discovery was refracted. The publication of *On Being Different* was the beginning of a conversation Miller continues to have with himself and his audience, not least of which are his gay brothers and sisters.

The initial publication of Miller's coming out piece in the *Times Magazine* evoked such reader response, and such changes in Miller's own relations with friends and the public, that he followed it with a second piece, "What It Means to be a Homosexual (Continued)." That "Continued" and those parentheses speak volumes about Miller, the gay artist. He has now joined himself symbiotically with the gay people from whom he often felt so alienated in a continuing exploration of a common humanity. That relation of the gay artist to the gay community requires absolute honesty, a willingness to look beyond the distracting glare of gay liberation slogans. There is in all of us pain and doubt which does not issue from mere social oppression; there is the pain and doubt of being human, which must express itself differently in the lives of gay people because we are gay, because we have a kind of freedom in our eroticism which straight people, living by socially supported erotic values, do not.

I think it is that which makes Miller's recently published gay novel, *What Happened*, such an important contribution to his dialogue with gay people, a contribution which some gay activists have been unwilling to recognize because they interpret the novel's often melancholy tone as another denigration of gay experience. What Miller is in fact saying is that we are redeemed as people by our pain as well as by our joy, by the total fabric of our existence which incorporates the gay into the irreducibly human. If we deny that pain, we deny an important part of ourselves; we trade it for the illusion that our human situation as homosexuals is described and limited only by an oppressive society. Merle Miller sings a gay and melancholy song which embraces a whole life and a whole vision; it is true and thus fully human because, quite simply, it is what happened. Merle Miller the man and the artist gives us that whole life and that whole vision so that we might share in the freedom it promises.

—Eric Hansen

BOOKS DISCUSSED:

On Being Different: What It Means To Be A Homosexual by Merle Miller. Random House, N.Y. 1971. 65 pp. \$4.50 hardcover. *What Happened. A Novel* by Merle Miller. Harper & Row, N.Y. 1972. 342 pp. \$7.95 hardcover.

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ON PUSHING A LOVER

we are wrestling.
soggy cartons, beech
leaves, dirt-powdered
sticks and stones...
my target is not only
the space between
your legs, or your
brown eyes, or your
taut neck as you thrust
against me in bed.

your angel waits:
release him. like
the body love
has its thunder.

— Robert Peters

CRUISING

someone will come up
approach you on the street
and say
I haven't been here long
this place, this way
this wind, these windows

— Ed Cox

LOVE AS PUSHER

time as a ghost
robbed of its sheet:

a tourniquet
around your chest. below
at the beautiful junction
of cock and groin
impossible flowers burst
not needing stems buds
or leaves, form a direct
fire.
why can't this be forever?

I wait for a connection,
for hot bolts dropped
into place, searing.

— Robert Peters

It's the lining of
Frank's heart we all share
tender, vulnerable enough
to make us share
our pain & frustration in
public, call it camp
call it poetry
it keeps us from killing

O Frank O'Hara
if we love you

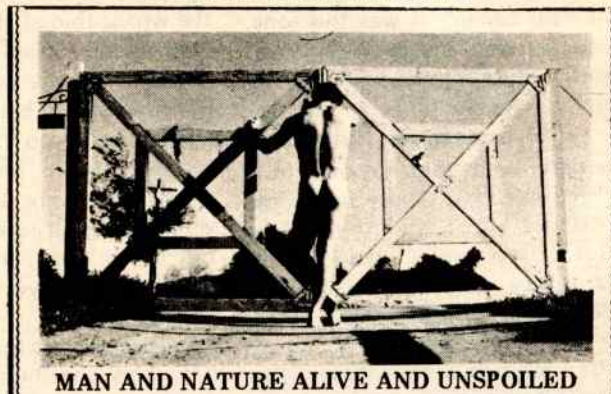
we need
to find a better way

—Michael Lally

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William Burroughs, E. 7th St., N.Y. 1953
Photo by Allen Ginsberg

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THE FECUNDATING STING

dressed to kill
what do you gain
by dressing like a gipsy?

you'll be the same
& I'll hover round

I walked in
dressed
in silver and leather
kind-a
like-a high-speed dragster

in top gear
feeling hot-and-charged
I looked good

I thought
doing my motorcycle strut;
when this skinny man
in a candy-cane shirt

stops me.
I was strutting so heavy,
feeling butch and mean,
that I almost

plowed the guy
down.

But,
he strongholds me
and screams.

"Honey,
ain't you the pits!
Where do you think you're from?
I'm from Hollywood.

glam-capital of the world
You could sure use some tips,
not that I'll spare any.

First of all,
don't wear leather and chains;
wear lame, silver lame.

And,
your make-up is all wrong,
it's far too plain.

What you need
is bright red stars
around your eyes

I used to wear them
all the time
until everyone

copied me.
Take my advice
you'll look fine in stars.

Also, Sweets
get some rhinestones
to cover up

all those spots
that are
far too visible.

Dear,
I can see
you've tried;
but you are a shambles;

Actually,
you look like something that died.

Oh well,
can you spare a dime
so I can buy
another dry
gin-flizz?"

—Lee M. Balan

FRAGMENTS

How can I reach with my fingers
thru your brow into the solar plexus,
turn your loins inward like a woman's
outward like a man's show you
with the lone blue light of my nipples
the hollow castle within your labyrinth
a wreck enjoined with bulls' heads
and stuccofalling facades of multibreated
clay figures

And shoot your sperm inward
hide the course of the spine
upward upward outward thru the brow
a lone light wandering the rings of space
earth and her sun a dying nova:

the fantasy of dying myths:
the long saints the dark couplings
dead all dead figures of voice captivity
Eyes blinded by the progeny of unfiltered night
seeing no more idols no more men women
but voices voices voices
implanted in the seed of the serpent
waiting wandering breathing with you
on the tailend of unejaculated sperm
I wait for these loins to grasp your fragments

— Robert Peters

NO ONE LOVES

No one loves you like an empty house
to live in, to move through
to fill it up to its seams.

No one loves you like four walls
to clutter with pictures
to angle furniture up to.

No one loves you like shadows
to try to outrun, to race,
to see if you can step through.

No one loves you like bodies
to get tangled up in,
to come, to be undone.

— Paul Mariah

THREE IN THE MORNING

The stillness is thick.
Dark covers door and corner —
the wall a blind gallery:
paintings without frame or face.

You are awake
while others sleep.

This is the time,
moment only you share,
when you unbutton your shirt,
touch your chest —
your hand an earth in itself
moving so sure, so slow.

Light rises between your fingers.

— Ed Cox

— Kenneth Lee
November, 1973

ROOM

we go into after getting out of car
morning walk up stairs
when we sit, fall

touching, just touching
blood goes to where it will then
stillness between legs, neck relaxes
veins: arms, legs cock
body inside has curves, places wet

— Ed Cox

I WONDER IF VERLAINE HELD RIMBAUD

I wonder if Verlaine held Rimbaud
like this, slowly rocking the troubled
head, wild with curls.

(Rimbaud murmured,
Verlaine merely smiled
as a wind rose to set them
walking from the park,
far from the stars that drove
poor Arthur into another's arms.)

In our room
a mushroom candle
flickers in the corner,
keeping Night
at a safe distance.

(Outside,
the humans keep to themselves,
sometimes pressing their
noses to the glass.)

— Wayne McNeill