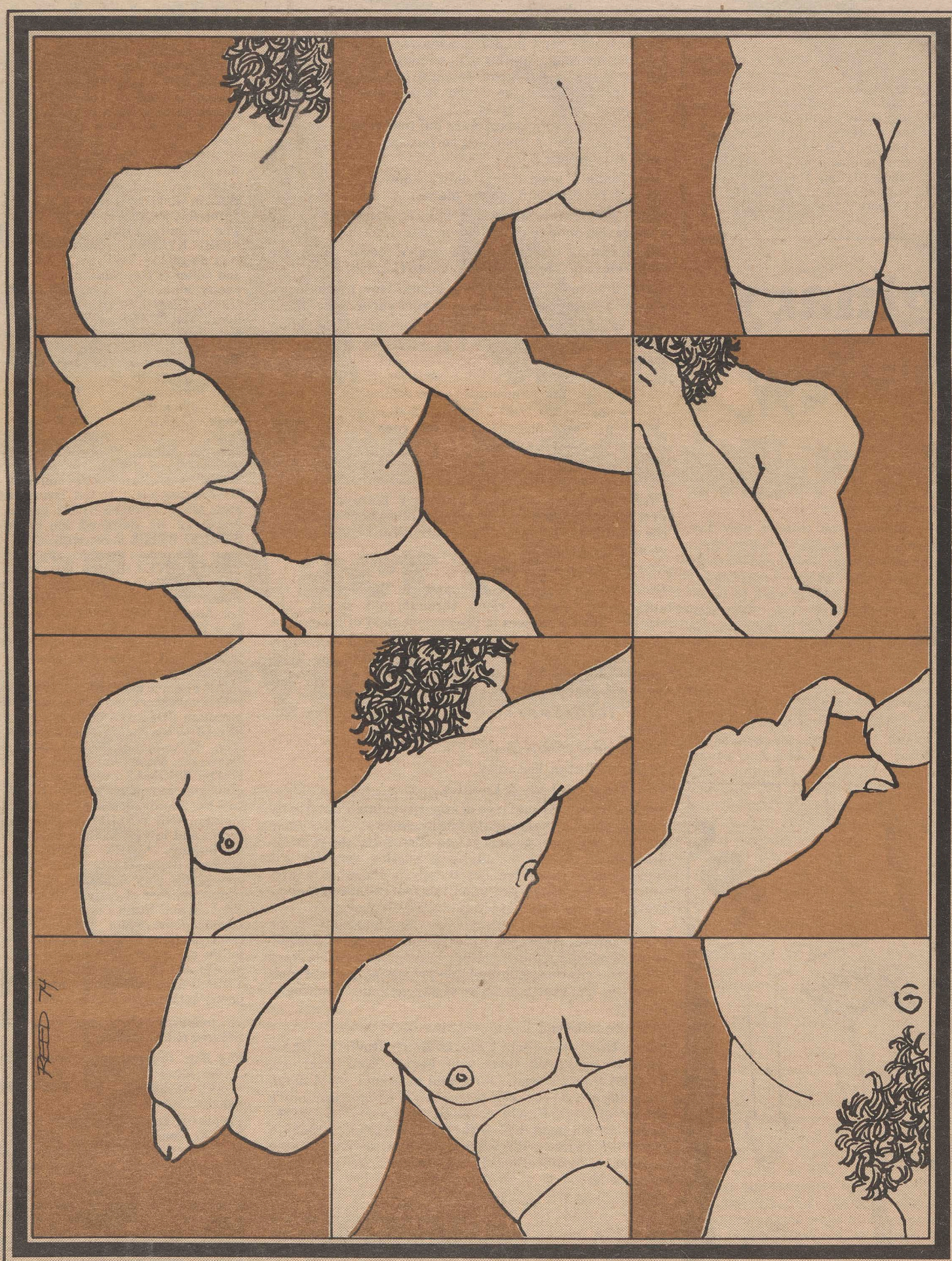

FAG RAG

GAY SUNSHINE

Stonewall 5th

Anniversary Issue



SUMMER 1974 · ONE DOLLAR

contents

3. Indiscriminate Promiscuity
6. Ned Rorem : An Interview
14. Rictor Norton
on the Movement
24. Ginsberg, Wieners, Norse,
Jonathan Williams :
New Poems
27. David Greene's Photos
31. Allen Young on
Gay Identity
34. Porno goes Arty
37. Steven Grossman:
A Profile
38. Third World
40. Murder in Chile
43. Ian Young: Gay Novel
Historical Overview

Graphics by Stearns, Button,
Brainard, Allyn & gleep

GAY SUNSHINE

Fag Rag

Since their inception Fag Rag and Gay Sunshine, two original movement publications, have faced similar problems in publishing. There has been a good deal of communication between the two papers and a general feeling that we are engaged in the same struggle. Last November during his visit to Boston, Winston Leyland, editor of Gay Sunshine, suggested that as a gesture of solidarity the two papers publish a special joint issue in the summer of 1974 to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the New York Stonewall riots which sparked off the current gay liberation movement.

The logistics of putting together such a double issue were enormous. The paper was typeset and laid out in San Francisco by people from both papers. Fag Ragers traveled 3000 miles to the West Coast to work on the issue. Working together we faced many disagreements and problems which were resolved as we went along. This Stonewall issue will not merge the two papers. Both will resume independent publication in the fall.

In this issue we have printed articles which express a wide divergence of opinions (not all of which we necessarily agree with ourselves). Nonetheless, this is probably the largest gay liberation collection to appear to date and is equivalent in material printed to a book anthology. In publishing this joint issue we are sharing ourselves and providing a place where other gay people can sing about themselves. Hopefully, our readers will find echoes and reverberations of themselves in our writing and will respond to us, not by accepting everything we print, but by loving us for taking the time and energy to publish this issue.

Both Gay Sunshine and Fag Rag are non-commercial publications. We have only been able to publish this issue because of the many subscriptions and contributions (in money, work and encouragement) that continue to come in. The expenses (over \$2000) have completely exhausted our funds. If you like this issue and believe in the kind of gay journalism we are doing, why not subscribe **now** to both papers (subscription box is on page 17). If you are already a subscriber, why not renew, or send in a contribution. This is the time we really need your financial help!

If you are gay you have something beautiful to say. Submit an article, a poem, a letter, a drawing, a photograph. Add your energy to the community by letting the community in on your creativity. Deadline for submission of material for the next issue of Gay Sunshine (no. 23) is September 1. Send material to Gay Sunshine, P.O. Box 40397, San Francisco, CA 94140; (415) 824-3184. Please type and double-space all manuscripts. Deadline for the next issue of Fag Rag (no. 10), a special poetry issue, is August 1. Send material to Fag Rag, P.O. Box 331, Kenmore Station, Boston, MA 02215.

imaginary interview

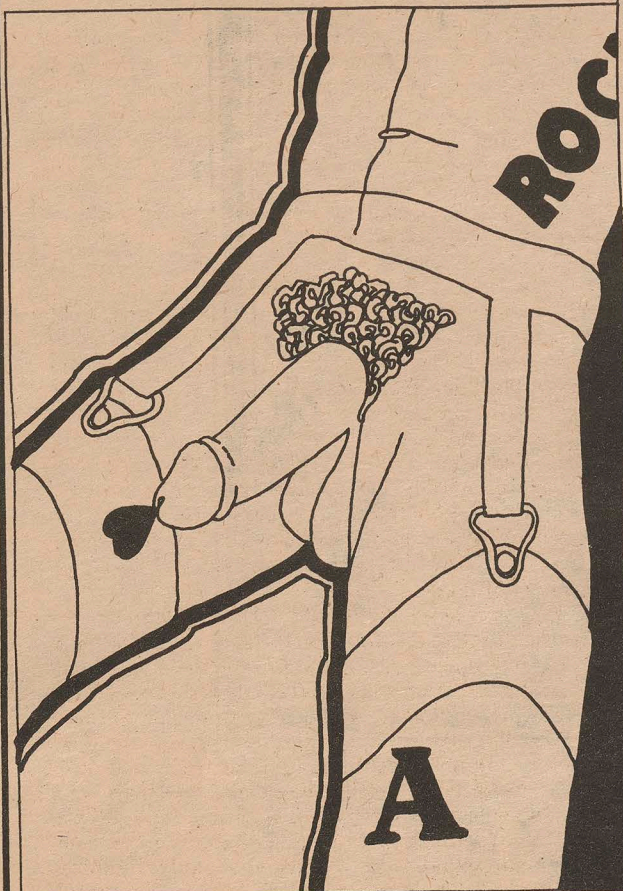
in the style of beckett malanga, an a.k.b.g.
by John Wieners

Seen through the eyes of Simone de Beauvoir as An Imaginary interviewer of Greta Garbo:

GG: Madame Simone, I suppose you wonder why I've asked you here this afternoon. It's because I was reading, and impressed with your photograph, that I came across while rifling through a closet shelf of news clippings, I wondered if you (knowing I'd be thrilled) care to interview after I discarded such personal trivia. [Nostalgically]: The ire of former times has abated, in the direction of a certain Ms. Mary Theresa, *tu reconnais, n'est-ce-pas?*

SdeB: I concern myself most assuredly, in forgoing prior lucidation.

GG: Gracious, then you accept an assignment in debating the earlier merits and acerbities in the direction of another laxity?



by gleep

SdeB: I can't say I do, but I persevere in attacking the general miasma, mythically winnowing through the debasements in our governmental genetic cabinets, as demeaning athwart the titular habiliments of feminine costume.

That intrigues me, just *where* did that rubbish buy lent out of your files? I mean, it's corpuscular, leaning pieces of O'Leary plastic.

GG: That's a good one. I didn't know, are you Irish, through the Mulligan and the Morse?

SdeB: No matter. A missing link, as morning becomes Electra. No mind to the proper names.

GG: Knowing an assumed paternity, could you guess Odin refers to Intrusion? or Celt unto Cornish.

SdeB: Please, let's get down to basics: How much do you weigh? You've put on weight, and your earlier efforts. . .

GG: Appear in vain, approximate unavoidably of majority acclaim; mildly awarded. A generous sampling in taste.

SdeB: Decorum being sensible adjunct, to a sumptuous surveillance. You continued your efforts in the film, tracing antecedent lives from post-modern authorities, in genres of geographical locales and constabularies, a la Romany and South America.

GG: No, I dare say not. I've haven't budged an inch; as a chatelaine to Victor P. Immanuel.

SdeB: Goodness, gracious, pungency betrays berating gestating twilight's aura. A glimpse atwixt our reunion in the art of letters gently. There can never be enough of a good thing. A just cause. A noble. . .

GG: Intrusion.

SdeB: At your request, of course, in the world of the unconscious sharply risen through old words, and straight kept sentences in the ancient field of Honorable.

GG: Always, darling monde. Theoreticianed correspondent, called caught, kept in proselytizing to the fickle mouths of impertinent men. I can see there's no such disdainful distaste culled imaginatively other mindfully.

SdeB: You read somewhere, a Chelsea, Grammercy, Sardinia?

GG: None of *trompe l'oeil*.

SdeB: In Boston, last week.

GG: About our Lady of Lourdes,

SdeB: Doubly. Acceptance of apparition intrigues Seduction. Ariadne either acquits fatally reversed exotic miscreant both rurally benefitting Prescott; desperately Staunching the body and blood of Her son, for the supreme act of sacrifice, heard daily in the weekly celebration of the Mass, not upon the federal apron strings braided as coils from Circe's turret Pike's peak.

I consider poetry and problematic philosophy to be *outré gauche*, regarded skitterish tabulating of worldliness galoshed Southern central juxtaposition to this Nord de Paris visitation, mourned you profess by servant girls upon the masonned bypaths of my put-out. Pointingly, plurally.

GG: Coquettishly.

SdeB: How dare you? [Stammering]: Ruefully. Those were my assumed tears you heard. Bled lachrimae Trinkles from Parisian judgmented plazerias. [Both laugh musically and discuss sidereal asides in delightful, sundry mirths of gratuitously acquired innuendos.] I gather you've seen a good deal of the United States, through a friend of yours, with whom you are severing three decades of codification. Is he too strange as in the example H. P. L.?

GG: I dunno. It's gone beyond.

SdeB: Desire? [A long, as usual awkward pause, generated by the unmentioned escort reimburses the tacking of these relations.] Sober, harried and T-content.

GG: Fruitlessly

SdeB: You've been too kind, over simplification aligns aspersions, a good jostling now and again never hurts any one. I receive first hand you've gone shopping incessantly around Town in Two years of all the things bought, which do you favor? or prefer? Consider four. . .

GG: Automobiles, Tens, a Sunny afternoon, hostess.

FAG RAG NO. 9 GAY SUNSHINE NO. 22

(* indicates member of Fag Rag group; ° indicates involvement in Gay Sunshine group.)

General Editor: WINSTON LEYLAND.

Contributors: *STEVE ABBOTT, Boston librarian; co-editor of *Myra and Gore*. GARY ALINDER recently returned to San Francisco after a long absence. He was involved in the beginnings of *Gay Sunshine*.

JIM ARNOLD is a full-time staff member of Seattle's Stonewall. ALLYN AMUNDSON, Boston artist. *LARRY ANDERSON is involved in Third World Caucus. LEONARD ANDREWS is currently living in Ann Arbor. In the fall he begins his first year as a Yale divinity student. °LEE ATWELL, film critic for *Gay Sunshine*. He has published in *Film Quarterly* and elsewhere. JULIAN BAMFORD lives in a Los Angeles gay collective and has been involved in that city's Gay Community Center. WILLIAM BARBERS poetry has appeared in *Gay Sunshine*, *Manroot* and *The Male Muse*. He currently lives in San Francisco. JOE BRAINARD, artist and poet, lives in New York. His most recent book, *New Work*, was published by Black Sparrow Press (1973). PERRY BRASS' poetry has appeared in *The Male Muse* and *Gay Sunshine*. He lives in New York City and is a long-time activist. STUART BYRON is a film critic for Boston's *Real Paper*. He is included in the anthology *Out of the Closets*. JOHN BUTTON is a prominent New York artist. He has published in *Manroot* and *Gay Sunshine* (#8). ED COX lives in Washington, D.C. His book of poems, *Blocks*, was published by Some of Us Press (1973). KIRBY CONGDON lives in Brooklyn. He is publisher of Cycle Press and editor of *Magazine*. His poetry appeared in *The Male Muse*. DAVID DARBY is a Milwaukee gay activist. DAVID EBERLY, Boston poet, previously published in *Sebastian Quill*, *Fag Rag*, *Gay Sunshine* and elsewhere. KENWARD ELSMLIE is a prominent New York poet-novelist, librettist, and editor of *Z*. His book of poems, *Motor Disturbance*, won the Frank O'Hara Award. *LOTTIN ELVEY is a member of the *Fag Rag* staff. DANIEL EVANS is editor of Philadelphia's poetry magazine, *Painted Bride Quarterly*. *SALVATORE FARINELLA, Boston poet, is editor of *Suntan*. His poetry has appeared in *The Male Muse* and numerous magazines. ALLEN GINSBERG's most recent book is *Fall of America*. He is spending this summer in the country in northern California. An interview with him appeared in *Gay Sunshine* #16. JOHN GIORNO, New York poet. Most recent book is *Cancer in My Left Ball*. GLEEP, an artist, transexual, lives in Alexandria, Louisiana. ROBERT GLUCK is a San Francisco poet. His most recent book, *Andy*, was reviewed in *Gay Sunshine* #20. °DAVID GREENE, filmmaker and photographer, lives in Berkeley, Calif. °EDWARD GUTHMANN is a free-lance writer living in San Francisco. PATRICK KELLY is a white medical volunteer who recently returned to Seattle from Wounded Knee. *JOHN KYPER is active in the War Resister's League and *Win* magazine. °WINSTON LEYLAND, movement activist and editor of *Gay Sunshine* since 1971. He is editing a gay poetry anthology to be published by Panjandrum Press (1975). CRAIG MAKLER, poet, lives in San Francisco. PAUL MACPHAIL is currently living in Massachusetts. He helped on proofreading. PAUL MARIAH is co-editor of San Francisco's poetry magazine *Manroot*. TOM MEYER, poet, lives in England with Jonathan Williams. °JOHN MITZEL recently published a book on Gore Vidal. He also edits the satiric paper *Manifest Destiny*. RICHARD NASH has been a full-time staff member of Los Angeles' Gay Community Center since 1972. HAROLD NORSE, poet, lives in San Francisco and edits *Bastard Angel*. An interview with him appeared in *Gay Sunshine* #18. RICTOR NORTON, movement activist and writer, currently lives in England where he is contributing editor to *Gay News*. ROBERT PETERS teaches at U. Cal. Irvine. His poetry appears in *The Male Muse*. °JAMES REED, graphic designer, lives in San Francisco. He designed the covers for this joint issue. SAMUEL REESE is currently serving a life sentence in Missouri. His prison graphics appeared in *Gay Sunshine* #17. *TOM REEVES, Boston activist. His book *End the Draft: The Feasibility of Freedom* was published by Random House. BRUCE REIFEL, free-lance artist, currently lives in Los Angeles. NED ROREM, composer and writer, lives in New York City. SATIVA, black poet, lives in San Francisco. *KEN SANCHEZ handles distribution for *Fag Rag*. RON SCHREIBER, Boston poet, co-editor of *Hanging Loose*. His most recent book, *Living Space*, was reviewed in *Gay Sunshine* #17. *CHARLEY SHIVELY, Boston poet, teaches American history and has been involved in *Fag Rag* since its inception. JOEL STARKEY is a Florida gay activist. ROGER STEARNS is a Boston artist whose work has appeared in *Fag Rag*, *Sebastian Quill* and elsewhere. CHRIS STOREY, Nantucket, Mass., bus driver, originally from New Mexico. KEITH THOMAS lives in Berkeley, Calif., where he is a graduate student in English. KOKE VACHA lives in Ohio and has coordinated the *Ohio Gay Conference Poetry Anthology*. ANN WALDMAN, New York poet, is editor of *The World* and involved in the Poetry Project at St. Mark's-in-the-Bowery. *JOHN WIENERS' most recent book is *Selected Poems* (1971). He lives in Boston and was interviewed for *Gay Sunshine* #17. JONATHAN WILLIAMS, poet, publisher of Jargon Books, divides his time between England and North Carolina. His most recent book is *Loco Logodaedalist in Situ*. °ALLEN YOUNG currently lives on a rural commune in Massachusetts. He has written extensively for the gay movement and is co-editor of the anthology *Out of the Closets*. He is a contributing editor of *Gay Sunshine*. IAN YOUNG lives in Ontario, Canada. He edited the recent gay poetry anthology, *The Male Muse*.

The following list indicates the material that each paper contributed to this special joint issue:

Fag Rag: Indiscriminate Promiscuity; John Horne Burns; Steven Jonas; Wieners/Greta Garbo; Reflections from Third World; Wounded Knee; Timelustness; Dear Dos; Cory/Sagarin; Seattle Center.

Poems by: John Giorno, John Wieners, Ron Schreiber, Bill Barber, Daniel Evans, Sal Farinella, Stuart Byron, Sativa, David Eberly, Charley Shively, Tom Reeves.

Graphics by: Allyn Amundson, Roger Stearns

Gay Sunshine: Ned Rorem Interview; On Human & Gay Identity; Chilean Oppression; Reflections on the Gay Movement; Gay Novel; Gays and the Left; Film Interview & Review; L.A. Community Center; Photo Essay on Gay Friends; Steven Grossman Music Interview & Review; Cartoon; Harold Norse Review.

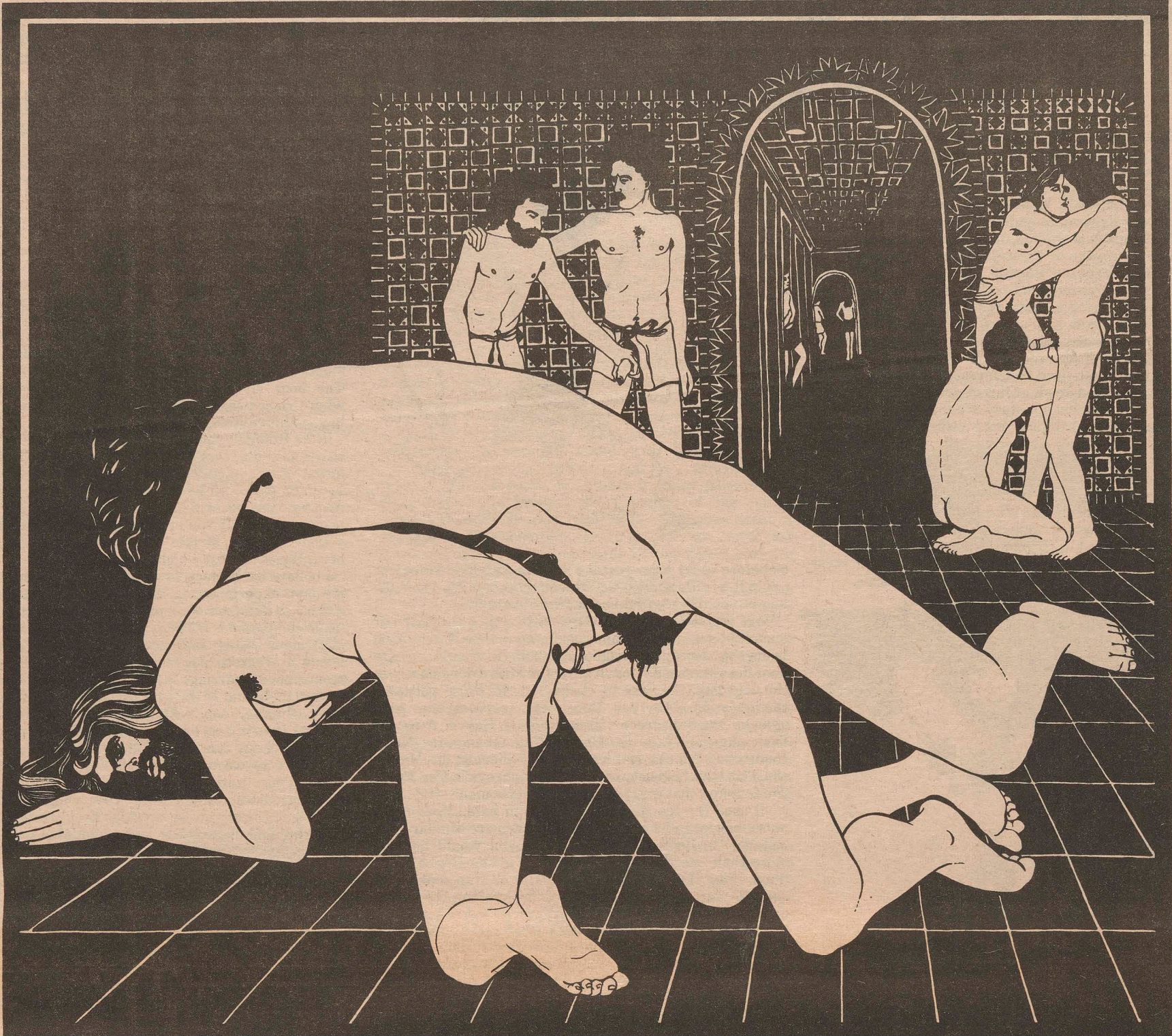
Poems by: Perry Brass, Ed Cox, Kenward Elmslie, Craig Makler, Paul Mariah, Tom Meyer, Harold Norse, Robert Peters, Keith Thomas, Anne Waldman, Jonathan Williams, Koke Vacha.

Graphics by: Joe Brainard, John Button, gleep, Jim Reed.

Joint material: Allen Ginsberg poems; Reviews of Paul Mariah, Bill Barber, Robert Peters; Editorial.

Copyright © Winston Leyland and Salvatore Farinella 1974

U.S. ISSN 0046-550X



R. STEARNS

INDISCRIMINATE PROMISCUITY as an act of revolution

Choosing homosexuality is in itself an act of rebellion, a revolutionary stance. Becoming a homosexual meant I rejected the boyfriend/girlfriend, jock/homecoming queen, auto mechanic/cooking class, dirty joke/purity, science/poetry divisions that were everything in Hamilton, Ohio. I refused to become a "man." I was (and am) "queer as a three-dollar bill."

I am also thirty-six years old and am part of a movement not more than twenty (really no more than five) years old. Why have we waited so many centuries to act on the revolutionary core, potential, voice deep within us? Notwithstanding Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde, Paul Verlaine, or Morris Hirschfeld—why have faggots been so slow to rebel?

The answer partly rests in the massive drains of energy put into surviving, the co-optation by the ruling class and other causes common to oppressed groups. But there is, I think, a unique potentiality among faggots to break away from the existing power structure and search out new alternatives. The nuclear family is the foundation stone of all that is established. Because we are so radically opposed to the breeding family unit with reproduction as its ultimate aim, our sexuality makes us revolutionary.

Everywhere people belittle our practice. In the spring of 1971, I wrote the first part of my "Cocksucking as an Act of Revolution" (*Fag Rag* #1, June 1971), and got little comment except people saying surely you don't mean that *just* sucking cocks or taking it up the ass can be revolutionary. If you do, you're wrong (or stupid) not to notice it's been done for centuries without much change. Aren't you just "wishfully thinking about our sex habits as though they *were* revolutionary"? If sucking cocks would do, then "given the number of numbers making it every night in bushes from Boston to Bulgaria, the state would [long ago] have exploded."

I have always refused to concede the point here because I believe there is an implicit denigration of sexuality and of the body. Our bodies are real, they are not some social theory, some utopian proposal; their relationship to labor, the state, the economy and consciousness is no less fundamental than the other way around. We still wince at taking our bodies and sexuality seriously. Certainly I do. Doing child care at a conference recently, I was just stunned at the "innocent" sexuality of the "children." They had not learned yet how much more important thought and consciousness was than their bodies or the bodies of those they love. They simply did it.

Getting back into, back to our bodies, our sexuality can be a revolutionary perspective for ourselves. How much less utopian can I be? to rest everything on the "flesh," "lust"—prevailing practice instead of magisterial theories? Why can't our bodies, commonplace things found in every home—why can't they be the source of change and revolution? Do we have to sail to Byzantium, the Kremlin, Hanoi, Havana, Santiago or Zanzibar to find the *revolution*? If so, there ain't many'll be able to afford the trip.

Obviously there is decadence, cruelty and exploitation everywhere in faggotland. But I say that decadence comes not from our bodies or our sexual practices; decadence comes from accepting the straight, white man values. Believing that we are sick, inferior, cursed, bad, spoiled, wrong, wretched; believing "they" are always right; wanting to be them; not wanting to be ourselves. It is so easy to wander from sensation—to go away from what we feel into what they want us to feel, believe, think, and experience. Maybe, I'd do better to say "Revolutionary Sensuality" is intended to be a revolutionary perspective for ourselves—the antithesis to bourgeois decadence. But I prefer to talk of "Cocksucking as an Act of Revolution." When the ass is licked clean, then come to me talking of "revolutionary sensuality." Then I will kiss your sweet tongue.

Because our sexuality is not only strange, but dangerous and lethal, to the existing powers, they have invented peculiar and unique ways of talking about and conceptualizing us. Ruling-class men associate faggots with effiteness. Their projection is oddly perverted from their normal way of fantasizing about "oppressed" groups. Generally the administrators equate inferiority with sexuality and subjectivity (both being base, sensual) and their own superiority with thought and objectivity. This holds true of every group *except* faggots. We are considered animal/sexual/base because our only defining characteristic is sexual; at the same time we are para-

Indiscriminate Promiscuity

doxically seen as an effete part of the ruling class—given over to music, philosophy, decoration, poetry and other intellectual pursuits. The accepted wisdom is that (unlike other oppressed groups) we are rich or nearly so. By one count, 80% of all U.S. homosexuals as homosexuals are living affluent lives or struggling to do so.

I don't accept such counts, nor the fantasy about our being an effete part of the ruling class. Quite the contrary, I think faggots suffer all the existing discriminations of our class/race-bound society plus those of sexual oppression. We need a more real understanding of our social standing—how it is a part of a class society—and from that I think we can find real strategies out of the existing, collapsing society.

To begin with, we need to understand that the idea of faggots being only a small group of decadent ruling-class parasites is nothing but a fantasy. Ruling-class faggots (of which there are plenty) are more visible and freer, but that doesn't mean they are necessarily more numerous. There are not fewer faggots in the working class, there are only more closets there. Manliness is really a mark of class oppression, and the lower class you are the more manly you are expected and required to be—both by your peers and the society in general. Thus sports—i.e. baseball, football, hockey, boxing, etc.—is primarily an interest of young and lower-class men. Almost a social necessity that declines as you rise on the class scale.



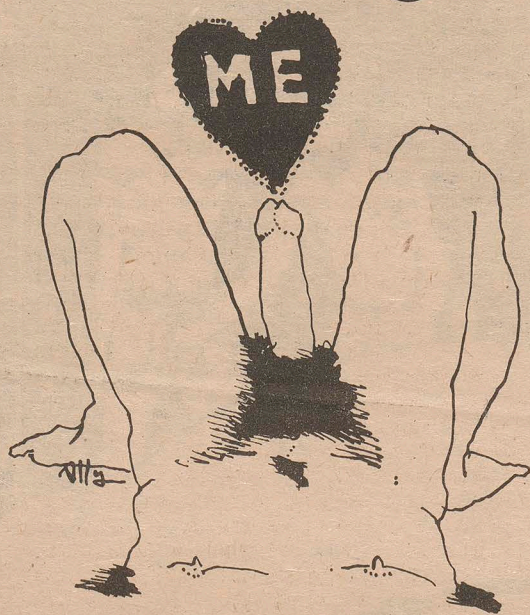
In the gay community, these marks of class are visible everywhere. The young, virile, beautiful, educated—usually white—form a circle of beautiful people, who as a group enjoy more fun and privilege than the old, ugly, poor, uneducated. All faggots carry in their heads a computer system/switchboard in which they weigh each other. On the grid we process such factors as height, penis size, ass shape, eyes, clothing, personality, smile, weight, age, skin/hair color, virility, education, intelligence, sun sign, birthplace and so forth. The inexorable computer says: Meet my Fantasy or be gone, what do you think this is, some kind of charity?

Too many protests against the horrors of this computer system have been against the values being processed rather than the process itself. That is, someone with a short penis will argue that technique should count more. Or someone will want to substitute personality, intelligence and education for those areas in which he would get a lower score. And isn't the demand for counting personality similar? A friend writes: "I have my best luck meeting people on the streets, just talking, and many times, through the beginnings of compassion or intimacy, the other person (who might have refused my advances in a bar or the fens) sees that I am a person and responds. In fact, I think I can say that I have luck only when I can get myself across as a decent, interesting human being."

I don't deny this heartfelt cry in any way; just typing it makes me want to stop and cry—search the faggot out and embrace. Yet I can't help feeling some failure to recognize the goodness in anonymity. Plenty has been said of its shortcomings; it's supposed to be breakdown of the family and civilization according to some sociologists. (They put it in French, *anomie*, to make their observation seem even profound.)

Faggots live *anomie* more than virtually any other group of people I know; despite the evils, maybe we're onto something good. Because sometimes it does help the old, ugly, poor, uneducated and generally "unfortunate." Since the computer of each faggot is "fussy" to some degree about who they'll copulate with, the more casual the encounter the less particular they are likely to be. In the baths or bushes, a faggot will more likely make it with someone he will not have to live with the next day. The trucks in New York City are one example of a very unfamiliar rendezvous—where words are seldom spoken, names are unknown, the whole body may never be seen. Unlike the baths and bars, they are also cheap (no cover charge).

As the stakes go up in the relationship, the standards go up. You might trick with someone in the bushes who has a score of 25, but require a score of 50 before you'd take him home to bed; 65 before you'd fix him breakfast;



69 before you'd actually make it again with him; 75 before you'd live with him; 85 before you'd become his lover; 95 before you'd live with him the rest of your life.

Thus the denunciations of tea-room sex or the baths or one-night stands are denunciations of victims. The typical bourgeois morality: people are bad because they are poor, less successful, less happy; they have done poorly in the economy, they are to blame. An *Advocate* poll asks the question: "Do you think that tearoom and park 'queens' are a disgrace and discredit to Gays?" A recent front page story in the *Boston Gay Community News* condemns such sex because it might alienate the Massachusetts state legislature. Laud Humphreys in *Tea Room Trade* found that many more lower-class men (often married) used the tea rooms than went to bars. More older men likewise. The baths or the bushes are similar. For instance, in Boston for many years you would not see more than one or two black faggots in the Punch Bowl (loud, brassy) or Sporters (collegiate) or Napoleon (high church)—but in the subway tea rooms or along the Esplanade, the proportion was greater.

Our computer/capitalist wiring grades not only people and places for cruising; more deviously it also controls our sexual practice. We carry around a control board indicating just what we can and will do in bed. Some people are wired only to suck; others only to fuck; some to sex only with black men; some only with white men; some only 69; some only in chains. Both as a group and as individuals, faggots have suffered from tightly delineated sex roles. Breaking these, building new wider, better circuits, is our most important task. Each person should be free to choose a role if they want and to live without roles if they want, but the freedom and potentiality should be wired in, available.

Least freedom probably exists in prison; here the roles tend to be most tightly defined. You either fuck or get fucked, and if you are fucked, you fit into an inescapable and undesirable category. When I went to visit the Bille-rica House of Correction, the prison master arranged an interview with two older trustees in order to intimidate any gay people coming to visit the prison. A lot of what they said was lies (like we were in danger of being raped and stabbed there), but one thing stood out in my mind. The trustee said, don't you understand, they've taken everything from us; we've only got one thing to hold onto, our manliness. Having to be a man is a mark of oppression; the more wretched your position, the more manly you're expected to be and the harder it is for you to be a faggot. The more you have to stay in the closet. The less freedom you have to be gay.

The situation with femininity or transvestism among men is similar—both in prison and in general "society." If you relinquish the role of straight man, then you have no other choice but to accept the role of woman—which brings a loss of freedom, money and independence. My own experience of cross-dressing is not great but that little has been educational. I remember wearing a robe at one gay "pride" celebration. In workshops, the lunch room and around the campus—everyone tended to ignore me and everything I said. Pantalooned men might open a few doors but for them I had otherwise ceased to exist. In themselves, roles are not evil but what is wrong is the fact that some people are involuntarily forced into certain definitely inferior roles and others fit into superior roles by their birthright as it were.

The idea of freedom seems particularly middle class; children of the working class are taught that you must either dominate someone or be dominated. And these roles appear in sexual relations. Anal sex is much more common among men in the third world or in rural areas than in the ruling parts of the empire (big cities for instance). The mouth is closer to the mind, personality above the rectum. Generally one is either dominant or dominated. The more middle-class a group of faggots, the more likely they will be into oral sex and the more likely it will be mutual. An interesting study shows that college students active in gay groups tend more toward oral sex than those outside gay groups who tend more toward anal sex. (No report on relative tooth decay).

Whatever the shortcomings of the gay liberation fronts, they really tried to break down roles. Admittedly they could be freer because so many were from the middle class. The luxury and possibilities of freedom were hard to come to and to understand, but that insight is perhaps our single most precious heritage. It doesn't always make

things easier; Phyllis Sawyer's "After Women's Liberation" says it in two lines: "Hurting more/ enjoying it less." But occasionally the vision, luxury, even ecstasy of a mutual faggot sexuality can be found. A few days ago, I think I felt it in Lynhurst Butte, Oregon: when I was being fucked and couldn't tell whether I was inside him or he was inside me. And later I couldn't remember which way it was. Maybe everyone feels that all the time but it was a revelation to me.

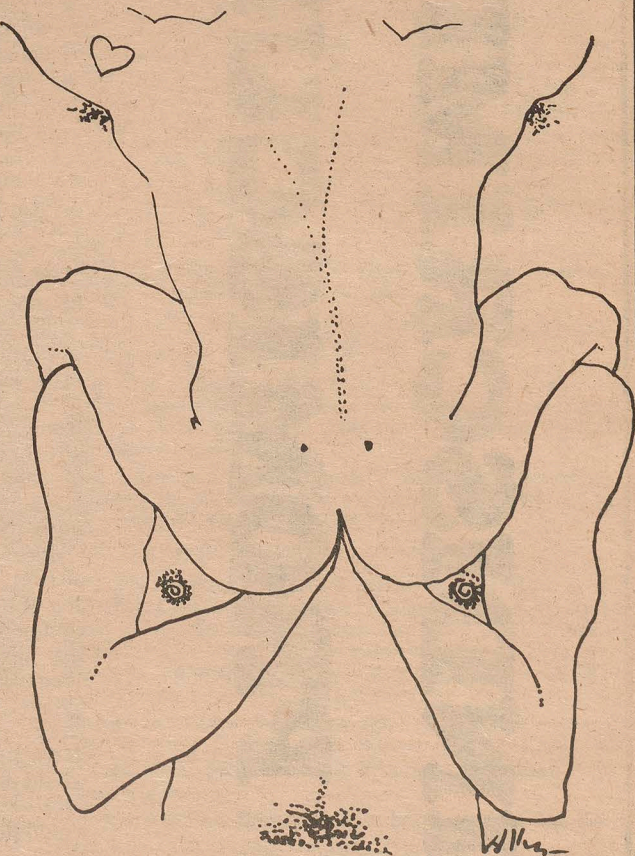
Everything boils down to *inequality*. We live in a culture/economy where all things are measured and sold; any inequality is counted and counts against you. Even the drug culture is a rat race of competition and selling and enslavement where the "superior" or those who have an edge either use it or have the potential for using it, and thus rule, prevail, while those without the edge fall to one side. Inequality cannot be dealt with on an individual philanthropic level: the unequal resent philanthropy, fear the loss of largesse. For instance, if a beautiful trick decides to befriend a "dirty old man," love him, go home with him, and become his lover, the economy dictates that the D.O.M. should live in constant jeopardy; he knows that he lives at the mercy of the other who has enough points to make different choices; the D.O.M. resents inevitably the disparity. Or the inequality could be money; someone might be rich and able to buy lovers. The poor lover will inevitably resent the inequality, where riches can be denied or granted him by reasons beyond his control.

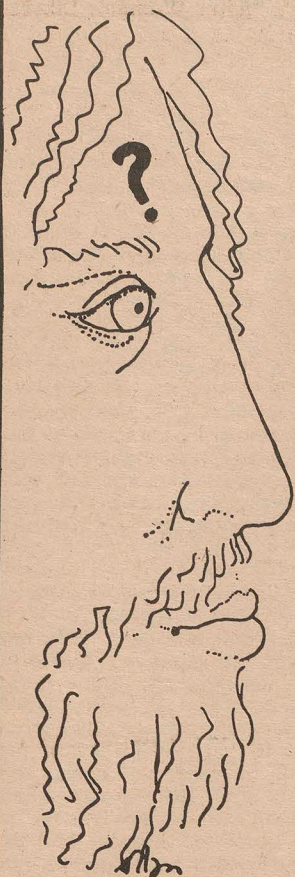
Billie Holiday sings that "Them that's got, gets; them that's not, lose, that's what the Bible says—and it still is news." Matthew 25:29, "For the man who has will always be given more, till he has enough and to spare; and the man who has not will forfeit even what he has." An Arab proverb says, "If you are a peg, endure the knocking; if you are a mallet, strike." That's the conventional wisdom of centuries against which we now speak.

I believe early clues to a new direction can be found in my own experiences in tea rooms, parks, trucks, baths and other untalked-of corners of this land. I don't want to make comparisons (such as faggots have made immemorably) about which faggots are good, better, best. Nor would I want to suggest the best bar or argue that monogamous marriage is the only respectable way. What I want to defend is the proposition that there is a whole body of experience within the existing promiscuity of faggots that (if accepted for the good it is) is revolutionary. I don't say there aren't "bad" sides to faggot behavior, the way we treat and mistreat each other. I offer some generalizations not as a utopian fantasy, but as a way for making change, a way rooted in the actual social experience of faggots—a way tied deeply into centuries of suffering and experience. You could label it "revolutionary sensuality," but I prefer *Indiscriminate Promiscuity*. People (particularly menpeople) have tended to classify love as changeless, timeless, natural, and as unavoidable or indefinite as death. This mystification is a fraud meant to prevent any questioning or change in the so-called "reality." Why should there not be a socialism of love and sex no less than of work and money? Should not equality and freedom extend to our bodies and their physical relationships as well as to the economy?

We need to be *indiscriminate*. No one should be denied love because they are old, ugly, fat, crippled, bruised, of the wrong race, color, creed, sex or country of national origin. We need to copulate with anyone who requests our company; set aside all the false contraptions of being hard to get, unavailable—that is, costly on the capitalist market. We need to leave behind the whole mentality of measurement; it is a massive tool of social control. We all measure ourselves against some standard, find ourselves wanting, and feel inferior, guilty, wrong, weak—in need of authority, direction, correction, ruling and enslavement.

Discriminating and distinguishing involves more than recognizing differences. Differences can indeed be precious, but they need to be understood as that—precious differences, not marketable qualities that have to be counted, compared and graded. Indeed, discrimination presumes a scale in which one perfection is taken as standard; everything short of achieving that goal is substandard and inferior on a particular scale.





Beauty, for instance, tends to cluster around a few ruling imperial standards—blond, blue-eyed, Nordic, etc. But even if different standards were set—"Black is beautiful," for instance—that would not be enough unless the competitive, measuring, rewarding, punishing system were junked. We are crippled by the pursuit of a false social ideal in sex—generally that of an Anglo-Saxon man. In fact beauty is not one ideal; it is in men everywhere. Beauty needs to be appreciated in its multiplicity and many manifestations; it also needs to be freed from its market value, its power, its usefulness in getting what you want (a lover, money, love, attention, customers, etc.).

Actually the greatest impediment to indiscriminacy is probably not so much ugliness as familiarity. I learned early about the incest tabu. I had this understanding faggot friend, who could see through my soul and perhaps me likewise. He made it with lots of people, some not that different from me. So once I said, "Why don't we try it together?" "Oh no," he answered, "that would be too much like incest." A faggot is more likely to be attracted to some stranger—hitchhiker, new-in-town, transient—than to a close friend. Part of this is the simple desire to keep social relations and sex separated; the latter being considered dirty and unworthy. But even those who over-

come this prejudice, who can accept their sexuality for the joy, dignity and beauty that it can be—they still lose some ardor and passion after a few years' acquaintance with another faggot. I've noticed this with my lover of nearly ten years; as he has come to be like my family to me, he has lost interest in me sexually.

Being indiscriminate would not only break down the hesitations about "ugliness" and undesirability but also break tabus between those who work and live closely together. A meeting would never be for "business" alone; every contact could be sexual as well. Our whole social system could become eroticized, sexualized, changed, revolutionized. The alienation most of us feel most of the time is most pronounced in our most intimate institutions—the "family" of social units in which we live. As David Cooper maintains in *Death of the Family*, these units are "the ultimately perfected form of nonmeeting" of "anonymized people."

We need to be more promiscuous as well as less discriminating. Promiscuous in every way with our bodies. Release all the armors and shackles, open all the pores and holes up for sexual communication. No restraint in any way. Multiple loves—amoeba-like as in orgies at the baths—single couplings, perhaps between subway stops or between classes or on the way shopping. We must be open at all times for sexual activity; in fact not make it an in-between action, but make every action sexual. Unlike capitalist decadence, our sexuality would not be separated from our business, our sexuality would not "drag" us down or wear us out for the tasks of building a totally free society. Our sexuality would be that society.

Promiscuity among faggots is not some dream or fantasy; it is a real social experience in many parts of our community. The present shortcomings of the baths, bushes, trucks, tea rooms and other libidinous areas is partly the discrimination that still goes on there. But it is more in the failure to provide for our lovers once we have been with them. Without a society in which everyone can make it (as well as make out), there will continue to be the question of "taking care of" each other—that is inequality, where the superior must provide for the inferior. Much of the fears and possessiveness in our present families comes from the way people are measured and sold on the love market as property. In our economy of scarcity, everyone continuously fears poverty and abandonment. Everyone is constantly hoarding people and love. Each relationship is curdled by the tendency to cling to someone else, to hold on for fear that there will be no more love after this. And the more marketable the love object and the less marketable the lover, the more desperate the clinging and the more terrifying the loss of a love object.

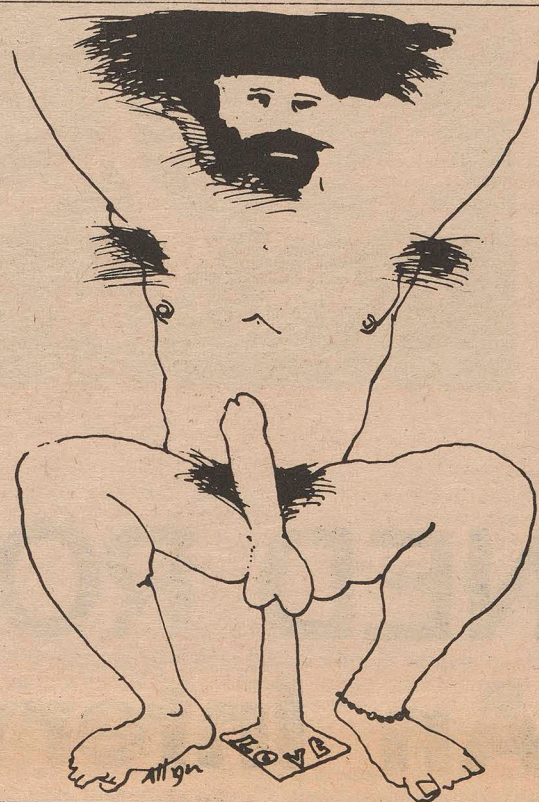
I think this may be my own greatest fantasy and fear—that of loss and abandonment. I've always worried about loss, what happens when the lover goes away, what if he leaves me, where then will I be. Such fear leads one to shut off, to be closed to loving, to protect oneself for fear of being wounded. And even coming to love the wound too dearly. Doubtless my own fantasy is my own particular one and cannot be exactly imposed on others, certainly not all faggots nor all society. Yet, I offer my humble solution. Indiscriminate Promiscuity, and wonder

if it wouldn't allow for a society in which each person could be free to provide for themselves without dependency.

This would, I believe, be the essence of a socialist economy: where each individual would become a person, be free, be an independent, unique agent, where they might explore the voice deep within. A humane socialism must move beyond trade-union economism; it must lose its prudery, and find sexuality. In calling for a socialist society, we do not ask some party or state to suddenly give something to us—like legalize homosexuality.

We don't want something, we want everything. Not half a loaf, but the whole thing; not for some but for everyone. Our desires are not false, nor an expression of hunger, appetite, want: our desires—to suck cock for instance—are creative, they are the road to creation, to the modification of reality. Our bodies themselves are real; our sexual organs are not separate from our persons; they should be an expression of our individuality. "Capitalism," a friend of mine writes, "keeps the desires in the frame of its limits, it enlarges these limits to contain the desires, it co-opts. There is hope, though, because no one knows where the new eruption is going to come from, and desire is more and more coming from unexpected places, so that capitalism has a harder time to prevent revolution. While the capitalists are reading Mao, Castro, Che, to prevent a surprise attack, the marginals invent revolutionary strategies, unheard of, unread before."

—Charles Shively



GAYS AND THE TRADITIONAL LEFT

Since I came out three and a half years ago I have considered myself a gay radical. I came out into the gay liberation movement from several years of participation in the straight left of the 60's. At that time, I had quite ill-defined politics which I suppose complemented rather nicely my ill-defined self. In those days, the gay movement seemed to be to a great extent attempting to clarify its relation to the straight movement. A parallel endeavor was an attempt to discover—or create—roots for the gay movement in an historic tradition of radical politics. To the extent that people in this culture are even aware of an historic opposition to the dominant society, that opposition is Marxism. This led a lot of people who were clear about their opposition to the dominant society to assume that they must be some sort of Marxist. Marxism is often presented as the only framework in which a person can develop a coherent opposition to imperialism, racism and now sexism. This rather uncritical acceptance of Marxism seems to me to have been the source of several regrettable conflicts within the gay movement. What I would suggest is that many of the conflicts were not necessarily due to "reactionary" elements of the gay movement, but were due to the inadequacy of Marxism as a framework for sexual politics. I will try to explain why I see Marxism as inadequate, if not inappropriate, to gay people.

First and most easily dismissed is the so-called vulgar Marxism which to a great extent equals the old-line Communist Party-type marxism. I have a hard time thinking even of gayness in this context. Simply within the traditional political criteria, CP politics seems to be such a dismal failure. Gay politics are here reduced to the primitive level at which capitalism attempts to keep us. Namely we would be reduced to a civil rightsian approach of appealing to and pleading with the state-party bureaucracy for recognition as human beings. To say the least, the CP does not have a tradition of recognizing gayness as politically relevant or even humanly relevant. Clearly then, this element of the Marxist tradition offered no hope to gays searching for a framework in which to legitimize our rage.

Recognizing this, the affinity for the Marxist critique has centered around the humanistic elements of Marx, particularly as developed by European Marxists. Marxist humanism has been primarily based on a rediscovery of the early writings of Marx. Heavily emphasized in these early writings are the origins of private property and alienation. Here finally we have something common to most gays—alienation. In fact this has been the concept latched on to by most of the humanistic schools of Marxism as a basic concept of Marx. Let's not be too quick, however, to think we have found with this a neat framework by which to analyze our situation. The root of this concept in Marx's writings is the First Manuscript of 1844. In this essay, he analyzes alienation in a way which leads me to believe that he is using the term in a much more confined way than we often do in speaking of our alienation as gays. By starting with an analysis of the nature of the relation of the worker to the product of labor as alienation, Marx goes on to explore the subsequent alienation from self and from others. I think it would be a mistake to deny the extent or power of this sort of alienation. However, I feel that it is also a serious mistake to suppose that all phenomena which we term alienation can be accounted for by Marx's model. The analysis provided by Marx is an accurate analysis of work alienation in a capitalist society. This is clearly a source of alienation for most gays since most gays work. However, even the broad interpretation of alienation from others given by some writers on work alienation comes up quite lacking as an analysis of much of our alienated experience as gays.

Now, where do the Marxists go from here? The most common next step is to view gay people as one of the minority groups maintained in an oppressed status by the capitalist society (e.g., the position held by the Socialist Workers' Party). It is quite accurately pointed out that the economic structure of this country encourages the oppression of antagonistic minority groups. This seems to me to be another point that is interesting by virtue of being a half-truth. The element of truth is that to the extent we as gays are viewed as and

view ourselves as a minority group we can understand our economic oppression in such areas as jobs and housing. The negative, insidious aspect of the minority-group approach is that it is crucial for the straight power structure. Inasmuch as the straight male mentality will even recognize the existence of gays, they would very much like to be able to deal with us as a minority group. I find this just as true in traditional liberalism as in the traditional left. The way in which I see this as reinforcing to straight mentality is that it allows them to continue to view gayness as a phenomenon alien to themselves. Gayness continued to be viewed as something which afflicts a few social aberrants. To me, this is precisely a myth, the destruction of which is a cornerstone of gay liberation. Until straight men become aware of their own homoerotic selves (the repression of which produced their present mangled personalities), then gay liberation will be at most a matter of pleading for tolerance in a straight-defined framework.

A final aspect of Marxism which I feel is counter to our needs as gay people is their fascination with being scientific. Marxism developed at a time in which there was still the hope that science would provide some sort of total, definitive framework. This has given rise to what seems to me a tragic aspect of Marxism—their pseudo-objectivity. The myth has been that somehow by a proper analysis of society one could objectively determine the proper course of action. This course would be objectively valid by being scientifically determined and would be ordained by history. What more could you want? One rather crucial problem, however. No one ever quite figured out how to establish the nature of the truly "proper" analysis. This would be innocuous if it were merely a theoretical flaw. It is, however, one of those theoretical flaws which have been quite costly. It was with just this sense of historical certainty that Stalin launched his vicious attacks on the peasants and Castro imprisoned and "re-educated" gays.

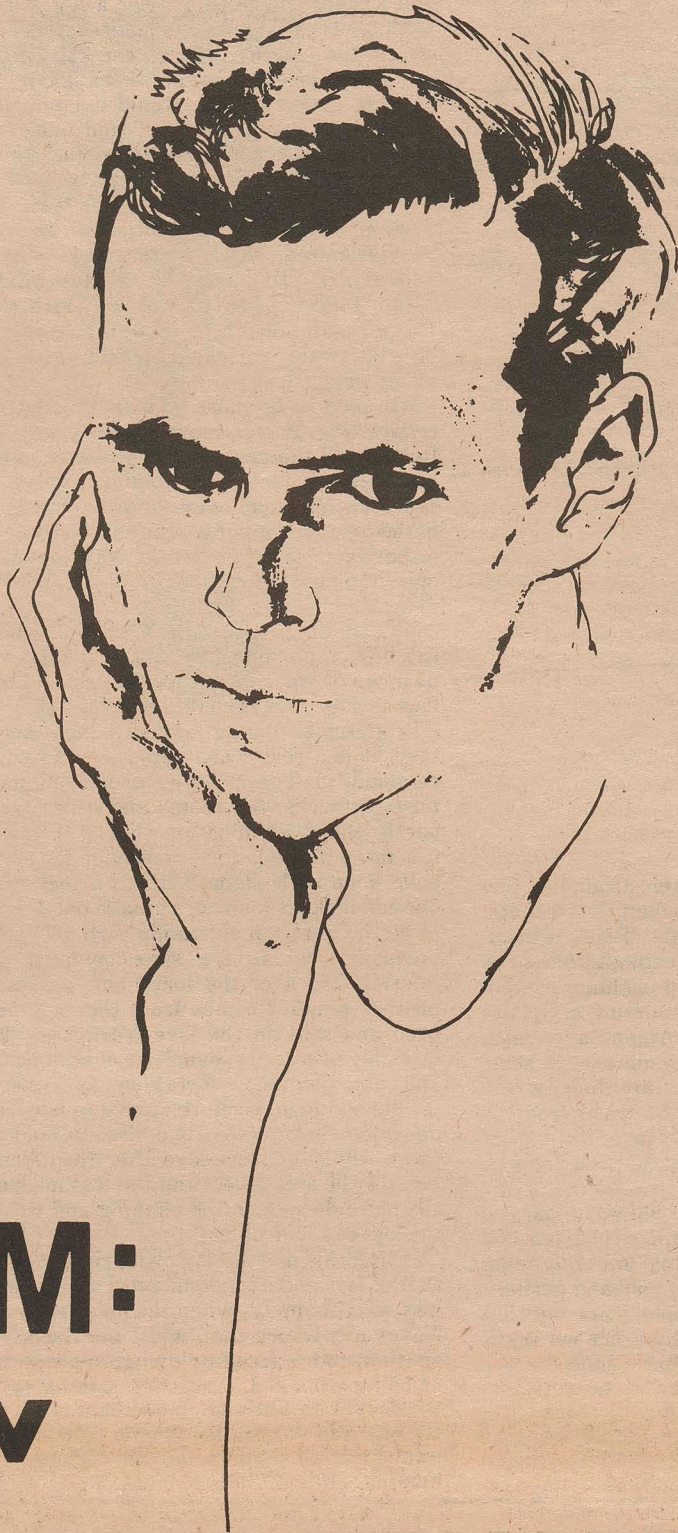
This sense of scientific and historical certainty ties in with what I see as a negative aspect of many gay radicals' attraction to

Marxism. As I mentioned before, I think many of us were searching for an historical tradition through which to legitimize our rage. What better than something which pretends to be historically and scientifically objective? The search for legitimacy in some historical tradition seems to me to be an outgrowth of our inability to trust ourselves and our experience. A life of repression and oppression is sufficient in itself to legitimize our rage and our demands for transformed social and interpersonal structures.

To the extent that I see my politics and life in relation to a tradition, it would be that of anarchism. I would be quick, however, to note that this is not without dissociating much of what is within the anarchist tradition. Suffice it to say that it too has been a straight, male-dominated tradition. What makes anarchism attractive to me is that such dissociation is not a threat to its tradition, but rather is within the anarchist tradition. Anarchism has no single body of writing to serve as a fount of truth—no holy writ. Anarchism does, however, have many elements in its numerous embodiments which I find important as a gay person. One is its stress on the basis of a new society being the individual and the self-conscious community of which the person is a part. The society which we create must be an embodiment of our lives as experienced in un-repressed and probably as yet unthought-of ways. Anarchism has a tradition of stressing revolution as a process and not a specific event. Gay liberation has had a parallel and compatible stress on revolution as an experimental, fluid and possibly ambiguous life-style of revolt.

Finally, I think we as gay people should continue to develop our opposition from our growing sensitivity to the ways we are oppressed every day. What is important is to act against the institutions and embodiments of that oppression. I do not see the development of a coherent theory as useless, but the theory must be an expression of our life experiences and not a sieve through which our experiences are strained.

—David Darby



NED ROREM: An Interview

NED ROREM
30 August 1962
by Don Bachardy

Words and music are inextricably linked for Ned Rorem. He has been called "the world's best composer of art songs," yet his musical and literary ventures extend far beyond this specialized field. Rorem has composed three symphonies, three piano concertos, five operas, several ballets and other music for the theatre, choral works of every description, and literally hundreds of songs and song cycles. He is also the author of five books, including two volumes of diaries, and a collection of lectures called "Music from the Inside Out" (Braziller, 1967).

Born in Richmond, Indiana, on October 23, 1923, Rorem early moved to Chicago with his family, where by the age of ten his piano teacher had introduced him to Debussy and Ravel, an experience which "changed his life forever." At seventeen Rorem entered the Music School of Northwestern University. After two years there, he received a scholarship to the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. Rorem later studied composition under Bernard Wagenaar at Juilliard, where he took his B.A. in 1946 and his M.A. degree (along with the George Gershwin Memorial Prize in composition) two years later. In New York he was Virgil Thomson's copyist, in return for \$20 a week and orchestration lessons. He studied on fellowship at the Berkshire Music Center in Tanglewood in the summers of 1946 and 1947. In 1948, his "The Lordly Hudson" was voted the best published song of that year by the Music Library Association.

In 1949 Rorem moved to France, where he lived until 1958. These years as a young composer among the leading figures of the artistic and social milieu of post-war Europe are absorbingly portrayed in "The Paris Diary of Ned Rorem" (Braziller, 1966). This was followed by the books "The New York Diary" (1967), "Music and People" (1968), and "Critical Affairs: A Composer's Journal" (1970). His most recent book is "Pure Contraption: A Composer's Essays" (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1974). Rorem's "Final Diary" will be published later this year.

The following interview with Ned Rorem was taped by Winston Leyland, editor of Gay Sunshine, at Rorem's New York apartment in late October, 1973. The interview was edited and revised in May 1974. A photo of the interviewer appears in the photo essay elsewhere in this issue. A profile of Ned Rorem, along with excerpts from his diaries, was published in Gay Sunshine #17 (March 1973).

Winston Leyland: In your "New York Diary" you have an aphorism: "The beautiful have a more drastic challenge than the ugly in aging, for only they must habituate to a change." How do you feel you've met this challenge, now that you've turned fifty which you've considered a kind of crucial turning point?

Ned Rorem: It's merely an epigram. There's really nothing to add to an epigram because it is its own explanation. The implication is also that I considered myself beautiful when I wrote it, which was twenty-five years ago. Well, I've been fifty for two days and it's less traumatic than thirty. When I was twenty-nine and a half I turned jaundiced with trauma because it was a thing which could happen to anyone but oneself. If you can be thirty, you can die—that I got past, and was willing to die, gave me a new lease on life. There's nothing to say except I'm proud, and I've had a nice life. The difference between me now and, say, fifteen years back, is that I'm more happy. No—happy's not the word. The state of happiness is a stupid state. I'm less miserable. Misery is unbecoming after a

certain age and can be controlled consciously, assuming you're in reasonably good health. Nothing's more inelegant than to be unhappily in love after forty, or to show it, to go around crying on people's shoulders. Certain preoccupations replace others with age. It's a favorite topic of the all-knowing Colette: the horror of aging, still falling in love, not being able to adjust to unrequited infatuations and therefore going to pot. Nothing is less graceful than an unhappy person. If the unhappy person is young and handsome, he or she just might get away with tears flowing down those downy cheeks. But I decided one day, O.K., I've done all that, I've let myself crack up sentimentally for too long. Let's stop it. There are more pressing concerns. Like, the work must come before the anxiety (which it always did, for that matter). This planet's in too much of a mess for my private vanities to take precedence. So that's my first reaction to fifty. How I'll feel next week I don't know, but for the moment things seem pretty fine. True, I no longer see through a glass darkly, but realize ever more keenly that my heartbeats are numbered. All around me friends are dying off. Yet as the future shrinks the past expands, and the expanse takes on new significance every day—which is nourishing.

WL: I didn't know your birthday was two days ago.

NR: Yes. Same day as Sarah Bernhardt's Franz Liszt's, and Johnny Carson's. . . . Again, my little epigram about adapting: a perfect face altered is more dismaying for those who have looked at it than is the alteration of a face they never thought perfect. Auden's face as it aged intrigued but didn't appall people because it always was a crisscross of spider webs. Lana Turner's face disturbs people now because it once existed specifically for being perfect. (Poets don't get face-lifts.) With me, it's not a question of whether I was in fact pretty, but of whether I thought I was. Still, I was smart enough never to let that thought be foremost, although the fact that I even wrote about it so much in the diaries embarrasses me now. I can't think of anything more to say on this.

WL: Aging seems to be a more traumatic thing for some gay people because of the emphasis which is put on youth in the gay community. You know, the "over-the-hill-at-thirty" syndrome.

NR: There's many a well-adjusted homosexual over the age of fifty, and many maladjusted heterosexuals. It just isn't true that gay people are lonelier than un-gay people (or whatever the opposite of gay is), and I'm in a position to know.

WL: I think there's a question of ageism in the gay community to some extent. There are a lot of older, lonely people around who perhaps don't have their work, their art, to uplift them.

NR: Well, along with other preoccupations, sex, for instance, as a pastime, doesn't concern me as it used to. The competitive scene of making out no longer seems so urgent. I do like people to respond to me, but to respond to my intelligence more than to my physique. Of course, we all want to be loved for ourselves alone, but none of us are, for the good reason that there's no such animal. I don't put myself in a position to be rejected any longer, and that's a relief. I do see a lot of ageism, for instance, vis-a-vis my own parents, or other older people here and there. Most of the people I frequent regularly are roughly my age, at least here in America. Fortunately, I don't lust

for young people, and do not curry their approval.

WL: In the interview I did with Christopher Isherwood, he talked about his gayness as being crucial to his life as an artist. He gave a quote at the end of the interview to that point; he said that he couldn't imagine himself not being gay. Do you feel the same has been true of your own life, or to what extent has your sexuality been interwoven with your work?

NR: How can one know? As an infant, almost from the time I knew how to talk, I knew what I wanted to be. It was just a question of tossing a coin—which kind of artist should I be: a performing musician, or a so-called creative musician? or shall I be a writer, or a dancer, or a whatever? Since I was in America rather than in Europe, which is a country of specialists rather than of general practitioners, I learned you have to be one thing; but even to this day I hate to pigeonhole myself. I'm a composer, but also a performing musician (I give concerts all over the country) and a writer, and more. I never wanted to be what other little boys want to be, a fireman, or Tarzan, or . . . Oh, I did aspire to be a pastry cook, for a while. Still, it never occurred to me that everybody in grammar school wasn't exactly like me; it never occurred to me that when they went home in the afternoon they didn't sit down and play Ravel on the piano, and then try to write pieces that sounded like Ravel. It never occurred to me that they didn't read Hawthorne or Gide. It was a rude awakening: the lack of curiosity I found in my fellow man. By the same token I cannot categorize myself. To be homosexual is too generalizing, I can't say "we," not even "we composers," or "we writers," or "we fifty-year-olds." I say "they." Therefore I can only refer to my **sexuality**. Now a black person is demonstrably black, there's nothing he can do about it. He's black if he's a scientist, he's black as he looks into a microscope, he's black as he reads Plato. We can see that he is. Meanwhile, a homosexual is only homosexual when he's being homosexual. He's not demonstrably so when he's writing music, or when he's thinking about a recipe for carrot cake. Homosexuality is a condition, whereas to be black is not a frame of mind, it's a physical identity.

WL: I don't agree with you all the way on that. I feel that I am gay twenty-four hours of the day and not just when I'm making love.

NR: I don't claim I'm not gay, but my sexuality is only one section of what I am. Certainly it's conditioned me down to my toenails. But as to how it's conditioned me, I'll never know. Let me add that I've never suffered from being what I am, or **particularly** what I am. When I told that to Kenneth Pitchford—who has now become an ultra-radical liberationist—he said you **have** suffered—you just don't know it. Well, I've faced far more hurdles for being a composer than for my bedtime inclinations. I feel more discriminated against as an artist in our America than as a queer. The milieu in which I evolved as an adolescent in Chicago was an "artistic" one. My parents, although not swinging people, were and are cultivated and intelligent; we never discussed sex (a case of tact between generations, although there was a lot of gaudy rumpus when I was a kid); still the community was on my side. And even as an artist in this society, if I feel discriminated against, as a composer, I still feel I've been awfully lucky. I've been appreciated for what I am able to do, and appreciation is the food of inspiration.

WL: Don't you think that perhaps you've not been exposed to as much discrimination as a gay person because of the artistic circles in which you were moving, such as in the 50's, in France?

NR: France is not all that open-minded, and is also the most heterosexual of European countries. But don't forget, I lived here all through the 1940's. By definition the category to which I have always been drawn is not homosexual, so much as literary. Though it's dumb for literature to be anti-homosexual, a lot of them are. I mean, Mailer still gets a cheap giggle on TV when he refers to the Marquis de Sade as a faggot. Everybody laughs nervously. Now, the nervousness is not because of the word "faggot"; it's because of who the Marquis de Sade was! Is it conceivable that Mailer would say "nigger" as he says "faggot" for an easy reaction? Well, that doesn't bother me if I'm in a milieu which is not inherently anti-homosexual, being literary, and thus inherently individualistic, as opposed, say, to a military milieu. It would be no more than vulgar of Mailer to make his quip in my presence. In that sense I wouldn't feel discriminated against. If I were among baseball players and they said it, I would feel, well, what am I doing here anyway? I've nothing in common with them—not because of sexuality but because of education. I've no more in common with them than Kafka or Kissinger do. I may one day suffer from society, but it'll be the suffering of, shall we say, post-menopause. . . .

I do ultimately feel more at ease in a homosexual group than in an essentially straight one. But again, whatever the group, I'm more at home with intelligent than with stupid people. I'm basically shy. That may be hard to believe, because I talk so much, and because I write diaries, which when they first came out were thought of as candid. But the very fact of keeping a diary implies a kind of reticence. In a sense the diarist writes what he is unable to say. As a terribly timid kid I told myself, categorically and calmly: be shy if you want to but no one will pay attention to you. You're as bright as the others in this room, saying their witty empty things. Shyness will get you no place. Yet even now, to speak out at a party means to break through a barrier, which makes me (unjustly) intolerant of people who are shy. If I can conquer it so can they. Shyness surely comes from a person's sexuality, just as everything that a person is contributes to what he produces. May I contradict that by its opposite? Could one say there is such a thing as homosexual music? There are works of literature that I admire terrifically, while feeling they lack a necessary queer spice. That's bigotry in reverse, perhaps, but I mean it. Although I'm attracted toward super-masculinity in humans, I loathe super-masculinity in art. Although I am not attracted toward effeminacy in a person, that's precisely what I admire in art. Which is probably what appeals to me in French art. French heterosexuals are not afraid of delicacy. Ballsiness—that is, male defiance—is not an ingredient of twentieth-century European culture. The male artifacts of a composer like William Schuman, a writer like James Jones, a painter like Jackson Pollack are strictly made in USA. Of course, the greatest art contains both gentleness and savagery. But isn't that also the definition of a true man? and of a true woman?

WL: What's your response to the Gay Liberation movement and its ideology in regard to the oppression of gay people? Do you respond in a negative or positive way to the gay activist movement?

NR: I think gay liberation is important. If I haven't done anything about it in a public way it's because I'm a coward. My mother, age 75, to this day stands on street corners to impeach Nixon, to foster abortion, to solicit funds to stop the war in Vietnam. Gay Liberation (which we never discuss in any but the most objective way) she's entirely sympathetic with, as is my father. It's something I only kind of enter in with, but whether I'm right or wrong, I'm right for me. The thing is, I am first of all a composer, and anything I can do for any group of people, I want to do as a composer, as Benjamin Britten does with his concerts to raise money for peace in the world. I would willingly give a concert for Gay Liberation. Not as a gay musician necessarily, just as a musician.

Let me put it this way. I'm against Gay Liberation except where it counts. I dislike seeing people stretching virtually every remark, as certain women do, into a sexist remark. Recently while in Vancouver to give a concert I read that Jill Johnston was there too, giving a speech. And I said, "Well, I have nothing to do tonight. I'll go listen to her," and I did. Afterward, as we got into the question period, she said, "Nobody's asking me any questions. I usually like some hostility at this point." So I raised my hand and introduced myself and said, "I don't feel hostile, but I'm willing to help get this show on the road. Do you remember that I once sent you a letter that was printed in the [Village] Voice?" She said, "Yes, I know that. I know your book. I know you. You're a sexist." She had the answer before the question was even posed and that was so hopelessly depressing that I simply after half an hour got up and left. We were getting no place. It was not a meeting of minds. I'm for, in other words, Women's Liberation, except as it is misused. Ditto for Gay Lib. But the compassionless infighting is as distasteful as Watergate. There are people, after all, who don't care one way or another about your sex life if they care about you. Not to make an issue of one's penchants doesn't imply one denies them. In my books I have never said, "I am homosexual." I have simply said "I am sexual." I've never concealed the nature of my love affairs. I've also taken other people's tolerance so for granted that I'm alarmed by any countercurrent. Suddenly there's a new generation who also take it for granted, but far more defiantly.

WL: This compassionless infighting, as you call it, has occurred too often in the gay movement. In a recent issue of the gay male feminist journal Double-F, I was included on a "Gay Enemies" list along with just about every other full-time male gay liberationist in the country. Actually, I was honored rather than hurt. It was like being on Nixon's "Secret Enemies" list.

NR: I like your magazine because of your concern with the whole person, and not just the groin nor just flag-waving, if you'll pardon the expression. . . . To hear these things that you're telling me now about Double-F brings bitter tears. Infighting, to me, is a most unhappy thing.

WL: In your book "Critical Affairs" you say there isn't a homosexual art as such any more than there's heterosexual, female, or black art, although you do say that "art may come from the experience of being these things." You also say that art dealing directly with homosexual experience does not necessarily deepen an understanding of heterosexual relationships. Don't you think that art dealing with homosexual experience deepens our understanding of homosexual experience? I could mention some of the poetry of John Wieners, Allen Ginsberg, Harold Norse, Frank O'Hara—poetry which has certainly deepened my understanding.

NR: It doesn't deepen our understanding of homosexuality. It deepens our understanding of art, the human condi-

tion. I'm not sure what you mean by homosexual art, but it's a beguiling question and there could be many definitions. A comprehensive editorial on homosexuality is more persuasive, for the so-called average man, than an art work on the subject—whatever that might be. You just mentioned Frank O'Hara. I think if Frank O'Hara were told that his subject was homosexuality, that would come as a surprise to him.

WL: I don't mean that homosexuality was his subject. I think there was a homosexual sensibility underlying all his poems. This comes more to the surface perhaps in some poems in which he was more explicit, such as the poem about visiting a gay bar with friends.

NR: That's not quite what you said before. By that token you could say the homosexual sensibility of Hemingway comes to the surface—he is so vitriolically anti-queer that he's obviously queer. So that's a kind of homosexuality too. I thought you were talking subject matter, not sensibility.

WL: And subject matter too. In the case of many poets gay subject matter is very important in their writing. John Wieners, for instance, writes a good deal of poems on gay themes, or connected with the gay experience in some way.

NR: Why say "gay experience"? Why not just say "experience"? Why qualify that any more than you would say that "Romeo and Juliet" is on the heterosexual experience? Why don't you forget the word "gay" in a case of that sort. Insofar as "The City and the Pillar," for instance, has homosexuality as its theme it's a bad book. It might be good propaganda but not good literature. Do you think that for President Nixon, the reading of Wieners' poetry would be more convincing than the reading of an essay on the subject?

WL: I don't think that he'd get anything out of John Wieners' poetry or out of an essay. Nixon is totally corrupt with zero sensitivity. I think for many gay people, especially when "coming out," reading John Wieners' poetry can be a catalytic experience, can be revelation. It was for me, and I told John that when I saw him recently.

NR: A lot of things "work" that are not "art," yet which can be a great help to men and women who are coming out. Some very intelligent people are just not concerned with art, while many unintelligent people, who are very uptight about sexuality, don't need poetry but therapy. I feel strongly that art doesn't change people. It reinforces what they already know.

WL: I agree. Poetry did not change me. But it was immensely catalytic.

NR: As for homosexual subject matter, we can talk about that until the cows come home and never put our finger on what exactly it is. What it is changes with each generation. Let me give you a political example. You have the recording of my "War Scenes." In 1969, the French baritone Gerard Souzay asked me to write a song cycle for his American tour. I wanted to compose something for him that, with his French accent, wouldn't sound funny. The words of my beloved Frank O'Hara or of John Ashbery were just too colloquially American. Now, the Vietnam misadventure was at its height at that time, so what could I use as a text that would be both good literature and engaged which Souzay could put across with his little accent? I wanted to use something to express my concern for this mess we're in. Yet I cannot set current news items to music about bloody injustices. Lots of young poets go on the assumption that "to know where it's at" makes them poets. That war is bad and peace is good does not of itself make literature. Some great poets are terrific bigots. To be a poet does not mean to be right; too many bad poems in the name of peace prove this.

WL: There's bad music too.

NR: Sure. Well, since there's always the question that as a composer I'm going to write bad music, I at least didn't want to set bad verse to it. In 1969 I wanted to set words that had a degree of universality. So I went to Walt Whitman who had served me well in the past. I didn't want to take verse of his, so I used his Civil War diary, "Specimen Days," which he kept while he was a medical assistant, writing of his attitudes both tranquil and devastating. The sense of the text could apply not only to the Civil War, but to the Trojan War or to Vietnam, or, as we sit here today, to the war in Israel. Walt's words are not about the war,



they're about a war. They're about generalized strife, applicable to you or to me, to poor and rich and guilty and innocent. Generalized by an individual! So I composed a cycle which is effective, but one of the reasons, perhaps the only reason it's effective, is because Whitman wrote the words. By the same token, not just any bright versifier treating homosexuality can be persuasive, it's how good the treatment is. So that's not homosexual art, that's John Wieners' art, or Whitman's art, or Goodman's art. If it touches a strain in you as a homosexual, that is not because Whitman was homosexual, but because he was a poet.

WL: I would disagree on that; I doubt that you can separate the two.

NR: You mean the mere fact that a poet is a homosexual is going to touch you?

WL: Not necessarily. Whitman, for example, touches me because he was an insightful poet and a gay brother. There's a gay sensibility throughout his writing. A good

poet who is not homosexual cannot write really of the homosexual experience. It will not be persuasive at all.

NR: Yet the inverse does not hold true. I mean, E.M. Forster's weakest book (though I happen to love it) is "Maurice." It's weak structurally. It's a fairy tale, if you'll pardon the expression, with specifically homosexuality as subject matter. It's a trick, and a fantasy at that. But Forster, or any homosexual, can write of heterosexual experience, because from what do we all learn if not from our heterosexual environs, after all? Remember that chic vogue of criticizing or of digging "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf," because the protagonists were drag queens? As if a homosexual can't write about other things! One writes about what one knows, or what one imagines, and Albee is no more a woman than Shakespeare—author of "Macbeth"—was a murderer.

WL: My point is that successful poems touching on the gay experience are almost always poems that have been



Ned Rorem, 1950's
by Henri Cartier-Bresson

written by good poets who happen to be gay—poets who have gotten into their gayness and integrated it into their life, their writing. "Maurice" may be an inferior novel (although that's debatable). But I think it's sad that "Maurice" could not be published while Forster was alive. He did suffer for his homosexuality, and perhaps punished himself by withholding the book during the last decades of his life when it could have been published.

NR: I'm very much against censorship, of course, but I do believe that limitations—whether imposed by the artist on himself or by the state, are not a deterrent to communication. Art is form. Does it really make much difference for a novelist? He knows many ways for sidestepping censorship. It's not as though he were a preacher or a journalist. Censorship makes far less difference in questions of art than in questions of daily life. A work of art will come to the fore, censorship or not. Of course an artist needs freedom. But even more, he needs discipline—he's going to set his own limitations in any case. Creation is not solely the spewing forth of unreasoned emotion. Control is the very heart of poetry. To be able to say things within a set framework, or by allusion. I wouldn't presume to define pornography (the definition of pornography changes every three minutes). But in the long run, Sophocles or Tolstoy or even Jane Austen can be very very sexy because their excitement is in context. Hard-core porno, by depicting sex out of context, ends up more wearying than stimulating. Similarly, homosexuality for its own sake proves nothing.

WL: To return to Walt Whitman, who I gather has been a source of constant inspiration for you. You mentioned in one of your books that you used Whitman's tropic format, development of ideas, in your tone poem "Eagles." You also set five Whitman poems for baritone and clavichord in 1957, and then there's the setting from "Specimen Days" that you just mentioned. Perhaps you could talk a little more about Whitman and why he has meant so much to you?

NR: Well, I've never musicalized any of his so-called boy poems—unless they're all boy poems. God knows he was sexual, all sperm and growth, and becoming rather than dying. But I love and need death too, and Whitman essentially is not about death, he's not pessimistic. Like Roethke, who was a most morbid human, in his poetry he was optimistic and wrote about plant life and resurgence.

It may be of interest to know how I happened to compose the orchestral tone poem "Eagles." It's a nonvocal piece which contradictorily employs a poem rather than a musical structure as format. Now music cannot be based on, say, sonnet or ballad or sestina forms because there's no such thing as rhyme in music. Only words rhyme. What I did there is sort of amusing from a musician's standpoint. I took a Whitman poem about eagles fucking in mid-air. They clench claws, start to bleed, gyrate like a wheel, and fall a mile in the air while having a great orgasm. Then she flies off in her direction and he flies off in his direction, and the poet, who was watching this during his morning walk along the river, is somehow changed, and continues to walk. I took each one of those eighteen lines and translated them into music. Yet music has no literary connotations. None. Except inasmuch as it deals directly with words, as in songs. Vocal music is bastard music, being the illegitimate result of music's rape of poetry. That doesn't mean bastards can't be healthy and stimulating. If a wordless tone-poem has a program, as "Eagles" does or as Richard Strauss' tone-poems do, it's only by virtue of what the composer, in words, tells you it signifies.

To write a song I need good poetry first. Second, it must be my kind of good poetry. My kind of good poetry as opposed, say, to Pierre Boulez's kind, or George Crumb's or Lou Harrison's. It has to communicate when sung. That might sound obvious. Yet another composer has other criteria and may not be concerned about the words being understood when they're sung. In fact, he could set them to music disjointly. In Gregorian chant the word "deo" can be protracted for five minutes. And if you come in late you're lost. Theologically you know the word is "deo," but it's not the meaning that counts, it's the meaning of the meaning. But I'm interested in the words being understood on a straight verbal plane as they are sung, so I use them prosodically, as we speak them. I don't distort words

to where you can't understand them, or repeat arbitrarily words that the poet has not repeated. My kind of good poetry means, then, that it's got to be fairly easy. I'm not interested in setting T. S. Eliot which is a little bit complicated, or Marianne Moore, though I love and respect them.

WL: But you did set John Ashbery's work, rather difficult poetry.

NR: John Ashbery is complicated but in another way. I did set John Ashbery's "Some Trees" for three voices and piano. Now that's a different concept. Nobody "understands" Ashbery anyway. I mean, it's not poetry that you understand the same way that you understand, let's say, a Shakespeare sonnet which has one meaning. It might have puns and things, but it has a specific message. The elusiveness of Ashbery's poetry is its very nature. The elusiveness of Eliot's poetry is not its nature. An Eliot poem asks you to interpret it, to find references. It dares you to find the key. John Ashbery's poems don't challenge an interpretation. They're asking you to let them flow over your skin. Sensual experience can't be meaningful in any literary way, at least while it's occurring. So music only adds to the fun. Kenneth Koch I've set a good deal of. I just did his opera "Bertha," which of course is very easy if you know "Bertha." It's all of the Shakespeare king plays reduced to ten pages: a huge tragic farce in miniature. It's very funny and it's very sad. Very direct too, and all about President Nixon. Bertha, the mad queen of Norway, is so obsessed with invading countries she finally invades her own. We're performing it with a mezzo-soprano, Beverly Wolff, and a little chorus of nine singers. As a play it makes plain sense. Kenneth's poems don't make sense in the sense of sense, they make sense in the sense of poetry.

WL: You've also set poems by Paul Goodman.

NR: Well, Paul is something quite else—both literal-minded yet romantic in the expansive nineteenth-century manner. He's sort of my Goethe, the poet I constantly turn to, who constantly satisfies me. And his poetry is just the opposite of his prose writing. It's sentimental, it rhymes, it's non-intellectual. Yet he doesn't say anything in his poetry that he doesn't say in his prose. Because everything that Paul was, was poetry. His plays were poetry. His poems were poetry. His essays on how to plan a city were poetry. Like Freud he was a poet first, a thinker second. And I'm sure he thought that way about himself. Paul's approval had much to do with my being an artist today. I'm only one of hundreds of people who felt that. (Here I'm confusing him in both past and present tenses, and he's been dead for over a year. Do poets die? Yes they do, and the meaning of their value alters immediately.)

WL: He was a catalyst for you when you were in your early twenties?

NR: Mid-teens. Paul was a born Socratic. The two best minds of our time are Paul Goodman's and Wystan Auden's. I single them out—the compleat Jew and the compleat Goy—because poets as a rule are not thinkers. Because these two were very well-trained, they proposed logical solutions for world problems, and were able to write prose, a sensible prose that was granted authority by virtue of the fact that they were great poets. The prose, say, of a Wilfred Sheed, or a Benjamin DeMott, or of all these clever book reviewers, does not in my opinion have the same force as Auden's or Goodman's, because either they are poets themselves, or they lack a requisite classical background. Auden, unlike Goodman, was not a Socratic type. It was important to Paul that he be surrounded by the young who would listen to him as to the Sermon on the Mount. It wasn't that important to Auden to be personally heard. He might have been the life of the party and assumed everyone would listen while he talked, but he didn't visit the schools and tell people how to raise children or to have proper orgasms or to keep out of the army the way Goodman did. By doing that, Paul did, I

think, cheat in a way. It was unfair of Paul, who for many years was a practicing analyst, to try to seduce his cute patients and not the ugly ones. Yet he was a responsible husband and parent and had time for anyone who needed him.

WL: I met Goodman just once very briefly when he came to a small gay-lib-consciousness rap group that we had in Berkeley three years ago.

NR: What do you remember him saying?

WL: He talked a little about gay oppression, what it meant to him and how changes will come about. I remember we disagreed with his reformist approach that if we wait long enough the laws against gay people will be changed automatically. We felt there needed to be more activism, instead of proposing the passive approach. I respect him immensely, but I also felt that there was too much of a tendency on his part toward being a guru. People reacted a little negatively to that—perhaps a natural reaction among young people.

NR: I think gurus are a pain in the neck. They cater to weakness—to grooving rather than to thought. For the general public Paul was a mind rather than a body, which is what gurus are not. God knows he could turn people off. And God knows he was a proselytizer, didn't listen to other people. However, his was such an extraordinary brain that I'm inclined to give him the benefit of the doubt. He did have answers. As for the gay oppression thing, I imagine, between us, it's something that Paul wouldn't have grasped for the simple reason that he grasped it only too well. In the way that I was talking about earlier, he didn't use a word like "homosexuality." Not because he avoided it but because he took it so for granted. Oh, he was so sexual (which I'm not)—always making passes in front of his wife or children even! In principle he was bisexual; in fact his eyes lit up mainly for boys. After I was no longer a boy he grew to see me as a person, then as a rival. Unfair but understandable. Paul's books are full of people who screw each other without asking questions or making problems. Outside the books the problems were whether people were attracted to each other (that is, to him)—not whether they were homosexual! I think that's what he would have assumed your rap group was: not a problem of societal oppression, but sexual beings amongst themselves.

Like many gay people, Paul lacked humor (although Auden had humor). A person can become so great as to be removed from standard questions. Not that young homosexuals have all that much humor, or young anybody. A lot of survival I suppose, even living to the age of ten, requires a sense of balance, and humor is balance—seeing two sides of the same coin, or even three. But so is art balance. So is imagination. A lot of artists don't have much humor either (starting with Chaplin, though he is a terrific comic). As Paul grew older, he grew understandably disillusioned with the whole human race; and since with people in any given circumstances he would usually be the wisest, and see them go on making the same mistakes . . . I can't help but think he died of a broken heart.

WL: In your book "Critical Affairs," you say that artists care less about being misunderstood than about being heard, but that we are all misunderstood most of the time. Do you feel this has been true in both your life and your music?

NR: Gide's famous remark, "Don't be too quick to understand me" is a quip all artists like. When people come up and say "Oh, I just understand you so well," that makes me feel transparent. Did you misquote a little bit?

WL: The quote of yours I've got here is "We are all misunderstood most of the time."

NR: I do believe it. A work of art, so long as it is art, is never understood. One does not understand art. We understand analyses of art. But we never understand the art any better for the analysis. A real work of art is like the

human soul, without finite limits, and changes definition according to who looks at it. So what I meant is not "an artist wants to be understood." What I meant was "he want it not to be misunderstood." Therefore, do not misunderstand him. But I have never read a diagnosis of anything I've ever made that I agreed with. Although I'm pleased, I'm pleased because of the length rather than the insight.

WL: Is this true of both your writing and your music?

NR: Particularly the music. I don't know what my writing is. I don't even know if it's art. I don't even know what art is. But if I'm an artist, it's as a musician. I am a musician who also writes prose, not a prose writer who happens to write music. It's as a musician that I am talking to you. Only as a musician do I have any authority in what I say.

WL: In "Critical Affairs" you talk about an artist judging his own work under acid. Is that "acid test" meant to be a put-on? Have you taken acid, or is that just a bon mot?

NR: It's a bon mot, and I have. I took mescaline three times many years ago, and discussed the first trip at length in "New York Diary." The only reason for taking psychedelics now would be under a control—it is so startlingly informing. I know exactly what I would like to do: an investigation of problems in musical grammar. I would like to discover wherein I have cheated, because we all cheat all the time without knowing it. With each breath we draw we compromise. Life is a compromise, and so is art. But sometimes it's the right compromise. Wrong compromises are cheating, and that's what makes a bad artist out of a bad artist: to take the easy way out, given a set of rules that you've assigned to yourself for constructing this or that piece. You can't always see when you're cheating. Nor do we always know when we're cheating sexually. The human language being already such an artificial situation, we use music to reinforce our artifices. We use it to dissemble rather than to reveal. Musical language is a language of dissemblance. Art is a language of disguise. The artist guards himself and his work. Sometimes he will—I'm mixing my metaphors all over the place, but I hope you follow me—sometimes he will guard himself carefully, sometimes uncaringly, and he can't always know until years later when he looks back and says, "My God, what a good day that was. What a terrific poem that was, and right off the top of my head!" or maybe "What a lousy tune—and to think I was six months writing it!" So I would like to hear my own music under LSD and see wherein the seams are closely-knit or falling apart. But I say all this as an aside to that essentially cute phrase you just quoted. (Paradoxically, music is sometimes defined as a language—a language not too vague but too precise to be described by words.)

WL: You mentioned composer Lou Harrison in your book "Music and People," and you call him one of the most gifted melodists of our century. I had the honor to meet Lou last year—a charming, brilliant man. I spent a weekend with Lou and Bill Colvig down in Aptos, California. Perhaps you'd like to talk a little about his music, or your own music.

NR: It's hard for me to talk about my own music. Composers always talk "around" their own music, since that music itself speaks so much more clearly. Presumably, I did the entry for Lou in Grove's Dictionary this year so I know his music in depth, as they say. Not that I know all of it, but I've known some of it for a really long time and care about it. That's saying plenty, because I don't like anybody anymore. When people ask "What American composers do you like?" I always scratch my head and say "Oh God" and Lou Harrison is the only name I can eke out. (Naturally there are others.)

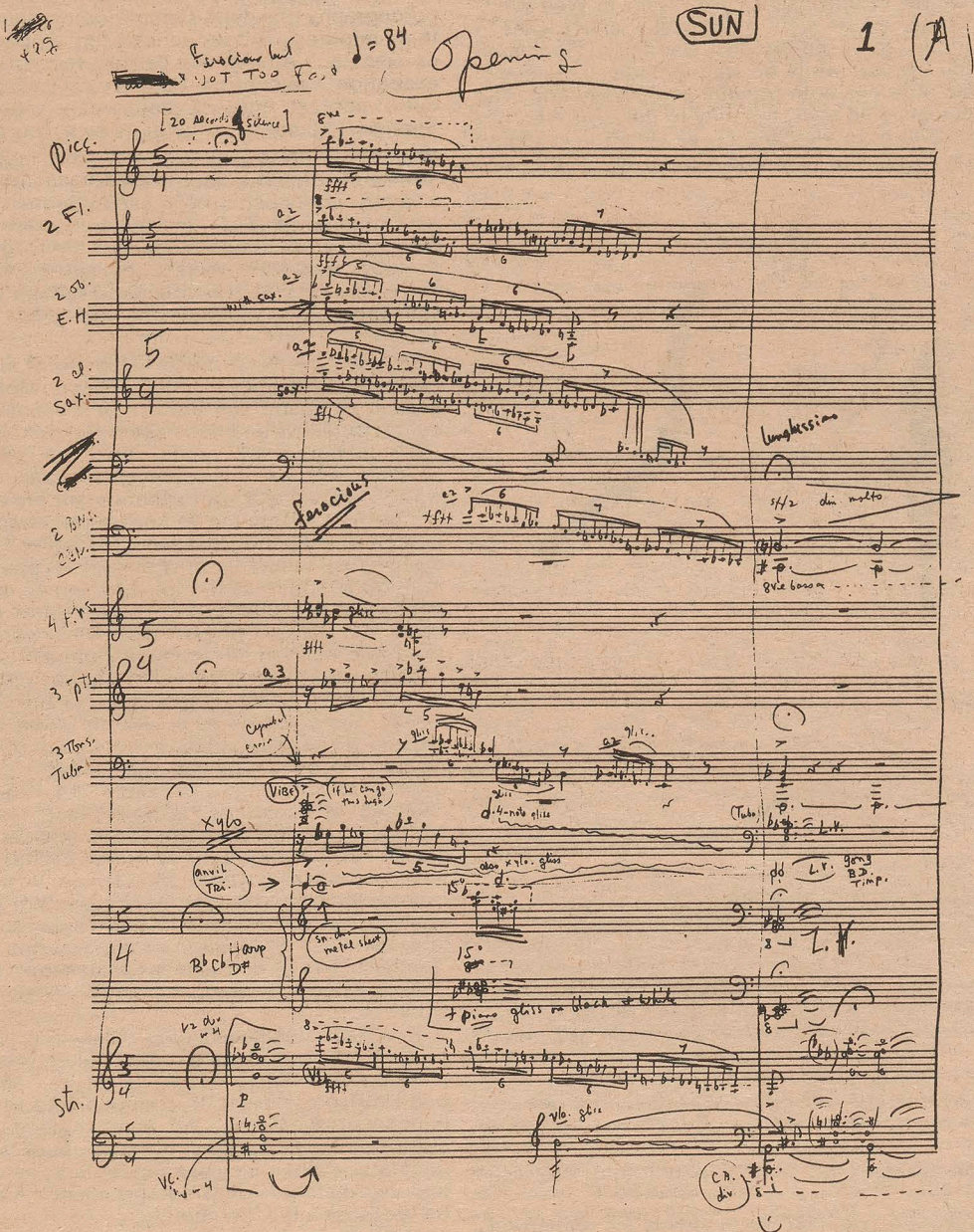
WL: I heard in concert a beautiful, soul-piercing work by Lou last summer—a setting in Esperanto of the Buddhist Heart Sutra. I've long admired his music.

NR: Lou Harrison's got wit and that counts for a lot. Nobody has wit any more. Not even me. He gets in a rut sometimes with those eternal ostinatos—a mannerism I have copied, I fear. But on the whole Lou Harrison has a terrific melodic sense, the sense that most counts, music being all inherently melodic. Which doesn't mean it has to be a simple-minded street-song, or a Stephen Foster tune, or even Purcell or Puccini. But any composer worthy of the name is basically a singer. Inasmuch as any author is good, it's not because he deals with homosexuality, but because he's a writer. Inasmuch as a poet is good, it's because he's a poet, not because he's gay. Inasmuch as a composer is a composer, it's not because he's a man or a woman, nor because he's wise and experienced, but because he's got a singer in him trying to get out. All music is song. Now Harrison is a songster if ever there was one. He just reeks of memorable melody. I like him and I like his ideas about a lot of things. Like Paul Goodman, Lou was liberated long before one "was liberated." It must be made clear, though, that both Lou and Paul would have been thought eccentric, not being average people, and highly noticeable. Their sexuality had much to do with it, and certainly their persona had much to do with their sexuality.

To be homosexual today is not eccentric necessarily. A man doesn't have to be a deep intellectual or a mad drag queen today to be homosexual. In New York he can be a warrior, a truck driver, as well as a maker of women's hats. But eccentricity was a mark of an artist far more in the 40's than it is today, and certainly of a homosexual artist. I'm contradicting myself to some extent. To be a pablist is not particularly unusual, but it was unusual in the 30's and 40's, like Lou and Paul. To be intelligent is very unusual any time, and to use one's intelligence to better the world is most unusual of all.

WL: Maybe you'd like to talk a little bit about Frank O'Hara. You have often set his words to music. What were your feelings about him as an artist?

NR: Frank O'Hara was the least selfish of artists. Most artists are out for themselves, like everybody else. They're interested in other people's art only as that applies to themselves. Frank O'Hara was interested in other people's work for its own sake. He could spend hours, months, helping other poets, even bad poets. Or writing blurbs for painters—unsigned blurbs that did nothing for his own posterity. Thus his poetry was generous too—not because it was about other people. He's written along with an awful lot of lazy junk, but at his best, the split-second, on-the-spot poems are good precisely by virtue of being split-second, on-the-spot, and they can melt your heart. Every time I read it I weep at his poem about Billie Holiday dying, an uncopiable masterpiece that young poets have all tried to copy. Look around at all the imitators of Ashbery, of Koch, of O'Hara! They say, "If Frank can get up and recite a poem that says 'I shit,' so can we." But it doesn't work, because Frank was a poet and they are not. The Masturbation School of Poetry declares: "Anything is valid because it happens to us and we are poets." What makes a poet a poet? It's one thing nobody can define. Frank's poems had at their best the blood of life and their



Facsimile of a manuscript page showing opening measures of SUN (1966).

poems are tubercular, yet the subject matter is identical. He was fun to work with because, in this age of specialists, he adored collaborating in a variety of fields. He collaborated in a tactile way with dancers, painters, novelists, sculptors, other poets. He even collaborated with me and I hate collaboration. My ego doesn't permit me to work gracefully with others. But I did with Frank on two occasions, and happily. Our "Four Dialogues" are not great poetry or great music but they work. And the little poem he wrote on Poulenc's death is lovely, and my music for that works too.

Interestingly, Frank O'Hara was not all that famous while he was alive. He died around the same time as Randall Jarrell, who was an established poet. When a painter dies his property becomes more valuable, because a painting is something that you own. Poetry or music cannot be owned. A composer when he dies is usually forgotten, at least for a while, or becomes immortal. (Bartok was canonized within a week after he died.) The same happens with poets. Frank O'Hara died, and New York City was overrun with widows of all sexes. I've never seen such spiteful behavior. The number of people who acted like barnyard creatures gnashing at each other instead of coming together in a common cause. Each one said, "Frank loved me the most. Frank gave me this poem. It's my poem. Frank wrote that for me."

When you were in Frank's presence, *tete-a-tete*, you were the only person in Frank's life. You might not think about him the next day, or he might not think about you, but he gave of himself individually to every single person he talked to. And he talked to everyone, important people, unimportant people. He couldn't not talk. He saw the worst minds of his generation destroyed, and the best. It was the same to him. It's not that he loved people but that he made them feel they were worth something. So when there was no more Frank, everybody felt widowed and instead of coming together with benevolence they hated each other for a while. But the hate turned to practicality. The collected works of Frank O'Hara are now out and have sold. His letters are coming out. And other collections. There's a Young Poets' Award now in his name. All of that is very sweet. He has become more famous than Randall Jarrell. He is a cult. I wonder what his reaction would be to this.

In 1970 the Frank O'Hara foundation said, "Let's give a memorial concert, and ask a bunch of composers to set words of Frank O'Hara to music." They got a slew of Frank's poems and sent that around to a couple dozen composers, and said, "We're having a memorial for Frank at the Whitney Museum, set his poems to music as you would like, and we'll perform them." It failed, of course. If a composer didn't set his words to music while Frank was living, why bother now? Also a lot of it didn't work because the generations change so quickly (as we were saying a while ago). Frank has been dead since 1966. I often think of how Frank would react to Gay Liberation, to Women's Liberation, or to Susan Sontag, or to his own proteges. Frank is very much situated in my mind, and in many people's minds, as the sixties. He's not a poet of the seventies. Things would be slightly out of focus to Frank if he suddenly came back. None of these composers had a point of view because they were all seventies, and Frank had been dead too long yet not long enough. He spoke with a sixties accent, and they composed with a seventies accent just by virtue of being alive. And that's why it would be interesting to know how Frank would react.

If Frank were alive now he would not be 40, as when he died, but 47. A 40-year-old Frank resuscitated and put into 1973. A 47-year-old Frank would have evolved with the times. Taking the old Frank and putting him in this room with you and me there on that couch: it's possible that not only would he not be able to breathe the air because it's become so polluted (you and I are conditioned to it because we're alive), but he wouldn't know what the hell we were talking about. The issue of Gay Liberation for instance would come as a slap in the face. It would either seem so obvious because it is obvious (like anything that's truly needed becomes, after the fact), or so remote he might not comprehend. Of course, that's as vain as asking: how would Bach react to Stravinsky? Bach was a great musician, Stravinsky was a great musician. But that they should thus naturally "understand" each other doesn't follow. Frank O'Hara was lovable and tough. He should not have died, but he did. It was an Irish death. He died talking, and probably drunk. Because he hadn't said all he had to say, his death is a tragedy.

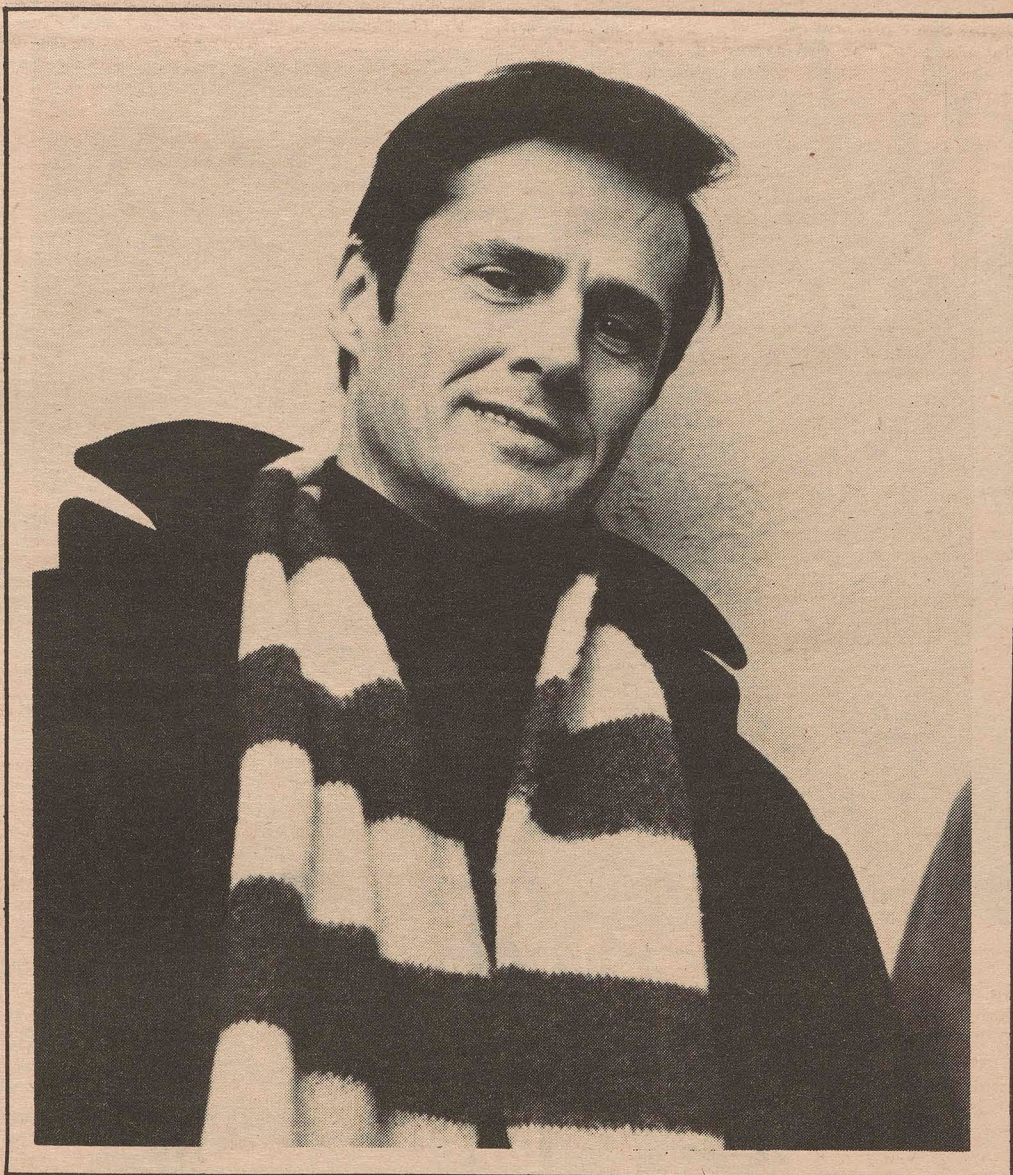
WL: It would be interesting to hear more on your relationship with Cocteau, although you do go into that somewhat in your books.

NR: Everything I know about Cocteau I've already written. That's why I find myself so uninteresting anymore: I can just refer you to a page in a book. To meet Cocteau once was to know him, because he was such an outgoing man. He had to be liked. And he also had to spill his seed, so to speak, to disseminate himself indiscriminately throughout the world. He gave of himself to an awful lot of people. All who knew him felt that they were the only person in his life, at least while in his presence, because he exuded a charitable flood of fire. I've only met three or four big people who have such warmth. It may be affectation or opportunism, but it can't be faked. I've seen people who try to fake opportunism. In vain.

With Frank it wasn't warmth so much as generosity summed up in the words, "Let me love you, let me help you." With Cocteau it was, "I will labor so you will love me, help me." It takes however as much energy to be loved as to love. A person who wants to be loved must toil at it. Anyone can love. It's harder to be loved than to love: you have to have something a lover doesn't have. Jean Cocteau was loved, and he worked at it, while Frank O'Hara worked at loving. There's the basic difference between them. When Frank died he left mourners of all sexes each of whom considered themselves his official widow. When Cocteau died he left grandchildren (so to speak), long-since weaned and very derisive. Of course, Frank's premature death flung him headlong into a vogue that's still going strong, while Cocteau was out of fashion and forgotten. Cocteau talked and talked, like Tallulah Bankhead. Impossible to get a word in edgewise. Yet he remembered everything you said, and threw it back at you the next time, like Tallulah did. But whereas Tallulah talked without rhyme or reason, and none of her sentences scanned, every Cocteau phrase was a ruby polished right there on the spot for you. Of course he may have pulled out that same jewel for someone else that morning, but while he was there he was polishing only for you.

WL: In your "Diaries" you have written a lot about loneliness and age.

NR: I think about loneliness and age, that loneliness is a part of life, though I'm not sure that as one gets older he necessarily becomes more lonely. But loneliness becomes more uncovered—one grows more aware of it. Loneliness can be good for you. I am fairly self-sufficient and have work that concerns me. May the work continue



Ned Rorem, 1970
Photo by Eugene Cook

to interest me for the rest of my life! As to homosexual loneliness (since you asked), again, like heterosexual loneliness it stems from sexual rejection—not from repression so much as from ageism in general. The sad folks in old folks' homes! With each crucial birthday must come a certain accommodation. Can one continue to live—or to live with oneself? Male gays often seem more sex-driven than straights. Because sexual intercourse seems proof that one is alive. For better or for worse I feel far less compulsive sexually than I used to. I don't feel I have to prove anything. Were a doctor to say, "Look, you will be very healthy and live to be ninety-eight if you don't have any more sex ever," it wouldn't be so terrible.

WL: But would it have been terrible for you say twenty years ago?

NR: Sure it would. Whereas I know any number of septuagenarians who would commit suicide if they thought they had to give up sex. My friend JH, who does not like to be talked about, appeared in my life at an absolute crucial moment, or so he thinks and I do. I might even be dead from alcoholism now. But again, I think sometimes that death can be both willed and willed away. I don't drink now, or smoke, or fuck, or say bad words. I'm impossibly boorish. But I've made choices, and we always get to some extent what we deserve.

[A youngish man enters the room where Ned Rorem and Winston Leyland are talking. After a brief introduction he withdraws.]

NR: That's JH. He's fifteen years younger than me, although since I'm only attracted to fathers he's a father image. I'm drawn to older types, but that can't go on forever. When I'm ninety-eight I can't only be attracted toward people in their hundreds. Well, each to his own fantasies! We are dear friends and I hope that it lasts forever.

That's one thing I wanted to say. The other thing is this: it has to do with my being evasive. There's nothing—nothing—that I don't feel guilty of. It's not unusual, many people feel the same, people from all walks of life. I see myself on trial for my life, accused of crimes that I don't know if I've committed. You know what I'm talking about. If I'm evasive it's precisely because of the governments of this hemisphere. Being too outspoken might be risky. I see myself being tortured in a concentration camp. Perhaps that's in answer to my being cavalier awhile ago about oppression. It might be possibly fear of oppression that comes from a certain guilt, that makes me want to be less outspoken. Not just taste, not just a question of good taste, but a terror of the times we inhabit.

WL: I think you have been outspoken. If the government were to round up known homosexuals sometime in the future, you would definitely be on that list. You speak quite up-frontly about your gayness in the "Diaries."

NR: So it's too late now. Oh, I'm on lots of lists I'm sure, as are my whole family for the measure of things we believe in. It so happens that I am not a champion of any cause except music. I don't think in generalities. I'll sign my name to lists that have to do with peace, but I won't sign anything that will promote any kind of war. I'm not trying to be lofty, I just feel vulnerable. Although I don't feel oppressed, the risk may be just around the corner. And as I say, when they start rounding up people they're going to round up artists too. Artists are not *bien vus*—are not well seen—by revolutionary governments.

WL: Why do you feel you've found some stability in a relationship at this point in your life? Your love relationships in the past seem to have been more tumultuous and traumatic.

NR: In the "Paris Diaries" I talk about an affair with an Italian. He was a delicatessen owner, and hardly a literary giant. My relationships today are less physical. I didn't have much mentally in common with many lovers in the past, but we had a lot in common bodily. I can't imagine spending an evening now, must less a lifetime, with a truck driver. I don't even think about it much, but if I have some sort of "image," it's probably that. I talked in the Shenandoah article clearly about my sado-masochistic sexual images. But I need somebody to admire, and also who knows what I'm made of.

WL: Do you feel this is the first time that you really found that in a relationship?

NR: Of course not, no. But time goes by. If I were me now, and wanted to have an affair with the "P" of the "Paris Diary," who was then twenty-nine, he wouldn't find me attractive—I'm twenty years older—or he might, but I might not find him attractive. One's needs in given situations change as the years roll on, thank God, and I think it has to do with our protective clothing. I'm not especially interested in gorgeous youths or swarthy toughs anymore. So our rhythms alter. JH perhaps wouldn't have been the right person, or I wouldn't have been ready ten years ago. There were still wild oats to be sown.

WL: In "Critical Affairs" you quote Chekhov as saying, "Artists and intellectuals must deal with politics only insofar as it is necessary to put up a defense against politics," and you say in addition, "The past few years"—you wrote this about 1966—"have spawned even fewer genuine works in any form. This I feel is due to the direct alliance of art with the New Left." I disagree with you. In many cases art has been directly inspired by the revolution. Consider Orozco in Mexico, or Soviet literature and music in the twenties, before the clamp-down by Stalin. The artist can't be completely apolitical, because he/she will be among the first to be rounded up when fascism comes.

NR: Yes, but what I meant is this: to express honest political ideas in art does not of itself make honest art. Kids who sing rock on a subject matter that's with-it assume that the very with-it-ness makes good music, whereas in fact the words are so simplistic, and the music is so gross that there are no longer those levels of complexity inherent to art. That's all I'm saying. People bring up "Guernica." "Guernica" is not a political work, because it can apply to any war in the world, not just to that specific war. Picasso did thousands of paintings, of which one was "Guernica," and sure it's good, but it's not good because it's political any more than the crucifixions of the Renaissance were good because they were religious.

More and more people claim to be artists, who have no know-how and no talent, simply because they know how to play the guitar, because they don't want to go to war, and because they get high on pot. Of course they are right in not wanting to go to war, but their rightness is not automatically musical. That matter is too obvious to need restatement. Not that by definition a subject does or doesn't make art. I'm saying that, just as wars in the name of the Lord are not justifiable (although most wars up until the twentieth century were religious wars), so an artistic effort in the name of Vietnam or Israel or in the name of whatever, is not necessarily art. Art is beyond these frontiers.

For every Orozco there were a thousand people painting lousy pictures on the same subjects. When Mozart lived everyone composed the same kind of music, there was one musical language. He was better than the rest, that's all. There is music which is effective for nonmusical reasons, like military marches. A military march might impel men to walk into battle. Unfortunately it won't inspire them to walk out of battle. If I could write a piece that would inspire an army to turn around and walk away, I wouldn't care whether that was art or not. Music that inspires the masses does seem pretty unsophisticated. When governments are in an emergency art is the last thing they need. To my chagrin, but not to my surprise, the most liberal of Americans politicians are the least culture minded. A Bella Abzug, for example, hasn't made one statement on behalf of the arts, yet she represents this zone of Manhattan from about 100th Street down to the Village. Some of the world's greatest creators inhabit Abzug's zone, yet what has she acknowledged to the United States Government in their behalf? Yet God knows she's for the rights of man and I'm all for her. It's people like Rockefeller, jaded, decadent capitalists, who have time for the leisure of art. Alas!

WL: Aaron Copland was quoted in your "Paris Diary" as saying that your journal expressed the unexpected violent side of your nature, and that your music expresses your serene side. Do you agree?



NED ROREM 1958
by Larry Rivers

NR: I don't know that I believe it now. At that time I felt less responsibility towards prose writing, and therefore wrote down anything in any order; whereas I felt, being a composer, intense responsibility towards my music. Yet if the arts could express each other we'd only need one art. That's why I would write prose and music, but I truthfully cannot say now whether my music and my prose express the same thing. I don't know what music expresses, that is, music which doesn't have words. However, a composer can't be jailed for subversive ideas in his nonvocal music, though authors can be arrested—have been arrested—for writing certain kinds of prose. In Russia, of course, composers have been arrested for writing certain kinds of music, but it's impossible to label what that music "says." Does a given symphony of Shostakovich represent indecent acts, or political acts, or is it dirty, and if so, how?

WL: Of course in the case of Shostakovich, he did have political intent in some of his symphonies, such as the "Leningrad Symphony" or Symphonies No. 11 and 12. It is patriotic music for the masses.

NR: Again, that's because he explained, in words, what that non-vocal music was meant to represent. Take that same symphony and play it for a class of high school seniors who have never heard of Shostakovich, and explain, "Now Shostakovich intended in this last movement to depict the migration of muskrats," they'd buy that. Music means whatever a composer tells you, in words. Sometimes he even gives it titles, like "La Mer" [Debussy], or "Reformation Symphony" [Mendelssohn], precisely because he knows that music doesn't really express literary ideas. It is associative only through extramusical conditioning—like films on college proms or dreams.

Being a composer involves a lot more paperwork than being an author. If you like to generalize, and who doesn't—composers are neater, fussier, more generally collected than any other breed of so-called creative artist. Being a composer involves not only composition, but copying of that composition, orchestration of that composition, and the dissemination of the composition, taking it apart, copying the instrumental parts, and then giving it to middle-men who are performers. All this before it's even published. There's practical dirty work that needs to be done, which poets don't have to do. I once wrote that the main problem for a poet is how to spend those other twenty-four hours a day. He can write poetry as he walks along the river. A painter paints his picture, then it's done. But a composer needs both a performer and a listener for his work to exist. So as a type, he's rather different from a writer. But I'm both of them. The writer in me drinks, and the composer abstains. The diary represents the bloody, neurotic, frantic side of me. The music is my pristine, white, controlled side. A bemusing review of the "Paris Diary" said: "Ned Rorem may well write of suffering and love and introspection and anxiety, but the fact that he writes to glibly makes it doubtful that he ever experienced these emotions." Meaning: if you write well you must be a phony. The reviewer went on to say that in this era, when Jews have been massacred by the millions in concentration camps, how can I write as casually as I do about recipes and heartache and abattoirs. It was a review that I couldn't believe: criticizing me for having *métier*.

WL: Was the reviewer being paranoid?

NR: Well, I suppose he resented my sexual casualness. Homosexuality was thought frivolous even as recently as 1966. Because the critic didn't want to censor me outright for loose morals, he accused me of loose politics. Maybe I'm the paranoid. Nevertheless, the purplest works of nineteenth-century art, say by Melville or Dostoevski or Tchaikovsky, flow forth like so much ecstasy or vomit, but are always very carefully fabricated. A person writing about his unhappiness is not unhappy during those suspended moments.

WL: You're talking about a cathartic experience?

NR: I don't know if it's cathartic, so much as that the act of projecting onto paper or canvas the distillation of a feeling, precludes, for the duration of that act, the actual feeling. Artists are in a sense the most self-involved of all people, socially, but while putting brush to canvas or words to paper or notes to staves, they become outside themselves; they are thus selfless because momentarily they don't exist.

WL: You wrote in one of the "Diaries" that artistic natures tend towards the Compassionate Left.

NR: People often say that artists should stay out of politics. I would agree if I saw that people in politics were any smarter than artists. Mary McCarthy contends—and she's no slouch when it comes to politics—that artists may not be more informed than "real people" when it comes to politics, but they do have a knack for smelling rats. Which is why an Auden, while not active politically, had a good sense of the tone of the times. Shelley wrote, "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world," so Auden then wondered how things might be if poets were in the White House. The world would turn into an aristocracy. My generality was that poets tend to be compassionate and left-wing, like painters, since the Industrial Revolution when they were no longer subsidized by courts and things. The bohemian life is theirs. (I'm not speaking about the Andrew Wyeths of this world.) Musicians are more conservative, especially performing musicians. But even composers politically are pretty conservative. I can't think of any painter who is first-rate who could possibly be as monstrous as a Wagner. Writers are a bit of everything, but on the whole they do tend toward the Compassionate Left, if not always so compassionate. And even now that is shifting. The very strong school of Jewish writers today is not all that compassionate nor all that left, and what with the war in Israel, Jewish writers can be virulently mean. And is there really, as a WASP like Benjamin DeMott maintains, a Homosexual Mafia in music? It's a terrible thing to say and also untrue. And people talk about "Jewish Mafia" in the arts. The "Goyish Mafia"? Although the New York Review of Books is essentially Jewish, it does have some big gay numbers like Gore Vidal and Mary McCarthy. Things are segmented, not all that compassionate, and not even all that left anymore. And that's all I can think to say about that.

WL: What kind of a life style do you have now that you're living in New York?

NR: My health is good but I worry about it constantly. I'm very nearsighted because God wants me not to see. I don't drink anymore or smoke. I'm hooked on sweets and I make pies and cakes and puddings, and I think of them with lust the way others think of salty things like cheese or sex. I work every day, and every one of my actions deals with that work in some manner, this interview for instance. I seldom do anything for the hell of it anymore, having lived so much for the hell of it for so long, and almost dying. (Look how pretty that light comes in now, just as we sit here, just for the past two minutes, there against Jane Wilson's green painting.) I get up every morning at nine. I have very little social life. I don't have fun at parties anymore, because I don't drink. It's boring when everybody else is drunk. And I don't smoke pot. I'm madly stuffy.

WL: Do you think this is partially true because you've gotten into a more in-depth, continuing relationship?

NR: Yes, certainly it has to do with that. On the last page of the "New York Diary" I wrote: Everybody wants success in three areas, he wants success in love, success socially, and success in his trade. Now, any one person can have success in two of those areas simultaneously, but if he has success in all three of those areas he is dancing on the brink. Because with success in love and society, there's no time to get your work done. Success in love and

in work leaves no time to see other people. If you have success in society and in your work you have no time for the necessary conversation and compassion of conjugal living. So I have given up society; I no longer see many friends whom I think about and love dearly. Of course that happens with everybody as they grow older. I'm a fairly good correspondent with friends all over the world—but it's with anxiety that I get ready for a party, and never a thrill of expectation. My time is filled, therefore, with my work. I visit my parents every week. I cook a lot. I never go to restaurants, because I loathe the sound of laughter.

WL: Why?

NR: Most laughter is self-conscious and stems from mediocrity. People who laugh too much can't think of any other reaction. Temperamentally it's just their way of reacting; it doesn't mean mirth though, and it does slow down conversation. Anyway I don't go to restaurants or bars, but I spent my youth in them and loved them.

WL: Looking back on the various love affairs that you've had, what kind of reaction do you have now?

NR: I've had six serious love affairs, and remained on good terms with all. I still like everyone I've ever loved. Once love is over, that flaming emotional thing, with me instead of settling into indifference, it settles into a continually glowing ember. "Friendship into love, perhaps, but love to friendship, never." I don't comprehend that old saw. Now, Frank O'Hara just loved to sleep with friends. He was always going to bed with poets and painters and such. My affairs have usually begun with people not met in a, let's say, decent way. People picked up, and not in publishers' offices. People met "abstractly." Those affairs turned into friendship, unfailingly. But the business about friends into lovers is something quite foreign to me.

WL: I think, though, that more people—especially in the gay movement—are trying to lessen that dichotomy, or to eliminate it.

NR: You mean of going to bed with an image.

WL: Of not going to bed with one's friends. This can be a kind of oppressive thing that we've gotten into: a mold, a pattern.

WL: Of only going to bed anonymously you mean?

WL: Yes.

NR: I'm all for friends doing whatever they want with each other. My generation didn't. I'm not proud of it. It simply was. It's absolutely lovely that friends go to bed with each other now, heterosexually or homosexually. But I'm still excited by the anonymous. As soon as I discover how bright or how dull—how real—some new person might be, my interest in them changes from carnal to either no interest or to sexless curiosity. I find it hard to link the two, and it's too bad.

Incidentally, four of the six are European. During my Parisian years, if one again can generalize about those things now (because I was younger and my habits were different)—Europeans in the fifties seemed more able to have working love affairs than Americans of that period. By "affair" I mean something worked at by two people, with the necessary—the necessary sacrifices that must be made if the pair is not going to spend their days playing tricks on themselves. I don't know about Europe now. But Americans aren't doing so badly.

Speaking of love, did I tell you? One day last year I went to my skin doctor to have a mole removed. It was up by the Metropolitan Museum. I got there early, so before I went in to see him I crossed the street to the Metropolitan and walked around, into the room that had busts of old Roman emperors. One of the emperors was so beautiful, with his ample lips, his wise eyes and his Roman nose and curly hair, that I fell madly in love with him, over the centuries, this Augustus. Then I had my appointment. I went back over to the doctor, and who should be sitting in the outer office but my old friend Kenward Elmslie. I hadn't known he knew this doctor. And I said, "Kenward, what can I do? I'm in love!" And he said, "Oh? Who with?" And I said, "Well, it's with this Roman emperor, the bust of an emperor, across the street. It's an impossible situation." And Kenward said, "How marvelous to hear someone say they're in love again!" End of story! Not in the least confused, Kenward was pleased only that I should still talk about being in love when young people were all talking about making it, or making out, and so forth, not in terms of affection.

What are twenty-year-olds these days doing?—Living together? Are they not living together? My impression is that despite the new permissiveness, there's a lot less promiscuity (as it was named in the forties). During the war, when I think of my own sleeping around, my hair stands on end. The thousands of people I went to bed with! Much of that had to do with being a teenager, but it had to do with the war too. Although I was not in the army, I sure had a lot to do with the military. That the world could come to an end—and the sort of urge—I don't know, the urge to propagate, or whatever, there's so much copulation during wartime periods! Yet today these things are not all that untoward. When homosexuality, or sexuality pure and simple, is not an indecent thing, gang bangs seem less urgent. Wouldn't it be pleasant to think that the easing off of promiscuity signified an easing up of international strife?

One heterosexual point of view about homosexual promiscuity is that it is a constant seeking of the unattainable because homosexuality is wrong. Homosexuals, in fact, are not constantly looking for the ideal partner. Anonymity can be so uninhibited, the sex so incredibly fulfilling, that it could never be repeated with that same person, precisely because next time he would be a person. Better to die! In Gide's "Counterfeiters" Olivier does attempt suicide because he has found the ultimate. Homosexuals permit themselves a promiscuity that heterosexuals could not permit themselves in the less permissive days of twenty years ago. Homosexuals could permit it because they already were underground. Promiscuity does not mean hopeless seeking. Promiscuity means: renewal of perfection under different circumstances. Because perfection, by definition, can't be duplicated.

WL: Do you feel this is true in your own life?

NR: Not much anymore. But some of the best sex I ever had was precisely because of the anonymity: when you're no longer a rational being, but a gibbering idiot, throttled by Eros. When everything is the same. Beethoven or Einstein or Groucho Marx or the cashier at a burlesque house are all the same when they're in love. In the sexual act they're equally stupid and ungainly. It's funny-looking to see a person fucking, at least it is to me. To stand off and watch two (or more) people behaving like animals, it's all sort of sweet and ridiculous: great panting bodies rubbing against each other to no apparent purpose. That has nothing to do with scanning verse or city planning. But if the instinct is to become a babbling fool, it's difficult to babble with your peers, and that's why anonymous encounters are more satisfactory.

WL: Have your views on sex and promiscuity changed radically with increasing age?

NR: Well, as I said, sex doesn't mean that much now: the competitive business of making sure you don't go home alone means little, and I'm very relieved. Sex has always been kind of a mental thing with me. I've had a lot in my life, but a lot was to prove that I was desirable, more than out of horniness. It was sufficient sometimes to know that a person wanted me. A lot of my drinking had to do with being able to go to bed with people, being drunk enough to put myself in certain positions.

WL: Do you feel there was a connection between sexual promiscuity and alcoholism in your own life?

NR: Definitely. If you're drunk you're not ashamed of playing a certain role. Shame hangs over me still, a residue that maybe makes me what I am. Do I write the kind of music that I write because of this shame? That's what nobody will ever be able to analyze. It's forever tantalizing as an idea, the relationship between a man's private sexuality and his worldly output. Whether the output is good or bad, its nature can be defined as passive or aggressive, masculine or feminine, dark or light. Too many, for instance, ivory-figurine men compose tough music, and too many tough men (on the surface) compose ivory-figurine music, for one to safely generalize that ivory-figurine music is feminine. I have this endless cobweb of definitions for what is and isn't sexual, feminine, masculine, passive, and such. None of it makes for good art or bad art or even art at all, but it's fun. Surely my point of view about myself sexually has something to do with the "tone" of my work. It has more to do with a musician's work than with a painter's or novelist's who deal in concretes. Except in the case of someone like Christopher Isherwood who writes extremely subjective novels, or Philip Roth on the other side of the fence. But it would be hard to prove that the novels of Balzac or Flaubert or even Dos Passos come out of their sexual behavior.

Kinsey interviewed me and also my parents in 1948. We were all at the same party at the same time after a concert. I said, "Oh terrific. I'd love for you to interview me." And he asked, "Do you think I could have your mother and father too?" So I said, "Well, ask them" and indeed they were staying on in New York a couple of days. Kinsey's assistants interviewed them, and Kinsey interviewed me. He was a man of infinite charm, easy to talk to, which had a lot to do with how he got what he got in his landmark of scientific investigation. Charm or not charm, the interview was standard and lasted the same amount of time for everyone with the same questions. The questions were so categorized that if you lied on one you'd be tripped up later. For instance, if asked "When was the first time you ever masturbated?" and the subject said "I never masturbated," obviously a lie, he would be tripped up by a later question. After the interview, we discussed homosexuality. I gave him some musical generalities, and I'm interested now, so many years later, how the generalities wouldn't hold up. For instance, his book should have been titled "Sexual Behavior in the Human American Male," because that behavior has no relationship to the French male, much less to the Moroccan male. It's definitely the American male.

In the forties one could make the following generalizations: organists 95% homosexual, violinists 1%, pianists 50%, cellists and violists none, harpists less than we might think. (All male harpists were European in those days, and real woman-chasers. Of course 99% of harpists are female.) Of composers approximately 50%. In the pop world, female vocalists were all drugged and sapphic. The males were all drunk and straight. (Today that is really quite changed.) And I gave him my reasons as much as I could figure them out. Organists were of a WASP family make-up that lent itself to homosexuality as it was then thought to be bred. String players were in those days mostly Jewish and the Jewish family did not tend toward the homosexual, particularly in the non-soloist area. Orchestra players are simply never homosexual. If a violinist today is homosexual (which is very rare) it would come from being a soloist, but the violinist who plays in the violin section of the orchestra just isn't.

Composers, during the fifties, what with the sterility of twelve-tone music being revived, were neither heterosexual nor homosexual, they just were not sexual. (I'm speaking of composers who came of age in that period, in their twenties.) They didn't look it and didn't act it. Now, I don't think composers worry about what they are. And there are many heterosexual organists, both in America and in Europe. All French organists are heterosexual. Does this sound flippant? I don't mean it to be. It's neither important or unimportant. Today, organists in America are about 75% homosexual and a lot of them closets because they're in small towns. Art in Europe is not considered a sissy thing. It has to do with the Catholic past and the church is not sissy.

WL: There's a certain amount of camp that gay people are attracted to in the church: ecclesiastical drag. I went through it myself in my own seminary past: cassocks, vestments, incense. I had mystical experiences too, but my gay sensibility—at that time still nascent—thrived on the aesthetic aspects of Roman ritual.

NR: Less in Europe. Take your average Catholic in Europe. It may be ecclesiastical drag to us, but it isn't to him—it's life and death. And I would venture to say that the clergy, just like the organists, in Europe are far less gay than in America. We may find it a camp because art is still a silly thing for us. Therefore we use phrases like "ecclesiastical drag." Even if we're not Protestant in America we inhabit a Protestant ethic. So all the gold and silver and perfume and incense and saints and confession of the Roman church became for us a thrill so untenable we write it off as camp.

WL: When I was in the Roman priesthood several years ago, I certainly didn't consider the rituals of the Church as just camp. I became radicalized at that time (influenced especially by Dan Berrigan, Merton and Teilhard de Chardin). I left the ecclesiastical structure in the sixties because I reacted against the stylized ritual of the Church and ecclesiastical fascism, partly because of my desire to really implement my pacifist views, my horror at the Church's complicity in the genocide of Vietnam, also my desire to explore my own gayness. But I do feel that the Church would be a good deal better off if it were able to acknowledge the homosexual camp aspects of ritual, vestments and so forth. Perhaps such an attitude might help to liberate gay clerics. There are more closet cases in the Roman clergy than anyone would believe—I would guess up to 40%.

But to return to Kinsey: Did he do research on the sexuality of artists?

NR: Kinsey wanted to do a book on the sexuality of artists and he certainly had the archives in Bloomington—hordes of goodies that should be revealed sometime. One cannot generalize about male ballet dancers any longer. Too many are presumably well-adjusted family men and not all that interested. The ballet scene has changed. The



Ned Rorem, Brooklyn, 1967

organ scene has to some extent changed in America. The pop scene has changed—because first of all there are no more woman pop singers, except Barbra Streisand. I can't think of a single gay male pop singer except maybe Johnny Ray of Johnny Mathis.

WL: Or David Bowie and Lou Reed. Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones also tries to project a bisexual image—not too convincingly I might add.

NR: Yes. He projects that image but I'll bet he's not. He's too flamboyant about pretending to be. If he were, he wouldn't do it quite that way. What Mick Jagger is, is not a camp. He thinks he is, but he isn't. Camp is a homosexual sensibility with a soupçon of weariness. A heterosexual in drag thinks he is a camp, but he can't bring it off—perhaps from lack of pathos. Camp also implies a certain sophistication, whereas Mick Jagger is a child in a tantrum. Precisely that innocence keeps him from being a camp. A drag queen is saying "Get me, I am a woman," while Mick Jagger is saying, "Get me, I'm pretending to be a woman and isn't it a scream?"

WL: In the gay scene now there are people who are into "genderfuck" who are not into "Look at me, I'm a woman." They're into drag for itself and for political reasons. We printed an article on this in Issue No. 21. I know a number of people in San Francisco who are into genderfuck drag on an everyday basis. It's a new, completely different kind of approach.

NR: It's a chip-on-the-shoulder approach. I understand it, although it makes me feel funny. I don't mean drag makes me feel funny. But the defiance of it makes me feel funny. As though homosexuality were limited to men who think of themselves as women, because we know perfectly well it's not that. To confirm an image in the mind of the bourgeoisie who hates homosexuals seems unfortunate, but perhaps there's a thread of logic which escapes me.

WL: Well, many people do it for fun. When I got home last night John [Button] and his roommate had company and they were all in semi-drag camping it up.

NR: That's not the same as going to the corner delicatessen in drag precisely so that outsiders will look at you with hate.

WL: Not so much with hate. I think many of the younger gay people doing genderfuck are doing it partly as a political thing, not because they want to bring out hate.

NR: Maybe it's political and maybe it's exhibitionistic.

WL: Possibly exhibitionistic. But so are many other kinds of gay sexual behavior.

NR: But you said it wasn't sexual. You said it was political.

WL: I think it's both.

NR: They are attracting attention to themselves as individuals, and that doesn't serve the purpose of homosexuality in general.

WL: I disagree. I think it does in the case of people I know. I think it's very political on one level and very sexual on another level and very campy on another level. It's fun both for the people who do it and those who see it—for example, the Cockettes and Angels of Light groups in San Francisco.

NR: I'm not against it. To go onto a stage and people applaud—the very idea that they're there for me is already so absolutely insolent! For any public performer the fact that people should watch and listen to him hawk his wares! There's a chutzpah in arranging to be clapped for, even through playing Bach. To perform for people could be thought of as active, but also very passive. It's like being possessed when people applaud you, being possessed to perform music for people. There's no such real thing as a passive act or an active pass. It's what goes through your head. Is to blow somebody passive? Is the blower the fucker or fuckee? To my mind, he's being fucked, what with that male member discharging in his body! To be fucked, in other words, as a woman is being fucked. Now that's a passive grammatical construction in English. But like anyone with any brains I know perfectly well that women have teeth in their cunts. That cunt, grasping the cock, draining it of its virility, and leaving it limp. A cunt is a most aggressive organ, in a sense that a cock is not. But again, it's what goes through your head. If you're being fucked in the ass what are you doing? Are you de-virilizing the man? Or being possessed by him? So all of those things—those definitions about who is what in a given relationship, I disclaim in my own psyche. The same goes for drag queens, some of whom lift their skirts and bugger truck drivers. You just never know. Had I not early reaped appreciation in a comparatively dignified way by writing music and sometimes going out and performing it (that's so carnal that I feel almost like Mick Jagger) I too

Photo by Rev. William Glenesk

might be in drag today. At the corner delicatessen, too. Everyone likes to get in costume. Even Nixon sponsors drag for the White House guardsmen—or whatever they're called.

WL: He is in drag himself. That grim visage and the bourgeois garb.

NR: A very gloomy drag. And a dangerous drag too. The drag of Dracula!

WL: You said earlier that you dislike macho literature.

NR: Yes. I loathe macho literature like Lowry's "Under the Volcano" which is considered a masterpiece. Faulkner is a mystery to me. I mean, why it is considered good is a mystery to me. I don't see the greatness there. I do see tackiness in Hemingway, and do feel that that comes out of his macho thing. But if a Hemingway type excites me in a man-to-man encounter, I find that the work that comes from that is terrible. Whereas fruity types don't send me in a sexual way. But if I'm not attracted toward what used to be called effeminacy, I love what used to be called femininity. Art, if it's well-put-together. In other words, I love delicacy and nuance and looking at things from a great distance. Of course now that isn't really femininity at all and women writers can be extremely (Mary McCarthy for one) what we used to call masculine. All those things are now melding in such a way that one can no longer distinguish between the sexes, and that's very good. It's happened I think that now in the English language females are writing better prose than men, in both England and America. I wouldn't say the same in poetry, but I would say that in painting and English literature women are certainly as good as if not better than men. Someone like Colette who writes with great elegance has as good a sense of construction as any man who ever lived.

WL: Music or composing has been pretty much a male preserve, more so than writing. There've been very few women composers. I can think of Clara Schumann, Germaine Tailleferre, Peggy Glanville-Hicks, a few more.

NR: Well, I once wrote an essay on that called "Ladies' Music" [In the book "Critical Affairs"]. Women composers today are no worse than men composers.

WL: I wanted to ask you also if you knew Paul Bowles? I've admired his fiction and his music for some time. I just saw a preview in Los Angeles of a one-hour color film about Paul Bowles, made in Morocco about two years ago, very well done. I met Bowles very briefly in Tangier in 1970 through a letter-introduction by poet David Posner. If he remembers me at all, it's probably because I was sick (travel-nausea) in his bathroom.

NR: (Why doesn't someone make a film on me before it's too late? Nobody's ever done that and I'm dying to be in a movie. And now I can't be young in a movie anymore.) Paul Bowles doesn't know it, but he's been a big influence on me. He's one of the most original Americans since the twenties. His music is very underrated. I wrote a little essay on his autobiography scolding him nicely and saying I wish he would write more music. But he has one of the most unusual minds, and his wife Jane is—surely one of the most intriguing writers of any sex who ever lived. Paul and Jane Bowles in the thirty years I've known them, have never ceased to interest me. Paul was the first real live composer I ever met. I was fifteen at the time. In Taxco; and so our age difference was big enough for me to look up to this person. I'd never known a composer who had published music and had it performed. Little did I realize that he would become the weird Paul Bowles and end up writing those fairly good novels. He's a most valuable individual and everyone should talk about him more. They don't because he lives away, because he gave up the American bullshit competition scene. He went to live in Morocco on his own terms.

Where's David Posner? I've known David all my mature life.

WL: I knew him in LA but have lost touch. I believe he was teaching in Florida.

NR: He is a real poet when he doesn't cheat. He's so masochistic! I like him.

WL: I met him in an interesting way. I put a gay ad in the LA Free Press, an underground paper, when I was living in LA about 1968, and David answered it.

NR: What did you advertise for?

WL: To meet a gay person. A sexual friendship.

NR: And he answered the ad? Did it work?

WL: Ahhh . . .

NR: Or is that important?

WL: It's not important, but I did get to know him a little.

NR: Such a small world.

WL: And then he gave me an introduction to Paul Bowles.

NR: Paul Bowles is definitely—let's say if there were twelve older people in my life like my mother and father and Marie Laure and Paul Goodman, then Paul Bowles would be one.

WL: Since we're talking about literary personalities (and why not a little gay gossip), did you know Gore Vidal?

NR: We see each other every three or four years. I like and agree with everything about him except his style which is a little aloof for me. He's sort of aloofed himself into a corner, with his blasé shrieks of doom. (If one can speak of blasé shrieks.)

WL: He was on the Dick Cavett show just a few nights ago advertising his new book, "Burr."

NR: He's pretty good on those shows. I once asked him, "Why are you so good on those shows?" and he answered, "Ostensibly I'm there to plug a new book. So I come out and sell my book for two minutes, and then go on to really important things, like ecology or Vietnam, rather than constantly saying I, I, I like those vocalists who just opened at the Rainbow Grill." Gore talks about things bigger than himself. It gives him a certain lasting quality. I like that quality. He's not all that self-involved, considering his whole career. He's good-looking, and makes the



NED ROREM
by Man Ray, 1954

most of that, but he's used it for entree to valuable people. Gore's known everybody and gotten a great deal out of them all, and his vanity is not essentially sexual. I mean, he's a very sexy number, and he likes a lot of sex; and likes to talk about it. But essentially he writes not about himself. Imagine writing a novel on Aaron Burr, for God's sake! A homosexual writing a novel on Aaron Burr, or on the Washington political scene! That's rare. Homosexuals are usually too self-directed to turn toward politics. I'm speaking of another time and place, because some American homosexuals are political now, but much of that has to do solely with gay politics. Gore's politics is more general. For instance, he's specifically against Nixon or Buckley, or any right-wing or conservative party, considering he's an aristocrat to the manor born, rather than a gay liberationist which he probably is too. But he's barking up a broader tree.

WL: I suppose I shall have to ask the inevitable question about your narcissism. This is one thing you've been criticized for in regard to the diaries. Not that narcissism is always a negative quality.

NR: I'm no more narcissistic than anyone else. I just admit to it. If I were really so narcissistic I would have my face lifted at this point. I'm not very interested in my own person.

WL: You do look much younger than you are. I suppose you've been told that throughout your life, and it isn't ageist to say so.

NR: That's nice to hear. Everybody likes to hear that. But I'm not out to prove to anyone that I'm younger than I am. I'm not interested in clothes and so forth, though I want to be loved as well as liked. But mostly, I want to get my work done. That has always come first. The rest has been pure decoration, and admittedly I've at various points connected certain personages for myself. But I'm not necessarily like that at all. I'm a nicer person than I make myself out to be.

No portion of this interview is to be reprinted without permission.

Interview: Copyright © Winston Leyland 1974

FINAL DIARY

Selections from "The Final Diary, 1971-72," by Ned Rorem, to be published Fall 1974. Sections from this diary originally appeared in *Shenandoah*, Summer 1972.

Twenty-six years ago I began this journal whose chief obsessions were about making out. How do you talk to strangers? make friends? what do you do in bed, and how do you get there? How do you persuade others of your talent, and become famous? How, for that matter, do you write diaries, and then, of all things, get them published? Today, with some of the riddles solved, the obsessions remain identical, for the solutions are already a thing of the past: how can I communicate, be appreciated, make friends, get laid? Accomplishment is significant only to outsiders. We cannot nourish ourselves by rereading our own books or hearing our own music, by, so to speak, performing ourselves. The Ned then made friends or thought he did; the Ned now wonders how; the future Ned, like Madame DuBarry to the Angel of Death, requests a minute's reprieve—I was just about to understand. . . .

Why soft-pedal your homosexuality?

Because anyone can be homosexual whereas only I can be me. Homosexuality, like beauty, is partly an effect of will. Talent is given, not willed. What we make of our talent, as of our homosexuality or beauty, is a responsibility. Talent, however, cannot be lazy; it only exists by proving itself. The thrill of Mozart lies not in his genius but in what he did with his genius. But homosexuals and beauties can fritter their lives away, for they need prove nothing.

Rechy, Rader, Krim, and all, write of themselves as trade. Those with whom they "trade it" are treated, at best, with a cold affection, like gifts. Has the fellator, the enclé, ever drawn his side of the picture? Not yet, not as a serious writer, at least not in the first person singular, not even Genet. Yet it is precisely from among the accomplished that we find the homosexual who is attracted to the non-accomplished, the everyday, the workman. Now Rechy, Rader, Krim, and all, necessarily align themselves with the non-accomplished, at least in fantasy. The smaller classes (intellectuals, artists) seem always attracted by the larger classes (students, sailors). How many delicate poets incognito are down at the docks blowing butch poets incognito? Despite the Harold Actons of this world, aristocrats do not recoil before their servants.

In a misfired epigram James Dickey writes: "Marilyn Monroe was a masturbation fantasy of bellboys, Grace Kelly of bank executives." He is exactly wrong. Men tend to masturbate out of their class, women within it (if they use images at all).

My sexuality, tastes, my role? Wasn't this clear? The crucified Christ with a Gioconda smile. Tadzio fused with Hedda Gabler.

Picture a prison cell, adrift in space and time, open only on top like a Vietnamese tiger cage, or rather, like that

sunken habitat in "Women in the Dunes," but more confined and covered with iron cross-hatching. Picture a satisfied person housed here at state expense. To his prison ceiling come a marine sergeant, a mack truck driver, a hard hat, each of beauty without narcissism, of indifference beyond contempt, each unshaven, sweaty, musclebound, dark haired, big cocked. These three straddle the roof, inserting their erections between the bars, while the satisfied person throws back his head and blows them one by one voraciously, his own whole body floating up to grip the bars from which he hangs by all fours like an eager sloth.

Picture a pink and pearl chorister contracting for his own violation by a black monk.

Picture a cop jerked off in a urinal by a female impersonator.

Combine the pictures, for I am the satisfied person, the pearl chorister, the impersonator, the knife and the wound, la victime et le bourreau, and I despise them all, conniving bland Sebastians who wait, noblesse oblige, for their multiple puncture as for some higher homage. Yet passivity is stronger than activity, for it arranges to be rejected to. I am the receiver, the contriving Eve, thrown to my knees in the boudoir while dominating in the parlor, the choreographer forcing them to rape me, smiling the smile of Françoise Rosay at the end of "La Kermesse Heroique."

Jean Genet in the early fifties was a conquest among the dames du monde vying with each other about stolen objects. "So he swiped a gold salt cellar from you, did he dear? From me he took an alabaster vase." Today they purchase life-size replicas of people fucking, but don't permit people to fuck beneath their chippendale chairs. I am not queer, I am a composer. I am not a composer, I am my parents' offspring. The divine specific, creator as creation. Even Beethoven was not Beethoven but a product of the elders. Anyone, in principle, can be Beethoven, but only he can be his parents' child.

Within our circle securely heterosexual men showed no contempt for me. That was in the early forties. Today such men, in their security, question their security.

It is while legitimately waiting on a corner for our Aunt Lucy, not cruising at all, that the incredible occasion presents itself, and we are incapable. . . .

It is not wisdom but perversity that makes me want doors to be held open, cigarettes lit,—makes me wish to be treated like an unliberated woman.

If you choose to soft-pedal your homosexuality, why such revelations?

Those "revelations" aren't homosexual, they're sexual tout court, your father experiences them, they're social. True, these diaries never disclosed secrets or made issues of "tastes" because there were no secrets or issues; the homo part of the sexuality was taken for granted. However, I am an exhibitionist, precisely at a moment when it's no longer becoming, and times have changed.

Though times haven't changed so much when at this late date, in the face of black and female freedom, homosexuality is, in the eyes of intellectual pedants, still good for a "how come" or a laugh or a sneer. When a Stanley Kauffmann, with untypical fuzziness, asks in a review of "Sunday Bloody Sunday" how two such comparatively cultivated types could fall for a cypher like Murray Head—that, the very week Forster's "Maurice" comes out. When, in the current issue of *Sewanee Review*, a Peter Taylor will disclose his hero as homosexual by declaring—what else?—that "his gestures and his walk have become effeminate—but not exaggerated." When, in the same issue, one James Blish, in an essay on Poe, concludes with this gratuitous paragraph:

Such arguments as those between Edmund Wilson and Vladimir Nabokov over the latter's translation of Pushkin, or indeed almost any of the tempests which rage in the letter columns of *The New York Review of Books*, more closely resemble the domestic spats of homosexuals than they do any kind of literary controversy. Such people seem to thrive, or think that they thrive, in a climate of insult. . . .

But since Wilson and Nabokov are not homosexual, nor are the policy makers of *The New York Review*, why doesn't the author say "spats of heterosexuals"? Such a person seems to thrive in a climate of insult.

for John

QUEER LOVE

(very spontaneous on occasion of
Gay Rights Action Coalition Rally)

Fissure the foundations of society!
poverty & its distribution
spiritual poverty & its institution
Suck cock, Father country
be tender & gentle, yr mind out of the gutter
Kiss pussy, Mother country, be kind & subtle
satisfy the hungry ladies with skillful embrace
O the human heart it takes to reach the human heart!
the heart in the sleeve of the person who waits—
the heart at the door of a fitful night—
the heart in the body of a snappy cadet—
heart of a woman who loves a woman—
the heart moving cautious thru monitored turf—
the heart stretching to livid extremes—
the heart of Sleazy City— won't somebody help? doan nobody care?
the heart of wounded loves too scared to move
Let's build the biggest best alleycat heart
the strongest surest heart revealed, the hayloft heart!
the bristling heart! embroiled heart! in juicy flesh
flesh of ancestors, flesh from the beginning
flesh returning, flesh smoldering, flesh on the loose
licked flesh, flesh tumbling & opening
heart flash mind flash body flash
Honor you, honor myself, blessings on the natural act!

A. Waldman
NYC 1974

At dawn — my breath
pale mushrooms against your window.
I have been as crystal —
chipped
but capable of rainbow.

You say you like white
and so it was —
you came to me —
a white river
with city lights stretching
beneath white hairs
you carry like virgin dust
between your legs.

With stars in my veins
I make love to you
in your self
sufficiency...
and stand at the window
with breathing like memories

of mushroom clouds.

Somewhere there is a moon.
Somewhere in your dreams
you moan for something that floats
on your white river.

You cover me in white.
It is your way.

Craig Makler

TURNING

when you turn someone else will be turning station
wagon on turnpike in field house falling
supermarket boy his eyes turning his lips my hands
too they are birds like that they are turning
where I don't know they would fly out and in to you.

— Ed Cox

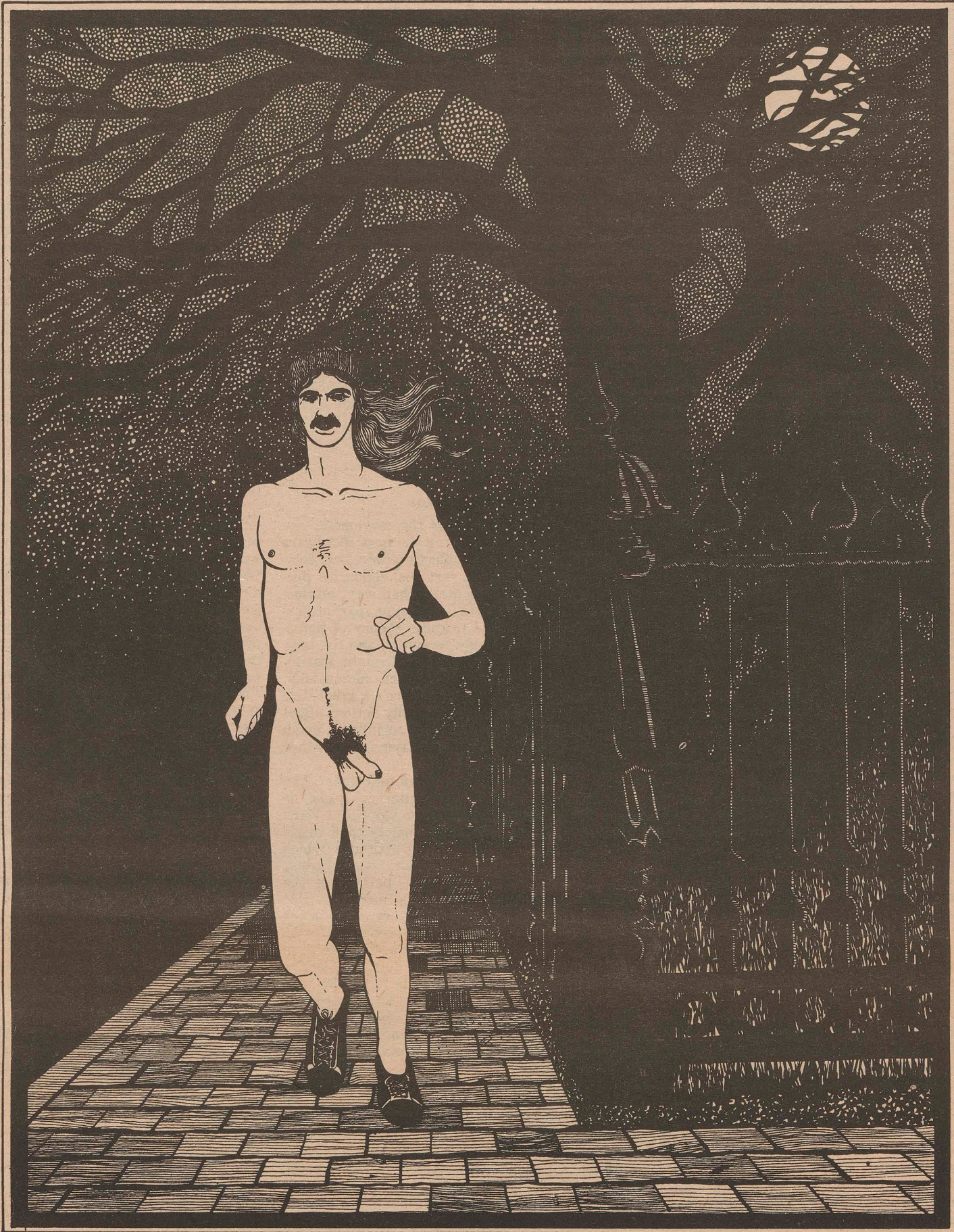
DEFIANCES

You ask me to go to an
Elephant film
on Friday.
I don't want to go;
I already experience
too many nature adventures.

I daydream about cocks,
imagine the bottom of my hand
on the top of a cockhead
about to sprout up
between my fingers
a pink jungle flower.

Too lazy to go out & get one,
instead I play a record
of music by Chausson.
The soprano sings in French
but listening closely
I discover
she's singing about elephants.

R. Daniel Evans



R. STEARNS

PALM CASINO

glamor pallor wax blonde bombshell pallor glamor
hospital bed tableau tata hospital bed tableau
roses roses I HAD THE CRAZIEST DREAM roses roses

me in drag watching backstage me in drag
EEK I time my scream EEK
vinyl ghost moth skin ghost vinyl

EEK I HAD THE CRAZIEST DREAM EEK

Candy I time my scream Candy
Darling watching backstage darling

we clatter back down
black spiral steps
vinyl glamor vinyl

black spiral steps
courtly thanks
star
final kiss final
byebye

Kenward Elmslie

HAND IN HAND

My lovers of the fruit
blaze forth out of the punch
dripping blue all the hairs
on their nude bodies glowing crimson.
They are coming now to plant
their dyed palms plop flat on my face.
We are all safe in faience
from the Nile, in faience
from the Nile, in faience
from the Nile. Lotus printed
on our buttocks we walk over the Delta
hand in hand. Men this is sure not Illinois.

Sal Farinella

THE VERGE BOYS

One always got on the bottom
and one always got on the top
in brick Massachusetts' leaves
we sailed into our closeness.
The Fifties with large fins.
Puberty in a motorboat
on the verge.
An island in the river.
Touching each other there.
Holding each other.
Loving each other.

William Barber

MARKETPLACE

I.
Obscenities
scrawled in johns
and in public places
ARE for children ...
Neglectful parents
should know.

II.
You'd think Market Street
was the producing
Fruit Capitol
of the World!
The way the baskets
are bulging:
overripeness.

III.
Selecting the right fruit
is an art and I'd rather
go to the root of the tree
than to the Marketplace.
The fruits are so much
firmer there.

Paul Mariah

A YOUNG MAN IN A BAR

your burn is subtle,
an echo trapped
in mist, forced down,
down into flakes,
where red leaves soak
into mulch, where
the mandibles of
beetles advance
over the table cloth
like razors

the barmaid coughs.
she presents her
heavy wallet. a candle
dies. night groans
in the street. a hint
of fire.

Robert Peters

REFLECTIONS ON THE GAY MOVEMENT

The primary cause of the modern gay liberation movement is the massive invasion of privacy characteristic of modern western culture. It isn't so much that we are coming out of the closets, but that our closets have been invaded and there's little else we can do. For fear of subversive revolution, the police state in America has broadened its definition of the public domain so as to extend its control over private life styles—a form of behavior typical of dying regimes. Teachers are being trained on the principle that their right to teach (i.e. their right to propagandize) extends from the public classroom into the private home, where parents weren't socializing children as effectively as the state required. One of the motivations behind the community involvement of progressive university programs is the need to divert the growing unrest of the potentially revolutionary lower classes.

The masters of the media have exploited bedroom/bathroom activity not merely to increase the market for deodorants and sex-aids, but to mould the patterns of private behavior into predictable, and hence controllable, outlets. Psychiatrists/psychologists/sociologists, through their official affiliation with educational/business/governmental agencies, have crippled the vital strangeness of intimacy, and have brought us to a poverty of the private self that forestalls revolution just as effectively as does abject economic poverty. The starving person is kept working for tomorrow's daily bread, or tomorrow's lay, rather than going without for the sake of next year's revolution. Civil police agents have become plainclothes decoys and private investigators into criminal activity, vice, drugs, conspiracy, and other phenomena of the countercultures and subcultures that a rapidly-decaying culture can no longer afford to ignore in self-confident security.

Whether such developments are good or bad, or can or should be reversed, is beside the point. The point is that the old-line homophile ideology of the right to privacy was no longer tenable to those of us who recognized that privacy is virtually non-existent in modern culture. Of course we still talk about the right to privacy, and it's a useful concept when arguing the fine points of constitutional law. But it's an ideal whose substantive reality can never be reclaimed. The modern gay liberation movement had little recourse but to proclaim, in effect if not in rhetoric, a right to publicity, and developed an ideology of coming out as a matter of course. The closet was becoming so intolerably delimited by the claims of an open-orientated society that it was becoming virtually impossible to live a double life of which half could still remain a secret. Somewhere in our educational/military/credit dossier is a note indicating that someone knows about our closet; gone are the days when homosexuals could have a large circle of friends who could provide a security nest if one had to leave town quietly.

My point is that we didn't come out: we were squeezed out by those very same forces that heretofore had tried to keep us in. "Come out!" need never have been shouted so loudly. Whether they like it or not, more and more people will be forced by society to join our ranks. This suggests that we will have larger resources from which to draw in the future. We would be foolish strategists indeed were we to waste these resources by channeling all of our energies towards any specific goal, such as a gay civil rights amendment to the Constitution. A great many rivulets will be emerging, and we've got to avoid damming them up as we did at the outset of the movement.

At this grass-roots/popular level of people who are out of the closet simply because of circumstances rather than political choice, the general mood will be conservative. This was also true at the beginning of the movement, and our failure to recognize it prevented us from effectively facilitating the growth through the reformist stage towards the revolutionary stage. There will be increasing numbers of us gambling about looking for something to do, and hopefully we will be able to accommodate all workers. An ideology of "Never trash thy brother or sister" must become a categorical imperative. And at the same time we must recognize the difference between "trashing" and "using," between "exploiting" and "facilitating," so that we can develop strategies of implementing the functionally subversive potential of even the least radical thrusts of any part of the movement.

I wish we could postpone the revolution. I wish we could quietly spend our leisure time developing a sound ideology of liberation, while we spend much of our gay activist time engaged in humanistic reform. The simple humanitarian task of gay liberation is immense, so immense as to almost preclude the possibility of a large enough popular base for a program of revolution. Most of us still get barely enough sex/love/friendship to sustain us: the fifty-year-old homosexual priest still has his problems about coming out and getting old and being Roman Catholic; most of us still don't know what to do about our parents; and our ideology, such as it is, is thoroughly enmeshed with the American Dream.

Because we've been squeezed out at this particular time and place, the Healthy Happy Homosexual seems likely to conquer the gay liberation movement. More and more healthy happy homosexuals, quite ordinary blokes (like the ad says, no freaks, fats, feds, drugs, dopes, or leeches), are getting it together as couples, and together happily buying houses and cars and cameras, washing their underwear and "keeping it clean," preparing joint income tax returns like most other just plain folk in America, and healthily dancing to funky rock 'n' roll at healthy happy homosexual discos. When I discovered that most of us were mediocre instead of different, and that, if given half a chance, we would indeed become these healthy happy homosexuals instead of pure perverts, I wasn't at all liberated. I wasn't happy; I was a bit bored. When I discovered the existence of proud prac-

ticing pederasts, and sadomasochists, and drag queens and genderfuckers—then I was liberated.

When I first became active in the movement, I was always arguing that the age of consent should be lowered to three (i.e., I was hoping that the oppressive distinction between "child" and "adult" could be replaced by the revolutionary concept of "person"); and that total consent wasn't really absolutely necessary for determining the morality of an act; and that orgy was grand and S/M was fine (and maybe even water sports were okay). But people started yelling at me for upsetting the apple cart and killing the horse. Like most supersensitive adult male homosexuals, I shut up. I began my dutiful stint of appearing on campus panels to present the case that we all—every goddam last one of us—were normal, middle-class, respectable, and non-pederastic. I constructed such a perfect gay mirror-image of the American Dream that I almost believed that maybe we were normal, middleclass, respectable, and non-pederastic. The thought filled me with utter horror, so I ceased being an active gay activist. I became instead something of a "humorist gay historian" in public and a radical ideologue in private. I'm peeping out again.

THE HUMANITARIANS

In terms of submovements within the movement, the most significant development during the past five years is the increased humanitarian emphasis within local communities. Telephone counseling services, child-care programs, community service centers, half-way houses, crash pads, etc. are noticeably increasing, paraprofessionals who've abandoned the sickness theory of homosexual love are being effectively recruited, and the anti-humanitarian aspect of homophobia in straight institutions is being challenged more and more successfully. Within this humanitarian movement there's a great deal of sloppy sentimentality, a great many silly notions about health and happiness and the key to the scriptures, and a good many do-gooders who attack the symptoms rather than the causes of oppression.

In the very long run this humanitarian movement, like all movements with strictly humanitarian goals, is doomed to failure (the Red Cross never stopped a war). Appeals to sentimentality, pity, and charity tend to reinforce condescending and patronizing attitudes which backlash when it comes time to demand one's rights; health and happiness is the normative pattern of the American dream; do-gooders tend to be moralists. But I'm still glad that the humanitarians are very much on the scene. For one thing, they are valuably concerned with the age extremes that the liberationists and the reformists have tended to ignore, much to the detriment of the gay community. We've exploited our elderly for financial donations from behind the scenes, and abandoned our young for fear of a pederastic image. People at the age extremes are ipso facto conservative if not reactionary, and it's quite true that they can be stumbling blocks for any ethnic revolutionary group.

Revolution becomes increasingly difficult to the degree to which advanced cultures can preserve the presence of their older members and prolong the dependency of their younger members—I take that to be a neutral fact with which all revolutionary movements must somehow cope. I'm not sure how to cope with it except on the humanitarian level, which can be condescending, but I do know that it's crass and barbaric to ignore or exploit or repudiate the elderly for the sake of an imaginary future generation. The increasing number of under-age coffee-houses, crash pads, and parental advisory services to a great extent have a specifically Christian religious motivation which is anathema to any ultimate liberation. But it's at least a start towards meeting the needs of a steadily increasing number of homeless young gay people.

In spite of the basically reactionary home/family/childhood concepts that humanitarians tend to approve, their parental advisory services tend to weaken the nuclear family unit just as heterosexual marriage/family counseling generally fails to hold families together while creating a more realistic situation in which they separate amicably. Regardless of the conservative nature of most humanitarian ideals, their activity itself is functionally subversive, if only because modern humanitarians tend to espouse slightly more radical ideas than their Victorian forbears. Most important, however, they broaden the base of functional people—people who are no longer helplessly hamstrung by their fear/guilt/oppression/isolation/loneliness, who will have more time and ability to contribute to the more liberationist part of the movement. All things in due course.

THE REFORMISTS

The reformist movement is proceeding about as well as we can expect it to proceed. The women's rights movement channeled all of its energies into the single issue of obtaining the vote, and after fifty years of hard work they achieved the vote and found that it didn't make much difference. I imagine that the gay civil rights movement as such will take the same course, but that, given the more rapid pace of society, it will attain its dubious achievements more rapidly. I'm exceedingly relieved that the reformist front is being taken over by the professionals. It's insufferably tedious for the gay liberationist to argue the fine points of any specific anti-gay law when the concept of "law" itself is an incarnation of oppression and of course has got to go. And the gay humanitarian is always frustrated when he or she leaves the courtroom or legislature. The reformists persevere because of their worldly wisdom "it's all in a day's work," and that helps the morale of the gay populace. We can conserve our energies while the experts handle things. Exactly what is being accomplished I'm not quite sure, and it's somewhat preposterous to argue for civil rights within the context

of the death of civilization (hasn't anybody noticed?). It's rather hard to argue that gay teachers should be allowed to be role models for gay students, when the concept of "role models" is almost as archaic as the "leadership model" of education, and educational systems are wobbling on their last legs.

It's feasible that the great education campaign of the reformists has inadvertently educated our oppressors as to the options open to them for effecting our oppression. If we had not attacked the sodomy statute on the grounds that the phrase "unnatural and abominable" was void for vagueness, the legislatures wouldn't be listing oral-anal and oral-scrotal acts to make everything crystal clear. But I don't blame the reformists for this—I think it was an inevitable reaction of the dying police state. Right now I think the reformists are functioning as a diversionary tactic, distracting society from the revolutionary principles at the core of gay liberation.

THE LIBERATIONISTS

What really upsets me is that the liberationists haven't developed a radical ideology. For a variety of reasons, GLF groups are collapsing everywhere (are there any left?). The gay liberation movement that began in 1969 is now defunct, a matter for historical research, and we left-over liberationists have scuttled mostly to the humanitarian ranks, wondering why things happened the way they did. We didn't hold firmly enough to a "never trash thy brother or sister" philosophy. When inner-directed guilt was transformed into outer-directed anger, we weren't quite prepared for the fact that such anger automatically attacks the nearest available object instead of the enemy-at-a-distance. So we kept getting into these incredible bitch fights. We might have gotten things under control if we hadn't run off to Washington and Cuba and conventions of other oppressed groups. But there's no use lamenting the passing away of what could have been.

But, being an incorrigible ideologue, I'm still disappointed that nothing of ideological significance has appeared since Carl Wittman's *A Gay Manifesto*. In that document—the most important document of gay liberation so far—Wittman made a number of very important points, including the following: "kids can take care of themselves, and are sexual beings way earlier than we like to admit"; s/m can be a "highly developed artistic endeavor, a ballet"; "we shouldn't be apologetic to straights about gay people whose sex lives we don't understand or share." Since then, we have internalized our oppressors' ideology to such a degree that Dennis Altman in *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation*, can by a curious doublethink, call himself a liberationist and still utter these thoroughly establishment sentiments: "My personal belief (hope?) [his parenthesis] is that transvestism/sexism would disappear were our social norms not so oppressive of men who exhibit 'feminine' traits and vice versa. Similarly I suspect sadomasochism is a product of a screwed-up sexuality that is also likely to pass. The relationship between gay liberation and those who practice both transvestism and sadomasochism, usually stigmatized within as well as without the traditional gayworld, is one of the real challenges faced by the movement." Altman confesses that he wasn't able to meet that challenge in 1971, and by 1973 it still hadn't been met: in *The Gay Liberation Book* Len Richmond and Gary Noguera acknowledge that they weren't able to collect any essays on S/M or transvestism. And we hardly hear a whisper about that other radical challenge: pederasty. Our ideology is going practically nowhere.

Of course there is such a thing as "a symptom of internalized oppression," but that's a very broad idea, and we tend to carelessly apply it before engaging in radical analysis. It is only superficially apparent, for example, that pederasty imitates a dominant/subordinate exploitative power structure. Radical analysis reveals that pederasty challenges the child/adult dichotomy imposed by western culture, and it would certainly be to our tactical advantage to foster pederasty because of its relevance to a radically transformed child-rearing. (I know PTA mothers will holler, but PTA mothers are obsolete.) Of course there are exploitative patterns in pederastic relationships, but it can be fairly well documented that such patterns were created by the oppressive "school" concept invented in the nineteenth century (and nothing in modern life has not been corrupted by this "school" tradition), but the root itself is still revolutionary. We've handled transvestism in a similarly superficial and dismissive manner. We should have noticed that drag queens do not "imitate women"—the difference between drag queens and women should have been obvious to us, and not just because some drag queens are inept with their greasepaint. The "women" imitated by "female" impersonators are not "women"—they're "famous stars," usually Amazonian/lesbian type women who are self-defined and not simply an extension of The Man. Of course there's a lot of sexism in a lot of drag shows, which just means that sexism may have corrupted something that was not inherently sexist. If sexism originates in patriarchal culture, as it does, then it is indeed strange that transvestism and transsexualism originated in the matriarchal culture of Asian Minor around 3300 B.C. Homosexual marriages (formal "mateship" contracts recognized by law) also originated in matriarchal cultures, and it's not the "pure and simple truth" to suggest that homosexual marriages "imitate" heterosexual marriages (there's some evidence to suggest exactly the contrary). It's been said that sadomasochism is one of those dominant-subordinate things that will magically pass away when liberation comes. Any honest leatherman will tell you that he's neither sadist nor masochist but both, alternately and simultaneously, and a clear pattern of oppressor/oppressed or the master/male/active exploiting

the slave/female/passive exists to the degree that it exists only because it has been corrupted by a society that demands sexist role-playing.

The primary ideology that's been developing lately is a very vague concept that Altman calls "androgynous bisexuality." The theory that we will all become androgynous bisexuals lacks a materialist basis and is frighteningly normative. We've fallen into the subject/object trap of heterosexism/dialectism, and wrongly defined "the polymorphous" in terms of sex stimulus rather than sex gratification. Pansexuality, a proper liberationist goal, simply means that one's entire body become erotically responsive (e.g. as in the case of "cuddle freaks"), regardless of the gender of the stimulus (male, female, child, animal, vegetable, coke bottle, porn pic, what not). Such a goal can be achieved entirely within the context of exclusive homosexuality, though some of us are copping out to a "humansexuality" that still bears the traces of The Man's definition of (hetero)sex.

I don't think anyone has done much with our most radical idea of liberation: perversity. That's because it's our most dangerous (non-reformist, non-humanitarian) ideology, an ideology that even goes beyond cautious liberationism. Altman refers to Mick Jagger as a symbol of the androgynous bisexual goal, without mentioning that Jagger is also a symbol of Lord High Satan. If we're hearty radical analysts we should be able to go beyond androgyny (a mixture merely of male and female) to a mixture of human and animal. The great god Pan, symbol of pansexuality, was half-goat, and Satan has goat feet. Well, I'm becoming metaphoric. But I don't believe that revolution will be possible until we can open up the abyss, or that Satan can be transformed into bright Lucifer until we can climb upon him and achieve our desire. I don't mean to frighten away our humanitarians and reformists and cautious liberationists, but as a radical ideologue I simply can't close up shop at the point of humanism with its false dichotomy of human/inhuman, which is the origin of the false dichotomy of natural/unnatural.

THE STRATEGISTS

I'm disappointed that there hasn't emerged a fourth group of gay strategists who might set about seeking ways to interrelate the activities of the humanitarians, the reformists, and the liberationists. Probably one reason for this lack is that we've been so excessively abused as non-persons that we justifiably refuse to use/exploit others in an impersonal manner. However, all known revolutions have required the Machiavellian

manipulation of bodies of people, both one's own and one's enemies', often to their hurt and with full cynical knowledge that every revolution has its casualties. Herbert Marcuse in *Eros and Civilization* (1955)—a book that increasing numbers of gay liberationists are referring to—says quite bluntly that cultural revolution will first of all require an interim dictatorship in which the oppressors are eliminated and their repressive ideologies are purged. That's a bit heavy for young idealists, and most of the time we use the phrase "cultural revolution" strictly as a metaphor. I'd really like to know if anyone's preparing a contingency plan just in case a real revolution comes, guns and all.

Of course guns are phallic symbols, and that raises the specter of male power structures. But not necessarily. In strict symbology, a gun is no more phallic, and no less phallic, than a television tower, and even the purest women's liberationists have not advocated *not* using the media because of its inherent power/influence structure. A gun is simply a tool like any other, which can be abused as an exploitative tool, or used for corrective repair. In some of my more "what's-the-use" moments, e.g. in response to a story about the use of the drug prolixin to "cure" homosexuals by inducing acute anxiety death panic, I envision a holocaust that seems the inevitable outcome of our collective rage, and I hope someone's around to direct that rage upon the nearest available heterosexist institution. My entire personality is so imbued with the influence of the humanist educational tradition that I can't come to grips with questions relating to revolutionary violence as an instrument of change, so maybe it's just as well that the reformists and humanitarians are keeping us busy with committees and more committees and campaigns and community projects.

But I think it would be wise for us to at least give some careful attention to the potential revolutionary strategies inherent in the gay situation itself. Whereas women cannot persuade men to become women, and blacks cannot persuade whites to become black, gays can certainly persuade straights to go gay. I see absolutely nothing wrong with proselytizing; to cringe under the accusation of proselytizing probably is a symptom of internalized guilt, and certainly exhibits a lack of gay pride. Proselytizing could be used to slightly swell our ranks, but mainly as a subversive tactic to play upon the self-doubt of machismo males. There's no better way to destroy machismo than to fuck it in the ass. We have a reformist ideology of the function of the secret voting booth; what

we need is a radical revaluation of the function of the closet—certainly our invisibility would make for excellent saboteur tactics, if such become necessary. Some really interesting possibilities come to mind once we start thinking about it.

FINAL COMMENTS

The consciousness-raising flurry at the beginning of the gay liberation movement held out the promise of transforming society by the aid of our heightened consciousness; i.e. it held out the hopes that a raised consciousness would automatically reveal ideologies and how to implement them. Because of our learned behavior for introspective analysis, we quickly digressed into encounter therapy, encountering each other instead of confronting society, and at best achieved a temporary alleviation of loneliness. The radical gay media have become an extension of this encounter-therapy model, and the papers are filled with many short testimonials and personal statements that don't really go anywhere. This is an important period for us men—and the gay movement is mostly a male gay movement—to go through, in order to release pent-up sorrow and discover fraternal tenderness. But now that we've told each other our sob stories, several times, with variations of rage, pity, joy, anger and other of the primary emotions, we're discovering a gnawing emptiness because we men, as men are presently defined/oppressed, still need that abstract idea to keep us going. On our road to gay liberation we've stopped long enough to weep over the slain. Insofar as our status for several hundred years has been that of anti-persons (demons, anti-social criminals, anti-religious sinners, unnatural/*contra naturam*/against nature, perverts) rather than merely inferior persons with the second-class citizenship of women and blacks, it was inevitable for us to clasp onto the very personal as a part of our liberation. And it is part of our liberation. But our emphasis upon the dignity of individual personality, particularly our obsessive insistence upon "personal" rather than "theoretical" discussion, indicates that we're becoming trapped by the false dichotomy of public/private constructed by our oppressors. I hope that gradually we begin re-recognizing that "dispassionate objective radical analysis" can also be an effective path to liberation. Personal self-affirmation and the joyful exuberance of first coming out has sustained us, but *only just* sustained us, for the grim and earnest tasks that lie ahead.

—Rictor Norton



Photo by Nick Sheldy

"NUDE, CAROLINA BEACH"
Gouache on Paper by John Button
Original is 16" x 12"

The painting here indicates that something is happening in the field of professional painting. Previously only the most guarded and smirking references were made to homosexuality. But, in the last few years, many artists have been coming out. They have been producing art that is frankly homosexual. The example here is figurative. But there are some abstract artists, too, who have found ways to allow their work to be homosexual.

The visual arts seem to have lagged far behind poetry, and other arts, in this respect. But, in the last year or two, homosexual art has appeared forcefully. There have been many important "male-nude" shows in the New York area, two of them at highly respected college-galleries. This has served the function of admitting that there are gay artists and gay art, and has also had the effect of opposing the habit of using primarily women as sex-objects in painting.

Women's art, feminist art, has led the way. Only five or six years ago there were not more than a handful of women artists who could show in galleries and be taken seriously by professionals. But now there are a number of women's groups and galleries that are seeing to it that women get a fair shake. Much of the art is frankly feminist. The gay movement has much to learn from these determined and courageous women.

I have been showing in New York for the last twenty years. I've been associated with my present gallery for fourteen years. Yet, two years ago, when I proposed a frankly homosexual show, my dealer came close to refusing to exhibit the work. Finally she did, and to her surprise the show received wider and more favorable coverage than my previous shows had.

The time is ripe. The serious, professional art world has been assaulted and won.

—John Button

JOHN HORNE BURNS

... John Horne Burns was by far the most talented, and the most attractively talented, American novelist to emerge since the end of the war.

—Brigid Brophy

This July marks the 21st anniversary of the death of John Horne Burns. Few people today recognize the name of this man, even fewer are familiar with his books. In the popular mind Norman Mailer is identified as the man who wrote *The American War Novel* of WW II. But in fact it was a book by John Horne Burns: *The Gallery*, published in 1947. This book was a bestseller, and Burns was proclaimed by the *Saturday Review* as the best writer of 1947.

But John Horne Burns was a faggot, and he was certainly no claqueur for America. His two following books, *Lucifer with a Book* and *A Cry of Children* were fiercely and cruelly attacked; some reviewers sank to the level of personal abuse. Brophy wrote: The subsequent career of his reputation illustrates not so much the viciousness as the whirling irresponsibility of literary circles." They certainly did a job on John Horne Burns, and it was all very deliberate; if not personally coordinated, then at least a shared reaction by a mediocre sensibility common to the kind of people America's literary Mafia promotes. Reviewers and critics were initially dazzled by Burns' talent, but he proved to be too much for them, and they rubbed him out. It only took six years. In 1947 he was America's Brightest Literary Star; in 1953 he was dead, his name already drifting into oblivion, his work vilified and ignored.

John Horne Burns was born in 1916 in Andover, Massachusetts. He attended Phillips Andover Academy and Harvard College, graduating from this latter in 1937. He served in the U.S. Army during the Second World War from 1942 to 1946. Out of his war experiences he created his first published novel: *The Gallery*. It was an unconventional work. Burns created a very direct communication with the reader about his own self-discovery. It's as though the world were opening to him for the first time. *The Gallery* consists of a series of "Portraits and Promenades," people and places Burns recalled from his North African and Italian years while in the service. In *The Gallery* Burns wasn't so much concerned with a narrator's experience in combat per se—test of masculinity and all that—instead, the thrust of his book is in the contrast of Americans Abroad with the North Africans and Italians they encounter, especially after the Allied Conquest. The Americans, in their ignorance, arrogance and greed, don't come off very well.

Gore Vidal wrote of Burns: "In Naples he fell in love with the idea of life . . . for Burns it was a revelation to realize that he belonged not to an army of civilized liberators but to a barbarian horde humanly inferior to the conquered."

Burns himself did an amusing light self-parody of just the discovery in the opening of *The Gallery*. An Irish-American serviceman, appropriately named Michael Patrick, rather stupid and unsophisticated, and a drunk, attends the Neapolitan Opera. "Michael Patrick had an envy of Italians, seeing a certain kinship between them and the Irish. But the Irish stayed hurt all their lives; the Italians had a bounce back in them. All his life he'd been silent, waiting and listening for some cue . . . But after months of being alone with himself a reserve of chatter had been dammed up in him, punctuated with shellfire. He so wanted to talk on and on just for the joy of creating sentences!" Michael Patrick winds up in an elegant booth on the horseshoe, nipping from his bottle of hooch, totally overwhelmed by the opera and The Experience of Culture on his heretofore bleak life. He collapses in a welter of tears and passes out. It's a scene ludicrous in just about all respects except for the author's awareness of its potentiality, that after this collapse will come a rising of a person now beginning to understand the dimensions to living.

The Gallery was both a critical and popular success. And yet even among the kudos there were already traces of the vines that would ultimately wend their circuitous way to strangle off his career. There was something too critical, not upbeat enough at the end of *The Gallery* that sparked a suggestion of heterodoxy too unnerving for the Bookchat Network. To some reviewers it seemed that Burns had

been just a mite too unkind on Americans for their own tastes. Said the *Saturday Review*: "Bitterness and power are there in good measure; but hope is harder to find." After all, we had "won" the war! Why was Burns so magnetized by the Italians, a mere conquered people? We, the conquerors, learn from them? Preposterous!

In 1949, Harper and Brothers published John Horne Burns' second novel: *Lucifer with a Book*. The proto-fascist impulses of Americans that Burns touched on in *The Gallery* were more clearly delineated in this second novel. It is the story of Guy Hudson, a young veteran who obtains a teaching position at an exclusive New England private school. The book is an examination of how evil becomes predominant and is accepted as the norm in an atmosphere in which personal loyalty, toadying to wealth, and gun-toting patriotism are established as a society's totems. It's a story about the tolls of hypocrisy and the gradual perversion of individual integrity.

Burns indicts the American educational system for betraying each and every Ideal it purports to uphold. The theme is old-hat today. It was still exciting and controversial in 1949, especially when treated with the anger that Burns pumps into it. His parents themselves were first-generation Americans, and like virtually all of their generation, eager to believe in the institutions of this land. *Lucifer with a Book* is an exquisite indictment of all this sham, written by a man who observed the decay in progress from the inside. (Burns had spent years as an English instructor at the Loomis Institute, a second-rate boys' preparatory school in Connecticut. It is not, alas, a wholly honest book. Burns works up a romance between his hero and his female counterpart on the faculty of the adjacent girls' academy, the two who refuse to give in to the sinister machinations that "normal" life at the school demands. There develops a sexual relationship between them, and finally a romantic love.

The other love theme in the book is subordinate but it is somehow more successfully evoked. It is between Guy Hudson and Ralph Du Bouchet, a sensitive, pretty senior classman who's on scholarship. The erotic tension between them is strong though unspoken. The "romance" is under-described by Burns, but those encounters between Ralph and Guy blaze like bottled fire, waiting for something to happen. The affair, to the extent both know it exists, is far more moving—perhaps because of his circumspections—than is the heterosexual affair. He diverts their mutual attraction



into sexual relations with women and we are to accept this as final resolution. Such a tender and touchy subject as the potentiality of real erotic passion between a teacher and his student—taboo though part of just about everyone's maturing—can easily be treated with contempt, fear, or as cliché. In *Lucifer with a Book*, the reader would have to be obtuse not to identify some of this capability for homosexual passion as Burns's own; hence, some of the anger must be the author's frustration at the required repression of such love. This same kind of fascinating stifled erotic tension will recur in *Cry of Children* between the protagonist and his "buddy."

Yet we must keep in mind the temper of the times in which Burns wrote. Though only two and a half decades ago, it was in many ways an age that denied authors their right to be as candid as they might have chosen to be, either with theme or in style. The contrivance of the heterosexual affairs in *Lucifer* was also a convenience of plot to Burns, allowing the reader to focus more easily on the issues involved with the school. You can only teach your readers so much in one book. Give them half a chance to beat you dead with homosexuality and they'll ignore anything else you may have to say.

Lucifer with a Book is a brilliant and stunning work, dazzling in its displays of the author's creative abilities. It sparkles with criticism that has crystallized into contempt. It's a more narrowly focused work than *The Gallery*. Burns is writing about something profoundly important: the process by which a culture corrupts whole generations of youth into accepting a mean, barbaric approach to life while conquering the world and its resources in the name of self-evident human rights and political democracy of which it, in fact, knows little. Again B. Brophy: "He is bold in scale. He is not afraid to bid to be universal." That Burns is saying something relevant and immediately material is rare enough among American novelists. He's not merely descriptive and wholly self-evolved; he's identifying a pathology and tacitly challenging us to change.

The problem for the reviewers and critics was that they couldn't accept the truth in Burns' vision; it had to be called "farce," or "satire," and thereby dismissed. As Brigid Brophy wrote of Burns: "The events retain just enough probability to make the characters' sensations of nightmare terrifyingly convincing." But if you deny the probability of events, call them distortions and parody, then it is quite easy to miss the observations revealed in them, especially if those observations are

unpleasant to the prevailing sensibility. But this was the path of the critics. Brophy: "Horne Burns had the courage, and sufficiently overcame his puritanism, to commit himself to his imagination, even where he was artistically unsafe." What more can be asked of the artist? It is his gift to make as explicable as possible his world. It is the commitment to his imagination, and the quality of the imagination in detailing his world by which the artist must be judged, not merely the truths revealed thereby, though of course these orient him on the political spectrum. But in the area of brilliantly detailing his world, Burns excelled. Brophy says his prototype is Dickens. We might also compare him, making small qualifications, with Tennessee Williams. There is a mind and an active imagination revealed in the novels of John Horne Burns through all these words, and a mind and an imagination are perhaps what Bookchat Mobsters are least equipped to handle.

Orville Prescott in the *New York Times*: "... a novel . . . so drenched in bile and venom that it is hard to take seriously. . . . *Lucifer with a Book* is a wretchedly bad novel, tedious and sometimes ludicrous. . . . Mr. Burns seems to have no compunction about pompous phrases, weary clichés, unnecessary and completely irrelevant vulgarities. . . . There is all sorts of violence in these rancid pages, violence of material, of emotion and of speech."

Surely by this time, the Literary Gangsters all knew Burns was a faggot—and an open and aggressive one at that. In the Bookchat milieu of the late 1940's, if an author was known to be an active homosexual, it was grounds to discount him and whatever he had to say. It was the Era of the Dreaded "Homintern." Burns was nothing if not what we would welcome as a brother faggot, perhaps not as up-front as even others were at that time but no shrinking violet either. People knew. Says Brophy: "... a friend described him to me as 'the most committed homosexual I have ever met' . . ." And though the reviewers may not have been wearing antiseptic gloves while reading Burns' books (those who actually read the books—a rarity in Bookchat circles), we can be certain that they believed, as many continue to believe today, that A Faggot Author was Not Trustworthy, was Out To Trick You, trying to sell you Shoddy Goods In Subtle But Glamorous Ways, worshipping Strange Gods and Doing Perverse Things in the Dark Of The Night with the other odd members of his outlawed coven! A Smart, Sensible Reader could not be expected to have a work of such inspiration forced upon him, and it was the Reviewers Duty to so warn the Unsuspecting Customer.

But 1949ers considered themselves enlightened. They couldn't come right out and say: "Don't buy this book because the author is a faggot-subversive." There were other words to get the same message across, and the Literary Mobsters went to work. Maxwell Geismar wrote in *Saturday Review*: "What is deceptive—and valuable [valuable? to whom we wonder?]-about *Lucifer with a Book* is that it has all the trappings of normalcy, so that its flights of fancy still carry an element of probability and of social satire. . . . The central love affair . . . is not convincing . . . there is an inverted Puritanism in Mr. Burns's work, and a remarkably sophisticated sense of evil and malice."

There's the trinity: "trappings of normalcy," "not convincing," and "inverted Puritanism." Those are The Key Words. Need he say more? A whiff of deviancy, when detected by a Bookchat Mobster, can be used to snuff out an author's career in America—that is, if he's lucky enough to get off the ground in the first place. Warns Geismar: "... the direction of Mr. Burns's future work remains to be seen." Thus the warning. Shape Up or Be Shipped Out! Just like an admonition from one of the twisted, hypocritical faculty of the school in *Lucifer with a Book*.

There's a Gay Sensibility that comes through in Burns' work, particularly in *Lucifer with a Book*, even if not consistently. Burns writes with a mixture of anger and humor that is often characteristic of faggot authors: anger at the prevailing injustice, anger spawned by their hypocritical moralistic upbringing, and humor stemming from their estrangement from the idiocy—and thus their ability to see this idiocy at right angles—of supporting that system of injustice and hypocrisy.

a forgotten faggot

This admixture comes across in Burns' work as the result of a slowly revealed awareness of himself, a familiar way among faggots of maintaining a level of sanity despite the growing gap between this new awareness and the increasing understanding of the day-to-day perniciousness of "normalcy."

I feel that John Horne Burns quickly came to know precisely what America was doing to him. It was driving him out of its borders, his homeland, as it had to many before him. It was driving him to his death. He was angry because part of what he was saying all along was that Americans, in their continued frenzied pursuit of The Excluded Middle, were casting out all those individuals and ideas which could make life here more decent—including casting off JHB. The nation was so obtuse it wouldn't even listen, in fact, it even had, as part of its Early Warning System, a Literary Gang Up Top to catch the likes of him.

What could he do? There were certain circumspections in his time that one observed in one's writings, despite the compromises to one's integrity, that one made in order to get published. Poor Burns did his duty at the altar of normalcy and was then promptly attacked for being "not convincing"! "Prove you're not a heretic!" Oh, the piercing eyes of the deviancy-hunters! One is reminded of the way in which the whisper-mongers greeted Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. (See P. Roth's attack in the *New York Review* on Albee's "pansy prose" in 1965.) You remember the line: It's-a-fag-play-and-he's-trying-to-fool-us-into-accepting-that-he's-really-writing-about-normal-people. It's the classic defense of people who must keep the Truth outside the perimeter of their "Morality." The reasoning goes something like this: You don't let faggots publish openly and honestly about their lives; you deny that a faggot author has anything universal to say; you maintain in a generous moment—that at best a faggot author can only describe a depraved sub-world (Rech's novels), and since that's the case, and since the books would only have "limited appeal" anyway, you don't publish them at all! Even with this vigilance, "one" occasionally slips through; then you've got to weed him out. As a Literary Bookchat Mobster, you've got a "tradition" to uphold.

Burns was discouraged with the reviews and sales of *Lucifer*. It only had 17,500 copies printed, many of which went unsold; there was no paperback sale.

In 1952 *A Cry of Children* was published, his third and final novel. The story of the book is set in Boston's Old West End. It's an anti-Catholic book without being overly explicit about it. Once again, it's about hypocrisy and how hypocrisy and the lack of freedom can ruin people's lives. There's very little hope or sympathy in the story; the author has removed the "hero" from the narrative. There's no one the reader sticks to. David Murray, an upper-middle-class pianist of strict lace-curtain Irish-Catholic background, sets up house out of wedlock with Isobel Joy, a lowlife shanty Irish-Catholic trollop with vulgar pretensions. They live on Fruit Street. (He could of course have named her "Gaye Joye" and had them live on Fruit Street; would have driven critics up the wall!) David was best friends with Isobel's brother Fred in the Navy, and Fred's in love with David. Isobel and Fred are twins. Not much happens in the story, workaday trappings, and the slow change in relationships. Burns switches voices; toys with varied first person accounts of the story—everybody can justify their own position. A reader at first expects more than he gets out of these people. Is Burns being deliberately coy? Or are we just so much smarter than the lives of the people he depicts?

David Murray is perhaps Burns' own projection of how his life might have gone if he had pursued his original interest in music, and if he had repressed his homosexual desires. David Murray is nothing if not a victim of normalcy. More often than not, given his potentiality, he's a spineless mush of a man, tyrannized by aggressive, stupid, calculating women.

Contrary to what every critic and reviewer wrote at the time, the book is not a dud. It contains one of the most memorable scenes I've ever read anywhere. David brings Fred Joy home one night when Isobel's out. Fred realizes that he'll never have the chance to become David's

lover, though this is said without words in the narrative. Fred proceeds to tie David up on the sofa and beat him unconscious with a belt. It's a scene filled with pent-up frustrated passion. Eros has been denied and the result has to be a kind of ritual violence; that's behavior Puritans (Protestant or Irish-Catholic) know all too well. Both men are embarrassed to communicate, hence they must fail. This scene is probably the most fragile yet potent depiction of the failure to express need in a repressed society, and rather than love one's friend it becomes inevitable that one must beat him up if only as a means of communicating something, acknowledging failure. What underscores the impact of this violent encounter is that Burns does not elaborate Fred's motivations, nor does he question David's acceptance of this grotesque injury. Not only do David and Fred understand the inevitability of this ritual brutality, so does Burns.

The casual cognizance of this horrible perversion of human affairs is the very heart of what Burns had been writing about, in one form or another, since *The Gallery*. It's all right there in that flogging. When people stick to conventions, treading down well-worn roads, their lives are stiflingly familiar, devoid of pleasure. When they attempt something different, as David does with his "shacking up" with Isobel, a commitment without inspiration, they're sure to make a mess of it. *A Cry of Children* depicts arid characters feigning lushness and three dimensions. It's an extraordinary canvas detailing the horrors of living in the fallacy of The Excluded Middle. Of course it's boring on its most superficial level. Imagine if David had decided to shack up with Fred instead! We get what we choose, so we better be careful what we choose and how we choose it.

Brigid Brophy quotes Burns' English editor, David Farrer of Secker & Warburg, as saying to Burns that he through *A Cry of Children* "must hold the record for being the most savagely and unfairly criticized novel of the century." "Why John Horne Burns' third novel . . . should be such a confused, stale and empty book is difficult to understand," snipes Whitney Balliot in *The New Republic*. The novel "is either a good parody, or pure soap opera, whichever you wish." And let things not rest there. Balliot even goes out of his way to back up and pile a round of ammo into *The Gallery* which he claims to have just read. "I also found, however, that the author's gallery of souls is mainly a gallery of neurotics—far inferior to Mrs. McCullers' variety. . . . But the thing that bothers me most in *The Gallery* is its phony vision, compounded of a disgust for human beings—Americans in particular."

The *Saturday Review*: "Wickedness also has its clichés. I doubt if John Horne Burns has missed many of them in his novel. . . . Mr. Burns has no assets of style, wit, or poetry. Nor has he a comparable command of techniques. . . . Mr. Burns in this novel has stated the banal in terms of the vicious."

An early draft of his unfinished book *The Stranger's Guise* was rejected by Harper's. The Literary Mobsters had succeeded. The obliteration was complete.

What reviewers and the popular press cannot deal with in any reasonable way is an author who writes clearly and precisely in his own manner, especially if this manner is in large measure the product of his anger. He's angry because he's hurt, and being Celtic, as he himself said, stayed hurt. Invective, spleen, bitterness, marbled with his devastating wry humor, these were all ultimately used against Burns. He was no longer regarded as "serious"; he was judged to border on the pathological, a bearer of some private grudge that none other could possibly be interested in. My own view: Never, ever, underestimate the creative impulse that results from the sense of loss, of anger or bitterness. Look at Poe. Fitzgerald. And for a more recent example, Gilbert Sorrentino's brilliant and ignored book *Imaginative Qualities of Actual Things*. That Burns was known to the Literary Mobsters as an aggressive faggot guaranteed that his books would never be well received. Mobsters had to prove their point: they had the power to switch off the presses.

The reaction to Burns' novels proved in a grim way the very points he'd been making. He exposed the sham and hypocrisy of American life on its surface, the

hollowness of our civilization, the state of fear and self-repression which we maintain every day that destroys our lives, our hatred for the creative, the critical, the genuine. In *The Gallery* Burns has one character put it this way: "If the murder gets over, everything will then be geared to the lowest common denominator, as it is in the American public schools. The queer, the beautiful, the gentle, and the wondering will all go down before a race of healthy baboons with football letters on their sweaters. . . . And the end of the world will come as a tittering anticlimax, because we're going to shut ourselves out from the stream of truth, and drown in pettiness and small talk."

Burns came out of the kind of America that he finally had to reject. But he didn't just flee these shores and abandon hope, as has been the case with all too many American literary expatriates; like the best of the conscientious, he still felt some responsibility to the community of America—whatever and wherever he felt it was—to criticize through his art and lead them to change their ways. To say, in so many words, that The American Way as it then stood was a great crock of shit during the red-baiting McCarthy years took no small amount of personal courage. This was the era of the blacklist. As to his detractors, to gang up on a faggot writer and annihilate his career took no courage at all; in fact, it smacks of the worst kind of tribal witchhunt, an atavistic instinct even among the ostensibly Hi-Brow Literary Network.

What Burns criticized in America then is still with us today. The indictment still stands. The change is negligible. To read his novels today, one finds his imagination still exciting, the author's anger and self-discovery still fresh, his message just as contemporary now as it was a quarter-century ago. Burns homed in on a truth about the American condition; its stultifying, smothering characteristics (who better than a brilliant Irish-Catholic to know!). It was the graceful finesse with which he netted his prey that stirred his opponents; *he made them see it!* That they refused to accept what he had to say and understand his criticisms was *their* responsibility. How dare Burns say Nay when We Won The War, when Americans were finally fulfilling their "Manifest Destiny" as the last and greatest Hope For Mankind!

Twenty-one years after his death, it is time for all of John Horne Burns' novels to be reissued. It is time we acknowledge his brilliance as a writer and get his books in stores and into the hands of readers where they belong. I'd especially like to see the last manuscript, *The Stranger's Guise*, published, even if incomplete.

One wishes John Horne Burns were still alive. He'd be 58 years old now. He would have probably produced an interesting oeuvre, a respectable shelf of books.

Today, his readership might have caught up with him; he might have lived to see his career vindicated. He had too crisp a vision for his own muddled times, too sharp a talent: clean, cold, cutting. The bullets, the campaign of vilification, the poison darts—call them what you will—all got to him. He returned to Italy, the country which had awakened him to the sensual, civilized life, to have a last affair with an Italian doctor, to heavy drinking, and to an early death. He was only 37 years old when he died in 1953. America had done its work well, wiped out the most interesting writer of his time and turned John Horne Burns into a forgotten commodity.

Burns understood the nature of the beast he was up against. His anger was not solely from despair. He saw the hope and potentiality in America too, that even in spite of the concerted efforts to crush it, new talents and fresh expression continue to break through. "I believe that the most vital writing in the world today is being done in America," he wrote in an article "Drunk with Ink" in 1949. "Pressure is still put on young American novelists to conform to a critical party line," Burns continues. "Critics of this school would like to spay the wonderful, fresh intellectual influences loose in postwar America. Their gods are the unreadable Henry James, the tenuous Elizabeth Bowen, the waspish I. Compton-Burnett, the overrated Graham Greene, the dessicated T. S. Eliot, the garrulously-negating Sartre, the claustrophobic Franz Kafka. I think these same critics would have done Keats to death."

Burns is vitriolic, savage, lancing, but he's *fun* too. That's an essential part of The Gay Sensibility. There's a lively, crackling mind behind his work, a sexuality in constant struggle to break out and get around the confines of its heritage. A reader knows quickly that the author behind the work is not inspired to write purely intellectual exercises; he's involved with living. That's a great threat to Academicians and their minions in Bookchat Land.

The cruelest thought is that John Horne Burns was a mere flash in the pan. He wrote two extraordinary books under unusual circumstances, it could be argued: the first as a result of a self-awakening in Italy during the war, the second in the overconfidence that comes with instant success and celebration, when he thought he could actually get approval for the things he really wanted to say. There are rumors of six or seven manuscripts which preceded *The Gallery* which were never printed. And the virtually universal panning of *A Cry of Children*.

Let us not permit John Horne Burns to be just another forgotten faggot author!

—John Mitzel

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

\$7/12 issues [\$10 overseas & Canada]
First Class: \$10
Sponsoring subscription: \$25
Lifetime subscription: \$100
(includes all available back issues)
Free to those incarcerated in prisons & mental hospitals.
List of available back issues is given on page 46.
Please begin my subscription with:
(circle one) Issue No. 20 21 22 23

GAY SUNSHINE
P.O. BOX 40397
SAN FRANCISCO, CA. 94140
(415) 824-3184

NAME _____
STREET _____
CITY _____ STATE _____

\$7/12 issues (1st class: \$10)
Friend: \$25;
Lifetime Sponsor: \$100
(includes set of back issues)
Back issues: 1-4, 6: \$1 each;
5, 7/8: 50c each

FAG RAG
P.O. BOX 331
KENMORE STATION
BOSTON, MASS. 02215

NAME _____
STREET _____
CITY _____ STATE _____

Free to those incarcerated in prisons, mental hospitals & the armed forces.

The following poems are all
from an unpublished ms
Boy Muse, Uranian Roses for Strato
by Tom Meyer

Naked thigh —
lightning eye.

A boy's well-knit
body —

Love's net

Your looks
keep old men
awake all night.

The spells
you weave
bring the sea
to the shore.

Was it
a swarm of bees,
a patch of nettles,
a roaring fire or

just his glance?

Tender sapling
bend for me.

Save your kisses, friend.
I remember when
they weren't for me.

He's back!

with hair on his legs ...

David at my arms
Michael singing to me,
Edward on my knee,
Kenneth boiling my cod,
Allen simmering my beans,
Phillip with carrots in his lap,
John whispering in my ears,
Mark tickling my nipples —

Boys,
that's an antipasto!

Sunburnt boy
be my sun

Gentle winds
bring back
Adrian.

Don't waste your time
laying traps for Lionel —

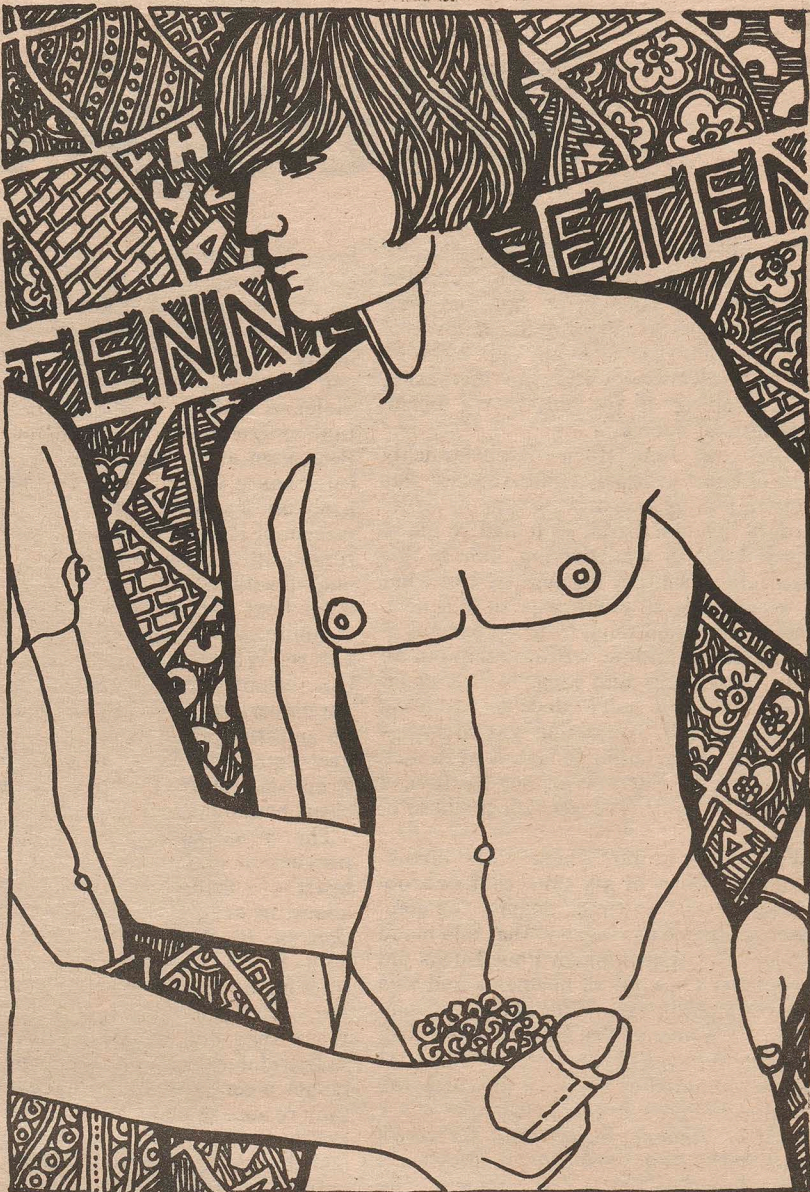
a raised eyebrow will do.

Hard as I try
to look the other way
I hardly get by
before my eyes
are over my shoulder.

If he doesn't come
in the next hour
it's all off.

& if he shows up
tomorrow ...

what's a day lost?



TROOST STREET BLUES

You can teach me baby, you can touch my soul
You can have my mouth, you can have my jellyroll
Gimmie your heart baby fuck me up my asshole

You can kiss my lips in Kansas Belly naked on mine
You can suck my tongue or suck my cock so fine
I love to put my tongue up in your sweet behind

There's frightened deared white folks in Kansas City
Walter's Crescendo Lounge here is my place to be
I have a bed on Troost Street, back in Eternity

I can't find words, my feelings are unreal
I used to sit by your bedside your prick I love to steal
Your belly's in an ash urn Now how do I feel?

Kansas City, got the blues Early Midnight Walter's bar
Years later sitting by the jukebox how funky people are
But O them black musicians make me feel like a soul star

I'm back in Kansas City with my old time used-to-be
Alone with my Alone that's the story you and me
I once met Lester Young and got down on my knees

Bodies rot and faces vanish Lips turn white
I had my dreams my love is dead O Heaven it's all right
Here I am in Kansas City I think I'll spend an empty night

Allen Ginsberg
Feb. 10, 1972



STORROW LAGOON

Every issue has some other thrill
orange fur tympanii trill
a window to pedestrians
whose stars are still holes
pierced blanket highway
among streetlights blinds
gale force winds
gusting forty miles an hr
I jump up and down
in it
to get
attention
visions
what do you see?
I've seen everything already
I see you
transparencies
of river sludge
tacked onto trousers
outlying promontory
of some chemical ghosts
steady salt
walking on water
to escape my following

religions
begin so obscurely
absolutely
you stop to examine
pavement flaws

I envy
a broken stone.

charley shively
10 April 74

The heart does not care

The heart does not care.
It breaks and leaves.
Like a door opened
to the evening breeze
rushing through and then gone;

as a moment
of intense movement,
heartlessly, artlessly
caring, and then leaving,

breaking. Then silence
once more resumes, until dishes,
car horns, clatter back
in the wake, but the heart

does not care; it breaks
and leaves the broken moment
for the whole body
to bear.

Perry Brass
Dec. 9, 1972

POETS AT FIFTEEN

unique and indispensable
make my head your hand
my tongue fingers
throat roach case
bring diamonds to stars
dominoes dropping
in cyclone patterns
stray strips of blue
July 4th sky peeling
autosexual
as I blend in
my heart a hole
my eyes mirrors
we can lie in bed
after boats dry dock
autoclonic parts
for silence
in outer rinds rhymes
slipping up tongues
resonance
in windows
a widow watches
you.

charley shively
24 February 74

To Tom

against
(sleeping
against me
Enthusiast!

by sudden
turn to
ward my
side be
longs to
loose its
freight

like faith
charged

so

simple

Keith Thomas

AMERICAN PASSOVER

Here is the herb, as bitter as that wrath
Which sent the ten
Scourges upon a helpless king that week;
And here the bread as dry as desert breath;
And here the parsley, here the wine;
And here the hurt old man who holds the book
As solidly as words of law upon a rock:

He reaches out, and fills the silver cup.
We watch him as
He lifts it and repeats the ancient prayer;
I see the fingers clutch the parsley snip,
And with a pained deliberateness
Dip the green branches into vinegar.
Knuckles and nails move slowly through the sharpened air.

If outstretched fingers, if an open palm
Signalled a blank
Confusion once, when first this immigrant
Ran from a stifled culture to a home,
Should we, his children's children, think
It strange, knowing not what the language meant,
That hands may well express a feeling for the chant?

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Then may my right
Hand lose its cunning. Let us eat and find
How bitterness can somehow serve a dream,
And make a modern head elate.
—Is this the pathway to the Holy Land?
Come, take unleavened bread and break it in your hand.

Stuart Byron

STEPHEN JONAS

Love, the Poem, the Sea & Other Pieces Examined. San Francisco, 1957.

Transmutations. London, 1966.

Exercises for Ear, Being a Primer in the American Idiom. London, 1968.

"75 Poems and a Narration," *Caterpillar* 15/16 (April-July 1971).

Morphogenesis (Being a Conventionalization of Morphemes of Jack Spicer). Cambridge, Mass., 1970.

Selected Poems. Boston, 1973.

In this fifth anniversary of Stonewall, I would like to look back to a poet who never made it into the shiny new world of gay freedom. He died in February of 1970 going on fifty years old—died of overdrinking, drugs, a broken heart, or who is to say what now that his memory has become less distinct than a stone rubbing. Steve Jonas (as he called himself) is too great to be long forgotten—although his unpublished poems have fallen into the hands of a straight man intent on destroying whatever gayness might linger around his memory.

Stephen Jonas surrounded himself with flamboyant faggots, a number of whom he once called as character witnesses in his trial. (He spent time at least twice for book club fraud, drugs, etc., but not on any "sodomy" charges.) The only straight people he had much to do with were the handsome young druggies, who would always hold out the promise and once in a while give some loving. At his death, Steve was living in an apartment owned by gay liberation patriarch Prescott Townsend (who also specialized in similar trade). One of those pieces of trade—now older and making it in the suburbs—got hold of all Jonas' papers, books and other belongings; he has refused to let *Fag Rag* publish any of them.

Jonas separated his life from his poetry; viewing the former as illegal; the latter celestial. Yet the gay underworld lingo/life/practices thread their way through his poetry. His poem titled after Boston's popular outdoor faggot makeout spot, near where he lived, "On the Esplanade," captures Jonas' feeling of poignancy at being gay, on the make and outcast. He starts and ends with images of Tu Fu (713-770), the traditional plum blossoms, symbols of sexual intercourse, jived up:

as snow flying past
on the picture tube
& petals of ten thousand springs
carried by the wind
blowing no good
then the fade-out
and I turn to drink.

Having blown a little, he returns quickly to the park movement with a wonderful colloquial jab at Charles Olson's Kingfisher poem; and captures the essence of cruising on the Esplanade:

Pair of kingfishers shack up in
the pavilion with rotten teeth
stoned bi-sexual unicorns
case the park &
the thud-like empty tomb
(to each his own
after his kind or a folded
quilt)

Jonas mastered and everywhere displayed a gay sensibility sometimes called "camp," although that overused term hardly describes more than a few artifices. Gay "camp" might be closer to jazz (especially a jazz rendition of some conventional song like "Autumn Leaves") where new values (quite contrary values) subvert the melody. Gay people have done that so often—teasing, caressing their sexuality against the grain of society. Thus Stephen Jonas makes of Ou Yang Hsiu (1007-1072), Sung Dynasty:

Trees horny w/ leaves
scratching their crotches
full on bird tweet
as the hard-on hills
get a blow job from the east
all to censor'd bird songs
& the flower orgy
when this wino
comes out of his stupor
it will be too late for
spring

The "blow job" tease of Charley Parker ("bird") and the whole scene going on without the wino (straight white man) even knowing what's happening to him; while the man's down and out cold, everything's up in the spring.

Love poetry comes perfectly to every faggot; not that everyone recognizes or embraces it, but we all feel it like cigarette smoke in Sporter's. Stephen Jonas wrote one of the finest love poems in any language (the man's dead, why reserve praise?): "Love, the Poem, the Sea & Other Pieces Examined," dedicated to Michael Farmer, United States Navy (August, 1956). Here Jonas weaves the sea/navy with scenes of Washington St. (Boston's Tenderloin), birds, roses, death, poetry, friends, and special words for Mike:

... I have seen pieces of driftwood two
so twisted together you & I
would be hard put to extricate.

And for Mike, Jonas pushes through with this switchblade belly thrust—what faggot can read it without weeping?

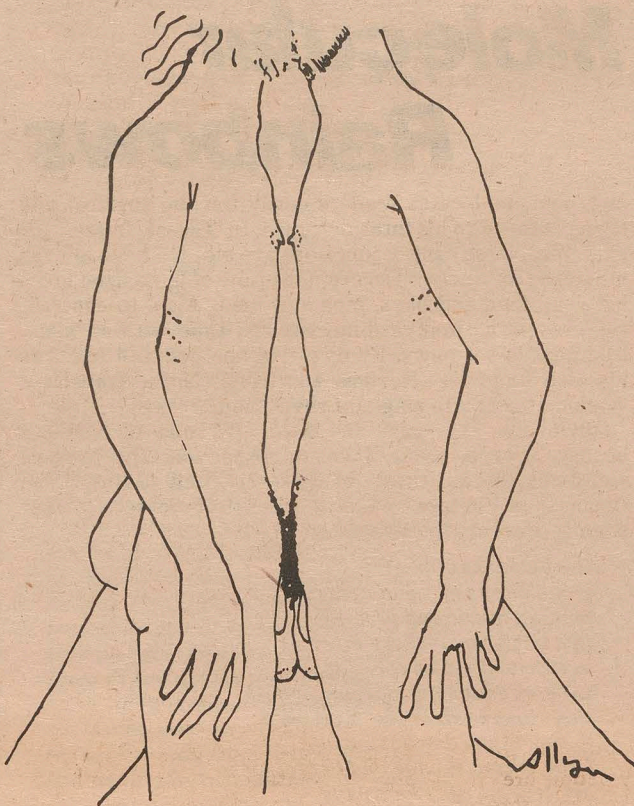
It has been a lean season for you & me.
I did not intend a serious poem but the Poem
has a will all its own

I am a poor vehicle
a transport in summer wear
I to be discarded also
in the season of decline
Love
O self-willed Love
though unworthy

remember me kindly at the hour of decline
know then I sacrificed all
to say nothing.

Hereafter
it will be stark winter
every sign indicates it
In the long night there will be time enuf
To think what pigs we have made of ourselves.

Stephen Jonas was a saint of poetry as well as of faggots. He hated the tawdry, showy politics of poetry movements, magazines, anthologies, grants, readings and congresses. Because he had integrity, he refused to appear in any anthology (despite offers). He spit at them all, hating with a passion the "topical," "cheap," or "timely" poem/poet. Drugs for instance were the thing of the fifties and early sixties: you could make a reputation as a poet (if a man) simply by being strung out. Kerouac, Corso and lesser imitations thrived on shocking and conning the middle class. Jonas would have no more of that than he would of the Andy Warhol's "Chelsea Girls" exploitation. Jonas lived Chelsea Hotel; it was too precious to be sold for a market.



While avoiding the hucksters, he still fell into some shucking himself. The 1950's were no time to be proud of being black (as Jonas was), to be proud of being gay (as Jonas was) or to be proud of being poorly born and obscure (as Jonas was). He did not want to be tagged in the early sixties nor later as a "black poet." And doubtless, had he lived to see more of gay liberation, he wouldn't want to be tagged as gay. Yet in wanting not to be those things, he showed a weakness in wanting to be the straight, white man. He was too great to be that—still the hankering, lingering self-doubt remained.

First off, the name. In changing his name he sought to repudiate a lot of what he was. He was evidently born Rufus Jones in the South; spent some time in a black college, drifted to New York and then Boston. No reason he should want or keep a slave name; and he always had to dodge charges, creditors, etc. The gay world where everyone has many names is still with us as writers use pseudonyms even in the "Movement." And in the world where Jonas circulated multiple names weren't (and aren't now) uncommon. I had a lover in 1960 who had over a dozen names. But Jonas said he was Portuguese—i.e. just dark, not "Black."

Every gay person of a generation ago (except maybe Allen Ginsberg) was trying to pass themselves off as higher in the class/social ladder than they were. An acquaintance is into English peerage, wax seals on letters, visits to Williamsburg, Virginia, and all sorts of pretentious nobility/gentleman type of stuff. There are also the so-called "tinsel queens" with their Wedgwood china, leather-bound books, and other refinery. Steve Jonas was no tinsel queen by any means, but he was attracted, lured to the snobbery of Boston's elite gentlemen, to the Harvard Brahmin aristocracy.

His last book while he was alive, *Exercises for Ear*, takes its title from a Lester Young number, but after his name Jonas writes "Gentleman." Of course, he was joking. As in his poem "Nubis in Nubis":

this very "english"
gentleman, Oliver
Wendell Dowland the III's
(colored) maintains a nine
room cold water walk-up
buckingham palazzo in the
black borough of
Roxbury the which the he-she
thinks (demented queen that
she is) out in Chestnut Hills!

In the *Exercises* Jonas uses Roman numerals for the poems a little like Wendell Dowland and he apes the anti-semitism, anti-nigger, anti-wop, anti-queen mentality of the Beacon Hill gentleman—all the time mocking the petty prejudice. Yet (as in Genet's *Balcony*) how can you remember what is mock and what worship in the world of Queens and Bishops? In 1973, at a memorial reading for Jonas (Allen Ginsberg read "Love, the Poem, the Sea & Other Pieces Examined"), white people reading the "nigger" poems sounded weird and it was never clear who the joke was on.

Jonas can't entirely be blamed for the stupidity of others. He can be blamed for his idle worship of Sam Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Andrew Johnson, and other Anglo-Saxon, white men, who supposedly had exceeding insight and wisdom about the banking system proper for freedom. In his series of "Orgasms" and "Denominations," Jonas explored the evils brought about by the National Banking Act of 1862 and the Federal Reserve Act of 1913. The Republic was destroyed by evil, foreign influences (mostly Jewish) who corrupted and conned the innocent Christians to accept their usury. No good will ever come to Stephen Jonas' reputation from such analysis; instead of attacking monopoly capitalism, the real source of the economic evils which he recognizes, Jonas goes after those who are themselves victims of capitalist exploitation.

But perhaps the worst trap of all was sex—not that beautiful ability to love men, but that bitterness at being a homosexual in a straight society. And that fifties queen's haunting search for James Dean, Dean Moriarty, Neal Cassady, what Gerrit Lansing called "Hotel Madison men's room boys," weird high objects of yr unearthly love, dumb credit card thieves, boosters, drunks, the last junk of the world. Yeah, they deserved your love—more than maybe a snotty Olympic swimmer or soccer player. But somehow, you maybe didn't see that you deserved to be loved more by them, to be loved more by other faggots. And not say "tricks were only tricks" but see in yourself, in them everything complete—only needing to be recognized, the "ecstasy" Gerrit called it. "Amazing Grace & A Salad Bowl" in memory of Stephen Jonas.

I think there is more than an accidental link between Jonas' closetry—his not wanting to be gay, or black or stray—and his Poundian fantasies about international Jew conspiracies. His life was truly rootless; rootless in the way all gay people are, without home, heritage, ancestry. Let's face it, the land, the geography, the city—whatever in the way of worldly things belongs mainly to the straight white men. It is their land, property, heritage until we take it from them, until we reclaim what is ours.

In the 1950's there was little organization, struggle or consciousness for reclaiming that heritage. That consciousness is, I think, the only road to freedom and liberation. The other roads are dead end, suicidal trails. Because Jonas got caught in a dead-end alley, I would not condemn him nor more cruelly pity him. But I would hold him as an example, a classic tragedy—caught in the web of irreconcilable forces: his own gayness, blackness, love, beauty pitted against the Federal Reserve Bank, straight white culture, Harvard, Brahmins, the police, state, American society.

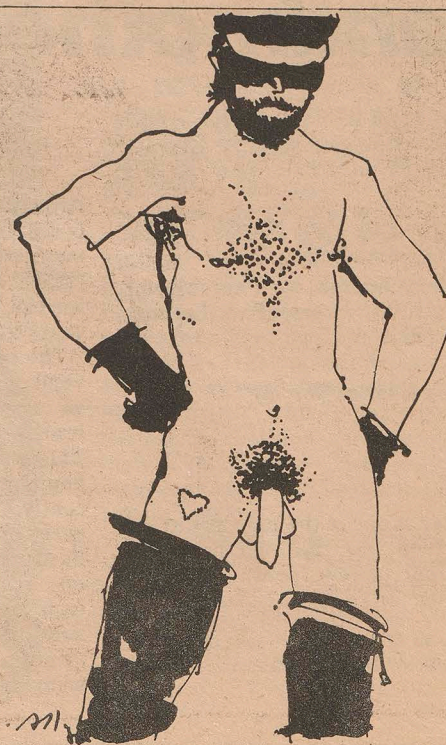
Stephen Jonas shared with Jack Spicer (another neglected gay poet) a special vision of poetry. "Things fit together," Spicer said, "We know that—it is the principle of magic. Two inconsequential things can combine together to become a consequence. This is true of poems too. A poem is never to be judged by itself alone. A poem is never by itself alone." And the magic was not only in the things, it was a part of the words themselves. Stephen Jonas wrote in *Morphogenesis* that "I take it that Jack Spicer's 'phonemes' carry/ the printed circuitry that upon utterance/ reproduces the visual impression." Jonas saw/sang/lived the world, the word, the universe:

clearly outlined
men & things stand out
in a realm where
everything is visible
no contour is blurred.

Stephen Jonas was at his greatest—in his true self when he followed, listened to his own heart, his own language. The world of the streets in Boston's South End, Beacon Hill, bars, alleys, T-rooms and Esplanade; he wrote it, heard it down every page he wrote. Jangled, incoherent, "obscure" to Harvard-educated linguists—whose duties have always been to put down and out linguistic fire, revolt, vision, change. Jonas knew the real roads of words; he could follow them in the liting, sorrowful, haunting jazz through his own backyard, Blackstone Park, along the lips of winos. Or in the "Music Maker," he has all the juice, excitement, improvisation—everything right there. It all fits, follows, flows, sings; that was Stephen Jonas responding to the voice deep within; the idiom hanging around in things; him listening.

I know Stephen Jonas is not now with Sam Adams, or Thomas Jefferson or Andrew Jackson; or even Ezra Pound and Charles Olson (Ole sun). He's up out there jamming with Jack Spicer, who wrote, "We blow the sentence pure and real/ Like chewing angels." And "There aren't any angels except when/ You and me blow 'em."

—Charley Shively



REVIEWS

2

POETS

Hotel Nirvana: Selected Poems by Harold Norse. City Lights Pocket Poets Series No. 32, San Francisco, 1974. 94 pp., \$2.00 (paper).

Karma Circuit by Harold Norse. Panjandrum Press, San Francisco, 1974. 70 pp., \$2.00 (paper).

Reviewed by Robert Peters

To say of these remarkable poems that they are primarily of the gay imagination is to limit them. True, few of Harold Norse's poems are free of either homosexual celebration or angst; but their range is immense both geographically and spiritually. Norse's fifteen years of expatriate wandering throughout Europe and northern Africa, simply in terms of psychic and sense exposure, have provided him with the materials for his work of a variety and depth rare among poets. It does matter that he has wandered through some of the most beautiful physical and sexual landscapes in the world. His feelings of being an outcast from his own New York/American culture were and remain obviously profound. The appearance of Norse's *Selected Poems: Hotel Nirvana*, under the City Lights imprint, is cause for rejoicing; for the first time this gifted poet's work is easily available to the wide audience it should have. *Karma Circuit* is republished by Panjandrum, after a limited edition published hitherto only in England. His translations and adaptations of *The Roman Sonnets of Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli* will appear shortly in a new edition. Recently, a several-page interview with Norse appeared in *Gay Sunshine* #18, and for its thoroughness and frankness has already become something of a classic.

[1]

"Classic frieze in a garage," the opening poem of *Karma Circuit*, shows Norse's fascination with faces from the Classical past alive in the present. The contrast is simple: an ancient frieze imposed upon a modern garage with its young intent mechanics and its broken cars:

walking thru incendiary alleys of crowded laundry
with yellow gourds in windows &
crumbling masonry of wars
human corruption
so thick & hopeless that i laugh.

when suddenly i saw among the oil & greasy rags
& wheels & axles of a garage
the carved nude figures of
a classic frieze
there above the dismantled
parts of cars!

perfect/ & how strange! garage
swallows sarcophagus!

As he gazes at "the brown wiry youths" busy with the cars, Norse flashes on Hermes, sees him actually "in the rainbow/of the dark oil on the floor." He sees "the wild" Sibyl also, her words bubbling, drowned "beneath the motor's roar."

Surface meanings are quite accessible here, even to non-poetry readers . . . and this is one of Norse's triumphs

NORSE:

Molecular

Rainbows

as a poet: he locates readers easily (on the surface) and then proceeds to his interior magic. In "Classic frieze," for example, Norse's preoccupations are old: we have always hungered for ancient Greece, that time of fantasized loves between men and boys, men and men. Also, to contrast the present as junkyard-mechanized time with an idealized past is not news. By directing the poem in towards his own fantasies (Hermes and Sibyl) Norse translates stock material into poignant revelation.

Obviously, the past in *Hotel Nirvana* symbolizes beauty, silence, order, love, introspection; the present stands as the antithesis of these civilized values. "The Business of Poetry," one of the finest of Norse's shorter poems, presents the issue:

the business of poetry
is the image of a young man
making music and love
to a young girl whose interest
in love and music coincides
with an enormous despair in both
their inner selves like a plucked
guitar in the dry hot sun of
hope where savage and brutal men
are tearing life like a page
from a very ancient
and yellow
book

The incredible title poem, "Hotel Nirvana," one of the few superb free-verse long poems of our time, moves from "The Business of Poetry" to an appropriate rage. Violence, madness, butchery, poison induce our rage:

i could not rise to the god or demon
of a dying planet
corpses try to contact each other
with helpless gestures
lovers go mad in cannibal beds
gnaw each other's flesh

dead mouths dribble worms
of sound

hips explode

hot membranes into throats
that grope the crotch for god
lipstick passions breathe into blue carbonic fumes
streaked with tobacco haze
as macedonian helmets of the police
glitter with hate

the international cripples huddle together
dying
of universal butchery

seeking the light
the way out

Yes, Nirvana in a hotel! Something tacky going on here . . . sweaty sheets . . . international set gathered in from America, Europe, eating one another out in sad sperm-girl/Kum-hotel rooms. Yes, guru This or guru That sell illusions of magic carpets, monk-fucks, nun bellies on the ground, maintaining monalisa smiles of "disinterested mystery." Norse sees the sad bullshit of it all, the decadence as in a Fellini movie:

i am gnawing the bark of trees in hunger
i am getting furious at everybody
i am the screaming kingdom of torn up streets of
earthquake

i am hate which i call love
i am the poet of potential murder

Guru-followers appear. Swami in lotus-posture under philodendron leaves, gentle mind, devoted to vedas, science & bible, near the funicular on Mt. Lycabettos, Swami flown in from Paris to unravel crisis between husband & wife (metaphysical jetset). Swami, Norse asks, "what can you tell us/from hotel nirvana."

Response: his message doesn't get through: "that thing/between the legs/and between the ears/got in the way." Marvelous! Swami looks at his followers and says: "turn off the ventriloquist's voice/flush out the snakeoil in the blood/your bible/your gita/your gems/your guns/your flags/your death." But "at night they went to the nite clubs gobbling and soaking/up the suds/while that thing/between the legs/became/more urgent."

"Hotel Nirvana" is a deep pain memory celebration lost-ness poem. The threat amidst the decay is "the void."

out of our mind limits

o molecular rainbow!
o carafe where tiny sperms swim!
o lies of love & brotherhood!
o emotional bullshit!

Norse here is an anguished Whitman reversed. His sexuality is a molecular rainbow, his mouth swims with sperm. And these are joy motifs, destroyed by lies. What is brotherhood? gayhood? humanhood? whitmanhood? He seems to reject his own emotions as so much "bullshit." Does he, Norse, stand tall among the liars in the desert, the crying child, the man betrayed? Yes and no. Nor should this ambiguity disturb us; life is seldom clearly negative as against positive, or clearly joy against pain. Norse is willing always to nail himself up, if the pain and the act promise even a half-illumination. His undergoing is ruthless and profound.

Norse is aware that the times are viciously hostile to poets and "faggots." An amazing poem, "We Bumped Off Your Friend the Poet," is spoken by the Spaniard Ruiz Alonso, ex-typographer, who fired two bullets up Lorca's ass and expects Franco to give him a medal. Not only was

MARIAH:

Grandmother's Silver

Love Poems to an Army Deserter Who Is in Jail by Paul Mariah. Empty Elevator Shaft Poetry Press, San Francisco, 1972, 1974.

The Spoon Ring by Paul Mariah. Contraband Press, Portland, Me., 1974.

Personae Non Gratae by Paul Mariah. Shameless Hussy Press, San Lorenzo, Calif., 1971, 1973.

Reviewed by Charles Shively

Paul Mariah is one of the pioneers of gay liberation. 1969 was the year he helped found *Manroot* (a few months after the Stonewall riot). In the first issue, Paul has these lines:

Spring the John door
Come out

break out into fresh air
with peacock eyes
and a rainbow tail.

After five years (and ten issues) *Manroot* is still ignored and bypassed by both the mainstream literati and many on the "little" mag circuit. As a poet, editor and activist, Paul Mariah has waited too many years for recognition.

The power of his poetry is certainly beyond question. The recent *Love Poems to an Army Deserter Who Is in Jail* celebrates a powerful moon-worship ideal. This theme has been in his work from the beginning; his first published poems (recently reprinted in *Manroot* 8) were a cycle entitled *Diana*. Although they are burdened with some heavy classical references, they do homage to the moon goddess. In that vein *Lovepoems to an Army Deserter* links gay love, the moon and the night into an ecstasy of tender song. Mariah turns from the head-mind-

knowledge-sun ("neither of us wants to butt heads, prefer touch"); turns to the lunacy, moon-struck, moon-mad wanderings; and concludes in "Postlude: Sleepless":

This night, I will sleep with you
In your dreams. You have
deserted the army, have deserted
My dreams. But I shall visit you.

Lie still. I will come to you
In sleep. My deserter
My deserted one. I shall lie
With you thru this barred night.

+ +

I hear you, I hear you. I see the Moon.

The contrast between the moon values of love, body, dripping, affection, night and orgasm (one melded whole)—the contrast between this and the life of the army and soldiery is implicit in *Love Poems*, where the power of love supreme emerges, with only a minor threat from the prison walls. In *The Spoon Ring*, the two powers of sun (prison) and moon (love) are more sharply drawn.

The spoon searched for by guards in a prison shakedown is perhaps a *knife* to kill (maybe you, me, the author), symbolic of the values of hierarchical, patriarchal, western civilization. Straight, virile, sharp, hard, virulent, unyielding, threat-

ening, without feeling, warning, witness or restraint: "One lives in/ terror that it's/ Not marked/ For him."

Or the spoon can be a prison wedding ring. Silver the color of the moon, the sign of the night, of Diana, of love, lust, dripping, sexuality, night, woods, and care. Like Grandmother's collected wedding silver: "a ring on/ Newly-wedded hand."

Also reissued and further into the past is Paul's now classic work, *Personae Non Gratae*. Here the power of the prison is clearest; the moon themes least clear. The work is classic because he captured so much of the tears (green tears as he calls them) from his three years in an Illinois prison—stamped a "Sexually Dangerous Person" because he worshipped Diana, the Moon, Man love, Walt Whitman and the evening songs of laughing lovers. Tears come to me every time I read "Christmas 1962." "Grey Him" is another triumph of the person-poet-language. Catching a lizard, caught away from water in prison: "I knew he sought water. There was nothing growing green/ In the yard to feed him, gravel." Paul fed the lizard with a dropper but "He crawled off one day and died/ In the sand."

Mariah has certainly taken "the dark knowledge/ of prison into the other world of stone." Yet there are difficulties in this

Lorca a poet but "he was a queer with Leftist leanings . . . a queer Communist poet":

*We left him in a ditch
I fired 2 bullets into his ass
for being queer*

[2]

Norse shares something of Whitman's sense of an encompassing vision. "Zombie Fix" is Spanish in its locale. There is a sense of amazing life and energy throughout this ambitious poem. I feel secure here, as I do in all of these poems, in the presence of a first-rate poetic talent, technically sure and adept, metaphysically mature. Little escapes his eye. Here, for example, is a passage on a bullfight:

*& the bullfight in Alicante full of blood & spunk & but-
tocks tight silk flaming oles in dust of broiling corrida
in the blowtorch sun & blaze of mobs with an ear a tail
a groin a horn handkerchiefs & cushions hurled. . .*

Death is also a presence: "all over Spain i shook the clammy hand of executed souls/kissed sweet mouths of corpses spoke with the vanquished/spirit of revolution walked with unspoken fear." The "zombie fix" is not the "lust in the johns of Malaga," "dark rustlings in doorways off the ramblas," or "fandangos of fuck in hotels that stank of fish." The zombie fix is the glass and steel life of Manhattan, with its "vapid saurian heights of shiny nightmare script written for all/with breakdown nerves of power mad executives/running the world on alcohol & sex." And this remains Norse's position on American life throughout his books.

Norse's talent is highly visual. Portions seem descriptions of snapshots or paintings. And Norse himself is highly aware of his visual sense. "The Boy, the Birds, the Concierge and Verlaine" is a poignant expression of reality as turn-on dissolved. A series of street pictures is the occasion. Poet wanders from the Parisian Latin quarter of St. Germain with its firm asses, beer-drinking, "a mimic movie of lips and tits/and swollen jeans padded in the right places," where "copcars cruise like leprosy" . . . poet wanders to "a quiet little square/Place de Furstembourg" with its 4 planetrees and its streetlamp. He passes Delacroix's studio, now closed for repairs, and finds

*on a bench flat on his belly
a lotus boy with radiant tan
and very dirty feet*

dozing beside a folder of drawings. "Everyone stares/at him":

*the concierge at the window
on street level, her leathery old arms
folded on the sill
and the birds stare
as she sits very gray
very sad
one hand against her mouth
elbows like knobby staves
and I stare
like Verlaine discovering
Rimbaud*

The poet removes himself in order to "hold the picture in time." The next day he returns to find "nothing"

*not even the trees
only 4 great gaping holes
where they had been*

task—being overwhelmed by the sheer pathos, settling for tears, using the means of poverty as self justification. These are exactly the same handicaps in gay poetry where the suffering, however great, cannot be the language. In fact the suffering tends another way: to build shellacs, covers, defenses, an unwillingness to let go under the moon. The captured prisoner "will remember/ The shadows he learned of survival: to protect his own shell."

There are places in Mariah's poems where a touch of hustle emerges, some deliberate inauthenticity. His "Letter to Robert Duncan While Bending the Bow" has an unnerving applepolishing quality. Witty uses of Duncan's lines (much as Duncan echoed other echoes) don't always adequately capture Duncan's tension/attention. Paul obliquely refers to Clayton Eshleman's poem about holding Duncan's hand; both their poems suffer from asking the master to bless their own work. Hustling.

One of the most characteristic parts of Mariah's poetry is the simple, Midwestern diction, rhythm and sound. I know when I first read his work I moaned, "yuck, no fanciness, difficulty, obscurity; this can't be profound poetry." (You see, I'm from Stonelick Twp. Ohio myself; corn fed, country raised. We want something more.) But the moon shines no less on the Mississippi Valley than on the West Coast.

In a poem for Leland Stoney (another poet), Paul says "Your words are flowers/ I barely crawl/ through my own ragweed & brambles/ without catching a thorn or thistle." Such self-abnegation is unjustified—particularly here. Because Paul has taken his vegetation from memory—the Illinois ragweed, brambles and thistleweed—it is so much more fitting, lovely than his friend's flower words. San Francisco does that to inlanders; makes them forget "Great Lakes wind/ whipping the

The antidote to the world's viciousness and insanity is, as one might expect, love. But, particularly in the gay world, loves are ephemeral and relationships dissolve in pain and hurt. No news here either, of course. "Under the Night Sky" suggests the precariousness of love:

*we sit
smoking too much
whispering together
of being hurt &
hurting
can love after so many
errors, after so much
pain & fear exist?
under the night sky
on the Aegean shore
the edge of a precipice
we kiss*

Painfully private is "You Must Have Been a Sensational Baby." As we age, lust fails to diminish, and the fulfilling of lust (in the gay world) becomes increasingly impossible. The poem is in two parts. The first part quickly sketches the poet's sense of his own aging:

*I love your eyebrows, said one.
the distribution of your bodyhair
is sensational. what teeth, said two.
your mouth is cocaine, said three.
your lips, said four, look like sexual organs.
they are, I said.
as I got older features thickened.
the body grew flabby. then
thin in the wrong places. they
all shut up or spoke about life.*

In part 2, the speaker's frustration is edged with humor. A ruthless honesty of feeling is chillingly realized in the final lust-symbol:

*a pair of muscular calves
drove me crazy today.
I studied their size, their shape,
their suntanned hairiness. I spoke
to the owner of them. are you
a dancer? I asked. oh no,
I was born with them, he said.
you must have been a sensational baby,
I said, he went back to his newspaper.
I went back to his calves.
he displayed them mercilessly.
he was absolutely heartless.
men stole secret looks at them.
women pretended he was a table.
they all had a pained expression.
he went on reading the Sports Page.
his thighs were even more cruel
thrust brutally from denim shorts.
the whole place trembled with lust.*

The very pain of such an attraction Norse remarked on in the *Gay Sunshine* interview, where he explained that beauty in the young bestows on that person "a kind of godlike superhuman quality to be worshipped and admired rather than to be comfortable with. It's a gift like genius. The possessor can get away with almost anything. But the beauty must also get old and die. I've never been comfortable in the presence of great beauty. If I have sex with a great beauty, it is always followed by a kind of sadness, and I'm sure that this is because it could

not continue forever" (p. 7). Obviously, there must be alternatives to aging in the presence of such attractions, particularly in America where youth is ipso facto Divine! Norse seems to be working towards possible accommodations in his latest poetry: the fact of his poetry is more than an adequate compensation for the fading and mellowing of sinew and muscle. To connect with the spirit is not bullshit! It doth matter how one defineth Beauty vs. Beast! The ephemeral fuck is available, in the bars, baths, for hire. The lasting fuck is a totality, built over months of loving and caring. The young, I'm beginning to find, are attracted and fascinated by older folk, particularly if the latter have created beautiful poems, pictures, music out of personal risk, courage and fearlessness. Harold, you are there!

A handful of poems in the central section of *Selected Poems* celebrate a fulfilling love. These are the Mohammed poems, commemorating a friendship with a seventeen-year-old Moroccan youth. Norse and Mohammed journey through the mountains to Taroudant. They buy alabaster kif bowls and watch

*the dancing boys in desert cafes
kissing old Arabs and sitting on their
laps, dancing with kohl eyes, and
heard the music down in Joujouka
in the hills under the stars
the ancient ceremony, Pan pipes
fierce in white moonlight
and the white walls with hooded figures
stoned on kif for eight nights
and the goatboy in a floppy hat
scared us, beating the air
with a stick, beating whoever came close,
Father of Skins, goat god,
and the flutes maddened us
and we slept together in huts*

Sexual joy became a way of "leaving the mind"—"To Mohammed in the Hôtel of the Palms." But such departures are ephemeral, as are peregrinations over the faces of Europe and Africa. Restlessness and the driven self seem sexual . . . and if there is a thematic progress in Norse's body of work it is towards the wisdom that one can't keep running as a working out (victim) of our sex drives. The flash of a train is sexual. A sleek metallic plane . . . a swift speedboat . . . a streaking horse. Norse says (in "Now France"), "I've chosen orgasm/feeling/smell/soul." He implies a progression here from body-lust to soul-experience. We might quarrel with the sequence of these stages; we can't quarrel with their authenticity. Poetry, for Norse, is sanity. Poetry is movement towards beauty and belief. Sexuality in its affinities with spirituality endows an absurd world with meaning. Norse reports this experience: in the midst of writing a poem "& feeling absurd," he goes to the window and sees a "lonely weirdo/in priestly garb/ratty & black" scribbling on a wall. Norse runs downstairs to find what is surely a rationale for his own life:

*WE ARE SEARCHING
FOR RATIONAL REASONS
FOR BELIEVING
IN THE ABSURD*

We feel strengthened because Harold Norse is here, and because he has seen so fully and so well, sparing neither himself nor us. His energies are both Boschian and calming, wild and controlled.

winter walls/ of green;" drives them into the sea around Land's End looking for exotic flora. Do they forget those lands "Born where the ghosts of the Buffaloes still dream"? (V. Lindsay quoted in *The Spoon Ring*).

In leaving Illinois, Paul Mariah wasn't dumb; after all they threw him three years in prison there. His suffering couldn't be cured (it could only be revenged) in the corn fields of Illinois. He was one of those who came into gay liberation because there was no place else to go, no place else to be.

Within gay liberation, I'd like to raise the issue of feminist consciousness. Paul has published an essay, "From Lesbos with Love," in *Margins* (Oct/Nov 1973) and co-edited issue #8 of *Manroot*, labeled "Womanhood." The editors say *Manroot* has never been isolationist, segregationist, elitist; therefore in this issue of *Manroot* work is here by women and men, black and white, gay and straight." Isn't the experience of black, women, and faggot writers the opposite: that when we are mixed, the straight white men tend to call the show. At most they offer condescension. Why shouldn't *Manroot* be a faggot poetry journal? And wouldn't it be better to have women speaking for themselves from their own publications—where they control the means of communication? Paul's essay on lesbian poetry talks of the importance of transcending gender, yet the author continues to talk condescendingly like a man: "Her work is very serious and is not to be dismissed without hard reflection."

Notwithstanding such reservations, the solid meat of Paul Mariah's work can not be ignored (to echo the poet). The splendid voice speaking sacredly in his *Love Poems to an Army Deserter Who Is in Jail* promises more to come. I wait with an open mouth.



Poem for Paul Mariah

Graphic by Harriette Frances
Photo by Rink

Reviews

Holy Cow: Parable Poems by Robert Peters; Red Hill Press Books, 1973, \$2.50; distributed by Serendipity Books, 1790 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94709.

Reviewed by Salvatore Farinella

When I first heard Bob Peters read at MIT in Cambridge Massachusetts his poems struck me with a force that could only be that of recognition of a brother struggling with the burden of trying to relearn that lost definition of humanity. This particular night I had come to hear Bob because a card by him had come to me via Paul Mariah. The card announced he was coming to read, he liked my poems and wanted to meet me. O.K. I went alone to MIT in the cold darkness to meet Bob Peters and hear him read his poems. Nervously scanning the room looking intently into the eyes of every attractive man in hopes of psychically recognizing Bob without introduction, I became nervous—my heart was acting as a metronome waving a pool ball in my chest. When Bob walked into that room I was surprised by his size: he is a formidable man with what I presume to be hands the size of football fields. The reading went well with poems from his first book which Bob apparently felt very comfortable with, very close too, very safe in this company of strangers: this cup of strangers, this sometimes sieve of strangers. These poems he read were firmly rooted in physical touchable reality: description of slaughter in minute detail, the pain of a son's death. Good poems all but anchors weighing the man down. All through the presentation of Bob's poems there was a confrontation taking place deep inside that head of his: I didn't know what it was or what was happening but could see the battle lines draw his mouth tight, the eye brows close, the cirrus clouds suck past his eyes. Then he did it: he decided to trust us with the newest poems; those poems he wasn't sure about; the poems he didn't trust; the poems he didn't understand. He read them quickly almost apologetically. They these new poems were different and unlike the others. The power of the older clearly understood poems was still there but the darkness of the goat legged god was in them. There was the stench of spilled wine red on white satin. The uncertainty was the quaky knees of the new born plains creature: the confusion at sleepy seeds barely seen at the corners of the eyes. These new poems were old bandaids lifting off healing wounds.

Holy Cow: Parable Poems brings Bob Peters to the public in full flood. The poems lift off the page and float in the reader's consciousness. They are all parables in the old sense of the word where reality is altered to come closer to that mysterious reality within us that many have not found and maybe will never find. These poems chase the devil with an old shoe. An example I suppose is due—still as I write I wonder whether every time the stork lifts off his chimney pot the guilt descends on the witnesses, those creators of false myth. "The Talented Family" essays this question of guilt and myth:

1.
*my father makes mandolins
of rosin and turtle shells
my mother plays the violin.
my brother raises poodles for
senior citizens. my sister
has few brains. each day
she explains by letter
that she's getting better.
she knows that roses glow
when the desert hot winds blow.*

2.
*"Come home," writes my father.
"There's so much to tell. I
want to nourish you as well.
Your talent's fine, though
only half as good as mine,
tee hee."*

3.
*I trimmed my beard, washed my hair,
packed my bag, brought all my poems
inside, turned off the utilities
and thumbed a ride to Wisconsin.*

4.
*my dad was dead: he'd tried to shoot
a rabid dog and missed. my mother's
face was covered with paste. her
breasts were bare. "Come in," she said
in bed. She took her violin. She
lit a candle and played a little air
from Handel. "Your sister, I'm afraid
is off her rocker. Your brother's trade
in pets is through, he's screwing
the old women. Now, son, tell me
what you've done."*

5.
*I played a tune upon a yellow
ocarina. I played another
upon a comb. I sang by blowing
through my fingers. I recited
a poem. "Stop," she said, "spare
me your logorrhea. I'll have
an attack of diarrhea. Please
play me more upon your ocarina."*

6.
*I played until she died.
I went outside.
I uprooted the nearest tree
and threw it as far from me
as I could into the lake.
I saw my father's face. I
set fire to the house.
string snapped in the flames.
I thought I saw my brother.
I took my bag and hitched a ride
west to California.
as you can see, at last I'm free.*

Peters without quacking in our everyday duck talk goes directly to the mark—that blue black bruise in our memory as children growing up and having to do that walk away from the parents. Leaving the parents, the family as agents of oppression for the individual, trying hard to find the wings to freedom. Within the poems barriers are set up to disarm the reader; set the serious tone of the poems ajar. Example the rhymes in stanza 2 of the quoted poem:

*"There's so much to tell. I
want to nourish you as well
Your talent's fine, though
only half as good as mine,
tee hee."*

The persona is dad's where the old good natured joking is more than serious in putting down the son. The rhymes tend to put a light hearted lilt to the music of this stanza and give old dad a pleasant tone. yet this is a serious putting down of the son and his capabilities as an adult are questioned. Now read stanza 5 and watch the rhymes. Take care when reading Peters.

All poets sit on a huge pile of words that have preceded them. These words have all been manipulated and rearranged millions of times to say pretty much similar things about love, death, birth, sorrow. For thousands of years men have talked about these subjects. Must we as present day poets continue in this tradition without altering or extending or coming to grips with our potentiality? A poem of Peters dips into this can of worms and talks of "the poet as horse-back rider."

*insane with the flexed motion
its ragged speeds, of the circle
he rides the pony around and around.*

*the lather of the driven hide
soaks his ass and legs.
in the hollow of the taut back
in bounces towards what
he has never seen: the round eye
stricken, horse-bloody
in its grains.*

Holy Cow: what a full book! Look see—the latter day saint.

*the latter day saint
he strips and adorns himself*

*with vines and ferns.
he fills his ears with mountains laurel
honey and climbs a pine, the sun
has turned him brown. he looks
like an iriguois.*

*at the beach, at home, he knows
that someone is biting the nipples
of the boy he loves, a thief
has stolen his clothes,
his fifteen rental units
are on fire, a hood has slashed
his tires, his life insurance
business is defunct, his estranged
son sent by his estranged wife
comes to take his life.*

*he's in love with a hummingbird.
his attraction is conceptual, although
the physical experience he gets
is far more stimulating than
that he'd had with other pets.*

*each day the bird whirrs to the pine,
zings and spins until it finds
his car and zeroes in. it sips honey,
drinks perspiration salt, takes
saliva from his lips, then zooms
and does a somersault, plummets
and settles briefly on his head.*

*whether the bird acts out of tact
or gratitude, the man can't say—
nor does he care. And he'd admit
that the whirr and beat sometimes
do frighten him. a perforated cere-
bellum?*

*eventually of course, the
tete-a-tete must end. the man
will lose his little friend.
the man will grieve and find another
way
to modify his features, to
make himself attractive to other
forest creatures. and when
at last the world learns of
his antics, they'll at first
regard him as insane and quaint,
and later they'll renege
and canonize him saint and
raise his pay.*

Peters talks of a relationship with a hummingbird; an intense relationship with a hummingbird as pet/as lover when the last stanza winds down to insert its fine blade between the reader's ribs. Who can understand better this stanza than faggots who in their fragile relationships must learn to understand how to make a new kind of lover relationship as free individuals who often lose and are faced with the ruins of a year or more commitments to another man who is no longer there. The fresh start is so common to faggots that the very thought starts the old heart wobbling. Yet psychiatrists regard him as sick and the general populace look at the fairy as quaint/cute/a lap dog. Can we look to this poem as prophecy when all faggots will be canonized saints? Bob Peters has done a wonderful job with this book. He is an honest man; look to him with trust.

Abyss: A Collection of Poems by William Barber. Empty Elevator Shaft Press, San Francisco, 1974; \$2.25.

Reviewed by Salvatore Farinella

The poetry underground has a wonderful way of sustaining its poets. One need never fear when the literary establishment whether pseudo-underground in the form of famous small magazines and presses or the untouchable large magazines such as *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's Monthly*, *Poetry* and the comparable publishing houses refuses to acknowledge those poets who do not answer to the establishment's attitudes towards life. A poet's literary life usually extends into ten writing years before the large houses wake up to his/her worth then print their book in the quantity that will give him/her a nationwide/worldwide reputation and audience. Yet in the faggot underground some poets have been repeatedly refused admission into almost all literary vehicles. Obviously if a poet's poems are not printed his potential readers will never know that he exists or that he is writing poems that speak directly to his particular situation. With few exceptions this was the case with black poets in the past. Over the past five years more and more black poets are having their poems printed and their voices heard. Part of this reversal may seem obvious what with the civil rights movement being so hot an issue for years. But there is another much more important issue that compromised the establishment publishers. The poetry-reading public bought the books! Whenever there is a market there will be a product to fill that demand. At this point in time the Big Boys who make these editorial decisions do not believe there is a buying or interested public in *Homo* literature. Haven't you ever wondered why there isn't more homoerotic literature with socially redeeming features on the local bookstore's shelves?

Yet a few Gay poets keep surfacing and having their voices heard through beautiful small press operations. (Odd to think about the small press publications that have featured Gay poems. Almost all of their production have had a rare beauty. A beauty difficult for the straight world to tune into like swans drifting through oil slick.) One such poet has a first book of poems to be released by the Empty Elevator Shaft Press in San Francisco in June, 1974: *Abyss*, a collection of poems by William Barber. This collection features twelve poems that the poet has selected and ten additional poems selected by close friends of the poet and their comments. A novel and interesting concept for a book of poems. So often an unknown poet only shares his poems with close friends,

family or lovers. Often the poems are about the same people. In theory who could be closer to the quick life of the poems than these same people who have witnessed their birth?

I have been aware of Barber's poems for about four years. A glimpse of a poem now and then in publications such as *Sebastian Quill*, *Manroot*, and *Gay Sunshine* helped make public that an important block of writing was happening in America today. The poems themselves have a quietness filled with fury. These poems are hard muscled with hot blood chugging through the veins. The energy is fast and quick under the calm surface.

What I have always liked about Barber's poems is the thinking process he shares with the reader. One gets the impression that the poet confronts the paper in a love/hate relationship. The paper—its empty field a blank eye—waits indifferently full of promise and failure. The poet must through his own act of will push his pen as burnt stick across the page and through this act discover what has prompted him to sit down in the first place and write the poem. When one reads a Barber poem the reader is always in an act of discovery. "Serial Poem" is a good example of this process:

Serial Poem

Last night I dreamed *I jumped*

from the brown cliff

into a circle of blue water,

and it was good and cool

and I had broken from you

at last.

I suppose I dreamed of tricks

churning my vision

like minnows,

and I went swimming toward them

beneath the surface.

When I woke you were gone.

Tonight your arms

are holding down

a younger boy,

and your mouth is a river

flowing into his skin

with the passion

of our first night.

In this poem the device of dream is used to bring the reader closer to a reality every gay person has felt. The

confusion of dreams even though themselves everyday occurrences, a common experience, tends to leave the waker confused, bewildered at the dream and its relation to the outside external world. Barber used this confusion by clearly rendering it into words and letting it tell him what it means. And as a result the truth of the statement through its vignette form becomes a devastating flash of recognition in the reader's consciousness. Barber is particularly good at this kind of poem. I myself believe it to be one of the few methods to use to make poems real and meaningful. Poets and writers in the past have used this technique all the way from Gide to Frost.

Illusion, love, loss, coming out, hustlers, are all issues that Barber's poems deal with. I have appreciated this poet's work for a number of years and I am amazed at times how different lines and images keep reappearing in my life from Barber's poems. Look at "Soul Transplant":

Soul Transplant

You healed more completely.

A lapse of catatonia has passed.

We batter at friendliness

though some words wear costume.

You speak softly; my eyes

dangerously close to their origin

feel like frog's eyes, swollen

too big for their sockets

that night we crazy on mescaline

locked our eyes, locked eyes

until I fell into your brain.

The whole year

I kept walking around

with your eyes

in my head.

That last stanza stays in the consciousness with the tenacity of Elmer's. The statement is another man's consciousness that I so happen to recognize too by my own experience.

All poetry books and magazines reviewed in this issue are available, postpaid, through the Gay Liberation Book Service; see listing on page 46.

the betrayal of donald webster cory?

Edward Sagarin is a singularly tragic figure, a man who became the bitterest critic of the movement he had been instrumental in beginning. In 1951 he wrote *The Homosexual in America*, using the pseudonym Donald Webster Cory, adapted from Andre Gide's *Corydon*. "This book is the result of a quarter of a century of participation in American life as a homosexual," he wrote in the preface. His was the first account to recognize homosexuals as a minority group, and it slowly emerged from obscurity to become a best-seller.

Save for a few intrepid souls like Morris Kight, most members of what was to be known as the homophile movement used pseudonyms for their own protection. Nevertheless, it required great courage to write *The Homosexual in America*, a book whose rare compassion and insight made it one of the better written books on the subject for the next two decades. Cory's book is considered the seminal influence upon the movement, and for many years he was its leading, most respected spokesman.

But the early fifties was not an opportune time to start a movement: Joseph McCarthy was having his heyday hunting the "Communist homosexuals" in the State Department, causing the dismissal of over 300 employees. Police vice squads were operating freely, without interference. A prominent United States senator committed suicide after receiving a blackmail threat. Legend has it that the first Mattachine Society was founded in Los Angeles in a closed room with the blinds drawn and lookouts posted at the door. ONE, a later group, had to appeal all the way to the Supreme Court for the right to send its literature through the mails.

It was by no means agreed that homosexuality was not a sickness. *The Homosexual in America* reflects the author's ambivalence about his sexuality and his nearly obsessive sense of alienation. It recounts the pain he experienced while growing up and the anguish of realizing he was different, cursed. Alas, he could not eradicate his sexual passion, even after years of marriage. In the introduction psychiatrist Albert Ellis chided the author for believing in the ineradicability of homosexuality.

Christopher Street marked not the beginning of gay liberation but, instead, its successful transformation from the earlier homophile sensibility. It was a process that began nearly a decade before, when Frank Kameny founded the Mattachine Society of Washington as the first activist, civil liberties organization in the movement. In 1964 it passed a policy statement declaring that "in the absence of valid scientific evidence to the contrary, homosexuality could not properly be considered a sickness, illness, disturbance, disorder or other pathology of any kind." Conservatives, Cory among them, attacked the MSW's brashness: only psychiatrists were qualified to make such a pronouncement. A year later they were further scandalized by the first gay picketing, of Independence Hall and the White House.

Cory wrote and edited several other pseudonymous works on homosexuality. In 1963 he coauthored *The Homosexual and His Society* with John P. LeRoy. By

this time Cory could no longer contain his bitterness and disillusionment with the homosexual scene. There was considerable disagreement between the two authors over the book's direction. Several years later LeRoy wrote a vituperative expose in *Gay*, "The Anti-Homosexual in America," alleging that Cory had repudiated the views of his first book.

How much he had really repudiated is unclear; nevertheless, he had come to believe that homosexuality was subject to psychiatric "cure," implying that he had undergone it himself. Although he severely criticized the movement's unwillingness to envision "cure"—at the 1964 Daughters of Bilitis Convention and a year later in the introduction of Ellis' *Homosexuality*—he continued to endorse its aim of combating injustice.

His repudiation by the movement was not long in coming. In 1965 Craig Rodwell was a leader of a group of younger members of the New York Mattachine with the slogan, "Let's get Mattachine moving!" They were determined that the MSNY adopt the MSW's "anti-sickness" statement and engage in political activism. Cory was nominated for president by alarmed conservatives and was decisively defeated. Embittered, he quit MSNY and the movement.

Then his double life took a curious turn. Again writing as Edward Sagarin, he completed his Ph.D. in sociology at New York University in 1966. His thesis: "Structure and Ideology in an Association of Deviants," a critical study of the MSNY! Three years later an adaptation, "The Many Masks of Mattachine," appeared as a chapter in his book *Odd Man In*. The chapter is characterized by a snide attitude toward his subject, petty sniping, and the manipulation of logic to his ends. In the blurb he is cited as an associate professor of sociology at the City College of New York. Other writings are listed; however, none, that he wrote as Donald Webster Cory.

Since 1969 Sagarin's writings on the growing gay militancy have become increasingly shrill. Last summer he was featured in the journal *Contemporary Sociology* with an abrasive review of a dozen books on homosexuality: "The Good Guys, the Bad Guys, and the Gay Guys." His review, like his subsequent reply to letters, pursues a limited inquiry that fails to go anywhere and loops back on itself. Gay is bad, bad, bad. "Scientific" pronouncements are buttressed on evidence whose faulty logic is ill concealed by his cuteness.

In mid-May Edward Sagarin spoke before the New York Gay Academic Union. "The adversary we had expected was not there at all," one GAU member commented. Instead, he seemed pathetic and not nearly as sure of himself as his writings had implied. This same observer likened his bitterness to the extremism of a reformed drunk. Sagarin told of his desperate search for love and affection in the gay community, and of the suicides of his friends. There was such a low possibility of finding love within a homosexual life style that he felt children should be discouraged from it.

Unlike John LeRoy's *Gay* piece, it is self-defeating to feel vindictive toward Donald Webster Cory/Edward Sagarin. Instead, we wish to point out the irony of his double life. As Cory he was a pioneer, a man who did more than anyone else to establish a movement that grew to declare confidently that homosexuality is not sick, a position that the American Psychiatric

Association belatedly recognized because of this movement's pressure. And now as Sagarin his work expressed the very prejudice and pseudoscientific thinking of society that made him go through the traumatic experience of renouncing his own homosexuality.

The final paragraph of his review in *Contemporary Sociology* seems ironically appropriate for himself:

As for the secret deviates among these writers, I deeply respect their right to self-protection in an atmosphere of continued hostility. But as they call on gay people to accept and assert themselves, blatantly to proclaim themselves, they may be proceeding on the road of their own undoing. For if the scene should change and such people do remove their masks (the obvious masks, those that the selves are most conscious of), then writers caught up in their own rhetoric may be compelled to pursue the strategy they had advocated. No longer, how-

ever, could they be quoted and cited as scholars in whatever their area of specialization, protected by the mantle of objectivity, for their vested interest would place their work under a shadow. It would be bittersweet irony if the success of homosexual liberation for which they were fighting should deprive them of their only value in that struggle. It would not be the first time that a revolution has devoured its leaders. [Emphasis added.]

One must wonder what changes this man has gone through, writing about homosexuality under a pseudonym when it was a forbidden topic and now attacking homosexuality under the "protection" of his own name.

—John Kyper and Steven Abbott
(with acknowledgment to friends in the New York Gay Academic Union, and others)

Cartoon by Bruce Reifel



OUT OF THE CLOSETS: VOICES OF GAY LIBERATION

Edited by Karla Jay & Allen Young

Now in its second printing.

The Nation: "voices from the battlefield, conveying both the ideas and the spirit of the gay struggle." *Library Journal*: "well-organized and highly recommended." *The Militant*: "Editors Jay and Young have done a service by including a section on Cuba." *Lavender Starship* (Columbus, Ohio): "a must for any person hoping to develop a gay consciousness." *The Advocate*: "An excellently-edited and solidly packed anthology of some of the finest gay writings in the last four years." *The Body Politic*: "interesting and stimulating." *Gay Activist* (Columbus, Ohio): "a fine resource for your rap group or gay studies course." *Gay Liberator* (Detroit): "the most thorough and comprehensive collection of gay experiences and philosophies to appear so far."

A collection of more than 50 articles, manifestos and interviews. The only gay liberation anthology with articles by women and men. Published by Douglas/Links Books 33 West 60th St., New York, N.Y. 10023. Phone: 212-246-0325. \$3.95 paperback. Available by mail from: Gay Liberation Book Service, P.O. Box 40397, San Francisco, Calif. 94140. Or from your local book seller.

LET ME LOVE YOU ALL AT STILLMAN'S GYM

freakshows. ferris wheels. rollercoasters. flash. flare. thrash. surf. seasmell. saltair. youths in openair lockers. sand. sun. nude bodies. they see me. in toilet window. make obscene Italo hood gestures. up yours. *va fongool*. left hand pumping bicep in crook of right arm. shame. I blush with shame. they think I'm a girl! crimson shame. I'll die of shame. and delight. excitement pumping hot blood thru my body. thick chestnut hair over my eyes. red cheeks. ripe red lips. everybody looks up at me. I peek over bathroom window ledge. *Hey! ya want dis?* they yell laughing. mocking yet sweet. they grab their dongs and wave and waggle them half-hard. their hips press forward. *Come'n' git it!* HAHahaha! my hair my skin like electricity. sparks shoot out of me. I grab the toilet paper cylinder. slide it in. pull it out. they can't see. they make farting lip sounds. the razz the Bronx cheer. *Hey kid wanna wop salami? c'mon down!* they laugh. slap golden suntanned muscles. gleam in openair showers. bending knees on sandy floorboards. wet. hot. salty. sea and sperm. if the sandman brough me dreams of you. I pick one out with my eyes. tall. lean. ample cock. he looks up. defiant. provocative. tender. sneers like a bully. slyly winks. buddies do not see this. secretly taps forefinger to breastbone. points to me. together. us. I'm breathing hard. suffocating. scared. tantalised. what shall I do? I hide behind Auntie May's chintzy white toilet curtains. I think I'd dream the whole night thru. I peer furtively over the ledge. they have forgotten me. nobody looks up. I feel lost. they slap each other's ass. grab at pricks. flick towels at balls. make sexy gestures. yell hoarsely. then furtively look in my direction from time to time. pretending not to notice me. bathing trunks drying on sandy floorboards in the sun. I can almost smell the musk from the trunks. they whistle between the teeth. sharp piercing masculine. slap each other hard. smacking sound of flat hard palms against flat hard bodies. whip towels across asses. grab balls. cackle. HAHahaha. shadowbox. they do not look up. I am forlorn. should I go downstairs? what will they do? call me dirty names and beat me up? I could never stand it. the one I love looks up. loud Bronx cheer with puffed out lips. waggles cock contemptuously. sneers handsomely. lips curl arrogant and beautiful. for you brought a new kinda love to me-e-e. I duck. I hide. crushed. rouged with shame and desire. in medicine cabinet mirror my face like a girl's. roses and olives in my cheeks. beautiful flash of brilliant teeth as I grind them in agonized frustration. Calcium they call me at school. Handsome Harry. pubic hairs thick black and shiny. come on little cat feet. I am 13. I watch the young men under the silk spray. twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore. they do not know who watches and loves them. behind the curtains I make love to America. in the closet I make love to America. my love is bigger than the Atlantic Ocean. America does not want my love. America throws sand in my eyes and tries to drown me in the Atlantic Ocean. but my love is bigger than any ocean. over the greatness of such space steps must be gentle. everywhere sand and waves and sun flashing. superb young acrobats in tank suits. they build a throne of bodies. along the sand I crawl on my belly to the throne. I am a slave to the monarch of flesh. no precious gems more precious than this throne of flesh. no god more precious than this throne of youth. let me love you all at Stillman's Gym. I am 13. I want to love America. America with its smell of gymnasiums and lockerrooms. America with its smell of hamburgers and hot dogs. America laughs at me. Steeplechase laughs. Luna Park laughs. the fat lady comes with jellyroll and laughs. the seal boy comes with black flippers and laughs. zip the pinhead comes and laughs. multitudes come on the beach and laugh. under the boardwalk the lovers laugh. the bank director in a beach cabana eats the newsie's shit and laughs. a great horseshoe crab rots on the sand with slimy maggots infesting its jurassic head and laughs. I poke it with a tarry stick. I dissolve into sea's endless rhythm. I fade out in relentless dumb seasurge and. I do not laugh.

* * * * *

fingers delicately palpate hairs on backs of thighs —
run gingerly along the bulge of buttocks
and rest gently on asshole —
please God I don't wanna do it!
stomach trembling — bands of young taut muscle ripple out
then suck in, waist tight — thighs arch like bows —
thick arrow ready from quivering tendons
to shoot — muscles straining —
I lower my head and grasp my feet —
tickle my toes with moist fingers
then bend down further —
straining — stretching — back and spine aching —
lips purse with kissy stress
towards the pearly glistening moisture —
heart pounding — tongue darting — bending forward —
hands clasped beneath thighs — locked —
grappling — pulling down — snout burrowing —
pressed in musky nest — aaahh! mmmmm!
GULP!

Harold Norse

NIGHT GLEAM

Over and over thru the dull material world the call is made
over and over thru the dull material world I make the call
O English folk, in Sussex night, thru black beech tree branches
the full moon shone at three AM, I stood in under wear on the lawn —
I saw a mustached English man I loved, athlete's breast and farmer's arms,
I lay in bed that night many loves beating in my heart
sleepless hearing songs of generations returning intelligent memory
to my frame, and so went to dwell again in my heart
and worship the Lovers there, love's teachers, youths and poets who live forever
in the secret heart, in the dark night, in the full moon, year after year
over & over thru the dull material world the call is made.

Allen Ginsberg
11 July 1973

I sat on his face
I sat on his face
I sat on his face
and he tongued my ass
and he tongued my ass
my ass
and ate out my asshole,
then I took the tube of KY
then I took the tube of KY
and smeared it on my hand
and smeared it on my hand
and eased it into his asshole,
into his asshole
and I pushed until it was in up to the knuckles,
and I pushed until it was in up to the knuckles,
then I gently forced the rest of the hand into the opening
then I gently forced the rest of the hand into the opening
and it slipped completely inside
and it slipped completely inside
and the lips tightened around my wrist
and the lips tightened around my wrist
and I slowly began to twist my arm
and I slowly began to twist my arm,
and he went out of his mind
and he went out of his mind
and he went out of his mind
and he went out of his mind

John Giorno

LEXINGTON NOCTURNE

don't you?
don't you want to?

a gentleman doesn't ask young men
questions like that;
he probably begins with reveries on the French word
tendresse
and how much better it is than our own

tendresse
what you find in the Adagio
of Rachmaninov's *E Minor Symphony*,
after the Largo, which was so
rapacious
and full of longing . . .

sacred *longing*:
to be long, to belong to the company of those
who trust the holiness of the heart's affections . . .

and to be *long gone*
up the first road to Eros,
as prone to the emotions as Sebastian,
full of his arrows . . .

back to the gentleman
and the young man:

Lexington, Kentucky,
the boy sharing the double-bed is called ____
from Texas,
full of *tendresse* . . .

22, old enough to ask,
as I did rhetorically, above:
do you?
do you want to?

the truth is
I never said a word . . .
I burned
and merely remembered what
Tram Combs used to say:
NEVER FUCK YOUR FRIENDS! never
let a tablespoon of come
come between friends . . .

one of those nights
with eyes open all night
(even they sweat),
but by 3 o'clock my foot and calf
relax,
the mind lies back
in the light of the white room,
where it waits for you
to shift your body
freely
in deep sleep . . .

by 6 o'clock the light brightens,
and if I move carefully
I can move the spread just a little, see
your back where the t-shirt's pulled up
and the top of your thigh shows

and look at you
and wonder what any of this would mean to you —
this meaning the lust to hold you
and bring you
into the Brotherhood of Lovers . . .

the very first thing to say, the fact is
it is most seemly, most apposite, most circumspect for men
to fuck boys —
"men are men's joy"

if I were a Dorian nobleman
I would explain to ____ as I slipped it in,
this is not just semen up your ass,
this is *class*, this is *arête*, this is how
you learn to be a man

but this is 2500 years post Plato,
who fucked everybody up

thus I see you as your eyes open in the Lexington dawn
and put my hand in your hair and
let it hang
just an instant
there
and let that be all
for then

"men are men's joy"
means what it says

in another town
on another night

Eros, that sore, three-time loser,
shall strike again,
old friend:

do you
do you want to?

man
to
boy

Jonathan Williams

from *Adventures With a Twelve-Inch Pianist*
Beyond the Blue Horizon
[Xerox edition] New Mexico, 1973

COME SUNDOWN

Come sundown and the brown of my eyes
cast shadows across the mountain peaks
of your knees. How the forests weave
wind into braids of sound.
The early evening sound of birds
blankets meadows and city streets alike.
How alike we are under the sun's
lengthening elbow. Ride my hip
as an Indian babe; the small animals' teeth
will not know you; share your breath
and we will know each other in the
biblical sense. Notice you ride
the right, the left
saddles Lilith howling
tearing at her hair raking nails;
Example: the grab at dangling legs
the hiss at the ankle, the calf bleating
lost in the grass. My lover
how alike we are lost in the tall grass.

Sal Farinella

As the most beautiful woman in the world

i. e. in term of forms
Gibson, Harvey or Flora-
dora body-wise corporeal

sanctifying night's shoppes
Common. Ave.; The Store or Mac-
Arthur mall the genuine pleas-

ure of town, gracious mist Im-
maculate December sunday Male;
Fulsome, you are my most favorite

One, my good, my need, my saint in-
deed mostly, as well in spirit as
housekeeper, that beacon, angel det-

ermined to oversee, not only me but
the vice-Presidency, there can be
no other prerogative because our be-

liefs recorded set stove, picture, story
sitting room apart of conjecture, ass-
suming Hadrian's infidels observe the

confrontation of a simple glass mirror.

John Wieners

Even your best shirts are frayed.
The seams give out.
Buttons go. At both elbows
the sleeves rip, the body tears
beyond any mending
or hope of any more repair.
The patterns we picked out fade
as flimsy photographs
of a figure's shape
are battered with light,
mottled with age,
flattened out
on their hanging frames.
Their natural force
retreats, involves,
curls in closets like cocoons.
So collars, cuffs, unbuttoned
at the neck and wrist
of a torso's dim silhouette,
almost close around the flesh
but the only bones that are there
are the spare arabesques
bent in the wire
question marks of the hangers.
I buy new clothes; these days.
The colors change.
Like the chameleon's tail,
strange arms replace
the wings or the limbs
bullies pull apart.
But the crude stumps
of amputations bud on the bark.
I call them by new names now
— those arms, their embrace.
They are both mine, once again,
as before, but still, we know,
for either arm,
the body is not the same.

Kirby Congdon

KAOSAN'S ROBE

—for Kenneth Pitchford (Steven Dansky, John Knoebel)

i.
I collect the 17-year-old *dotera*
from H. Goren Cleansers. the old man
alone two years since his wife died,
listens to the Red Sox play the Astros
as he sews. reminding him of Florida
(I suggest), where he spent two weeks.
—have to keep your mind occupied, he says.

—a 60-year-old woman (I correct myself
remembering her youngest son was 10
— she just looked 60 — her husband blind,
but operable if she could save enough money
for the operation, her oldest daughter
in a TB sanatorium in the hills);
—a 45-year-old woman made it for me.
(& two more, I could have said:
one for Faith, with red & yellow dots
in the fabric, matching her long hair;
one for Bill in blue stripes to match
his blue eyes). —an old woman made it for me,
I say. —it has sentimental value.

ii.
in the car we wait while you finish
writing your poem. Marjorie opens the gallery
for us men. sets up the chairs herself.

between acts of your reading I open the wine
but need someone to hold cups while I pour.
John declines, too busy selling *FF Journal*
teaching us to learn to follow women's leads.
Karen holds the cups.

two of us gay men, one in rhinestones,
& Marjorie again, clean up afterwards.
we wait for you to finish talking
so Marjorie can get supper before the evening reading.

when we all drive back to your hotel,
there is talk & argument.
Steven bitches —is he boring you?
& you scream —it's my reading!
Karen sits nervous & angry, ignored
by men & their politics.
given the choice of following your effeminate
vanguard or remaining the Gay Enemy,
those of us who are learning to do drudgery
will choose Enemy of course. hopeful
as lesser enemies maybe to find useful service
in your kitchen when women come to power
with you as their voice to instruct us.

iii.
the agents who murdered Allende are the same men
who fuck their wives day after day
in kitchens, living rooms, one-room
nurseries/playpens/factories.

who screw the rest of us on battlefields
in streets & ghettos & whole countries
occupied by the stale blanketing greed
of America.

to listen means to listen,
not to talk. to make a revolution
means to work deep underground.
soft as the folds of the clean & mended
dotera I wrap around my body, hard
as the crust wrapped over the center of the earth.
fiery. waiting to erupt.

iv.
Kaosan's son must be a Japanese man.
maybe he works for Mitsubishi.
her husband may be dead by now.
maybe he could see before he died.

Faith left her husband to live in England,
returned to Berkeley. Bill is married.
he has three children, two daughters
& a son. H. Goren mends old garments,
listens to baseball games, vacations
in Florida once a year.

I wear the old robe. I listen & wait,
under the robe more naked than I am.
an old woman made the robe for me.
it has sentimental value.

Ron Schreiber

All poems in this special joint issue
are previously unpublished unless
otherwise stated.

Gay liberation is now five years old and coasting along without a sense of direction of where it is and where it's going. It has no definitive philosophy, and its greatest accomplishments have been forcing an unwilling America to admit Gays even exist and freeing thousands of frightened and oppressed homosexuals from their closet prisons.

Both the traditional Christian Right and the traditional Marxist Left have declared us outlaws—social criminals—and we really haven't yet figured out the kind of society best for us. Whatever it is, gay liberation will have to be without Marx or Jesus. We cannot compromise our gay identities—our essential selves—for the supposedly higher goals of socialism or Christianity. We've compromised for two thousand years; now is the time to stop.

Because a gay consciousness is totally incompatible with the anti-sex puritanism of either Christianity or Marxism, there can be no Christian Gays, and there are no Marxist Gays. There are only confused homosexuals who *think* they are Christian or Marxist. Now is the time to free ourselves of both dogmas!

Most of us have been religious, social, and economic conservatives because we either needed to build an image of perfect straightness and social conformity to compensate for our gayness, or we discovered that we could be protected by the Establishment by serving it as clergymen, decorators, or entertainers and preserve its bankrupt culture.

Conservatism insists that individual freedom must be contained within an orderly society based on the preservation of traditional Western religious, economic, and cultural values. Women and men are expected to fulfill narrowly defined family roles; men as breadwinners and fathers, women as wives and mothers. By being more American than the President and more Christian than Billy Graham, we were able to hide behind a facade of respectability. Who would possibly guess we were queer? Most of us didn't even believe it ourselves. In *Tearoom Trade*, a study of homosexual restroom habitués, sociologist Laud Humphries exposed the incredible ultra-conservative defenses of the guilt-ridden tearoom queens.

Who are we fooling? Conservatism is the *enemy* because, except for procreation within marriage, it is totally anti-sex. We will never be free until we smash it—wipe it out—and replace it with a human society. Why should we continue to be silly fools who pander to the upper class? Why should we fear the hell and damnation of hypocritical American Gothic preachers of the likes of Garner Ted Armstrong when the mass media recently exposed him as an adulterer?

Even Pat Boone, America's "Mr. Clean," is on the Christian conservative hate trip. *Joy*, a little book he just wrote, tells how he saved a gay woman from lesbianism for Jesus. The April 10, 1974, *Advocate* even published an ad for the thing in which Boone said, "I'd like to share with my friends in the gay community this thrilling true story. It concerns a very dear friend and me—and it's a real love trip." Inside we find the "dear friend" maligned as a "spiritual leper."

For those who had any hope of the Church changing, what about that anti-gay editorial read from the pulpit of most New York City Catholic churches on April 28, 1974? The Judeo-Christian religion is inherently anti-sex and anti-gay, and no amount of reform will ever really change it. Even the Metropolitan Community Churches, for all their liberalism, see homosexuality only in the context of imitation of heterosexual marriages; recreational sex remains taboo.

There is hope. The enemy is being defeated! The Catholic Church just lost an important Italian election over divorce. Richard M. Nixon, leader of America's conservatives, shocked his followers with the Watergate transcripts; impeachment draws near. The reactionary Portuguese government has fallen, and Portugal's colonial blacks may soon be free. We have been fools playing the mattachine—court fools—for the conservative aristocracy. We owe it nothing! Why should we defend a corrupt social order which murders us, drives us to suicide, or incarcerates us in its concentration camps for social variants, the mental hospitals and prisons?

Rejecting conservatism does not mean we should go Communist. Many gay liberation front people thought Marxism was the answer and said we should join the New Left with other oppressed minorities for socialism and against capitalism and the Vietnam War. But the traditional Marxist Left proved to be just as inhospitable as the Right. The Communists said we were nothing but degenerate by-products of a decaying capitalism. By

LIBERATION WITHOUT MARX OR JESUS LGAY

products? The Communists don't even consider us human beings! Nevertheless, because it is so weak and disorganized, the American Left is not nearly as dangerous to gay people as the Right. Let us hope Marxism never gets into power.

In 1970 several American gay liberationists joined the Venceremos Brigade to cut Cuban sugar cane and soak up the socialist paradise of the Americas only to discover that Communist Cuba had herded its homosexuals into concentration camps labeled "Military Units to Increase Production." About the same time the Cuban First National Congress on Education and Culture issued a strong statement which clearly indicated that Marxism was not for Gays. The Americans were shocked at the treatment they received and the miserable condition of the Cuban Gays and returned disillusioned with the New Left and the radical movement.

Socialist Gays have said that such homophobia is only characteristic of the Stalinist form of socialism, but I think it goes much deeper. Marxism, like conservative puritanism, is a work ethic, anti-pleasure ideology. Sex must be repressed for the good of the people.

Marx said little about women and nothing about homosexuality, but in his first book, *Die Heilige Familie* (1945), he wrote: "The immediate, natural and necessary relation of human being to human being is the relation of man to woman. . . . The relation of man to woman is the most natural relation of human being to human being." The key word is *natural*. Marxism claims to be "scientific," and I believe it considers homosexuality "unnatural."

Lastly, some of the most obvious aspects of American homosexuality have tended to be associated with aristocratic upper class conservatism. As ballet dancers, antique dealers, or fashion designers we are seen as associates (but hardly as servants) of the wealthy, and Communists believe we should be destroyed along with the rich.

Disillusionment with both the Right and the Left has led to the development of three new radical movements during the past decade. Libertarianism, the first of these, resulted when some right-wing intellectuals broke with the conservatives over what had precedence: tradition or individual liberty. The libertarians insisted that individual liberty must be absolute; no person or group has the right to initiate physical force against any other person or group even when tradition is broken.

But the libertarians utterly neglect the many and devastating ways in which psychological, social, and economic violence is inflicted on social minorities in the form of injustices such as discrimination and exploitation, and there is a selfish and self-serving "me first" spirit in libertarianism which reminds of the nineteenth century robber barons.

In giving everything to "individualism," libertarianism ignores community; and despite its anarchistic ideas of government decentralization, its extreme rationality and worship of private property makes

libertarianism difficult to accept. About two years ago, I must confess, I thought libertarianism was the answer for gay liberation. But after having met quite a few libertarians, I feel that they may have given up the Christian Religion and conservative rhetoric, but they are still conservatives at heart. Any support which libertarians have for gay liberation is much more apt to be the result of their dictum that individual liberty is absolute than a change in consciousness.

The counter culture, the second new movement, is a revolt against the inhumanity of industrial society, capitalist or communist. It seeks to return to a decentralized and more human and organic society. As such, the counter culture is much more radical than either industry-oriented Marxism or libertarianism. It is a community anarchism which seeks to change the human consciousness from *The Machine to The Person*.

Work, according to the counter culture, must be fulfilling to the worker, not just to serve God or the people; and by questioning the Marxist-Capitalist work ethic that work has its just reward, the counter culture broke with the Marxist-Capitalist meritocracy mentality. It opposed the whole Freudian (and Marxist and Judeo-Christian) idea that sexual repression and sublimation is necessary for civilization. It even questioned the traditional concept of civilization: a civilization built on sexual repression is no civilization at all but organized mental illness.

Allen Ginsberg and *Howl*, and the beat generation of fifteen years ago and its offspring, the counter culture, were the *real* parents of gay liberation, not the Mattachine Society and its timid homophiles who hid behind a front of non-gay (and sometimes anti-gay) churchmen and shrinks. The Mattachine mentality of 1950-1969 was too wrapped up in respectability and social status, and its inconsequential efforts were geared to finding a niche for homosexuals in a system which had no place for them and in covering up what society said were the really bad aspects of homosexuality such as public sex and transvestism.

But the counter culture also has a dark side. Drug use to raise consciousness and gain mystical insight degenerated into addiction, and Eastern metaphysics became magic and Satanism. Charles Manson was glorified by the underground press. Communes failed because the members did not know how to live together. The counter culture, like gay liberation, is still seeking its way out of the Establishment.

Feminism, the third movement, began by demanding legalized abortions, employment equality, child care centers, and equal rights for women. The feminists next questioned sexual roles and the fact that American culture, dominated by conservatism, insisted that the only place for a woman was in the home.

Insofar as feminism demands the *equality* of the sexes, I think it should be supported, but some feminists went on to a female supremacist line. One group of gay

males have started calling themselves "effeminists" (male woman liberationists) and are demanding the establishment of the gynocracy.

Man-hating (like Jew-hating among the Nazis) seems the spirit of the day with some lesbian feminists. At the April, 1973, Lesbian Feminist Conference at UCLA, radical feminist Robin Morgan stated in the keynote address, "I feel that 'man-hating' is an honorable and viable political act"; and the May-June, 1973, issue of *The Lesbian Tide* reported that some radical lesbians were working with a woman chemist to exterminate men.

That line of rhetoric is disgusting, and I have lost much feeling for the lesbian feminists and wonder what lesbians and gay men have in common other than the fact we both live oppressed lifestyles. It seems that dialogue between men and women is badly needed, but some lesbians are closed to all communication.

An especially disturbing aspect of feminist philosophy is the belief that, aside from obvious physical differences, the two sexes are identical. In their book *Man & Woman, Boy & Girl*, Drs. John Money and Anke Ehrhardt show how androgens (male hormones) affect the behavior of girls with an androgen excess. Such girls are much more active and aggressive than normal girls and subject to a masculine erotic visual imagery. One can only conclude that there are personality as well as physical differences between men and women, although the personality can be greatly modified.

While libertarianism, feminism, and especially the counter culture have ideas useful to our movement, none of the three really fills our needs. They have failed to give the gay movement a clear sense of direction, and the result is that we have been increasingly drawn into a radicalized liberalism.

If liberals have any philosophy, they avoid absolutes. Gay and feminist supremacism disturb them just as much as white or black supremacism, or the conservative idea that we are all sinners or criminals, or the Marxist rhetoric that all Gays are degenerate capitalist perverts.

However, many liberals made a religion out of Freudian psychiatry, and as long as the psychiatrists insisted we were sick the liberals went along with them. Now that the American Psychiatric Association gave us an "instant cure" by saying we were not suffering from an emotional illness, I believe we will have increasing liberal support. Besides, Freudism became coopted by the conservatives with their rigid notions about family life, and Freud is going out of fashion with the liberals.

Liberalism does not generate new ideas but absorbs those around it, softens and modifies them, and it tends to be practical rather than ideological. Thus, the present liberal direction has led the gay movement to become primarily concerned with such civil rights issues as anti-sex laws and employment discrimination. Liberalism does not challenge basic social institutions. The free enterprise system continues, only the wealth should be spread more evenly. The nuclear family remains, but liberals support the equality of husband and wife. The Judeo-Christian heritage continues, religion only needs to become more relevant and humane.

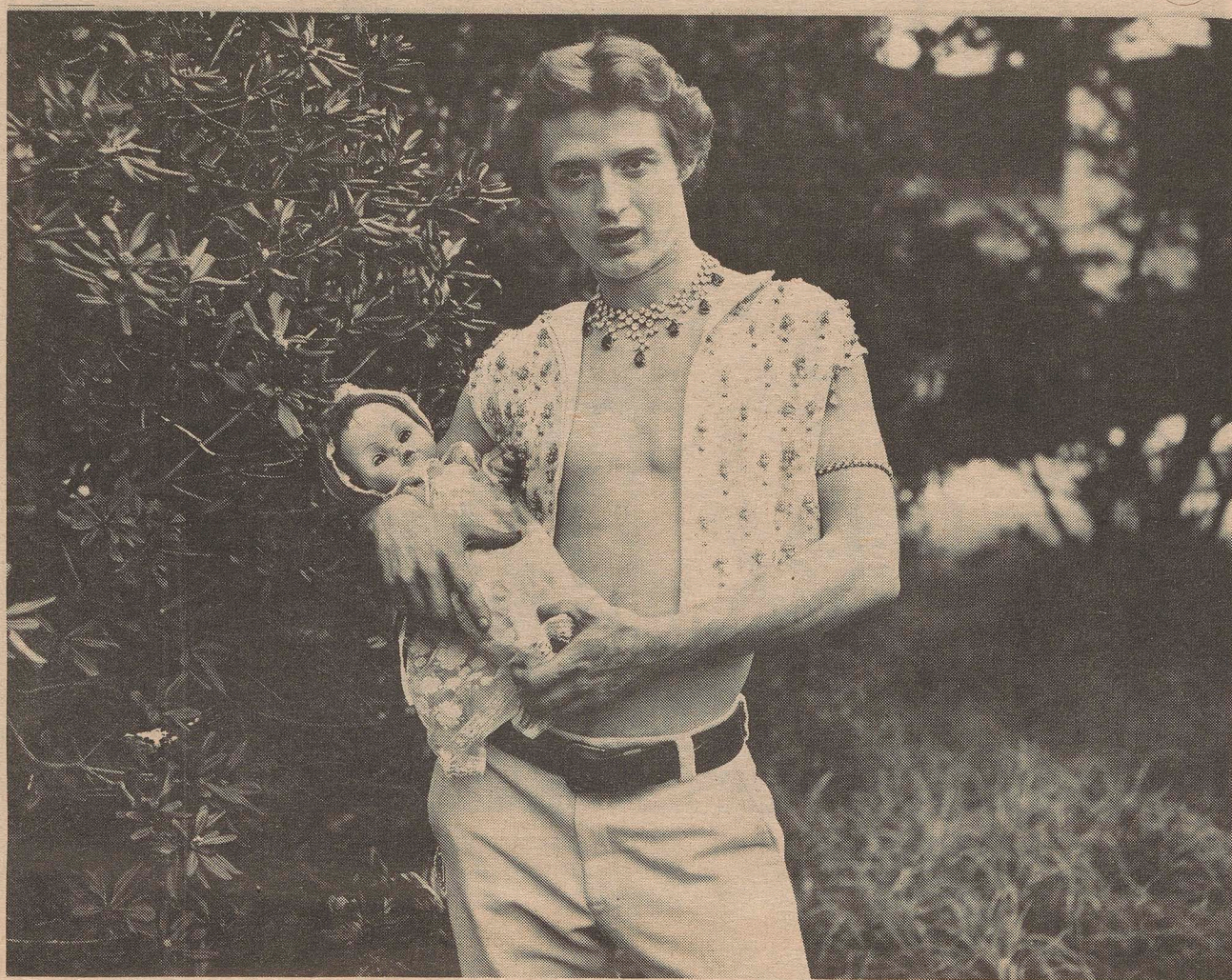
Our movement must have popular support, and we cannot afford to adopt dogmatic ideas and say that communism, the counter culture, feminism, libertarianism, aristocratic conservatism, or even fascism is the *only* way for gay people without turning a majority of Gays off. I, like most others, have defected to a pragmatic liberalism with all of its limitations because I believe that *at this time* only liberalism could possibly build a mass movement.

Nevertheless, we can become lost in liberalism, and while the liberal philosophy may change the anti-sex laws and some forms of employment discrimination, liberalism will not eliminate those social forces which are responsible for homophobia in the first place. Our eventual goal must be the complete social *integration* of gay people into a sexually free society rather than building a ghettoized subculture because we are really more tolerated than accepted in a liberal society.

I admit that I don't have a really clear vision of what lies beyond liberalism but, whatever it is, it must include the total elimination of erotophobia—the fear of sex—and the destruction of those religious and social institutions responsible for it. Unlike the homosexual Marxists, I am much less convinced that the economic system is as responsible for erotophobia as the Judeo-Christian or Marxist ethics with their anti-sex puritanism, their narrow ideas of masculinity and femininity, and their willingness to use the law and the State to enforce their social values.

—Craig Alfred Hanson

MARCH 1974 — BERKELEY
 Steven Davis at his birthday party with gift



David Greene & Friends

The photographs reproduced here are part of David Greene's photo essay entitled "Photographs of My Gay Friends." This collection of photographs of gay men and women will be displayed at the Darkroom Workshop Photo Gallery in Berkeley, California this August.

David is also a filmmaker and the founder of the Gay Artists and Writers Kollektive (GAWK), a group of artists in and around San Francisco "committed to gay revolution and fun." In 1971 he completed a feature-length film called *Pamela and Ian*, a film essay about cinematic reality, which deals narratively with a bi-sexual love triangle.



MARCH 1974 — CHICAGO
Richard Yankovic, hairdresser, in his bedroom, after
returning from the Bistro Dance Bar.



FEBRUARY 1974 — BERKELEY
Christopher, member of Fruit Punch Gay Men's Radio
Show & Gay Artists and Writers Collective, at home
in chiffon dress with Song of the Islands poster.



FEBRUARY 1974 — SAN FRANCISCO
Winston Leyland, editor of Gay Sunshine and member
of The Gay Artists and Writers Collective, in his garden.



FEBRUARY 1974 — BERKELEY
David Mainick (Nice), poet, member of the Gay
Artists and Writers Collective, in his home with
rhinestones, glitter lips, Bruno Walter & pink flamingo.



MAY 1974 — SAN FRANCISCO
Jim GianCarlo, Lux Zircon, Blaze Lust, the Clichettes,
in the Rock and Roll Palace finale from "Roll Over Alice."



APRIL 1974 — BERKELEY
Debby Trent at home in revolutionary drag

ON HUMAN & GAY IDENTITY

There's a very old joke about the white liberal who attended a party where there was only one black guest. Anxious to get into a conversation with this black man, but unsure of how to do it, he finally walked over to him and said, "That Joe Louis sure is a fine boxer!"

I realize there may be some readers of this newspaper who don't even know who Joe Louis was, so I will tell you that he was a black man who held the World Heavyweight boxing championship for much of the 1930s and 1940s. It is probably fair to say that he was the most famous black person in America at that time, and perhaps of all time—more famous than Frederick Douglass or Marcus Garvey or W. E. B. DuBois or Bessie Smith or even Billie Holiday or Louis Armstrong. His victories over white boxers were an early symbol of black power, or of racial equality.

Now, while black Americans loved Joe Louis and identified with Joe Louis (whose nickname in the white press was "the brown bomber"), one can only assume that the black man at that party did not appreciate the white liberal's lame attempt at conversation.

The point is, of course, that the white liberal was unable to relate to the black man as another human being, and so felt compelled to relate to him on the basis of skin color. Well-intentioned, the white liberal thought he would be more likable in the eyes of the black man if he showed appropriate recognition of a black hero.

At the heart of this joke is the question of identity, a crucial issue facing the gay liberation movement. I believe that the affirmation of gay identity has been simultaneously the greatest strength and the greatest weakness of the gay liberation movement. This contradiction is our greatest dilemma, my greatest dilemma.

The advantages of a strong gay identity have already been written about extensively in the gay press, but I will sum them up here.

First of all, identifying ourselves as gay is *truthful*, and brings with it the righteousness of spirit that comes with the truth. That sounds religious, and perhaps suitably so, as we proclaim our gayness to the world with a fervor that has religious overtones to it.

Second, saying "I am gay" has the important element of *self-definition* to it. It is not the negative definition of others (homo, lezzie, queer, pansy, fruit) but a positive term we can call our own. (Even if the term is not an ideal one—there have been objections to the trivializing aspects of the word "gay" from within our community—still it is the one most generally favored by gay people.) The word "homosexual" is far less satisfactory, though we use it a lot, too. It has a medical, clinical feeling to it which we dislike, and besides, most of us have not always been (or are not now) exclusively homosexual. Most important, the term homosexual does not comply with the need of self-definition, because the term was given to us by doctors and other "scientists" who have not generally been our friends. "Faggot" and "dyke" are used in a special way, turning terms of put-down into proud affirmation.

Third, the affirmation of gay identity allows us to get together and achieve *unity* with others of like identity. This has obvious advantages for our sexual and social needs, but it also means we can share life experiences which cannot be shared with people who are not gay. This sharing is important to our self-image (to overcome the prejudice and lies of straight society) and to our sense of solidarity and our awareness of our vast numbers (as opposed to our isolation). This leads quite naturally to the discovery of gay culture and gay history, the development of gay media, international communication and understanding among gay people, and perhaps most important, action against our oppressors.

The price of suppressing one's gay identity, the price of closetry, is a very high one to pay. We have all known the closet in one form or another, and we abhor it. The experience we know as gay pride and gay militancy/revolution is a direct response to the dismal closet experience.

But, once a person is out, once it is no longer traumatic or innovative for one to say to one's friends and to the world, "I am

gay," once some time has passed, then the joy, the victory, the sheer relief at being one's self is no longer such an overwhelming part of one's day-to-day reality. In other words, coming out is great, but it isn't everything.

The gay liberation movement's stress on gay identity, gay pride and gay militancy, as we all have said from the beginning, directly contradicts our larger message about human liberation. On the one hand, we want to affirm our oneness with the human species, while on the other we insist on our separateness (for the good reasons I have already summarized).

There was a time a few years ago, when I was active in the New York Gay Liberation Front (GLF), that I felt guilty for the few evenings a month I spent with straight friends, some of them married. I felt guilty not only because I was not spending my time with my "gay sisters and brothers" (some of whom were not my friends), but because I failed to denounce my straight friends for their straightness and their marriages. I have since discovered that this was a rather specialized hang-up resulting from movement dogmatism, actually the product of a mere handful of individuals who laid heavy trips on those of us who were vulnerable to such trips. And I was vulnerable because I'd put so much energy previously into the straight New Left movement, and because I had "passed" for straight.

Of course, as with all dogma, there's a kernel of truth to be dealt with. My married friends tend to follow the norms of that institution, and it is difficult if not impossible for us to have the kind of full and open relationship I would prefer. And it was good that "heavies" in gay liberation helped me move away from the New Left into involvement with the gay movement, just as they helped me discover and affirm my "femininity" and reject aspects of my "masculinity." So hopefully I have been able to contribute something to the gay movement.

But not everyone who is gay, or even gay-and-proud, is going to be my friend, or is going to share my values as a whole. It is absurd for us to expect ourselves, or any gay people, furthermore, to drop everything, to obliterate past lives and past interests, in order to further the gay cause. There is something about the very idea of gay liberation as a "cause" that bothers me. We were definitely missionaries in the New Left and there's a lot of the same mentality in the gay movement. It doesn't strike me as healthy; I find it very restricting and I think that is one reason there is always a shortage of activists.

Let me illustrate with an example. I am thinking of two friends, both of them writers, who I knew in the New Left. Both of them were secret homosexuals, just as I was, but both of them came out somewhat later than I did. While both have become involved in aspects of gay liberation, neither has become involved or known as a "gay liberationist." Neither has become widely-known as a public gay, yet both of them function in gay social circles and have carried the ideas and language of gay militancy to their straight environments. They are both quite well-known for their non-gay achievements; both are beautiful deeply-concerned people who believe that peace and justice are possible in this world. I have responded to these two friends with a mixture of resentment and envy, most of it unspoken. I am resentful because I feel that if I burned all those bridges, they should too, that gay liberation should be a priority (some self-righteousness here!). But I am envious because I often wish I hadn't burned so many bridges, I often wish I could get my head together to write about something other than gay liberation (I find it almost impossible), and I somehow sense that they are more talented and more whole people, that I in contrast am a mediocre, hack "professional homosexual." But it is my friendship with them that seems most important, and I am concerned that the dogma of gay liberation not interfere with friendships that are valuable to me. Similarly, I am concerned that I can be me, the whole me, and not a gay liberation spokesman.

I do not want to be routinely asked about the gay perspective on this or that,

any more than the black person in the joke wanted to hear praise for Joe Louis. But here again is my ambivalence: I do find I can express a gay perspective on this or that, and I do enjoy communicating it when I have a chance—and I feel that this is rewarding and socially meaningful. Still, I don't like the idea of being a full-time homosexual.

I feel a similar ambivalence when I am socially involved with my gay friends, especially my gay friends in Boston or New York. A typical relaxed conversation involving myself and other faggots is likely to involve such topics as sexual achievements (hopes and failures), a gay-oriented critique of movies, gossip about mutual friends and acquaintances, and news and views about a gay-oriented event, publication or political action (plus a little chatter about the impeachment of Nixon). The time goes quickly and we have a really good time. Sometimes, these conversations are beautifully intimate, warm and personally rewarding. I depend on them for my emotional survival. But sometimes in the aftermath of such a conversation, I say to myself, "Gay, gay, gay, that's all I ever think, say or do!" I feel at those moments that I have become narrow, bored/boring, hung-up, and stuck in a homosexual rut curiously reminiscent of the paths through the bushes in the Fenway or the Rambles. (I hasten to add that I have spent some boring times with straight friends, too, in recent years, acutely aware of their straightness and the barriers it creates between us.) But the fact remains that a 100% homosexual life-style and a 100% gay liberation mentality can place one in a very small box, given the totality of the human experience.

I think that this notion of the "box" is helpful to understanding the failure of political movements generally to attract a mass following. Too often, the emphasis on a political category precludes full human interaction. Where the political category is not recognized ("we're all people"), there can be oppression. But where the category is emphasized above all, there can be dehumanization. I am reminded of a Puerto Rican gay brother—see, even that phrase "Puerto Rican gay brother" reeks of dehumanizing rhetoric—who came into contact in 1970 with some members of New York GLF. Some of us saw in him our fulfillment of our fantasy of the right-on-gay-Young-Lord. But in the process of recruiting him to the causes of gay liberation and Puerto Rican nationalism (for he was not a nationalist; in fact he was happy to have escaped from *el barrio* to Greenwich Village), we stopped seeing him as a human being and we ultimately lost his trust and friendship. I, for one, miss him very much and I am sorry he is no longer my friend.

The dilemma of the "box" is the dilemma of gay identity, too, and it is one reason that the gay movement does not have the numbers of visible, committed activists it needs. I am no longer the activist I was, and though I occasionally speak in public and write for gay publications, I rarely (or never) attend meetings, plan marches, lobby, run dances, mimeograph leaflets, or even do any of the troublesome nitty-gritty tasks of putting out a publication. I admire and respect those who do these tasks, and I did them all in the past, but I feel I can no longer do them. Of course, more heads and hands are needed to do the work of gay liberation, but perhaps more would become involved if they could feel that their total human identity could remain intact and not be overwhelmed by the label "gay."

Arthur Bell, writing in the April 4, 1974, *Village Voice*, told about his experiences at a recent gay dance at Columbia University in New York City:

"I bumped into a few men I used to know when GAA [Gay Activists Alliance] was in its heyday [presumably around 1970-71]. Their anger is toned down. They're not trying to change the world any more but grateful to the movement for instilling that sense of self-identity. GAA was where they went to school and once they got their education, they left. They're indifferent about the present in-fighting and they don't give a damn if Intro 2 [the New York City gay civil rights bill] gets passed."

I suspect that many veterans of GLF and GAA in many cities would fit such a description of apathy and indifference. (I sometimes wonder how many of them read this newspaper.) Is this depressing? Should those people who *do* still want to change the world (and I count myself among them) be angry with those who are apathetic? I am neither depressed nor angry, for if I and others have withdrawn from the active gay movement (in varying degrees), there are new people involved in new projects, and old people involved in new ways—in other words, the movement we knew in 1970-71 has created ripples which are still expanding outward. Gay people with a sense of self-identity are "liberationist," whether or not they are activists.

What is the state of the gay liberation movement today, five years after the historic confrontation at the Stonewall Inn? Certainly, the outlook is less apocalyptic, the mentality more pragmatic. The movement in 1970, at least NY-GLF, which is where I got my first taste of the ideas of gay revolution, was predicated largely on a sense of revolutionary urgency. "Revolution in our lifetime" was the Black Panther slogan we often espoused. It was with this sense of immediacy that we joined with the Panthers and a melange of white radicals at the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention. Significantly, the lesbians were generally far less enthusiastic about such rhetoric and the straight revolutionaries. They wrote about "organic revolution" ("The Woman-Identified Woman") and said that "revolution is process not goal" (Radicalesbian statement). In any case, that sense of immediacy is gone, but for those who would say that gay liberation is dead, I say, read this newspaper and see how much the movement is alive. Read any issue of *Fag Rag*, *Gay Sunshine*, *Gay Liberator*, the *Body Politic*, the [Lesbian] *Tide*, and so on, and you will see gay minds busy at work thinking gay, creatively striving toward personal and social change. Or read the *Advocate*, just for a sense of gay people making news and taking stands everywhere. (And read recent critiques of the *Advocate* in *Gay Sunshine* 18 and *Fag Rag* 6 for a view of the ways in which we have not lost sight of the contradictions among gay people.)

If the movement is indeed a school, as Arthur Bell suggests, there will be new graduates and new students—and new "courses," too.

One gay liberation project that is an indicator of the current state of the movement in one city is the *Gay Community News (gcn)*, a weekly newspaper published in Boston. The staff of *gcn* manages to pack an incredible amount of information, commentary, reader response and news in a small space—and the paper is very much alive and expanding rapidly. (For a free sample, send them a self-addressed stamped envelope: GCN, 22 Bromfield St., Boston, MA 02108.) *GCN* is probably the only newspaper that has a more or less even presentation of lesbian and gay male perspectives—and a staff more or less evenly divided between women and men. In addition, the paper has been dealing with issues of sex, race and class without very much heavy rhetoric. It has become commonplace among former GLFers to accuse the current gay movement of being dominated by "white middle-class males," but I have found that such accusations are far too frequently made by white middle-class males. The needs of lesbians, third world gay people, and working class gay people are often expressed; those people are far from absent or silent. Exploitation and oppression within the gay community exists, yes, but it is constantly being combated.

Some people have become disturbed at certain developments in the movement, such as the National Gay Task Force and the Gay Academic Union. There is an important sense in which the idea of highly-paid professional lobbyists or an intellectually-oriented gay elite goes against the egalitarian grain of the initial impulse of gay liberation. Of course there should be and will be continued pressure from those of us whose instincts are anti-authoritarian and socialist. But I have detected at the same time a healthy reluctance to condemn, emerging from the spirit of "let a hundred flowers bloom." It is the same

a liberationist dilemma

GAY IDENTITY cont.

attitude, politically, which has led members (and former members) of the Black Panther Party to collaborate with Christian clergy or to work for government-funded agencies. We're all here for the long haul, and there's a lot of different ropes to pull on.

I said before that I felt ambivalent about being heavily identified as a gay person. One important way that I have dealt with this ambivalence is by deciding (three years ago) to move to the country.

The most common gay experience is that the strengthening of gay identity leads a gay person to move to a big city, or perhaps a different city—to seek out a social situation, away from straight pressures, where the environment is markedly gay.

Here in rural America, the environment is markedly straight—but wait! This environment straight? Trees, birds, waterfalls, lakes, rivers, rainstorms, wildflowers, sunshine, springtime buds, gardening, building a house—are these things straight? In a sense they are, for up to now, rural America has stressed the nuclear family and thereby enforced straightness on its inhabitants.

Of course, rural people have experienced homosexuality—lots of it. Lesbian homesteaders, for example, are an untold part of American rural social history. And for gay men, there's even the word cornholing, right out of rural America (though perhaps it's British in origin). My own homosexual experiences took place in open fields under sunny skies and in an old barn in the Catskill Mountains, where I grew up.

The recent struggles of gay students in Maine and New Hampshire testify to the straight up-tight mentality in rural and small-town New England—and to the courage of the students there. But I am too old to be a student, and I am talking about the gay experience beyond school.

Gay liberation as an ideology and practice has yet to come to grips with the ideas and demands of the back-to-the-land or country commune movement. How ter-

rible it is that to be gay we have to choose life in an urban ghetto. Yet there are many gay people, myself among them, who are fed up with the reality of city life. It is a widely-held belief, especially in Marxist circles, that moving to the country is a "middle-class privilege." It is my experience that what it takes is not a lot of money, but only the will to be here. It certainly does not take any more money than the amount an ordinary worker spends on a new car or a summer vacation. Life in the city has many advantages, and I was a loyal New Yorker for some time, but once I really got in touch with the disadvantages, the city lost its charm, perhaps for good. That goes for the noise and pollution, the crowded housing, the paranoia, the rip-offs and the violence, the artificiality and crass commercialism, as well as for much of urban sexuality (baths and bushes, smoky unfriendly bars, unhealthy drugs such as downers and amyl nitrite, etc.).

I risk sounding self-righteous, so I hasten to add that I have been back to the baths and the bushes and the smoky bars more than once since moving to the country. But I am glad not to have them around me as part of my environment.

Living in the country as an open gay person is an entirely new experience for me, and I cannot write about it in depth because it has not really happened yet, I have only been here for six months, and everything happens slowly.

But as I concern myself with building a house, growing vegetables, familiarizing myself with my natural environment, finding a place in a rural New England community, I am dealing with my broader human identity. That is a rewarding relief for me, to find myself relating to people once again on some level other than the vocabulary of gay liberation. Of course, I am still a faggot and I am not proposing a return to the closet.

Do our neighbors "know?" We think some of them might. But some of them don't and I have found that I simply do not

overtly communicate my gayness here as quickly as I would in the city. I don't consider this to be closeting, but it is different from the kind (degree?) of gay identity one can have in a big city. Even in the city, of course, there are very up-front gay people who are "discreet" in their workplace—for the sake of survival.

Being gay here, my friends and I will have to confront two kinds of straightness—first, the rural New England Yankee nuclear family (or at worst, redneck), and second, the country commune folk who often adopt their own brand of sex roles (he-man farmer and earth mother, etc.). There are faggots in these woods, too, and we will find them! I know I am still part of the gay liberation process. I do much of what the he-man farmer does and much of what the earth mother does, yet I am neither. Here the process of gay liberation is bound to have unique characteristics, both in the area of being "out" and in the area of sex roles. We are only beginning to feel our way. Though at the present time we are all gay men, we don't consider our place to be a "gay commune." We hope for an integrated community that will eventually include women and children.

Like most people, I am seeking a meaningful happy life. Recognizing the oppressive nature of this society, and my own place in it as an oppressed person (gay on the one hand, moneyless on the other), I do not choose to allow my sense of oppression to define my life into misery, martyrdom and gloom. For me, the rural life, with its emphasis on creation (growing and building things) and simplicity, is particularly meaningful at this juncture in my personal history and in the history of America. I do not believe that rural life-style should be equated with isolation or withdrawal from social reality; I certainly don't see it that way, though I recognize that some people do. I don't feel the onus is on me to justify my choice. In fact, I am concerned about the city people who generally prefer to ignore the ecological crisis and the collapse of technological-urban America that is already upon us.

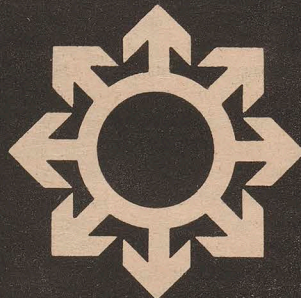
Above all, I suppose I feel that a rural life-style will provide me with an identity that is ultimately more satisfying than the

other identities I have had to deal with in my past, such as student, Latin Americanist, professional journalist, New Leftist, and gay liberationist. These former identities do not, of course, fade away, but rather emerge into a newly-defined place in my current personhood. For one thing, my life here demands more physical labor from me, which is good for both mind and body.

I am motivated largely by my hope to transcend the experiences I have had as a homosexual and to explore my broader human potential. Humility as a human being amid earth's many creatures is a crucial characteristic I can link to my gayness, or at least to the part of me that has rejected typical male notions of dominance. Just as we blame the macho mentality for war and other forms of coercion and control, we should blame it for humankind's foolish insistence that nature be dominated rather than lived with harmoniously.

If I succeed in building a meaningful life here, however, it will be largely because of the incredible support that I have felt from the gay liberation movement and from the gay people who have been, and continue to be, my acquaintances, friends and lovers.

—Allen Young



Although social services are not generally thought to be revolutionary tools by which a society is changed, I believe the Gay Community Services Center in Los Angeles has been developing into just such a tool.

This is the case because it has geared its programs and services to meet real needs of an oppressed minority and because it has devised a unique style to enable gay people to work together on our own behalf. If power is defined as the ability to get things accomplished, then GCSC is making it possible for heretofore largely powerless people to mobilize the power necessary to change our own lives, and, growing out of this, the larger society in which we live.

Let's look, in turn, both at how the Center's activities are matched to the actual needs of people in the gay community and at the special way it brings gays together in the pursuit of our goals.

MATCHING ACTIVITIES TO NEEDS

Before GCSC leased the central building at 1614 Wilshire Boulevard, ten blocks west of downtown L.A., in the fall of 1971, it had rented first one house and then another, which it called "Liberation Houses."

The direct experience of the early workers, who emerged almost entirely from the Gay Liberation Front, showed the immediate need for housing. Street people wanting a place to stay with other gays were being put up in number up to forty a night at the GLF building, which was never designed to house anybody. We began, and have continued ever since, by creating programs in direct response to the needs that our firsthand experience told us were priorities. We began with little administrative structure and still less money. But, that did not keep us from responding to the human needs of our gay sisters and brothers.

One by one, additional services were developed to deal with the human needs of oppressed gays.

There is discrimination in hiring and on the part of employment agencies, especially against the more feminine-identified men and the more masculine-identified women. Our Job Placement Service has been highly successful in searching out employers with fewer prejudices and in finding jobs in many cases where gays can be up-front at work.

Gay men and women still often face

L.A. GAY CENTER

moralistic lectures, insulting comments, or incomplete examinations (not checked for anal VD) from doctors, but not at our Medical Clinic, which is staffed completely by gay doctors, nurses, technicians and others who welcome this opportunity to serve their brothers and sisters.

Our Draft and Military Program worked first (with 100% success) to keep men out of military service from which gays are officially excluded, when they wished to claim their gayness as the reason for avoiding this oppressive situation. Since the end of the draft, the attention of this program has shifted to getting dishonorable discharges upgraded and to helping gays get out of the service on the basis of their gayness. Both men and women approach us for this help.

Gays arrested are oppressed by many uncaring lawyers and public defenders who overcharge and/or give poor counsel. Our Legal Services Program provides legal counseling and referral to competent, friendly lawyers. Next, as we face court proceedings, all too often our rights are overlooked and/or our sentences are cruel and extreme. Our Arraignment Intervention Program arranges for gay law students to be in court to advise gay arrestees of their rights and to intervene on their behalf to get minimal, sensible judgments, often involving the person in Center programs as an alternative to jail.

Gays serving time in jails, prisons, and state hospitals or who are on probation or parole from these institutions face some of the most inhuman treatment, ranging from being held indefinitely to brutal treatment to not being allowed to associate with other gays. Our Prisoner, Parole & Probation Program assists people in each of these categories providing services relevant to their needs and dealing directly with corrections officials at all levels to improve their treatment of our brothers and sisters.

Gays with personal problems who turn to private therapists or mental health centers regularly encounter professionals who want to "cure" their gayness or

refuse to explore the problems as manifestations of a messed-up society. The Peer Counseling Program at the Center gives troubled persons that chance to work with a person who not only shares his/her gayness, but also is prepared to use methods more relevant than the traditional medical model for resolving personal problems.

Young gays are harassed by parents, school officials, and peers. Teenagers who are kicked out of home or school often appear at our doors, having no other place to turn. The Under-21 Group, which is operated entirely by the young gays, gives people under 21 the chance to rap and socialize together, to develop activities for mutual support, and to act as an avenue to any of the Center's programs.

Gays whose experience of their oppression is overwhelming often abuse alcohol and other drugs as one way out. As with VD, alcohol and drug abuse is rampant in the gay community because relevant help has not been provided. Our Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program has taken this situation seriously and is designing services, in cooperation with interested members of Alcoholics Together (the gay counterpart to Alcoholics Anonymous), to give realistic help to chemical abusers who want to rehabilitate their lives.

This list illustrates that what we do has developed in response to real, existing needs in the gay community, but does not exhaust our range of services. We also have a 24-hour hotline for crises; social alternatives, including dances; a transvestite/transsexual program; a parents of gay people group; and a speakers bureau.

The programs already listed assist people in cases where oppression is direct and obvious. The oppressor, whether a person or an institution, is easily identified. There are more subtle forms of oppression experienced by gay people, often denied or not understood because their sources are not so readily apparent.

For example, there is the isolation of the young gay who believes he/she is the "only one," which is a function of social censorship of honest and complete infor-

mation about us.

In our society there is a double standard in which non-gays are permitted to give free expression to their sexuality in public, but gays are warned not to. We are expected to be sexual neuters, not holding hands, kissing, discussing our love affairs, etc. By limiting the expression of our natural human emotion to private settings, we do tremendous psychological damage to ourselves.

In a predominantly non-gay society our sexuality is typically the source of negative experience: shame, guilt, hostility, compromise. When people experience their gayness in consistently bad ways, it is inevitable that they will develop a low self-esteem.

Because we have been up-front only at great risk of ostracism, we have lived closeted existences which keep us isolated and alienated from each other. This loneliness is expressed by a large majority of people coming to GCSC.

Growing out of this oppression is the fact that we are not whole people on the job, at school, in church—in the many social institutions where most people make most of their friends. Consequently, we have another circle of gay friends, with whom we are not whole either, since they are not typically our coworkers, classmates, etc. Having different sets of friends and sharing only limited parts of our lives with them means that our lives are disintegrated, with our sexuality fragmented from the rest of our existence.

How people view themselves is a product of the conceptual tools available in their culture. It is no coincidence that a great many of us should have limited and/or negative self-images when the conceptualization offered by our society has been the term "homosexual." Not only is the term a direct put-down because of its connotations, it also limits our vision to a specific behavioral pattern: what we do in bed. It focuses attention away from *who we are* to *what we do*. The possibility that our lifestyle can be a consistent whole, informed throughout by our sexuality, is ruled out. The exploration of the ramifications of our gayness for politics, religion, lifestyles, etc. is discouraged. That many think of our identity in terms of what we do rather than who we are is a tragic consequence of the conceptual tool offered by our society. And, since the distinction is subtle, many miss its enormous importance.

It is to meet the needs of gay women and men oppressed in the more subtle ways just described that the Gay Community Services Center began its Self Development Program, including Gay Awareness Rap Groups, Growth Groups, Consciousness Raising Groups, and the Counseling Program already mentioned. By helping people become a part of a mutually supportive community, by giving solid encouragement for more openly gay lifestyles, in providing different settings in which gays experience their gayness positively, in offering a wide variety of groups in which we experience ourselves and each other more fully, and in developing new conceptual tools encouraging us to explore all the implications of our sexuality for our total lives, the Center helps people realize their full potential as gay human beings.

We have believed from the outset that a careful analysis of our oppression is the starting point for program planning. This is the gay consciousness we believe necessary to meet the needs of an emerging people.

The Gay Community Services Center has been a service agency (and certificated as such by the state) combined with a community center. As a service agency the Center helps people who come with particular needs. As a community center we provide a setting for people who want simply to enjoy themselves and to have a good time with others who share their gayness. Actually, a majority of people come to the Center with this second motivation, rather than for help with problems.

So far I've written about how our programs grew in response to the real needs of emerging gay people. Now I turn to the other reason mentioned at the beginning for why the Center has a revolutionary impact on its community: the special way it brings gays together in the pursuit of our goals.

CREATING COMMUNITY

Every worker at the Center is gay. There have been only rare exceptions to this generalization. Every person on the staff is also a volunteer. Only a few people—some of those who are full-time volunteers—have received small "survival stipends." \$50-\$150 a month, when money was available. The staff has been ingenious in finding other means of support.

The Center has become a vehicle for gay people with special skills and talents to give of themselves to their brothers and

sisters. A great variety of people who experience the mystique of the Center are motivated to see it as the place where they, too, will offer their particular contribution. Doctors, nurses, technicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, clergy, teachers, law students, businessmen, accountants, corrections officers, and others have volunteered at the Center. Many of these people are up-front gays; others have to do their work anonymously. Not only are there gay people who have all the skills needed to staff our kind of center, our experience also shows that they are willing and ready to work at a gay center where they serve their sisters and brothers.

All of our workers are peers with the people who come to the Center. We are gay people helping each other. Some staff have academic credentials, some have advanced training, some have professional experience. But, all this is incidental, in most cases, to their becoming workers. First we look for people who are really together gay human beings. Then we welcome whatever other resources they bring.

The peer relationship existing between people at GCSC means to the person coming to the Center that he/she will have the opportunity to deal with somebody who in large measure shares where he/she is coming from. Women with women, men with men, transvestites with transvestites, alcoholics with alcoholics, young people with young people, and in all cases gays with gays. Our experience tells us that, because of the peer nature of our service, people come with more confidence, open themselves up more comfortably, have fewer resistances due to fear and suspicion, and save much time in explaining detail.

The peer relationship also has implications about how a service is rendered. Staff, with certain exceptions, are not seen as experts, but rather as other human beings. Whether or not a special expertise is part of the service rendered, the quality of the interaction can be described as human. We—all people at the Center—share our experience and insight, develop emotional involvements, and relate with each other at many levels in the several programs there. We discourage the clinical detachment of some agencies and encourage the personal involvement natural to people who share a common oppression and a common struggle for liberation.

We charge no fees for any activity. Many of the people are poor, but there is a more fundamental reason for not charging. It is inconsistent with our larger goals. Payment implies an inequality between a giver of services and a receiver of services. It defines the relationship as being built on the need of the client and the expertise of the professional. That very relationship is what we avoid at GCSC because it is inconsistent with our longer-range goal of creating a sense of community among those who use the Center.

By our understanding, community means having that kind of relationship to others in a group of people in which a person receives according to his/her need and gives according to his/her ability and in which people define for themselves the ways they will be givers and receivers. In that setting the exchange of money makes little sense. Should I pay you today for something I receive from you, when tomorrow you might return the money for something you receive from me? We invite all people to join us in our larger community-building effort.

The Center needs money to operate. Many people are in a position to give us money, and we always welcome contributions, from people using our services as well as others. Our basic support has always been of this kind. We make appeals regularly. But, we do not charge fees, thus not defining ahead of time who will be givers and who will be receivers and how that exchange will operate.

Notice that I've written at this length without mentioning the names of anybody at the Center. This is purposeful. From the beginning there was a sizable group of workers involved. To mention the names of a few would falsely imply that their special contribution was more important than that of others. Put, more importantly, it would divert attention away from the more fundamental reason for whatever success the Center has achieved. Without denying the courage, clear vision, and extensive talent of many people identified with GCSC, I think it is more important to focus attention on the nature of what happens at the Center. We are organized to make possible the coming together of people from many lifestyles and with many talents to interact in ways that are mutually satisfying. It is the positive, supportive experience of this interaction which is contagious. It continuously draws

more people, who, having felt this special mystique, want to make it available to still more people.

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

The political implications of the Center's existence may now be evident. We are not political in the usual definition of that word. But, we are highly political by our definition of the term, which would have to do with bringing power into people's hands to take charge of their lives and destinies.

Certainly, the objective impression outlined above keeps us from controlling our own lives. But, so also do the repressive attitudes in our own heads which we've internalized from the larger society. Freeing people internally is the first step in preparing them for dealing with external oppression. The Center works at both levels, but our assumption is that gays are going to have to win our own freedom rather than have it handed to us by somebody else.

We focus our attention less on our oppressors or on the people in control of the standard means of social change than we do on our sisters and brothers. We are not trying to change the world or even our city; we are trying to make more real the notion of community among gay people. Where external oppression still has power over us it is where we have not freed ourselves internally, individually and collectively.

Kahlil Gibran said it well:

And what is it but fragments of your own self you would discard that you may become free?

If it is an unjust law you would abolish, that law was written with your own hand upon your own forehead.

You cannot erase it by burning your law books nor by washing the foreheads of your judges, though you pour the sea upon them....

For how can a tyrant rule the free and the proud, but for a tyranny in their own freedom and a shame in their own pride?

That speaks especially to me because I was arrested, without justification, on an unjust law: solicitation for prostitution. I finally won when the city dismissed charges, after a two-year struggle, in and out of the courts. I did not do it alone; I didn't have to. The community of which I am a part at the Center mobilized the resources—and a great many were needed—to defeat our opposition. We stood together in our conviction of our rightness and our pride. Our very oppression turned out to be the theater for victory. When we turn our oppression around and use it to our advantage as stepping stones to our freedom, we become victorious.

That is what the Gay Community Services Center is all about. We are trying to facilitate a self-defining, self-affirming, mutually supportive community of gay men and women, not only as the road to freedom for individual gays, but through us, for the larger community in which we live.

—Richard Nash

—Jim Arnold

SEATTLE CENTER

Seattle Gays have long felt a need for a Gay Community Center—a place where we can meet as human beings and neighbors without the games endemic to bars, baths or other cruising grounds. Two years ago, Seattle Gays founded the first Center, which lasted a year and then folded. But its absence was felt like an absent lover, like an empty space on the pillow. A period of analysis followed. What went wrong? The atmosphere was too much like the bars because the center was located in an old bar. Drugs got in. The center was too far away from where most Gays lived in Seattle but near the bars. The commune-type organization precluded strong leadership.

In January of 1974, the corporation which had purchased the house next to the Counseling Center and kept it vacant with the purpose of eventually replacing it with a high-rise apartment, announced its willingness to rent the house out cheaply in order to prevent arson and further vandalism. The lease took two months to negotiate, and in the meantime a group of Gay people started to repair and renovate the house.

The center is located in a large family dwelling in the Gay Community in Seattle. The house had been subdivided into five apartments. Four apartments were re-consolidated and the fifth rented out to help support the center. The house was extensively renovated, painted, and furnished as much like a private house as possible.

The facilities include a pool table on which a hundred dollars is still owed, so the center is required to charge a quarter a game until it is paid off. The cellar is being developed for dancing, taping, and an electronic shop. There will be a coffee shop in the rear and the upstairs will house a darkroom, a children's nursery, and a room furnished with cushions for group meetings.

David Neth and members of the group have formed themselves into the Center Collective, which meets every Thursday night and maintains the building during the week. The center is financed by many small pledges (five to ten dollars a month) which add up to \$120, \$75 from rent on the apartment, and donations which average about \$50 a month. It needs more staff and money. The center has applied for tax-exempt status which will allow the donor to deduct the contributions from income taxes. Unlike the pastor who said that nickels and dimes were for buses and he wanted to see green in the collection basket, the center will take anything.

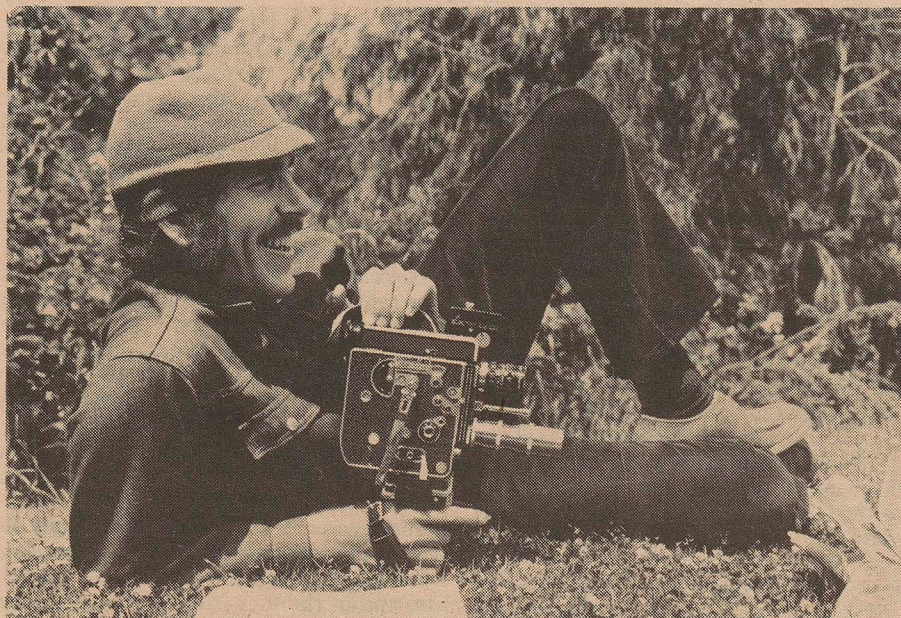


Lavender Country

An Album of Gay Music

By mail: \$4.50 postpaid. Wash. state residents add 5.3% sales tax.
Gay Community Services, Dept. G P.O. Box 22228
East Union Station, Seattle, Wash. 98122

Interview: Filmmaker Arthur Bressan



ARTIE BRESSAN sees his new film, "Passing Strangers," as a departure from the gay pornography genre. "I didn't want the sex to be a power trip, but rather pleasure, simply pleasure. Maybe revelation, but first pleasure, not power."

The following conversation between filmmaker Artie Bressan and Lee Atwell, film reviewer for *Gay Sunshine*, took place in San Francisco, May 16-17, 1974. The talk took place before Artie Bressan's film, "Passing Strangers," emerged from the lab. Lee Atwell's critique of the film is given in the article accompanying the interview.

LA: Artie, could you tell me how you became involved initially in films and filmmaking?

AB: Well, I was teaching kids literature in a private high school and they were all turned off by the books. So I got them interested in movies just bringing them into class—"The Scarlet Letter," "Potemkin," "Of Mice and Men"—and they got turned on to it. From there it was a simple step to writing screenplays and making movies since they weren't interested in writing compositions. I didn't know anything about making movies. I just rented a Kodak camera for 5 dollars a day and we shot a film in Central Park. It was written by one of the students—it was about two boys, sort of a gay story without them knowing it—a story of friendship.

LA: Was your film "Boy," screened at the Alternative Futures Commune for the San Francisco Gay Rap Film Festival in 1972, based on that first film you made?

AB: No. "Boys" was my own idea. I got let go from my teaching job in New York City for some hanky-panky with the kids. Worked for the government in Massachusetts, where I bought a Bolex Super 8 camera and made a movie with my students there. When I left, I came back to New York and lived at Bensalem Experimental College. It was there I decided to make a movie about my own growing up experiences in the big city, cruising the parks and subway johns. It was a two-character film—one character a super-student, the other a closet-cruiser type. Both were me, but I took the two sides and made them into separate characters. It was about the time when nobody knew I was gay. By day I was the super-student (straight A's), and by night and on weekends I was the street-cruiser, going out to find people and get it on.

LA: Do you remember your experience when you ran that film at the festival in San Francisco?

AB: Well, I had only shown the film once when I finished it in New York, for friends in a room. I put it away and came to San Francisco where I met you and you said you were running a festival, so I agreed to screen the film. The room filled up with 500 to 600 people, the lights went out and my film "Boys" began. It was a weird feeling seeing the film on a big screen with all those people who didn't know me. The story unfolded about cruising the subways and parks—and I started to feel very naked in the darkness of the auditorium. My feelings, my experiences and emotions were bared and by the third part of the film, when the two guys meet in the playground, and play games which symbolize what they will do later, I felt like I was watching the film for the first time. I looked around, and people seemed to be really into it.

LA: What happened when it was over?

AB: Well, when it was over everybody started to applaud. That was the first time I had ever experienced that particular feeling—people, strangers, people I didn't know applauding for something I had made. I

was really turned on by the experience. The questions afterward were pleasant and it was fun to answer. More mind-blowing was that five or six people came to me afterwards with telephone numbers—some just wanted to work on some scripts and others just to get together and maybe get it on! It dawned on me that making movies is a way of cruising, in the broadest sense of the term—a way to meet people.

LA: You have made around 20 films. What are the others about?

AB: Seventeen are in Super 8 and they are films for occasions. The man who gave me this bed was a medical intern and my roommate, who was going away from our house in San Francisco. We all loved him very much so I made a fifteen-minute film, "Goodbye," movie for him. It was fun, so I started making films about myself and my friends, about our lives together.

LA: Your first feature film, "Passing Strangers," fits into the genre of the gay erotic or pornographic film. Had you seen many films of this type?

AB: No. I had seen very few.

LA: Why did you decide to do a film of this type?

AB: I wanted to make a film that could be seen by people who didn't know me, that could be shown theatrically. I had made two 16mm films and found distributors were not interested in them. I figured the only way to get something before a large audience was to work in the feature format.

LA: What were the subjects of the 16mm shorts?

AB: One was about Vietnam. A man who I fell in love with had brought back some incredibly beautiful footage from Vietnam. In color. I edited it for him into a story-continuity. It was called "Over There." The second film was "Coming Out," a nine-minute essay on the Gay Day Celebration in San Francisco (1973) which I thought was a really fine movie. A distributor in New York told me "it's good, but it's only nine minutes and what can you do with a nine-minute film?"

LA: Was "Coming Out" shown anywhere?

AB: Yes. It was screened in San Francisco at S.I.R. (we passed the hat and got \$28), at a Midwest People's Festival, and in New York City at Fordham University and Brooklyn College. Very small audiences. Recently, Diablo Valley College purchased a print. But I wanted to do a feature, a feature dealing with sexuality since I know a lot about it. I wanted to make it myself and sell it to a theatre directly, no middle man, no distributor, since I'm not in any union.

LA: How did you set about financing the film?

AB: That was Michael Moran's department. He was the executive producer. He and I raised the money from friends in small amounts. We borrowed from here and there and did it in small pieces, sometimes buying "tails" of film in LA and out-dated film. When we were broke, some friends who worked in professional labs filched a reel or two of color stock. Once we got into shooting, Michael was able to get a small but steady trickle of cash so we were on our way. My parents sent some money when work-print time rolled around.

LA: Did your parents know what the film was about?

AB: Yeah, I let them in on it from the start—they can't wait to see it. My sister saw the uncut work print and thought it

was far-out. When the film premieres I know all three of them will be there.

LA: Did you prepare a script before shooting?

AB: Well, I had an outline. And then I watched a lot of porno stuff—features, loops, twenty-five cent shorts to get an idea of what a typical porno film was like. From that, I made a list of "Don'ts"—what not to do in my film.

LA: What were your specific feelings from watching these films?

AB: Specifically? Well, in all of them I noticed that whenever anybody was fucking someone, just before he was about to come he would pull out his cock and come on the person he was fucking. It seemed pretty kinky, and except for several dudes in my own experience who liked me to come on their faces, the whole trip didn't seem real.

LA: Well, you must have some idea as to why they do that...

AB: Sure, I realized it was a kind of proof—you show the viewer that the man really came. I guess that's important. I mean I understand why those filmmakers were doing it, but, again, it didn't seem consistent with my sexual experience.

LA: That occurs with oral sex too in films. You see two people having oral sex and then at the crucial moment, they break apart.

AB: Well, I can see the filmic/commercial problem. The actors can go "ooohh!" and "ahhh!" and you can cut to a closeup of a grimace and pass that off as an orgasm. An orgasm is the one thing you can't fake—at least not easily—special effects notwithstanding!

LA: What other reactions did you have to the standard porno flick?

AB: You know, it all came down to power. Almost all of them equated sex with power. There would be a frigid woman who would be turned on by a delivery boy and then fuck ten guys in a row. Once she was turned on, she couldn't get enough. Or a stereotypical boy figure is picked out by an obviously "butch man" who would fuck him and the boy would get fucked by a succession of men. I decided that in my film, I didn't want the sex to be a power trip, but rather **pleasure**, simply pleasure. Maybe revelation, but first pleasure, not power.

LA: Anything else on your list of "don'ts?"

AB: Most of the films seemed padded. Here is a film supposed to be about sex and in some cases I had to wait fifteen minutes before anything sexual—on any level—happened. Many had endless credits, often unreadable, and endless walking around streets, car rides that went nowhere—stuff like that.

LA: What did you feel about the inept technique in these productions?

AB: Most of them looked as if they hadn't been edited—like the early Warhol-Morrissey efforts. Even in the more ambitious features, pacing and timing seemed to be off much of the time. There seemed to be no concern with planning. In a cramped room, the camera can't get to the action, so the people have to suddenly change positions to get where the lights and camera can photograph them—"point your ass this way, please!" This is unreal in terms of life, movies and must be a bummer for the people. Also there seemed to be very little fun in what was going on. They always looked like they were working for pay. Sex that looks like work can't be much fun.

LA: Did you pay the people to work in your film?

AB: No. I didn't have enough money to pay anyone. All the people have a share in some sort in the profits. The people who appear in the film worked on the basis of owning a part of it once its costs are regained.

LA: Did any of the films you saw turn you on?

AB: Yes. In almost all the long films there were brief scenes or moments—a few seconds between two people, or more in an orgy scene—where there would be a gesture, a guy resting his head on another guy's shoulder, or a woman who, after balling and thinking the camera had stopped, would tousle the man's hair. These looked real and were a turn-on. It wasn't always what you would call a particularly tender moment; sometimes, in the midst of a heavy fucking scene a movement or gesture made me feel the two actors were really getting off and I would get an erection.

LA: It seems to me that the sex is too often the *raison d'être* of the film, instead of being part of a total experience.

AB: Well, they seem to run: plot-sex-plot-sex, if that's what you mean.

LA: But plot is purely incidental or terribly contrived.

AB: Yeah, I see what you mean. The plot is dragged in like a rope. They fuck, then pick up the rope and pull on it until the next sex scene.

LA: These films rarely develop characters that you can relate to or feel something for. Don't you feel the audience gets off primarily on a ritual of sexual objectification?

AB: Well, I think it's great to watch pretty people fuck. I can watch that for about ten or fifteen minutes. But to sit in the dark for seventy-five or ninety minutes and watch that kind of cinema is boring. Not that they aren't attractive, but just the same thing over and over. It doesn't take you anywhere in particular, not even in a circle, which might be great.

LA: How long did you take to make your film?

AB: With four months out for hepatitis, about a year. That includes walking around the streets thinking about scenes, finding locations, and of course, finding the people.

LA: How did you find your actors?

AB: I spent three months on the streets and in bars asking people if they wanted to act in my film. In most cases they asked if it was a porno and I'd say yes, but a pornographic film that had a story and characters, a real film. For ninety days I got straight "no's," raised eyebrows, "fuck off," "sexist-pig," the full treatment. . . . Then one day, at Powell and Geary, near the St. Francis Hotel, I saw Robert Adams. I sort of cruised him, then introduced myself. I knew he was right for the part of the younger man in my film. He had a vulnerability I was searching for.

LA: He said yes, just like that?

AB: I told him the outline of the story. He liked movies and knew a lot about them. In the hotel lobby I gave him my name and number and a few days later we shot the first scenes together, a masturbation scene. He was quick to catch on to what I needed and very patient in waiting for me to think up the next shot.

LA: What about Robert Carnagey who plays the older man?

AB: Bob was a friend of the producer, Michael. We met on halloween night and he seemed right for the part. I was worried about working with him because he is so mercurial, really effusive and flighty. He had some professional experience as a model. But he proved to be as reliable as Bob Adams. He flew up from LA one morning to make a 7:30 a.m. call at the beach. And the night before the Gay Day Celebration—which figures in the film—he signed himself out of traction and a hospital with a slipped disc so as to make the shoot the following morning. He was also the one who kept us all smiling when there were slip-ups.

LA: How did the two men relate after filming began?

AB: At first, I didn't have them meet . . . for the first half of the film, they don't actually meet. So I worked with them individually and gradually introduced them. They are different types of men and though they became close in one sense, in another they kept a distance. Neither had ever had sex before a camera. They seemed attracted to that, though both were, I think, a bit anxious about it—that it would look good and that they would be proud of having made the film. It's a heavy trip to put your body, your personality, your reputation on the screen, and in pornography there is even more riding on the gamble. But each of them approached it differently.

LA: How so?

AB: At first, Robert Carnagey, who plays the older man, approached the work like a professional actor. He was making a movie that was about and included sex. I think that's a fair statement about Bobby's feelings. He had done professional modeling and seen his picture in newspaper ads and the like. Robert Adams, who plays the younger boy, was more intuitive and the film was **what** he was going to be doing for however long it took. He had had no previous experience before the camera. They worked fairly well together and any problems were worked out through me. The sex sequences were shot relatively fast on about five day's shooting, but the plot and character parts took much longer and there we all got tired and found our energies being used up.

LA: Where was the film shot?

AB: All in San Francisco. In my house, at Land's End, Polk Street, the beach, the Legion of Honor, Palace of Fine Arts, Angel Island, several baths, some local porno movie houses. We went to New York to have the score written and recorded.

LA: Artie, what is your general attitude toward pornography?

AB: I think it's great. I think for what it's supposed to be about, it is the most honest form of expression, or at least that it can be. In movies it's the only genre where the camera doesn't have to hide its eye and leave the room when people begin to take off their clothes.

LA: But you have told me at various times that you considered most of these films to be "rip-offs" from your point of view. What did you mean?

AB: Well, when I was going to learn the genre, and also to get it on with some of the great folks who just also happened to be in the audience, I felt that my feeling and the feeling of many was that five bucks was too much to pay to see a feature film that really wasn't a feature. That was the rip-off to me. I guess that on other levels, there was the feeling that the gay community, or women, or the concept of sex was being ripped-off, but for me, as I left the theatre, I had just paid too much to see too little. . . . People go to the movies for many reasons: to be uplifted, for a charge, to escape, to cruise, so I figured it would be great to make a film that wouldn't leave the audience feeling cheated or ripped off—that they would feel okay about and perhaps identify with.

LA: Right on. Then how did you make this an erotic film that was also a personal statement—a statement that reflected your own feelings and experiences?

AB: It has everything in it that I like to do—sexually and filmically. I decided to put nothing in the film that I had not experienced myself. Or to include things in the film that were "put-downs."

LA: Yes. You are certainly one of the most vibrant, energetic, and positive gay men that I have ever met, and I am sure this will surface in your film!

AB: Look, it's simple. I like to masturbate—like they say, I'm into masturbation. It's not a substitute for something else and I felt confident about those scenes. I feel the same way about fucking and being fucked, sucking and being blown. I've never figured out why there are two different words . . . kissing, hugging—I like all those things and they are in the film. I dig cruising, so I put in a cruising sequence. It's a happy scene, because for me cruising is usually a fun thing. I figure that I'm going out and don't know who I'm going to meet—might be for an hour, a day, a week or a year—but it is fun.

LA: How does that figure in a commercial set-up? Do you think your approach is "commercially sound"?

AB: I don't know . . . I talked to several theatre managers in San Francisco, actually went and talked to them about my film while it was in progress and they all said, usually as a first question: "Does it have S&M or fist fucking in it?"

LA: Do they think these are absolutely necessary to draw people to the box-office???

AB: Well, I don't think they are necessary to every gay film, but they think so because S&M and fist fucking are sensational sides of gay life that will attract customers. I would use them in my film provided that I could in a positive way and provided they were part of a character's sex life, not just to put a scene in to sensationalize or for shock value. That would be ripping off guys who are into it, sexually.

LA: How do you feel about Fred Halsted's "LA Plays Itself"?

AB: I thought it was slow. . . . I didn't much care for all the butterflies and the flowers. I didn't see what all that nature stuff had to do with the sex. I felt the first fucking scenes—as mere footage—were incredibly powerful and arresting. But there was no build-up to them, no attempt to get the audience involved in it. I felt the audience distanced by the scenes. Fred was obviously into it, but he didn't draw me into it and I have done it myself and enjoyed it. But S&M and fist fucking doesn't fit into my film and I wouldn't put it in to insure its acceptance by some theatre manager.

LA: So these have become sensational, marketable ingredients. Do the managers actually insist that they be included in films?

AB: I think so. Even in the light of the S&M stuff I've gotten into, which is not that heavy, the films I have seen don't square up with my experience. Even Halsted, who is openly and honestly into the trip, plays on the audience's fear with the voice-over warning the kid to watch out for every dude who may look cool—like when the track says "You don't want to be had!" That's a pretty straight view and traditional view of S&M. When I saw the film, the audience (at the SF Art Institute) was silenced, thinking something important was being said. It played on their fears and worked. . . .

One afternoon I went to talk with a theatre manager in the projection booth of his theatre. He had five hundred dollars lying on the table, which he offered to me to finish my film, provided that I lard it with S&M. He was genuinely trying to help me and I still remember my shock and his candor.

LA: Wow, this sounds like a tale from a Hollywood story conference!

AB: Well, it happened. But there was no way to work any of those scenes into my film without wrenching the story line.

LA: How did you conceive of the two different characterizations in your film—and how do they come off?

AB: The young guy is the sort who has had sex only in his mind, in fantasies. He wants to come out, but he doesn't know how or with whom. I remember this feeling in my own life. He had to be attractive enough so audiences would want to watch him, but he had to be funky too, vulnerable, so that it would seem credible that he could have made it to 18 without having someone make a pass or do something to bring him out. The older character, who is 28 years old, is a white-collar worker, works for the telephone company and is a "straight"-appearing man on the job and then is gay on the weekends. I remember how that used to be for myself too.

LA: How does the sex fit in with these characterizations?

AB: I decided to have the characters do nothing sexually that would realistically be outside their capacities. The older dude never goes beyond a traditional gay sexual expression: good old kissing, hugging, sucking and fucking. People might want to see more than that but I felt it would be unbelievable if he got into things beyond his experience. With the boy it was easier. I've been with some men for their first time, and brought them out. Since my film is essentially about that first time, the boy basically gets into the older man's trips. To go further would strain credulity, the audience's that is, to the breaking point, or worse, the laughing point.

LA: With only two main characters in the film, how did you introduce sexual variety?

AB: The boy is into fantasy—his own and others'. So I was able to get into what the kid masturbates about in his own head and also the whole area of pornography. The boy goes to a porno book shop, checks out magazines and some of the flicks that play in the shops.

LA: Did you shoot the loop yourself?

AB: Yeah. "Four on a Bed" was our working title for it. Michael and I shot the sequence with friends and tried to make it look like the stuff you see in porno arcades: lots of zooming in and out, sometimes out of focus, harsh lighting, unsteady camera, etc.

"(My film) has everything in it that I like to do—sexually and filmically. I decided to put nothing in the film that I had not experienced myself. Or to include things in the film that were "put-downs."

LA: What about the actors?

AB: They were great. At times they really got into the sex and then we'd break for a rest, with some real fun and laughing. I wanted them to look as handsome on screen as they were in person; and there were moments when I definitely wanted to put down the camera and join in myself!

LA: How did you work the boy into this part of the film?

AB: We just projected the footage onto his face. The audience watches the loop along with him, but some scenes are projected onto his face, like mental fantasies.

LA: How is the other man introduced?

AB: In a cruising sequence on Polk Street I like cruising Polk Street. The older man tricks with a dude—a "sex in the afternoon" scene—an encounter of the moment that has no other meaning. Just an afternoon of powerful, physical sex.

LA: Your remark suggests that you do show the sex = power motive in your film. Isn't the older man using the other man, i.e., tricking? With the boy it's different, since there is something resembling a relationship.

AB: The cruising and tricking scenes were the hardest to film in a way. I don't find cruising or sleeping with once and then never seeing them again to be impersonal, but I knew it might be taken that way, so I tried to get across my personal view. The hard thing was to show the older man picking up a dude on Polk Street and having a good time—just that, a good time, not implying a future or put-down of the past.

LA: Isn't it a relatively impersonal kind of relating as compared with the boy?

AB: When you go out to cruise there can be a variety of reasons. Sometimes you are looking for Mr. Wonderful, Mr. Forever, other times you are just horny or restless. If that's all you want and you succeed, probably you will feel okay. I have different needs at different times. That's what's so great about cruising: that you can go and find persons with similar needs and take care of those needs, desires, feelings. I know some folks think that's bad, but for me, it's good.

LA: Doesn't that attitude tend to turn people into objects?

AB: Well, sometimes I just love to be treated like an object, you know: just to

have someone stroke my body because they are into it. Not because they know me, or think I'm smart, or have money—or whatever. It might be a drag if that's what happened all the time. I don't know.

LA: Yes. If it becomes a constant pattern, I think it's destructive especially if you begin to relate to every person you meet as an object and never reach beyond to other levels.

LA: Look, I figure everybody is sizing everybody else up anyway. When I walk into a room, I instantly find myself fantasizing and checking people out. I'm aware of a sexual pulse most of the time—from the intern at the clinic, who I figure is in the closet, to the big Hollywood stars going through their "straight" paces on the silver screen. If that's bad, I guess I'm bad. . . .

LA: Maybe bad is not a useful word. But it's placing a heavy value judgment on looks and sexual types.

AB: Well, I feel I'm doing it casually. Meeting and making contact is as crucial to me as breathing, and doing it all the time withdraws much of the "heaviness" from it. It's not so judgmental or melodramatic since cruising can be a way of being open or aware of people sexually and in other ways. It's a really important thing with me.

LA: What you have said about "Passing Strangers" suggests that you may have romanticized the situation to justify and validate your particular view of things.

AB: Yes. Most of the people who have watched the work print and track in sync have all come to me with congratulations on the lyric and romantic feel of the second half of the film. I know they are sincere, but I get pissed off because I sense they are implying it is not real, but a dream or fantasy.

LA: Why does this bother you? Most artists are truly inspired by their dreams. Do you have an idea why they react this way?

AB: For me, the second section comes close to rendering how it is for me when I fall in love, or when I meet someone who really turns me on, moves me. When I get into a person, almost everything else vanishes from my attention. Consequently, you don't see anyone but the boy and the man in the second half. Of course, the addition of color will further romanticize the situations for some. But in my life, romantic feelings are real—they occur all the time.

LA: You mean a beautiful kind of isolation?

AB: Yeah, that's close to it. More like a focusing down of feelings on one person so that other people and things go away. While I was making the film, I met several wonderful men and fell in love with them. The film work stopped. Work is one thing, but people are more important. After all, you can't take a split reel to bed with you!

LA: Romanticism as an artistic mode is coming back into vogue as part of the nostalgia wave. Do any of the other gay films, in your opinion, effectively capture this feeling?

AB: I saw a few that effectively get to this level. But it's a very risky gamble in movies. Nothing is more embarrassing than romanticism that misses. If a filmmaker can't really deliver it, the audience will spot the flaws easier than if he tries to do surrealism or take the audience into the depths of depression. But if it succeeds, the technique and just the right balance of acting, cutting, music and atmosphere, then you can reach a gentleness, a tenderness in people that they may have forgotten was in themselves.

LA: What about your use of filmic techniques to get across your feelings on the screen?

AB: For me, a film is boring when the material doesn't move. So I use editing to keep the visuals interesting and arresting. There are large number of shots in my film, giving the eye and mind many different angles and perspectives on the action. In most porno films, a lot of time is spent zooming in and out on cocks, in continuous shots. This makes editing easier and cuts down on shooting ratios and budget. I tried to reverse the procedure and use a more traditional interplay of shots, except for scenes where an integral action is important. I used dissolves in one scene to slow down the sex, make it more sinuous.

LA: How did you handle the sound? Did you use music for the sex scenes?

AB: I used music and some "natural sounds" during the sexual scenes. Most of the effects were done on an arp synthesizer in New York City. Like wind and ocean effects. No words during the sexual scenes.

LA: What did you hope to achieve with just music?

AB: What they are doing is much more important than what they might say. Also, I haven't had much experience with dialogue in film. I'm most confident with the visuals. Besides, music draws the audience into the sexuality almost without fail.

LA: Yesterday, you told me that this was to be your last silent film—although there is a track. You said that you felt like your film was equivalent to a silent produced in 1928, a la King Vidor. . . .

AB: Lee, I started making films with a silent Super 8 camera. The tracks were always played on a tape recorder, so synchronization was never guaranteed. I had to depend basically on saying everything I wanted to say visually. It's like a silent film and I never had the people speak in my films. When I make another film, I'll be wanting to use some sync sound and dialogue. "Passing Strangers" has music, effects, and some dialogue voice-overs, but it is essentially a visual film experience.

LA: Do you have any plans for future films?

AB: I have thought about making one about a 60-year-old gay man and his relationship with a 20-year-old man—who would eventually get it on. My ultimate dream-come-true would be to film a script I've partially finished about a teacher who loves a high-school sophomore, and what happens to them when they get caught and the teacher goes to trial. This film would be about as autobiographical as I could get in putting my experiences into film.

"In most porno films, a lot of time is spent zooming in and out of cocks, in continuous shots. This makes editing easier and cuts down on shooting ratios and budget. I tried to reverse the procedure and use a more traditional interplay of shots, except where an integral action is important."

LA: How do you plan to finance your future films?

AB: I hope that Michael will want to produce our films in the future. Also, by being cunningly economical, I hope to retain whatever freedom of expression I have. If the films don't have astronomical budgets, less people have to be pleased to make them profitable.

LA: Do you envision your films being distributed to a wider market than the porno circuits, or do you plan to stay with the rather limited area of gay pornography?

AB: I think it's rather medieval to have to scrub films down—take out the sex—so that they can play in neighborhood theatres. "Deep Throat" hit quite a few neighborhood theatres—maybe it broke some ice, I don't know. It's unfortunate sex has to be ignored in films, since it's going on all the time from subway johns right up to the White House—though I sometimes have my doubts about the White House!

LA: Since your college days, you have been interested in the work of the American director Frank Capra. Why is he your favorite?

AB: Well, I've met him, interviewed him on several occasions, and some day I hope to write a book on him. Capra is the personification of the Great American Dilemma—in life, in the cinema—the dilemma of what to do when you see the gap between how things are and how they could be. For me, Capra is the ultimate closet director!

LA: What do you mean by "closet" in this context?

AB: Capra was a "closet director" because he had so much to say, to let out, and yet at the end of all his great films, I get the feeling he hasn't said it. I don't mean an exclusively sexual innuendo—more emotional. It's like you have a great secret, or truth, or terrible something to say. You get ready to say it; then, at the last moment (usually in his endings) you hedge, hesitate, swallow hard and say something else—the power in his films comes from what he hasn't said. So does the frustration he feels with his own work arise out of this repression of feelings. Even though he is down on pornography, I'd like to have him see my film. I think I have seen what he's about in his films, and I could get off having him discover me through mine.

LA: Do you think you could work in a Hollywood set-up?

AB: No. I wouldn't be much good there. I'd like to just keep making films about my experiences and hope to see them play in theatres. It's partly an ego thing, a money thing, but most of all it's fun making movies.

LA: Would you want to ideally work with a crew in the usual sense?

AB: Well, although "Passing Strangers" is my project, I had a lot of help. There are a lot of names on the credits. If by "in the usual sense" you mean be able to pay the people who helped me—I sure would. I hope we'll be able to get some bucks to the folks who helped me.

LA: Would you ever be interested in working with an established production company, say like Jaguar Productions, and make gay films?

AB: Only if I got an Orson Welles/Citizen Kane contract. That is, I'd bring it in under budget, but I'd have story, cast, crew choice, do the rough and fine cut myself, have the mix and music done my way and have them sign in black and white that they wouldn't change a frame—hell, I'd do it! But I don't think that will happen.

FILMS

MONTREAL MAIN
FRANK VITALE

PASSING STRANGERS
ARTHUR BRESSAN

In Woody Allen's most recent effort, *Sleeper*, an outrageously effeminate gay couple are encountered by the hero, ensconced in a dazzling futuristic version of what has been accurately described as the "fairy princess" dwelling. And in *Busting*, for the first time we see gays being arrested by vice officers in a bar, but the Felliniesque types in this bar are far removed from a representative selection of the gay community, however much they may be persecuted. And the notorious success of *The Rocky Horror Show*, capitalizing on the Bowie-Cooper drag-rock syndrome, does nothing, in a positive sense, to really liberate rigid minds, convinced that heretosexuality is the best way, with a passing nod to the fashionable notion of bisexuality.

Without sounding too querulous or judgmental, I would like to propose that the community as a whole is being ripped off at the expense of its more flamboyant, marginal elements. You might note that, comparatively speaking, *That Certain Summer*, even with its note of condescension, was a move forward. But toward what: sadness and resignation? And what have we had to follow up this momentous Movie of the Week? Precisely nothing of any consequence.

If you point this out to Hollywood directors, producers, or writers, they will refer you to the continuous presence of gays in their movies and television scripts. Of course, like little red herrings they are slipped in here and there to liven up the action and since too much time can't be wasted on character development they always swish or lisp a bit so as to be easily identified. One might even say that Lance Loud—and I admire him enormously—falls occasionally into a stereotypical role which his youthful imagination sees as a route to stardom *à la* Warhol.

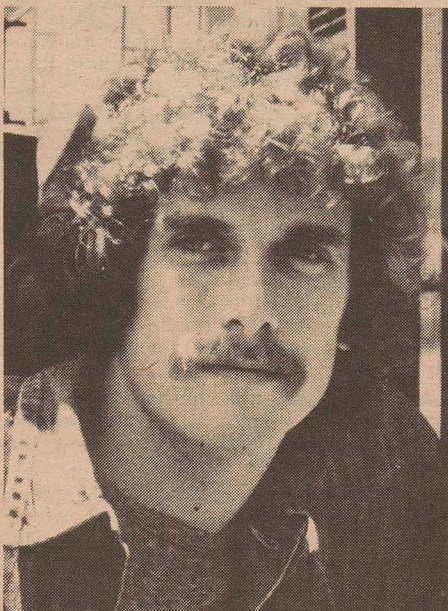
This is not to suggest that we should refer them to the ultra-masculine persona of Fred Halsted, Bill Harrison or Casey Donovan for comparison, but rather to the wider spectrum of gay brothers and sisters who are beginning to free themselves from the oppressive and limiting life-styles of the past, and whose gayness is not so much reflected in external behavior or dress but in a new level of consciousness in relating to their human dimension and that of others. As I have previously remarked, these films are still rare and although we must continue to try to influence establishment film makers to a more in-depth perspective and consciousness, we cannot expect the true latitude of our experience to be represented in filmic terms, unless gay filmmakers begin to create a real, positive vision of their world.

The publicity and New York reviews for a recent "underground" film from Canada, *Montreal Main*, might lead us to believe that it is indeed a step in the right direction. The writer-director-star of the film, Frank Vitale, after two years of begging and borrowing from friends, fellow film freaks, and the Canada Film Council, managed to get onto film a personal experience with some of the real persons re-enacting their original roles.

Unfortunately, though Canadian critics in what must be a chauvinistic support of the film have called *Montreal Main* "an intensely honest and personal film . . . and though it depicts events which are commonly regarded as depressing, it's a cheering story about overcoming all that life can dish out. Which in Frank's case is plenty," none of these glowing phrases bears any relation to what is finally seen on the screen. Good intentions and hard work, even sincere dedication, do not always produce admirable works of film art. In short, *Montreal Main* is a failure on almost every level.

Montreal Main chronicles the "non-relationship" between a 30-year-old artist/filmmaker, marginally involved with Montreal's gay scene, and Johnny, a 12-year-old boy. With the exception of Peter, a blond, hip, affable man, who identifies himself as a "queen," none of the characters appear to be gay (stereotypes) nor is there any indication that they, in fact, are consciously so. This aspect of the charac-

ters is tacitly ignored or rendered so ambiguous as to be insignificant in their lives. Frank, a gentle, quiet, bearded man, is so withdrawn and insecure, indecisive and frustrated in his relationship with his roommate and best friend, Bozo (who seems to clearly have a preference for women) that he is enraptured by Johnny's charm and youthful innocence. John Sutherland, who plays the boy, is an attractive, sweet, quiet, long-haired kid, so totally repressed by his pseudo-bohemian parents that he has almost lost the possibility of expressing emotion or feeling for anyone. In the film he comes off as a shy, inquisitive, innocent, yearning for loving father figure—a stance which Frank cannot quite assume. Structurally, the external obstacle to their relationship—which never remotely approaches an overt sexual level even on Frank's part—is the intolerance of the boy's parents and some well-meaning friends who insist that the friendship end for reasons which are never stated.



The lead actors of "Passing Strangers": Robert Adams (left) is Robert; Robert Carnagey (right) is Tom. The film is "real, lyrical, sexy as hell, happy, visually beautiful . . . The very finest personal and artistic success in the history of gay erotic cinema."

Vitale's film is vitiated not only by inadequate emotional and psychological motivation in the characterizations but by an embarrassing technical ineptitude, which is astonishing, considering the large technical crew assembled for the production. Sound recording and reproduction during the first half of the film is so muddy as to be almost inaudible. Yet, the gravest fault lies with Vitale, who for all his sincerity, demonstrates little sense of pictorial composition, editing pace (the rhythm and pace of the work is disturbingly abrupt, and dialog scenes fail to sustain the realism Vitale wants); nor does he seem to know when a long shot would be more effective than a closeup. Since the film is purportedly based on real incidents and real characters, I must assume that Mr. Vitale and his friends are either very closeted, or simply very dull people. I came away from it feeling very down, angry and ripped-off, along with a predominantly gay audience whose high expectations were far from being fulfilled. This is unfortunate, since Vitale obviously has something to say about relations between men and young boys, a tradition that harks back to the culture of Ancient Greece, but his film in the closet vein fails to say it or demonstrate it with any positive emotional or sexual force.

If discretion and frustration are the focal points of *Montreal Main*, which brought me down considerably, the joyful revelation of what must be the very finest personal and artistic success in the history of gay erotic cinema fills me with ecstasy: Arthur Bressan, Jr.'s *Passing Strangers*. Technically and thematically this film fulfills some of the goals of all good filmmaking. But beyond this, it expresses with great poignancy and feeling a positive level of gay consciousness (without being overtly political) totally absent in the history of cinema. In this sense it is a landmark and a cause for rejoicing! A real movie about real gay people that is a real movie!

Passing Strangers is the work of a man who openly and proudly celebrates his gay awareness and his love for movies and moviemaking. First and foremost, it is what we have rather casually come to refer to as "pornographic movies." It is not, however, a film that exploits gay sexuality but gives it a true human dimension as the honest expression of giving and receiving physical pleasure. In the very first shot, as the camera pulls back through the porthole of a projection booth of a straight porno theatre, we see the relatively mechanical closeup of a

couple fucking. Later, when we see a gay arcade loop the director creates similar moments that project little of the *feelings* involved in real sexual encounters. The humorous commentary of a radio spot announcing the theatre's current program gives an arched perspective on the routines and rituals and stock phrases of the porno profiteers. Contrasting with the sex loops, the sexuality in the main body of the film is full of passionate abandon, warmth and beauty, especially during the second section.

The story as such is simple and has occurred in the lives of almost all gay people. The characters are introduced via the device of a projectionist (played by Artie Bressan) who works in a straight porno house, whose friend, Tom (Robert Carnagey) places an ad in the *Berkeley Barb*, signed "box 1144" seeking a boyfriend for fun and good times. The ad, opening with the words "passing strangers . . ." is cribbed from a poem of Walt Whitman. Tom is an attractive, affable, boyish young



Back in the city, the two friends, experiencing the rush of first love, bicycle around together, showing off bravura daring in riding techniques, enjoying each other and the picturesque beauties of San Francisco streets and byways. At a playground high spirits are captured on a slide, swing, and a carousel ride. An evening interlude of love-making begins with considerable foreplay building to 69, atmospherically enhanced by golden candlelight and the sultry tones of a saxophone scoring. (If this scene doesn't convince you that pornography can be transformed into art, nothing ever will.)

The climactic sequence of the film, and literally its highest moment, is the Gay Day Parade which actually took place in San Francisco on June 24, 1973. As a participant in that parade, I can truthfully say that Artie Bressan and his two additional cameramen Joseph Cicio and William Smart have captured more completely than anyone has previously the overflowing good feelings and dionysian flavor of that marvelous day. From a variety of angles, gay men and women of all sorts, beginning with drag queens and a female couple embracing, storm the streets and Tom and Robert join a male chorus line to openly celebrate their love and solidarity with brothers and sisters. The entire sequence is given an additional momentum by an infectious song, "Great Expectations," composed and performed for the film by Jim O'Connor. Of all the songs about liberation and coming out, it is the best and deserves to become a hit.

Ending a film is often a ticklish and difficult problem for situations involving a dramatic conflict. Since *Passing Strangers* avoids any kind of conflict, it concludes quite naturally with Tom and Robert on the pier at Aquatic Park. Robert's thoughts are revealed in a succession of memory images, slightly tinted, of Tom and their experiences together making love and fulfilling a dream-fantasy. An unexpected pull-back from the pier reveals a breathtaking aerial view of the Bay harbor and Golden Gate bridge.

As this last shot suggests, Artie is a man who loves movies and loves to make them. For him, going out to shoot a film is inspiring and exciting event; editing is a wonderfully magical way to give form to moving images; and sound (he's a better than average singer) is an expressive, evocative way of giving shape to words and music. Artie is not what you would call a professional movie maker; his real profession is living, just living and keeping people high and turned on. But he has the passion and instincts of an artist, an artist who is in love with film and with people. I don't think that even he realized what a fine film he had made until he saw, for the first time, the answer print with a group of friends—straight as well as gay—myself included, that early morning in May. It was real, lyrical, sexy as hell, happy, visually beautiful . . .

Although it will be opening soon throughout the country in gay porno theatres, I wish that *Passing Strangers* could be shown everywhere; but considering the recent crack-down on pornography in America, I doubt that it will. This is the kind of film I have wanted to see for so long and couldn't get together myself. It may be, as Artie says, technically equivalent to what was happening in 1928—a silent with talkie sequences—but it makes most other porno films—gay and straight—look like cold, calculating amateurism. It is a landmark, a beginning for an alternative cinema that celebrates rather than exploits homosexuality as a positive way of living. Without standing on a soapbox, *Passing Strangers* is ultimately a political movie, a movie that could begin to change people's perceptions of themselves and of the world. And it must begin with us if we are to liberate ourselves and others.

After having said so much that is negative in my *Gay Sunshine* film reviews, it is a genuine pleasure to praise and recommend a film of such honesty and integrity as this, and I hope that gay people everywhere will take the opportunity to see it and dig it. It has something for everyone: hard-core freaks, politicians, blacks, women, drags, and just plain gay people. *Passing Strangers* is a labor of love conceived of by one man, and although he had much technical assistance from straight as well as gay people, including an exceptional original music score by Jeff Olmsted and Ed French which is planned to be released as an album, and some fine photography by Jim Block, it reflects the world and perceptions of its author, Arthur J. Bressan, Jr. Thank you, Artie, for making such a together, beautiful film! Thank you for giving us something we can be proud of! May you make many more!

—Lee Atwell

Steven Grossman: gay musician with self-acceptance

When Steven Grossman's highly-praised "Caravan Tonight" was released this May, it marked the first time a major record label (Mercury) had published an album devoted to songs about gay life, as well as the first effort of an outstanding new talent.

Steven's press has been surprisingly good, even considering the quality of his album. It started with the write-ups when he played New York clubs before recording, and now the fabulous review in the May 23 *Rolling Stone*. Critic Stephen Holden said "Caravan Tonight" "marks one of the auspicious singer/songwriter debuts of the Seventies," and praised Steven's "poignant but not self-pitying songs," and the record's "staggering emotional impact."

Even with its undoubted virtues, I feel the Grossman album (reviewed in these pages) reveals just a fraction of Steven's talent. Upon seeing him perform at San Francisco's Boarding House, prior to interviewing him, I was amazed at the dimensions not captured on the record. Steven's on-stage presence has an ingenuous affability and his voice surprised me with a flexibility not evident on the album.

As I sat listening, I caught traces of the tenderness of Cat Stevens and the soul of Laura Nyro, but with little of the abstraction those artists sometimes dwell in. More accurately, Steven's songs are accessible in the sense that Joni Mitchell's are, and it is Joni that Steven says influenced his style most.

Steven himself is not photo-handsome like the soft-focus shot inside his album. When my friend whispered that he was thin like a speed freak, I said no, he has a fragile and sensitive beauty. Actually, both are somewhat true.

His between-song raps are intimate and, like the fragments he has woven into his songs, provide strong points of recognition for gay audiences. In one he humorously recalls being in bed with a man while telling his mother over the phone that he is gay. His set lasted 45 minutes, featuring most of the compositions from his album, and ending with a dynamic delivery of an uptempo Stevie Wonder number. He was accompanied by Vinny Fucella, a straight man, whom Steven introduced as "very talented and very handsome." He certainly is.

When I called on Steven at his friends' Haight-Ashbury home, he'd just read a very unfavorable notice in the *San Francisco Examiner*. "I'm so depressed," he told me. "That man said I was an amateur. I think that anyone can get up and say I'm gay, and sing a couple of songs. But I'd like to be considered a musician too. That's why I'm affected by reviews like that one."

After supposedly sitting through Steven's set, the critic, who usually writes on jazz only, decided that Steven's baritone was really a tenor, and that the "enthusiasm of the largely gay audience was considerably more for (standup comic) Gabe Kaplan." The critic seemed to determine that by the fact that Steven, a singer, got fewer laughs.

I told Steven I thought the critic was a jerk, and as I set up my cassette recorder, I saw him nearly shiver at the sight of the machine. I explained why it's necessary, and we sat on the rug as he talked about fielding questions from AM radio people that morning. "I had to supply the questions because they didn't know what to ask a gay person. I woke up this morning with crabs, and while I was being interviewed I was picking them off and leaving them."

The whole trip of exposure and filling a celebrity's shoes has always been difficult for him. Recently he signed with CMA, an agency, and will begin a tour soon, which he's apprehensive about. "I'm not good at putting up fronts. I have a hard time relating to business people and to interviewers. I don't like some of them."

"And I don't like performing. I go through incredible changes about it. It's always made me very nervous. Like, when I first started I was going to reach some people, make it easy for some people. It used to be I could play some place by myself, and people would come up and talk to me afterwards and it would be really easy. I'd play once or twice a year. And it's really different now. And I think, like anything, after you like hear so much, people always come up to you and talk to you, like eventually you don't hear anything."

"I don't know if performing is my thing, if that's going to make me happy in life."

But now with the record there's a certain responsibility I have to fulfill in promoting the album. If I had it my way, I would only play gay places, with small crowds."

Until a year and a half ago, infrequent appearances were all he'd made, mostly near his Brooklyn home. At that time, he answered an ad in the *Village Voice* for a gay performer. "It was kind of vague, and I was on welfare at the time, so I just figured I'd call up and check it out, see what they were doing, if they were gay."

The ad introduced him to Bobby Flax and Lanny Lambert, independent producers. "I met with them, and did a few songs for them, and they kind of dug it. Our concept of the whole thing was pretty much the same. I didn't want any sensationalism. I wanted gay people to know that there was a gay singer, so that it would sell and gay people would be aware of it."

They began approaching record companies with demonstration tapes of Steven's songs. "Nobody would touch us, because they said we were too controversial, and that the material had very limited appeal. So what my producers did was set up gigs for me in straight clubs. And the response from the press was like really good, and from people. And record companies started approaching us, and Mercury eventually gave us the best deal."

Steven's been lucky in that his relationship with Lambert and Flax, who are both straight, has been trusting and amicable. "I think they break a lot of the stereotypes about producers and managers. I feel I can talk to them. The people at Mercury have been really good too. There obviously hasn't been any censorship (on the album). We were given complete creative control on the album, the package. I feel they've been really concerned."

The album cover, for instance, was conceived by Steven's close friend and former lover, Bonnie Samet, who inspired "Song to Bonnie" on the record. Her design depicts Steven in his Brooklyn home: the rings on his left hand which are significant in his life, the Malamute dog he owned, the customary clothes hanging out of drawers, and Steven gazing out his window at the idyllic caravan dancing in the street below.

Mercury also let Steven write the promotional copy for the record, so instead of the inflated or patronizing P.R. flak you'd expect a gay artist to receive, the publicity has been fairly low key.

For the first part of our conversation, Steven was visibly uptight and intimidated by the recorder. He spoke in the softest, deepest voice, which I could barely hear when I played back my cassettes. Our rapport improved a bit when I admitted I was uncomfortable with the role of "interviewer," much as I was interested in writing about him. Later, we were discussing performers who are gay but not publicly so, and when I mentioned Lily Tomlin, Steven screamed with delight. He called his lover Christopher into the room to hear me tell a bit I heard on FM radio where Lily, as Edith-Ann, decides to change her name to Lesbi-Ann, "cause it's prettier."

Stories of celebrities who are privately gay, unfounded or otherwise, are legion. Many are common knowledge among gays. Other performers, like the David Bowie camp of genderfuck-anarchic rockers, seem to grovel in decadence. Then there's a few who are open, but aren't in the business of writing about their lifestyle, leaving Steven Grossman, at the age of 22, as one of a handful of artists whose work comes from a serious gay sensibility. One other is Michael Cohen, a friend of Steven's. "I really admire him a whole lot. He's a beautiful poet." Cohen has two albums, on Folkways and BAI, the latter of which Steven greatly prefers.

The term "gay artist" has become Steven's label, but is ultimately insufficient. Steven's songs reflect his understanding that love knows no gender. Just as a gay person can identify with phrases and emotions in non-gay songs, Steven's words too have a universal appeal, and can usually be translated into man-woman relationships. They bear a strong comparison, especially in their rich imagery and romantic vision, to the vividly personal songs of Joni Mitchell. "I listen to her a lot. I'm sure I've copped from her style a whole lot, chords and all. . . . I believe everything she says and love it. That all her songs are about real experiences, with the exception of the last album ("Court and Spark"). It didn't have the poignant spontaneity of "For the Roses."



Gay recording artist STEVEN GROSSMAN. "My music is political if it brings people out . . . being gay is political because it's illegal."

As much as his songs have a universal appeal, Steven is the first to admit that it wasn't until he came out and wrote on gay themes, that his music truly evolved and matured. "When I came out the first song I wrote about being gay was when I'd fallen in love with this man, Michael, and it was unrequited. And I just needed some kind of outlet. So a few songs happened. I really began to like my own songs for a change, you know, because they were becoming more truthful to me. I was using them more like therapy or something rather than just something to do."

One of those early songs, "Christopher's Blues," is on the album. "That song is totally a product of my Gay Liberation consciousness. When I first came out I went right into GAA (Gay Activists' Alliance) in New York, and because of my straight political convictions being kind of far left, I couldn't relate to the group too well. I'm basically apolitical now. I think my music is kind of political so that's my way of being political now. It's political if it brings other people out. Being gay is political in that it's illegal."

I commented that several of Steven's songs on "Caravan Tonight" seem reactions to the social spheres gays are limited to. "I really resented for a long time," he said, "the fact that the only places gay people can be themselves are in places that straight people have said, 'it's all right for you to be here,' like bars and sections of town, movies."

"I remember being really in love with someone at Brooklyn College. I just wanted to share that with someone, talk with someone. I was sitting in my Philosophy class going crazy, just dying, 'cause as soon as I got out of there I was going to meet Joey. I was just incredibly horny, and just incredibly overwhelmed. This woman next to me said, 'You look like you're in love.' I said, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah,' and started talking about him using 'they' as a pronoun and 'we' a lot. And she finally got around and said, 'Do I know her?' And I said, 'Well, it's a man.' And the next time I went to Philosophy she had changed her seat."

"I just really would have liked to talk to someone, just to see gay people around and open, just everywhere. Like, I'd like to be able to meet in all kinds of places. And I think probably the best way to remedy that is just for gay people to like get their own thing together, their own meeting places, their own theatres, their own schools. At one time I was a really, really strong gay separatist. I was on that trip for a long time. I still think about it."

The transition involved in coming out was perhaps easier for Steven than many, since virtually all of his high school friends, men and women, came out. "Every one of them. And it was really strange, because none of us would ever talk about it. It was never a subject. We were concerned with other things: politics, school, where to cop, little intrigues, music. There were eight of us, an inseparable group, and we were very asexual."

That was in Brooklyn, a section where Steven still lives today with his lover Christopher, who's a San Francisco native. "There's absolutely nothing gay in my community except me and Chris. And when we go out dancing or whatever we go into the Village. Chris is trying to talk

me into moving here. . . . The bars here are much nicer. I feel people generally here are more attractive. They don't have that kind of New York 'I've-been-through-it-all' kind of look."

I switched off the recorder, much to Steven's relief, and walked with him and Chris to the door. Plans for a second album? "Well, Mercury wants another, but I haven't got enough songs yet. I don't know. I've been really happy lately, so I haven't been writing much. Maybe I need to work up a good depression."

—Edward Guthmann

review

"Caravan Tonight." Songs by Steven Grossman. Mercury SRM 1-702, \$6.98 (1974).

Reviewed by Julian Bamford

I spend a lot of my time searching out people, books, movies, and other experiences which can help me to feel and to understand myself better. Music is very helpful too; I love song writers and singers who express their feelings and experiences. But until now I'd rarely found a song writer who wrote as a gay person and with whom I could identify.

Steven Grossman has just recorded an album on Mercury called "Caravan Tonight." When someone brought the album home we put it on, and it made me sit up and take notice. The songs are well and fully arranged, and well sung in Steven's rich, deep voice. They are also varied in pace and mood. After some more playings I'd got a few favorite songs and had dismissed a lot more as average. In all, it seemed an uneven album. I like the title track "Caravan Tonight" best of all; he sings about how his lover has "that gypsy" in his eye—the lust for freedom. It's a poetic and dreamy song, spun from some basic emotions like love, need, and protectiveness. While I listened, I looked at the richly dreamy painting on the album cover, which was inspired by the song. I also liked "Christopher's Blues"; it really lets go in a funky, earthy rejection of being just a sexual being, and the backing arrangement sets the mood perfectly:

Well I don't want no sugar damn daddy . . .

I don't want to waste my days—these days

Trying to catch every eye on the corner

There must be a better way . . .

There were a couple of other songs too. And in the days following, the album got overlooked because it was pleasant but hadn't touched me deeply.

Two or three weekends later I went to stay with a friend who lives by the sea. We relaxed and drank tea and played music too. The album was in the house, and so we put it on. We listened to the "Caravan Tonight" song and talked about the situation in it—about freedom and dependence as we understood them. Michael said that he especially liked the imagery in the song. The album was pleasant and familiar in the background as we talked.

Partly to conjure up memories of that weekend, the next time I was doing a job which used my body but not my mind, I put the album on again.

*Austin, you got that gypsy in your eye
We have four good months behind us
But now you think I'm too possessive
Though your head is on my knee
Your mind is just outside of town
Your ears, they're ringing for that
carefree tambourine . . .*

There is magic in that song. And for the first time I really heard the imagery.

*And if the freedom your heart
embraces
Is nothing but a vision in the sand
Oh I'll be waiting here
I'll be your oasis
I'll be your promised
Your promised land.*

And that morning as I listened and mulled over the songs I noticed another striking aspect of them: their lack of idealism and striving. Instead there was a tremendous self-acceptance, an acceptance of those parts of Steven himself which other

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46



personal reflections on gay liberation

FROM THE

THIRD WORLD

STRUGGLE UNITY

AWARENESS RESPECT

Two events guide the details and the subject matter of this essay. Both events are independent of each other, but when brought together they begin to tell a story about the experience of Third World people in this country. My experience is admittedly somewhat limited, and I do not mean to convey from my words here that my personal history is anything like typical. I mean only to share some of it with the reader, along with some of my observations, so that a voice can at least be heard. It is my experience that Third World people who are gay do not really have a voice. We are in many ways voiceless which of course also means powerless. And because of the psychological barriers in this country, most of us remain invisible. Let me be more specific. Most of us remain invisible because we live in a racist culture, and in a racist culture you are not allowed the psychological freedom to rid yourself of sanctions and restrictions that have so long been interwoven within the framework of our society. It is indeed ironic that the very people who provided the political and social insights that gave birth to the women's movement and to the gay movement, are not allowed to participate in them in any meaningful way.

The surge of consciousness that emerged toward the end of the 60's emerged because black people demonstrated that oppression does not end when physical barriers are eliminated. We showed that oppression does not always take the form of obvious, physical barriers such as back-of-the-bus seating or separate drinking fountains. We showed that there are indeed more subtle forms of oppression that operate on a psychological level, but that are nevertheless every bit as destructive as any physical obstacle. We showed Americans how the dominant culture took a race of people and taught them, in the words of James Baldwin, to "despise themselves." The result of this startling discovery was the realization that there are deep levels of oppression that operate on a sub-conscious level, and that no significant measure of freedom could be achieved until psychological barriers were removed. In other words, until you rid yourself of the assumptions of the dominant culture; you are still trapped in a psychological prison that is even more severe and more limiting than even physical walls. This is where the phrase "come out" originated: the implication is to "come out" of the psychological prison that dictates that you are not as worthy or as valued a human being because you are a homosexual, or because you are a woman, or because you are not white.

White homosexuals and white women openly acknowledge their indebtedness to the black movement, usually through irritating and questionable comparisons (and it needs to be pointed out here that much of the hostility that white homosexuals complain about coming from black men and women results not so much from an intolerance of homosexuality, but rather from irritation at having their struggle used as a bandwagon for white people. White gays walk around saying that "being gay is like being black" as if they had some kind of first-hand knowledge of what "being black" is like). So even though the black movement in some ways led the way for the emergence of the women's and gay movements, black people and other Third World peoples are noticeably absent from participation. For a large number of black people, this is just as it should be, the implication being that we don't really have the time to devote to helping white people become "free." But

the larger reason is deeper than that. The larger reason is that "there are some things you don't talk about with strangers." The larger reason is that we do not yet feel comfortable enough with our countrymen to deal openly with something as intimate and as personal as one's sexuality. I should have said we do not yet *trust* our countrymen enough to deal with it. Keep in mind the enormous number of myths and speculations that have already, historically been made by white people about black sexuality anyway; and also keep in mind that since black people have always carried the status of "visitors" in this country, it shouldn't be surprising when we begin to display the characteristics of a "guest." Most of us have adopted the attitude that sex is something personal, and you don't go around talking about it; you don't go around being public about it, especially with "strangers." (Check out the reaction in the black community to the spectacle of black streakers. . . .)

For now I would like to get back to the two events that I mentioned earlier, which will hopefully help to present a total picture of what my experience has been like growing up and reacting to my environment in the black gay community of Detroit. The first event goes back to my initial awakening, as I began to identify myself with a larger group of individuals who for a long time remained for me anonymous. For this we must go back to the year 1965. The second event is really two events combined into one, and reflect my developing consciousness as I began to find community in and around the city of Detroit, and later on, in the city of Ann Arbor. The two events occur within the space of about ten years. The first even occurs before the advent of the current gay movement, and the second event occurs afterwards. I hope that together they begin to construct a picture of the situation of Third World gay people, who as I have indicated have remained largely invisible in the midst of the growing and highly visible openness of gay liberation. I must repeat something that an old friend once told me, and that is that there are many truths, and I want to add that my story is only one truth. Other aspects and parts of the story will be told by other Third World women and men as we begin to assert ourselves and to provide a voice for non-white gay people.

My identification as a gay person starts back in 1965. Back when I was very young and very impressionable and very much in need of a hero. My hero came, white horse and all, in the form of a young man whose age at the time I can't recall, only that he was five or six years older than me, and of course at the age of fourteen or fifteen, five or six years means all the difference in the world. It means the difference between childhood and maturity; between inexperience and experience. He was everything I could hope for in a hero: a tall handsome black man who was always on the go, always moving, always being missed and longed for and thought about by love-struck young girls and by fourteen-year-old boys, searching for heroes. Joe was very different from anyone I've ever known. His very presence was always something of an occasion in our household, mainly because he came around so rarely. But one always knew when he was in the house because his cologne was singular and intoxicating. And if I was up in my room lying on my bed reading or drawing pictures of nude bodies, his odor would creep up into my room and I would run down to the basement to find him

seated on our couch, smiling. Joe wore a cologne that would bring him into my mind whenever I passed someone on the street who had it on. The smell was indescribable. It was the smell of all the colognes together when you passed the counter in the department store. But whenever you tried to put your finger on it, and capture it as it were, by going through sniffing all the cologne bottles to try to find the one scent, it would be impossible to find. You could only locate it by standing back away from the counter, and sniffing in the combined odor of all those cologne bottles. The scent was elusive, just like Joe himself. And to try to pinpoint and locate Joe proved to be as futile as sniffing through those bottles, in search of his scent. There were other things that were different about Joe. Like his black hair, speckled with strands of white. I've never met a black man in his twenties with black hair speckled with white. It seemed very unusual, and it helped to make him very attractive. I was always puzzled by this feature of his. I often wondered how he got those strands of white hair. To me they seemed to tell a story about Joe; about his life, his struggles, his battles. To me they seemed to be the medals earned after a long, hard war. In my fantasy world of fourteen or fifteen, they made Joe seem heroic. And I guess they also made Joe seem a lot older than he really was.

I never understood why he picked me to confide in. He was one of my sisters' friends really, and I would tag along with the older kids, because I was a bit of a snob, and thought the kids my age to be childish and brutal and silly. They didn't at all seem concerned with some of the profound issues of life as I was. At that time the main profound issue I found myself concerned about was hanging between my legs. I had discovered masturbation only three years before, and was now in the process of discovering a more pleasurable, mutual enjoyment with some of the boys in my neighborhood. But that discovery was only partially helpful in solving the mystery. There was never anything sexual in my relationship with Joe. He only helped me to bring the thing into focus, to put it into a context. He helped me to identify my boyhood pleasures, and relate them to a vast network of social life around Detroit. It was a life so concealed and so underground that they had to invent a name, a pseudonym to describe it. It was a name that was used as a code word among the participants at that time. And one of the things I learned from Joe back in 1965, was the word "gay."

It must be emphasized that during the days before "gay" became proud and loud it was very quiet and very secretive, and for those in the black community who were not a part of the street scene in Detroit, there formed a fraternal-like network uniting a diverse and selective group of men. It was possible to go through all kinds of intimate connections and relationships in the black community, and be unaware of this world. But it was always there, ever present, for whoever wanted to find it. And for me it held a fascination precisely because of its mystery. It was a mystery that I always connected in my mind with Joe. For it was through his words that I was able to construct an image, a picture of the gay life in Detroit. I

was too young to participate in it for myself, and relied very heavily on Joe to relate to me his experience and his history. . . .

The following event occurs some nine years after those talks I used to have with Joe. Since then I've been in the process of integrating what I learned from Joe about the gay life in Detroit, with other aspects of my own life. The result has been my own involvement with gay liberation. In the following essay I talk about my involvement with gay groups in Detroit and in Ann Arbor. It's 1974 now, and I call this essay "Personal Reflections on Gay Liberation from the Third World . . ."

An event of rather historic proportions happened here in Ann Arbor in February, when Third World people from various parts of the country came together to hold a conference. There were speakers, presentations, and workshops, and Blacks, Chicanos, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Asian-Americans, came together under the assumption of a shared oppression. It is a valid assumption, and one of things we learned at this Solidarity Conference is how much non-white peoples in this country have in common, and how little we know about each other. We had reached the knowledge of our oppression slowly, and separately, and it is just recently that we are beginning to see the necessity of pooling our individual strengths and energies.

The last time I had come together with Third World people outside of my own brothers and sisters, was about three years ago in Detroit, when Third World people from the Detroit Gay Liberation Front formed a separate caucus. It was a small number of us, including sisters and brothers. Most of us were black, but also among us were Native-Americans and an Asian-American. Most of us were male. We had asserted our power to the extent that we had formed a separate caucus, and there was much strength and solidarity among the nine or ten of us who met each Sunday at someone's apartment in Detroit.

I had stumbled across the Caucus by accident really, when I was asked to come over the do some work for a gay parade that was being held in downtown Detroit. Gay people had organized a parade to march down Woodward Ave. to Kennedy Square. I didn't have it together enough at the time to participate in the actual march, which after all was in the center of my home town. But sitting there in that apartment with about eight other Third World brothers, making signs that said, "We're Young, Gifted, and Gay!" and "Black and Loud/Gay and Proud," was the beginning for me of a long process I've been going through since then, called Coming Out. I had "come out" sexually and socially before then, but I never felt so good about it; never felt so whole about it, until sitting in that apartment with these strangers, trying to invent slogans to go on our posterboards.

That was three or four years ago, and I've never had the chance to meet together with other Third World people on a continuous basis since then, and the next time I would walk into a Gay Liberation meeting, all the faces would be white . . .

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Last month at the Solidarity Conference in Ann Arbor, as I was sitting there listening to the chairperson of the Third World Woman's Alliance, I noticed a friend of mine named Luis, who had come from another college with other Third World people. I was surprised to see him, and we stood up and hugged each other. Later on, over a cup of coffee, we tried to figure out the ambivalence of our situation, of our "political predicament": How does a Third World person reconcile being involved in an organization that is predominantly white? There were a number of Third World gay people at that conference with the same ambivalence, in the same predicament.

Let me try to give you an impression of the ambivalence of Third World people, involved in the Gay struggle. Within the Third World movement, whether it be the Black Liberation struggle, the Asian-American struggle, whatever non-white movement in which we find ourselves, most gay people are caught in a middle ground that usually amounts to a tug-of-war within his conscience; within his soul. There is much in the organized Gay Liberation that non-white people are unable to identify with. We find ourselves feeling the alienation that James Baldwin describes in "Autobiographical Notes," when he goes to the great achievements of Western Art and Culture, and sees nothing of his history, of his accomplishment. What so many of the whites in Gay Liberation fail to comprehend, or perhaps admit, is that Gay Liberation is basically a white phenomenon of the late 60's, when young people, disillusioned with the system in which they found themselves, began demanding a better way to live, and searching for more meaningful and more honest ways to relate to each other. I'm in no way discounting the significance of this event, and in fact Eldridge Cleaver in his book *Soul on Ice* gives a fitting tribute to it. But nevertheless it is an event born out of the political and social insights brought about by a minority of people who are racially oppressed, and non-white people do not come to the Gay movement with the same set of assumptions and the same set of conclusions about sexuality and what it means as do white people.

Part of the reality is that Black people have been "disillusioned" with this system for a very long time, and this attitude didn't just begin to emerge with the outbreak of the Vietnam War. Black people in this country have always carried the status of second-class citizenship, and have never trusted the high and mighty promises of the "American Dream." And this initial attitude is carried by Black people in this country no matter what liberation group we might find ourselves in. Black women come to the women's Liberation movement with an entire history of racial and gender oppression that white women are by and large unable to relate to or understand except superficially. Black gays come to the Gay Liberation movement with the same history. And it is the inability of whites in both groups to incorporate the Black perspective; the inability of whites many times to deal with their own racism, that has caused the ambivalence I mentioned earlier among non-white gays and non-white women involved in the liberation struggle, and has necessitated the formation of gay groups and women groups that are specifically non-white.

This concludes my reflections and observations on the experience of Third World people involved in the gay movement. It occurs to me that I've gotten a long ways away from my friend Joe, since those days when he used to come over and talk to me. We've both gone off in very different directions, and I miss him very much. I miss him mainly I guess, because I suspect that he still has a lot to tell me, and maybe now there are even a few things that I can tell him. But even now after going through the never-ending process of developing a consciousness, and becoming politically active, I still find myself wrestling with some of the same old questions. And I begin to realize how much Joe's friendship means to me, and how united we are by something far more significant and central than political issues. All non-white people are united by something far more significant and central than the various places which our individual politics may lead us. I'm just hoping that somewhere along the journey, we might come together in our struggle for awareness, respect, and unity.

And peace.

—Leonard Andrews, Jr.

timelustness

My immediate reason for beginning this article was the observatin of a very visible change in the amount of people of "radical" consciousness who had in fact changed from very anti-establishment, live-for-the-revolution mentalities to what I saw as very 1950's get-a-job, maintain-someone-else's-schedule attitudes toward life. (While I was pondering in preparation for this article, a friend suggested I read "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism" by E. P. Thompson, a forty-plus-page chapter from a book dealing with the work force and the changing perception of time. The chapter did a nice job of allowing me to see in black and white some of the things I had been thinking about in very general terms but, of course, offered no assistance in understanding the resolution of the psychic conflict between the straight work ethic and the homosexual self-declaration!)

Having had various jobs, paid positions, through my years from 14 to 24, I am, on many levels, aware of what sort of securities having a job offers. Early in life I thought the main reason for working was to afford the money to obtain the basics of life in a material sense. These feelings were mine when I was very immersed in a Black environ. The prospect of going to college and getting a position as a degreed person caused everyone in that environ to be excited, very excited, for me. I would be able, by virtue of my increased earning ability, to do all the things Black folk had never been able to do. It didn't take long for the settling of the awareness that \$500 does not = \$500, etc. Plainly, I could not do the things with \$500 that whitemen did with the same amount or half that amount or one-fifth that amount. So it was no big deal to give up working as an occupation because the things I wanted to do (spend time with people—sexually, physically, emotionally, intellectually, lightly, dealing, growingly; travel, read, experience in a continuum of ease and stability) were much easier to do without the constant concern of The Boss expecting me at some time to do his bidding.

The period of the sixties showed me many people lost because of lack of energies to direct their own lives. It showed me much more than this—things like people with no clear knowledge of themselves as sexual beings, clutching to strong images that were arising. So much playing at being poor! Playing at being gay! Such definitive, and unfelt, stops placed in personalities, not because people were feeling the need to not do these things, but because people were feeling that the counter-culture was making demands—new orders to follow thoughtlessly. The counter-culture being these

straight white men who realized that they couldn't all be leaders in the straight culture as there are only so many positions open in any particular generation and overpopulation had reached the point where applicants far outnumbered slots. So they went where the positions had not yet been determined and, using their birthright as straight white men, began to organize a counter-culture where they would have the slots to lead in and the people to follow. People who don't believe in themselves find it very easy to believe in anyone who offers anything resembling a solution or an analysis of *any* particular situation as far as that goes!

When those new leaders tired of the particular project and decided to go back to the world of "accomplishment" (after all, they wanted their house, cars, and family) their followers were left unguided again. So having spent two to ten years agreeing that they couldn't get out of life anything worth having or anything approximately what they wanted from a restricting 9-5, they went out and got themselves a 9-5.

The wave of the sixties has shown many things. Having time to delve led some to the realization that all was not as the professor said. Television also was playing a very big part in the flow of things and many students and others found out about Freedom Marches and things around the country. There were many people traveling around the country learning about civil disobedience, about hunger, about time not spent doing the bidding of the large directive culture. The beginnings of a firm counter-culture. A counter-culture very much rooted in and reflective of the dominant culture. In this counter-culture there are many *homosexualists* (quoting an Ann Arbor mother), people who did sex with persons of the same sex, and many people who have not in any way become aware of who they are sexually. Another discovery of my college years was the preponderance of people with no—or limited—sexual expression and knowledge until very late teens or twenties!

In the culture there were, of course, no outspoken-to-be-taken-seriously models of for and/or by homosexuality. There was a period when Gay Liberation was a very definite representative of the counter-culture: sexual liberation, know one's self, end exploitation. Therefore, many sexually ambiguous people became attracted by the aura of increased sexual experimentation and expression of *coming out*. There was a party line there somewhere, depending on which branch of gay liberation one found oneself in, and the line was the important thing—something to dictate behavior. Even in turning away from the programming of goals, aspirations, rela-

tion models, patterns of life of the culture, there existed this need to have some program of behavior in order to exist. Since this program of behavior was not as in-depth, could not cover so many of one's hours as the previous program, and since the prime directive was not to have to decide what to do with one's time and energies on one's own, there was a period of great confusion, lack of direction and rampant catatonia and depression in the gay community.

There was a period of very visible outrageous dressing because there were many intellectual decisions to be less man-like. There were many more males having sexual relationships with males. These relationships did not involve erections, orgasms, or in many cases enjoyment because they were done as attempts at following the right line, not out of some understanding of or an attempt to fulfill some sexual impulse or need. There are all these people willing to do what whoever tells them to because they don't know what to do or how to find out what they want to do or whether they can trust their own impulses because after all they are from straight white backgrounds. So they go around experiencing the same discontent that caused them to leave the mainstream of society, the culture, in the first place. Only this time they blame most of these weird feelings on the gay community, and there can be no surprise here. Society has always said that the homosexual lot is a miserable one.

There are definite patterns of relationships within the world of work requirements. An economic system is pervasive. One does not leave one's uniform at the time clock and take on a different outlook. You don't walk away from something that had you fuming and suddenly, because you are no longer at work, become cheery and bright. Sexual relationships and alienation are two realities which coexist. Things have to become time-slotted when your time is not your own. You may be able to fuck until 6 when you have to be at work at 7 but you cannot fuck till 8. It is much easier on many levels to have shallower relationships when you don't have time for less shallow ones. Besides who has had enough time to develop whatever is the alternative to shallow relationships? We don't even know if they are worth having. When so much of one's psychic energy goes into work, there is certainly less psychosexual energy to put into sex. On a very practical level a certain source of sexual activity is called for. Baths, parks, tearooms between shifts, libraries are places where one needn't really talk and that means there is more time for the sex act. Of course if one works long and hard enough there is no time or energy for sex at all. There is no time for anything but work. A new division.

The two cultures I have experienced to a great extent are the Black and Homosexual subcultures. I do not for a second intend to say that all that follows in my relating the Black subculture is the experience of all Blacks, but I dare say there will be therein common experiences

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



TIMELUSTNESS CONT.

and emotional responses. To be a member of more than one subculture is to belong to another subculture. To be Black and homosexual is to be a Black homosexual, which is not just being Black or homosexual. Within the Black community I experienced extended family structure; I experienced women being able to move through the white world of getting a job, making money, providing for the family more dependably than a man. I experienced a firm grasp on reality. I never for any period of time expected anyone to give me anything because I happened to be standing on the right corner at the right time. I experienced sex at an early age as we were many people in very close quarters. I would walk the streets late at night or early in the morning and see people fucking in the hallways and in back of the school and in cars and in homes of friends. Needless to say I experienced more than these things and I experienced these things more than once.

As a homosexual, years ago, I experienced many social and economic realities as well as physical and sexual ones. I never sat down and thought about being a sexual being back then; I was too busy being one. Throughout this period, however, I never encountered anyone who was working for lack of anything better to do or because they couldn't stand having time to themselves or because they were saving up for a rainy day. They were forced to work to provide for themselves and those around them the necessities of day-to-day life. There were no allusions to the house one would buy after ten or so years of working. Two things I remember most about being a young homosexual were the feeling of being able to take care of myself, and having that feeling recognized by those around me, in the Black community; and the feeling that there was no need to lay resources back for a later time because everyone I met in the white homosexual community (or at least most of those I met who spoke to the possibility or showed signs of knowing that it was coming) seemed very sure that they would not live beyond 35 years of age. The driving force, in terms of work, with these groups was not to work and save and work and save, but to work in order to get the things one had to have or the things one needed or decided were worth having in the short span of time left one. No one was into working because if they lost that job they would be lost as far as directing their own energies and time were concerned. The jobs were not of the sort that were rare or irreplaceable.

At a get-together of Third World gay males recently I mentioned the economic reality of homosexuality and the fact that it is economics and social forces more than anything that cause Third World homosexuality to encounter such identity clashes upon leaving the Third World gay community. I felt about the way I had a gathering of intellectual white middle-class homosexuals when I mentioned that some time and energy should be lent to those homosexuals who are out on the streets hustling to buy food and pay rent. How advanced technology has become during the twenty-plus years of my life, while I understand little more than my parents did about these forces—bugging devices, computers that print newspapers, tasteless-odorless-colorless lubricants, machines to shell sunflower seeds, riddle me these!

So why are people working—at what are people working—for whom are people working??? Working to not know what is going on in and around them—working for things that have proved unsatisfactory years ago—working for things that changes and developments have made obsolete!

This article is a thought process and an attempt to share thoughts and insights. It cannot be a demand for others to open their eyes and relate to the world about them—the changing world—and realize that we are all agents, actors, not merely here to live out the predetermined existences we slipped into at birth. It cannot be a demand because I am not a Boss; my demand would be meaningless on so broad a plane. I shall continue the process of thinking about these things, using these thoughts and observations to live in a changing world in changing ways, not being bowled over by the machine which is society. I continue trying to relate these thoughts to my life and the circumstances of those around me who are even more definitively left out of the process of channeling the forces and direction of these changes and are supposed to be so content with the roles *opening up* for them in this time-space continuum in which we presently find ourselves. I needn't go around looking for places to put time, energy and love. It's where I live. Where do you live?

—Larry Anderson

I AM A WITCHDOCTOR

The Chippewa at Garapata
crashing from smack binge
Sagrada Familia gaunt and Gaudi
'gainst knobbed sandstone sets
wolfing weed
sipping snake oil
guzzling garbage vegetables.

Jaded serpentine and serpentine jades
lying in wait upon the beach.
I trade three joints for jasper in masquerade.
Countless campers top-heavy with tots
flashing hackneyed, half-truth symbols
of peace (V), short distance (D) and
no room (—).
Scientologist sings scat talk to
my keyboard cum gourd, my sax cum calabash.
("A what? 'Bird' never played *that*.")
At first he fears my tooth of horn, my nails of
"Jade Dust" and Sativa is put out. Next day we pass
The second time around and Sativa is put out.
Then: "scu dubba du bop, scu bop, ta dubby, dubby, du . . ."
Mbira ya Sativa
Kabaka wa kalimbash
Gourd keyboard,
Carmel calabash.

La Cuesta Encantada art-deco-rated
in mustard jars and catsup bottles,
tasteless Tiffany, and invaluable Velásquez—
cruetless mid Carraran splendor.
Exotic Rosebuds rank with riches the bridal bridle path;
Xanadu Welles up a
mighty heave
from below.

Mbira ya Sativa
Kabaka wa kalimbash
Gourd keyboard
Carmel calabash

Still Light in August,
simple Texan suffering from slight syllabic
slur plays Brown to my Xmas (fool
to my leer).
Pulls popgun pilferings for
Peanuts, on the plage in Venice.
"Nigger," (he slipped unscathing) is "just
a way of thinking."
As night falls the unhurried, unstudied,
unabashed drone makes an involuntary
tent of my sleeping bag.

Saw the escutcheon on his chariot,
the finest in the lot:
Lo, 'twas "Veritas"—
Big Sur from the "B" school,
major of Industry,
conspicuously consuming the view.
Dollar-rich and hour-poor
sitting with the pack, sipping
insipid coffee
staring at
the sunless scene,

He cannot the sea
see, nor *me* see
sitting with the pack,
trucking on my thumbs . . .
Mbira ya Sativa
Kabaka wa kalimbash,
Gourd keyboard
Carmel calabash.

But look—here comes a repeat meet,
armed with guitar.
Already sang soprano to my
thumb piano up the road
Not so far.
(Here I've waited half the day, here I seemed bound to stay
but,)
suddenly we've got a ride.
Well,
man and woman,
Black and white
same straw hat
(Chinatown, People's Republic of)
Though hers concave and mine is flat.
Do they take her for my bride?
Sure my nails are green. sure my ears
are pierced. sure my jewelry clacks and
rings.
still they take her for my bride,
still they take us for a ride.
Drive us to resort exclusive
Give us welcome quite effusive.

I played the night in sulphur
bath opening upon the sea.
Leather strap about my wrist
not even sleep can part *kalimba*
and me.

My gourd keyboard,
my Carmel calabash
mbira ya Sativa
kabaka wa kalimbash.

Kalimba Kalimba
ikaimba ikaimba
coming out in Zanzibars
soothing the heated verandas
of the mind,
the hot Hades of sense and
sensibilia.
singing of sum and loss
and the power of passion . . .
the silent strumming upon the
instrument.

Kabaka wa kalimbash Sativa's
Yaa, Sativa's Kabaka wa Kalimbas.



SATIVA
Kabaka wa Kalimbas.

Dear Brothers:

I don't believe I've ever explained to you how I came about subscribing to your paper or why I'm not allowed to have it.

While here, at Folsom, I met a guy, who was incidentally Caucasian (I'm black), with whom I reached such a rapport that we applied to be cell partners under a new double ceiling procedure which allows all inmates to double with any other inmate of their choice. The only inmates prohibited from doubling were those with past records of violence or aggressive homosexuality.

Neither of us having had any such past record, we thought we had it made. What we did not take into consideration was the unwritten policy of de facto segregation imposed by the prison administrators upon the inmate population. Due to our request for an integrated cell, my past record was researched and a past incident of 3½ years ago was brought forward and labeled a homosexual relationship, thereby providing an opportunity to custodially disqualify me from double-ceiling with anyone.

I filed a civil rights complaint with the Eastern District Federal Court, Misc. S1645, charging the prison administrators with de facto segregation and defamation of character. Whether I'm gay or not has nothing to do with these people, as long as I'm not caught violating any prison rules relating to sexuality. Because I went so far as to file the civil rights complaint and further to separate my partner and I, I was classified custodially disqualified from remaining in vocational training. We were both assigned to vocational print shop, but I was the only one labeled homosexual.

When the prison administrators found their adverse actions had little or no effect upon the strength of our relationship, they transferred my partner to another institu-

tion, and refused to allow us to correspond with one another. And now, I've been informed all inmates with single cell status (gays) are to be moved to a special tier (section) within the prison. The reason given being, "our present cells are needed for double-ceiling purposes," which makes a lot of sense considering all of the cells in this place are alike insofar as construction is concerned. I believe you can imagine what it's like to be labeled (justly or unjustly) discriminated against, harassed, isolated and generally stepped upon merely because the person you happen to be compatible with is incidentally of a different color.

It was during the above I learned of your paper and wrote for it. I just received the final denial on issue Jan.-Feb., so it will be kept in my personal property until my release. Issue March-April I've heard no word about, so I can only say it's also being held. I was told the paper would only be held when it had pictures depicting sex relations in it. The written word is allowed.

Solidarity,
Ronald Earl Sims
P. O. Box A-72555-B
Represa, Calif. 95671

Eddie Loftin served nearly five years in maximum security Folsom State Prison for stealing eight dollars.

He was an orphan from Georgia and, having no family, had been on the road A broadside illustrated with some of Eddie's drawings and excerpts from some feet tall and 120 pounds, he was known of his letters will be available through Join around as "Little Eddie." His crimes were Hands, P.O. Box 42242, San Francisco, nonviolent, mainly stealing enough to live California 94142. Donations for this hand-

When I started writing him through Join Hands last summer, our rapport was

close and immediate. We opened up to each other the conditions of our respective lives. What a difference in our backgrounds and life styles! But we were both artists and gay and related to each other as such. We talked, through our letters, of getting a showing of his work, as he didn't have a "trade"—and he was anticipating his parole this March (1974).

The letters and the months grew close, and in November he was denied parole along with all eight other gay men who came up before the board for hearings. This coincided with the new "hard line" in California's "model" prison system. Eddie recognized in his letters that raising the prison population was part of a plan to raise a budget for two new "maxi-prisons."

He wrote me, following that demoralizing experience, that although being openly gay was the excuse the parole board used, he was still proud of it, and that he would never give up hope of becoming a free man again.

In February, after an unusual three weeks' absence of communication, my last letter to him was returned, marked only "deceased."

Little Eddie, beautifully proud and healthy and hopeful, had died an untimely death, which was called a "heart attack" on the death certificate issued by the prison.

Using Eddie as a focal point of the oppression of all gay men in this country's prison system, we held a memorial service at the Metropolitan Community Church in

San Francisco on June 23. A broadside illustrated with some of Eddie's drawings and excerpts from some feet tall and 120 pounds, he was known of his letters will be available through Join around as "Little Eddie." His crimes were Hands, P.O. Box 42242, San Francisco, nonviolent, mainly stealing enough to live California 94142. Donations for this hand-

—Jerry Joiner

NOTES to the free?

Fag Rag and Gay Sunshine continue to relate to Gays in prison through letters and whatever other means are available, in terms of time and resources. If you have any time and energy, perhaps these excerpts from letters we have received will reveal things you can do.

The struggling men along with myself have been marching up and down the hall to entertain a few minute groups of investigators. The groups have come from the governing office, health and rehabilitative services and of all places the division of corrections main office. I said exactly what I thought about this jungle, all the fancy details as to how prison guards savagely attack prisoners among other acts of terrorism. Before I could get in my cell good, prison guards were retaliating against me. They boosted my spirit with their petty acts. I hear the pigs about the line telling a man who is having a seizure to get up and get on the stretcher. Every prisoner here best be paranoid.

The biggest problem for me concerning sex in prison is the fact that everything has to be all planned out in advance. That to me makes it all so phony. Sex should just happen. If its planned, it is sex for sexual reasons rather than expressing one's emotions for another, so I usually do without.

Most gays, and young good looking men in here get harassed and propositioned constantly. I had a few problems when I first got here, as I am 22 and good looking (I guess), but nobody bothered me anymore 'cause I'm not the scared, weak, little boy they thought I was. Practically everyone knows I'm gay, but they also know I have to really dig someone before I'll get down with them - so I've gained their respect and acceptance and my time is much easier than most.

...the length of time that I will be in here well I don't know for sure but I had hoped to be out by the middle of next year if everything works out right, if not I might have to do another year in here but I sure hope that that is not the case. I have been down for seven years and I hope that I won't have to do much more. I have 33 more months to do before I do my top. I was given a six months to ten year sentence of which I have done seven years. And I hope that I don't have to do the rest of it, for all this time is drivin' me up the wall, but I'll make it sooner or later.

Well if it is possible, there is one thing you can do for me. I would like to know if there is anyone out there that has an old portable typewriter that they do not need. I would appreciate it if I could obtain one for my studies. They get upset whenever I use the one in school.

I've been in "the hole" since February 14. About 40 of us were rounded up that day and charged with various infractions of prison regulations. These regulations are quite numerous and are given elastic interpretations, so we're subject to be found in violation of a rule at any time.

The real reason we were locked up concerned a demonstration which had been planned by local, outside people to take place in front of the prison. On the inside we had planned to refuse to eat on the day of the demonstration. The officials responded by making a mass search, locking up those of us whom they view as "radicals," and issuing a lurid press release in which they announced that we had been planning a violent uprising. They said they found weapons in their search, but these charges were a mere concoction. One man's "bomb" was really a can of glue, and another's "dagger" was a crocheting hook which had been purchased through the prison's commissary. Despite these actions by the officials the demonstration went off as planned.

I hope sincerely that you don't feel ill toward me for being as I am or my convictions in this, but regardless, don't condemn me for being myself. I want so badly to be a woman, to love and be loved. I'm not a tramp, nor will I ever be, but I am the

type that will go 100% in any venture I partake, and I choose homosexual life. Once released my life begins, it's as though being born again. I shall strive in every effort to become as I wish to be, to find someone who considers me worthy of being loved and to love with all my heart. Any form of life is beautiful if those involved think so and value what they have. I'll not go to "gay bars" etc., that's unlady-like. I will go to parties of some, but nothing dirty. Please don't think me snobbish or stuck-up, I'm not. I consider myself a realist, and know the path in life I want.



The gay group is starting to shape together a little. At present there are 20 in it, and I am the only true homosexual there. The other 19 were turned out in prison. I've got a real job on my hands. I didn't have the headache I'm getting from these Queens as I did when I was a first grade school teacher.

I'm hoping you can be of some help to me, by placing an ad in your paper. I'm 25 years old and presently a political prisoner at London Prison Farm. I'm very lonely and need friends. I would like correspondence with anyone.

If you know of anyone who would like to write I would be very glad to hear from them. I have no one, so it is quite hard doing this time. A letter can mean so much to a person, especially in here. There is only one problem with my writing to you. I have no funds so I must borrow envelopes. This, in here, is a very bad practice. I get by because I sell my meats and desserts for smokes, toothpaste and toilet articles. It really makes your whole outlook different when you are getting mail.

RECENTLY I WROTE TO YOU REQUESTING MY NAME BE PLACED ON THE PEN-PAL LIST AND A SUBSCRIPTION STARTED TO FAG RAG. I'M JUST WONDERING IF YOU RECEIVED MY REQUEST AND LETTER? MOST OF THE TIME WE EXPERIENCE DIFFICULTY HERE AT THIS PRISON WITH GAY BOOKS AND PAPERS. IT SEEMS THE ADMINISTRATION DOES NOT APPROVE OF GAY MATERIAL. IF NEED BE I PLAN ON GOING THROUGH THE COURT IN ORDER TO OBTAIN MY RIGHTS AND THE MATERIAL I ENJOY READING. I'D BE EVER SO APPRECIATIVE IF YOU'D PLACE AN ISSUE OF FAG RAG IN THE MAIL FOR ME. ALSO, WRITING DIRECTLY TO ME AND ADVISING OF ITS BEING FORWARDED. ALSO, PLACING MY NAME ON THE PEN-PAL LIST SO I MAY RECEIVE MAIL FROM MY TYPE OF PEOPLE. NOT ONLY TO FIND OUT WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND THE COUNTRY, BUT TO RAP AND TO PLACE MYSELF AWAY FROM THIS PRISON. I CAN'T SPEAK FOR OTHER PRISONS, BUT THIS ONE IS TERRIBLE FOR GAYS.

I enjoy reading your paper very much. I hope you continue to inform the public on what's really going on in this country.

I would appreciate it very much if you would print an ad in your correspondence section for me and a friend. We are presently confined at Soladad State Prison. We are both Chicano's and very lonely.

We will answer letters from (Gema) who are willing to write us.

wounded knee

Upon arriving in Wounded Knee, I realized that all the ideology I had learned had not prepared me for the reality of the situation. When confronted with the actual liberation of two square miles, with 20,000 rounds of ammunition from the U.S. government shot into the area each night, my political thoughts had some applicability, but the skills needed were not found in a book. I had never experienced people working together, sharing all things together to survive; and had never been shot at before. I have been to Vietnam, but it was I and the military that did the shooting. I found that I had to experience this before understanding it.

After being relieved by another medical team in a week, and realizing that I had only begun to understand why the Indian people from the Pine Ridge Reservation and all over the country were making a stand, I decided to stay and support the liberation. After being inside Wounded Knee for a week, I went to Rapid City, South Dakota, 110 miles from the reservation, to coordinate medical teams to go inside each week, and to acquire medical supplies.

During the liberation I began to feel a backslide in sexual politics with the people supporting on the outside. Women who were feminist in the cities around the country, and men who claimed to understand relationships and believed in not oppressing women, began existing in very stereotypical man-woman roles and began to fuck like it was the last chance.

During that time in Rapid City, many people were coming through helping with the support group for the Indians inside Wounded Knee. One of these people was a man named Jonny who was a reporter for a paper in Chicago. When we first met, I had very warm feelings toward him but was reluctant to spend much time with him. Many reasons were in my head as to why I hesitated; one was that I didn't know of any other gay people there and had been sleeping and relating with men openly for only about six months prior to my going to Wounded Knee. One day after a tension-filled time (because a person inside Wounded Knee had been wounded) I talked with Jonny alone, and found that he was feeling very similar things. We spent the night together even though two other couples were sleeping in the same room.

For a week the relationship continued. Though we were separated because of our different jobs, we found time to relate, but a tension began to develop because of the large groups of people always around us, no time to ourselves, and the individual personal tensions we both were experiencing. Shortly after a week, Jonny decided he didn't want to carry on the relationship; we discussed it and ended our sexual relationship.

This experience left me very upset; we stopped relating. I felt trapped and isolated, but my mind was also occupied with the work on hand. I left in June to return to Seattle, with some negative feelings on why I couldn't freely relate to a person when a relationship developed, to try and straighten out my life all over again and lick my wounds. What I found was basically the same thing I had left, groups of people groping after one another and saying all things were good. A friend of mine would come to my window at around midnight and knock on my bedroom window. I would let him in and he would

spend the night, get up in the morning and leave through the window so as not to meet the women I lived with.

In Seattle I got acquainted again with a friend named Larry and began talking of my troubles as well as spending some pleasurable times together, dining, playing cards and tennis, and generally feeling good. It was a time of feeling good with another gay person and, generally, having a friend who I could share some experiences with. Shortly after he decided to move to Boston, I decided to go back to Wounded Knee, having received many phone calls asking me to return and do investigation work on the Pine Ridge Reservation in preparation for the upcoming trials. I went back to the reservation and worked for three months in a very hostile area.

Since the liberation of Wounded Knee, Dick Wilson, Tribal Chairman of the Pine Ridge Reservation, continued to use hired vigilantes to beat, harass and kill the Indian people who did not support the Tribal Government. I lived in a district on the reservation which was made up of a thousand people who were strong and were fighting to change the present structure to enable them to go back to their traditional beliefs and way of life. The Indian people for thousands of years had their culture; white men came, took the land and dictated to them how to live and took all power away from them to attempt to retain their culture.

I was told by one of the older Indian people before leaving South Dakota, that homosexuals in their culture were sacred people, respected like the medicine men—the thought was that they had the choice of two lives—and it was their responsibility to give each Indian child a sacred name that was never spoken in public. (I have become aware that homosexuals are treated differently with different tribes in the Indian culture.)

After spending three months on the reservation I moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, to assist on the Dennis Banks-Russell Means trial. I helped to develop a legal collective which gathered all information acquired about Wounded Knee and indexed it in a way to be used in the court for the attorneys and defendants. It was at this time that I decided to get acquainted with the gay community. Because of the long hours spent on the trial and the political differences with the gay group I contacted, I began to feel somewhat isolated again. The gay group first told me they were trying to reach white middle-class men in the closet, therefore they could tolerate no long hair, and it wasn't time for their organization to deal with the issues of racism and sexism yet (that first meeting, most of the women walked out because of that reason). I at that time decided I could not be a part of that group.

The trials go on, the victory sought in the courts is an important one, the recognition of the 1868 Treaty with the Sioux people. I support the Indian people and believe all people have a human right to have control of their lives. I feel that socialism is perhaps a beginning. I do have some problems that are very clear to think of because I'm gay. How can a gay person in this country work for a structure that has yet to allow expression of our being to be expressed as any other desire among the people?

Patrick Kelly is a white medical volunteer from Seattle.



El Taller Grafico/LNS



Santiago/LNS

viva lola viva allende

The following is a declaration issued by the Homosexual Liberation Front of Argentina concerning the situation in Chile. English translation is by Allen Young.

The well-planned wave of terror unleashed in Chile by the military junta beginning on Sept. 11, 1973, apparently is not limited merely to the jailing of thousands of workers, students and patriots for the crime of disagreeing politically with the sinister plans of the regime of Gen. Pinochet.

Among those affected are those who in their day-to-day life do not behave in accord with the concepts of social order which the regime proposes to impose—concepts which seem to be modeled on the ideas of the Holy Inquisition.

Thus the homosexual community of Chile has been repressed along with the other sectors of the people, and in a most cruel manner.

A well known homosexual from Santiago, a Uruguayan nicknamed Lola Punales, was raped, tortured, castrated and tormented by groups of military men. Scores of homosexuals have suffered the same fate; such deeds are commonplace in Chile. The dead bodies are left for several days in the public streets in order to intimidate the population, to sow terror. To have long hair and a beard; to dress in red or to wear a mini-skirt—these are causes for arrest, these are subversive deeds according to the Chilean military regime. As far as its massive repression, the coup d'état of the Pinochet regime has no antecedent in the democratic history of this country.

The murder of homosexuals in Chile is nothing new. The same method was used by the Ibanez government in the 1950s;

hundreds of homosexuals were thrown into the sea with stones tied to them. A boat filled with *companeros* was sunk in the Pacific Ocean.

In the garden of fascism, have no doubt, only the flower of death and terror grows. We homosexuals are subversive because we love life; we are imaginative; we detest authoritarianism; we believe in human solidarity; we desire a system founded on freedom and we reject "Military Order" because it is synonymous with oppression.

Pinochismo [the regime of Gen. Pinochet] is a sea of blind worms in perfect "order."

We issue a call for the repudiation of the Chilean coup, and for helping the refugees, the prisoners and those who are fighting back.

We call upon Chilean homosexuals to join the Active Resistance, together with other repressed groups, and we call upon the Latin American and the world homosexual communities to give as much help as possible.

The death of Lola Punales shows us once again that to be homosexual is a manifestation of human affirmation and dignity, something that the fascists can not stand.

The most colorful flower of Santiago has died to be born again. Yesterday—grace, joy and wit. Today, in her unrecognizable corpse, each oppressed being can recognize its own image. There is a commitment, a pain which brings us to tears and makes us determined to fight on to victory. Lola Punales, your body, picked at by the carrion birds of *pinochismo*, bears within it a butterfly of dreams and kisses, which they could not find. We are confident of this: your shroud will be our banner.

nantucket chicano

Dear Dos,

Thoughts returning to the wharf the day you both left. Such a weak, pathetic hug and a kiss I gave you all. Even a peck on the cheek confirmed what the "men" on the dock knew anyway. So little courage and such a simple act. Question marks hanging over the love I wanted to express. A vacuum through which the warmth I needed from you could not pass. In thinking of good-byes remembering also leaving Boston. Leaving Charles. Two men kissing awkwardly in a subway car. Standing suddenly alone, outside on the platform as his train disappears over the Longfellow bridge. Not alone and afraid, but afraid and therefore alone. My love must have courage.

Being afraid and recalling the poet who wrote, "A lie is a death wish." I say I want to live, but the lies in my life hardly support the statement. I lose ten pounds and a woman at work says that must mean I have a new girl friend. I let it pass. Walking aimlessly down dark streets, my boss pulls up asking if some woman is keeping me up at nights. He tells me his latest sexual fantasy and my silence supports his sexism. Responding to his story with a wan smile that belies all that a faggot is.

In contradictory times it was easier to be a bit more courageous and therefore easier to be a faggot. The G.M.L. days. The endless series of meetings when we accomplished nothing so much as to be visible to each other. The first time I marched in a Christopher Street March in New York, it seemed like there were miles and miles of faggots, and we marched under a banner which read strength in numbers. Numbers that bring strength and power to dispel the fear. "Strength in numbers," not a tired cliché, but a mystic incantation of the numerologist. The credo of the miser, the politician, the tea-room queen. At 422 Mass. Ave. remember retching reading Rechy's "Numbers." Numbers always numbers. We played cut-throat, a card game. Make four tricks or have four added to your score, zero being the goal. Being deluded by this bit of reverse psychology. And if you climb stairs, finding me masturbating amidst my porno, in a larger game I am penalized. Go back four spaces and lose a roll of the dice. Paper tricks don't count. A simple arithmetic lesson not easily forgotten; waking up alone in a double bed, looking across

the room, seeing three people scrunched into the other bed.

Recently I tried to impress someone who impressed me. (You know what I mean). When my go-between, the infamous Fred, and I were doing an autopsy on the effort, he replied, "You didn't make any points talking about bus driving." Points — scores — numbers — winners — losers — power. Men win most of the time. Women win enough times to keep them interested in playing the game, and no one wants to play with fairies not even other fairies. I sing a sad song, "I ain't got no numbers."

More to the point, the power game goes on. I am afraid. I am afraid because one of you is black, and not a little because the other is blond and that is one of my weaknesses that I know too well. An emptiness felt in my life is threatened by what you know, and what you have experienced, where you have been and what you have survived. I think of my mother, who wants to know what I am doing, but knowing I am a faggot, also doesn't want to know what I am doing. A fear of living life honestly. Admitting that there are prospects of more pain and many more lies in life as well as fulfillment and productiveness.

I lie in bed a great deal doing nothing and not wanting to admit that I am doing nothing. I say that I am forgetting and remembering. Shaking out the wrinkles in the past. I am, however, no master of the art of selective forgetting. A host of petty injuries obsess me still and I forget the essentials. The most marvelous thing about your visit here was the humor you restored to my life. When I was very small, I would sit in papa's lap and he would read me the comics in the paper. I would never get the punch lines and he would have to poke me in the ribs and tell me, ever the stoneface, to laugh. Thanks for the much-needed poke in the ribs.

In our world there is a very special trinity in the past, the present, and the future. Faggots, Blacks, Women, and Native Americans are all denied access to our own history, and this is done by the powers that be to deny our legitimacy in the present. In forgetting and remembering, I guess, I try on a personal level to deal with the past and how it affects my present. I want the freedom to live honestly. I want my future.

love, Chris

THE FLOWER BENEATH THE FOOT: The Gay Novel

The rise of gay liberation in North America and Britain in the '60's and '70's has sparked new interest—among gays and others—in social attitudes toward the homosexual, and in gays' views of themselves and their place in society. Those attitudes, varying through the ages and altering drastically even since the beginning of this century, are most accurately reflected not in historical, sociological or legal studies but in imaginative literature—especially, during modern times, in the novel.

The literature of ancient Greece, Rome, Persia and the Orient had produced a considerable amount of prose, drama and poetry on homosexual themes. Many of the works are still extant; some have been lost or were destroyed by officials of the Christian Church. (Euripides' lost tragedy *Chrysippus*, for example, dealt with the abduction of Pelops' sons Chrysippus, by Laius, king of Thebes, who fell in love with the boy while giving him chariot-steering lessons.) In fact, the first "novel" still in existence (or partly in existence), Petronius' *Satyricon*, written in the first century A.D., is a gay novel; it details the adventures of a pair of dissolute youths as they wander through the decaying scenery of the Roman Empire. It was recently made into a dazzling film by Federico Fellini.

Other gay "novels" from the period include Xenophon's *An Ephesian Tale* and Lucian's *True History*. But the eclipse of pagan Rome brought an end to realistic, satirical and overtly erotic literature in the West for close to 1,000 years. Homosexual literature did not really re-emerge until the 16th century, with the sonnets of Barnfield, Shakespeare, Michelangelo and others.

Among prose works, the first modern European classic of homosexual love is *L'Alibiade Fanciullo a Scuola* (Alcibiades the Schoolboy) by Antonio Rocco, published in Venice in 1651. Written in dialogue form, it has been described as "a gem of erotic literature... a graceful description of the beauty of boys and the pleasures they offer, and of a boy's sexual education" [1]. It has also been characterized as "a manual on how to seduce boys" and "a deadly parody of the Machiavellian doctrine of expediency" [2]. An English edition of the work was announced in 1966, but was never issued.

More than thirty years after Alcibiades made his entrance, the first edition of *Sodom: or the Quintessence of Debauchery*, a play in rhyming couplets by John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, was posthumously published in Amsterdam. This bawdy satire on court manners recounts what ensues when King Bolloxinon decides that buggery will henceforth be the approved sexual activity at court:

*Buggery we chose and Buggery we allow
For none but fops alone to cunts will bow.*

And so on.

Perhaps the first English novel (or near-novel) to deal as extensively with homosexuality was *The Sins of the Cities of the Plain* or *The Recollections of a Mary-Anne*. Published in 1881, it gives a realistic, if somewhat exaggerated, picture of the male homosexual underworld in Victorian London. "The extent to which pederasty is carried on in London between gentlemen and young fellows is little dreamed of by the outside public," remarks the anonymous author. He would say the same today.

While *Cities of the Plain* is written in the form of a memoir, *Teleny*, or *the Reverse of the Medal*, published in 1893, is a true novel, the story of a love affair between two handsome young men, one of them a concert pianist. The book is sometimes attributed to Oscar Wilde, who seems to have had a hand in making additions and alterations to the original manuscript. In the incidents it recounts, *Teleny* gives full play to both the romantic and the sordid, and ends with the suicide of the title character; in this last it is typical of many works that followed. The tragic ending (usually suicide or murder) was a convention of the homosexual novel until well into the second half of this century. For readers, publishers and even some writers, the wages of sin was death and the transgressor had to receive the punishment he deserved. Sometimes (as in Mann's *Death in Venice*) the dramatic demise of the protagonist served an artistic purpose, but more often it was merely a



concession to the punitive impulses of conventional morality.

Teleny was an underground publication, clandestinely circulated, but during the Victorian and Edwardian eras in Britain, there were many generally available works, some by eminent authors, expressing some form of homosexual sentiment. Most were poetry or tracts—or both, like the free verse of Whitman's English disciple Edward Carpenter. But the trial in 1895 of Oscar Wilde for homosexual practices, had far-reaching effects on art and literature, one of which was to curtail the emergence of overtly gay writing. A few privately-printed books of verse and generalised apologia continued to be published, but of works intended for a larger public, such as novels, there were few, and those quite restrained in their depiction of same-sex affections.

Some authors, in acquiescing to the opinions of the time, totally suppressed their overtly homosexual writing. E. M. Forster's novel *Maurice*, for example, remained unpublished until after his death. Had it been released when it was written in 1914, its positive treatment of homosexual love would have been at least as revolutionary as D. H. Lawrence's writings of the same period.

Such muted treatments as did appear often had the traditional English all-male boarding school as their setting and the inmates of such institutions as their protagonists. The mutual affections that had been only obscurely hinted at in *Tom Brown's School Days* became considerably more obvious in Ashley Clarke's *Jasper Tristram*, H. A. Vachell's *The Hill* and Howard Sturgis' *Tim*, and in fact, the "school story" has remained a distinct and popular sub-genre of English gay writing.

But the inhibiting effects of the Wilde trial lasted in Britain even into the 1930's. Europe during this time enjoyed a somewhat less repressive atmosphere that allowed novels and even personal testaments on the theme of homosexuality. France, particularly, developed a tradition of homosexual writing, or perhaps more accurately of homosexual writers, that had begun with Verlaine and Rimbaud in the 1870's and was to continue to Eric Jourdan and Francois-Marie Banier today.

Proust, in *Remembrance of Things Past*, of course, had felt obliged to switch the sex of some of his characters, leaving only the less savory aspects of homosexuality intact. But Mann's *Death in Venice*, Gide's *Corydon* and *The Immoralist*, Eekhoud's *Eskal-Vigor*, Broch's *The Death of Vergil* were less dishonest. It is doubtful whether they could have appeared in England. In 1918, for example, the novel *Despised and Rejected* by "A. T. Fitzroy" (Rose Laure Allatini), described by one commentator as "the first open homosexual novel in English—worse still in war-time, a pacifist novel" [3] frightened the authorities into attempts at suppression. The British Museum's copy remained hidden in the "private case," its title missing from the catalogue, for many years.

In November of 1928, thirty-three years after the Wilde scandal, another sensational prosecution was taking place at Bow Street Police Court. This was the trial for obscenity of Radclyffe Hall's lesbian novel *The Well of Loneliness*. Although the defense marshalled forty witnesses from the world of letters to testify that the book was not obscene, their testimony was ruled inadmissible, and they were never called. The judge, Sir Charles Biron, remarked of the book, "There is not one word which suggests that anyone with the horrible tendencies described is in the least degree blameworthy. All the characters are presented as attractive people and put forward with admiration. What is even more serious is that certain acts are described in the most alluring terms." He concluded that *The Well of Loneliness* was "an obscene libel" that would tend to corrupt those into whose hands it might fall. He ordered the book to be destroyed. (It was subsequently published in France, the U.S. and many other countries before finally being released in Britain years later.)

Even though the case was lost, it marked a turning-point in ending public silence on the subject of sexual variation, as well as opening up to general debate the questions of obscenity and censorship.

The '30's in Britain and America, experiencing the beginnings of these more open attitudes, produced a number of novels about homosexuals that can be seen as the first "gay novels" in the current sense. The English writer Reginald Underwood, in *Bachelor's Hall* and *Flame of Freedom*, achieved a restraint and lack of histrionics unhappily rare in his day. The American novels of the period tended to be cast in the form of tragic melodrama: in *Strange Brother* by Blair Niles (a woman, incidentally), the protagonist shoots himself; in Lew Levenson's *Butterfly Man* he falls into alcoholic degeneration; in Andre Tellier's *Twilight Men*, he writes a bad poem and then jumps out of a window. *The Young and Evil*, written by the young expatriate writers Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler and published in Paris, was less hysterical and more bizarre; its flashy, sometimes sordid picture of an amoral gay underworld is still recognizable in the '70's, forty years later.

Among the better-known English-language novelists of the period, those who were concerned with homosexual relationships at all either found it difficult personally to come to terms with their sexual aspect or else were careful to refrain from being explicit about it: Djuna Barnes with her intense, gothic *Nightwood* was an exception to the rule; D. H. Lawrence was a notable example of it. The intriguingly odd results of the ambivalence and the somewhat hysterical fervour that occasionally accompanies it reveal themselves in such central Lawrence novels as *Women in Love* and *Aaron's Rod*, in which intense and physical attachments between men nevertheless stop short of actual love-making.

Victoria Sackville-West's novel *The Dark Island* depicts a somewhat similar situation: a "romantic, emotion-charged love story between two women," [4] it avoids mention of any overtly sexual activity. The passionate uncertainties of Vita Sackville-West's involvement with Virginia Woolf and the detached interest taken by her bisexual husband, diplomat Harold Nicholson, were amusingly satirised in *The Flower Beneath the Foot* by Ronald Firbank, a novelist whose books dealt far more openly with homosexuals of both sexes than most others of the time. It is significant that he had to pay for their publication himself! Wyndham Lewis' *The Apes of God*, published in 1930, provided a more malign caricature of the Bloomsbury Group and the homosexuality of many of its members.

Some valuable works written during the time did not see publication until many years later: Lytton Strachey's charming satire on sexual hypocrisy, *Ermyntrode and Esmeralda*, was one of them. And writers as diverse as Gertrude Stein and Rex Stout, after early and relatively overt gay novels, soon decided (perhaps prudently) to toil in other fields, Miss Stein wading through the ebb and flow of her own obscurities, Mr. Stout retreating to the innuendo of Nero Wolfe's misogyny and phallic orchids. The works of such best-selling (and homosexual) novelists as Hugh Walpole and W. Somerset Maugham, though smuggling in a few sympathetically-drawn, if stereotyped, lesbians, show little or nothing of the male homosexual.

The important changes in attitude and morality brought about partly by the social disruptions of the '30's and the Second World War were naturally reflected in the approach taken toward sexuality and its depiction by a new generation of novelists. Among the spate of "war novels" of the late '40's and early '50's, a considerable number used the military as background to latent or overt homosexuality. But the semi-obligatory tragedy still ended many of the books published in the immediate post-war period: either suicide (Fritz Peters' *Finistere*, Nial Kent's *The Divided Path*), murder (Gore Vidal's *The City and the Pillar*, Ward Thomas' *Stranger in the Land*), accidental death (James Barr's *Quatrefoil*), madness (Stuart Engstrand's *The Sling and the Arrow*), or lugubrious and exaggerated despair (Charles Jackson's *The Fall of Valor*). But several avoided the convention, among them John Horne Burns' *The Gallery*, Truman Capote's *Other Voices, Other Rooms* and Jay Little's *Maybe—Tomorrow*. One war novel, Walter Baxter's *Look Down in Mercy*, even came equipped with two endings—one tragic (for British readers—the queer protagonist was British), one non-tragic, for Americans.

The wide divergence between official morality and actual sexual activity, and the broad extent of homosexual behaviour were revealed by Dr. Alfred Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, published in 1948 and 1953 respectively, and this was to have an effect on writers as well as on the public. (At least one author who had written a gay novel received a letter from Dr. Kinsey complimenting him on his "work in the field." [5])

In the gay novels of the later '50's, the tragic ending came more and more to be drastically modified and even abandoned altogether. Both Hugh Ross Williamson's quasi-mystery story *A Wicked Pack of Cards* and Rodney Garland's *The Heart in Exile* reversed the usual procedure by having the death of a homosexual occur at the beginning of the book, or rather, before the beginning, and using a friend's or lover's investigation of the circumstances to provide the framework of the plot. Both novels end sensibly and happily (though rather gratuitously in the case of the Garland). In addition, *The Heart in Exile* provided a good picture of the English homosexual subculture.

In some ways, these and other British novels written at this time, when both the timidity and the hysteria of earlier years could be avoided, but before the painfully gritty school of American neo-naturalism came to hold sway, remain among the most positive and the most appealing fiction to deal with gay themes. Angus Wilson's *Hemlock and After*, Mary Renault's *The Charioteer* and *The Last of the Wine*, the sixteen-year-old Kenneth Martin's *Aubade*, Gillian Freeman's *The Leather Boys* (originally published under the name

GAY NOVEL cont.

of "Eliot George"), Iris Murdoch's *The Bell*, were all written between 1952 and 1962. Julian Mitchell's *Imaginary Toys*, published in 1961, was one of the first novels to depict an overtly and admittedly homosexual character as accepted matter-of-factly by a community of non-gay friends.

Social developments in the '60's were exemplified in gay writers' changing views of their situation. For David in James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*, published in 1956, homosexuality, in spite of its tenderness and positive qualities, cannot be comfortably accepted as a way of life. Bisexual possibilities are cause for uncertainty. And once more, the novel ends with a murder. But in Baldwin's *Another Country*, released six years later, the approach to unorthodox love affairs (inter-racial, homosexual, bisexual) while keenly perceptive of the social and emotional difficulties involved, is both accepting and defiant. For the gay characters, the novel ends on a note of hopefulness and promise. In *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* (1968), the young male lover of Baldwin's actor hero accepts his gayness quite naturally—and openly—in a way his older friend could never do.

An even more radical change can be seen in the novels of Robin Maugham. In *Behind the Mirror* (1955), the hero, a film script-writer with a slightly aristocratic but no-nonsense name of David Brent, is unequivocally normal. Researching a film based on the life of a famous actress, he goes to East Africa to interview Norman Hartley, a former diplomat. Hartley turns out to be a homosexual, and to have once had an emotional friendship with the actress' young son. When Brent meets him, Hartley is living with an attractive young man. The writer eventually uncovers the details of Hartley's former life; in a crisis, Hartley is killed trying to save his young friend Bill and the woman with whom Bill has fallen in love. Brent returns to England to write his film based on an expurgated and severely distorted version of Hartley's life.

Although the homosexual character in *Behind the Mirror* is not unsympathetically presented, his nobility is the nobility of socially-required self-sacrifice—the ambiguous sublimity of the willing victim. When he realizes that his deep attachment to the actress' son is friendly and erotic rather than paternal, he knows immediately that he must sever all connections with the boy and leave the country! Although Maugham does not neglect to show the unhappy effect on the boy of losing the one person he really loves and has come to trust, the abandonment itself is virtually taken for granted—as are various characters' begrudging and derogatory remarks about homosexuals.

Another convention shared by *Behind the Mirror* is that the handsome young man, though in the company of homosexuals, is not himself homosexual. The idea that a young and attractive man might be a queer is difficult for an unthinkingly heterosexual society (and those homosexuals who have absorbed its assumptions) to accept. Bill, in *Behind the Mirror*, is doggedly, but rather insipidly normal in his sexual orientation. Though devoted to his older gay friend, his erotic interest is in the nice, rather two-dimensional young lady on the next farm. All this is not to slight an accomplished, interesting and intensely readable novel, but merely to point out some of the considerations that lie behind its plot and characters.

In some of Maugham's early works (*The Servant*, *The Man with Two Shadows*, *November Reef*) homosexuality is vaguely associated with the evil and sinister: a tempting connection to make in a society which fears and stigmatizes sexual variance, as Norman Mailer discovered, and admitted in his essay "The Homosexual Villain" [6]. But Maugham's later novels show some definite changes in his attitude to homosexuality and his gay characters. In *The Second Window* (1968) a man traces the defeats and missed opportunities of his life to their origin in the determined mental excision of a boyhood duplicity—the hysterical betrayal of a young man who had attracted him. *The Link* (1969) makes clever use of homosexuality as part of its plot and character development and no adverse assumptions are made. By 1970, Maugham had apparently come to feel comfortable enough to allow reissue in his own name of his explicit gay novel *The Wrong People*, previously published in the U.S. under the pseudonym of David Griffin.

In Maugham's novel about General Gordon, *The Last Encounter* (1972), Gordon's repression of his sexuality is seen to have blighted and inhibited his life. Only moments before his death at the hands of the insurgents at Khartoum does he realize the folly of having tried to deny his own nature and thus struggling against the possibility of fulfillment. In contrast to Bill in *Behind the Mirror*, the young man in *The Last Encounter* (a young soldier in love with Gordon) is not only youthful, attractive and determined, but "gay and proud" as well.

(The very physical beauty of such characters has come under attack both by anti-homosexual moralists and by some of the more eccentric gay liberationists, the latter with the claim that writing about a handsome person "reinforces a socially-conditioned standard of beauty" which "oppresses" those who happen not to conform!)

The rise of the gay liberation movement in the '60's and '70's allowed gay writing to achieve more prominence and public attention. Whereas only a few years before, gay novels had often been ignored or played down by disapproving book review editors and had subsequently slid into obscurity (or onto the remainder tables and clandestine fame), now they occasionally received their due; some even featured in the best-seller lists.

This greater publicity notwithstanding, there were still, in the '60's and '70's, difficulties for the writer of gay books. Many publishers continued to be dubious of, and so rejected, books that should have been published, or accepted books but failed to promote them properly, seeing the subsequent poor sales as confirmation of the correctness of their own lack of enthusiasm. Censorship and the threat of prosecution still remained a problem. The New Zealand poet and playwright Laurence Collinson's comic novel *Cupid's Crescent* was rejected by commercial fiction publishers in England, even though many were highly enthusiastic about it. "Too dirty," "too kinky," "We'd be inundated by strangled cries from the outraged reading public," and "I don't want to end up in prison," were some of the comments the manuscript met. Ironically, the novel is a heavy-handed and rather unpleasant satire on the mentality of the censor and concerns a young man who believes that sex is nasty and takes drastic measures, including murder, to rid society of people who actually enjoy it. It also remained

standard practice among many publishers to expurgate homosexual passages from books before publication.

One trend that did come into its own in the '60's was toward "realistic," quasi-expose novels set in large U.S. cities and depicting life in the seamier corners of the homosexual underworld. John Rechy's *City of Night*, James Leo Herlihy's *Midnight Cowboy*, K. B. Raul's *Naked to the Night* and Hubert Selby Jr.'s *Last Exit to Brooklyn* were such. Peter Menegas' later *The Service* introduced an element of wit which had not been a prominent feature of the earlier books, and Leo Skir's *Boychick* (1971) offered a less abrasive and more humorous view.

At the same time, British writers continued to deal with another sort of homosexual underworld, that of the English public school, in accomplished and perceptive works such as Michael Campbell's *Lord Dismiss Us*, Simon Raven's *Fielding Gray* and Angus Stewart's *Sandel*.

Another frequent vehicle for presenting homosexual characters, the historical novel, continued to be popular. Tales set in eras when homosexual relationships were more accepted or less suspect than in the present have provided a variety of authors with opportunities for treating homosexual attachments matter-of-factly or even idealistically. A historical setting can enable readers—and writers!—to overcome what resistance they may have toward homosexuality in a contemporary context. A number of historical characters have been favorite subjects, among them Alexander the Great (Mary Renault's *Fire from Heaven* and *The Persian Boy*), Helio-gabalus (Alfred Duggan's *Family Favorites*, Kyle Onstott and Lance Horner's *Child of the Sun*), Hadrian and Antinous (Marguerite Yourcenar's *Memoirs of Hadrian*, Edmund de Unger's *To Antinous*) and Ludwig II of Bavaria (Jonathan Short's *The Black Room*, Gillian Freeman's *The Alabaster Egg*). Ursula Zilinsky in *Middle Ground*, about love between the German commander of a World War II prison camp and a Jewish prisoner, created a fine Romantic-realist novel with a very positive view of homosexual love. Perhaps because of its apparently unpromising subject matter, it has not received its due as an interesting portrayal of a gay relationship, or as a work of literature.

A few other sub-genres could be labelled: fantasies, such as William Burroughs' apocalyptic *The Wild Boys*, Huncie Voelcker's *Logan* and even a small amount of gay science fiction; detective and spy stories, and (an encouraging development, possible only after gay lib.) books for adolescents (Lynn Hall's *Sticks and Stones* and Isabelle Holland's *The Man Without a Face*).

It is interesting that many male gay novels—including some of the best—have been written by women, but excepting pulp paperbacks printed for the titillation of heterosexual male readers, very little lesbian literature in English has been created by men. In general, lesbian literature, if not quite as vast as its male counterpart, has been almost as diversified and has passed through many of the same stages as social attitudes have changed.

The '30's produced, in addition to *Nightwood* and *The Well of Loneliness*, to novels by Gale Wilhelm, sensational autobiographies by Diana Fredericks and Mary Casal and translations of European works by Colette and Anna Elisabet Weirauch. *Olivia*, published pseudonymously by Lytton Strachey's sister Dorothy Bussy, was a female version of the "school story." Mary Renault's *Friendly Young Ladies* appeared in 1944 (it was later published in the U.S. as *The Middle Mist*) and

the '50's and '60's saw very different novels by Kay Boyle, Vin Packer, Cressida Lindsay, Elizabeth Bowen and Brigid Brophy, among others. Jane Rule, May Sarton and Maureen Duffy have been prolific and subtly sensitive writers on lesbian themes, the latter two in poetry as well as prose.

Isobel Miller's *A Place for Us*, a novel about a pair of lesbian lovers living in the frontier society of early America, was first published in 1970 by a small press after rejection by commercial publishers; after becoming an underground favorite with gay and women readers it was reprinted by McGraw-Hill (as *Patience and Sarah*) and gathered a fairly wide reputation as a gay lib/women's lib novel.

A Place for Us, like Ursula Zilinsky's *Middle Ground*, offers a more extreme example of a situation common to many gays, and to many gay novels—the difficulties and triumphs of a love relationship amid uncongenial, even hostile surroundings. The psychiatrist Dr. Paul Rosenfels, in his book *Homosexuality: The Psychology of the Creative Process*, examined the basis of homosexuality in romantic affirmation and the quest for meaning and personal creativity. "The more an individual develops his love capacities in a creative direction," he wrote, "the less likely it is that he will be able to accept the external prohibitions established by social institutions" [7]—a psychological truth that poets and novelists have long known.

At first glance, gay novels may seem to have nothing in common but the sexual orientation of their characters, but on closer examination, certain shared qualities are illuminated by Dr. Rosenfels' remark. Like detective stories and science fiction in quite different ways, gay novels (or many of them) have been among the last remaining examples of Romantic literature. Necessarily, many gay novels have dealt with the struggle to discover, create or sustain personal values and choices in the face of social hostility or indifference—or with the consequences of the failure of that struggle. For the homosexual, there has been no accepted course of behaviour, no rules or guidelines for his or her life to follow, and the condition of existential freedom in which he finds himself is central to contemporary philosophic and social concerns: alienation, individualism vs. social conformity, the interplay between value and act, the worth of personal relationships, the meaning of sex, and not least, the nature of love.

1. Peter Fryer, *Private Case—Public Scandal*, London, Secker & Warburg, 1966.
2. Advertisement on dust jacket of J. Z. Eglinton, *Greek Love*, New York, Oliver Layton Press, 1964.
3. Fryer, op. cit.
4. Gene Damon and Lee Stuart, *The Lesbian in Literature: A Bibliography*, San Francisco, The Ladder, 1967.
5. Gore Vidal, "An Afterword" in *The City and the Pillar, Revised*, New York, Dutton, 1965.
6. Norman Mailer, "The Homosexual Villain" in *Advertisements for Myself*, New York, Putnam, 1959.
7. Paul Rosenfels, *Homosexuality: The Psychology of the Creative Process*, Roslyn Heights, New York, Libra, 1971.

—Ian Young

Copyright © Ian Young 1974

BAR WAIT

for all the starving souls of honey faces
feeding on rum tips and soft lights
the bar dates to satiate
the inner orgasms of mental hounds
piss-eyed angel farts.
my dear trick number phone papered
you are my friend
I love you and bleed guts over your
screaming heart
Tonight, somenight
some morning lights to spare sperm
and inside thought
I'm yours forever
of fun sweat in the long haired body
No straight game goes so well
so well to one good wheel
feel — Thnkya for flatter ass city
sorry, I'm in love and he waits
that home alone
and me, I'm goin to come
psst and ahh men.
in menopausal fate
I'm the late and bleeding angel.

Koke Vacha

that grief is full
which echoes laughter
out of nights we ran,
playing Games down every Boston street.
it brings back smiles, imp-angel,
recreates the tickling, touching times we shared.
boy-beloved becoming man,
this grief is friendly!
our briefly mingled hopes
let loose a power,
give me a voice again.
Shout, Sing, Say softly all at once:

Free.
you walk it now away,
i live it here.

Tom Reeves



The first honest popular
novel about
homosexual love

THE FRONT RUNNER

by Patricia Nell Warren

A story of homosexual love in the sports world, specifically long-distance running. It captures in true and telling detail the struggles, the pain, the triumph, and the losses that are inevitable in each. "Utterly candid... serious."

—Publishers Weekly

\$7.95



WILLIAM MORROW
Dept. RR-GS
105 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016

THE RAPE OF RAGGEDY ANN

My parents did it with pain
 My father had too much cock, all cock it seemed,
 and what a ruckus he could shake into the house.
 Him with his Japanese swords and his rifles and his
 battle flags ripped by friendly bullets and inscribed
 by all the dying slant-eyed names who bowed upon
 that planet mountain that took my father's senses.
 I shook to his tears and imagined rape.
 I wanted rape, to have him core me.
 I knew he'd never say I love you;
 he'd never heard the words himself except in fuck,
 and that was simple.
 My mother was a whore who ripped off my brother from her cunt
 and wrapped him like a bloody mummy in a closet
 turned sarcophagus.
 For years I've seen blue baby eyes.

The house was a three - room tomb
 with a separate kitchen house where I bathed in a gal
 vanized wash tub ashamed in my mother's eyes.
 She told me twice each morning, once at night, like
 Grace, how small I was, how poor the bitch would be
 who let me bore her;
 and then at 2 a.m. she'd wake and do her penance on me,
 clutch me to her breast, and sob her nympho prayers
 and tell me how I was all she had, and feel me,
 urging it to grow.
 By 3 a.m. my father ploughed the door with drunken
 epithets and puked on the welcome mat which was turned
 wrong side out to hide the fray.
 For years I've seen that question on my father's face.
 They made it in a recliner with a missing arm,
 broken in conflict with orgasm, that smelled of sweat
 and naked rumps they wiped on yellow newsprint
 in the john behind the corncrib where the beagle
 mother hung herself by jumping on the very fence
 I built for her protection in her pregnant bloat
 and over where the weight of birth consumed her
 Emptied with her wanting more, my father drew his
 sword that once drew blood on Luzon and asked her
 if that was prick enough, and she cried for flesh.
 And later in the night I crept up to their door to
 listen to his strain to rise again, to whip her
 belly with his question hook.
 For years I've heard the temper of cold steel.

My mother was an expert at cutting skunk cabbage in the yard
 and boiling clear potato soup with foam floating
 that looked like resurrected cum,
 and my father drank away the money Uncle Sammy gave
 for pasting ships together and gambled in the street
 light under Sophie's neon stab into the night,
 while my mother dreamed of pricks.
 Once she took me to a doctor's to see why mine refused
 to grow as fast as she would like.
 She blamed it on the foreskin and asked if boys should
 be circumcised at twelve, and he told her to have
 more patience, give puberty time to do its work.
 For years I've feared the public urinal.

I had a sister by this woman who slew bordelloed
 brothers, and I needed proof that a man I'd heard of
 in an A&P hadn't mounted my mother among the cabbages
 and built a rabbit.
 I took my sister's doll and stole into the barn;
 and climbed into the barren loft where only widowed
 spiders spun and slew their mates.
 There I bared, investigated myth and stuffed that cotton,
 torn vagina with the shock of spill.
 I heard her call my Andy, Andy, Andy as I tore her stitches
 and watched the white fabric blood ooze with lost
 virginity.
 For years I've heard my sister calling for her doll.

At last my mother got her vindication.
 The whiskey got my father in the liver, and he swelled
 to such a valiant size his unicorn spike was swallowed
 by the glutton of his flesh.
 I saw the question flash before his eyes:
 Who'll lay her now? He looked at me and knew I'd never
 pluck my eyes or let my mother hang herself upon my hook.
 For years I've noticed how my body resembles a gallows
 arch, and broads have hung themselves in effigy,
 But none have pleased me near so much as my rape of
 Raggedy Ann.
 For years I've seen blue baby's eyes.

Frederick A. Raborg, Jr.

whiffs of dreams of homosexuality
 when I awake I am a
 rosy & white thighed woman
 sitting on the edge of her bed musing on the tangle.
 She thinks
 I met a conquistador whose face looks like pizza crust.
 As she disappears she thinks
 a woman is a woman
 every other day of her life

Then we took something that made us rather be unconscious.
 entdres dripped off our bodies -
 cannibal's tears - little pools of meat.
 Who is ever sure that his lover's veins won't
 burst & he'll charge down the hall
 swinging an ax

When I close my eyes
 I know how a woman feels in this position

Robert Glück

Now you've hung yourself in the strange garden
 of my lip.
 Don't be surprised if I drink
 like a dancer.
 After a series of white afternoons
 I will be a memory on horizons
 lined with the tears of your bride.
 Listen to the rustle of her wedding train
 as winter winds
 blow across the yard.

We are passing through white afternoons.
 As I bring darkness to unfurnished corners
 you learn to use candles
 and leave lightbulbs
 at home.

Soon you will come to me
 and tell me how you love her.

Tell me how you love her
 as you watch
 snakes curl around your words
 when I smile slow dismissals
 and uncoil for another go.

Tideline
 my tongue will lick the salt
 from the inside of your legs
 as light water passes over the ridge
 that divides you
 into unknown quantities of pleasant fear
 and the compromise of cold air
 as the tide
 moves away.

Craig Makler
 Feb. 1, 1974
 Chester Springs, Pa.

SAFE

Let's hide here and kiss
 our bearded faces smooth.
 We are only men
 darting in and out of shadow:
 fry in the shallows:
 sunlight combing her fingers
 through safety's grasses.
 Pushed between the corner's two walls
 my back arched
 pressing the complete body
 against yours we are
 safe in this narrow eyeless hall.

Sal Farinella

THE WAY HOME

Where are you my lover
 in this night of dark tunnels and few lights
 my hands, limp in weariness, reminisce
 of weather vanes cranking out uncoiled music.
 Somewhere inspiration will work its way
 through rust and flakes of iron those fleeing ghosts
 red in ruin, will brush off and down the leather
 artisan's apron to fall as heavy snow
 on the eyelash of grass. There my lover
 our feet will white cane our way
 through lawns of dizzy paratroopers
 sprawled in green sorting out the way home.

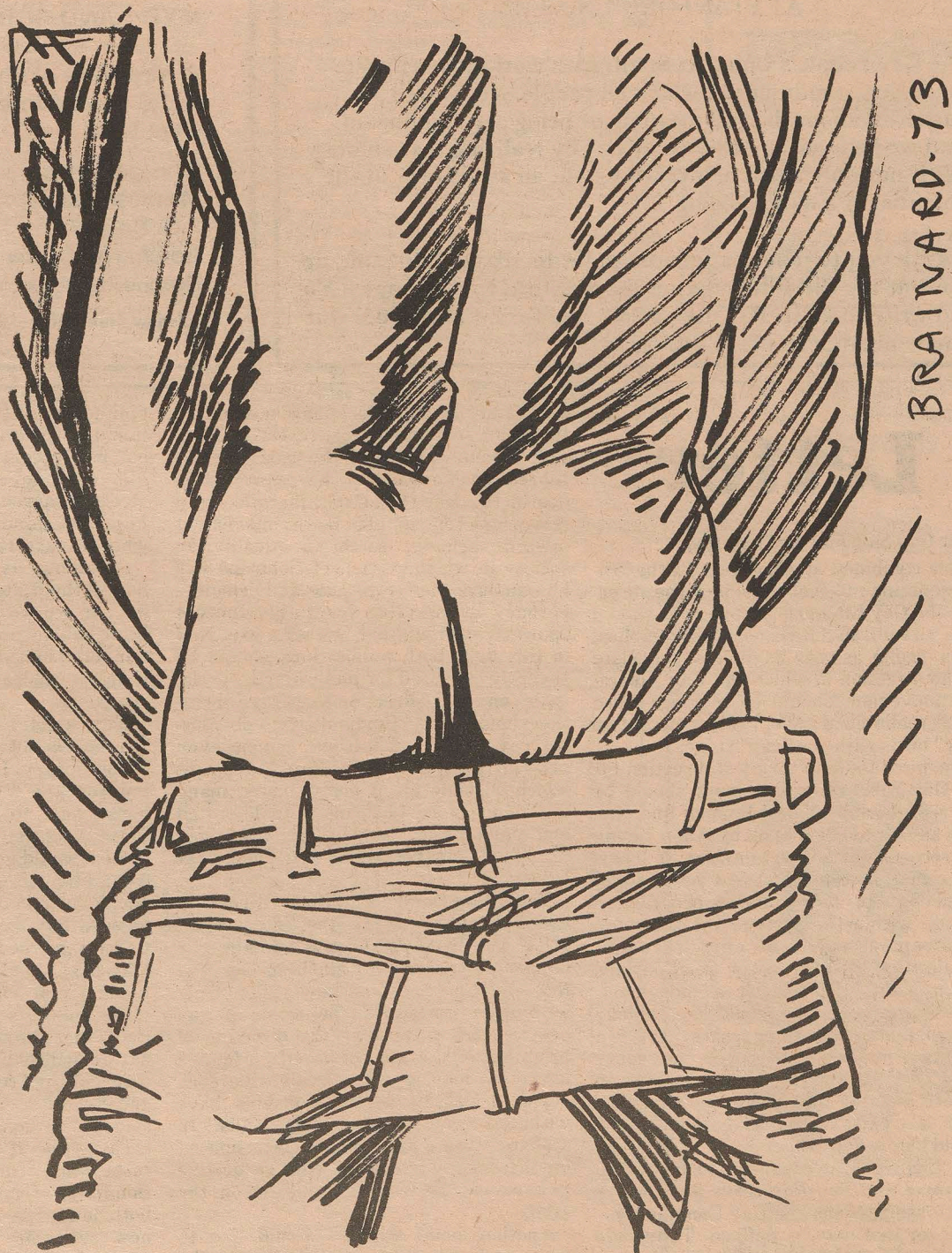
Sal Farinella

SURVIVING SUMMER

i have lived a season in this city,
 sitting in shared bars,
 or cruising.
 i have come to no understanding.
 i have lost both speech and perception.
 (this state is what you called hunger,
 stripped of its image,
 and the pretence of another.)

i remember the hot beach in North Truro:
 we climbed the steep dune and sat naked,
 watching the sea.
 it was our last moment of tranquility
 before desire and need locked words
 to the pitch of lovers,
 and pain became the language of possession.
 (the ocean seemed to swallow all others
 when you wandered below.)
 your body glowed in the dull haze,
 an interminable exception
 to memory,
 one summer's banality.
 i have survived the self-deception.
 i have recovered:
 i have abandoned the bars and turned back
 from the beach.
 (i spit at the ocean without its face.)
 i have been given a special grace,
 plain speech.
 i have been gifted with hunger.

David Eberly



BRAINARD-73

GAY LIB BOOK SERVICE

Box 40397 S.F. Cal. 94140

BOOKS

OUT OF THE CLOSETS: VOICES OF GAY LIBERATION. Edited by Karla Jay & Allen Young. \$3.95 paper. Anthology of essays, interviews, manifestos. Highly recommended.

THE GAY LIBERATION BOOK. \$3.95 paper. Anthology of articles, photos.

HOMOSEXUAL OPPRESSION AND LIBERATION by Dennis Altman. Superb writing on the crystallization of gay liberation consciousness. \$1.65 paper.

GMP by Gertrude Stein. 1st U.S. edition. Includes her "A Long Gay Book." Stein on homosexuality in her cubist style. \$3.45 paper.

THE NAKED IMAGE by Roy Dean. A book of over 80 male nude photos sensitively taken in outdoor settings. \$6.95.

MYRA AND GORE: A New View of Myra Breckinridge and a Candid Interview with Gore Vidal. \$2 paper.

SILLYCOMB. New novel by Hunce Voelcker. \$2 paper.

LOGAN by Hunce Voelcker. \$1.50 paper. Poetic story of two boys, lovers, giving birth to a poetic son, a poem.

GREAT GAY IN THE MORNING. \$1.75 paper. One group's approach to communal living and sexual politics.

THE QUEENS' VERNACULAR: A GAY LEXICON by Bruce Rodgers. \$3.50 paper. Gay slang past & present. Over 12,000 entries.

ALLEN GINSBERG: THE GAY SUNSHINE INTERVIEW with Allen Young. \$2 paper. Originally appeared in *Gay Sunshine* no. 16. Now in book form for the first time. [Copy of no. 16, collector's item, \$1.50.]

GAY LIBERATION PACKETS

GAY LIB PACKET No. 1. Collection of individual articles, papers. \$2.50.

GAY SUNSHINE PACKET No. 1: Eleven back issues of *Gay Sunshine* paper (Nos. 9-12; 14-15; 17-21). \$8.

GAY SUNSHINE PACKET No. 2: Four rare back issues of *Gay Sunshine* (Nos. 2, 4-6). \$5.

GAY SUNSHINE PACKET No. 3: Four additional rare back issues of *Gay Sunshine* (Nos. 7-8; 13; 16). \$5.

POETRY

MOUTH OF THE DRAGON. No. 1. A Gay poetry journal. \$2.50 paper.

HOLY COW: Parable Poems by Robert Peters. \$2.50 paper.

CANCER IN MY LEFT BALL by John Giorno. Includes long poems "Vaira Kisses" and "Cum." \$2.95 paper.

BLACK SUN. Selected poems by Kirby Congdon. \$4.50 hardcover. (See review, *Gay Sunshine* No. 20).

DREAM WORK by Kirby Congdon. Motorcycle, leather poems. \$2.95 paper.

LOGAN by Hunce Voelcker. \$1.50 paper. Poetic story of two boys, lovers, giving birth to a poetic son, a poem.

HUNGER. First poems by Salvatore Farinella. \$1 paper.

NEW POEMS by James Mitchell (contributor to *The Male Muse*). \$1 paper.

APHRODITE CHANGING. Long poem by Bob Rivera. \$2 paper.

THE MALE MUSE: A GAY POETRY ANTHOLOGY. edited by Ian Young. 40 poets, including Ginsberg, Goodman, Wieners, Norse, Jonathan Williams, etc. \$3.95 paper. Highly recommended.

BASTARD ANGEL No. 2. Poetry/prose by Anais Nin, Kerouac, Malanga, Bowles, Ginsberg etc. Ed. by Harold Norse. \$2.50 paper.

HOTEL NIRVANA. Selected poems by Harold Norse. New City Lights book. \$2 paper. signed copy: \$10. [Interview with Harold Norse, *Gay Sunshine* No. 18: \$1]

KARMA CIRCUIT. Poems by Harold Norse. \$2 paper.

SOME GREEN MOTHS. Poems by Ian Young. \$2 paper.

ANDY by Robert Gluck. Poetry, with erotic drawings by Edward Aulerich. \$2 paper. (See review, *Gay Sunshine* No. 20).

SELECTED POEMS by John Wieners. \$3.95 paper. Many gay poems included. See review, *Gay Sunshine* No. 16.

SELECTED POEMS by Larry Eigner. \$2.50 paper. Strong, open poetry.

MANROOT No. 8 (Spring 1973). A special womanhood issue. Poetry. \$1.50 paper.

MANROOT No. 9. First rate poetry by various poets. \$1.50

SAPPHO '71 by Harriette Frances. Collection of gay poetry & drawings. \$2.50 paper.

SONGS FOR THE REVOLUTION by Hunce Voelcker. Sonnets. \$1.25 paper.

PERSONAE NON GRATIAE by Paul Mariah. Prison poems for the sin of loving. Regular edit. \$1; Signed limited edit. \$5.

LOVE POEMS TO AN ARMY DESERTER. New book by Paul Mariah. \$2 paper.

RED MIDNIGHT MOON. Poems by Robert Peters. \$2 paper. regular edit.; signed copy: \$5. [See review: *Gay Sunshine* no. 21.]

ABYSS: A Collection of Poems by William Barber, with commentaries on the poems by his friends. \$2.25 paper.

Cash with order please. California residents add 5% sales tax. Postage included. Please allow 2-5 weeks. Make check or money order payable to Gay Sunshine. Overseas orders: please add 50 cents per hardcover, 25 cents per softcover for postage. minimum mail order \$3.

GAY PEOPLE'S UNION AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY

The Gay People's Union at Stanford is working to educate the larger community in which all people live, as well as ourselves, about the full meaning of being gay and human. And we help one another come out by realizing that coming out is not only a sexual awakening but an awakening of the potential of a human being.

We ask you to join us at meetings, Wednesdays, 7.30 p.m., upstairs at the Old Firehouse on the Stanford Univ. campus. You can write to us at: P.O. Box 8265, Stanford, Cal. 94305. Our phone number is: (415) 497-1323.

MYRA AND GORE

A New View of Myra Breckinridge and A Candid Interview with Gore Vidal

\$2 paperback
Manifest Destiny Press

P.O. Box 57
Dorchester Center Station
Dorchester, Mass. 02124

[also available through *Gay Sunshine*]

Letter

Dear *Gay Sunshine* and *Fag Rag*:

This combined article/letter to the editor contains my feelings about the direction the Gay Liberation movement should take, as well, as criticisms of your publications insofar as they have failed to relate to the direction in which the Gay Liberation movement should be moving. Since this is a combined issue, I can criticize two "gay" birds with one "gay" stone.

The main issue in terms of direction for the Gay Liberation movement should be the relationship of Gay Women and Gay Men as was touched upon by Allen Young in a recent issue of *Gay Sunshine*. It seems to me that, in order to have a viable social movement to bring about progressive change within the system, the minimum requirement would be unity-through-equalization of any power relationships which exist within such a movement. (There are those who would like to deny the existence of power or assert that it is a feature of male egos. However, the reality of a Capitalist and, therefore, non-human society dictates that power relationships do in fact exist no matter how much one would like to deny this.)

In this light newspapers such as *Gay Sunshine* and *Fag Rag* serve as a power relationship within the Gay Community—however that may be defined. To include only a gay liberation perspective from a gay male viewpoint, as has been done throughout the history of both *Gay Sun*

shine and *Fag Rag*, has been a severe contradiction in bringing forth a Gay Liberation Ideology which is the basis of Gay Liberation Movement. The contradiction lies in the fact that Gay Liberation is a movement or should be a movement towards bringing forth an equalitarian society in which power relationships will be equalized between male and female—perhaps by bringing forth this concept "power" itself will just wither away. And in this light both publications should be severely criticized for publishing a special issue on the "direction-that-Gay-Liberation-should-take." Certainly, two obviously "gay male" publications cannot even pretend to speak for a Gay Movement which is made up of many, many, many and many more Lesbians both liberated and unliberated, lesbian feminists, gay male feminists (yes, we do exist) and what have you.

Therefore, one immediate direction which should be taken is the "integration" of the gay male perspective within both the *Fag Rag* and *Gay Sunshine* newspaper. Only with such input will the mass of gay people start to move in the direction of bringing forth a society based on human liberation ideology—an equalitarian society in which power relationships have withered away... ain't I an idealist! In realistic terms this means inclusion of input from gay females in your respective newspapers as well as inclusion on the staff.

Another point which I would like to make and one which is applicable to the direction-that-the-Gay-Liberation-movement should take is the idea that unin-

hibited sexuality will bring forth a revolution, i.e., "Smash the State." As I pointed out in a recent letter/article to the *Gay Liberator* newspaper, I find myself in strong disagreement with the staff of *Fag Rag* (and to some extent *Gay Sunshine*) when it is asserted:

"Rimming as an act of revolution—Smash the State—by developing, cherishing our eroticism, our bodies, which have been hidden from us, stolen by this dis-tempered industrial capitalist wasteland—rimming can lead us to freedom."

[*Fag Rag* No. 7/8]

This is total irrationality and outright "irresponsibility" not to mention counter-revolutionary. If every male in this country from the White House to the poorest house were to rim 365 days a year, the State would still be intact and the class system would go on as usual. I don't know what kind of "revolution" the *Fag Rag* people have in mind for the rest of us gay people, but any gay person is able to understand the fact that uninhibited sexuality is by no means going to lead to any fundamental changes in the Capitalist structure—it is going to take a little more than that brothers. Hedonism of this nature will only produce a revolution in terms of the "revolutionary spread of VD and hepatitis" amongst gay people... some revolution.

Therefore, it would seem to me that rather than attempt to put forth a "direction-for-the-Gay-Liberation-movement" both newspapers should start to reanalyze how they relate to the Gay Movement as it now exists and how they can better relate to that movement. I have yet to see any real emphasis from either newspaper on a

GROSSMAN REVIEW

Continued from page 37

parts of him realized were stupid or childish. The result isn't stagnation or despair, but self-love. I have such a hard time letting go and accepting and not censoring my immature side. That's why "Song to That M&M Man" is such a powerful one for me. I guess it refers to that fantasy man for whom the childish part of us yearns. And rather than censoring his feelings, Steven has written a love song to the child inside himself. His wise side says:

"Steven, be glad for what you can!"
But there's a child inside my chest
And he won't let me rest
Without that M&M Man...
Well, if a child ain't like the rest of you
You say he might as well be dead
now...
Oh a child has a need to live and to love
Simply 'cause he was born...

And again in "Circle Times," which is a song about how loneliness has driven him to the painful "boozing and cruising" of the bars. He knows so well that it "won't get me the things that I took for granted before..."

*But 'til I get a change of mind
You can always find me
Doing overtime at The Circle Nine."*

The light and open tune underscores the acceptance of living out and working through the feelings he finds inside himself. The self-acceptance made me cry too.

There are other delights to be found: an ambitious song about the docks and trucks of New York. The locale is strange to someone who knows only California, but the emotions aren't: "I'm anxious and angry and want to go home/ But please—not alone." There's a song about talking about gayness to parents and family, and one where he talks to his God. Both are beautifully clear and simple and even bring me new insights to such well-worn subjects. Speaking to God, he says,

*And they say you're always with me
At the altar and the bed
But my sheets are cold and single
There's desire in my head...*

"Cold and single..."—it brings home so clearly the paradox of what some church people see as right for us in the name of God, who is love.

There's a lovely kick-out-heels, jazzy song too, "Can't... Papa Blues" which I really like. It's full of those crazy/sad fantasies that I recognize as coming to me when I'm preoccupied over someone.

*The wood's running low
The windows are frozen
I made three dots
And saw those eyes and that nose
And yes, I'd know them anywhere
It's never been more clear
Come in, Papa—it's chilly out there.*

And as on every record, there are a couple of songs which I still don't like.

There will be other times which I'll spend with the songs, and as I change they will change for me too. These are the feelings that Michael identified with most, and which, right now, I do too. They come from "Song to That M&M Man."

*Oh man you don't have to see and hear
what's happening
To feel someone sneaking up behind
you
To feel someone playing with your
head
Or to feel someone, like me, who wants
to be gentle...
Gentle...
Oh gentle, Lord
Gentle and warm...*

Gay Liberation Program for male and females such as the idea that "Gay people have the right to defend themselves from homophobic attacks" and should start to engage in self defense tactics, etc. In other words it is time to move away from the Gay Testimonials we have been getting with each issue of *Gay Sunshine/Fag Rag* which lead to the Gayer-than-thou attitude and start moving in the direction of some real programs to take care of the needs of gay people, i.e., "self-defense" programs, programs which bring gay males and females into unity not separatism, etc.

This is the direction which seems to contain the minimum essentials for an effective massive mobilization of "all" gay people... a massive mobilization to bring forth a Gay Liberation ideology and to put such an ideology into an action stage as opposed to a theoretical stage. I would certainly hope that you all will respond to these criticisms in your joint issue and future issues and will start to define what you mean by "revolution."

Gay Love n' Struggle,
Joel Starkey
Boca Raton, Florida

