

“Fag Rag is one of the most loathe-
some publications in the English
language.”

So writes Wm. Loeb in a front
page editorial in the Manchester
Union-Leader. It's what's called a
money review. And that's exactly
what we're hoping it'll do — bring
in money and bring in new sub-
scribers. If you don't already
subscribe to Fag Rag, do it now. If

you already subscribe for yourself,
buy a subscription for a friend (par-
ticularly a friend who may not live
near a large city where we have
most of our distribution). There will
be no revolution without us; *with*
us there's revolution everywhere.

Subscribe

FAG RAG 10 issues for \$7.00

Special Offer with a Subscription to FAG RAG

Also receive for only one dollar each:

- ☐ John Wieners, *Behind the State Capitol or Cincinnati Pike*
☐ John Mitzel, *Sports & the Macho Male*

or

- ☐ Back issues of *Fag Rag* containing all of the Arthur Evans
series on “Witchcraft & The Gay Counter Culture.”

Fag Rag, Box 331, Kenmore Sta., Boston, Mass. 02215

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

HOMAGE TO ANITA BRYANT, QUEER BAITER

I was walking down the street
one day when I was brutally
accosted by an orange.
This macho orange wanted to rape me
by crawling up my ass
and rotting. His mouth leered at me
like the word “Florida.”
So, this is the sunkist life,
I surmised, but
was not allured. Then Anita,
has-been sophisticated,
beautiful, melodious singer
turned citrus queen and
queer baiter, came up to me
with a microphone and
a camera crew following her.
She smiled and asked me: have you
sucked an orange today?
No, I replied indignantly,
but I was just raped by one.

I tried to fix my dishevelled hair
but I could tell I had turned Anita off
because she was broadcasting this
on national television
and she had never before heard
a disgusting word
about an orange.
Two of her muscular henchmen
grabbed me by the arms
and stuck the microphone
up my ass. Anita smiled
into the camera but throughout
the livingrooms of America,
as Anita sang the words
to the Sunkist Song,
it sounded like an asshole
sensuously sucking
on a microphone.

Jim Everhard

Cover Photo by Bernie Boyle



THE GLUTEUS MAXIMUS POEMS

Aha, sir, what are you fondling so fondly
under the spray? you think you're
unobserved but your half-hard belies
the macho pose—and you, sir, there
secretly in a corner at your locker
twisting your rod from view
under a towel, a stiff curved bow
of anxious meat—and you in the steam
room glancing over soggy newsprint,
black and beautiful, fighting down a
rising tool, it's no use, sweetie,
desire will out, don't try to hide!

1

In the locker room naked men sashay
from showers to sauna with steaming skin,
undercover agents of lust: erections
point like index fingers
in a mass wet dream where wetness
ignites uncontrollable fires
fed by dumbbells and parallel bars
and sweating armpits and pectorals—
muscles communicate like the blast
of a shotgun, thrust of missiles
whose launching pad is a crotch!
the gluteus maximus is more
than anyone can stand! I'm a casualty
of powerful curves, the lissome hip,
male mounds of maddening joy!
and then those parts "men love
to gaze upon"—how to survive
flames of sinew and joint?

2

Tough butts and beauties by the ton—
but none for me? Ow, what lousy
luck! If I were smooth instead of hairy
my chances would be better.
But no one wants to be called a fairy
and that's why their assholes are uptight.
It's the way of the world—real men would rather
bash in your head than suck your cock.
But every man has tried to suck his own
and wondered what it's like to get fucked.
Up the ass. Which makes them walk and talk
as if they've shat themselves, the butch
walk so sexy and ridiculous—
the speech tightlipped, sphincters shut
both ends, closing sweet holes
to other men's meat. But you
can have them drunk or stoned
or pretending sleep—then it's heaven
until they wake and, sullen, go
as if they'd spent the night with a whore.
But you both know who stuck it in.

3

Your ass has given me insomnia
because of your ass I can't sleep
your ass intrudes in everything
sits plunk in the middle of my lunch
sits on my mouth and eyes
spreads its cheeks over the poem I am writing
winks its asshole at Ravel
muzzles Krishnamurti
obscures the white light
your ass your incredible ass

These poems are from
Harold Norse's new book
*Carnivorous Saint: Gay
Poems: 1941-1976* avail-
able from Gay Sunshine
Press, Box 40397, San
Francisco, CA 40397.
\$5.97 paper; \$15, hard-
cover plus 75¢ for postage.

NEW POEMS: HAROLD NORSE

I AM FIGHTING ON THE LONE FRONT

I am fighting on the lone front
fighting propaganda with poetry
fighting booze with marijuana
fighting noise with silence
fighting television with vision
they're fighting me with underarm deodorants
buying my mind with soap flakes
cleaning up my speech with mouthwash
poisoning me with miles of video venom
polluting the food and the head
but I'm fighting back with poetry
they hit me with nuclear reactors
and I throw them a third eye
they deck me with put ons
I bang them with hard ons
they're fighting cut-ups with shut-ups
they're fighting literary symbols
with status symbols
they are fighting sexual freedom
with vice squads
fighting gay power and pecker power
with the zombie of the hour
I want the International Man
but all I get is the local yokel
they are fighting on the cold front
against reality
I'm fighting on the pubic front
for my everloving sexuality

MASTURBATION

1

The walls of the madhouse scream!
I read them with my pants down.
Nothing happens.
I witness terrible sex starvation
scrawled in blood

sperm

shit

RAPE MY MOUTH

HOT HOLE WANTS BIG DICK

I'M A COCKSLAVE

PINCH MY TITS

FISTFUCK ME

The walls are raving
with homosexual graffiti
and I'm standing alone, bare assed,
among my own nightmares and fantasies
in the john's eerie light
and rancid YMCA smells.

Men wander in, fumble
with themselves, searching for the same
thing, endless need for touch gone wild, roaring
in stoned flight that ends

clenching the fist

down

on their own genitals.

2

In bar or baths or street
(oppressing ourselves)
the past stabs us with memory:
it glows with that lurid
nightlight of Van Gogh's billiard table
and Bosch's hellish scenes
jabbed in the nerve
resonating forever
the early memory
stuck
in the throat, locked
In the muscles, crippling
spontaneous joy

So

in sleepless years of quest
we thrust
from one lost love
to another
thru aching scenes
of need

3

In Genêt's *Chant d'Amour*
the young convict sucks
his own arm in the
prison cell, blows
smoke thru a straw
thru a small chink in the wall
the only physical contact with
the other prisoner; this
sends them both into
masturbatory fantasies
of each other
from which they emerge
out of woods and grass
with a single flower
dangled between
the cell windows

4

The machinery of government
hides the hearts of people
from each other
Gandhi said
and so it must appear on walls
of toilets
in letters of cum and shit

Photo: Hap Paul



photo: Bernie Boyle

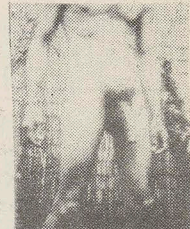
Dear Fag Rag,

Your No. 19, Spring 1977 issue turns me on. Great! I like the cover art much. I like the photo on page 2 by Ed Camp also very much. Guys who suck their own cock turn me on. I have been doing this for over 30 years. Lovers enjoy seeing me do it, and when I am alone it is really a neat way to come — right into my own mouth.

Not too many people do it. I found none in the first 25 years I was doing it, but have found several since the gay publications like yours began. But then I am dumb; in 30 years I have never even once seen a cock bigger than my own except for one little guy I met at Kenmore subway station years ago. He must have had 10 inches. I have nine. But when photographed it looks like 12 inches.

Cummily yours and slurping,

Narsuckus
(not sissus or cissus but suckus!)



LETTERS

from some new friends . . .

Dear Sir,
Few time ago I have received the magazine "Fag Rag" and I want to thank you; is very interesting and is a pleasure to me to be in relation with you, you seems very nice people full of interests. And I was also very attracted by your Poetry section. Where I readed so many lovely gay poems.

And as I want to be with you in some way, I send you now two poems of mine, of gay inspiration. I do hope you liked them and in this case you publish them in the "Fag Rag" poetry section. As I want you have an idea about me, I am a gay friend, 36, university, journalist and I have traveled a lot, I have lived in Paris and London, in Rome, Amsterdam . . . what a amusing city . . . and Vienna! I am of European culture and descent, physically I have 6 feet tall, 178 lbs. weight, blue eyes, brown hair. And if somebody wants to write me my address is:

Mr. Jack Galli
c/o Fag Rag
Box 331, Kenmore Sta.
Boston, Mass. 02215

Of course if anybody of you are coming to South America I'll be delighted to know him. And as a matter of fact I intend to be in Boston in some few months and to have then the pleasure to meet you all. Yours sincerely friend in Buenos Aires.-

Jack

AGONY

The nocturnal angels
founded me tonight.
I had terrible fights
and I wan . . .
And this morning
with the slow despair
everything started again . . .
My search,
my aethernal search
over your naked body . . .
And your sweet, healthy
peach's aroma
all around your curly hair
and closed eyes.
Everything started again.
My love and your serenity.
In this tremendous agony called life.-

THE SEARCH

I always wanted to fly.
Over the seas and the mountains.
Scaping from the constallations
and the deceptioning stars I know.
What else . . .
but to know always together
in our turbulent dreams
those orange suns
over the dark clouds!!
And the beautiful abyssess
all deep in red among the scarlet waves
of my losted blood . . . and so . . .
searching . . . I wanted thy love . . .
during those days . . . when my heart
was losing its palpitations . . .
I wanted so . . . Nothing.
Nothing that really exists.-

Jack Galli

Fag Rag #20 copyright © 1977 Fag Rag Varieties, Inc.
ISSN 0046-3167-001697

. . . and from some old

Dear People,

I came across your address in a book called "Gay Rights" and thought I'd write you a few lines. The most obvious reason for my picking you to write out of 30 others, I'm sure is as plain as your nose. FAG RAG, I'm sure you were able to catch many an eye, let alone many cat calls.

I don't find your name offensive, only because I've learned to live with the title FAG for 15 years. In fact, I sort of find it funny. After all these years of people hiding the fact that they are gay, it's funny, even cute to finally see people standing up saying YEA! I'm gay or even YEA! I'm a FAG.

Well, I'd like, even love to get on your mailing list for a subscription of your paper FAG RAG. I am an inmate at the Ohio State Reformatory and I'm doing a 2/15 yr sen for kindap 2nd degree. I've already got in 2 years, and I face the parole board in June of 77. I'm expecting 6 to 9 even 18 more months, and I would love to have your paper to help me through this passing time period.

Also, if your paper has a Pen Pal listings, please get me on it soon as possible. I am 5'7½", 148 pds, black hair, dark brown eyes. I have a year around tan color, I guess that's cause I'm a 100% full blooded Gypsy. My nick name is Chico, my bar or gay name is SaphFire. I am a musician. I've played the guitar for 16 yrs, and I write my own music. I love dogs and I damn good at Archery. Please, only male gays, any age (except under 17). I am 21, born July 16, 55, Cancer.

Well, I hope to hear from you soon, I thank you from the my heart. (for it is bottomless).

Love,

Chico (Saphfire)
#92082
P.O. Box 788 16-1-SE
Mansfield, OH 44901

Dear Fag Rag:

I was pleased and delighted to read Charley Shively's essay in the last *Fag Rag*, "Cosmetics As An Act of Revolution." In its way, it reminded me of my own controversial piece, "A Defense of Cosmetics," which was printed in the first issue of *The Yellow Book* in 1894.

Mr. Shively and I both agree on the importance — and you might say "gaiety" — of artifice. As you fellows seem to be your era's standard-bearers for what we call "dandyism" — I must say you certainly don't attempt to conceal your sexual inclinations but then, in our own fashion, neither did we in our time, though I don't own up to being at all the uranian I could be rumored to be — you would then agree with me on the importance of artificiality in our lives.

As I wrote in my notorious little essay: "Artifice is the strength of the world . . . Artifice must queen it once more in the town, and so, if there be any whose hearts chafe at her return, let them not say, 'We have come into evil times,' and be all for resistance, reformation, or angry cavilling." No, let them submit to the very essence of civilisation: the artificial!

Shively is only the most recent in a great line of writers on beauty and cosmetics. At Cleopatra's court, there as Archigenes. At Trajan's, Criton. Alas, the writings of these beauty panegyrist were destroyed by the early Christians. Ovid's "Ars Amatoria" is lovely, and it remains.

Curiously, I do find a kind of conflict in *Fag Rag's* publication of Shively's essay. It is: he argues the nicety and transformational quality of Cosmetics — the artificial — yet *Fag Rag*, as I have come to understand its history, and the

generation it has become a voice for, has always sought to be "natural" (whatever *that* might be): the naturalness of "unnatural" sex acts, the naturalness of speech — as evidenced by so much of what you publish — natural foods, the naturalness of the width and depth of human potentiality. How is your tradition (short as it is) to be made compatible with your Cosmetic Revolution? "The fairer the fruit's rind and the more delectable its bloom, the closer are packed the ashes within it."

"The white cliffs of Albion shall be ground to powder for Loveliness, and perfumed by the ghosts of many a little violet. The fluffy eigerducks, that are swimming round the pond, shall lose their feathers, that the powder puff may be moonlike as it passes over Loveliness' lovely face." This, I suspect, you find agreeable. To your advantage, your group of modern-day homogenics seem to be the only segment of this "Natural Generation" to appreciate and advocate (and even made a culture of) artifice. What I suspect you will not find agreeable is my essay's conclusion:

"Indeed, indeed, there is charm in every period, and only fools and flutter pates do not seek reverently for what is charming in their own day. No martyrdom, however fine, nor satire, however splendidly bitter, has changed by a little tittle the known tendency of things. It is the times that can perfect us, not we the times, and so let us wisely acquiesce. Like the little wired marionettes, let us acquiesce in the dance."

Cordially yours,
Max Beerbohm

Gay is Straight GAY IS STRAIGHT

By Thomas Dotton

Again, this rite of summer, gay pride week approaches, but I dissent. I protest. I object because gay has become banal.

Gay is straight.

White, male, and middle class, gay has become a repetitious faggot lie. Debris of a once radical social and political movement, gay now mumbles of the bad faith of male homosexuals; it's mystification of their bourgeois prejudice.

As they expound it, gay is the failure of faggots, triviality and theoretical confusion. It is intellectual dishonesty and bad politics masquerading as some progressive alternative.

Gay is the activity of a vocal vanguard of middle class homosexuals constituting themselves as 'The Movement', as can be easily seen in this year's holy crusade of bourgeois faggots against Anita Bryant. A minority, these men, however, imagine themselves the guardians of all faggot ambitions. And as their mythical 'Movement', they have bent, shaped, distorted, deflected everything homosexual to conform to a reactionary, in fact, homophobic notion of gay.

With them, gay's straight. The message of their gay insinuates that a homosexual is a heterosexual: the gay of this 'Movement' would have us accept that 'a gay' is a homosexual whose heterosexuality is expressed through homosexuality.

In its closeted homophobia, this is gay become abomination. What it announces is the futility of being a bourgeois faggot. It is gay as a kind of surrender, both silly and superstitious.

At its inception, gay aimed to refuse the reformist hope *a la* Mattachine Society to be made straight through homosexual mimicry of heterosexual value: it sought to deny that a homosexual was merely the lavender re-creation of some heterosexual opposite.

This gay of a decade ago was envisioned as freedom in escape from the closet, that invisible space wherein middle class homosexuals hid behind the mask of being 'normal'. The liberation of homosexuals, it was said at the time, would involve destroying the closet. What was needed, many thought, was a 'coming out', a denying of all false security, a rejecting of the self-hatred and guilt of the closet where one was expected to live tormented, tantalized by the 'normal' one was programmed to desire but couldn't be.

Coming out, as discussed then, was a coming-together of the isolated, oppressed, frightened and confused, united in collective knowledge that homosexual was, in itself, insignificant. A battle fought against homophobia within, coming out was a means for denying all the 'normative' values of heterosexual society — on imperialism, racism, sexism, class bias, etc., by refusing to be its faggot. Included in its goals was desire to show that the label 'faggot' or 'dyke' by which we were victimized functioned similarly to the 'nigger', 'cunt' or 'Communist', used to tyrannize others.

It was a coming out that required no loud, proud self-declaration; people were not asked to stand up and be counted since every homosexual, one imagined, carried around with him or her a closet. No one was at that time asked to bear witness.

Coming out was to be a recognition of the meaninglessness of conventional bi-, hetero- and homosexual divisions, awareness that these concepts were more bourgeois ideology, that these were the daydreams of 19th century psychiatrists serving to reinforce divisions within the divisions of a generally estranged sexuality.

But it is, precisely, the failure of gay to have embraced the very meaning of coming out denied it a decade ago. Instead of being a refusal of all value in challenging the idea of faggot, straight or bisexual to prove that none of them can exist, the coming out of later gay liberationists is a great climactic event.

It's a conversion, a coming out that fulfills some kind of destiny. In the hands of people who proudly date their 'liberation' from the Stonewall uprisings, coming out has become the foundation of a soft determinism behind which the bourgeois gay would hide himself.

Simply, despite all the statements of solidarity with other struggles, etc., this coming out is now the embracing of a faggot fate.

Rather than the beginning of some process, coming out has degenerated to an end. As if burlesque of the original principles of gay liberation, it means "I'm a faggot because I'm supposed to be a faggot and I'm supposed to be a faggot because I'm a faggot and gay is good."

For this reason, until quite recently, the liberationist movement has been content to clamor, Come out, come out wherever you are, be what you are." This dictum accepted, the movement has taught that in coming out one becomes yet another of good gays, ordered, ranked, arranged in perfect harmony like so many stones.

The message has been that in coming out, a homosexual bathes in the equality of faggot liberation. He is, according to movement cant, purified, made mediocre. Willingly, he is expected to join what Sartre has called in his study of Flaubert "that archipelago of solitudes which the ruling class causes to pass for an egalitarianism."

Thus, the homosexual come out is, for the movement, good. It's that simple. He fuses with a gay that's good. In his coming out is escape from the reality of the faggot feared, hated in love by homophobia. The liberated gay is not the homophobe's queer.

The good that's gay, a liberated faggot come out can denounce other homosexuals. His denunciation of other homosexuals not conforming to gay can, accordingly, be made from under the protective covering of movement rhetoric.

Through coming out, he selects himself as good to avoid being the homophobe's pervert. He's not sick, immoral, sinful, misguided or morally delinquent. These qualities a liberated faggot gives away. Coming out, he lavishes them on others. For this reason, the gay lives among us the personification of a middle class faggot lie.

Literally, the liberated homosexual throws the faggot of the homophobe onto the already laden backs of true queers — i.e., homosexuals not part of the movement who prefer in their lives something other than the gay fantasy of getting-ahead-as-normal-healthy-productive-homosexual-men-and-women.

For victims, liberated homosexuals mark members of their own supposed community. Munificent, they dole out stigmas: transvestites, transsexuals, fetishists, working class faggots, freaks into S & M or kinky sex, or anyone else who refuses gay parodies of heterosexuality's permanent, worthwhile, monogamous, humane relationships is tainted, separated from themselves as the true representatives of a legitimate gay that's good.

It is they, according to the liberationist line, they, these embarrassments, these "sick" throwbacks to the gray days before liberation and gay consciousness, who do not, not liberated gays, who are abnormal. The movement's perverts, they are people from whom homosexuals would estrange themselves to make more secure their distorted projection of the gay struggle: faggot reformism.

Epidemic mania to be as normal as everyone else, this reformism ruthlessly triages: it sets up groupings of outcasts. It creates a rigid homosexual hierarchy of liberated, less liberated, unliberated, etc. Creating castes, imagining the goal of the movement a process of becoming straight, it uses coming out to reduce the energies and enthusiasm of all homosexuals to normalization.





In opposition to the original idea of coming out, it betrays a vested interest in things as they are. It tells faggots there exists a right or truth or justice in heterosexual organization of society. It would forget that normal is as does or thinks ought to be done the dominant class at any given point in history. Instead, with each supposedly more humane (read "less homophobic") reading of history, religion, sociology or biochemistry, it sings hosannas; it does not see and cannot admit the totalitarian nature of these or other disciplines from which it will draw support. No matter from where this reformism may obtain it, any suggestion that homosexuals are just like them, their heterosexual equivalents, is the cause for rejoicing.

To individuals persuaded to come out, gay reformism prattles that the liberationist movement has all but succeeded. It disguises and rationalizes the resurgence of homophobia in this country. One is told that as more and more heterosexuals learn to see a homosexual without bias, see him or her as undifferentiated sameness of some gay that's good, homosexuals' problems will be solved.

Men and women not part of the movement's narrow focus continue to suffer every imaginable deprivation, including loss of life on the streets, in prisons, in supposedly safe gay institutions such as baths and bars but the bastard reformism of gays babbles that the solution to all political and social problems lies within the individual. Typical of Seventies' sentimentality, gay reformism says there is truth in the conventional, traditional, sacred concept of a person; and, realizing this truth shall set all homosexuals free. Finding one's destined gay self will transcend the unpleasantness of the world, gay ideology maintains.

But years ago a coming out tied to a gayness serving as the foundation of the politics of personal purity was feared. This kind of coming out, it was thought, would damn itself, becoming as it now has, a coming out through which those middle class and white find out this is, exactly, who they are: people who assume for themselves a privilege, demanding it regardless of with whom they might sleep.

How homosexual men white and middle class, racist and sexist, a proverbial few, are given by their gay movement a passport to respectable normalcy at the expense of the many, coming out is, simply, that means through which one is able to be again what one used to be.

Different from what was originally a decade ago, this coming out binds one to what one was destined to be before the troubling disqualification of homosexuality. Homosexuality, instead of being stigma, would through coming out be made good. It would, through gay ideology, swathe itself, serving as virtue through which even a homosexual realizes middle class destiny as the one-who-is-awaited to assume his place in an already ordered world.

In this slapstick of an original coming out, gays would wish that heterosexuals welcome them back into the bosom of normal society, rehabilitated, cleansed of faggot sins, purged of misplaced abnormality. Liberated gays would in this aspiration drink of the waters of oblivion, learning nothing about their homosexual bondage, failing to see

that sexual non-conformists are, and have been oppressed along with all other sorts of undesirable, that heterosexuality "created" the "queer" to justify itself in the 19th century. nor do middle class homosexuals concede that reformism's success would only continue to create them part of the status quo, making them at best so many normal house queers.

No, blinders are preferred this is, precisely, the ambition of the bourgeois movement's coming out: to discard the onerous burden of being oppressed passing, abracadabra, from victim to privileged victimizer. Or, in another idiom, liberated gays would cease being slaves on whose shoulders is placed the abandoned freedom of the master to try to be that master.

But, however one might wish to phrase it, this is an attitude of flight, dishonesty and evasion. It is blatant betrayal of the first principles of an autonomous gay struggle. It is a gay as almost a kind of fascism.

To be avoided in this attitude is knowledge that only faggots allow straights to be. What it is liberated homosexuals would escape is that theory suggesting that the slave is the secret of the master betrayed, incarnated, the abandoned freedom of the master made flesh. Faggot, it was thought, was the denied, inexpressible homosexuality of the heterosexual much as Martha Shelley said in one of the movement's still rigorous essays: "... we are extrusions of your conscious minds, your worst fears made flesh."

And most gays would know this; the lies of the liberationist movement are silent testimony, since to lie implies to deliberately, intentionally obscure a truth that, first, in order to be obscured, must be known.

Easily, 'a gay' should understand that homophobia is the insecurity of heterosexuality made repression masquerading as human nature; that homophobia is the violence of denied homosexuality claiming to be obedient to man's destiny; that homophobia is the irresponsibility of heterosexuality as it flourishes lusting, dreaming of the repression of queers; that homophobia is hatred codified, sanctioned by the very society it's helped to create making it unchallenged, unchecked irrationality aiming to provide meaning to a troubled heterosexuality otherwise lacking value; and that homophobia is the insignificance of heterosexuality presenting itself as the perfection of some cosmic normal that is in order to hate. (See Dotton, *Notes on Homophobia*, an essay on the phenomenology of sexual bias, soon to be available from Chameleon Press.)

However, with gays, admission of the nature of homophobia would be concession of the meaninglessness and insignificance of a homosexuality onto which frightened heterosexuality dumps its own imperfections. And to continue to pursue this

necessary function of the faggot, that queer with out whom reactionary heterosexuality couldn't exist would open a Pandora's box — with its contents gays might even be led to say that in serving as the foundation of the homophobe's being, a queer performs a necessary service of unwaged labor.

But those who would use coming out and gay consciousness to achieve some kind of normalcy, at all costs, will not see. They choose not to, they can't. They mustn't. Their fantasy is to become straight gays.

And, to this end, gays of the movement have labored with zeal. It's been an ambition that has danced throughout the gay subculture. Like an hysteria. Languid, macabre, it has seemed bent on self-hypnosis as it has sought to deaden, make dull, obscure the truth of the homosexual situation with its mesmerizing motion. Everywhere it's been the dishonesty of bearing witness, activity through which liberated homosexuals appear to have wanted to be swept away, to be made in the flesh their faggot destinies, to be carried off by something that will make meaningful so much unnecessary private suffering.

From what its movement has moaned, gayness is like a curse, fallen on its advocates like one of the plagues of Egypt. Those so tainted would cleanse themselves through confession.

Coming out, they expose their wounds. Scar tissue accumulates; confession then becomes more and more frequent. It becomes a mania of middle class men who believe everything in the world will be right as long as they continue testifying. Through its coming out as bearing witness, it is gay as superstition. About it all there's something mystical.

With one another, accordingly, liberated homosexuals compete in a celebration of guilt-ridden coming out, trying to demonstrate how much they've missed. They wallow, mumbling of the pain of their separation from middle class. They indulge themselves in a ritual that's pagan.

The same wounds, gays extend over and over again for the public's tongue. In a perpetual process of coming out, they flay themselves, pulling back soft quivering flesh to once again expose the same terrified bourgeois heart that bleeds for rehabilitation.

Themselves, they mystify. Recklessly, as if there were some order of oppression for which they must establish credentials, liberated homosexuals besiege us with their pain. They spew it forth in tawdry autobiographies said, printed, poeticized, pamphletized, dramatized, made movement rhetoric. They hold back nothing. No detail, no event, no recollection, no intimacy is too personal not to be given away.

With this kind of constant coming out, gays have made their movement repetitious. Claiming martyr status, middle class homosexuals have isolated gay liberationist activity, surrounding themselves with walls of spasms, throbs, and twitches, forging in place of a genuine political movement, a boring purgatory of the first person, a suspended state of writhing white bourgeois I's.

Any excuse suffices, most of the gay press seems interested in little else. The I by which gays would be normalized comes out reflexively. It drones, humming throughout everything gay like a mechanical one, lewd and lisping. It is an I that would overwhelm, the I of men so insecure that gay becomes a lifeline to which they desperately cling. People who come out in order to state "This is Gay and Gay is Good", they would fuse themselves with the movement's definitions.

And with these specious definitions, they are a movement of men who try to make themselves the simple, undifferentiated homosexual of their rhetoric, speaking as gays who do not analyze, who propose no new programs, who never seek more than the obvious pain, since in the words of one of the movement's more vocal spokespersons "that would be intellectualizing and we're trying to reach people."

So, like many of his confessing comrades, *reach people* he does, in a gush of glorious crimson intoning a now tedious gay first person litany intoning the tearful story of what-it-means-to-be-a-faggot-who-has-suffered-as-much-as-I-have.

Liberated homosexuals dole out stigmata; transvestites, transsexuals, fetishists, working class faggots, freaks into S & M or kinky sex, or anyone else who refuses gay parodies of heterosexuality's permanent, worthwhile, monogamous, humane relationships is tainted . . .

Yet despite his tiresome exegesis, he's not a faggot; he's himself. Simply, he would imagine himself all faggots past, present and future. He is a bourgeois who fantasizes that what he *feels* must reflect some species of external reality.

Around with him, he carries the throne from which he murmurs *ex cathedra*. Prolific, he writes to reduce, to flatten out his personality. He attempts, as do others, a mediocrity, he and the movement can conveniently accept as gay.

Article after article, he tearfully produces as if he were someone other than himself. He writes pretending some vague notion of gay moves his pen. Impersonal, his work is mystical.

When he bleeds, the bleeding is not his own. For all middle class homosexuals, he suffers. What flows saline from his sores, is other gays. He excretes them. We are his wounds. Bourgeois homosexuals, his flesh carries like stigmata. One of the movement's famed confessors, he lives a daily life of martyrdom. He is marked. In glory. Like so many others, he is marked for all middle class homosexuals. More than just one more queer, he's become a man with a mission. He *is* in order to be all gays. So, over and over again in print, he catalogues his faults, always adding to the breviary of his own imperfections.

But in this posing and posturing, he's merely made himself professional. Simply, he is better at it than most. With him and people like him, coming out is used by middle class homosexuals to pretend at being something they're not because they've never learned to accept what they fear they might be. Their game is the maneuvering of the guilty to embrace, to devour their own bourgeois guilt.

They are men who grew up assaulted by the barages of homophobic propaganda. In their frequent confession, the same bourgeois homosexuals, now gay, concede everything reactionary heterosexuals have alleged. Under the noble guise of gay liberation, they vomit back the homophobia. In coming out, they verify all that homophobia has imagined.

Through constant public self-reproach, these middle class men cry *de profundis*, trying to release themselves from all they think they've had to be. But once come out, they compile for the world all their *former* imperfections in order to see themselves as good gays.

This, gays do by making all space within which they move a vast confessional, a public square solemn and incense-scented upon which they do penance. They list each old weakness in order to be made strong and free. Zealously, as if entranced, they dangle before themselves the imperfections they readily admit they were while claiming they aren't.

In the safety of past tenses or an impersonal present, gays gorge themselves, feasting on faults, telling how flawed, how horrible they used to be. Movement gays tell us they used to be closet cases, sexists, racists, neurotically obsessed cripples, men incapable of human expression and so on. Generally, the statement of these people is, God, was I screwed up.

But, this is all pre-Stonewall. Through the magic of coming out, a middle class homosexual ceases to be his former imperfection.

If this were true, however, there wouldn't exist fascination among gays for their old, undesirable selves so painstakingly detailed in the gay liberationist literature. And if coming out were indeed some panacea there would be no murmuring re-echoing *mea culpa, mea maxima culpa* so frequently characterizing things gay.

Yet the cloying faggot lament, the dangled former selves, the pain, they are all part of the uselessness of gay. The paradox revealing through the idea of gay the selves the homophobe has stored in the middle class homosexual. It is his fears, the fantasies of the homophobe, motivating much of what's called gay.

The wastes secreted by the homophobe in order that he might live in his own denied homosexuality, the gay carries. It is the homophobe who has given to the him the imperfections making a homosexual the promiscuity, sinfulness, immorality, etc. a homophobe chooses to hide from himself.

Still, it's in terms of this tainted, worthless faggot identity that a liberated gay confesses, confessing he's not these things although he used to be them. In this way, the coming out of gays is an exercise in bad faith.

It is self-abuse of an almost religious quality. It is saying "I'm not the worthless shallow faggot" of tradition to; then, go about demonstrating this is exactly who one was.

The coming out of the gay movement, in this manner, seeks to legitimate and normalize a particular past, a specific past, one usually uniquely white and middle class, in which all homosexual experience must be re-created as a precondition for grooming the liberated gay consciousness of the present. What it is the proponents of this kind of gay would do, is commemorate their own past making solid and monumental their bourgeois guilt.

This is a reduction, a constricting, a distorting of gay ideology; simply, this ideology provides a means for survival: it gives to gays of a particular socio-economic background (middle class) a way of exorcizing their private guilt about being queer. This ideology of the liberationists, it's perverted itself to an hysterical orgy of gay confession rooted in a bourgeois guilt that can never be quite removed.

It remains the activity of an Unhappy Consciousness.

Middle class to the core, it stems from internal recognition that a homosexual is wrong or has done wrong. A feeling of estrangement from the normal, gay guilt revealed through confession is a longing for punishment. It's a plea. Through it, bourgeois homosexuals incant, soliciting a punishment contrary to everything for which gay liberation supposedly stands.

Punishment is sought because the guilt of the middle class implies that when a man does wrong or is wrong, he is punished, punished as he ought to be punished. A person alienated from a community through wrong will undergo a just punishment in order to be restored.

Believing punishment a negative quality reaffirming one's position in some established order, the guilt of the middle class is fusion. It is acceptance of a worthlessness for which one is punished to rejoin the pre-supposed Good of a constituted group. It's dialectic as something penitential.

The guilt of reformist gays is the bemoaning of the unnecessary suffering before coming out and liberation. Repentant, this idea of 'gay' welcomes confession in which admits the pain of former separation from the normal, as one dredges himself to publicize all and any bourgeois homosexual imperfection. A gay rehearses his flaws to prove he's surpassed them. In the pain of his surpassing them, he gains the normal he so cherishes, creating other homosexuals of different cultural experience, of diverse sexual orientation, of divergent political beliefs, 'queer'.

Amid the tears, sweat, blood of each additional confession, gays wimper of the injustice of branding them, of classifying them, they who were born with middle class privilege, abnormal. Their confession is the punishment they willingly endure to exorcize the demonical abnormal placed upon them; they confess in an act of humility to separate themselves from the queer.

In confessing they suffer before the homophobe asking their bourgeois privilege be restored, be reaffirmed. By electing their particular punishment, gays entreat the homophobe to re-invest them. Confronting their own oppression, middle class gays announce they're willing to reform, they will reform to regain their bourgeois patrimony.

Their gay and its coming out and confession demand that to which they feel entitled. To obtain it they will undergo a just punishment imagining themselves given to a fixed reality deserving civil rights as an emblem of their normalcy.

In their confused thirsting for rehabilitation, they subsume some whole or cosmic totality outside themselves by which they would be embraced: as shown by guilt and confession, their only concern is the relationship of their particular bourgeois insides to this externality.

Their guilt becomes a kind of insinuation. Through it, reformist gays would be fondled, bathed by this whole, made pure by the mere concession that this is a synthetic whole greater than the sum of its parts.

Simply, through coming out and its ideology gays would celebrate that very mystical normalcy by which they claim they've been oppressed.

This gourmandizing of the status quo is the loving faith of bourgeois faggots that dares not speak its name. Sequestered and silent, it would hide itself in rhetoric because gay reformism as begat by coming out as begat by guilt is the carrying of the homophobia to the heart of what would try to pass itself off as a liberation movement.

The homophobe, not the homosexual, is the foundation of this movement. It is he with his persistent concern for normal and abnormal with which he'd tyrannize the world, passed on to the reformism of gays that motivates the professional confession of liberated gays.

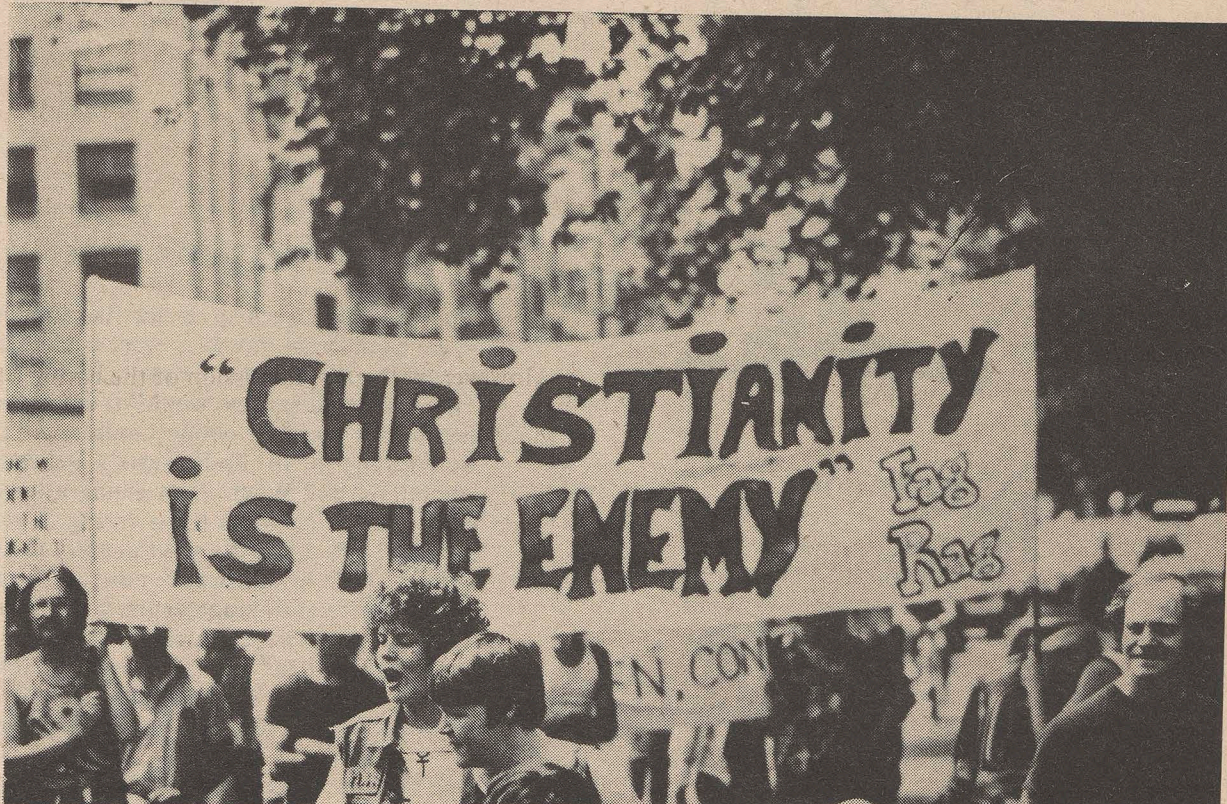
Confessing, it's the homophobe to whom these gays cling, clutching him for support. The movement of gays is, thus, no longer their own; it ceased to belong to them as middle class homosexuals retreated from other struggles of which gay activism can only be a part.

The coming out intended to free all homosexuals from the homophobe has, accordingly, become a gilded chain. Through it, gay liberation has betrayed itself. It has made itself an hysteria, an hysteria in front of the homophobe.

But more than any theoretical insufficiency, it is panic confronting someone white, sexist, male, and middle class. It is an attempt to be all these things while saying it's gay.

Homosexuals' politic of personal purity, coming out is merely the unleashing of the homophobe, that latent straight loving the supposed benefits of heterosexual America, lurking within the bourgeois faggot. It is the guilt-laden maneuvering of the privileged few that would lobotomize, send forth everyone blinking, stumbling, mumbling banal faggot rhetoric. As process, it is not liberation; it is the trivialization of the few aimed to exploit the many. It has made gay a kind of subversion. It is a gay implying that homosexual men and women will only be free to the extent that they're re-absorbed by the heterosexual society that's expelled them, discarded the homosexual like debris.

As such, this gay is a kind of doom, the kiss of death on the possibility of an autonomous homosexual politic. It provides a necessary link, merely assisting the heterosexual re-appropriation of the safer parts of its own abandoned homosexuality. It is gay as another of the instruments of reaction. It is gay becoming straight.



AMERICA!?

YOU HAVE TO EAT IN AMERICA

March 30, 1939

WINGS CIGARETTES a dime a package, a penny a piece loose/I stole out of my grandfathers store on the corner of Second & Arlington Streets in the scrap iron and metal capitol of the world as Adolph Hitler in Germany was biting off chunks of Europe/finishing the castration of the circumsized. Copper junk was selling, I think, for ten or twelve cents a pound, brass was about eight. In America, you have to eat in America. Little Edjoo Glowacki, the Polish boy who lived across the street from me, wanted free comic books to let me suck his prick with the mysterious foreskin which hurt when pulled back, but . . .

YOU HAVE TO EAT IN AMERICA

March 30, 1977

Poppers. Poppers, amyl nitrate poppers you said you had. No I never said that. I said I don't work. I'm a writer I said. You asked me what I did and I asked you what you did and you said . . . and I said let's go to my place, not far, over there, see. Let's come together you moaned. Then you said you could suck like this all afternoon. Then you asked me where you could buy some poppers, and how much were they, and I told you they give me a headache after I come down. In America, you have to eat in America.

YOU HAVE TO EAT IN AMERICA

March 30, 1939

Tickets they give you for the whole family to go to the circus if you display in the window their poster. RINGLING BROTHERS BARNUM & BAILEY with high wires. My grandmother, my mother told me, sold denatured alchohol to the Polacks on Sunday, hmm, or was it during prohibition in America. Sold too Chinese firecrackers made in Japan. Sold too one cent grab bags of stale candy with worms. In America, you have to eat in America.

freddie greenfield



REJECTION

Flushed down the toilet of rejection, wasting in the sewers of misunderstanding, love soon can decompose and be dissolved by time.

Henrik Eger

SAD IS'NT IT

Names Lucien. Born in Provincetown, MA. Parents unknown, who cares. Gender? Boy or girl, male or female? Bitch! I'm a bitch you dummy! A dog! What do you think, I'm a cat or something? Too many of those around this house if you ask me. But of course nobody does. A dog! That's what I am, just another dog. Sad is'nt it. Live with an old fag of all things. Chains me to violated parking meters under the presumption that I can't take care of myself without it around. It, you know, he/she. Poet, calls her/himself a poet. A gay liberation bowel movement poet. Why does'nt he get a job like a normal human being? A vegetarian no less/sticks and stones/have'nt seen a meat bone around this house in months. Plates. Lets me lick the oil off of empty vegetable plates like it's giving something away. A dog! That's what I am, just another dog. Sad is'nt it.

freddie greenfield

DO YOU WANNA BUY A DUCK

On the seashore ten silver sea fish sunned themselves, while eight brass monkeys were caught in the secret sacred crypts of ancient Egypt. Richie Essegian The Armenian said he would'nt smoke anymore dope because he was in a phone booth and he thought the walls were caving in. In? In Shwartz's Delicatessen that's where. Where? Where I sat eating a tongue and swiss cheese sandwich when I was young. Young? Yes young, a tongue I had, mostly used adeptly to suck off Jim Doherty the old married ex-police officer who lived with his wife and daughter on the corner of Fifth and Chestnut in Chelsea Massachusetts. Worked in the Kyienize Paint factory at the end of Heard Street, Jim did, when he was'nt too drunk. To roll me over. To roll me over. To roll me over and do it again.

DO YOU WANNA BUY A DUCK

freddie greenfield

GHOSTLY PROPOSITIONS AFTER GUSTAVE MOREAU

1. The Angels of Sodom

Viewing your spectral visitors in the light of our pale Jordan morning after thoughts as two gray areas of consciousness, we must imagine them fleshed out and cloaked in all provoked hallucination's flaming shades for us to replicate conditions of the test by a mere expenditure of overwhelming force you meant to pass. Watching now you begin to seethe as pitchy clouds surround and storm your citadels, we pray he may more modestly conduct himself whose one-night stint with holy terror disguised alluringly as his projected hopeless dream is in its planning stage.

2. Phaeton

Your curiously empathetic, shuddering armchair fellow stellar voyagers, must we not regard your overturning carriage and ecstatic gestures in the fiery light of gaudy finery that baits a consummately feral golden phantom and its black, abysmally deflecting, savagely supportive snaky train? Are you uncertainly surviving contact with a ghostly demolition crew, or driven by a coursing frenzy on a quest of heavenly thrusting private thrills have you been reveling in your languidly uplifted, passionately plunging self?

3. Salome Dancing Before Herod

Your unimpassioned-panther-padded-Dead-Sea-scripture-ritual affiliates, may we presume to penetrate the icy formal face that masks a mightily presiding tired tetrarch's deep concern for a towering, instantly engaging, maddeningly honeycombed malignant engine and its rigid reaching hand? Is deference to a ceremonial demand or morbid private fantasy preparing you to make this muscled male right arm a mutely executing brutal instrument in bringing on the soothing reign of your exalted, sunken self?

4. Polyphemus and Galatea

Your whimsically bewildering Sicilian seaside glamour chamber fathomers, must we not allow for some express contempt while a prodigiously constructed piece of penetrating male machinery depends upon a delicately branching coral cave and its tentacularly scheming incandescent polyp queen? Are you initiating plans to poke a hand in an unbroken beaming hold and steal away, or have you just begun to marvel at your monstrously distracted self, which takes its pleasure in a blooming dark, disastrously proportioned dream?

5. Hercules and the Daughters of Thespius

Your daintily suggestive, gloomy bullpen business evening meditation breakers, may we attempt to guess the solid bed consideration that has turned your head and locked your legs against initial deep immersion in a standing palace pool of decorous, densely concentrated, carefully undistinguished local blooms? Have visions of a coming muddle kept you from the prosecution of your choice in subject virgins, or in planning one night's laborious massive ravishment are you still hoping to attract a straitened circumstantial self you do not know?

6. Hercules and the Hydra of Lerna

Your luridly illuminated, dubious Peloponnesian fenway foreplay fans, may we conjecture why you dangle a knobby instrument and keep a ruby quiver loaded in the face of an obtrusive, passionately forking private pipeline, nested in its messily dismembered, toothsomely retired human heap? Are you displaying manly weaponry to scare or stimulate a belt of meaty male consumers, or before you seam the reaches of your massive sizzling phallic fantasy must you survive the piling of your feverishly expired selves?

7. Ulysses and the Suitors

Your lavishly appealed to, pitifully divided island slaughter hall defense, must we not determine whether the lofty light and elevated arm of an emblazoned maid can arguably deflect some blame for the fatal darted sentence on a gang of glitteringly gifted, stunningly convulsed voluptuous petitioners? Have you been arbitrarily directing barbs at a band of strapping sybaritic princes, or without a dazzling epic aspiration's forceful hand might you have spared the flashing last ecstatic shadow self your lengthy vagabondage spawned?

8. Thracian Girl with the Head of Orpheus

Your out-of-earshot, gently disconcerted blue-brocaded-seascape fond admirers, must we not wonder whether shaky local shepherd minstrel sound effects have urged your eyes to close and arms to settle on your maiden carapace this prettily dismembered, bloodlessly invading male appendage with its passion-teasing tool? Are beach musicians stimulating you to mourn or kiss your dreamy totem find, or floating in a silent golden twilight Hebron river margin sheltered garden silken haze are you in final first communion with your sacred priestly self?

Rudy Kikel



The Angels of Sodom, oil painting by Gustave Moreau



T. S. Eliot 74

#10

When I hear St. Sebastian I hear Frida Kahlo
because the saint is misnamed
Saint Frida would be more accurate now,
given what we think of Sebastian,
a minor vineyard,
tourist-colored,
Perseus, gangrene,
with the head of Medusa
for Pegasus to touch
again I have to unmask something
like a typing error in Hebrew,

this guy
cut off
this woman's head
and in terror flung his rock
poing

poetry

Horrah Pornoff

BLACKBIRD LOVERS

"My father
As I look at him
he begins to turn into a bird."
— Song from Ghost Dance Religion

My eyes settled on you
blackbirds
seeking Winter grain.
I don't know how you saw me
but you sold yr blood one day
to buy me a shirt for my birthday.

I won't say how happy we felt
going shopping, cooking for each other
but once, from old habit,
I moaned,
"Ed, do you *really* love me?"

Flapping his arms like a bird
Ed jumped around the kitchen cawing:
"Do ya love me?
Do ya love me?"
How we laughed.

After five blissful months
I returned one day to an empty house.
The window was open.
Like dreams in the morning
he finally flew away.

Sometimes now I take long walks.
Blackbirds in the park caw out my name.
I never answer
not unless I hear the flapping of their wings
behind me
& off to my left side.

Then, like dreams in the morning,
I moan
"Oh, do you *really* love me?"
and the birds —
"Caw, Caw."

laughing as they flutter away.

BOYS' RANCH

Boys ride the range,
their shirts blue as waterfalls
buttoned up, in jeans
that strangle the waist.

Their hair is very short,
sheared by rules, and the mules'
smell is on them, the only
cologne they're allowed.

After a hard work day
every joint hurts, and
necks must be craned
to softness, to floating.

They wash together in stalls,
and food that flares energy
is tossed to their waists
making them bounce in their bunks.

The lights fade
and play with them.
In the door ranch hands stand
and pick their vague faves.

Then, in every third bunk,
covers bunch at skinned knees
and, reflecting in white bellies,
unshaven mugs exaggerate everything.

Dennis Cooper

STEPHEN ABBOTT

***** STAR ***** ***** ***** BLOWER *****

an event 29 january 1977



photo credit: Ed Camp

I was in the midst of listening to Maria Lina Corentta-Piston singing her famous "Falalois" aria on the Met Opera broadcast of "La Profitière" (Ms. Cornetta-Piston is, of course, well-known as the only coloratura mezzo contralto liaison from the Longshoreperson's Union to the opera company) when suddenly my friend (and I use that word loosely) Louis Feinstein called to ask if I wanted to go out to the fuckbars that night. "Why don't you ask Maria Lina?" I asked. "That's not Jocko's scene," answered he, using one of the names by which she's affectionately known. Since I'd planned on making those rounds later on anyway, I agreed that we should go ensemble and we set a time and we met.

After a pointless endless discussion about how everybody doesn't have to know (Louis clings steadfastly to vestiges of his closet), we set out for "La Fontainedor," a great favorite among the raunchy places. We had a brief stint at the bar, Louis raved on about comparative recorded versions of *The Messiah*, who, contrary to popular opinion, is nicht necessarily gekommen, and we headed for the "backstage" area. A tall man passed into my line of vision and the idea flashed across my mind, I wonder if that's Jordan Manners (the Metropolitan Opera baritone). Louis noticed him too and mused, "I wonder if that's Jordie," using a nickname to imply a comradeship I thought dubious and playing one-ups-personship as usual. I decided to find out.

I drew near the man in question, looked him over, attempted to definitely identify him and realized that he was cruising me. About ten years ago, Herr Manners had figured prominently in my teenage erotic fantasies, and, given the circumstances and the opportunity, who was I to refuse to give him a whirl? So I groped him. Then he groped me, I blew him, he blew me and we did some intensely dramatic deep searching kissing. And then it was over.

I wanted him to know that I knew who he was. I followed him to the sink where he was relieving

himself (that sort of thing is done there), tapped him on the shoulder, leaned in towards him and half-whispered in his ear, "I wanted to tell you just one thing: 'Troika, semyorka, tewz,'" quoting a line identified with him from the ever-popular opera "Wenzel the Bricklayer" by Schimmelmayer. Manners stifled a snicker and I disappeared.

I retrieved Louis at the bar. He had seen Manners and someone genuflecting before him and had passed discreetly. He'd also seen me and someone kneeling in front of me and had, similarly, moved on. "Yes, I made it with him." "That was you?" Louis was aghast. "That's so wrong!" "Why?" "Because it is, starfucker." "That's starblower and, what's more, star-blown!"

I told him about the line I quoted. "Oh, that's so cruel, so sadistic and so unlike you." Now wait, first, it's unlike me to be sadistic? My keys have been on the left since '71. Second, I didn't say, "Troika, semyorka, tewz and I'm going to tell everyone that you were here." It was well meant and, I felt, well taken, and it established me to him as not just anybody, as one of the cognoscenti. I returned to the inner sancta.

I spotted Manners again and he passed me without greeting, either not noticing me or else lacking interest in reacquaintance. I began to wonder if Louis was right, if Manners had felt threatened on being recognized and was reacting with hostility. The next time he went by, I tickled his stomach. The time after, he tickled mine. All was well. Somehow, one thing led to another and we made contact again. Once more I found myself on my knees before him. He leaned down and confided, "I want to piss and jerk off on your chest and your cock." At your service, my dear.

Had he seen me in the light and senza barba, he might have realized that, when he had sung in "Wenzel the Bricklayer," I had had the part of the seventeenth offstage unborn door.

Bruce Michael Gelbert

angels

By Tom Felt

I know the horror they must have felt when they found him : his body sprawled obscenely, the head at an awkward angle, blood everywhere : flecks of blood matted in that dear, golden hair and staining the clothes that had first been cut from his body and then thrown aside : pools of blood, blood tears running from his eyes, blood, they say, even spattering the wallpaper. I did not see him, but he must have seemed like a cruelly ravished angel. He had that look of innocence : innocence, which even in hell, is beautiful.

They have accused me of murdering him.

I remember how he used to look at me : with eyes that were youthful and trusting, golden eyes, my golden child. He made love to me passionately and without restraint : devoted, he would give himself to me entirely, without question : he loved me then, at least for those few fleeting moments. It was not a love that could last. The world is not like that. I paid him for his time and he would go away again.

But I never harmed him.

You see, I loved him too much. I bought him when I could afford to and I dreamed of him when I could not. But I let him go without regret. He would be mine again : when I could afford it : that was my life and it was all I had.

Now there is this nightmare from which I shall never awake.

The first time I saw him was in a bar. He looked so out of place : golden hair, those angelic eyes. Later, in my bed, he unexpectedly told me that I was kind. I wanted to cry out that, no, it was he who was the blessing. I touched his body : he was so warm, so lovely. I wanted him to stay the night, but he slipped away as he would so many times after that.

Of course, I was jealous. But it was not him whom I hated. It was those other men who did not know the value of what they so casually bought. The golden youth that they wasted. Now he is gone.

Now they ask me their questions.

Suspicion.

Cruelty in their looks.

—When did you see him last?

—The night that he was killed.

—You went to his room?

—Yes.

—What time did you leave him?

—It was early. 10 o'clock, I think.

But what does this accomplish? Which truth do they hope to find? I cannot tell them that I am guilty; I am not. What else can I tell them?

That my beautiful angel has been brutally used and that this end was only to be expected?

But no, no, I cannot mean that. He was innocent : I did not hate him : perhaps it was merely the distasteful circumstances of his life that made him seem trapped, unable to transcend the degradation. I could not save him : love could not.

At a party once, he had been paid to perform. It was in a dark and smoky room : filled with middle-aged men. He undressed like a child, quite unaware of any moral significance to his act. His body, too, was youthful : in the dim light, he looked scarcely seventeen : there was only the slightest growth of golden down about his genitals. His parter was coarse and hairy. He stripped his clothes off arrogantly : and yet when they made love, it was with the same intensity and joy that I had known.

He could not differentiate.

That is when he seemed an angel : a child-angel-bitch in heat, giving of himself to the world.

Always, there was this thing about him : his sex was not just a commodity, it was a gift as well.

And now we come back to the horror : that he is dead. That it was a painful and bloody death. That I will never see him again.

—I did not kill him.

—But you were there.

—Earlier.

—And you quarrelled.

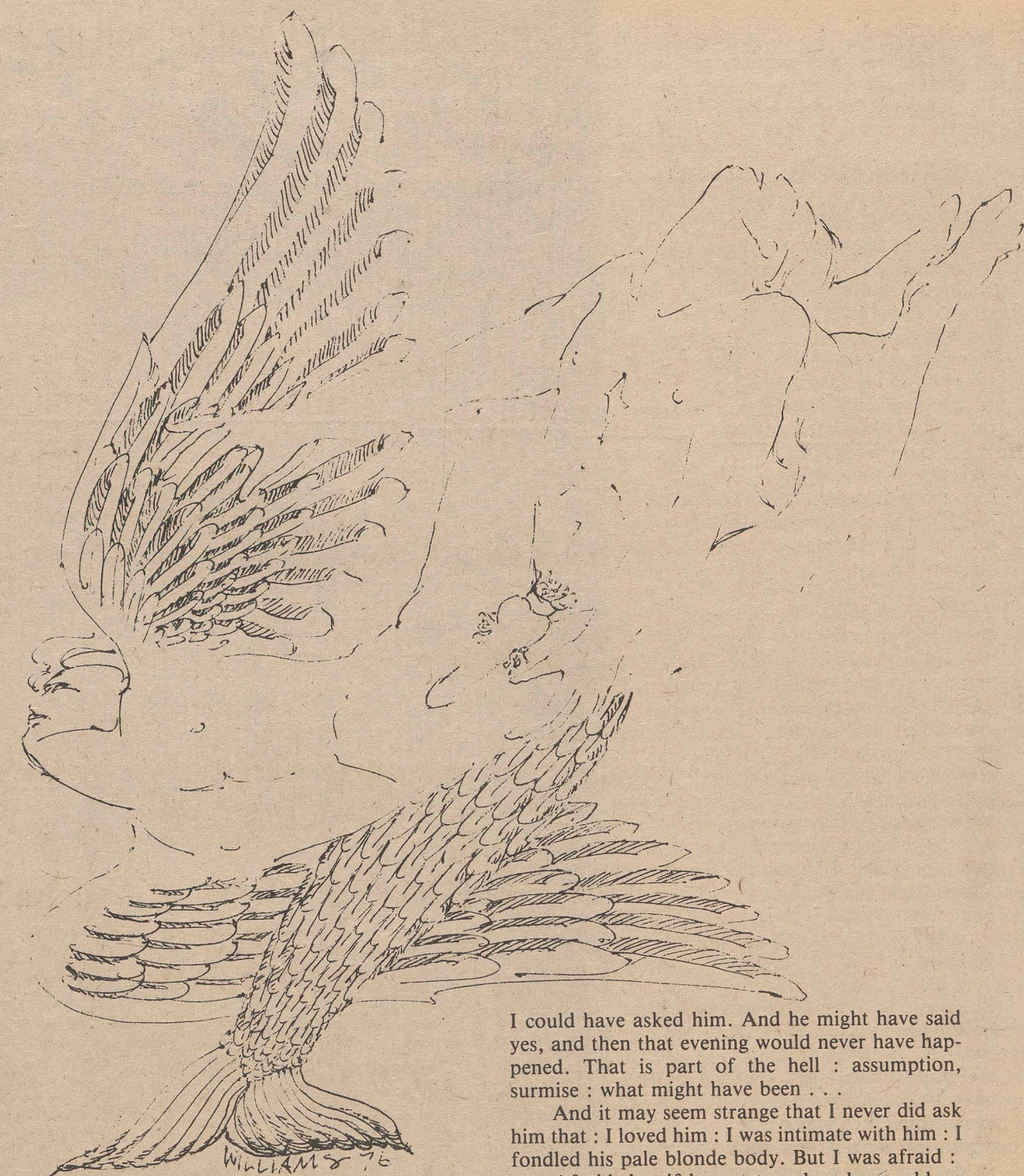
—No.

—You asked him to come live with you.

—No.

—But he was quite content with his life. He was doing very well. There was nothing you could offer him.

—I didn't ask him to live with me.



—But you wanted him to?

—Yes.

—And you quarrelled.

—No.

—You might as well tell us the truth. It will come out sooner or later.

—I am telling you the truth.

—Tell us how you killed him.

—I didn't.

Oh god, can't they see that I didn't?

(The knife must have slashed downward. He would have pulled back, but even so it cut the flesh : a thin line from his collar-bone to his stomach, beaded with blood that soon would begin to flow freely. Then a quick wrench and the tattered shirt had been pulled from his body. He began to struggle. The knife, less precise now, jabbed at his waist. He was struck on the back of the head by some heavy object : his neck was broken : at least, I hope that it was broken : now, before the pain had grown too great. The rest would have been done swiftly : unless he were still alive : unless . . . but I must not think of that.)

The belt cut and the pants cut and torn from his body. There were gashes all over his groin and on his buttocks : his chest was deliberately disfigured. Only his face was unmarred, so that his eyes seemed to stare . . .

No! I must not think about it. His beautiful face, those eyes, the tears of blood . . .)

At first I thought that someone had screamed. But it is only a nightmare. And I am alone in the night that engendered it.

I would like to reach out and find him lying beside me.

He only stayed once for the night. And then he would not stay for breakfast. There was too much he had to give : he could not remain in any one place for too long.

Still, I would have enjoyed watching him eat.

—And you paid him that night to go to bed with you?

—Yes.

—Twenty dollars, for a little less than an hour. Is that right?

—Yes.

—And then you asked him if he would come and live with you?

—No, I didn't.

—And he said no, that he would not . . .

I could have asked him. And he might have said yes, and then that evening would never have happened. That is part of the hell : assumption, surmise : what might have been . . .

And it may seem strange that I never did ask him that : I loved him : I was intimate with him : I fondled his pale blonde body. But I was afraid :

Afraid that if he got too close he would no longer be my angel and he would feel pity for me.

(He said yes, and suddenly I was berserk, screaming at him, slashing his body with all the wickedness that he denied me. I was the angel, the avenging angel, punishing him, punishing myself . . . Is this how it could have been?)

Oh god, my innocence is as heavy and unbearable as guilt. And so, perhaps in the end I will give in.

—Tell us, then, what it was you did say that night.

—I don't know. I can't remember. We just talked. There wasn't that much we needed to say.

Needed to say : wanted to say. We touched : he let me kiss him : his legs encircled my body. He was so much more beautiful than anyone else I had ever known.

And this is the very most serious indictment against me : that I did not tell him that I loved him, that I did not tell myself that I loved him, until after he was dead.

There are so many interpretations that I can make of that fact : they do not comfort me and I sink a little lower each time.

(The knife cutting away the blood-soaked trousers. He did not wear underwear. His penis, robbed of its sexuality at last, hung limply in a nest of tiny blonde curls. Only now, with his innocence so ruthlessly shattered, was he truly defenseless. Only now could he be taken without love, taken with the mastery of bloodlust. I swell with the thought of it and almost wish that the violation of that lifeless body had been mine.)

—You will tell us the truth, sooner or later. It is only a matter of time.

And, yes, I suppose I will. Tell them, not *the* truth, but *their* truth. How else can I escape him now? How else will I rid myself of that beautiful shadow, the boy who told me that I was kind?

It is strange what this death, this love-death, has taught me : strange and unnerving. Yes, I suppose that I must speak to them soon. My angel, my lovely and wonderful angel, bids me to do so.

I cannot let him down.

I cannot let him down again.

Perhaps tomorrow : perhaps tomorrow, when it is all utterly clear, I will speak.

SUCKERS: A MEAL IN REHASH

11:11 my lover asleep
I slip out of the room
kill the light
thought to turn key in dark
the lock-up due to guests
uninvited unknown
now I fear the switch
dawning in my lover's eyes
a falsehood to start awake
wide eyed accusing
infidelity in the slip out.
Too sensitive we retreat
as strangers touch our lives. Our privates
are public property; who owns what?

1a Guest 1

Hardly ghost of hair
to guess at mustache
the wise ass boy wanted suck
this queer willing in this space
of bulldozed trees where
drivers rest to piss, press
their dicks in open air.
Always someone hanging around
suspicious willing to suck
or nap you. The cops came
in globs glued the future
guest with child molestation.
We took him in after bail;
he robbed us blind.

1b Guest 2

Philosophers get hardons too
he said and I sucked for it.
But they can't shoot
and grab at you all night
never leave you to sleep
never let you rest, blame you
as they rim you, spit pin worms
up your ass, love you with blue tatoos
fuck you as they blame you
as they walk out the door
on you your eye lids falling into sleep.

1c Guest 3

Nuclear fission could be responsible
for the hair balled behind the elastic.
Nice enough to the dog
in front of us but we can see
the small pinches, the hoarse whispers
to *lay down*, the ownership rites of bread,
the gloomy sunday of our return.
My unfairness to wish him gone.

1d Guest 4

The week ahead my brother
has signed up for. His three friends
have just left: no goodbyes no thanks.
Good thing I locked up the goods.

salvatore farinella

AFTER THE BATHS

It is an October noon.
The wind is gathering the yield of people around the Common.
I have been alone and together all night, sucking cock and ass.
The sun is bright, cold and dry.
I am walking across Boylston Street towards McDonald's, ravenously hungry.

Stuart Byron



photo credit: Ken Clark

LOST BOY

Glanced at you one night,
You were so pretty.
What chance did I have?
Next night you gave me a turn.
You seemed so butch in bed.
I sucked, you did'nt.
Let you fuck,
You stuck and Quit.
Weightlifter
Why?
I sucked more and you fucked
my mouth.
I choked at climax.
Made you breakfast,
Spent the day.
You were in jeans and jacket.
Now that's not like you.
Wearing more fashion lately,
How could you be more pleasing?
We kiss and say hi,
Play mind-eye-games from a distance,
How distant are we?
Maybe you're not versatile,
But that's cool.
I'll suck and choke,
If you'll come home with me;
KURT.

Henry Sacks

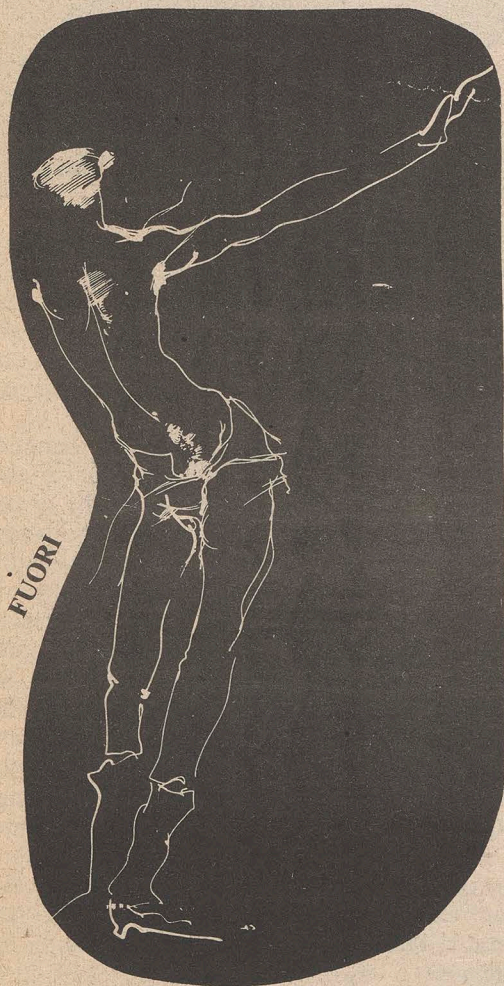
How many
years since
I stayed awake
afterwards
breathing in
the boysmell
milky and sour-sweet
a little pukey
and Irish.
Some mother sits
uneasy on her chair.
Tell her he bores me
in most ways;
I only wanted his
body. It's
the scent
keeps me up.
I wonder what it is
he reminds me of
and what that
old thing
means to me
anymore

It smells
like buttermilk
churning.

Richard Ronan

(by an unusual best-of-me
in a look-a-like love nest
of convenience)

Kept



Away

by Chasen Gaver

The art of being "kept," one young subject who is in keeping tells me, is not so much an *art*, as it is a craft. The former has for centuries implied the neutral, sexless tendencies of strict aesthetics (the kind of unadventurous, half-habit that has sent Susan Sontag, plume in palm, on a course of convincing artists that what they need is less soul and more bodies).

A craft, on the otherhand, is a more casual affair. And so, in the mid-Seventies, is the process of getting and being "kept."

Kenneth gestures with his left hand in the direction of the southern side of the residence. There is nothing on that side of the room. Just a few spider plants in clay pots suspended from a bamboo curtain rod, which are doing quite well owing to the southern exposure. But otherwise: blank, barren.

"That's it," Kenneth smiles. "That's the grand-sum-total of what I've held on to in the 2 years of this relationship."

Kenneth and his "keeper," who is a junior executive in a downtown National Bank, have agreed on a very subsistence oriented monetary arrangement. Hence: Kenneth's bare wall.

"He thinks if we split and I've gathered a lot of goodies that I'll scoot with 'em." Kenneth sips from an onyx colored cup, his hand covering its contents as if I'm not supposed to see what he's drinking.

Regardless of what Kenneth doesn't have, he does possess access to the rest of the Center City townhouse, all three floors, two bedrooms, two baths, den, dining room and sunroof of it. All because Kenneth is being kept.

Rita approaches it differently. She agrees that, in a word, she too is being "kept" by a commercial artist for a department store franchise, "but we have decided to refrain from that particular term." Rita's attitude is different from Kenneth's, but then so is her situation. She is older; 31 compared to Kenneth's 17. She is less concerned about acquiring material objects-de-gain from her stay with Caroline, for as she puts it:

"I left a \$40,000 house in White Plains, decorator drapes, Swiss crystal, two cars, two kids and a manila folder full of credit cards that it took me an hour and twenty minutes to cut every

one of them in half. You see," she says, "I was legally 'kept'. They call that being: married . . ."

So the southern wall of the co-op apartment of the woman who is now supporting Rita Jenkins can stay bare for all she cares. What Rita wants to own is her "own self" for once.

She is writing poetry, when she is not doing some of the odds 'n ends errands that make up her and Caroline's unlicensed agreement — light housekeeping, some decorating, a bit of answering the phone should a free lance job ring for Caroline. Rita says she doesn't mind the "chores," and would be doing the same routine herself "if poetry only paid." And since so many of us know it doesn't, she believes herself lucky for locating this "Artist in Residence" status so quickly after her separation seven months ago.

There then, are two different people who, for different lengths of time, with different attitudes and gratitudes can provide us with some insight to a phenomenon encountered quite often in Gay Culture.

Kenneth and Rita are two, I am a third — there are perhaps a couple hundred-kept-thousand of us.

While in between jobs and out of collateral — excepting several unsold manuscripts and a big batch of poetry that non-profit journals were running off ruinous issues of — I realized my copy right permissions were up for my ego, but not even on the verge of *nourishing*. So, happened along this anxious, amiable, government go-getter, and he caught one of my poorly paid poetry performances and, well, decided to make a *contribution*!

For the month of March I became a Kept Boy. I have lived to write about it . . .

I have also learned several important truisms for those who might find themselves in "good keeping" some future day.

Sex, for example. Nearly every person who is being kept is furnishing sex in return. There are slim exceptions. A staff assistant on Capitol Hill described a stint in Portland, Oregon where the first weekend after he moved in, his benefactor attempted sex but was impotent the first night: "The first night was the last night," the Congressional staffer said he was happily surprised: "Because I am better at being a *companion* anyway. So it worked out well for the both us: He, with his reading glasses, I, with my smile . . ."

Smiles or no smiles, sex can really get sticky when two or more people are being kept at one time. The same Congressional staffer spoke of a situation here in Washington where he and two other young men had the run of an eleven room penthouse as long as they ran on call to the bill payer's bedroom. "We finally decided that if all three of us patched together part time jobs, we could make it on our own," and so they did. Bobbie's temporary typist job turned into a Congressional research position, and now ironically he is keeping a young man from his home state of Florida.

There is finally the sometimes dehumanizing aspect of being passed around a la "O" in *The Story of . . .*, and several people I interviewed stated flatly: that ended it for them! For, there is a fine, but tight line between being kept and being involved in out 'n out prostitution. Certainly those "kept away" have been engaging in a particular form of prostitution, but a *very* particular form: only one "client," if you will, is involved and he or she lives in the same domicile. There is also a bit more that the keeper and the "keepee" are exchanging than physical love and physical shelter. My own experience brings this to bright light.

Had I not found Terrance, or he me, chances are I would have been cut off from those supporters who have helped my writing develop, I'd have lost a great deal of public performance exposure, and no telling what an extended stay in the teeny midwestern village my parents reside in (while I regrouped my resources in some automaking sweat-shop) would have twisted my subject matter. True, some critics are probably wishing it would happen all over again — but those asides aside, this is what I learned:

Some responses are automatic. I have always gravitated toward drying dishes, for example. Back home every other night the children would do the dishes and all our parents had to do was referee among the three of us: who got to wash, who got to dry and who got to put away. The youngest of us always wanted to climb on the counters and pile the finished works in neat even columns, so she nearly always put away. My older sister relished rubber gloves and raised her voice to call for the wash routine. So all that was left was a dish rag and a tray full of rinsed Fiestaware and I came to like drying.

This transferred to my relationship with Terrance, as well as my college chore of emptying the studyroom wastecans, and my pride at discharging ice trays and refilling them to the proper spot. The lesson in all this is to take what one has and *build* up and out from there.

Those two directions also hold true socially. If the person who is supporting you is at all amiable, chances are one might find oneself in Zelda Fitzgerald's position where more and more of Scott's friends became the people they entertained and were amused by. The pressure is definitely on the person being kept to get along with the keeper's people. But there was an entire section of Terrance's social stadium that I couldn't come to enjoy.

Since Terrance was black and I was not, we found ourselves in sort of a historical reversal. For decades Caucasians have been keeping non-whites, but now — especially in more affluent black environments like Washington, D.C. — the set has switched. The people I couldn't be comfortable around were the inter-racial two-somes who were doing the same thing! All these upwardly mobile black men keeping white boys. And that seemed the only tangible thing Terrance and I had in common with the dozen or so black/white couples we knew.

In addition to race there is sometimes age. In my case, a man 15 years my senior, continued to make decisions based on laws, customs, crimes and wars I hadn't lived through and it made life difficult. What I learned from the conflicts that ensued was: if one doesn't have independence, one must achieve a degree of it. We fought. I won.

That is to say my victory could be measured in terms of my not having to pack my manuscripts into a Safeway bag and take to the streets. But, indeed, I lost as well . . . and *gladly*! I lost my ignorance of the conditions of an Other, and my loss was my gain.

In the sense that a keeper is also a potential mentor, those of us "kept away" are at best not kept away from the ability to bubble underneath and boil over into steamy new experiences. I learned everything from how to improve the taste of frozen vegetables with fat-back, to some damn good tips on which galleries to tap for artists to illustrate my work, and patrons to encourage my poetry performances.

As a side note, near the end to this then, I'd suggest if you go looking for someone to keep you, that you look in the same directions that you'd like to keep going. It just so happened that Terrance promoted art on the side, and his aid to this very day, has been invaluable.

Indeed, not all those kept away are satisfied with the situation. In search of more examples, I found reluctant subjects who whispered about friends who were beaten, or literally held captive by angered keepers who "would rather maim them than see them flee."

This only goes to show there are sick people in every business . . . but my belief remains: it can and in many cases it *should* be done!

The alternatives are often returning to a family situation that has ceased to nurture anything but unreasonable doubts; or an unsympathetic and complex welfare system that runs one ragged, drains off creative drive, and appears to be self-perpetuating.

Sure, there are pitfalls in being kept, and one cannot be blind to the sacrifices one may make. Call Off Your Old Tired *Ego* and come face to face with the hard economic fact that when it comes to fighting poverty: no person is an island. But each one of us *is* a person, and even if it means Kenneth packing his bare wall into a designer shopping bag and nesting on the nearest hot air vent, he echoes a feeling I believe insured the health of his potentially hazardous relationship:

"The entire reason I got into this thing in the first place was for self-preservation. As soon as my psyche is threatened, I split."

Kenneth and Rita *both* emphasized that their individualistic viewpoints were in keeping with the knowledge that to be kept in homosexual society held no promises of legal bonds, community properties, or even social sanction. This reality often adds to the tension within a relationship, and this too one must be aware of upon entry into, as Rita puts it: "A contained atmosphere, a social terrarium."

But then Kenneth, Rita and I all agree: such is the *craft* as opposed to "art" — that is etched into the makings of any atmosphere that will be "self-contained." And as an end note to those who have previewed this piece and find it "sleazy," or "better-left-unread," Craft Shows have never received the critical acclaim that Art Openings often achieve — but in the pluralistic world of the creatives, few have questioned the, granted: somewhat subliminal, but none-the-less viable *art* of *craft* . . .

WIT vs. THE WARD-HEELERS

by MITZEL

Why are straight people so dull?

And why is it that so many faggots are witty, sharp, free, fluid and verbally dexterous?

These related questions have fascinated me ever since I became aware of this distinction — sometime around my 15th year.

"Camp culture" — or whatever name you prefer — seems to me to be largely characterized by wit. Dull themselves, straights *love* traditional faggot camp humor; they love it when faggot dishes faggot. But when they become the targets of wit, straights often stop laughing and turn nasty — unless the homosexual can present himself as too much of a joke personally to be regarded seriously — the mattress.

Yet, as with everything foreign and tantalizing to them, the straights resent it too, in an equal amount. I think they know they are barred from understanding wit — as they are barred from expressing themselves through it — by the psychological blinders they have put upon themselves. Wit acts as a sneaky and deadly threat to the equilibrium of their social roles. By accepting the vision of the world behind the "commodity" of this wit, their social supports would be drained of meaning. Whereas straight people have a vested interest in being dull, literalist, and unimaginative to keep their world going, gay people are, I've learned, in the truest and fullest sense of the word *fabulous*. We lie, tell incredible stories about ourselves (that we expect to be believed), we pretend we're all kinds of people we're not. More than any other people in the macroscopic society, we've broken down the rules that are used for validating the difference between real/true and unreal/false. The control agents of the status quo may know the power of lies; dissident sub-cultures, however, are closer to knowing their *value*.

Nothing is more despised by straights than gay wit expressed at and/or during their Rituals of Solemn Occasions. Oscar Wilde, at one of his trials, was on the stand and had upset the judge. The judge inquired: "Are you trying to show contempt for this court, Mr. Wilde?" Oscar replied: "On the contrary, my Lord. I'm trying my best to conceal it." This truth came across as superciliousness and was surely held against Wilde at verdict and sentencing time. I can recall that after my brother swapped marriage vows with his wife at a judge's home, I burst into applause, assuming such was acceptable behavior at heterosexual "joyous occasions" (remembering so well how people in New York City had clapped and screamed at His Holiness when he visited the World's Fair there in 1964 — escorted by the decrepit Fanny Spellman — and their demonstrative carryings-on scandalized my protestant-puritan sense of propriety, even though I didn't give beans about the Pope; people screaming, "Yea, Pope!"). So I applauded their nuptials, and my family (and the judge) gave me looks that could kill. The marriage has since dissolved.

In exploring wit's pervasiveness among faggots, I see it as both an expression and technique of self-defense. Evidence of wit gives quick glimpses into the world of gay energies (originating in the fundamentally different attitudes and orientation of choosing to be part of an outlawed and potentially revolutionary sub-culture — and growing up with no belief in and, at last, no fear of, the social institutions of conventional support and control). Were they not still obstructed by the tyranny of the monopoly of heterosexual "education," "conditioning," and "behavior control," these energies would bring entirely new ways of reacting and reshaping our worlds. The gay sensibility freed would completely destroy the arts and culture as they exist for contemporary taste-makers and culture-eaters.

My own situation is a case in point. For at least the last 10 years, many people have regarded me as "a wit." I can recall quite clearly when I made my first "witticism" — at age 8 — and how it was received, and what pleasant encouragement it gave me. I guess I was impressed then that I possessed

something for which there appeared to be a market.

Early in my life I decided that I did not want to think or express myself as I was being instructed to do in the myriad of schools I attended. I relied at first on gladhand and easy sarcasm; I later developed a reliance on ironical expression. And since about 1970 — that time in my life when I opted to associate almost exclusively with faggots and lesbians — I have expressed myself, as much and as often as I can, through epigrams and wit. I have come to view wit as an integral and *essential* part of gay male living. Wit and irony provide the only reasonable *modus operandi* in the American Literalist Terror of Straight Reality.

Faggots are more adept with irony and wit than straight people generally, and much, much more so than straight men. Irony is the patois of the gay male sub-world; I think Oscar Wilde's specific *brand* of wit — playing the contrary to expectations — set the idiom of this kind of expression. Something is expressed in its established opposite, and then, having presented things as contrary, one then tries to cap it off by transforming it into a paradox. This makes for an uneven reality, the faggot's response to the monolithic presence of straight culture. And it makes for the kind of whirligig verbal maneuvering which amazes, titillates and annoys the straights.

I have come to reject *totally* the straight ways of registering and reacting to phenomena. When I find myself in the company of straights, I have to translate my thoughts not only from gay-talk to straight-ese, but I have to switch *modes* of responding. (When a trade trick tells you his daughter is getting married, big wedding, etc., you can't scream and talk of your own sequence of "husbands"; he'll get angry. When with straights, talking of Joan Crawford's death, one must be serious and respectful and not launch into movie-queen faggot jabber, else they'll look at you as though you were a heretic.) When you talk in your own lingo at your own speed, straights become perplexed, tune out, shut you off and become hostile. Hence one must translate and self-censor to communicate with straights; this is a form of unseen but real social oppression which leads to the most unpleasant and harmful forms of rerouting of energies into conventional and acceptable molds for expression.

I have come to view wit as an integral and essential part of gay male living. Wit and irony provide the only reasonable *modus operandi* in The American Literalist Terror of Straight Reality.

In an earlier piece (published in the now defunct Philadelphia *Gay Alternative*), I wrote that faggots and lesbians who are part of their sub-culture (they implicitly accept the idea that *how* they have organized their sexuality *affects* every aspect of their intelligence and imagination) express themselves through their gay sensibility.

This gay sensibility, itself, is just a further refinement of a materialist philosophy, and I think it is essential for the evolution of gay liberation organizing and politics to keep the one firmly rooted in the other. The self-awareness of the homosexual existence/experience superimposed on a materialist political philosophy is the mix that gives us the gay sensibility; it is that which gives us the space we need to attack, with wit, the bloated mystification and solemnity into which the straights imprison our imagination and energy.

All that we are and do stems from sensation processed and qualified by intelligence. Sexual energy is *the* keystone from which we build our

supports and networks of determining our specific structures determining pleasure and pain — our social selves. The gay sensibility rejects, on a fundamental level, the *sine qua non* of the Heterosexual Tyranny: the pleasure/duty/virtue/necessity of focusing one's life's energies into heterosexual bonds.

But we live under a tyranny which demands such an organization, and since one is never able to eliminate totally the parameters of the givens (the tyranny's language, customs, rituals, superstructure, its totems of art), the homosexualist develops a forked-tongue, duplicitous manner in reaction. One's rejection of this heterosexual tyranny is defined by the fact of one having come *through it to the edge of it*, trying to get out. All actions, as with all thoughts, are rooted in the existing imprints of social experience. The is/isn't, accept/reject, cherish/mock dichotomy so characteristic of *this stage* of the gay sensibility is defined by still *reacting* and not really struggling for new ways and forms of expressing our experiences. I accept the gay sensibility as *the* mode of perceiving and expressing all sensations; I cultivate the new tracks left for routing sensation through my intelligence; I warm myself at the new fires kindled by a released imagination.

Experts Frustrated by Wit

Fortunately for us, the phenomenon of humor and wit is one aspect of psychological behavior which totally eludes the ambitions and capacities of head doctors and their social science colleagues. Our wit belongs to us completely, free of "normalizing" influences. "Scientific literature" on the subject is luckily slim.

Freud's *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious* classifies wit as "tendentious humor." It involves, he says, a mental process of intentionally or unintentionally reassigning sounds to alter meaning to affect understanding which *makes* or transforms something ordinary and unamusing into the ridiculous. When done intentionally, this is done to make a point.

One could move on from this simple description and hypothesize that a person or sub-group which has been ostracized from the center of social life would be less inclined to accept the established meanings for words and phrases and would be more intentionally and/or accidentally

playful in assigning words to their referents. (The word "she" — and its objective case counterpart — when used among faggots is one of the greatest free-floating items in the language. It carries such baggage around with it — for such a tiny, three-lettered word — that when affixed to a person or thing, warps all received western culture). One of the solemn figures of this century, Freud was lucky to get as far as he did in exploring jokes, though his book reads more like a neurologist (which he was) dabbling into the new field of psycho/linguistics.

I should note that Dr. Bergler, our constant diagnostician, has also written on the phenomenon of wit. As one of the great generals of the shock troops disciplining social deviation, Bergler knows something threatening when he sees it. And he goes right after it. Having diagnosed homosexual behavior as *ipso facto* pathological, he reveals that expressions of wit are also symptoms of a mentally-diseased personality for which therapy is recom-

mended. His Ideal Patient is someone quite along my line: a witty homosexual who likes to drink a lot; there could be a lifetime of therapy in "curing" me.

As twisted and reactionary as Bergler is, he alone from among Freud, Max Eastman, Bergson and the others who have explored laughter/humor/wit does not hesitate to call wit subversive of order. Wit is subversive. It is the skill of breaking down the automatic and conventional domino set up of sensation-impression-association-concept-thought-word which is aligned with the values of straight society and demands we keep on a literalist and two-dimensional plane (as we were instructed). Wit pulls a fast one and replaces one segment of this link-up (usually the last) — this is Oscar's forte — with its opposite and thereby explodes it of its conventional meaning. I think subtler varieties of wit back up the chain of causality that takes us from impression to expression and do the switching somewhere along the nervous system routing of the transformation from information-digestion and evaluation to vocalization.

To learn *what* to laugh at is socialized behavior — as is hungering for meat, eating junk foods, praying, smoking cigarettes, getting sick, feeling hurt, etc. — and there has been, traditionally, a very distinct line between those things acceptable as objects for laughter and those that were not. When comedians in the late 1950s and early '60s dared challenge this mind set with a new kind of humor, they were called "sick" — Bergler's diagnosis. The subjectivity in the expression of wit is obvious by the fact that a witticism may be a howler to one part of an audience and a deep insult to another part (viz. the Wilde quote above).

A Digression on the Dandies

The movement called Aestheticism in the last part of the 19th Century gave an organized expression to the gay sensibility. The Dandies conscientiously opposed the majority culture, yet to some degree they depended upon approval of elements within it, thereby exploiting antagonisms within the tight class structure of their time. As a movement — and that's really too heavy a word to identify them; they were, rather, an association of like-minded artistic individuals — they were top-heavy with male homosexuals. Oscar Wilde was, obviously, the most flamboyant, successful and, well, fabulous among them. Wearing a green carnation in the buttonhole became a symbol of the aesthetes/dandies. (A novel was written with fictionalized, but obvious, depictions of Oscar, Bosie and Ada Leverson. It was entitled *The Green Carnation*.) How odd and redoundingly ironic that the Irish-Americans in Boston — who, as a community, stand for everything antithetical to gay liberation and the gay sensibility — proudly wear green carnations on St. Patrick's Day, transforming them all, for me, into followers of Oscar and his boys. (This is not to belittle Oscar's Irish ancestry. His mother, Speranza, was a fiery Irish nationalist and poet. In fact, I'd love to see someone write a biography on that whole family: Oscar's mother and father, Oscar and his sons, and Oscar's brother Willie, every bit the gab-about and raconteur that his brother was, and Willie's daughter, Dolly Wilde, a wit in her own right and part of the famous circle of international lesbians in Paris in the first decades of this century.)

The 1890s can be viewed as a decade of homosexual activism of one sort or another. Certainly so in the arts. And the gay sensibility as it was embryonically displayed by the aesthetes played a large part in this.

After Wilde was tried and convicted, the movement, such as it was, collapsed, and the history of the culture of homosexuals moves to Paris and become the story of the aforementioned lesbian circle there from 1900 to 1940 when it moves to the U.S. (New York City mostly) and once again centers on faggots. The "decadents," the Dandies, etc., had been crushed by virile English law and its enforcers. In this perspective, Wilde's trial is every bit as much a political act comparable to the Palmer Raids or the HUAC-McCarthy witch-hunt, that is, it was a signal event which was undertaken by those in power to retard or eliminate a divergent development in social affairs. The collapse of the briefly-flowering Aesthetes was achieved easily enough. In their time, they lacked an understanding of the importance of their psychology as it was intertwined with sexuality and how this affects an overall world view of things. They were the Wits — loosely attached to the structure of things — against the Literalists of

The homosexual sub-culture is the tabernacle of the imagination. It is where all things imaginable are possible. In oneself and the "roles" one assumes, all acts are possible.

their day who proclaimed to be defending the letter of the law, the spirit of the scriptures, etc. None of the dandies gave any indication of connecting attitudes of social contrariness to a philosophical (much less political) materialism. They seemed too busy searching Above for the Muse to get a grasp on the history of their social experiences and the direction of their somatic energies. Their movement focused on the very superficial cultivation of the *artificial*, of anything which was against nature. Male homosexuality became an asset to them (or so it was rationalized) precisely because it was taboo and non-procreative. Hence, they developed a kind of neo-Platonic apologia (in, say, Pater and J. A. Symonds), the idealization of same-sex friendships, filled with passion though, ostensibly, without sexual contact.

By contrast Edward Carpenter attempted to meld a crude (and in many ways romantic) materialism with his "homogenic love"; he thereby came up with a new synthesis even more difficult for the upholders of conventionality to stomach. The Dandies, meanwhile, cherishing the citified-civilized corruptions to the core, proceeded in the opposite direction and wound up in the cul-de-sac of "spirituality." They idealized Love (see Bosie's poem "Two Loves"). Poetry and Art were their totems. Platonic same-sexed Love, Great Beauty and Soul were their Holy Trinity. And so, when their bubble was burst after Oscar's conviction, it was no surprise to find many of them becoming converts to the Roman Church (that haven for Camp Queans who don't really understand why they're camp).

One interesting aspect of the Dandies was their relationship to social manners, art and culture itself; it consisted of *posing*. The Dandies struck

attitudes — quintessentially queanly — kept their distance and made *objects of everything*. Posing is the classic gay ruse used to avoid having to deal with content and/or, if such is your aim, subverting the importance of content. Since all art serves the purpose of propaganda for the Heterosexualist Tyranny, what could be the only reasonable response for a member of an oppressed class but to trash it! I would suggest that a subtle form of trashing the content of art is striking an attitude vis-a-vis it. Doing so, the Dandies started a tradition by their example which is alive today: disentangling emotional, intellectual and ideological commitment from the established order's shibboleths. By separating themselves from any need to support current mores, artistic propaganda, or social institutions, they put these matters into their own aesthetic perspective, which usually made such objects diminutive (or grotesquely changing conventional dimensions — especially in some of Beardsley's overblown or dwarfed figures). In Art Nouveau we get a real challenge from style to content — an essential ingredient of Camp, and the beginning of the political aspect of the gay sensibility — cutting off the content's significance from connecting with its audience, and then, one hopes, changing it or removing it all together.

Too, the Decadents put their stamp on another great gay tradition. By constantly assuming *poses*, they changed the focus and even the terms of any discussion. The subject was no longer the content of a work of art but rather it became the attitude the Dandy assumed *to* the piece. The Dandy becomes The Star of the show even though he's not on stage! (It was not that Oscar was first charged with being a pedophile or ass-fucker that got him into libel court. The Marquess left his card at Oscar's club; it read: "To Oscar Wilde, posing as a sodomite [sic].")

This kind of objectification of what the anticipated subject should be is a distinctive part of the male homosexual sub-culture. Straight men



Philip Gornstein

always assume they are to be the subjects in any situation; the gay male world reverses this and turns us into objects. What are we at the bottom line of existence when meat-meets-meat? Well, if you walk into a traditional gay male milieu, you're just "Miss Thing," or, as our French brothers have learned to call you, "Mademoiselle Chose."

That it was the Aesthete's pose which became the center of attention (rather than the artifact) is what gave wit its power. And no one who isn't capable of viewing his/her culture dispassionately and *as though* from the outside will be, I think, able to be witty. Let the profiteers and apologists of a culture construct their ponderous monuments of their civilization; let the wits dart from church to palace to museum to funeral pyre undermining the seriousness of the content and the ritual of all. All it takes to begin to demystify a high Catholic church procession is to throw Tallulah's famous line at the officiating priest: "Your drag is *divine*, darling, but your *purse* is on fire!"

It appears to me that witticisms, and the epigram in particular, have been the distinctive expressive form of the homosexual sub-culture. As to homosexual writers, development of a pose is what makes their art distinctive. Brigid Brophy has written (with reference to the work of Firkbank, Proust and Henry James), "The pose is good for the prose." Being epigrammatic ("witty") is certainly the most noticeable characteristic of homosexual artists by their straight critics. These latter misapprehend and, consequently, misrepresent the phenomenon of wit. They assume it is like decorations on the icing of a cake, frivolous, unnecessary and, consumed in too great a quantity, probably unhealthy. Yet wit — and its vehicle, the epigram — are at the very center of the gay sensibility. Wit is deflationary; it luxuriates in paradoxicalness; it thrives in a nest of irony. In its standard form, it invests the artificial with high seriousness (another requisite of Camp) and trivializes what is otherwise accorded great social value by straights. Wit is the outsiders' way of telling truth within the limits of the only vocabulary he/she possesses — that of the enemy. The expression of wit as the idiom of the homosexual sub-culture is the first step to understanding that social structures and mores need not be regarded as their upholders say they should be. By its very nature, wit draws attention away from the subject of the epigram to the *person* of the wit. This is an essential part of the ambition inherent in the gay sensibility which is, to reshape eventually and totally, how we conceive ideas, perceive social phenomena and express the art in/of our lives.

Straight people by and large fit neatly into existing social categories ("role models") — mommies, daddies, businessperson, team member, beauty queen, expert, professional, etc. Gay people are more socially fluid; the only real social identity even the sorriest quean has is that of Being A Star. What's so wonderful about homosexuals is that, ever so much more than straights, we are *constantly* in the process of inventing *ourselves*! The homosexual sub-culture is the tabernacle of the imagination. It is where *all things imaginable are possible*. In oneself and the "roles" one assumes — just like with the great Stars — all acts are possible.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GAY SENSIBILITY THROUGH WIT Where Do We Go From Here?

The important aspects of communications are: content, audience, and media. The owners of straight networks (I'm thinking at this moment of newspapers and slick newswEEKlies) have established themselves as the channel through which most of our citizenry absorb ideas, information and attitudes. At their best, these media are active and persistent agents for maintaining the status quo. Many outstanding media brokers use their vehicles to advocate social reaction; their specialty is fueling divisive issues with emotion (Hearst Press, Scripps-Howard, this is the "Checkers Speech" play).

The "arts & ideas establishment" — trade book publishers, university idea-setters, high-brow entertainment packagers, and the culture-makers for the masses — are only a tonier, dressed-up edition of the seedy and vicious daily press writers, editors and owners. From the vast majority of the total of the products of the arts & information conglomerate, the "talent" the processors are most at ease with is that which churns out familiar and comfortable lies, casual distortions of truth and the soothing idiocies which flatter the owners and directors of USA, Inc. Ideas and issues are reduced to a level of emotions and personalities. The journalists share with the culture bosses a common ward-heeler imagination. No

matter their tone, their topic, or their politics, *they are all on the same payroll*. The arts racket in America displays a poverty of imagination. And even worse, an actual fear of imagination. (I don't regard the consistent lies of the daily journalists and commentators as evidences of imagination. These merely reveal the corruptions inherent in the kind of "talents" that are capable of deadline-writing, though I do endorse, at times, the notion that peoples' lies, in whatever context, are more interesting than their *truths*.)

The artistic expressions of a subculture can either remain static parts of their communities, or they can become universalized. I think what makes the gay sub-culture so important (and so threatening to the straights) is that, because we are not strictly a language, ethnic or racial sub-group, what we *are* and *can offer* can be easily universalized (hence, in a way, "proselytizing" is very much what we are all about). I'm enough a subscriber to rudimentary behaviorist theory to accept that what kind of behavior you get out of people will pretty much be the result of the information/disinformation, rewards/punishments, easy choices/closed options you put into them with a given set of operating instructions. Since our fellow citizens are conditioned to respond primarily to cycles of buying and selling, they have been reduced to a reified condition themselves. Gay "lifestyles," as the ward-healers are promoting them these days, can plug right into this condition. Gay liberation, at least as it boils down to its marketplace version, can be auctioned and sold just like any other commodity. But, we must ask, on what terms? And to whose advantage?

I define the homo ward-healers by their most striking characteristic; they are absolutely obsessed with the *image* we project to the straight world.

The earlier consumption of gay wit — as provided by the likes of Noel Coward, Cole Porter, Carl van Vechten, and Thorne Smith — was strictly on terms of the straights. Things are looser and more two-way now, and yet, more perverse, at least as far as radical gay liberationist critics of America are concerned. I think we are at a very important cross-road. We are fast coming upon a time when, as more and more men and women break away from their straight-imposed "role models" (that vile phrase so vogueish with respectability-obsessed faggots and lesbians which is a ruse that plays into the hands of the agents of social control), and enter gay life, the time is right for a massive dislocation of our growing sub-culture from the dominant ways of conceptualizing our lives and our art. Not only to acknowledge but to *act on* the irrelevance of the culture of the majority! If nine out of ten profit-making book publishers vanished overnight, if all grand opera were never performed again, if all TV studios blew up, if never another symphony filled a music hall, if all universities collapsed tomorrow, are we impoverished? No! Such would be the best situation to begin anew in a void and create our own culture out of our gay sensibility, rid of the detritus and deadwood of "art" and "culture" (both high and pop) which is the "heritage" of centuries of religious persecutions, economic exploitation and heterosexist tyranny. Alas, these monoliths of straight culture will not disappear overnight; we must operate in a world where the junk of this culture is pushed at us from every direction as The Ideal by the ward-healers on orders from their cultural commissars. Amazingly, we do have a history of actually finding out and sharing those few items which make it through the hostility, censorship and persecution of the gendarmes of the heterosexist tyranny. What is important finds its way to many of us through the gayvine in spite of the machinery of oppression. As Roger Austen writes in his new book, *Playing The Game, The Homosexual Novel In America*: "Forty years ago, about the only way one had of discovering what it meant to be a homosexual — especially if one were in the closet — was to somehow find a copy of an underground gay novel. One man recalls that in those years 'the classic Gay Novel was passed around like the Eucharist, with moist eyes and a warm endorsement . . .' But now, with no one having to rely on gay fiction for information, amusement, or encouragement, nearly everyone agrees that the 'moist eyes' era is over." New channels of communication are springing up everywhere for gay people, and the ward-healers are busy trying to establish themselves (and the power of their bosses) as brokers for these channels.

Within the gay community, things right now are in a state of flux. Straight cultural commissars and their gay ward-heeler lackies would harness our vitality into their familiar ways and to their ends.

They would control the direction of our imaginations — such has been their traditional domain — and, ultimately, when convenient, they will snuff out our independent way of viewing things, or at least so successfully blend us in with the majority culture of dead-heads that we'll forget we ever once were separate, distinct and *alive*. The brokers of art & expression will once again have usurped the function of *mediating* everything that touches our lives (and, of course, thereby distorting, censoring, perverting as suits their needs). The viciousness, the corruption, and the monolithic banality of straight culture is a given unchangeable, and chiseling away at it with reforms is tactically secondary. What is of paramount interest to me right now are the shapes, forms and the directions of the increasing expressions of our imagination, intelligence, and energy.

Will we demand that our gay sensibilities be free of all impositions to have the space they need for liberated expression? Or will we gradually deny the importance of our gay sensibility, distrust its wild, anarchic explosions and settle down for a slice of the pie proffered by the ward-healers in exchange for our toeing the line?

As the gay liberationist movement has developed over the past eight years, I have observed with interest the growth of the accommodationist faction within our ranks — Berglerites in their own fashion, ones for whom wit and displays of gay sensibility are now Out-Of-Place, for whom radical strategies are "embarrassing" and "infantile," etc. What began as a movement almost entirely inclined toward collective and grass-roots organizing — a movement, after all, which

literally *began* in the streets — and virtually unfathomable to inquisitive straight interlopers (police spies at gay meetings are identifiable as much by their *dullness* as by their evil manipulations and divisiveness) is seeing this daring and anarchic energy being *squeezed out* and attacked by the new gay ward-healers. Our anger, "madness," "dizziness" is being denied support by those who believe that the validity of *our* organizations, publications and structures can only be measured by the degree to which these resemble their counterparts in the straight world. It's the imagination of the ward-healers rudely elbowing its way to the helm, moving into our community, making us ever-conscious of the power of the bosses, and warning us not to "offend" the powers that be. It is this encroachment we must resist, this new muzzling of ourselves in the name of *real-politik*, forcing us to become "positive role models," gaining respectability, achieving acceptance with the help of our powerful "friends" in Washington, New York or wherever.

I recall remarking to Shively back in 1971, in a somewhat and totally atypically cynical mood: "What will happen to gay liberation? Well, what the Mafia can buy up, they will. Everything else will boil down to some safe and respectable social service-counseling racket." The ward-healers are everywhere present among us today, putting on the squeeze and talking "common sense" at us: religion flunkies, "respectable" academics, group therapy quacks, money-hustlers, power-groupies, etc. Media-mad organizations have sprung up out of nowhere which claim to represent the gay community, even though they patently do not. Toadies to those in power, whether they be in activist groups or writing for gay publications, would give credence to one of Anita Bryant's wisdoms: "Homosexuals already have the best jobs and the best houses."

I define the homo ward-healers by their most striking characteristic; they are all absolutely obsessed with the *image* we project to the straight world. They want nothing to exist in our lives which would embarrass, upset or offend the people in power. What this comes down to in our community is that the homo ward-healers are always attacking drag queens, radical faggots, lesbian feminists, the sexually promiscuous, the drop-outs, the counter-culturists, the freaks, the poor, the shabby, the queer-looking — all those who don't fit in conveniently with the literalist demands of the Heterosexist Tyrants. This bulk of our community commits what one homo ward-heeler recently wrote was "the ultimate crime — being in poor taste in public!"

The ward-healers know how it is done. They organize *from above*, ignore the masses, suck up the money and talent from the community, challenge it to please the bosses they seek to get in with and thereby achieve their personal ambitions of becoming the established brokers between the

The artifacts of high culture are ads and apologies for a system of superstition and exploitation of slave class/women/faggots.

seats of money/power/straight authority from on top and you and me on the bottom — where they intend for us to stay. Their establishment and legitimization of this role for themselves is built on a lie. We must expose them.

As an instance locally, some ward-healers were busy in the planning for Boston's Gay Day Parade, 1977. I had a grotesque vision of how the march would turn out if the ward-healers had their way unopposed: a line of clerical-collared divinity drags leading off this year's march, carrying a street-wide banner proclaiming "Gay Liberation Through Jesus Christ." They would be followed by the straight local dignitaries who like to march in every parade. Behind them would be the gaudy floats plugging bars and discos. And from there on to the end would be a procession of Cadillac convertibles filled with bouquet-carrying, gaily-waving drag queans.

In other words, no march for *people* in our community, only space for those who have been created out of straight concepts about how our lives are to be organized. Sell-out time.



Gay people are constantly in the process of inventing themselves. Mr. Sylvia Sidney pictured above.

The ward-healers achieve their power by making sure we stay in line. They discipline us, silence us, and package us as to be indistinguishable from other interest groups in this society. It seems to me that if we ignore or deny the importance of the gay sensibility, we are fated to become just *that* — another Special Interest Group, Legislative Lobby, Marketing Area. Our particular threat to the established straight tyranny will be radically diminished if the ward-healers can set us up all neat and tidy with carefully delineated boundaries, with anticipatable interests and demands which can be serviced in exchange for deals with our brokers.

It seems to me that gay people are "special." We are all special to the degree that we are committed to the vitality of our gay sensibility and to the extent that we reject all straight-promoted forms of understanding and expressing experience. We must let the culture and institutions of the superstructure collapse through sheer top-heaviness — and hope the collapse takes a good number of their apologists and missionaries with it. Once crumbled, I think we'd skip merrily through the ruins and busy ourselves immediately with repainting the horizons in *our colors and through our perspectives*.

Wit is the cutting edge of the gay sensibility. It's what is on hand right now to constantly deflate the much-advertised importance of the culture-pattern-setters. We must subvert, destabilize, unnerve, and harass the enforcers of the Het Tyr-

anny with whatever means we possess. An upfront demonstration of who and what we are — our "madness," our imagination, our mercurialness — are constant and frightening challenges to the upholders of the straight life and its culture. If we constantly expose them *in* and *through* ridicule, the ward-healers within the gay community will, one hopes, be kept at bay and revealed for the fraudulent self-seekers they are.

Again, it is important to remember that most "high culture" and virtually all pop culture communicates the established values of the society that contains it. It is propaganda. (Who, after all, *pays* for symphonies, opera houses, educational TV, tidy reviews of literature, university presses and unending Wagner festivals?) The artifacts of high culture are, by and large, ads and apologies for a system of superstition and exploitation of a slave class/women/faggots. Where apologists for high culture see "talent," "beauty," and "educational opportunity," I see only the rivers of blood and mountains of corpses on which rest the thrones and pulpits which created and filled the British Museum, The Louvre, the Hermitage, Paris Opera, the Vatican, Harvard University, Lincoln Center (more aptly called Rockefeller Center West), and the list goes on and on with monuments to the jealousy and greed of power-mad Christians and capitalists whose symbols must flatteringly reflect and celebrate their twisted condition. And this they call the "world of art and ideas."

I think it hasn't been until this decade that homosexuals have had all the right equipment to take the next step: to clear away the old cob-webbed maze of taboos, hypocrisies and intolerance of the heterosexual tyranny.

photo credit: Roland Land

Anyone electing to express (through the conventional genres) attitudes &/or ideas not acceptable to the Het Tyrants will have a difficult time gaining access to an audience. Someone daring to explore new genres, inventing or rediscovering different structures for perceptions, evidence and information will likely be benignly ignored or actively prosecuted. Such has been the theme through the history of artists to date who attempt to operate on their gay sensibilities and who optimistically hope they can slip through the censors/editors/heresy-hounds to reach an audience.

The social supports for straight culture, and the hostility to any direct challenge to its propagandistic function, make the "fact" of this culture so seemingly impenetrable that those trapped within it were always frustrated in their attempts to break out of it. The branding-iron Rules of The Game was impressed onto every gay imagination, to the injury and detriment of gay sensibility. Wiggle, twist, explode: do what it might, gay imaginative energies, to get through to an audience at all, had to clean up their acts and had to get screened through the taboos of the time. The squirming around of the gay imagination within these tight confines connect with the *outrage* of being entrapped to create the energy for what's called "camp" — the gay sensibility howling out for independence from the shackles of heterosexual imagery, referents, trappings, apologies, and "role models" (*those* again!).

I think it hasn't been until this decade, really, that homosexuals have had all the right equipment — correct social analysis, strong support from the like-minded, a proper contempt for the enemy, and a recognition of the vulnerability of the established culture — to take the next step: to actively clear away the old cob-webbed maze of taboos, hypocrisies and intolerance of the Heterosexual Tyranny. Now is the time; we will either successfully create the intellectual and imaginative revolution against the strictures of current agencies of social control or we will fail. To succeed, we must ridicule, shout down, and discredit the new variety of apologists for the given order of things, i.e. the homo ward-healers in our midsts and their payrollers. If we do succeed in this intellectual and imaginative revolution, it will be like having well-oiled skids to slide into place everything else that will follow. We will fail only if we lack the courage to invest full confidence and authority in re-inventing our world based on impulse, daring and visions that come out of our gay sensibility. If we do fail, and if we crumble beneath the firm-jawed, money-hungry, power-obsessed class of homosexual ward-healers in the current machine, we will not have another chance,

such as we now have, in our lifetime. I think the worst thing that could develop is that we'd retreat from the front edge of our expanding consciousness of our imaginative powers and settle down with the lot that the ward-healers dispense: their content with being dull. Ward-healers are happy to service our liberation from the waste down (tastefully, of course); what they want is for us to be dead from the belly-button up.

Everything will be done by the lackies of the Het Tyranny to bring us back into line and secure it there. Money, publicity, fame and rewards are (and will continue to be) presented to the malleable gay ward-healers and their minions. Homosexual authors who can write novels with romantic and/or guilt-ridden characters and themes for mass market will be published, feted and promoted as The New Gay Talent of Today; they will be made into Stars. (Natalie Barney once remarked — and this should be beat into every wordy journalist, academic writer, and pop-tras scribbler — "How lazy it is to write a lot. If you can put a whole novel into a few sentences, why not?")

Musical queans who can tinkle out pretty tunes with clever lyrics that do not offend the powerful consumers among the straights will be offered Broadway/Hollywood opportunities. Balladeers, who croon of heterosexual commitment (or, a lately, a sort of neuter love — no names and no pronouns) will make it to The Top Of The Pops. The emphasis on the values of the existing Marketplace Structure will be the magnet to get us into the grove. Faggots & dykes (less so the dykes, it seems, than the queans) who keep their talent within established mores — more new grand operas, more brilliant but conventional, dull, in offensive literary studies about dead straights or

closet cases, safe poetry characterized by Heavy Syntax or Deep, Obscure Meaning, and always *always* in all work propagating the superiority of business men with money — will trigger a cascade of prizes, dinners, awards, cash grants, lecture dollars, interviews, etc. (One of our Good Gay Poets remarked that he had great respect for a local writing homo ward-heeler because "he is a professional journalist" — as though *that* were something a gay person should aspire to or be proud of!)

The control agents of the Het Tyranny are *right now* deciding who within our community (or better for them, who it will be that they can *implant* into our community) are to be acceptable "role models" for us to imitate to also try to gain acceptance, win cash prizes, fabulous jobs, wealth and fame and the Respectability Rewards from the tyrants.

Homosexual cultural myoptics will be singled out and acclaimed "visionaries," gay accommodationists will be lauded as "realists" who can "get things done for their people," gay hack writers and editors working for (probably straight owned) publications which imitate dull straight journals will be rewarded with fat ads, eager distribution, helpful printers. And those who engage in rear-guard divisiveness — red-baiting woman-hating, blacklisting, distortion, sexual exploitation — will be particular favorites of the control agents of the Het Tyranny, and they will be lavished with the most serious attention of the Het Rulers of anything within our community.

The homosexual ward-heeler busily sew up their minions into an increasingly closed world; all new information must pass through them in their role of brokers. If they succeed, we will once again be robbed not only of our voices and our inventive ness, but what will also be taken from us is our means to create a world in which we are no longer trapped in a million gigantic and trivial ways.

Since the Days of Stonewall, I have often heard or read laments about gay wit. Usually the criticism follows this line: homosexuals have for too long made each the "victims" of their own wit. I hope I have contributed to burying this chestnut once and for all time. Let me say that wit has been for gay people a double-edged sword. It can cut either way. Mostly it has been a rearguard instrument fighting off attacks that threaten our survival. But we can use it best in the other direction. We must sharpen our wit on each other — like knives against whetstones — so that when we must strike, our edges will be their sharpest to cut our enemies to the quick.



photo credit: Ken Clark

IMAGE (for John)

*Like waves
Crash against sand
Oceans
of his love's
Fire
Screamed through my body's
Clay;
Our eyes sang through tears.*

*And I kissed the electric fur
On the back of his panther-like body
In moonlight.*

Gerard Coptsias

CUTE

they say he's cute
but I don't know
for I can't behold
him in my eyes
as cute
yet those who pose
in front of mirrors and windows
know the eyes
to be the real ruler
of beauty
yet they say he's cute
masculine faces were intended that way
with maybe a pinch of feminine
but he's cute
because our eyes met
and as they met they became an invisible rope
which was taut to the end
an the more you tug
the harder it was to turn away
from that cute
face

Armando Alleyne



A TRUE LIFE ROMANCE POEM

HOT BLOOD
i cannot sleep
keep thinking bout you
spent all day Sunday in bed
with you
clean cut man of thirty
you said you felt lost
there in the club
for the first time
so we danced and talked
on and on
getting closer and closer
more and more intimate

the orgasm happened
but the rest
has altered my consciousness
your tenderness
reaching out
to my need for love

i'd thought you didn't exist anymore
that it couldn't happen again
that my occasional partners
sexual friends and others
would satisfy me
but i've discovered
my yearning is still alive
to enter into you totally

to be consumed, digested
and layed out waiting
for your touch
for your call
for your need - again

i'll be there when you need me
i'm going to be gentle
with your mind
with your body

you are coming out
into the gay world now
and i want you to like it

i want you to enjoy
the tenderness
of mans love

its the real thing
on yeah.

Ray Horton

ON LOVE

While we were making love,
i realized that we had something
that no government could ever take away,
and no spiritual movement
could every push
to a lower chakra.

While sharing ourselves
in the ways that came naturally,
we merged with the miracle of Life,
learning the things
that lovers everywhere
have always known:
that real Love is Eternal,
watching human laws crumble
and religions decay
laughing at all the rules
that people use
to suffocate themselves.

Only those without love would dare to put limits on love.

satya klein



ARETE

HIRSUTE SECRETS ((((((((((((

Just thinking
of those hirsute secrets
behind your cocky jeans

gives my imagination
an erection,
makes sperms of words

flow out
of all the ball pens
that I touch.

Henrik Eger

Robert you never knew
I called you Jesse
when you came
so like a saint
a little frailer
than blown glass
holy
and held back
my mouth half full
of the only tear eked
out of your tension
my lung left hotter
than the weather
in the glass ball
that was born in that
moment
Jesse was that spillage
that pearl
that globe fattening
like dew
at the end of
a hawthorn twig
I miss him Robert
nothing flowers on
my tongue anymore

Richard Ronan

APRIL FOOL

I just stopped 'round behind the store to piss. You happened to walk by,
you couldn't miss me standing there, and you looked twice at me
and said, "I'm real fucked up." I jestured, "Ain't that nice,"
and you walked on around the corner. I felt it . . . and stopped and lit
one necessary cigarette, and you peeked 'round to see if I was there . . .
and disappeared.

Well, when I looked around the corner your black hair
was flying up the street and running free, but you in two short looks
had made a slave of me.

It's thirty minutes later, and I swear the fingers of my soul are in your hair,
the tongue of all my times is up your ass, my dick is hard, I'm lusting much
to share a load of me and you . . . and who knows where.

Arnold Warden Klassen

my hair ballets through yr moist hands
an ripples to yr tongues concerto-----
my body you kill with pleasure
as you stick me an stab to catch our finale
as i flow into your momentum i feel yr grumble
and complement you with mine

graham l.

HAYMARKET WINTER

Pollution's grandeur
fails to appear
on freeze dry nights

air boning to the
chilled failed face

a racket from the back room
keens and skips
like strung out stutterers
wrecked on
wax

"or cocaine"
says the bug's eye
in the back men's room
crooning his
own
tune for damp drunks

"My name is Jeffrey
I paint and I hustle"

and
I
hate whores who make me feel old
on freezing Fridays
in Haymarket's square

an eye from the pool table
pulls down his fly
and bites a ball
into an empty pocket

tonic dilutes the air smoke
a register rings
the music's havoc

eyes pierce the dusk dark
like neon pins

poisoned needles
for a lover's arms

fermaldehyde rises from the
steaming radiator
gas leaks from
winter's jet

the senses ache
and crack
like midnight teeth

Alexander Todd



Photo: Hap Paull

Photo: John Scagliotti



Straddling the Closet Door

By Mike Hippler

When I told my college roommate that I was going to accept a teaching job in a rural Southern Appalachian high school, he laughed. "You're crazy," he said. "They'll crucify you for sure." Steve, who is from a small town in North Carolina, claimed to know exactly what happened to faggot teachers in the South, but then, Steve used to claim a lot of things I didn't ever believe, and this was one of them. I firmly believed I could overcome any homophobic prejudice I might meet by the sheer charm of my personality. Besides, I grew up in the South, too, and I knew that the days of lynching queers was long gone.

Howard Swenson, the headmaster of the very liberal, very alternative school where I did my practice teaching, did not share my optimism. When he asked me if I were going to come out in Hall County and I replied, "As much as possible," he said, "I'm worried for you." I had never felt sorry for myself because I was gay, and although I knew it would be hard to be a gay teacher in a rural public school, I never thought it would be impossible. Ever since I had decided several years before to accept, respect, and enjoy my homosexuality, I had led a free and open lifestyle, and I wasn't going to change that for anything or anyone — the teaching profession and the entire county of Hall included.

Howard decided I was going to have trouble.

Howard was right. Or he *would* have been, if I had lived up to the expectations I originally held for myself. Unfortunately, I wasn't in Hall County two days before I realized that if I let my sexual orientation be publicly known, I would be out of a job in five minutes. I then had to decide whether it was better to be Straight than Late, at least in the eyes of the outside world, and I wasn't long in pondering. I decided, and consequently, I taught at Hall County High School for two years.

I often had visions of letting the truth be known, getting fired, going all the way to the Supreme Court, perhaps never being allowed to teach again, and becoming a martyr to the gay cause. There's something romantic about all that which attracts me greatly. But when I first moved to Hall County, I decided I really didn't want to go that route — not yet, anyway. I wanted to work with kids and to live in the country — *and* I wanted to eat. So I decided that it was better to keep my job and fight in a small way for social change than to be strictly honest to the letter of the law and go down fighting, an ineffectual, inexperienced hero. I never resolved to deny my homosexuality, at least not explicitly. I just decided to try to walk a middle line between two extremes — to keep my job, but at the same time to do all I could for the cause of gay (and straight) liberation, to work in a gentle yet forceful manner toward tolerant, enlightened thinking. I convinced myself that this was possible — to walk the middle road, to work for homosexuality yet not be an open homosexual, to straddle the closet door — and I knew it was necessary if I wanted to teach.

Getting through my first year was an exhilarating, if dangerous, experience. I stumbled along

from one precarious experience to the next, full of idealism and excitement. As a student I had never been called to the office in my life, unless you count the time I was sent to the principal in the second grade for running across a patch of newly-planted grass. As a teacher, I was called to the office in disgrace three or four times the first year alone. I got in trouble for the clothes I wore, the way I talked, for the things my kids did ("You call *that* learning? They're running all over the school!"), but every time I went, I smiled to myself inside (as my stomach turned), for I knew that this little reprimand was nothing, compared to what they would do if they knew what they were really dealing with. They got upset because I wore tennis shoes (once) and said "crap" in class, when they didn't even know that under that calm, cool exterior lurked a Fag, and not just an ordinary fag, but an All-American Fag, Proud and Free (sort of), who was out to Change the World — their world (maybe).

Although I never attempted to proselytize to my students, there were plenty of opportunities for me to do a little bit of world-changing, to carry on my quiet crusade. I taught the 8th grade, and according to everything I'd ever known or read, this is the age of puberty, the time of flux and transition, or anxiety and awkwardness. Consequently, this is the age when kids are constantly calling each other fags and queers, and since it's also an age for intense value formation, it's time they ought to know better — or be told better. So whenever Johnny called Billy a fag, I stepped right up and said, "Hey, don't you call him that. Lots of people don't like to hear it, and besides, so what if he is a fag? There's nothing wrong with it."

Needless to say, Johnny was not impressed. Neither did he change, certainly not the next day, when he called Billy a fag again, or when Billy called him one right back. If Johnny was black, I could always say, "How would you like it if someone called you a nigger?", but that never seemed to do much good either. Johnny would usually say, "I'd kill him, the fag."

I always felt that if the class heard me say, "There's nothing wrong with it," their little worlds would shake, and I would have done my part for the Revolution. I figured that probably, none of them had ever heard an adult say that homosexuality was just as valid as heterosexuality, and that once they heard it was, they'd automatically believe it. And think what it would mean for the homosexual student, I pondered in glee. Their teacher, a man they respect and admire, has just told them that homosexuality is OK. What a godsend, a miracle!

Unfortunately, it never seemed to work that way. I said homosexuality was OK lots of times, whenever somebody called somebody else a fag. Usually, the class would let it pass and yawn. Once in a while, someone would say (in their best sneering voice), "Well, are *you* one?" I'd say, "Sure," and smile, but nobody ever believed me. I knew they wouldn't, so it took no great courage to answer in the affirmative.

Several times, however, I did get a reaction, and once it almost cost me my job. The class was studying debate by debating such issues of vital concern to every 8th grader (especially in the Appalachian Mountains) as abortion, capital punishment, snow, hunting, and "women's lib." At the end of the debate on "women's lib," I passed out a questionnaire concerning male/female role playing, which asked things like, "Do you think it's all right for a girl to ask a boy out?" "Should women and men get equal pay for equal work?" "Should women have to shave their legs? Should men?" The last question was, "Do you think it's all right for people of the same sex to love each other?" This caused a furor. People were shouting right and left (mostly right, seldom left). Kids were arguing furiously for what they believed. My students were involved. "This," I patted myself on the back, "is a success."

So we studied homosexuality for a few days. Several groups of kids performed skits — two lesbians move next door and ask the neighbors over for dinner, son tells Mom and Dad he is gay, girl is only heterosexual in a class full of gays (dream on), and the like. Pretty heavy stuff for 8th grade country kids, I grant you. Everybody also wrote papers entitled (I blush to admit it), "What I would do if a homosexual moved next door." Of course, most everybody answered, "Move," "Put them in an institution," "Call the police," or simply, "Shoot them." A few enlightened souls actually said, "Nothing. They have the right to live the way they want." For me, the experience was a positive, joyful one. So what if Tim, the pre-Marine, came up to me and said, "Mr. Hippler, now what would you do if you saw two of them walking down the street holding hands? Wouldn't you just want to shoot them?" Tim, who respects and likes me a great deal, didn't know that I've done that very thing, on Broadway no less, but his comments didn't bother me. What else could I expect? The truly amazing thing was the positive responses, the people who said, "Why not?" Sure, they were few, but at least they *were*. Maybe our class discussions didn't cause that attitude, but I truly believe they helped to enforce it and to bring others around to the same attitude.

Here enter the villain. My principal, walking

I convinced myself that this was possible—to walk the middle road, to straddle the closet door—and I knew it was necessary if I wanted to teach.

The longer I stayed in Hall County, the more frustrated I became with my double role as a non-gay teacher working for gay rights, and trying to do so much else besides. Although few of my students have gone to the streets to fight against oppression, at least I did have a liberating influence on some of them. If I had come out at the beginning, I wouldn't have accomplished any of this.

down the hall one afternoon, found a dubious-looking sheet of paper on the floor — the original "women's lib" questionnaire which gave birth to our mini-gay studies course. I was promptly summoned to the office (once again) and greeted by a stone-cold face and the words, "Who are you trying to get fired, Mr. Hippler — you or me?" He claimed he understood what I was trying to do (?), but that I couldn't possibly realize the consequences of what I was doing. Why, not too far from us, people were bombing schools because of the English textbooks being used. Did I think that Hall County was ready for this? Why, he bet that half my students didn't even know what a homosexual was until I brought it up in class(!).

I was in his office for three hours, and with a great deal of tact and humor and a little bit of grovelling and hypocrisy, I kept my job and left him laughing. But I did feel committed (trapped) not to continue studying homosexuality in class — at least for a long while. Thus ended the Great Homosexual Studies Course. I never got in trouble again, and nobody ever realized that I was gay (or didn't seem to realize), both of which, for me, are causes of disappointment. The longer I stayed in Hall County, the more and more frustrated I became with my double role as a non-gay teacher working for gay rights, and trying to do so much else besides. Eventually, I didn't even think much about it anymore; I just decided I had to leave. Which I did.

It would have been much better for me, living in that county, to have been able to go home every night to a circle of gay friends, or at least close straight friends who knew, who understood. I imagine that gay teachers in the city who lead a life of secrecy at work can always escape at night — go to the bars, or something. I couldn't do that. The nearest bar (and hence, the nearest gay person that I was aware of) was in the nearest city — sixty miles away. Besides, I don't like gay bars.

After a long time, I finally did make a few close friends in the area. It was hard, though, for few of them had ever known any gay people, so I had to go through the Big Revelation Scene most of us have to face too many times — breaking the news, explaining my sexuality, proving myself. I was actually afraid to tell some of my fellow teachers, and that, for me, is terrible. Only my roommate, an old college friend, ever understood, and after he left, after the first year, I had no one to share my frustration. So I'd relieve the tension by riding my horse up and down the mountains and slamming tennis balls across the net. Hardly adequate compensation.

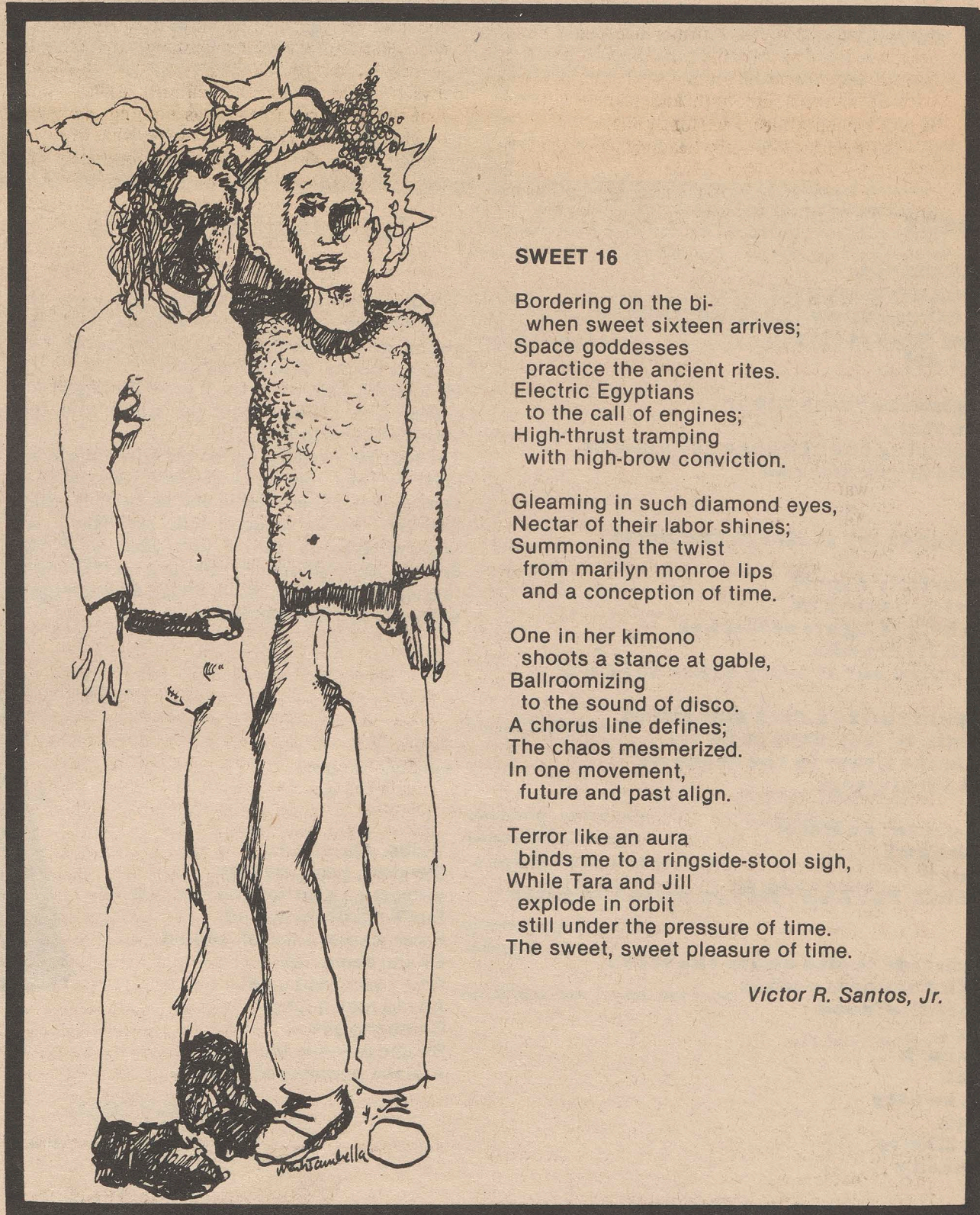
I don't think any of my other friends ever really understood, no matter how much they claimed to. Nobody saw why I should talk about "it" at school, and they all thought I was bound to get in trouble for it. They certainly thought I was wrong to deal with it on the 8th grade level. "They can't handle it," they said. "Who can?" I replied. "And if not then, when? When they're old and grey and set in their ways?" They never understood, either, why I was disappointed that I never told my students I was gay. I did tell one of them eventually, a junior I was particularly close to, and after I left, I wrote to another, but that's all — and not enough.

It ought to be very obvious by now that I left Hall County with very ambiguous feelings. I'm still not sure if my two years there were worthwhile, whether or not they were profitable to me or to anybody else. I'm glad I did expose those kids to many things they might never have faced otherwise. My principal may have been right when he said half my students were hardly aware that homosexuals existed. At least in my class, we *did*

deal with it. And although few of my students have gone to the streets to fight against oppression, at least I did have a liberating influence on some of them, even if they were kids who were already pretty wonderful to start with. If I had come out at the beginning, I wouldn't have accomplished any of this, and I wouldn't have had the extra benefits of two years teaching experience, two years in the country. I wouldn't trade those two years for anything.

But I'm still dissatisfied. It's not enough. I wasn't honest. And that — to be totally truthful — is all-important. Unless I am truthful, how can I expect others to be the same? Unless I tell people I'm gay, how can I expect people to accept diversity, to believe in tolerance, to give themselves to love? I think the thing that hurts the most, though, is the feeling that I failed the gay students at that high school. I always wanted to be a gay counselor for them, a positive role model, so that they wouldn't have to go through the crap I did. By not coming out, I failed those kids. I have to accept that.

I suppose I have to conclude something. If I do, it's that I wouldn't try to straddle the closet again. It's too hard. It takes too much out of me. And it's not right. Yet, what alternative do I have, if I want to keep teaching? I tried to get a teaching job in Boston or Washington, and I couldn't, perhaps only partly because of the words, "National Gay Task Force member," on some of my applications. I can't conceive of a public high school anywhere in this country where an openly gay teacher would be allowed to teach. In the meantime, while I try to decide what to do, I'm living in L.A. — *not* teaching. Where can I go? Perhaps a benevolent administrator from some educational oasis will rescue me and offer a refuge. I kind of doubt it, but maybe. And maybe the American school system will soon become a bastion of freedom and justice, with doors open to all. I kind of doubt that too. If Steve heard me say that, he'd laugh for sure.



SWEET 16

Bordering on the bi-
when sweet sixteen arrives;
Space goddesses
practice the ancient rites.
Electric Egyptians
to the call of engines;
High-thrust tramping
with high-brow conviction.

Gleaming in such diamond eyes,
Nectar of their labor shines;
Summoning the twist
from marilyn monroe lips
and a conception of time.

One in her kimono
shoots a stance at gable,
Ballroomizing
to the sound of disco.
A chorus line defines;
The chaos mesmerized.
In one movement,
future and past align.

Terror like an aura
binds me to a ringside-stool sigh,
While Tara and Jill
explode in orbit
still under the pressure of time.
The sweet, sweet pleasure of time.

Victor R. Santos, Jr.

i left my heart in... S.F.

my name is ed camp and...

Dear Fagrag,

Here is a little poem about the feeling of the Hotel I live in officially known as the Delta Rooms but affectionately called sometimes the Rainbow Rooms (at least by our beloved phone company) because it is situated over the only fag cowboy bar in the city entitled the Rainbow Cattle Co. which in itself is a whole other story. Can you guess our theme song, Judy?

This poem does not relate any actual event but is, rather, an impression of the atmosphere (an air of mystery and suspense?) of the hotel (how about romantic?).

This is not your ordinary deadbeat hotel. Indeed is like more living in a sorority house than a hotel. You get a chance meet everyone which creates sort of a community feeling. There is a dayroom where there is a lot of social activity especially in the summer. Sometimes the trips that come down in there make me think that it is an gestalt room. We have a lot of out-patients.

This place is like being in another dimension. The inside of an rainbow. At any rate the ass-end of it.

The hotel has rather an dubious reputation in the city. In several instances some of the boys here have pick up tricks from some of the more uppity sections of town. When asked by their prospective boyfriend where they are from the response would be something like "You're from there?" and would find themselves back out on the street again. Not to worry, this does not deter anyone from making any further advance.

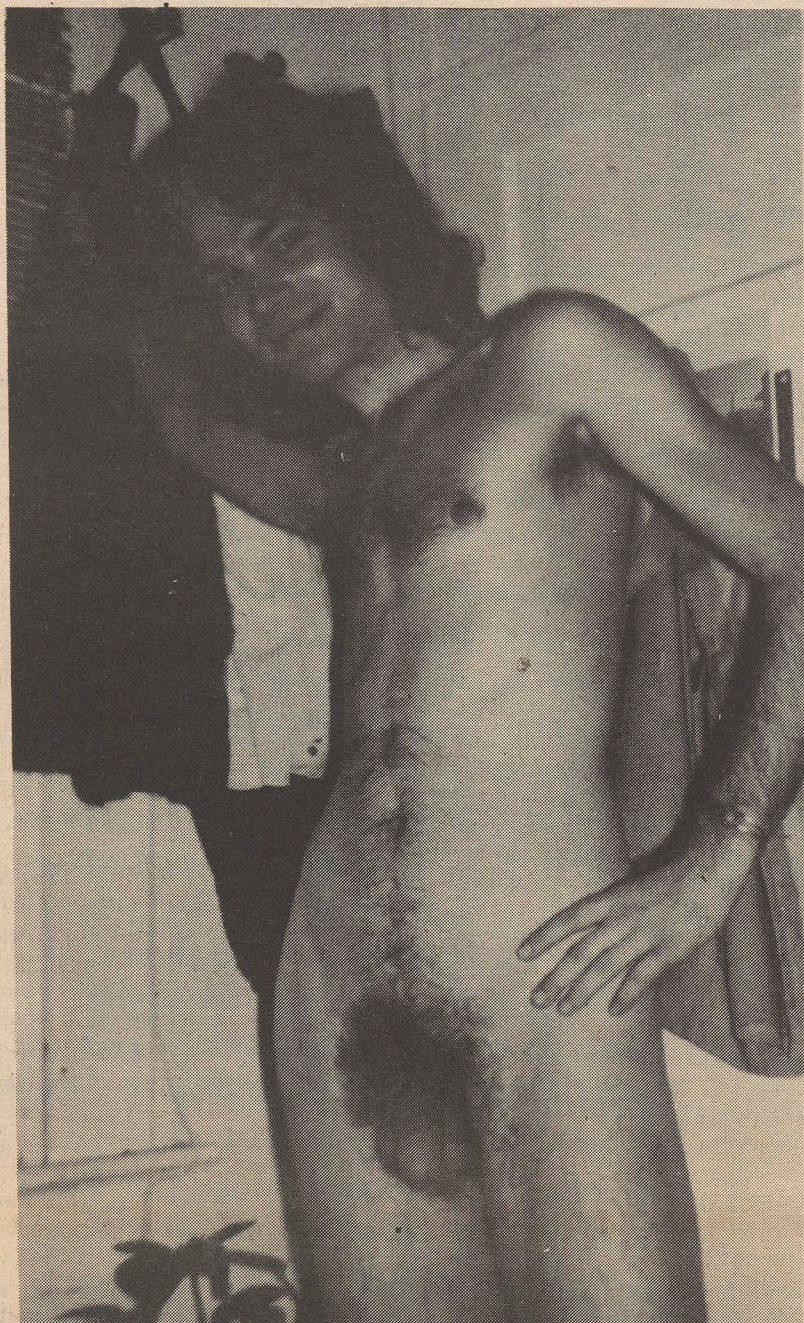
The poem also expresses some sentiment of the other residents here especially Jimmy and Joe who live down the hall. They like to refer to themselves as 'pig sisters'. God!

Anyway, here is the poem I hope you like it. Possibly in the future I might be able to send you some essays on the life and times of the Delta Dorm and S.F. if you are interested.

Too real for TV.

Yours truthfully,

Guy Alexandre Grande



NARCISSUSPOEM

Someday i'll know
the hottest sex object around:
my own beautiful body
lightweight sculpture
hipbone hardon
kohl eyes
henna hair
my very own
work of art
the only object
i can own
its not much;
its good.
Someday i'll know
the hottest sex object around.

Ed Camp

THE ROOM

the room has arms and legs
and jumps out of its skin
to find us unleashing dreams
upon the flat plain and moving
closer to the hurricane's eye
with silence as a thunderbolt

a blue and red salvation army truck
waits outside with windows of pain
in which a man sits holding death
in his arms and humming a tune
neither of us can hear

this is the end
we've arrived
in our rooms
two of us
soldiers
philosophers
getting rid of the world

Neeli Cherkovski

SLEEZE

**Walking out
seeing with my eyes
the other guy on the street corner
along Market street
It's 4 AM**

**We glance at each other
then stare
decreasing the distance between us
Smile are exchanged
Hi!
Hi!
Let's go to my parlor at the Hotel**

**We swiftly depart
leaving behind us
the bright lights of Market
with its drunks
sprawled out at every other doorway**

**Slipping on to a dark side street
I begin to feel more at home
He looks sleezy in the shadows
and I feel sleezy**

**We get to the Hotel
He knows
I know
SLEEZE PLEASE * let's jump in the gutter**

**So
we decide to slip under the stove
with the cockroaches
to set the mood
Fuck
it's dark
Fuck
it's sweaty
Fuck
it's slimey
Fucking**

Guy Alexandre Grande

THE MAN OF MY DREAMS

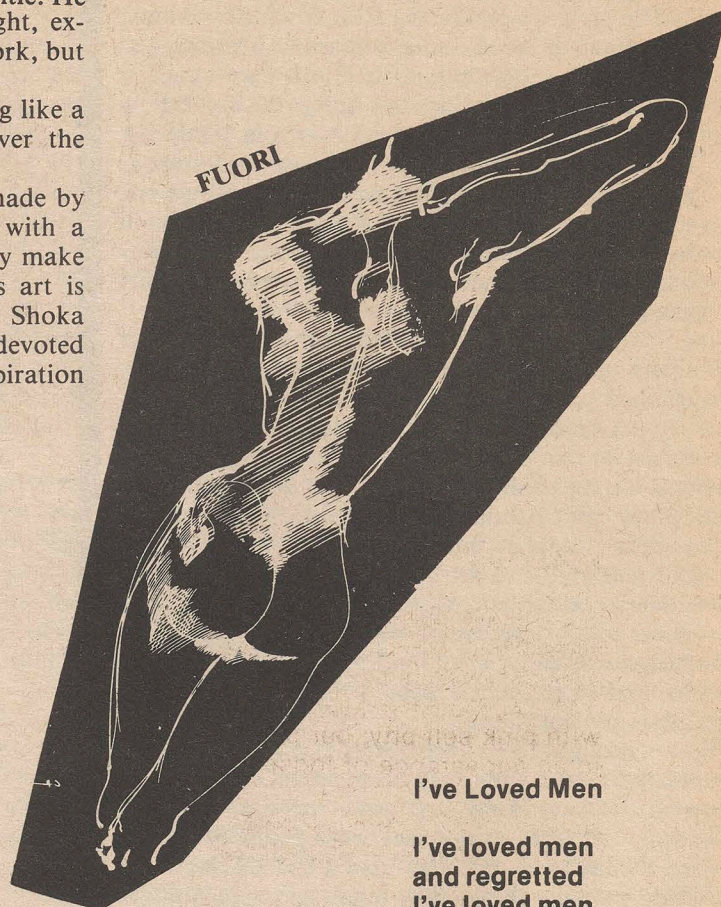
The man of my dreams is tall, thin, and gentle. He loves his body, so he keeps it delicate, light, exquisite, perfect in its form, not to do shitwork, but to create beauty: to be beauty itself.

He loves his hair, so he lets it grow flowing like a golden aura of light from the crown over the shoulders down to the waist.

The blue bib overalls that an old friend made by hand for him, big patch pockets white with a delicate blue pattern; loose and baggy they make him look like an innocent little girl. His art is Ikenobo Ikebana flower arranging; a Shoka delicate, elegantly simple, reflecting a life devoted to beauty wherever it can be found, an inspiration to all who enter his charmed circle.

Golden Gate Park
Meadow, grass, daisies
Between a road and the foot of a hill
Sun's magickal warmth
Embraced by trees all around
On the same trail
A tiny secluded lake
An old rock quarry
Climb the cliff
Sit and worship the Sun
And the goddess of love.

Edward Camp



I've Loved Men

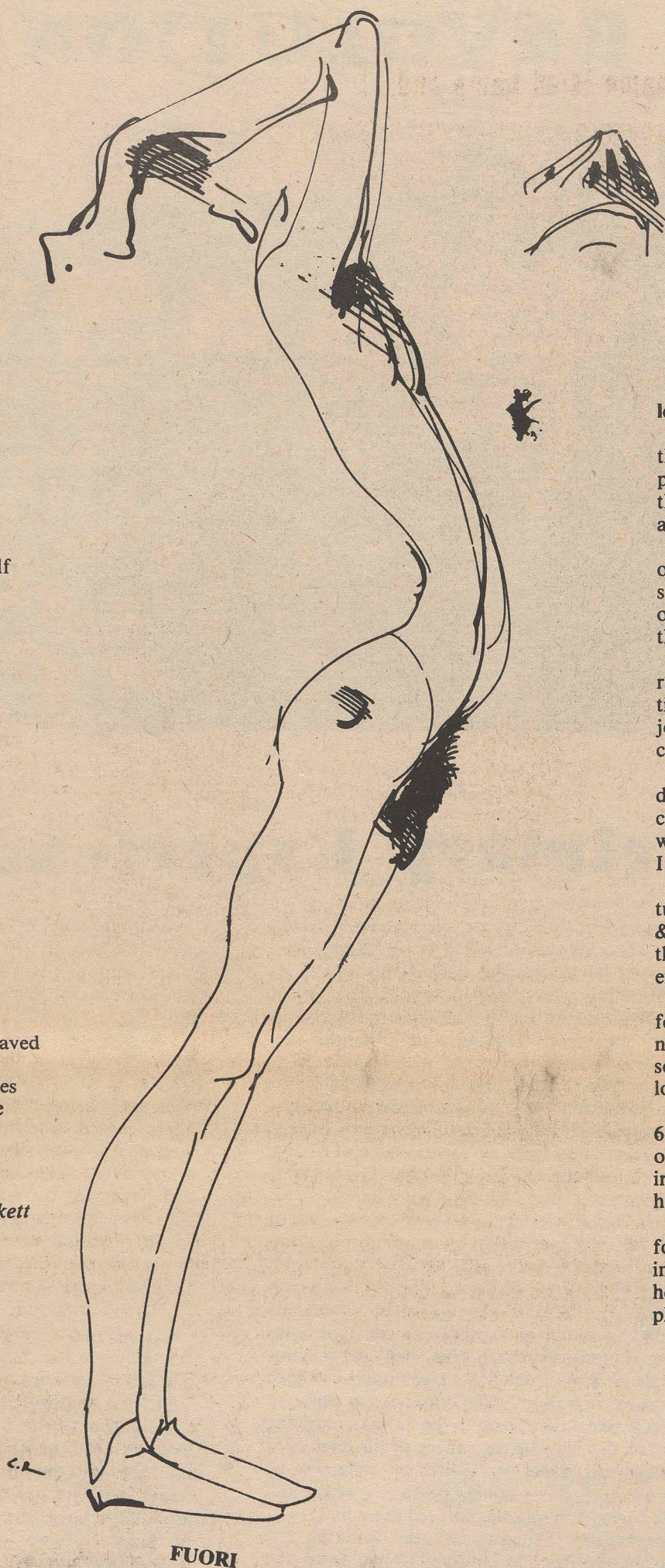
I've loved men
and regretted
I've loved men
and do still
Each a reflection
I find
I run into mirrors

Guy Bishop

OFFICE JOB

that office job
 young executive
 training the time
 serious security
 plans
 computer printouts
 they *do* get married
 & live in Queens
 & MAN
 the work piles up at
 the end of the day
 someone will yell
 & the schedule still
 has to be extended
 & the only way to know
 you're even alive
 young man
 is to extend your ass
 to some hard thrust
 or slap your mind
 w/ a week-end pill
 if only sex were dirty
 you could degrade yourself
 outside 9-5
 for a variety
 compliment
 a grain gradation
 along the way
 at least
 the punk rock show
 is electric & loud
 & the little
 longhair boys pretend
 their crotches are dirty
 & stick their tongues out
 jump & stomp
 sing the hit song titled:
 KISS MY ASS
 & makes it hard not
 to grow long hair in
 one weekend &
 show up Mon. morning
 w/ it dyed silver
 & eyebrows completely shaved
 dressed in boots & leather
 w/ silver keys on both sides
 calling a conference of the
 senior executives
 before 10 o'clock.

Harold Pickett



FUORI

JEALOUSY

Greeneyed Jealousy cowers in this
 rented bed, signs and moans; the mattress
 echoes, echoes like bad connections
 with LA; her soiled face is bloated
 with pink self-pity; her body's tense
 in an appearance of looseness, like . . .

a plastic dolly, dismembered, smeared
 with excrement—"Abandoned"—or like . . .

an apartment poodle ballooning
 with unspeakable panic, doggy
 mind speeding one-track *down*, repeating
 in high-pitched internal wail senseless
 syllables of her sole master's name.

Michael Lebeck

COMMUNITY SINGS?

John saw Mary
 blow Tommy
 while Jerry felt Susan
 after Susan ate Mary
 who fucked Jerry
 while Tommy grabbed John
 and now they all have crabs

Jeffrey Rosenberg

letting the music play

the weather is changing & I feel in my body all the
 pulls of winter: ways to gain weight again enjoying
 the food but always thinking that no one will love me
 anymore now that I've gone fat ways of snuggling indoors

of keeping myself away from other bodies looking in-
 stead at magazines or reading books or having fantasies
 of loving the real thing being so difficult & risky
 that I hang onto pain like a koala to a eucalyptus leaf

rather than take another marsupial leap into a spring-
 time that left these parts last summer working at a
 job again watching my friends get fired & not finally
 caring or caring too much when there is nothing I can

do about their jobs or getting another virus this one
 called orchitis after a delicate tropical bloom I think
 who know the irises but never had a corsage on the gown
 I didn't wear to the prom I never danced at but it

turned out to be a swelling of my right testicle & pain
 & fear for four days till the flower wilted watching
 the sun set earlier every day my last lover & latest
 enemy finally getting ready to go west where whatever I

feel at least I won't have to worry about seeing him or
 not seeing him listening to a football game with the
 sound off picture on but blurred & how can you sink any
 lower than below sea level the game (Texas 6, Oklahoma

6, final) turns into another roaring like the cat purring
 on the couch next to me & I listen & the music comes on
 in a bright clear shining hit of acapulco gold that must
 have been lost for months now it's October the season

for finding old dope in our socks & pushing it out & toe-
 ing it time to let Indian summer come back into our
 heated rooms in January if we listen if we let the music
 play.

Ron Schreiber

Folding sheets

I'll help you
 do it

mitred corners
 metastasizing
 creases into crowsfeet

if you like
 meeting

if you smile

winking

unwrinkling
 wings

section and connect us.

John Barnstead

MATRICIDE AS AN ACT OF REVOLUTION

Charley Shively



Mothers are very special to faggots. Virtually every one I know has tender ties with their mother — ties that last throughout life and continue even after death. I once felt the depth of this feeling at a pre-Stonewall party in Madison, Wisconsin. This Saturday night fuck fest met at the "Pink Palace" — an apartment decorated totally in pink organdy, chintz, chenille and velveteen. Lots of doilies and champagne and fashionable clothes. Lightheartedly to a show-tune record, I suggested (since it was the second week in May) that we call it a Mother's Day Eve Celebration. Poor taste, my dear! The music stopped and everyone stared at me as though I were a communist. No one laughed; mothers in 1960 were something you did not joke about, especially in the proximity of sex. Nor today.

The mother-tie is more subtle and inescapable than the father-tie. At the very start it is biological: placenta, belly button, breast, survival, total dependency. The somewhat nasty philosopher Thomas Hobbes observed that mothers have a great power: they decide at the beginning whether a child will live. Every faggot existence passes from the womb and will continue to do so until cloning or embryo incubators are perfected. James Joyce reflected on that survival: "Ugly and futile: lean neck and tangled hair and a stain of ink, a snail's bed. Yet someone had loved him, borne him to her arms and in her heart. But for her the race of the world would have trampled him under foot, a squashed boneless snail." Products of mother production, we are all in the beginning not our own but our mother's own being/fetus/property. Cornelia (Roman mother of the Gracchi brothers) said of her sons: these are my jewels just as men talk of their cocks and balls as jewels or the aborigine Santa Barbarans called their faggots their jewels.

The relationship of faggots to their mothers (and by extension to other women) is not easy to discuss. Homophobes such as Dr. Irving Bieber have argued that fear of women is the distinguishing characteristic of a male homosexual. A "cured" faggot in the Austrian Action Analysis Organization succinctly describes how he was saved from "my deeply-hidden hatred against my mother. I still hadn't forgiven her for not loving me completely. the more deeply I delved into my childhood, the more the stubbornness, the hate and revengeful thoughts burst out of me. that was what I had always been hiding behind my seeming admiration and love for my mother. at this point in the analysis I was able to fuck [women] for the first time without fear." Faggots should not turn from the unconscious in disgust because homophobes have coopted the insights of psychoanalysis. Neglecting the conscious and not understanding its dynamic will frustrate our hopes for liberation. The relationship between faggots and their mothers, for example, is too often ignored as taboo or is discussed in romantic, sentimental terms. We must break through such defenses before we can develop a complete consciousness for our liberation.

Primary Experience

I want to analyze my own relationship to my mother. In part, because that is the experience I know best — a material basis from which my understanding grows. Sharing my experience will hopefully awaken similar, different or complementary experiences among others. At the very least, you can get an idea of where I'm coming from: my past, my feelings, my inadequacies, my hopes. Hopefully as we all share private and perhaps painful experiences we can develop a collective consciousness truly our own. And out of that shared experience will come the energy we need to transform and change the experience itself.

Grandmother was first mother to me: symbol of womb, fertility, mother love, unquestioning comfort and support. Never a demand or reprimand; every year after year a crisp dollar bill and birthday card. Her breasts were gigantic; resting my head on vast mountains; pillows; giant light bulbs holding rhinestone broach pins spelling her name in purple settings: Della Mae. Her fingers chopped off working in a shoe factory; married at thirteen; deserted; divorced; loose; living in sin; mopping floors for the rich; breast cancer death. Her 1913 wedding trunk contained a lifetime collection of cheap mother's day birthday perfumes, soaps and bubble baths. Old *Fag Rags* stored there now.

Mother/Sister/Daughter a year drinking her breast, my mother; her betrayed to live down dirt mud lanes raising child after child; her teeth falling out. She dreamed of big city Cincinnati stuck on a tough farm in 1929; mother dead; Daddy burnt all the Bibles cursed the God damned kids; why couldn't it be one of them; girl cook; girl pick corn; girl shut up; girl can't you do anything right; get to work. In the city I could have gone to school; I could have got a job; I could have gone somewhere; I could have gone to movies; there were people in the streets. Mud sticking to your shoes you could breathe it thru yr bones; yellow clay slimy as baby mess in the diapers. Marriage.

I never remember my mother treating me as anything but an adult; she always talked with me as a human being. She spilled out all the details of her suffering through her father, the depression, cardboard shoe soles; making ends meet. I was recruited as a partner in the struggle for existence: as soon as I could I was washing dishes, cleaning house; I carried the babies, changed their diapers, washed them, watched them; became myself part mother. A baby on my hip almost second nature. I remember a Sunday School lesson: Jesus helped his mother wash dishes (illustrated with little dabs of yellow and blue food) while the other children went out and played. A doctor once asked "Didn't you resent having to

do all that work?" I was slightly shocked: No, it never occurred to me; my mother had suffered so much, endured so much; how could I possibly complain about giving my whole life to helping her.

I became her surrogate: her escape. She could not go to high school: I would graduate from high school. I would find in the world what she had been denied. In school my shirt didn't fit; mother never learned to sew perfectly; the shirt was puckered at the joints; her child was very queer and afraid of all the other even seamed Sears kids. I had been sent on a mission: to find the middle class she had missed, to find somewhere revenge for all she had never found. Her mind guided mine; native mother's milk wisdom tough as nails. Trapped trying to find a way out.

I never saw a mark of weakness in my mother. We had no water in the house; the well fell in; she dug the trench for public water: six feet deep, one foot wide and thirty feet long; we all helped; but she did most of the ditch-digging with a bandanna over her head, barefoot; neighbors talked about it not looking right; we had running water up to the house (later inside). She once said she never saw any reason to believe in God; we had to take care of ourselves. I was over thirty before I ever saw her cry; she wept briefly at daddy's funeral. I was shaken and cried at her crying; we held each other.

Having been given the strength and wit to go I went, carrying what I had in grandmother's wedding trunk. You can escape, get out: remember I have taught you something that will always make you strong: knowledge of how to survive, knowledge that you can always get through the worst. If you ever fall, you'll already know what it's like on the bottom; having been there it can hold no terror for you. Eating in a nightclub in Boston, I remember in 1958 feeling guilty: at home we could have eaten for a week on what the dinner cost. I studied compulsively; I must catch up for the generations of my mothers who had known only how completely they had been left out of everything.

Mother: I became the opportunity you never had; your sacrifice made me possible; I can never repay the debt; I owe everything to you. Mother, you are a martyr; no one knows the suffering you have seen; your multitudinous sorrows; your endless scars. They are stitched in my psyche; they are me. That pattern continues in my life. Agamemnon my lover once complained: you're impossible to live with, you never do anything wrong. Someone else said: why don't you just fuck up once, we'd all feel so much better. She's so good; she's a martyr; how can you kill her the way you would your father?

SECONDARY ANALYSIS

The guilt-at-leaving feeling actually covers an even deeper feeling: the fear of being unwanted. Clinging to the notion that mother (or other loved one) wants me so deeply that she can't let me go is partly a wish/fear of being left alone. We are never wanted as much as we want to be wanted. A friend told that his mother said he was a child that was really wanted — not an accidental or forced pregnancy but one joyfully chosen. But the very idea that you could be unwanted contains unsettling implications: it all seems to be so very close, so very accidental, so chancy. It is more terrifying than reassuring to realize that (through no fault or virtue of oneself) you might have been unwanted.

Mothers (and by extension for straight men: wives, mistresses, waitresses, nurses, secretaries and other women) play a special role in always being there to want the little man. Even a man when he grows up — perhaps poor, ugly, nasty or mean — can still recall in memory an eternal time in the past when as a sweet baby mommy wanted him. Even if it's untrue or exaggerated that past always remains no matter what else happens.

Woman support is actually a function of our society's organization. In a rational society, mother/woman support would be only one among many supports available. But in a predatory capitalist economy, no-one really "wants" anyone; we are all objects — expendable commodities in a market economy. Were we "wanted" by each other and by our society, the great burden placed on mothers would be lessened. In the marketplace, we suffer alienation from work — that is, we feel that our labor is not our own: our job, boss or occupation does not really "want" us at all; everywhere we are made to feel random and expendable. Consequently, greater and greater burdens are placed on women to compensate for the lost feelings men experience in the "outside" world; they have to provide a nest or support for daddy when he comes home from the factory.

Women, faggots, marginal workers and other surplus people suffer far greater tremors of being themselves unwanted. They can only hope that the less marginal elements (straight white men) will smile on them and give them approval and existence for their sub-service, subservience. One deadly solution for our hopeless condition has been to turn to god, someone who — whether vengeful or loving — really wants you. Churches in fact often provide what's called "the only hope" for women, faggots, Black and other oppressed peoples. If you took all the women and faggots out of the churches (including the Black churches), organized religion would immediately cease.

Instead of god (or the goddess), we need to turn to each other for hope. The only possibility for social change is for the wretched of the earth (us) not to wait for some pie in the sky, but to organize ourselves. In this organization for social reconstruction, faggots occupy a special place. Although we continue to live off of some mother ideal, nonetheless we drain a good deal less energy away from women than heterosexual men. And at the same time, faggots have begun to develop a whole network of relations and living arrangements in which emotional dependency is widely shared among whole groups of males.

For a beginning there is no place in our society where rejection and acceptance of rejection has been carried to such a fine art. Every part of the faggot sub-culture is an eternal weaning process from the idea of being wanted. Some of us face an incredible barrage of rejections every day; even the most beautiful, witty and well-dressed faggot faces ten or twenty times the rejections any straight man ever faces — at least in the intimate area of sexual relations. Some of this leads to a touch of callousness. But I am continuously amazed (particularly in myself and other older faggots) at how much tenderness and love for each other we retain. We just bypass or overcome the grandiose dreams of being someone someone *wants* totally. Certainly straight men coming out find this the hardest thing to understand: our ability to want and love literally thousands of other faggots.

Faggots getting together makes almost everyone uncomfortable (even including ourselves). Some have argued that faggots getting together is only another form of "male-bonding." The whole theory of male-bonding derived from Lionel Tiger's *Men in Groups* rests on some very dubious ethnology: that *biologically* men form groups. Since there is no evidence how humans would

behave without a class society, all his analysis rests on analogies with other animals. Too many people have taken Tiger's work at face value.

Even if you accept the crackpot ethnology of *Men in Groups*, you need to recognize the distinction between heterosexual men and homosexual men in groups. The heterosexual group (although all male) is bound together by continuous talk and reference to women: stories of fucking, family and conquest dominate every male heterosexual get-together. Even (or maybe above all others) poets, artists and philosophers lubricate their inter-group solidarity through conquest of women. Also the heterosexual men-in-groups spend their time challenging and competing with one another. For sexual, emotional support they depend on "their" women. Even in the prison or in armies or other situations where women are almost never present, the heterosexual men still hang up pictures of women, wait in line for letters from mom & girlfriends, and never stop talking and joking about all the women they have fucked.

Homosexual men when they gather in groups hardly fit this pattern at all. And that is why people are very uncomfortable about groups of male homosexuals: we undertake to support one another sexually, financially, emotionally and physically. And at the same time we attempt to overcome dependency on women's energies. The idea that you don't have women around to trample on is very startling to heterosexuals (male and female). But I think it must be an increasingly necessary for all men: if women will not support them, they are going to have to take care of each other. Faggots have experimented in this area extensively. We don't do it very well, but we have tried. Ideally, I suppose, everyone should be strong enough to take care of themselves and not have to depend on others for support. But that ideal is only rarely possible.

In particular, I want to explore three areas of deep vulnerability — in which traditionally women have been the slaves who did the work. Faggots need to explore further what we can do in such areas as Old Age, Keeping House and Infant Care.

Old Age: I vividly recall being in two faggot consciousness raising groups and a member saying: I plan to marry a woman because I want someone to take care of me when I get old. But faggots are beginning to demonstrate that they don't have to live on slave labor any longer. ("But if we abolish slavery, who will pick the cotton?") In *Fag Rag 2* we published the picture of two lovers marching in the Gay Pride Parade; later Harry Isele wrote thanking us for the photographs

and letting us know his lover had died in April 1973. He said, "I am 72 years of age and have been Gay since 16. My lover Bob Liechti has been a contributor of articles on female and male impersonation . . . and we have been together 26 years not without occasional differences! but with many happy times."

John Murray who participated in Boston's Gay Male Liberation Front moved in with Prescott Townsend who was in his seventies. John (in his thirties) helped take care of Prescott by getting groceries, carrying out garbage and bringing in tricks. I remember taking John and Prescott to a fashionable suburban party in nearby Westwood and heard someone say, "Who invited that one, he looks like he's going to die." At the funeral, the straight minister deplored the "fact" that Prescott had to spend his last years in "squalor, neglect and without care." John ran from the church weeping. The idea is that if you aren't under a woman's care, no one else can care for you; faggot care for each other doesn't count in the Copley Square church.

Human Maintenance. Nursing, Cooking, Ironing, house cleaning, bookkeeping, typing, and other human maintenance tasks have been generally taken care of by women or among the wealthy by servants. Traditionally, rulers have left these tasks to their subjects. Faggots more than any other group of men have learned to do these things for ourselves and each other. More often than not out of sheer pleasure; knitting sweaters, gourmet cooking or decorating an apartment.

I think everyone needs to participate in their own maintenance. Each person picking up after themselves will free other people to be themselves instead of being the one who has to follow Jimmy around cleaning up his shit. But beyond the simple matter of justice, I think there is a matter of balance at stake. In the Cultural Revolution, Mao-Tse-Tung attempted to balance the lives of students and intellectuals by having them work in the fields and factories. Some were horrified at forcing manual labor on men of culture who were supposed to devote their life to poetry, music, philosophy, political science, dialectics or whatever. But without work in the shops and fields, reality would always elude them; from their studies they could never have a feeling of the road. Likewise with each life: a person trapped cleaning toilets will not lead a full life; nor will a person who hasn't eaten a little shit (or at least cleaned up his/her own) get a sense of the full possibility of human life. By taking care of ourselves and of others, we get in touch with the material conditions of our existence. Washing dishes is not always enlightenment, but those who have never washed dishes will never know what enlightenment can be.



Infancy. Ideally children should learn as early as possible to take care of themselves and of each other. I began this when I was only seven taking care of my sister and later my youngest brother. Child care is not so complicated that children can't do it for each other. Particularly in large families, the older children tend to raise the younger ones. I have been amazed to find people hiring "baby sitters" for fifteen year old men and women.

I am deeply suspicious of the great emphasis on the need for massive child care and protection. Children are generally over-protected. And for good reason: they are being regimented and brain washed into becoming straight, production units in patriarchal capitalism. We see readily through the male supremacist arguments that women are weak, stupid or generally incapable of defending themselves. They need a man to defend them (generally defend them from another man!). Just like statisticians say we need the state to defend us from other states, likewise we are told that children need adults to defend them from other adults!

A secondary argument is that children need good "role models." Without adults, they just would never know what to do; role models are not just statues to copy: they are commands to obey. Children need role models like they need atomic bombs or insecticides. All role models are lies: no one is the model they pretend to be. So people run around pretending to be roles: Santa Claus, say; and children learn very early that models are playing roles. Which would be fun and games, if children and adults were free to pick and choose roles like wild clothing. But role models are not just a game, they are a serious form of indoctrination. Good "role models" will be the death of any liberation inherent in gayness.

Much has been said about the importance of having men or faggots share child-care, but many issues on this subject are unclear. For instance, is the idea to keep the motherhood institution intact, but just change the personnel? That is, are children to continue to be desexualized and infantilized by more people? I have participated in child-care arrangements where that was clearly the case, where everyone understood implicitly that you were doing childcare as a male model — a surrogate father — not as a faggot.

Heterosexual biological parents basically need "baby" sitters, they view their children as *their* property, and resist "outside" intrusion into the lives of *their* children. In the past, men as the power in society have directed women as servants how to take care of the men's property. The women have been stewards or caretakers for the men. A few lucky women have been given enough money to hire sub-caretakers for the family property: English governesses or Black "Mammies." Of course, the sub-servant had great impact on the property: children often loved their surrogate mother more than their biological mother; just as children love their biological mother more than the owner-"boss" of the family/factory.

Now that servants are expensive and women are demanding wages for housework, new sources of labor needs to be found for child care. Faggots are a possible choice: not because heterosexuals like us any more than they did Black women; nor do they intend to share their property with us any more than they did with Black women. We are just a cheap source of surplus labor.

Basically I think the idea that you have to "own" a child or two to be human is a deforming notion for both the owner and the owned. Children should own themselves; they should own their own bodies in particular. A virtual propaganda war is now being waged against any child sexuality. All possible sexual contact between adults and children is legally defined as rape or abuse. Thus Ellen Weber in *Ms* magazine explains that "Sexual abuse . . . runs the gamut from 'fondling' to fellatio, cunnilingus, sodomy, and ultimately, full intercourse." In Massachusetts, one man is in prison for assaulting his children with a microscope: he showed them a slide of live sperm — a "crime against chastity."

The existing system of child miscare consists of suppressing — actively suppressing — the polymorphous eroticism of the child. Jill Johnston pointed out that under the present system of motherhood, "the mother wants to control and restrain and regulate and repress." Mothers do this because they have to under the regulation of the patriarchy. But they do it also because they are exercising power and rulership (a power all the more important to mothers since they are allowed few other powers in society). The liberal motto "Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely" has not been applied as extensively as it should be.

APPLICATIONS:



Rob Rovenhalt, collage by

The whole society is coming around to the faggot view of Fathers. Sylvia Plath's line — "Daddy, I have had to kill you" — might be the theme song for struggle against patriarchy. Male supremacy no longer passes unquestioned. And although man-rule continues, men now disguise their arrogance. Presidents pass as down-home folks; quarterbacks wear pantyhose; bosses pretend to be one of the boys; and police play ball with homosexuals. Even leather faggots do their part by trivializing the once sacred signs of Father power: bikes, boots, beer and barbells have been turned into camp sex-toys.

As fathers fall into disrepute, Mothers become correspondingly untouchable. Some authoritarians have performed a quick switch act: replacing patriarchy with a proposed matriarchy. Great praise is suddenly showered on Golda Meir or Indira Gandhi — both counter-revolutionary if not reactionary leaders. And ancient queens such as Elizabeth I, Isabella or Victoria suddenly become "role" models. These women presided over a predatory and competitive imperialism under which mercantile capital tried to destroy Africa, Asia and America. What we need are strategies for getting rid of rulers of whatever gender. As Jill Johnston wrote, "i don't want to live in a matriarchy any more than i do a patriarchy . . . the thing is we don't want any heads period. the elimination of heads is the substance of revolution." VV, (11 Oct 73)

Assuming that *Fag Rag* readers will share a commitment to Patricide — Killing the fathers and father rule — I want to explore the necessity for MATRICIDE. Faggots need to rebel not only against fathers but also against mothers. In the same way we have killed our fathers, we must kill our mothers to free them and ourselves. Unfortunately such a project is blocked by deep residual anti-woman fears which faggots retain. Not only because the biological debt is so great but also because mothers (and women generally) have been so ill-treated in our culture, faggots cannot fight against them. We face not only the guilt *how can i ever repay all she has done for me* but also the guilt *mother could have been a person if she hadn't wasted time making me*.

All mothers carry within themselves a horror story that truly makes them martyrs. Daddy deserted them, neglected them, killed them. They were denied access to power, love, education, achievement, freedom, capacity and existence. To various degrees they all bear the hard marks of their many sacrifices: how can you struggle with a woman who has suffered so much and done so much for her children. More extreme guilt comes from those mothers who actually run away, die or go insane. Communication then becomes absolutely impossible; you must assume that it was all your fault: she went away because you did something nasty. In all cases, deep guilt combines with the untouchable credentials of motherhood to block any revolt or change. How could you go against your mother? She has had such a hard life. She did so much for you.

Among faggots, this deep guilt has taken two contradictory but common outlets: gynophobia (fear-hate of women) and pedestalitis (worship of women). These two approaches generally grow out of the faggot's unresolved debt/guilt to mothers. Until this tie is transformed, any revolution will fail to change the structures of either faggot oppression or oppression in general.

Gynophobia is most familiar: you can easily find examples of fear and hatred of women among faggots. I remember a meeting at the now defunct Homophile Union of Boston. An elderly faggot was there along with Elaine Noble and a representative of the Massachusetts Political Caucus; tentative of the Massachusetts Womens' Political Caucus; we were discussing strategy for some anti-great rage: "I am not going to let some bitch [i.e. Noble] tell me what to do; I've been around a lot longer than she has. If these broads want to learn something, they should listen. We don't really need them." Everyone was embarrassed. Several lesbians and a few faggots (including myself) stomped out, but the man's ill grace only expressed what many faggots would have said if they weren't afraid. Among us the terms "bitch," "cunt," "fish," or "broad" are derogatory even when they are intended to provoke laughter.

While struggling toward liberation, even *Fag Rag* faces a lot of confusion about the use of such derogatory words. Because of our male supremacist society, these words carry an enormous amount of emotional impact. Poets particularly will grab such words as "bitch" (or "nigger," "kike," or "wop") because the word is so handy in arousing responses (even a negative response means more to the poet than no response at all). Poets also claim that their effusions can serve as a catharsis. Neither excuse has seemed adequate for publishing such words in *Fag Rag*; not everything a poet writes needs to be inevitably published. Just removing the offensive words seldom removes the feelings that brought the words into consciousness. Nevertheless, training people to understand that words like "bitch" represents a deep fault in our world will hopefully lead writers to probe more deeply into their psyches. Whatever the case, this widespread use of the word "bitch" among faggots demonstrates (if any demonstration were needed) how deeply embedded gynophobic feelings are among faggots.

Pedestalitis is the disease of placing women out-of-sight and out-of-touch. Among faggots it takes two related forms: goddess worship and radical effeminism.

Goddess worship would attempt to restore an early form of mother religion. Jane Harrison in *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* explains that "Women to primitive man is . . . at once weak and magical; oppressed, yet feared. She is charged with powers of childbearing denied to man, powers only half-understood . . . forces that all over the world seem to fill him with terror." As though we have not had enough

trouble killing "God the Father," now we face an unkillable Mother-God. Accepting all the historical premises of such authors as Elizabeth Gould Davis or Arthur Evans that in preindustrial societies, matriarchy and goddess worship prevailed, I would question the good sense of trying to refurbish that or any religion. It would certainly offer little for women to be worshipped without being free.

The Effeminists have not been too clearly distinguished from the goddess-worshippers. Thus *The Effeminist* group in Berkeley (May 1971) evolved as "gay christian revolutionaries" who had previously published *Agape and Action*. And the New York *Double-F: a magazine of effeminism* has claims of reclaiming "the whole earth for the Great Mother." The Effeminists can perhaps be distinguished from other goddess worshipers by their aggressiveness and belligerency. Rejecting the legitimacy of male homosexuality, the N.Y. group has struggled "with the dilemma of being partisans — as effeminists — of a revolution opposed to us — as men." Consequently all their guilt, anxiety and hatred have been poured out against other faggots. Although they quarrel with each other, the one common theme of effeminists is that men should buy and read books published by women. (A curiously academic notion.) According to John Stoltenberg, we must do two things: give up all homosexual relations and "make a conscientious study of feminist texts, a study which if full-time I imagine could take a year or longer." (GAU, 1974) My understanding of effeminism is that faggots must sacrifice every part of their sexuality on the altar of feminine purity.

Both gynophobia and pedestalitis are rooted (like religion) in a fear and hatred of our mothers. And one of the most enduring feeling in relation to mothers centers around sexuality. We maintain a myth of maternal virginity/non-sexuality that arises more out of our own desires than anything else. Men (particularly faggots) have a notion that women want us most of all to sacrifice our sexuality; certainly men are afraid of not only feminine sexuality but sexuality itself. Gynophobia and pedestalitis are two symptoms of that fear.

To break through those fears, I think nothing will be more effective for faggots than developing our own sexual, sensual relations for each other. And develop that sexuality not only in private but also in public. We need to celebrate our sensuality, our sexuality. At the present, sexuality has been linked too closely with service and too little with pleasure. Thus service people (women, Blacks, children or faggots) are often called "sexy" in a

way unconnected with being sexual. The need for power among the powerless has led them to follow a road of de-eroticization. Thus many gay liberationists shun any sexual identification as they put emphasis on "power," which they see as non-sexual. When they come out of the closet, they tend to abandon their sexual identification ("what I do in bed is no one's business") and demand all the powers that has been denied them because they were thought to be sexual. Basically they are rising out of their class rather than rising with their class.

What we need is to liberate sexuality itself, to free it from the status of service. In finding a sensual/sexual balance men loving men have an important opportunity. They can be both sensual and in control of their own lives (powerful as opposed to powerless). And men together if they do not simply become men who live off of the emotional, physical and psychological energies of women have an opportunity to develop free love — a love without boundaries, services, parents or owners.



SEN. TED KENNEDY in close conversation with his mother, Rose, and look — their hands are clasped as they talk. There's real affection here, not just a pose for the camera.

MIDNIGHT/GLOBE — July 12, 1977

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF A GAY MALE MOTHER

A LITTLE CONSIDERATION

Is that asking too much? Haven't I gone out of my way to provide a comfortable home for my adopted child? Is he going to turn out like the rest of those suburban young fags. Give them a finger and before you know it they want an arm up their ass. Sick and tired of it, let me tell you.

Of course he doesn't listen to me. Try telling him something for his own good and you know what I get. In one ear, out the other. Never learn. I know that now. Marijuana, acid, beer every night, dancing in those despicable gay bars, going ga-ga over every tom-boys dick. Me alone at home frantic, wondering; is he all right? has he been arrested? who's he sleeping with tonight? will they feed him breakfast in the morning? His own bed not being slept in for days. Egad, I think to myself, don't I warrant a little consideration? I'll say it again. Is that asking too much?

Oh of course he asks me to go with him but who needs it. Peeing on the sidewalk at 2 a.m. under a street lamp. Drunk and disorderly on his knees in some clump of bushes or god knows where. I repeat, who needs it. Know what I mean? Or do you really know what I mean. (kind reader) I think not. Laugh, go ahead, ha ha. Well it's no joke to me. No sir dearie, taint no joke at all to me. You don't know what I mean unless you're physically being subjected to these anxious ordeals I'm talking about. Because I know. Yes sir sweetie pie, (kind reader) I know. I know now because I know what my own poor mother had to put with when I was his age.

What the hell, my own fault I suppose. Me the masochist. Me the battering ram. My broad shoulders he's melted down with his tears as I held him tightly patting his back, sobbing with him after his catastrophic love affairs break up. Why?



Why me I scream inwardly? Shouldn't I know better, me an old has been masculine fruit taking my mothers role? Oh I see it plainly today. I'm her all over again. Don't have to be the same gender to play that matriarchal role, you can bet your holy piss on that. (dear reader) Do I invite these slaps on the face? Is that my station in life, the matronly martyr, or as the catholics say, is that my cross to bear?

(what started out as a camp piece becomes serious enough a topic among gay men — the recognition of conditioned mother response)

We joke about this. He calling me his mother, smiling, his typical Jewish fairy mother. Oh you love it my friends tell me. But to quote one of my own mothers lament, "What do I need this heart-ache for?" On the other hand I find it very pleasant living with him. We share expenses, cleaning, cooking on the rare occasions he's home. He writes creatively. I do too. He's a romantic. I'm a practicalist. He hustles a street-walker block. Me, the carnival midway. Two whores. Two peas in a pod. He's nineteen. I'm fortyeight.

We've had sex with each other a few times. Very casual, almost as a matter of fact, like one would eat or drink a cup of tea. We're confidants when sharing our sexual exploits. "How was he in bed?" is a cliché around the apartment we share. Non-possessive it appears. Indifferent to each other's comings and goings, yet within myself I know how protective I feel toward him. If he says he's happy I beam inside despite some seemingly message of impending doom, e.g., the rent is due or some such day to day drivel which comes through out of focus, enlarged. But, at my age (48) how many cruising years do I have left... So I ask you. (kind reader) Don't I deserve A LITTLE CONSIDERATION? A note even would be enough to allay my anxiety. "Dear Mother: Going to P-town. See you next week." or "Dear Mother: Met a rich man, he's taking me to Amsterdam." Tell me, is that asking too much?

freddie greenfield

VICE COP

he strode from urinal
to wash basin,
where he rinsed hands.
dried them by air.
withdrew an Ace comb,
and arranged his thinning hair.
his nostrils smarted:
having been inside so long,
breathing fumes from urine.
it never got washed away;
but there was something unclean
about the subway entire.
some thickness in the air,
some film to surfaces.
suddenly he gazed down
to his white trousers,
hugging flesh contours:
smudges of obscure dirt.
white tennis shoes the same.

someone entered, walking
direct to the urinal.
he was silent and efficient.
seemed not to see the other.
fastened his zipper, then left.
well, he's normal, I guess,
thought white trousers.
where are those dirty queers,
anyway? supposed to be a line here.
they must like the smell.
"now you're supposed
to receive passes, not make them.
it's like football," sergeant said.
I hope no one kisses in here,
or holds hands. that's ugly.
which one plays the woman?
"some are switch-hitters," sergeant said.
deserve what they get.

once more he surveyed
his white trousers, tennis shoes.
"now you'll be irresistible.
like moths to flame."
what did the sergeant know?
couldn't be moths here,
they'd die. from the smell.
he lit a cigarette.
what if one wants
to suck me off?
my girlfriend won't. just whores.
he wouldn't have to kiss me.
I could unzip, whip it out,
push it in his face. his mouth.
probably has a bigger mouth
than whores . . .
white trousers strode
back to the urinal.

someone entered.
white trousers jerked his head,
trying to smile. fumbling his cigarette.
the other pissed into the toilet.
maybe this one'll volunteer,
thought white trousers,
to suck my dick.
doesn't even look queer.
but if he tries to kiss me,
I'll bash his skull!
ears straining, expectant,
his eyes fixed on the other.
who vaguely rinsed hands and left.

damn faggot!
cried white trousers after him . . .

David Feren

FORESKIN ENVY

my squalling protests counted as nothing
to the masked monster in white
wielding a knife to my genitals
a few years later my mother told me
that baby boys were supposed to be circumcised
(who was i to challenge her parental wisdom?)

the first uncut cock i ever saw
fascinated me—I fantasized about it
i used to imagine that uncircumcised guys
would get more sexual satisfaction than i could
—hiding my adolescent pain at not getting any

a decade later i call it foreskin envy
as i become delirious with orgiastic joy

John Kyper

BURNING THE TREE

**I hear the flower growing out of your head,
The funny lines you read were sharp as razor edge,
They cut off my ears, slit open my gut
I wait, wait
to hear the flower grow out of your mouth.**

Ron Morgan

Drawing by Razzel Dazzel



Mercenary
Mendacious

U seduc/d me,so stupid,w/loving lies
And i believ/d & i believ/d u
Dark enchanter,dark defiler
Third-rate robber u stole my love
Schizoid,schizoid u i never knew sometimes u wud kiss some
times u wud hit me
And masochistic me i was yr eagerly willing victim sd:humiliate me
Deceive me
And u w/yr sex drive like a low-grade fever did deceive,
deceive me w/a careless casual ceaseless string of one-night-stands
Subconsciously i thank/d u for the pain,the degradation
i need/d it then i need/d u then
U,darkly,the black angel of mendacity sd:sleeping w/u is either
false entry

or rape!

that tatter/d raincoat i wore thru the sleet
But finally,finally i escap/d from that maelstroming insanity-love
No:i wud not let it suck me down!

When next u visit the nether land,do not give my regards!
Memories like looking thru a murky styxian river
Years have gone & i have no more understanding of u now than i did then
Only comforting reassuring contempt:that/s all i need
i never knew exactly what u need/d altho i tri/d
to offer everything:fully open arm fuls of love
which u brutally dismember/d

But still

again & again i brought another armful
When i am feeling benevolent towards u—it rarely happens!—i
can wish u some semblance of happiness
Pausing to remove an ancient sliver of shrapnel
But i cannot wish that which u always withheld from me:contentment

Jimm Basty

April 20th

Hell flames out at my fingertips? freezes
behind my eyes? There is no recourse, "mother,"
for the fist up the ass—the sphincter squeezes
the wrist bones, the forearm, like no other
object one might ease against it; the fingers
enjoy the anal canal as a fetus
enjoys the womb while, their thumb cupped, each
lingers
until he and I feel our loves complete us—

but to sometime return, slowly, born into
air (unless by some hate it's amputated
and sewn inside while the Justices grin to
show it's alright), fist still, though adumbrated
by vaseline/shit/streaks of blood: hot sin to
your blown understanding, too long outdated.

Brian Arthur Bass

CRIME

I suppose I could wear red—
low-cut and vulgar, spangled; sluttish
spit curls at each ear
and strings of gaudy beads hung
down to where the pistol's hid
between proud breasts
and Heart of Gold. Then—
Bang! Bang! Bang!
and any jury would believe
these slender, modestly-crossed
ankles, swollen downcast eyes,
and single artful tear:
"It went off accidentally.
I knew they loved each other. I had come
to say 'He's yours. I'll go away.'"
Magnanimous and humbled now,
in navy Crepe-de-chine, I'm free
at last, out of the red.

Robert Ames

LADY MAY

lady may was found on
a cold winter day with
a leather dildo tied to
her mouth/
some say that she wanted
to go that way/ our lady may
but i still cann't understand it
to this day/
why her lover left her that way

Michael Johnson

"J" 2/16/77

Mingling my beard
With the coarse hair
Between your breasts
I watch you
After the tension's discharged
With your come.
I find your features reminiscent
Of those of the first faggot I ever knew,
(Excuse the stereotype:)
My mother's hairdresser.

From my resting place
I focus on your strong right shoulder,
Tanned and freckled
Against the pillow,
A shoulder to bear burdens,
Secure, dependable.

My fingers return
To play once more about your cock,
In repose now orgasm's done.
I won't tell you
I'm fantasizing you/it pissing
And thinking of things
To do with the piss.
Though I'm sure
You've expected me to teach you
"Kinky" things
Like the ones I've related
When we've compared exploits,
I'm no initiator
And you're out just a year.
On one summer day years ago
In my quiet home town,
A workman, barechested,
Needing to relieve himself,
Opened his pants and stood
Near naked, unconcernedly,
Pissing in the crowded road—
Its dignity violated, the town stood aghast
And I got excited.
I've called that scene to mind many times:
You could not have known
That I did so earlier
Alternatively visualizing you or myself
In the role of the pisser.

As you suck my cock,
You present to my
Ecstasy reduced and eyelash curtained vision
A silky mane and hills and valleys and plateaux—
The terrain of your reliable back and firm ass.

I've sliced you thus in bits and pieces
Taken you in arty doses
Perhaps because I'm not too thrilled
About your real, present whole.

Bruce Michael Gelbert

POST CARD
TO A CALIFORNIA
BLONDE
for G.C.

The moon is full tonight,
and pulling through cumulus nimbus
moves the madman lustily
to hunt;
tho' even he despairs of
ever finding double
Shakespeares —
as pictured from the back.

Let's wrestle.

D. B. Kreitzberg

**The provocative red handkerchief
Cock Keys
Leather coated denim;
Posing confidence and presenting It.
Calculating - Evaluating
the space to cruise
with professional clarity.
Arrogance refined and distilled:
Another's Statement of Perfection.
Remote, desolate landscapes
of muscular men in suspension.
Unripened fantasies manifest
Voluptuous illusions of Manhood
Lusting for Love.**

Fredd Gordon



OR

Tough, surly boys in leather, Pabst or Bud
brown paper-bagged, boot heels lopsidedly
worn down to round: you match
these elegant young queens who swish
deceptively, today, in even higher heel
and Florentine suede leather jackets,
scented, freshly-shaven smooth
to matinee moustache.
Another day you'll trade your swaggers
and your Harleys in, and mince
as much—such dandies, all,
beneath.

Robert Ames

LETTER TO JOHN, or ODE FOR A ROBOT

Went out dancedrinking last night
Met this spacesuited stud
With cool, curved muscles.
Called himself Narcissus.
Wore a thin zippered smile
Hooked on tight plastic vinyl
Clear covering his face.
His eyes, like liquid pools,
Reflected his lower lip.

He'd slightly fucked me,
Mechanically
With his metallic tasting cock.
Sounds and motion
Surrounded us,
But I could not hear
That music
Or feel familiar rhythms.

Got outa' his car this morning,
Crisp air showered my face.
A little funny clown
Limped in my brain.
Sleepwalking
Rain lonely streets
Tenderly important was the something
That he never said.

Gerard Coptsias

*he fell into bed
like an angel out
of heaven/ the whip
fell on his ass like
fire out of hell/
a thousand voices
ringing through his
head/ his eyes as
open like a church bell*

Michael Johnson

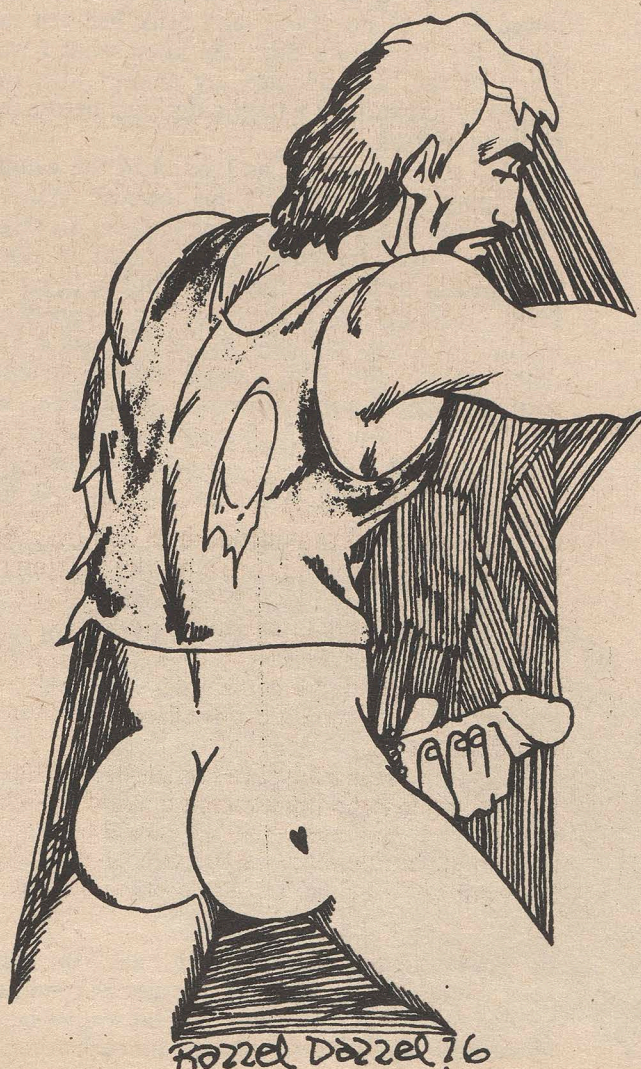
WHAT DOES IT MEAN when you carry a
copy of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in the left hip
pocket of your Levi brand blue jeans? Is it because
you're reading it? I mean, red handkerchiefs used
to be for blowing noses, or for girls to fold into
triangles and tie around their heads, or for bandits
to fold in triangles and tie around their faces, or
for miners to tie around their biceps to show that
they were the girls in Colorado square dances, and
everybody knows what red handkerchiefs mean
now! And why the *left* hip pocket of your Levi
brand blue jeans? It could be only because you're
left-handed and the left pocket was the most con-
venient, or because you're right-handed and your
right hip pocket was already full of wallet.

But it's hard to believe that you're carrying
that book in your left hip pocket just because
you're reading it. You're wearing glasses, it's true,
but you're also wearing Levi brand blue jeans, and
besides, you're in a gay bar, and you have a very
sexy beard and a leather jacket, and *nobody* reads
Robert Louis Stevenson anymore. And if it means
more than that you're reading it, like red handker-
chiefs mean more than just red handkerchiefs,
could it mean that Dr. Jekyll is hiding underneath
your Levi brand blue jeans and leather jacket?
You could even be wearing lace panties and cruis-
ing for someone who's into tea for two and a
literary discussion over french chamber music! I
want some *real* action, the animal in you. Oh,
please, please be Mr. Hyde.

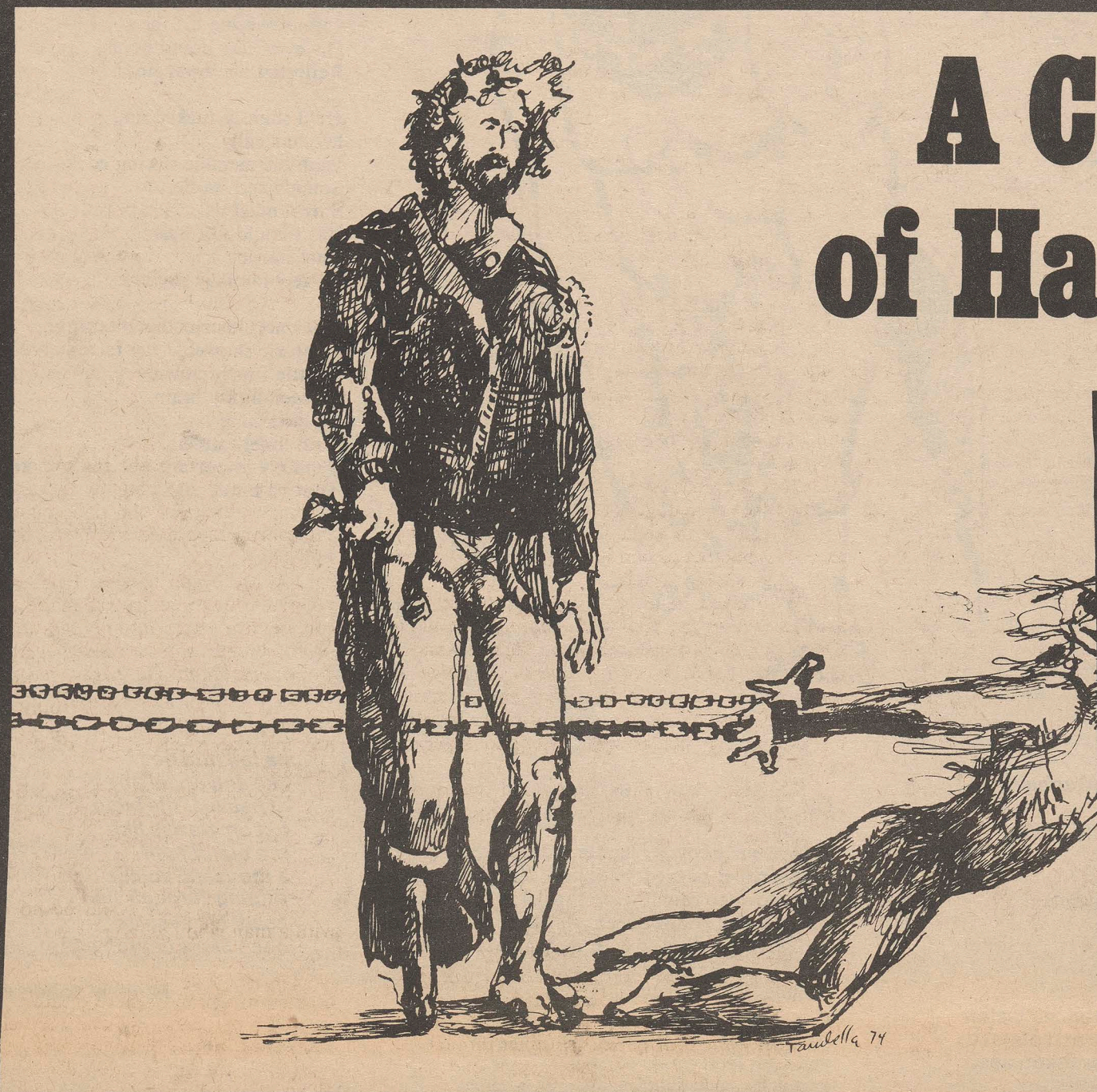
"Excuse me, sir, but . . . what does it mean
when you carry a copy of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*
in the left hip pocket of your Levi brand blue
jeans?"

"You asked, didn't you?"

Arnold Warden Klassen



A Child of Hamlin



By Kenneth Sjonnesen

He looked, his eyes smiling at me, and spoke with soft assurance that compelled me to hear more.

-My name is Eric

He said. I told him mine. He pulled up a stool next to me, sitting closely so our knees touched. He came right to the point, but I told him that I had to work early, and perhaps some other time.

He stayed anyway. We discussed trivial things at first, but then easing into inner feelings about sex, we mellowed into a nice rapport.

-Are you into S & M?

-Not too much, I said but-

-But you'd like to.

The way he said this I felt that I didn't have much choice. As I was to find out later, I didn't.

His voice, gentle and smooth, streamed its way through my consciousness and drowned my ears with the rapture of the deep. I discarded my protective gear; I don't remember the details after that.

My head on his shoulder in the taxi- his hand forcing my head to that crotch I'd get to know so well-him laughing softly and whispering for me to sit up straight.

Just flashes of memory until we arrived at his place that night and my life entered another plane of existence.

-Take your clothes off and make yourself comfortable.

I obeyed, of course.

-Would you like a drink?

-Bourbon, on the rocks.

-Why are you here?

His question surprised me.

-To have sex.

He sat on the bed next to me, handed me the

drink and said

-No, I said why are you here? With me, now. Why did you come home with me tonight?

He slapped me lightly on the face. I swallowed some of my drink, and sank beneath the waves for the second time. He knew what I was going to say, and awaited my answer with the poised anticipation of a bullfighter, just before the moment of truth.

He stood over me, as I watched the candle light play reflectively off his smooth skin. I reached out to trace the dancing light on his thigh with my finger- he tensed and I sensed an aloof anxiousness welling up inside him, but he began to speak, seemingly to himself at first. I tuned in, letting the words lap over me as I gazed at the paintings on the wall- garish colors striking tortured faces- it was a panorama of suffering and destruction- a tour of the Sistine Chapel on a bad acid trip. They were all his- a scrapbook of past agonies pasted with tears and spit against the pages of his soul.

His voice believed the angry words he spoke. They made no sense- fragments of his unconscious mind: the symptoms were there, the cure inevitable. Raising up my head, I kissed his thigh then said to him

-I'm here to help you.

-What else?

-I'm here to help myself also.

The cross was raised into place, and each player knew his part.

.....

The next morning I awoke half froze with fear, out of habit I suppose, because as soon as I felt Eric's body next to mine, the fear was replaced by the memory of what we'd done for each other.

I relished the sweet pain I felt that first morning of my life, his slaps forced me to breathe air I had forgotten how to breathe. The wounds on my back let out the decayed matter and allowed new tissue to form- more solid stock this time, for I met my tormentor and stared unflinchingly back.

He stirred, I placed my hand on his chest and felt his heart pounding him awake. I waited patiently until at last his eyes flickered open and they met mine with a silent goodmorning. He drew closer, then spoke hoarsely into my ear.

-Thankyou.

-Thankyou.

We embraced the moment together, our bodies intertwined as only lovers and strangers can- feeling, the two of us relaxed, intimate with the universe, and most importantly ourselves.

After an eternity, he guided me onto my stomach. We began making love, gently at first but then increasingly fierce until I succumbed my will totally to his whispered instructions and allowed myself only the inch of self identity necessary for survival.

Once again we laid silently catching our breath in unison. I looked around the room at the pictures which seemed kinder, more comprehensible in the light of morning and the previous events.

-Let's take a shower.

-Beautiful.

I said as our glistening bodies slowly moved through the morning air to the steamy warmth of the shower stall. We cleansed ourselves of the sweat and dirt, but also the memory of the night before, apparently, for we were meeting each other once again for the first time over the breakfast table.

-What do you do for a living?

-I'm an unemployed English teacher, and a freelance writer. And you, you're an artist, but what

else?

-I manage an art gallery on Newbury Street.

We found out that we were both Vietnam Veterans, then touched on politics, music and old Bette Davis movies.

Eric was an animate conversationalist. The morning tripped by lightly until it came time for something else to happen. We didn't talk about what we really wanted to talk about, but at the same time we weren't either of us evasive, so the unspoken words would just have to wait for a time when we both needed them.

We kissed tenderly while groping about for pens and paper to exchange phone numbers and time available. He tickled me playfully and said goodbye with such 'hello' as I did the same until he gave me a final smack on the ass. That was last Saturday.

I spent the next week buried in work and loving it. I had forgotten for a while my love affair with the typewriter and approached my writing with an ardor usually obtained by young boys in heat and war heros.

On Friday Eric called. He asked to meet me at the bar we first met in, and I said yes, of course.

-How have you been?

-Just fine, sweetie. And how 'bout yourself?

-Well, I'll feel alot better tonight I'm sure. He was warning me. I loved it.

I sat at the bar waiting for Eric to show. As I looked about the room, there he was sitting in front of the pool table, giving me that same half smile that first turned me on.

We cruised each other for a few minutes, until he finally walked over and sat down next to me, smiling and allowed our knees to touch. The game made me laugh, but he kept it up until I stopped laughing and submitted myself to the scene.

The play was in dress rehearsal this time-Eric was in full leather gear. I remained passive as he put a dog collar around my neck, complete with leash and all the verbal abuse he could give. I moved silently about the bar in tow, eyes fixed upon the floor, knowing my master would reward me with love for obedience and punishment for disobedience.

This degradation lasted for hours until Eric decided that the punishment was sufficient, and I was released with an affectionate hug. He was angry that I ignored him all week, so I vowed not to be so inconsiderate again.

We walked to his apartment with our arms around each other, feeling the moonlight and the drinks, while I listened intently to the idle wanderings of his heart. It wasn't love or marriage we were sharing. It was a trust that only needed a phone call and a few devices to bring an intensity of feeling that others spent lifetimes trying to create.

The stars drew closer to us and the air was peopled with intimacy as Eric's solilquy gained momentum.

-Senile children are dying off before they're even given a chance to be born these days, you know that? I look at young kids on the street and they're already playing out their lives before they ever even know the difference between love and masturbation. Their life is handed to them on a silver plated TV tube, while their parents slit their throats with talking dolls, hockey games and a promise of sheepskin success in the suburbs. It makes me sick to see people sell their own offspring and their own soul on the chopping block of consumerism, without ever considering that there might be another bidder out there. As a child I stood by watching helplessly while my own parents suffocated themselves with false dreams and a sex life that neither of them would admit not caring for. I'm sure they were both gay. My father preferred his men friends and my mother her women friends. They made nervous jokes about sex. We even had those awful little cocktail napkins with jokes about B-girls on them. There was enough sexual tension in the air to start a war, but it never happened. They just died slowly of pollution. It's too bad, they both had such potential but they lacked the courage to use it.

His arm began to tense, so I made him stop for a moment. We shared a joint then embraced for a long time. His words weren't new, but they echoed my own feelings. I said to both of us that it was best to let things go- it was someone else's problem, not ours, and it could only slow us down to carry that extra burden.

-Why should we go on being angry for other's sins? We've got a new world to build and-

-That's right, but you need some anger to give you that extra push.

I gave in. It was no use arguing with a man who has already been to hell.

We walked faster now, both of us growing anxious for what was ahead. My jeans were tight and the faster I walked, the more they rubbed into my crotch until the pain made me moan slightly. Eric noticed what was happening, so he coaxed me into a run, and the pain radiated throughout my body. I could only go on another few yards before I had to stop.

-No more, please.

-OK, since you said please.

We slumped onto his bed tired and happy, touching and listening to the easy Jazz on the stereo, waiting for the right moment. This time things would be different, I sensed this but I didn't know how.

As we began to kiss, Eric became limp and seemed content to let me make the moves. His tongue drove deep into my mouth, and he sucked on my breath as if he needed every ounce of air I could give him. He began pleading under his breath for help, and I could only gather enough strength to ask how. He was making demands on me, but they were the sort of demands I was incapable of fulfilling.

My mind flashed to High School days- in the balcony of the movie theater with Linda pulling me close to her, needing so much, but I couldn't give her what isn't there, so I make excuses and she thought I was kind and good.

This time there could be no excuses. I was with a man who had given me so much. Now that he discovered an area in himself which needed healing, to deny him that service would be like denying myself the right to breathe.

I let my mind drift to another area of time and space, where fears become reality, and gut reaction is the key to survival. I turned my anger outward and struck Eric resoundingly across the face. It was crude, but now at least the process was begun. My pent up frustrations and fantasies poured upon the man like a terrible waterfall that had been artificially dammed for ages. I discovered emotions within myself that I never knew existed, as the cub became a lion, and the lion lay down in the grass.

There is poetry in seeing a strong, masculine being become clay to be molded by an artist who knows what he wants, then creates an image out of his own likeness.

Exhausted, we both lapsed into a coma until late the next day. I awoke to find Eric standing over me with a tray. He had prepared breakfast, which we ate in bed, then full and content we made love till we were both sore.

-What a bore

to be sore

but want more.

I chimmed. Eric looked bemused, and we fell silent until the spell was broken by the doorbell. We ignored the disturbance and instead showered then went into the living room for a chat. The talk was quiet. We dwelled solely on our relationship and how that fit into the master scheme.

-We are all like the children of Hamlin . . . waiting for the right player or the right note to lead us away to a new place where our dreams drift into reality and we're all equally alone and helpless. We need that.

-Why?

I asked, but I already knew the answer and we just smiled at each other.

.....
The last time I saw Eric he was winning another heart at the bar, and we just winked at each other from across the room. The trust is still there, it's something we'll both have to cling to for a long time.



WHAT RUBY ZEPHYR HAS DONE WITH HIMSELF

ONE YEAR AGO TODAY Ruby Zephyr's dress was suddenly lifted over his head by a gust of wind to the complete delight of the large crowd present at the moment. Needless to say, Ruby has not been the same since.

We let Ruby himself tell you about it:

Carefully, I eased myself out of the limo. My bottom sliding across the leather seat made a sound similar in some ways to the sound of the wind which then lifted my evening dress as I stepped up to the sidewalk. That was the time the world saw my hairy legs! My thrill was the thrill of others and knowing precisely what gave it to them! Oh I knew it's petty, why yes it's trite and insignificant, but I can't deny that I felt something more strongly than I've every felt anything else. I can honestly say I was moved — no! Lifted! Lifted! in spirit as (clearly) was my dress in body in form! This was a moment of grace and perfection! The perfect coincidence of rich Nature! You've no idea how haughty I was before that instant! And how thankful I am now to have had that feeling! Oh! Experience of God! Dears!! The wind's breath on hairy legs in the sight of the whole astonished and wondering world! Curtain! Curtain! What else is left to motivate me?! I've already been upon my gleaming . . . my gleaming pinnacle! I've known what others only dream of!

And now I shut myself here before this light-ringed mirror simply to remember, to hold the memory dear, to remember . . . to memorize completely . . . to remember . . .

Bill Mitchell



SECOND THOUGHTS

**Look at that blond boy
In the metro!
He has a cold.**

**Check out the fit of those
Pants, pant pant.
But,
Pimples.**

**Rushing to catch up
With those blue jeans.
Too old.**

**I want to be close
to you—
Then I smell
Your breath.**

**Immobile on a parc bench,
He had me going
In circles.
Then I saw him walk.**

**Quiet waters
Running deep:
Then I heard him speak.**

**Let me gladden
That handsome sadness.
Oh dear,
Those teeth!**

William Pruitt
(Paris, France)

A TRUE HAPPENING IN A 747

A boy came up to me
By my seat
And touched me on my shoulder
I put the Book down
I laid it on my lap
With its pages facing left
The boy followed every move my fingers made
And when he saw they weren't going to move for awhile
He said, "Look into my grey-blue eyes"
His eyes were brown
But since I didn't think he had any other eyes on his person
I looked into his brown eyes
We stayed that way a quarter of an hour
Then the boy started crying and blurted out
"Noone cares about anything anymore"
And took two grey-blue eyes out of his navel and threw them at me

Brandon Judell



FOR SHERMAN

you mistake my joke
for a racial slur

i am sorry
to have hurt you

but your skin is soft
your eyes are deep

i love you for this evening
we lie together

"how big you are"
you tell me

and i said
"but i thought all . . ."

and you knew
what i wanted to say

and how the window
revealed the city

the city in turn
revealed the nation

and the nation stood in a corner
weeping

how real my tears
rolling down your cheeks

my white body
and your black skin

until morning
until the end

Neeli Cherkovski

Boston Bible Burning

Everything that we are
we owe to each other.
What we are
we owe in no way
to the straight society around us.

(Cheers)

I have a Harvard PhD., and I teach at Boston State College: they say I'm not fit to teach gay history:

I have here the committee report calling me unqualified.

I have here my Harvard diploma.
They are worth only burning.

(Cheers for the burning papers)

In today's march, we passed by the John Hancock Insurance and the Prudential Insurance buildings; these companies have one hundred, two hundred, a thousand times more space than all the gay bars and all the gay organizations in Boston.

I have here an insurance policy and a dollar bill.

This is what they're worth: Burning.

(Cheers at the flames!)

I have here the text of the crimes against chastity, Chapter 272, Verse 32 of the Massachusetts Criminal Code:

"Whoever commits the abominable and detestable crime against nature, either with mankind or with a beast, shall be punished by imprisonment in the state prison for not more than twenty years."

The laws of the state against us are only worth burning.

(Cheers and shouts of Burn it! burn it!)

I have here the Bible, Leviticus, Chapter 20 says: "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them." And "A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them."

(Cheers and shouts of Burn it! Burn it! combine with, No, no, Not the Bible; you can't burn the bible); after the Bible drops into the flames and ignites, an excited demonstrator grabs and stamps on it with his feet.)

Nine million witches have been burnt to death under that verse. And how many gay people we will never know, but the word "faggot" comes from tying us to the feet of the nine million witches as they burned to death, which is what it means to say "burn a faggot."

So, when Anita Bryant quotes those verses, she's talking about our MURDER!

WE CANNOT COMPROMISE; WE CANNOT SINK INTO RESPECTABILITY. Some among us may think you don't have to worry.

those who are Christian can blame our troubles on the athiests and Jews

those who are rich can blame our problems on the poor

those who are white can blame the Black and Third World peoples who are in struggle

those who are conservatives can blame the radical

those who are well-dressed can blame the sloppy dressers

those who are educated can blame the uneducated

those who are alconolics can blame the sober

those in their closets can blame the out-front for our troubles

those who have sex in private can blame those in public places

those who are monogamous can blame the promiscuous

those who are celibate can blame the sexual

those who are bisexual can say they only did it for a lark.

We cannot remain alone and terrorized and divided. Because we face a test: a test to see who among us is the weakest, who among us will go first, who among us will be destroyed first.

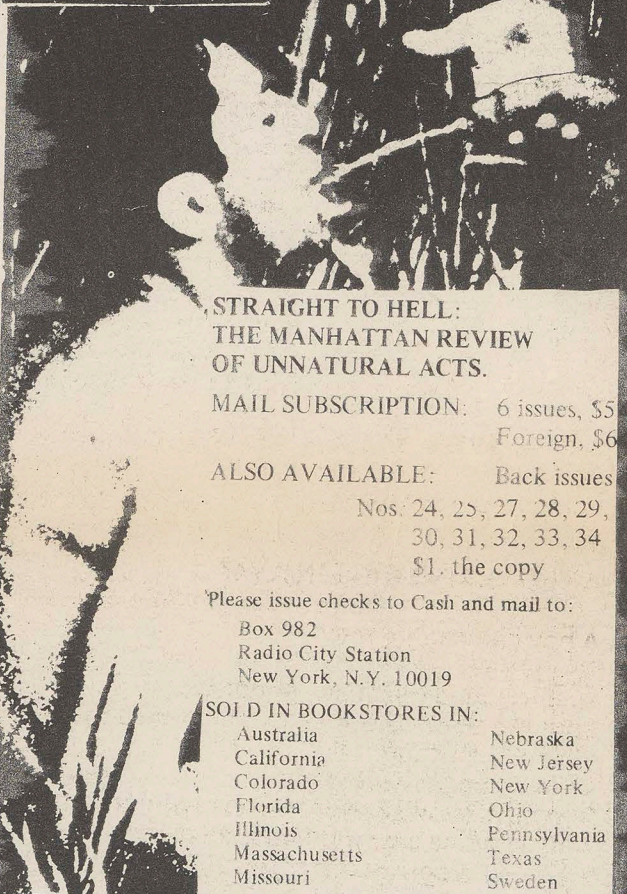
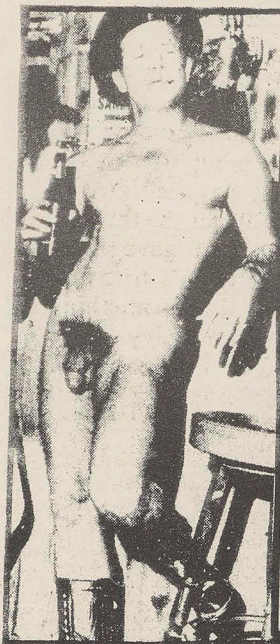
Some say let the wierdos go, and we will be safe. Perhaps let the radicals go, others say. Send Susan Saxe to jail. (Shouts of "Free Susan Saxe!") Some say send the pedophiliacs to jail. Some say send the pornographers to jail.

But when the time comes, we are not going to be asked what degrees we have, how rich we are, who we know or what we have accomplished. They will only ask, "Are you queer?" And when they come for the queers, they are going to come for us all. So. WE MUST COME TOGETHER OR WE WILL SURELY BE DESTROYED.

[The above speech is a transcript of Charley Shively's keynote address at Boston's Gay Pride Rally, June 18, 1977. The rally took place on the Boston Common whose soil is soaked with the blood of witches and Quakers whom the Puritans killed for dissenting from orthodoxy. Photo. by Ken Rabb.]

STRAIGHT TO

HELL



STRAIGHT TO HELL:
THE MANHATTAN REVIEW
OF UNNATURAL ACTS.

MAIL SUBSCRIPTION: 6 issues, \$5
Foreign, \$6

ALSO AVAILABLE: Back issues
Nos. 24, 25, 27, 28, 29,
30, 31, 32, 33, 34
\$1. the copy

Please issue checks to Cash and mail to:

Box 982
Radio City Station
New York, N.Y. 10019

SOLD IN BOOKSTORES IN:

| | |
|---------------|--------------|
| Australia | Nebraska |
| California | New Jersey |
| Colorado | New York |
| Florida | Ohio |
| Illinois | Pennsylvania |
| Massachusetts | Texas |
| Missouri | Sweden |

Fag Rag

STAFF INFECTION

Loftin Elvey, jr.
Mitzel
Sal Farinella
Robert Dargon
Ed Camp
Arnold Klassen
Charley Shively
Freddie Greenfield
Thomas Dotton



PISS NOT O.J.

31