

WE HAVE A RIGHT TO BE VISIBLE.

WE HAVE A RIGHT TO BE SAFE.

WE HAVE A RIGHT TO BUILD OUR OWN CULTURE, OUR OWN INSTITUTIONS.



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LET'S GET NATIONAL

When we started OUT/LOOK over three years ago, I remember thinking that the ampersand in our masthead-OUT/LOOK, National Lesbian & Gay Quarterly—reflected the biggest challenge ahead of us. Creating a truly co-sexual magazine -and a co-sexual liberation movement—within a community comprised of individuals whose primary commitment and desire is with their same sex would be a monumental task. And it has been. But today as I pass the baton to a new executive editor, I do so with the belief that the greater editorial—and activist—challenge is, in fact, embodied in a different part of the magazine's title-in the word national. While symmetry between the sexes is essential for cultural, political, and social institutions that profess to serve the gay and lesbian communities, it alone can't foster a truly national forum or movement. In addition to bringing men and women together as a joint political force, a national lesbian and gay culture must include the lives of people of all colors, embrace the breadth of our sexual diversity, and speak to the political reality of every city, town, and suburb. The enormous differences among us in sexual tastes and politics, regional disparities in the depth of homophobia-not to mention age, race, and class distinctions and oppressions-make the goal of producing a national gay and lesbian looking-glass a tall order to fill.



PICTURED ABOVE (TOP TO BOTTOM): OUT/LOOK EDITORS TOMÁS ALMAGUER, JACKIE GOLDSBY, JAN ZITA GROVER, E.G. CRICHTON, RUDIGER BUSTO, AND KEN DIXON. PHOTOS BY BLAKE SORRELL. National: every city, town, and suburb. Last spring I was personally reminded of the dramatic role geography plays in shaping each of our experiences as lesbians and gay men when my son became the twelfth child in the world to have two legal parents of the same sex. Thanks to the hard work of lesbian and gay civil rights attorneys, parents like me who live in a few relatively gay-sympathetic jurisdictions are beginning to be able to circumvent state policies that prohibit gay cou-

ples from adopting each other's children. But the euphoria I felt when I heard the judge say that "it was in the best interest of the child" for me to adopt him was tempered by the fact that I knew this legal protection and recognition was still beyond the wildest fantasies of lesbian and gay parents living just about anywhere else.

Ironically, my son's adoption was the first case that my attorney, Donna Hitchens, had to handle after her election the week before to the California Superior Court. In an extremely close race Donna made history, unseating a Republican incumbent to become the highestranking openly lesbian judge in the country.

These kinds of victories make me wonder how much I

have in common on a day-to-day basis with the closeted gay man in Tulsa who is terrified to receive an envelope with the word *OUT/LOOK* on it. The political climate that makes this adoption and Donna's election possible is not the climate in which most gay men and lesbians find themselves, and the gender difference between us seems insignificant compared to the geographic one.

National: embracing the breadth of our sexual diversity. For a while, public discussion of lesbian identity assumed a shared experience of sexuality. Since the 1960s, an equality-based feminist politic has influenced millions of women who were sharing their beds with other women. But that ideology is not necessarily the motivating force for the

choices many lesbians are making today. Since the "sex wars," lesbians increasingly have been (or at least talking about) sleeping with or fantasizing about men, strapping on dildoes, dressing up, looking straight, looking butch, looking femme, enjoying s/m. And each time a woman tells the truth about any of these things, our collective grasp on what it means to be a lesbian seems to weaken. The definition of "lesbian" is breaking down; we don't share the same glossary any more.

I WOULD HAVE
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FROM RACE AND
BACK TOWARD
THE SIMPLER
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THE LESBIAN &
GAY.

For this lesbian, to penetrate or not is not the burning issue in my life. But from the response OUT/LOOK has received to articles that question the conventions of lesbian sexuality or identity, I've come to appreciate the depth of feeling many women do have about these issues. At times I am discouraged by the divisions among women that these debates reveal, yet I value lesbians' ability to be self-critical and wonder about the lack of a parallel critique among gay men.

I've been surprised by how uncontroversial a topic gay male sex is (for gay men, that is, not for women!). Gay male identity does not seem to be going through the same deconstruction that lesbian identity

is. If anything, AIDS has expanded discussions of gay male identity to include political activism, emotionalism, and spirituality—fostering a new era of male-bonding and inclusiveness that contrasts sharply with its lesbian counterpart.

National: people of all colors. How to be racially diverse and deal responsibly with race-related concerns perhaps has fueled the most thorny debates among our editors, certainly more than questions of gender balance have. Does it matter if a white middle-class male fiction writer speaks in the first-person through a Latina working-class woman? Is there a different definition/tolerance for racism among gay men than among lesbians? In our thirst for information about gay culture

outside the US, do we do a disservice by publishing commentaries about developing countries written by white US citizens? Are we silencing some voices by slapping a charge of "racism" on their perspectives, knowing the power of that critique in some circles to grind the presses to a halt? Is it ever appropriate to publish an article containing racist remarks if an author is illuminating some other aspect of our culture that would otherwise go unseen?

As a white middle-class person who wants to do the right thing, struggling with these kinds of questions has been some of the most difficult work I've ever done. The taboos against speaking openly about all of our ideas and feelings about race are hard ones to break down; the need for racial separatism sometimes competes with the goal of creating a thriving multiracial institution; the tension in the room when racism is the topic is not fun to sit through. There have been times when I would have leapt at the chance to turn the focus of conversation away from race and back toward the more simple ampersand, the lesbian & gay. But today I am more convinced than ever that there is no turning back.

It's not surprising that after years of oppression, we demand that our cultural institutions precisely mirror the particulars of our individual lives. But what happens when one person's reflection has blemishes in it that feel oppressive to someone else? Perhaps my inclinations are too liberal in this regard, but over the course of my tenure at *OUT/LOOK* I've become more adamant about our not censoring each other. As editors, all of us here walk a fine line between offending some readers and excluding others; there are always hard choices to make.

As the gay and lesbian movement strives to become truly national, the tension between giving voice to all of our perspectives and silencing those that in some way oppress or leave out other gay men and lesbians will continue. Making *OUT/LOOK* a truly national magazine is our challenge for the 1990s and I look forward to working with Jan Zita Grover, our new Executive Editor, to find the ways to make that national dream come true.

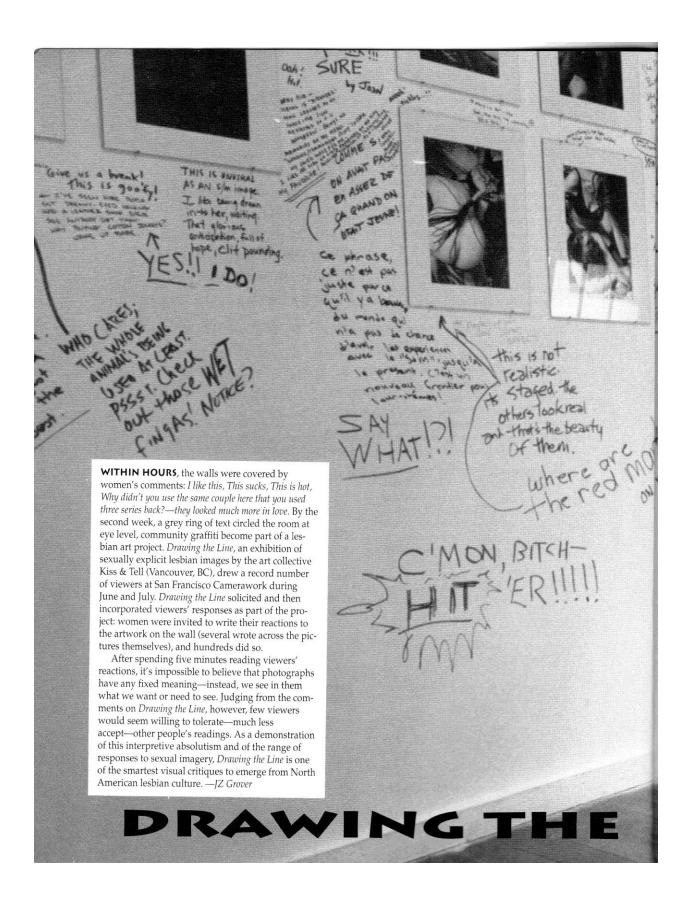
-Debra Chasnoff

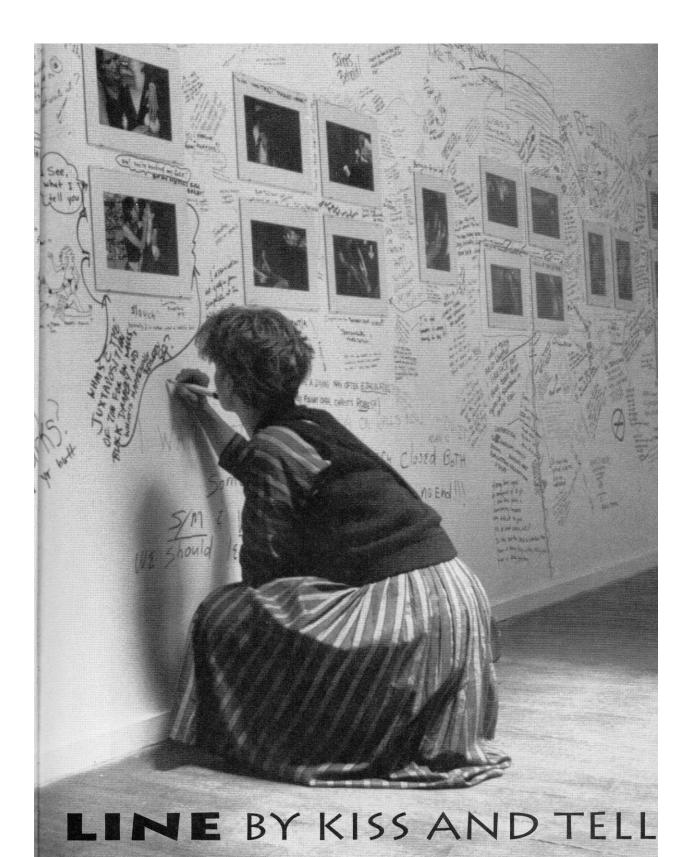
RACE-RELATED CONCERNS
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*CHAC





KISS AND TELL

Persimmon Blackbridge, Lizard Jones, and Susan Stewart are Kiss & Tell, an art collective started in 1984 in Vancouver, BC, to explore the pornography and censorship debates that continue to divide our communities. *Drawing the Line* has been exhibited in Vancouver, Toronto, Melbourne (Australia), and San Francisco.

ARTISTS' STATEMENT

Persimmon. Susan. Lizard. We've been meeting off and on in different forms for five years. We talk about art. We tell each other Everything about our sex lives. We talk about art about sex, and sometimes we make art together. We have never made sex together, except when it's for art.

Susan did all the photography. Lizard and Persimmon were the models. We had to turn it on and turn it off. Susan would tell us to look tenderly at each other and we'd laugh hysterically. Or things would be getting really hot, and Susan would say, "Hold it, I have to change the film," or "Okay, great, now try something else."

There was a lot of nervous giggling. Drawing the Line doesn't represent all lesbians or all lesbian sexual practices. Two women in one hundred photographs couldn't possibly represent all lesbians. Using the same models in all the pictures limits the judgments to what they're doing and how it is depicted, not who they are and what they look like.

Drawing the Line is part of a discussion in the lesbian and feminist communities about sexual imagery, sexism, censorship, pleasure, violence, power, and empowerment. We want you to use this work to look at what you like and don't like, how you decide, where your lines are uncertain, and where they're sure.

Is there a line that to cross means you're on the other side? Is everyone on this side on the same side of the line?

All photos by Kiss and Tell except where noted. Special thanks to San Francisco Camerawork. Photos on page 6 and 7 by Isa Massu.







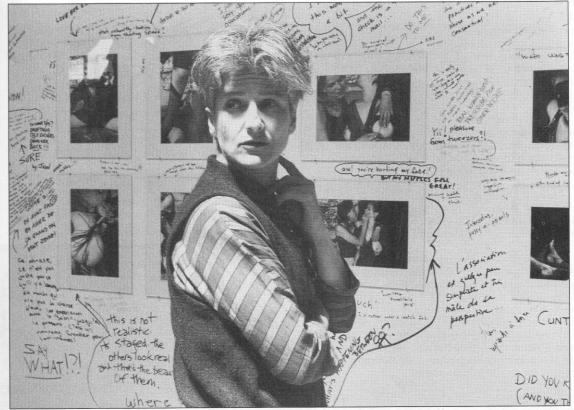
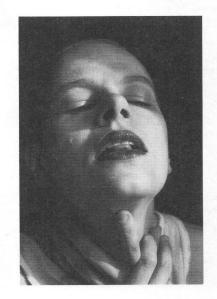


PHOTO: ISA MASSU



THE MEN'S BOOK

Although only women were invited to write on the walls of Drawing the Line, male viewers were invited to record their



comments in The Men's Book. Here are some of their responses:

I love anything that has to do with Erotica, nothing shocks me except that lesbians make too harsh of comments about men who enjoy doing the same acts with women. If you can do so, let's all quit being sexists and the world will be just fine!—A Man

I draw the line at attacking people for the accident of birth that is gender. Unfortunately, because of some of the comments, I couldn't wait to get out of here.

Why are white men so goddamned sensitive? (Rhetorical question.) I wish all that sensitivity were turned into empathy for people of color, women, lesbians/gays, etc. You can't take everything so personally. I wouldn't be here today (surviving/thriving) if I took to heart all the violence and negation that's been directed at me—even here among you so-called 'progressives.' We all have to get over it, keep pushing and try to do something positive for the whole in the interim.

... I'm surprised to find curious parallels between the range of graffiti (insight, stupidity, embarrassment, enlightenment, passion) expressed here compared to men's room walls—except the thrust is more purely sexual and loving than men are wont to express...

It's nice to know that women don't necessarily need men to degrade themselves. It's sort of 'equal opportunity' sexuality.

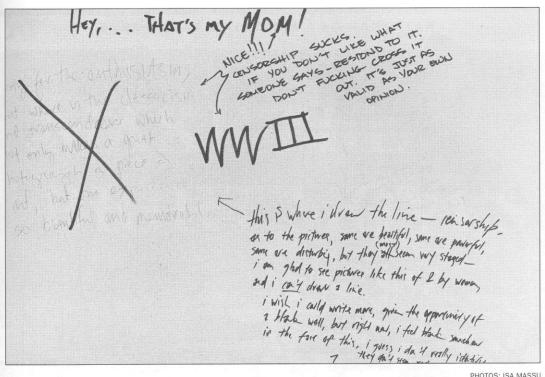
... my comments left to a book signifies [sic] the loss of power and privilege which is so necessary for men. Hope more dialogue in other forms over the practices of how lesbians are represented continues ...

Growing up male, I'm still trying to get rid of a lot of crap about women being sexless (i.e., not wanting it). I really enjoyed the photos and the comments. Thanks for making this a woman-only space. I want to know how my sisters feel!

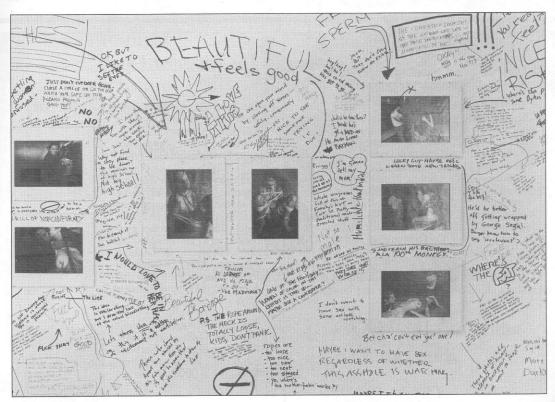
Great show—I like how men get a chance to experience the marginalization which women are so familiar with (by writing in a book, not on the walls). No lines, no lines—

What bullshit! I experience marginalization every day without having to play at it.



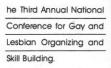


PHOTOS: ISA MASSU



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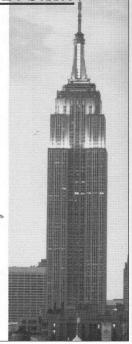
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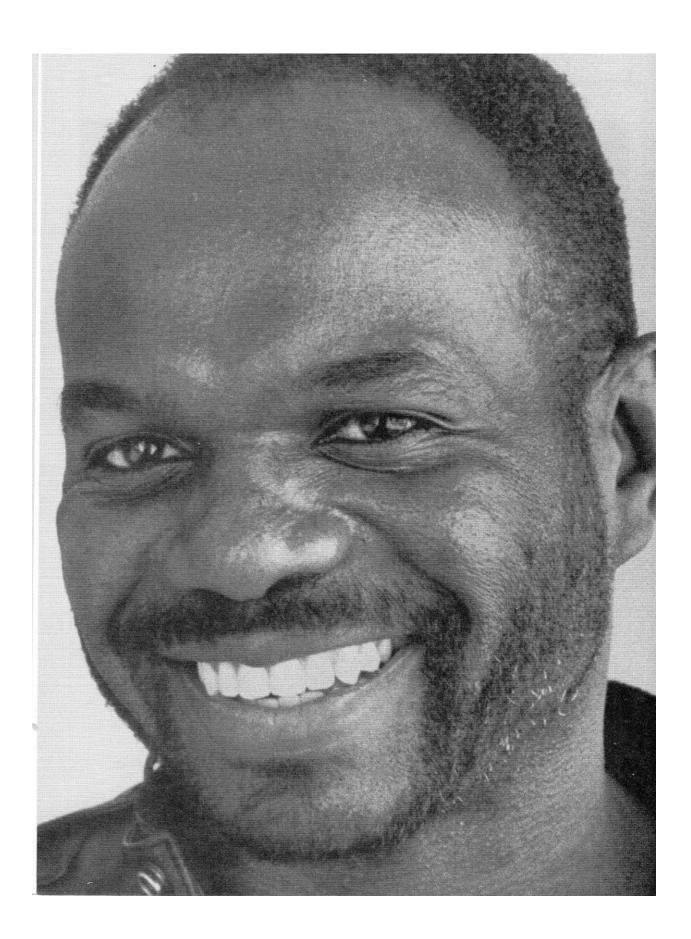


PHOTO COURTESY OF FRAMELINE

Marlon Riggs Untied

By Revon Kyle Banneker

As producer, director and writer of the documentary Ethnic Notions, a history of the stereotypes of Blacks as revealed through cartoons and caricatures, Marlon T. Riggs received awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the California Council for the Humanities. The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences awarded Ethnic Notions its Individual Craft Award for Outstanding Achievement in Research in the National News and Documentary category—everybody else calls it the Emmy. More top honors have come from such media showcases as the San Francisco International Film Festival and the American Film and Video Festival. Riggs is currently working on a sequel, Color Adjustment, supported by grants from the Rockefeller Foundation and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Ethnic Notions did not reflect a gay focus, but Riggs's 1989 video about Black gay male identity, Tongues Untied, unleashed the blackened gay voices of suppressed hunger, anger, and aloneness. In making Tongues United, Riggs collaborated with a number of nationally known Black gay artists and organizations, including poets Essex Hemphill, Alan Miller, and Steve Langley, and singer-composer Blackberri, as well as New York's Gay Men of African Descent and Oakland's Black Gay Men United. The 55-minute video premiered at the American Film Institute's 1989 Video Festi-

A longer version of this interview appeared in *BLK*, vol. 2, no. 4 (April, 1990).

val and was the centerpiece of the San Francisco Film Arts Festival's "Gay Lives '89" program. It has appeared at the Berlin International Film Festival as well as the Cleveland International Film Festival. It received an Outstanding Merit Award in the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame Film/Video Competition and an Honorable Mention in the Black Maria Film Festival.

A media activist, Riggs has testifed before the US Senate, spoken at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and written numerous articles on the state of independent documentary production. He is vice-president of the Bay Area Video Coalition and a steering committee member of the Association of California Independent Public Television Producers.

Riggs graduated with honors from Harvard in 1978 and earned a master's degree in journalism at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1981. A native of Texas, Riggs resides with his lover in Oakland, California, and is a faculty member at the University of California at Berkeley.

Revon Kyle Banneker: Is there a history of Black gay films? Or are we just seeing the beginning of it?

Marlon Riggs: No. I think we're just seeing the beginning. My work, I hope, will inspire others to do work like this and to explore their own experiences, to reflect their own personal

biographies, their lives, their issues on the screen. I don't want to be the only one out there doing this. That gets very tiresome and lonely. In fact, what was inspiring about working on this project was the degree to which I was able to collaborate with other artists, though they weren't filmmakers—the poorest dancers, singers, musicians, composers, "snapthologists." That was the fun of working on this, bringing the community together on this behalf, this one project. It would be nice if this work would not only inspire collaborations like that but also encourage filmmakers who

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are Black and gay or lesbian to really deal with the substance of their own lives and not have to speak in camouflage, not have to channel and sublimate things so that they won't threaten or challenge the larger community and won't threaten their own careers.

RKB: Do these films really change anything?

MR: [Laughs.] You know, you hear about people wanting to get this message across: it could be about race or it could be about economics or about allegations they

couldn't prove. I think some films do change things for people. What films like *Tongues Untied* do, especially for people who have had, by and large, no images of them[selves] out there to see, is give them a visible and visual representation of their lives.

We live in a society in which truth is often defined by your reflection on the screen, whether it's the television screen or the cinematic screen. But you don't really live and you're not really somebody until you're somehow reflected there on the tube or in the theater. Things that you've thought about vaguely now come in sharp focus. Things that you've felt but_never been able to articulate to yourself or to anybody else you've now got a handle on, you can talk about. There's a vehicle

for you to actually be able to discuss with somebody else something you might have felt uncomfortable talking about.

Films don't change the world, I have no illusion about that, but they do help some people understand themselves better, help them move to take some action they might not have taken before, whether it's just objecting to a joke or standing up for themselves and not feeling ashamed about being gay. Whatever the consequence might be, I think that films like this do help.

RKB: So I assume you definitely plan to do some more films dealing with Black gays.

MR: Yeah. In fact, the newest piece is *Affirmations*. It is affirmations of Black gay experiences. It takes a different form, not quite like *Tongues Untied*. There's no poetry in it as such, it's more interview, as well as straightforward documentary in some respects.

It deals with the march on African-American Celebration Day in Harlem this year. There was a large Black gay and lesbian contingent that marched during this very traditional march. It was a very powerful event and there is a confrontation at one point between a homophobic young man on the side and the Black gay marchers. The homophobic man was telling the marchers they weren't part of the Black community: "In Africa they don't do this—you're slaves, you're still slaves! You're slaves to the white man—free yourselves! You're offending our families."

You had the back and forth and I move that into an analysis of homophobia and racism, more from the perspective of people that I interview. You hear their voices while you see images from this parade and march. It should be out by the end of February 1991.

RKB: Can you give us a hint about what specific aspects of Black gay experience your future films are going to zero in on?

MR: I know some things I would like to do: there are people who have never had relations with white people, who never went to college, who don't identify with the gay movement or

explicit gay identity. I think those people need to be heard from—what are the issues of their lives? There are people who have different kinds of experiences—people who are much more political, people who are working within nationalist frameworks. How do you reconcile that with the dominant sort of homophobia in nationalism—especially Black nationalism—today? Those are different kinds of issues that I haven't dealt with at all.

There are issues of dressing in drag which I really don't deal with. You see people who are drag queens in the video, and I think that is something to be dealt with. Hustlers and so forth, people who are sort of on the margins, even of the gay community—transsexuals. I think there is a lot to be explored. I know some of Essex Hemphill's work has dealt with that. I've already told him I would like to do a sort of experimental biographical piece based on his life and work. He has just covered so much territory!—not only gay but just generally Black male, regardless of sexuality as well as inclusive of sexuality.

RKB: Have you been pretty much involved in Black, gay organizations, as opposed to mainstream gay organizations?

MR: No, actually I've been a part of an informal discussion-support group in the Bay Area, Black Gay Men United, for about three years now. I even hesitate to call it an organization—we do call ourselves a "group" for good reason, in that we don't have a hierarchy or structure. It is a group of men who get together regularly to discuss ideas and experiences as well as to support each other through personal kinds of experiences.

With the exception of that, my participation in other organizations is giving money to different groups—political aims I support—AIDS organizations who are doing work. I give money to them, but I'm not an active member.

RKB: Since you identify rather strongly as a Black gay man, has the nature of your relationship with your white lover ever come up in any of the other things that you've done?

MR: Well, no. That's sort of the interesting thing. I have done work with Gay Men of African Descent in New York. I am a member of Black Gay Men United. We've done political events and so forth. But I'm very open with my relationship—it's not something that I keep under cover. These groups define love much more broadly—they see acts of love as having to do with more than acts of sex or who you live with. They're more concerned with acts of serving the community and what your work does on behalf of educating those inside as well as outside the community. They

look at that as paramount, and I think people who know me and who know Tongues see that, too. They see that Tongues was coming out of a spirit, a desire to affirm Black men's relationships with other Black men, a need to build and nurture each other. I think it's very clear

But I do know that within the community there is definitely an ideological split—people who consider anyone who has a relationship outside of the race as somehow being a traitor or less than really Black. I don't want to go too long on this,

but I find it very divisive that our community constantly comes up against barriers like these: we excommunicate people because they're too lightskinned or they're too darkskinned; they're not Black enough or they don't talk right; they talk too "white" or too Black; they're not Black enough. Or they're educated or they're not educated sufficiently.

We build so many structures to divide and define categories of people as somehow not belonging to our in-group. I think it ultimately defeats our chance of salvation and of lifting ourselves from the problems that we face. This for me is just one more of that kind of syndrome that is very historic in our community.

RKB: Has your consciousness as a Black, gay

You're not
really
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the theater

documentarian or filmmaker changed over the years?

MR: Oh, yes, definitely, in a number of ways. One, my consciousness as a documentarian, then as a Black documentarian, and then as a Black, gay documentarian—you've got many levels there to deal with.

I know that the voices and the tones that I've heard were generally and still are feminine—I think that's something peculiar to my nature as a gay man; it's something that I've come more and more to embrace in terms of the subjects that I'm willing to explore now. Before, my films dealt with more traditional things associated with African-American life and culture-with racism and the ways in which our people have built and survived in our community and nation. Now I'm looking not just in terms of general race issues, but at specific issues of sexuality mixed in with issues of gender and class and color. All of which are things that confront our community as problems.

RKB: Do you have any feelings on the "Black gay" versus "gay Black" controversy?

MR: Sure. That's what Tongues Untied expressly deals with, in part; the notion of hierarchy, of what makes us whole. Many of us try to divide ourselves up into part-Black and partgay and then arrange these parts in some formal kind of hierarchy and decide, "Which am I first?" I think it's a very silly thing to do, because one cannot divide up one's character just so. Also, it's a very dangerous and selfdefeating thing to do because one of the ways in which we've been oppressed and marginalized-not only by the majority white culture, but by the majority Black mainstream culture—is by our buying into this schizophrenia, this further internal marginalization of our sexuality. Because our sexuality has been treated as something without significance, without a history (that is, our community has no history because what we do and what we value in terms of our sexuality has not been affirmed by the majority culture), we ourselves treat it as something that doesn't need to be affirmed, doesn't need to be valued. We really buy into that entire process and devalue our personalities and character.

There is no way to divide myself—I am whole, all of these things are complete and virtuous to me. Let people respond how they may! I don't buy into that question or the marginalization that answering it often entails. Nevertheless, the schism remains. Some Black gays want to maintain separate Black gay organizations, while others feel Black gay organizations are counterproductive, that segmentation is wrong, that it makes much more sense to build from within white gay organizations with the goal of just being a gay organizations—not white, not Black.

If you ask, "Should there be Black gay organizations?" I give a resounding "yes"—I think there are many issues that we as Black people first need to deal with each other on, before attempting to build coalitions and bridges across racial and multicultural boundaries. There are all kinds of hostilities among ourselves that we have not resolved but must before we seriously try to branch out into other organizations.

I understand criticisms of that kind of effort, though; what tends to happen with all kinds of organizations, not just Black gay organizations, is that they tend to forget the lessons of oppression and become just as chauvinistic as those they were set up to be an alternative to. Rather than embracing diversity, multiculturalism, and respect for difference, people tend to set up their own particular kind of culture, trait, look, ideology as the perfect and only virtuous ideology, skin color, trait, culture. That is the danger.

In the context of so much violence, internalized anger, repressed emotions, and detachment, learning to love one another, to nurture one another would not just be *a* revolutionary act but *the* revolutionary act for Black men in America. Above all, that is what I hope comes across and what people will learn from *Tongues Untied*. ▼

Revon Kyle Banneker was the pseudonym of a deceased BLK staff writer.

Coming-out stories, one of the conversational staples of lesbian and gay culture, take many forms: first sexual experiences, reactions of relatives, friends, and co-workers, confronting homophobes, and finding support in expected places.

In conjunction with the "Coming Out" Queery we published in the Spring 1990 issue, scores of readers put pen to paper to share their favorite coming-out stories with us. We're pleased to present a selection of them here. Most of the stories were submitted anonymously; when writers did sign their names, we've included them.—Debra Chasnoff

ANOTHER MARTINI, PLEASE

I came out to myself on November 4, 1960; the next person I told was my mother on June 4, 1978. I telephoned her from my office at three o'clock knowing she was alone and asked her if I could come by. Naturally my mother wanted to know why I would risk leaving work early, since I was hanging onto my job by the skin of my teeth. I evaded answering her by saying it had been a while since we just talked. In fact it had been over two months since I had visited my parents after living in the same city for over a year's worth of regular, never-to-be-missed Sunday family dinners and the opportunity to use their washer and dryer.

My mother is a very sophisticated lady with a wonderful habit of knitting and a keen appreciation of the perfect martini. I assured my mother when I arrived that it was after four o'clock and that we would not scandalize her neighborhood if we drank our martinis seated comfortably on her lawn chairs in the front yard. When she pointed out that she had missed me for eight Sundays in a row, I saw the opening and explained that I had met someone,



thought I was in love, and naturally wanted to spend all my free time with that someone.

My mother asked if this someone had a name and if she was single, childless, attractive, and made her own decent living. I said that someone's name was Bill; Bill was indeed single, had no children, was handsome, and made a very comfortable living. My mother did not drop a stitch from the baby blanket she was knitting. She did stop knitting after a moment, drained her martini, and asked me to prepare another for her.

When I returned to the front lawn, my mother asked me how long I had known. When I told her, she did not believe me. When I reminded her about a childhood friend when I was twelve, a sweetheart at fourteen, late returns home from sixteen to eighteen, my mother sighed. She told me that no one should have to hide how they feel. She also told me she was very sad for a world that demanded conformity from such an individualist as I. She also told me to bring Bill for dinner this coming Sunday without fail.

My mother and I live thousands of miles from each other now, in different countries. I call her every Sunday. She always asks after my spouse, who she and I have made a very large part of our family.

Jack Herman

DOING MY CIVIC DUTY

When I was fifteen, I had heard some people in school making derogatory comments about a bar in town called Loose Ends. I asked a friend about what the place was and he replied, "The fag bar!"

Something clicked! Well, that night I walked downtown (after calling 411 and getting the address) and there were only a few cars in the lot. Knowing I wouldn't be allowed in, I walked past the place a few times.

I then noticed a guy sitting on a bench a ways down the street. I got up the courage to ask for a cig and we started talking. The guy (can't remember his name—if he even told me) turned out to be sixteen. He was visiting his father for a few weeks and had missed his bus back to Chicago. He said he was hanging out til the next bus. He asked if I knew what that bar down the street was and I told him yes. He had obviously been around a bit as he asked me if I wanted to go somewhere and

have our own party.

Looking back, I guess the excitement of the evening clouded my thinking because I agreed and we ended up on the second floor outer balcony of the Lake Charles Civic Center while some event was taking place inside. I didn't know anything about gay sex—except that I wanted it.

I sat on the floor and he pushed me back—undid my pants— undid his—and just sat! It took me only a few seconds to achieve orgasm. I then wanted to do something (didn't know what) with him, but he said he didn't like anything else and wouldn't let me touch him. We parted ways and that was that.

I guess that was when I first realized that was what I wanted and that there were others that had the same feelings toward men as I did. I've yet to be attracted sexually to a female, but I won't rule out the possibility that it may happen someday. I think it highly unlikely but if so, I would follow my feelings.

ME. FRAT PRESIDENT

Year. 1972.

Time. Late evening.

Place. My room, frat house; I am at the drafting table.

Gary: "Hi, can I come in to talk to you?"

Me: "Come in."

Gary: "I just wanted to thank you as frat president for inviting me to pledge."

Me: "That's not necessary."
Gary: "I would like to pledge,
but I think it would be best if I did
not."

Me: "Why?"

Gary: "Some of the guys would not understand; I am gay."

I lose my balance and fall off the drafting stool. I get up and run to close the door to my room to make sure no one heard or is listening. Gary: "Most of all I feel I need to tell you that you are fooling no one but yourself; we have a way of recognizing each other."

Me: Shaking, I give a sigh of relief.

PINK-ROBED INSIGHTS

After Mom confronted me and I answered that I was in a relation-



KRIS KOVI

ship with Michelle, she walked around (away from) me crying. I trapped her in the kitchen to discuss this. She looked up at me from her handkerchief in her pink robe and sobbed, "I guess this means you're having orgasms."

PLANE OLE CONFRONTATION

In 1987, I was returning to Durham, North Carolina, from a family event in New Jersey. I boarded the plane and immediately began reading what I had with me—the latest copy of the *Gay Community News*. The man beside me was reading also—*Wrestling Magazine*. After we had taken off, we struck up a conversation about where we had been. He had been doing some diving work off the docks in New York City.

"I saw all kinds of things you just wouldn't believe." I could tell by the tone in his voice that I would not only believe it, but indeed that I practiced those "things" as often as I could.

"I bet I would. Now, what do you mean?" I asked with a most innocent expression. I wanted him to have to say the words.

"You know." (Meaningful glance).

This left him somewhat flustered. He allowed as how men with men was just disgusting, and he thought they should drop an atom bomb on the Lower West Side. The hatred in his voice made my hackles rise.

"I'm a lesbian, and that's the most ridiculous thing I ever heard." I proceeded to dress him down for several minutes, he taking it all in with his mouth hanging open in amazement.

He apologized. I went back to reading my *GCN*.

Betsy Barton North Carolina

THE 87TH ANNUAL FIREMAN'S BALL

I found myself alone on New Year's Eve in Ely, Nevada, a very small town in the middle of nowhere. The hotel manager warned me to stay away from The Winner's Circle, a local bar. "The place just breeds fights," she said. She suggested that I might enjoy the 87th Annual Fireman's Ball at the armory.

I took her suggestion. The event was a favorite of the locals, who were your typical small-town rednecks along with several Native Americans. I struck up a conversation with a couple of unattached women and we danced to the live band. They introduced me to some fellas they knew. We were all having a good time.

After bringing in 1989 together, one of the two women asked if I wanted to go with the group to a bar. When I asked which one, the reply was "The Winner's Circle." "I hear that's a place where there's a lot of fights," I said. One of the guys shot back, in a bubba sort of way, "Only if you're gay." Without hesitation, I leaned toward him

and said, "Well, I am." I paused for a moment and, softening my tone, said, "But—that will be our little secret." Having said that, I struck an Egyptian pose and said, "Time for a drink."

I didn't look back as I made fast tracks to the bar. I had clearly shocked them, but we all went to The Winner's Circle and had a great time.

DIE LAUGHING

I came out to my best friend at a fraternity party. When I told him I was gay, he began to laugh uncontrollably. He told his girlfriend and she told my date and all three of them began to laugh even harder. As word spread throughout the party I could hear phrases such as "fucking cocksucker," "asshole faggot." My face was burning as I stood there alone while everyone around me stared, pointed, laughed, and made crude comments. Before long, I realized that someone was throwing ice cubes at me. Then someone sprayed me with beer. Before I knew what was happening, the partygoers began to pelt me with finger sandwiches, potato chips, chopped vegetables, and then the really painful stuff: beer cans-empty and unopened-and logs from the pile near the fireplace. I could still hear laughter as two or three guys jumped me and began to throw me to the floor. There I was kicked and beaten mercilessly for several minutes before I passed out. Just before I lost consciousness I heard someone say in a drunken voice, "Take his fucking clothes off!"

When I came to hours later, it was early dawn. I could still hear raucous laughter coming from the fraternity house as I lay on the lawn, unable to move, my entire body covered with spit, beer, blood, and shit, human shit. As I struggled to my feet, I could hear

my best friend call out, "Hey, Nancy-boy! Wanna borrow a skirt?" Then more laughter and catcalls as I staggered across the lawn into the house and back to my room, which had been entirely trashed by the partygoers and was drenched in urine.

I could have died laughing.

THE CHORES CAN WAIT

I fell in love with my next-door neighbor at thirty. She had two kids and I had three kids and we'd love to pack them all off to preschool in the mornings to enjoy four hours of uninterrupted bliss. (No housework got done.) Of course, good things always come to an end and so did this, but thank Goddess my lesbianism didn't die.

COUNT THE SINS

It was 1980. I had only recently completed a course in ministerial training at a local United Pentecostal Church Bible school. Few churches are as strict as the UPC; everything from watching TV to women cutting their hair is considered sin. I had gotten in the habit (God only knows how) of going out to a local gay disco at night. More than wanting to drink or meet someone "for the evening," I think I just needed to be around my own kind.

One night, the place was wallto-wall people and the music was blaring. I was squeezing my way through the crowd with a bottle of beer in my hand, when I ran right into a woman from the church; I almost died on the spot. Here I was in a bar (sin #1), a gay bar, no less (sin #2), listening to disco (sin #3), wearing some light jewelry (sin #4), holding and drinking alcohol (sin #5). And there she was, with a drink in her hand (sin #1), wearing pants instead of a dress (the ultimate sin), with her UPC-style hair down to her waist.

For a moment we just stared, sharing the same thought: My life is over. (Neither of us stopped to realize that we were both doing the same thing.)

She and I didn't say much of anything that night. We were too much in shock. I had never had any suspicion that Judy was a lesbian, nor had she suspected anything about me. The next Thursday night, after church, Judy offered me a ride home. Before she took me home, though, we sat in her car in the church parking lot and talked for hours. What a relief to know I wasn't the only one in the church! (Actually, we later discovered many more!) I no longer needed to go out to the bar just to be with my own kind.

In 1980, I stopped pretending to be heterosexual in church, and the church "showed me the door." Judy chose to leave voluntarily. Still needing a place to worship in the Pentecostal manner and not finding one available to gay people, Judy and I started what was to be the first gay-oriented Pentecostal denomination in the world, the National Gay Pentecostal Alliance.

I've left out a lot of things in my struggle to come out in the UPC. I've purposely omitted some of the painful events I endured (such as two exorcisms) to concentrate on one of the brightest spots of my coming out: Judy, my friend.

Rev. William H. Carey

BED SHOPPING

Several months out of college, I had just moved to Minneapolis with a friend I was going to share an apartment with (we weren't lovers). A week after we arrived, we decided to do a little furniture shopping, including beds. We looked in several stores and ended up back in one where the salesman was quite friendly and help-

ful. I was wearing a March on Washington t-shirt and my roommate and I were essentially trying out the same beds—alternately lying on several different mattresses and subsequently discussing their various merits.

Eventually we both decided on the same style bed. My roommate then approached the salesman and told him which bed she wanted. I said I wanted one, too. The salesman had obviously figured out in the last fifteen minutes or so that we were lesbians and had said to himself that he was going to be cool about it, because at my words his jaw just about dropped and he said, "You want TWO?!"

A GLOWING REPORT CARD

A friend of mine confessed his homosexuality to his father while he was under sedation in a hospital. The father was kind and accepting. But the next night he showed up drunk, pulled the kid out of the hospital, and drove him to a whorehouse in the Bronx. My friend cut a deal with the prostitute, who gave him a glowing report card.

ACCEPTABLE GRIEF

When an Indonesian friend lost his lover of fourteen years, he immediately proposed marriage to a woman he knew would reject him. After she did, he was free to express his grief publicly—he had an "acceptable" reason to be miserable and ask for comfort.

BEACH BUNS

I was a married thirty-eightyear-old professor at the University of Hawaii. He was a twentyyear-old student at the University of California at Santa Cruz. We both attended a scientific conference at UC San Diego. We had a nice time getting to know each other at the coffee breaks and meal times of the two-day conference.

After the closing ice cream party, he invited me to go swimming at Black's Beach (then a legal nude beach) to see the phosphorescence. We swam nude and then ran down the beach to warm up. As we ran he got an erection. I put my hand on his buns, pulled him into my arms, hugged him against me (also erect by then), and kissed him. He immediately pushed me away and then exclaimed, "Tom, I've come all over you!" It was the first homosexual experience each of us had even had. That started a complex and torrid relationship that has remained hot for over fifteen years-through my divorce, us living together, a 6,000 mile separation, other boyfriends and lovers, graduate school, and more.

Tom Humphreys Honolulu, Hawaii

SPORTSMAN'S LOUNGE, MESA, ARIZONA

I came out in 1972 at age eighteen, the product of a fundamentalist upbringing in Mesa, Arizona, a suburb of Phoenix, the state capital. I accompanied my new best friend—my crowd's token faggot—to his favorite local gay bar.

The Sportsman's Lounge catered to rough trade and real live dykes. I knew they were dykes from all the diesel trucks left in the parking lot. My bravery of walking into the bar did not counteract my feeling of intimidation one ounce. As I surveyed the scene, allowing my eyes to grow accustomed to the darkness. I noticed a short, fat, much older and drunker dyke approaching me. She appeared to have written the book, with her face, on rough trade. She planted herself directly in front of me, looked me over from head to toe (I was at least a head taller than her), and put the question to me: "Are you butch or femme?"

How does one respond to a question that, to their knowledge, has never in the history of the world been asked before? My mind raced—I'm a girl, I've always been a girl, I act like a girl, that's what I'll tell her. "I'm a femme," I said. It was the correct answer. She asked me to dance.

We danced a slow dance, and as she held me close, head to my bosom, I thought, "If I'm going to be a lesbian, it will be because I want to be with a woman, not a man, or pseudo-man, or a woman who acts like a man, but because I want to be with a woman who likes being a woman. So, if this is what being a femme attracts, I'll go butch because I want a woman."

As a consequence of this first encounter, I wore my daddy's sport coats to the bars and acted tougher than I was, believing that is what lesbians did to attract each other. It was two years before I realized I could just relax, be myself, and thereby become even more attractive to other women.

GOING FOR THE GLORY

I was almost out when I met my first lover. We were best friends in high school and I always thought he was gay, and he always thought I was. One day, he was in the shower and I was waiting in his room. He came out of the shower wearing only a towel and holding another towel to dry himself off with. He positioned himself on a chair so I couldn't help but see his "glory." He dropped the towel and then asked me if I wanted it. I said yes, and we basically came out then.

But, to me I officially came all the way out when I was almost nineteen. I was afraid of coming out because I had basically been taught that gayness was gross and gay people were the scum of the earth. I also didn't want to lose my masculinity and become a fairy."

Eventually, I described my states as being "bi, but preferring men." But I wanted to get out of mat in-between stage and figure out if I was truly bi or gay. So, I did some deep soul-searching. In my mind I placed the finest moman you could ever imagine or hope for on a big bed, naked and spread-eagle. I then did the same with a man. I then asked myself, that would you really do?

Well, I asked the woman to Leave, because he and I were going to be busy for awhile. So I then became gay to myself and to others.

I finally blew the doors off my closet one day. I did what I thought were the two sickest things: I passionately kissed a man, and I dressed up in drag. I'm not saying I'm a drag queen, but that release, being in touch with the woman in me, just like women have a little bit of men in them, was profound and the final touch on my identity.

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH ME?

My favorite coming-out story was telling my friend of many years (we'd been college sorority sisters). Her first response was "Why tell me? I've always liked you but only as a friend." (*Panic.*)

After I said I had no personal interest in her, her second response was "Why not? What's the matter with me?!"

GOING DOWN WITH A SUBMARINER

The US Navy and I discovered, with certainty, my sexual orientation aboard a US Naval submarine. The result was a General Discharge under honorable conditions. My record up to the time of that lapse was flawless. Imagine, finding two sailors in the same

rack (bed)! (We were only in bed—no hanky-panky.)

While in the discharge process from the USN, I met a gorgeous man in the library on base, also a submariner, also being discharged—a completely honorable discharge. We went to a motel and had a great time. It was the first for us both—twenty-two years ago.

SKIP THE BIRTH CONTROL, DOCTOR

It was summer. I had a gynecologic exam and of course the issue of birth control came up. I answered, "Yes, I am sexually active; no—I don't use a form of birth control and no, I am not trying to become pregnant."

The doctor and I stared at each other for a few seconds and then came the big question: "How are you avoiding pregnancy?"

My heart was pounding and I looked him right in the eye and told him I was a lesbian. Amazingly neither of us fainted or dropped dead. I was very surprised. He just smiled and remarked that I saved a bundle of money on birth control

I was eighteen, madly in love, and thought the world would stand still when I came out. To realize that I wasn't one of the only two lesbians alive was disappointing! It felt so magical—I was sure my lover and I had invented something revolutionary.

COMING OUT, COMING BACK

"Coming Out" has been a long and difficult process for me, largely due to twenty-one years of active alcoholism.

My lover and I have lived in our town for fifteen years. He has always been "out" and confident about that. I have, until recently, always identified myself as gay but lacked self-acceptance, relying on my relationship and identification with my lover for a sense of self-worth . . . all the time drinking.

This past year I stopped drinking and through active participation in Alcoholics Anonymous and the support of gay and straight AA members, many of the blocks to true identity are falling.

I guess my coming out in this town was finalized a month ago when I performed in the local production of Harvey Fierstein's *Torch Song Trilogy*. And printed in the program was a dedication of my performance to my partner. The sense of purpose in being in the play (a political and financial risk in this town) was overwhelming. I truly felt an affirmation of my own worth as an individual whose talents, in this case acting, contributed to the affirmation of a positive gay community.

For me the three landmarks in my life so far have been—birth, coming out, and recovery. Recovery has let me be free to be who I am: a complete individual who happens to be gay.

QUICKIES

Times when it's been great to be out:

- Managing a Ben & Jerry's and having my fellow employees (all teenagers) pounce on anti-gay comments among new employees and customers before I can!
- Having your mother and grandmother look for "nice boys" to pair you with.
- Having sales people enjoy helping you with clothes and make-up for a drag party.

TEA ROOM TALE

I was twenty years old and had found that one place to have homosexual sex on campus (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) was in public bathrooms. This is where I met Paul. He was the first "John" that actu-

ally engaged in conversation after we had fooled around. I told him my name (no small feat) and we parted company. That was not the last I was to see of him.

The next time I was cruising the feet under the stall next to mine, I received a quickly scribbled note (on toilet paper) that queeried "So, what is Mr. up to today?" Needless to say, I was shocked that the pair of feet next to mine knew my last name. (I had always counted on this sex as anonymous.) Paul and I went out for coffee together and started a friendship that has lasted over six years. He was the co-facilitator of my coming out group and the central figure of a large and close group of gay friends in college.

It took a lot of patience on Paul's part, but I credit him (aside from myself) with doing the most to drag me out of the closet.

"OFF TO SODOM"

I'm planning to come out to my parents in March when I take a trip home to Kansas City. Three days later I'm going to San Francisco for the first time. ("Hi, Mom and Dad. I'm gay. See you later—I'm off to Sodom.") Well, I hope to handle it with more tact than that.

A FUNDAMENTALIST IN THE FAMILY

I fell in love with a known lesbian at the age of thirty, after thirteen years of marriage and three kids. When I left my husband, I didn't take my kids with me, a move that I now regret because in the four and a half years since then, I've had to try to undo the damage that my ex-husband and my mother have done to them.

They have told my kids not to kiss me on the lips or drink after me because they might catch AIDS, that I was going to hell, and many other bad things about the

gay lifestyle. For four years my exhusband wouldn't allow my kids to come to my home. When I got them for a Sunday visitation, I had to drive them somewhere in the car, go shopping, or visit someone. In this time, my kids never asked if I was gay; they didn't usually like to even talk about it. When my two sons got to be teenagers, I started hearing gay-related remarks and bad jokes from them. I had been afraid to tell them that I was gay because I was afraid that I would lose their love, since they had been told all of these bad things about me.

A little over a year ago, my middle son, who is fifteen now, started asking questions about my home and finally rode over on his bike. My lover and I have lived together since I left my husband, so he had to run into her occasionally. He often goes with me on my Sunday paper route, which takes six hours to do, so this gave us a chance to talk. He told me that he was thinking of moving in with me because he and his dad don't get along too good. He even told me that his step-mother (who comes from a very fundamentalist religious family) has a brother who is gay and that he lives with his step-grandmother. He said that if they could be around him, why couldn't they be around my house where "those people" were known to hang out?

After a lot of worrying and trying to find the nerve to tell him, I just came right out and told him. All that he said was that he thought that being gay was stupid. He seems to wish that I weren't gay, but he still accepts me and loves me. He seems to accept my friends and still comes over, as does my eleven-year-old daughter, but my seventeen-year-old son doesn't want to come here because he doesn't want to be around "that kind of people." My oldest son is

very close to his dad and doesn't seem to want to cross him or hurt him in any way. I think that he feels that my lover broke up his home, but the truth is that the marriage was bad for a long time.

This is a very shortened version of my story. I now belong to the Gay and Lesbian Parenting group and the international group also.

Arlene Bartley Mansfield, Ohio

DEFYING PRESCRIPTIONS

As a college student in the carefree 1970s, I went to the infirmary with a case of clap. I explained to the doctor, a middle-aged man with a picture of his wife and kids on his desk, that I was sure my problem stemmed from last Friday night's date.

The doctor smiled, wrote me a prescription, and explained the importance of a confidential notice from the health department to my date. "What was the young lady's name?" he asked.

"It wasn't a young lady," I replied.

Visibly disconcerted, he paused a moment, regained his composure and, avoiding eye contact, asked, "What was the young man's name?"

I grinned and replied, "Which

PRETTY BUTCH

I am a counselor in a women's prison. My first day there, during orientation, I was standing in front of about forty female inmates, and one young woman looked me dead in the eye and asked, "Are you queer?"

Before I could answer yes, no, or maybe, she said, "Well, I am—and you look pretty butch to me."

With that I responded, "I have been called butch many times, but never pretty—thank you!" ▼

GRETA GARBO'S "MYSTERIOUS" PRIVATE LIFE BY MARGIE ADAM

ARBO IS DEAD. And the grief that sits in the corners of my day is, first of all, simple. I have loved and admired her since the first time I saw her in 1964, in *Grand Hotel*. I was seventeen, an awkward, fierce, and angular young one, just come out three months earlier, and I knew, right down to my molecular structure, that the shimmering beauty with such a jawline up there on the screen was a dyke, just like me.

And from that time until now, I have had her picture somewhere in my living space. First it was the movie poster bought in a Hollywood Boulevard shop and tacked up on one apartment wall after another. Then, during my "on the road" years, it was a postcard I carried with me. Now, in my forties, I have a studio portrait of her simply but strikingly framed and hung on the wall opposite my piano.

There was a time when I might have tried to explain how it was I know Garbo (or any other woman, for that matter) was a lesbian. Now I say it's simply a sixth sense that all lesbians have which I would liken to the heightened sensibility possessed by animals that live in the dark. It is this intuition that enables us to identify each other without exposing ourselves.

Over the years I sought out many of Garbo's films: Queen Christina, Mata Hari, Mysterious Woman, Anna Karenina, Camille, As You Desire Me, Anna Christie, Flesh and the Devil, even Ninotchka. In the sixties I bought two different photo books which included contemporary reviews of her films and analyses of her work.

When I think about how drawn to this one woman I have remained, it occurs to me that she has continued to represent to me the personification of woman-loving beauty and strength. As I sat through film after film watching the leading man take Garbo in his arms, I never once took that behavior to have anything whatsoever to do with her. I translated the eerie detachment she seemed to exude and edited out the male energy.

I kept Garbo's image near me in my young lesbian years because it reminded me lesbians

were beautiful—that I could be a lesbian and also be beautiful. I was uncomfortable in my body, still afraid to claim the womanliness that she represented because I could not separate it from vulnerability and danger. Only in my thirties did I begin to call up that womanliness because I was ready to claim the power available in that stance.

All the accounts of Garbo's life refer to her mysterious need for privacy. The writers speak about her total refusal to expose any details of her life—for all the forty-nine years the media pursued her after she quit acting in 1941. Often this discussion of her reclusiveness is followed by a short list of famous men who may have been her lovers. I know what her secret was. She was a lesbian. This is no mystery.

But here my grief takes on a more complicated aspect.

I have been out as a lesbian since December 28, 1963. In all those years I cannot count the number of conversations I have had with other lesbians that have begun with "Guess who I heard is a lesbian?" This delicious information is a wonderful way to drive a woman who is just coming out crazy with excitement. It is an initiation rite in more than one respect, however. Besides telling the new lesbian that there are beautiful, powerful, famous, brilliant, fabulous, talented women who are "sisters," it communicates that these women's reputations are somehow contingent on their being in the closet—or else this information about them would be readily available.

I know Garbo was a lesbian, and yet, there is a way in which I was never allowed to know it. Because Garbo never came out, there is a way in which she, like every lesbian of accomplishment who does not step into the light, will always be lost to us.

Finally, my grief is familiar. ▼

Margie Adam is a songwriter who lately has taken to the written word. Olivia Records will be releasing the best of her music this Fall.

LESBIAN LESBIAN

a text on lesbian identity with a subtext on essentialism/constructionism

BY RUTHANN ROBSON

I discovered her.

I invented her.

The first problem is not contradiction, but signification.

If the "I" is phallic—a plural patriarchal phallic, or even a singular male phallus—it cannot signify the "I" of a lesbian lesbian whether she is discovered or invented. And even if the "I" is not phallic, it has been labeled such and thus carries a phallic connotation.

And so, the phallic "I" (whether essentially phallic or constructed as phallic) must be confronted. If I were writing in French, I could imitate lesbian lesbian Monique Wittig (among others) and write j/e. Attempts at translating j/e include the slashed I: I (too castrated, and thus too phallic) and the italicized I: I (too slanted, and again, too phallic). If I were speaking in American English, I could use a gesture or an inflection. Attempts at rendering gestures and inflections into written prose include stage directions (appropriate only in plays) and exclamation points (appropriate only at ends of sentences). I decide on the lowercase I—i.

It is not the lowercaseness of the "i" that makes me decide it is disengaged from the phallic "I," but the dot: that dot that can look like a slash or a slant or a direction or a point; that dot that can look round and open like a you-know-what; that dot that is so necessary it can be absent; that dot that Cathi Kojinski drew as open hearts when she wrote her name; wrote her name in blue ink on her school desk; wrote her name in black ink in her school books; wrote her name in purple ink on the hems of my dresses; wrote her name in invisible ink on my thigh, just below my curved red birthmark.

i discovered her.

The "I" having been de-phallicized, the next confrontation is with "her." Her who? Not Cathi Kojinski, but the "her" that kissed Cathi Kojinski; the "her" that decided upon that lowercase "i" with its crown of possibility.

With all identity in question, it is dangerous to even concede that "i" am "her."

All pronouns are mediated by verbs: to discover; to invent.

One of these verbs demands "lesbian" be a noun; one demands "lesbian" be an adjective.

i invented her.

If i discovered her, then she is \boldsymbol{a} lesbian, a noun uncovered in a pool of essentialism.

If i invented her, then she is lesbian, an adjective constructed in a storm of social forces.

i want to be a lesbian, a noun, unmodified.

i want to be lesbian, an adjective, free.

There is just no escaping grammar, which is what Miss K. tried to teach me. Miss K. was a creative writing teacher, from Alberta, who hated all things French. I did not have a crush on her, although her hair was blonde and her eyebrows were black; very striking on a white woman wearing red dresses as she did quite often. Across one of my more

interesting surrealisms (if slavishly derivative), she scrawled: *Try to write something happy*. She dotted her "i" with a perfect circle, replicated in the exclamation point terminating her sentence. i wrote realisms of varied-colored women with Cleopatra bangs and bloodied tracked arms. She wrote the same refrain with the same open holes. i went to see her.

i told her i wrote what i knew. The sound of streets. The smell of horse. Pathetic, i said, wanting her to tell me it wasn't. She told me again to write something happy. She told me to be imaginative. She said write fantasy.

i did.

She wrote: please see me. There were no "i's" to dot.

She told me not to worry. She told me it didn't necessarily *mean* anything to have lesbian fantasies. To have lesbian fantasies was not to *be* a lesbian. I did not have to base my life on a few feelings, she reassured me. It didn't mean much, she said, probably nothing at all.

Miss K. was a social constructionist.

At least when it came to lesbians. In the presence of her theory of lesbianism, i looked at my paper and saw something essential, immutable, incorrigible. i saw a lesbian.

There was no escaping this lesbian, which is what I learned from Christine. Christine lived across the street from me, in an apartment with her mother. Christine was very cute, very Catholic, and very pregnant. After "little Philip" (as he was always called) was born, Christine would stroll the baby down the street. Sometimes "big Philip" (although he was smaller than Christine) would walk with her. A few people thought i was interested in little Philip; several people thought i was interested in Christine. i was. i thought she was romantic. i loved her insolent smile, her strange freedom, her swollen breasts. And she walked like a dyke.

People gossiped that big Philip would not marry Christine, but she told me different. She told me he had asked; she told me she had refused. She told me she had slept with him because her mother had accused her of "messing around" with some girl named Mary at St. Catherine's parochial high school, from which Christine would never graduate. She told me having a baby was her penance for her sinful nature; i guessed she meant Mary and not big Philip. She told me she knew she could not change, but that having a baby would keep her busy.

At sixteen, Christine was an essentialist.

At least when it came to lesbians. In the presence of her practice of lesbianism, i looked at my knees and saw something shifting, challenging, changing. i saw a lesbian survivor.

i like to think of Miss K. and Christine reading a brief essay based on the word "lesbian" by Nicole Brossard. i like to think of Miss K. reading: "The lesbian is a woman ablaze who is reborn from the essence of what she knows (she) is." i like to think of Christine reading: "The lesbian . . . invents everything by the force of the attraction she has for other women."

But Miss K. got married and murdered, and would never read a French Canadian even if she were still alive.

But Christine forgot everything she ever learned at St. Catherine's, and only reads TV Guide.

And really, i don't like to imagine them reading at all. i fled their lives; their constructions; their essences.

i fled to look for her; to work on her: the lesbian lesbian. i discovered her in a doorway, her face scratched, watching blood fill a needle.

i created her in the image of kiki bar dykes, Kim Novak and Jack Kerouac, who called himself a "Canuck."

i think my story is happy.

i think my story is partial: fragmented into other stories, like the stories of Miss K. and Christine.

And like all stories, such stories are false.

And like all stories, such stories are true.

And like all texts, this text reflects the tension between fiction and theory.

And like some texts, this text rejects the contradiction between discovery and invention.

i am a lesbian lesbian: constructed in her essentials; essential in her constructions.

in her universality, i am unmediated by verbs, loved and lover, imagined and remembered, vocabularized and deconstructed, post-modernized and pre-historicized.

in her particularities, i taught creative writing once (in a prison, perhaps to Miss K.'s murderer); i became an unwed mother (the records indicate marital status but not sexuality); i completed the curve of my birthmark into a permanent red heart by a tattoo on my thigh high. ▼

NOTE

I am using "text" to denote the genre fiction-theory, as it is used by Québecoise lesbian and feminist writers. As Anglo-Québecoise writer Gail Scott explains the genre of fiction-theory, it is:

a reflexive doubling-back over the texture of the text. Where nothing, not even the "theory" escapes the poetry, the internal rhythm (as opposed to the internal logic) of the writing. The better to break continuity (the continuity of patriarchal mythologies) into fragments in order to question syntax/context....

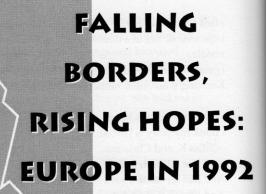
And fiction-theory, while it may be a method of exploring a space, a gap (never pretending to close it) between two or more ways of thinking, is the antithesis of a bridge.

- Gail Scott, Spaces Like Stairs (Toronto: Women's Press, 1989), p. 47.

The quotes from Nicole Brossard are from the essay, "Kind Skin My Mind," in *The Aerial Letter*, trans. Marlene Wildeman (Toronto: Women's Press 1988), pp.121-2.



Ruthann Robson's collection of fiction, Eye of a Hurricane, is available from Firebrand Books. She is presently writing fiction, theory, and fiction-theory in Berkeley, California.



EUROPEAN NATIONAL
BORDERS WILL FALL IN 1992,
TO BE REPLACED BY AN
INTEGRATED ECONOMIC
COMMUNITY. WHAT CAN
GAY MEN AND LESBIANS
EXPECT FROM THE ENSUING
LEGAL AND ECONOMIC
CHANGES?

BY SHELLEY ANDERSON

NINETEEN NINETY-TWO is already being touted as a magic year by many Western Europeans, for in that year, thanks to the Single Europe Act signed by all twelve of the Western European countries in the Economic Community (EC) [see page 34], national boundaries will disappear, allowing unrestricted flows of goods, information, and people across EC borders. While largely addressed to commercial affairs, the Act nonetheless has had enormous social implications that both national governments and the European Parliament (EP) are only now beginning to deal with. The EC's member states are engaged in what is being called "harmonization": setting standards for products so that Italian pipes will fit Dutch toilets and Spanish olives will meet British health standards. Other, more social standards are also being debated: pension rights, unemployment benefits, voting privileges, and immigration rules-all of which have serious consequences for gay rights.

For lesbians and gay men, the important issue about EC and EP decisions boils down to a question of which countries' standards will be adopted. Possible choices represent the entire spectrum of political response to social realities: at one end lies Britain's homophobic Clause 28, which prohibits local governments from giving grants to local organizations that "promote homosexuality"; at the other, Dutch regulations that specifically earmark funding for gay communities. West Germany, the EC's most powerful member thanks to its strong economic clout, has proposed national legislation outlawing artificial insemination for lesbians. What if Germany proposes this for the entire EC?

Optimistic activists see Western Europe's unification as a golden opportunity for gay rights. They point out that the European Parliament and other EC bodies, which will gain even more power in 1992, have been more progressive on gay-rights issues than many member-states' national governments. For example, a 1984 EP law prohibits discrimination based on sex and sexual preference in the workplace, and the European Court for Human Rights ruled that an Irish law mandating life imprisonment for male homosexual acts violated the European Convention of Human Rights. More pessimistic activists are not convinced that a unified Western Europe

will improve the legal and economic conditions of lesbians and gay men. In the Netherlands, with its high standard of living, they speculate the provisions of 1992 may lead to lower living and social standards. They fear that politicians will use the need for international "harmonization" in 1992 as an excuse for avoiding progressive national legislation.

And although walls are coming down inside Western Europe in 1992, they are going up around Europe—and this shift constitutes a new threat to lesbian and gay civil rights. Five EC countries have already agreed not to accept asylum seekers or political refugees who have been denied entry into one of their countries; this model is expected to be adopted soon by the entire EC. This may affect gay-rights cases adversely, given that persecution for homosexuality is currently considered grounds for asylum in some EC countries but not in all of them. The Netherlands, as one of the most socially progressive countries in Western Europe, attracts such refugees; currently twelve gay people are being held in refugee centers there awaiting a government decision on their status. In West Germany, on the other hand, a gay Pakistani man who had lived in Berlin for eight years was recently denied his request for asylum.

One of the active, international lesbian and gay organizations monitoring these shifts as Western Europe moves toward 1992 is the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) [see page 35]. Founded in 1978 as the International Gay Association, it quickly changed its name to ILGA and established an active women's secretariat that works hard to include more lesbians. ILGA's purpose is to work for lesbian and gay liberation and against legal, social, cultural, and economic discrimination. In the past three years, it has doubled its size to become a network of over 200 groups in more than forty countries—from a six-person collective in Australia to a Dutch trade union with over 40,000 members.

Despite its lack of funds and the logistical difficulties of international work, ILGA manages to coordinate an extraordinary number and variety of projects. For example, HOSI-Wien, an Austrian group, coordinated ILGA's Eastern European Information Pool for several years and helped Eastern European groups by mimeo-

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
HAS BEEN MORE PROGRESSIVE ON GAY ISSUES THAN
MANY MEMBER-STATES'
NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS.

graphing and distributing information for them. The Asia Information Pool, coordinated by a Japanese group, has organized several Asian conferences. The Prisoners' Project generated international pressure leading to the release of South African gay anti-apartheid activist Simon Nkoli. ILGA groups continue pressuring Amnesty International to acknowledge lesbians and gay men jailed solely for their homosexuality as prisoners of conscience; they have recently secured funding from the European Human Rights Foundation for a lesbian group in Chile. They have also lobbied the World Health Organization to remove homosexuality from its disease list and urged the United Nations to monitor gay-rights developments. Stonewall, a British ILGA affiliate, has requested funding from the EC to monitor developments on lesbian and gay rights within member nations.

So what's wrong with this picture? What's missing from it? The answer: US lesbians and gay men—only a handful of US groups have joined ILGA and other international organizations. This is a fact that has not gone unnoticed by a great many European activists, who are justifiably puzzled by it. "Why aren't Americans more involved internationally?" a Dutch member asked me after ILGA's annual international conference in Vienna in 1989.

It's a question I've asked myself often. We all know the practical explanations: the US's geographic isolation, an educational system that ignores other cultures and languages, media that give scant seconds to international news before moving on to more important topics like the President's taste in vegetables.

It goes without saying that we can learn a lot about political organizing and negotiating from

other nations' (and continents') movements. European gay-rights movements have created a political climate in which lesbians and gay men have certain rights that Americans can still only dream of. For example, in the Netherlands, where I currently live, projects aimed at the homosexual community—from safe-sex seminars for young people to gay and lesbian archivesare regularly funded by Dutch city councils. A national monument to lesbian and gay victims of fascism during World War II was dedicated in Amsterdam in September, 1987—the first memorial of its kind in the world. Viewing the achievements of European lesbian and gay groups has raised my expectations about what can be accomplished on a national level and what remains to be done in the US. Observing Latin American and African lesbian and gay organizing in the face of tremendous government and social hostilities has shown me the discipline and sense of solidarity that such groups develop and which have no equivalent back in the States outside of struggles around color.

But US movements have a lot to offer gay men and lesbians in other countries, too. Beyond the obvious material aid, we have great skill and experience with fundraising—something that many Western European groups, used to getting their funding from their governments, lack. European activists are already asking what will happen when the government well runs dry. In some countries, it already has—for example, in England with the passage of Clause 28, and in Norway, where a conservative national government was elected that promptly cut funding to gay-rights organizations. American grassroots fundraising, from garage sales to direct-mail continued on page 35

EUROPEAN GAY-RIGHTS
MOVEMENTS HAVE CREATED
A POLITICAL CLIMATE THAT
AMERICANS CAN STILL ONLY
DREAM OF.



WHAT WILL BECOME THE LEGAL AGE of consent for sexual activity in the EC nations? Right now, there is no uniform age of consent for lesbians, gay men, and heterosexuals in the twelve EC member states. Once one has been established, how will neighboring, non-EC countries respond?

E.C. COUNTRIES: AGE OF CONSENT

Belgium	16	16	16
Denmark	15	15	15
France	15	15	15
Greece	15	15	15
Ireland	n/a	illegal	n/a
Italy	14	14	14
Luxembourg	14	18	14
Netherlands	16	16	16
Portugal	16	16	16
West Germany	14	18	14
United Kingdom	16	21	16



MAIN SOURCE: HOSI-WIEN AND I.L.G.A. MAP BY MICHAEL SEXTON

NON-E.C. COUNTRIES: AGE OF CONSENT

Albania .	14	14	14
Austria	14	18	14
Bulgaria	14	21	21
Czechoslovakia	15	18	18
East Germany	14	14	14
Finland	16	18	18
Hungary	14	18	18
Iceland	16	18	16
Norway	16	16	16
Poland	15	15	15
Romania	n/a	illegal	illegal
Sweden	15	15	15
Switzerland	16	16	16
USSR	n/a	illegal	n/a
Yugoslavia			
Bosnia-Herzegovina,			
Macedonia & Serbia	n/a	illegal	n/a
Croatia &		Polytica	
Montenegro	14	18	16
Slovenia	16	16	16

n/a = not available

BACKGROUND ON THE GOVERNING BODIES OF EUROPE

The European Community

The European Community (EC) consists of twelve countries with a combined population of 320,000,000 people—Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, and West Germany. The importance of a European approach to campaigning for lesbian and gay rights looks set to grow in the coming years as the EC moves toward closer political integration and assumes greater legislative powers over a wider range of issues.

According to the President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, by the late 1990s most of the laws which affect the lives of people in the EC will be decided at the European level rather than by the national parliaments of the member states.

The Politics of the EC

The EC consists of three main institutions:

- The European Parliament—Despite being the only democratically elected EC body, it is relatively powerless and has little more than a consultative role in relation to the European Commission and the Council of Ministers.
- The European Commission—The Brussels equivalent of a high-powered executive civil service, it is administered by commissioners appointed from each country, who are responsible for implementing the decisions of the Council of Ministers.
- The Council of Ministers—Made up of ministers from the governments of the member states, it is the main policy-making and legislative institution of the EC. Real power lies with the Council of Ministers. They are unelected and meet in secret. Many of their decisions require *unanimous* agreement by all the EC governments. This limits but does not exclude the possibility that the EC could be a means for implementing progressive policies on lesbian and gay rights.

Towards a Social Agenda

To counterbalance the EC's almost exclusively economic agenda, the Green and Left parties in the European Parliament, with the support of many Liberals and Christian Democrats, have argued successfully in favor of a "Social Charter" to remedy the adverse effects of the Single European Market. They want it to include common policies on issues such as industrial democracy, minimum wages, health and safety, women's equality, and protection for young, elderly, and disabled persons.

Some lesbian and gay movements in the different EC countries are now suggesting a similar strategy. Taking advantage of the moves toward economic "harmonization," they argue that the lesbian and gay community should demand a parallel "social harmonization," including the adoption of common policies on lesbian and gay rights through the EC, based on the laws prevailing in Denmark and the Netherlands. This would result in a massive extension of equality for homosexuals in, for example, Britain and Ireland.

The Squarcialupi and Buron Reports

The European Parliament has already adopted the Squarcialupi Report (1984), which recommended equal rights for lesbians and gay men. Sponsored by the Italian Communist Member of the European Parliament (MEP), Vera Squarcialupi, it urged the EC member states to

- abolish legal proscriptions against consenting relationships between adult homosexuals:
- introduce a common age of consent for heterosexuals and homosexuals:
- ban the classification of homosexuality as a mental illness:
- outlaw discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of a person's homosexuality.

Although the report was welcomed by the EC's Social Affairs Commissioner, the EC has taken no further action on the Squarcialupi Report.

In November 1989, during the debate on the Social Charter for the EC, the European Parliament again reiterated its support for equal rights for homosexuals. The Buron Report, sponsored by the French socialist MEP, Martine Buron, recommended that the Social Charter should ensure "the right of all workers to equal protection regardless of their . . . sexual preference."

This recommendation was also never acted upon. The European Commission now claims that since there is nothing specific in the EC treaties about lesbian and gay rights, it therefore has no legal jurisdiction to take action on matters on sexuality.

—Peter Tatchell, *Out In Europe: A Guide to Lesbian and Gay Rights in 30 European Countries* (London: Out in Europe, 1990). Available from *Out in Europe*, PO Box 4000, London W3 6XJ (\$5 or £2.50, checks payable to *Channel Four*). [Reproduced with permission of Channel 4 Television.]

solicitations, is unknown in Western Europe, but it could become increasingly valuable where conservative politicians slash funds for social pro-

Another important US contribution is our tradition of civil disobedience. While Americanstyle civil disobedience could be suicidal in some countries, it can be a useful source of inspiration and tactics in others. British AIDS activists were impressed enough by this tradition to invite members of US ACT UP groups to London last year for some strategizing and training sessions.

Finally, US failures and successes in building multicultural movements are also valuable examples, especially for EC countries, which had relatively homogeneous populations until after World War II. Most white Europeans have not yet acknowledged that their societies are multiracial. Black European lesbians and gay men are justifiably angry at predominantly white gayrights groups that spend time and money on international work, yet fail to address racism within their own borders. African-American activist Audre Lorde inspired African-German lesbians to launch the first German women-ofcolor magazine, Afrekete, after her visit to West Germany several years ago.

We Americans cannot impose our methods and priorities on other cultures, but the gains in attempting to do international work far outweigh the inevitable tensions and mistakes we will make. Lesbians and gay men are everywhere—it's time US activists realize this and get involved.

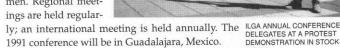
Shelley Anderson is a US lesbian living in Amsterdam. She is working on a pamphlet on international lesbian organizing to be published by Firebrand Books in Spring 1991.

[Editor's note: at ILGA's 1990 annual meeting in Stockholm, which OUT/LOOK's Art Director Dominic Cappello attended, the number of US delegates almost doubled from the previous year. In a future issue, we will run a feature on this conference.]

RESOURCES

International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) c/o RFSL, Box 350, 101 24 Stockholm, Sweden. Tel. 46 8 736 02 17. Besides lobbying international organizations in support of gay rights, ILGA conducts letterwriting campaigns to protest specific cases of discrimination. A bulletin with news clippings from

around the world is published semimonthly. ILGA also investigates and documents discrimination in Europe through the Iceberg Project and regularly publishes the ILGA Pink Book on the international status of lesbians and gay men. Regional meet-





DEMONSTRATION IN STOCK-HOLM.

International Lesbian Information Service

c/o COC, Rozenstraat 8, 1016 NX Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Tel. 31 20 231 192. ILIS helps organize regional lesbian meetings and is currently planning an international lesbian conference for 1991. Besides letter-writing campaigns, ILIS publishes a quarterly bulletin (English and Spanish; subscriptions \$15 US per year) with news from lesbian groups around the world. It has developed Lesbian Organizing, Lesbian Action, a booklet on group organizing and dynamics (Spanish or English).

Paz y Liberación

PO Box 66540, Houston, Texas 77266, publishes a quarterly newsletter (English or Spanish) of international news about lesbian and gay groups, with special editions for Asia and the African / Mediterranean regions. Newsletters include a free pen-pal list of lesbians and gay men wishing to correspond with people outside their own countries. Donations of stamps are appreciated so that newsletters can be mailed free to countries outside North America and Europe.

International Lesbian and Gay People of Colour Conference (ILGPOCC)

c/o Black Lesbian and Gay Centre (BLGC), BM Box 4390, London WC1N 3XX, England. Tel. 44 1 885 3543. Held every two years, this year's ILGPOCC conference will take place in London, England, October 27-28. The conference includes workshops on racism, the AIDS crisis, and organizing support groups across national boundaries.

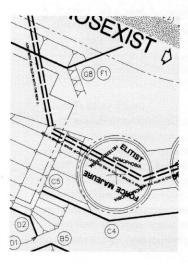
HETEROSEXISM OR HOMOPHOBIA?

THE POWER OF THE LANGUAGE WE USE

JOSEPH H. NEISEN

OVER THE PAST twenty years, homophobia has become a catchall word for any type of negative attitude or behavior directed toward gays and lesbians. The term initially provided a means for many of us to articulate our recognition that homosexuality was not the problem: the problem was society's irrational prejudices against us. Over time, however, the utility and power associated with the term homophobia have peaked. The gay and lesbian community is in need of a new concept that can provide an impetus as we continue our struggle for equal civil rights, acceptance, and validation. The word heterosexism can provide this focal point as we set our political agendas for social change in the 1990s.

Heterosexism is not a new concept. It has its roots in femi-



nist writing that explores the interrelated themes of sexism and antihomosexual sentiment. In *Sister, Outsider,* Audre Lorde described heterosexism as a form of oppression incorporating a belief in the inherent superiority of one form of loving over all others. This belief is then used to justify dominating those who do not subscribe to the privileged practice.

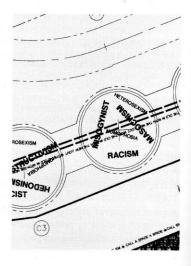
Heterosexism is the continual promotion by major social institutions of heterosexuality and the simultaneous subordination of all other lifestyles (that is, gay, lesbian, and bisexual). It is based on unfounded prejudices, just as racism and sexism are. When our institutions knowingly or unknowingly perpetuate these prejudices and intentionally or unintentionally act on them, heterosexism is at work.

Heterosexism is not limited to institutional oppression. Individual acts of heterosexism occur when individuals discriminate and institutions passively allow or foster the continuation of such discrimination. Heterosexism manifests itself in blatant discrimination against gays and lesbians as well as in more subtle forms of exclusion or lack of acknowledgment. Heterosexism is alive when individuals refuse to rent to gays or lesbians, when the military discharges someone for homosexual behavior or mere suspicion of being homosexual, and when governments prohibit gays and lesbians from marrying

legally. Heterosexism also works in more subtle ways, as when television programs and advertisements show only heterosexual couples, when mainstream media underreport gay and lesbian events like the 1987 National March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights, and when magazine articles and obituaries fail to acknowledge the life partners of gay men and lesbians.

There are a number of reasons why we need a change in focus from *homophobia* to *heterosexism*.

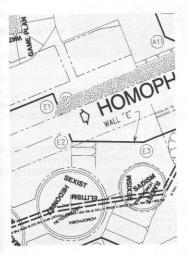
Homophobia places the attention on us as gays and lesbians when it is heterosexuals who need the message most. Because the prefix homo- is generally accepted as a reference to homosexuals, the term homophobia incorrectly perpetuates the belief that there may be something intrinsically dreadful about



homosexuality. Heterosexism, on the other hand, identifies the true origin of the prejudice, forcing heterosexuals to confront their own bigotry. Heterosexism avoids the trap of continual dialogue on the "pros" and "cons" of homosexuality and concentrates on the real problem—discrimination and prejudice against gay men and lesbians.

Heterosexism is also more consistent with the language of oppression. When we talk of prejudice against and oppression of women, we do not speak of womanphobia but of sexism. When we talk of prejudice against and oppression of African-Americans, we do not talk of African-American-phobia but of racism.

The suffix -phobia is also problematic since homophobia is not a true phobia. A phobic reaction is one in which the object that provokes anxiety is avoided. Individuals who are truly homophobic avoid gays and lesbians rather than seek us out to attack and fag-bash. Many heterosexuals are not fearful of gay men and lesbians at all; they may, in fact, be rather accepting. The use of heterosexism instead of homophobia should provide a reminder



USE OF THE TERM HETEROSEXISM WILL TELL HETEROSEXUALS THAT IT IS THEIR PROBLEM, NOT OURS.

to heterosexuals that their prejudice against gay men and lesbians needs continual unlearning, that the main issues are hatred, bigotry, and lack of empathy for those different from themselves.

Finally, use of heterosexism leads the way from victimization to survival. It helps us direct our anger outward to heterosexist individuals and institutions rather than inward, where it can lead to self-destruction. Too often, abused and battered gay men and lesbians early in their coming-out process believe their self-hatred is innate, the inevitable result of their homosexuality. The concept of heterosexism can help us recognize more clearly that the self-hatred we struggle with is in fact shame: shame due to cultural heterosex-

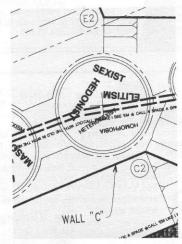
Although *heterosexism* may be a misnomer for something more

accurately called *sexual orienta-tionism* (that is, assigning a superior value to a single sexual orientation), *heterosexism* appears to be our best choice of language at this point.

Language evolves; the power and meaning of words change over time. Homophobia was extremely useful during those decades when we first raised our voices and stated that "we are everywhere" and "we will not go back into the closet." Use of heterosexism will tell heterosexual North Americans that now is the time for them to start confronting their own prejudicesthat this is their problem, not ours. The implications are farreaching as we set our strategies for social and political change in the 1990s. ▼

This article is based on the author's "Heterosexism: Redefining Homophobia for the 1990s" in Journal of Gay and Lesbian Psychotherapy, Vol. 1, no. 3 (1990).

Joseph Neisen is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Family Social Science at the University of Minnesota and primary therapist with the Pride Institute. He lives happily in Minneapolis with his loving partner, Bruce Olmscheid.



ART BY MIKE MATTOR

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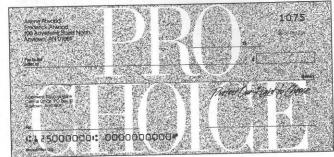
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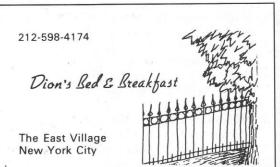
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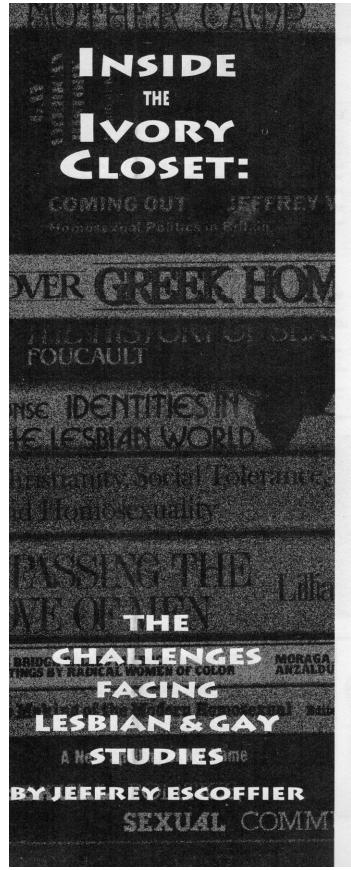
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ver the last four years, research centers, graduate seminars, undergraduate courses, and publishing programs in lesbian and gay studies have been established at a number of institutions across the country: Yale, City University of New York (CUNY), City College of San Francisco (CCSF), Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), University of California at Santa Cruz, and Duke. Even though this development is a major step forward, it is an unsteady one. A gap is widening between the field's "new historicists" and the lesbian and gay communities, creating anew the same conflict between community responsibility and academic respectability that has divided ethnic and women's studies since their tumultuous beginnings. The growth of gay and lesbian studies forces an examination of whether as an academic discipline it should, or can, exist without structural ties to lesbian and gay political struggles. Is it fair to insist on such relations between a community and its intellectuals?

Lesbian and gay studies brings together two waves or generations of scholars. One is a group of writers and scholars who experienced the euphoria of Stonewall and the women's movement in the early seventies. Many of them are established professors, who as "out" academics gained tenure only after brutal political battles and now teach heavy course loads at less prestigious institutions. Others are independent writers and scholars unaffiliated with any academic institution whose books, essays, and articles broke fresh ground in the early days of lesbian and gay studies. Dennis Altman, John D'Emilio, Martin Duberman, Karla Jay, Jonathan Katz, and Esther Newton are important figures of this early generation on both sides of the academic fence.

The second, younger group of scholars are ambitious young teachers and bright graduate students trained at elite universities and occupying jobs at the more prestigious institutions. John Boswell, Lee Edelman, David Halperin, and Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick are representative of this post-Stonewall generation. In contrast to their predecessors, they emphasize sophisticated interpretation of texts rather than the social history or the sociology of gay life.

These two generations take radically different approaches to their writing and research and each finds itself in a correspondingly different relation to the lesbian and gay community. Influenced by work in social history and anthropology, the Stonewall-generation scholars relied on the community both for support and as a critical audience. Their work grew out of questions that had preoccupied lesbians and gay men in their struggles to forge strong, visible communities. Not only were the most original contributions on the history, culture, and sociology of gay life being produced largely by writers and intellectuals either outside the university or only occasionally employed as parttime or temporary lecturers—people like Allan Bérubé, Jonathan Katz, Audre Lorde, Kate Millet, Cherríe Moraga, and Vito Russo-but the Stonewall scholars were in constant dialogue with the community.

Now those independent writers and scholars are increasingly excluded from the new framework for gay scholarship created by the apparently successful institutionalization of lesbian and gay studies in the university. The post-Stonewall generation has been able to take the development of lesbian and gay communities and many of their political gains for granted. Turning away from social history and anthropology to the textual concerns of literary and cultural criticism, the younger generation uses a language that, for all its literary brilliance, is guite difficult. With the links between the university and the communities rendered less visible, this new wave of lesbian and gay studies has not managed to incorporate women and people of color into its ranks and analyses. Together with the stylistic shift from the kind of research that the Stonewall generation produced to the new generation's more academically attuned literary and cultural interpretations, these changes may produce an unbridgeable gap between gay academics and the community.

GAY REVOLUTION IN THE UNIVERSITY?

The current round of new programs in lesbian and gay studies is not the first time that lesbian

and gay scholars have tried to break out of the ivory closet. The early days of the gay movement were full of intellectual ferment. Almost immediately after Stonewall a flood of books, periodicals, and other publications found an audience eager to explore the political and cultural implications of lesbian feminism and gay liberation. The powerful lesbian-feminist manifesto "The Woman-Identified Woman" (written collectively by a group called Radicalesbians) was published in 1970. A year later Dennis Altman published Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation, the first book after Stonewall on the politics of gay liberation. Between 1972 and 1978 Karla Jay and Allan Young published a series of anthologies (Out of the Closets, After You're Out, Lavender Culture) that explored gay and lesbian history, psychological theories, the problems and possibilities of coming out, lesbian and gay culture before and after Stonewall, the gay movement's relation to the left, the women's movement, the Black civilrights movement, sex roles, and the images of gay men and lesbians in the media.

Scholars of the Stonewall generation made an effort to bring gay-liberation and feminist perspectives to bear on their research and writing when they founded the Gay Academic Union (GAU) in March 1973. Professors, writers, students, and librarians banded together and, backed by 300 like-minded people, sponsored the first GAU conference on November 23 and 24, 1973. New York hosted two other conferences before political divisions broke up the group: the annual conference moved out to Los Angeles, while GAU in New York maintained a shadowy existence for several years.

GAU grew out of a need to confront the virulent homophobia of academia. But from the very beginning this early attempt to create a place for lesbian and gay studies also had to contend with the institutionalized gender imbalance of the university system. The organization was overwhelmingly male in membership, and the few women who attended meetings were constantly put in the awkward position of challenging the sexist comments and underlying chauvinism of their male colleagues. Divisions among the men themselves

occurred along lines of left-versus-right politics. Initially GAU responded by publishing a political statement of purpose that listed opposition to all forms of discrimination against women within academia as the first priority and opposition to all forms of discrimination against gay people as second. Nevertheless, all three GAU conferences in New York were

marked by increasingly bitter confrontations between lesbians and gay men. By 1975 the radical men and most lesbians had left GAU.

THE LESBIAN

CONTENT OF THE

COURSES WAS

DOWNPLAYED

OR ELIMINATED

The rapid growth of women's-studies programs in the seventies provided a safe space for courses with lesbian content and themes, and for a while "lesbian studies" thrived. The ideological basis for many of these courses was "cultural feminism," which emphasized the idea of a "female nature" and the construction of a women's culture reflecting that nature. The lesbian com-

munity seemed to fit this theoretical model as an example of a women's culture unsullied by male domination.

Lesbian feminism, defined by important pieces like "The Woman-Identified Woman," the Radicalesbian manifesto, Jill Johnston's Lesbian Nation, and Adrienne Rich's essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," presented lesbianism as an alternative model for female identity. Some of the major contributions to lesbian studies-such as Lillian Faderman's history of romantic friendship among women, Surpassing the Love of Menwere written in this tradition. Most significantly, women's-studies programs often created a safe place for lesbians to come out and familiarize themselves with lesbian culture. In the eighties, as these programs came under attack from conservatives and budget cutbacks, the lesbian content of the courses was downplayed or eliminated.

OUTSIDE THE WALLS OF ACADEME

The Stonewall generation's ability to build an institutional framework for research on lesbian

and gay life was severely limited by its own battles for tenure and promotion. The widespread homophobia of academic life discouraged many from devoting themselves to research on homosexual themes. Emotionally drained by faculty politics, heavy teaching loads, and their colleagues' rejection of the legitimacy of research on homosexuality, many gay academics retreated into internal exile. What serious research was done on gay and lesbian life was often carried out by scholarly writers and intellectuals outside the university. Their work appeared in books, community newspapers, and magazines like The Body Politic, Sinister Wisdom, Gay Community News, Heresies, and The Advocate, or in leftist journals like Radical America and Socialist Review.

While gay scholars gave up trying to form a national organization to advance lesbian or gay studies, some continued to work on their own research projects in isolation or outside the university. The new leftist idea of "history from the bottom up," added to the feminist motto, "the personal is the political," gave intellectual significance to what appeared individual and private. The successes of Black and women's social history inspired some activist-writers to look for "gay history."

In 1971 gay activist Jonathan Katz launched his research, starting only from the presumption that gay American history actually existed. In June 1972 he mounted a dramatization of some of his early discoveries in a documentary play, Coming Out, modeled on Martin Duberman's successful off-Broadway play, In White America. Eventually Katz's research led to two huge collections of lesbian and gay historical documents: Gay American History (1976) and Gay/Lesbian Almanac (1983). Katz also served as the general editor of the Arno Press series, Homosexuality: Lesbians and Gay Men in Society, History, and Literature. He directed the massive reprinting of over 100 books, both classic and obscure, dealing with homosexuality from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Also in the early seventies John D'Emilio and James Steakley, graduate students in (respectively) history and German literature as well as gay activists, conducted pioneering explorations of homosexual-emancipation movements in America during the forties and fifties and in pre-Nazi Germany. First published in the Canadian gay journal *The Body Politic*, their work eventually appeared in book form. Lesbians and gay men interested in the past started community history projects like The Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York and The San Francisco Lesbian and Gay History Project, where they collected historical materials and began to publish their results.

Throughout this period of apparent institutional dormancy, some gay teachers, like Jack Collins at City College of San Francisco, continued to teach lesbian or gay courses. In small liberal colleges and at big state schools and some elite universities, openly gay and lesbian teachers kept up the fight in their departments to teach courses dealing with homosexuality. In some instances students took up the gauntlet and designed courses they taught themselves with the help of friendly faculty sponsors.

During the following years women's and gay caucuses formed in a number of academic professional associations, like the Modern Language Association (for teachers of language and literature), the American Sociological Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Anthropological Association, and the American Historical Association. These groups became forums where openly gay and closeted academics alike could meet and discuss research on homosexual themes as well as deal with job and research biases within the professions. In this same period The Journal of Homosexuality—founded in 1974 by psychologist Charles Silverstein (coauthor with Edmund White of The Joy of Gay Sex), and since 1977 edited by John DeCecco of San Francisco State University—gradually transformed itself from a narrowly focused journal of psychology into a broad interdisciplinary journal of lesbian and gay studies.

This outpouring of lesbian and gay social thought and history in the early seventies initially assumed that the homosexual experience in different periods of history and in different cultures reveals a type of human personality called "the homosexual." Scholars looked for our antecedents in history as a way of claiming

CLASSICS OF LESBIAN AND GAY STUDIES

- 1972 Esther Newton, *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1972; reprinted University of Chicago Press, 1985)
- 1976 Jonathan Katz, *Gay American History* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1976)
- 1977 Jeffrey Weeks, Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the the Nineteenth Century to the Present (London: Ouartet Books, 1977)
- 1978 K.J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980; reprinted by Vintage Books, 1978)

Michel Foucault, A History of Sexuality, Vol. 1 (New York: Pantheon, 1978)

Barbara Ponse, *Identities in the Lesbian World* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978)

- 1980 John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980)
- 1981 Lillian Faderman, Surpassing the Love of Men (New York: William Morrow & Co.,1981)

Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., This Bridge Called My Back (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1981)

Kenneth Plummer, ed. *The Making of the Modern Homosexual* (London: Hutchinson, 1981)

- 1982 Audre Lourde, Zami: A New Spelling of My Name (Trumansburg, NY: The Crossing Press, 1982)
- 1983 John D'Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of the Homosexual Minority (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983)

Cherrie Moraga, Loving in the War Years (Boston: South End Press, 1983)

Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, eds., *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983)

1984 Judy Grahn, Another Mother Tongue: Gay Words, Gay Worlds (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984)

Carole S. Vance, ed. *Pleasure and Danger* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984)

1985 Estelle Freedman, Barbara C. Gelphi, Susan L. Johnson and Kathleen M. Weston, eds., *The Lesbian Issue: Essays from Signs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985)



ancestors, of validating ourselves through the achievements of great and famous queers and dykes. They searched for evidence that homosexuality is transhistorical, "natural," or essential. Arthur Evans wrote articles in this vein for the radical political newspaper, Fag Rag, and then in his book, Witchcraft and the Gay Counterculture (1978). There Evans linked the perse-

THE
HOMOSEXUAL
IS A SOCIAL
ROLE RATHER
THAN A
NATURAL
CONDITION

cution of gay people to the repression of the pagan witches. This book became an important source for the faerie movement—the movement of gay male spirituality.

But lesbian and gay historians also discovered that homosexual activity frequently occurred without the presence of "homosexuals," and that intense homosocial or erotic relationships existed between people who otherwise did not appear to be "homosexuals." One solution

to these puzzles already had been ventured by the British sociologist Mary McIntosh, whose scholarly paper on "The Homosexual Role" had been published in the American academic journal *Social Problems* in 1968—even before Stonewall. Challenging the belief that "homosexuals" and "heterosexuals" were different kinds of people, McIntosh argued that the homosexual should be seen as a social role rather than as a natural condition. Furthermore, she claimed that the "role" of homosexual describes not simply a pattern of sexual behavior but other kinds of cultural activities as well.

The historical and political implications of McIntosh's thinking were worked out by a group of young British gay leftists. In the pages of their journal, *Gay Left* (1975–1979), they synthesized Marxist social history with "symbolic interactionism," a school of sociology that emphasized the importance of socially created meanings in everyday life. This perspective on the historical emergence of the homosexual identity informed Jeffrey Weeks's *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present*, published

in 1977. The Gay Left Collective writers elaborated on the making of "the modern homosexual" in a series of essays later collected in two anthologies: Homosexuality: Power and Politics (1980), which they edited, and The Making of the Modern Homosexual (1981), edited by Kenneth Plummer. Eventually, this approach to gay history was identified as the social-constructionist theory of homosexual identity. French historian Michel Foucault's History of Sexuality (1978) offered a similar account of the historical creation of the homosexual identity, but his work also presented a full-scale philosophical critique of "essentialism"—the belief that "the homosexual person" exists throughout history.

The development of a social-constructionist interpretation of homosexual history is one of the major intellectual achievements of the Stonewall generation of lesbian and gay scholars. This theoretical paradigm provides criteria for historical and social research. Thus, the question that would send the social constructionist off to the archives would be, for instance, "Why doesn't every society organize homosexuality in the same way that the classical Greeks did?" rather than "Why did the Christian church repress the natural impulse of homosexual love?"

Another intellectual development of the eighties that made a major contribution to our thinking about lesbian (and, by implication, gay male) identities was the publication of This Bridge Called My Back. Gloria Anzaldúa, Audre Lorde, Cherríe Moraga, and Barbara Smith, among others, contributed essays, poetry, and personal narratives to this anthology, which, along with such other books as Sister Outsider (Lorde, 1984), Home Girls (edited by Smith, 1983), Borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987), and Loving in the War Years (Moraga, 1983), proposed a new way of thinking about cultural identity and difference. These women of color criticized the impulse, widely prevalent among cultural feminists, to emphasize the essential similarities of all women rather than the differences of race, sexuality, and class among women. This Bridge Called My Back warned against an enforced women's identity and, by implication, all attempts to downplay or disregard dif-

THE MAINSTREAMS OF LESBIAN AND GAY STUDIES

Formulating a genealogy: This is a tentative map of the intellectual and ideological influences on lesbian and gay studies that emerged from the radical scholarship, Black cultural nationalism, and counterculture of the 60s.

British Gay Left

Mary McIntosh. "The Homosexual Role" (1969) The first formulation of the historical and social construction of the homosexual identity.

Gay Left (1975-1979) This periodical brought together Mary McIntosh's analysis of the homosexual role with a left analysis of capitalism and the social regulation of sexuality.

Jeffrey Weeks, Coming Out (1977) One of the editors of Gav Left, Weeks wrote the first "social constructionist" history of homosexual politics

Homosexuality: Power and Politics (1980) An anthology that brought together the most important articles from Gav Left.

French **Post-Structuralism**

Michel Foucault, History of Sexuality (1978)Rewrote the history of sexuality in Western Europe without relying exclusively or the role of repression and by

emphasizing the creation of

sexual identities

American Gay Left

Dennis Altman, Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation (1970) The first contribution to the theory of gay liberation.

The Gay Academic Union (1973) Gay and lesbian scholars and writers organized to promote feminism and gay liberation in the academic world.

Jonathan Katz, Gay American History (1976)The pioneering collection of lesbian and gay historical documents

Powers of Desire (1983)

Brought together many key essays on sexuality as well as some important gay contributions by D'Emilio, Bérubé, Rich, Hollibaugh, and Moraga

Feminism

Kate Millet, Sexual Politics (1970) One of the great American texts of feminist theory.

Radical Feminism

Feminist Women of Color

Combahee River Collective (1974-1977) Black feminist organizers and writers defined Black feminist politics and culture.

Conditions (1977present) One of the major vehicles for the development of feminist thinking by women of color, especially Conditions 5: The Black Women's Issue.

Barbara Smith. "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism" (1977)Explored the importance of Black women novelists and poets for feminism.

Audre Lorde, Zami (1982)An original synthesis of autobiography, history, and mythology by a Black lesbian.

Lesbian **Feminism**

Radicalesbians, "The Woman-Identified Woman" (1970) One of the founding documents of lesbian-feminisi

Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Lesbian Continuum" (1980) Theorized that compulsory heterosexuality destroyed the natural solidarity of

Lillian Faderman, Surpassing the Love of Men (1980) The history of romantic friendships among women.

This Bridge Called My Back (1983) An anthology of essays, poetry, and personal narratives that proposed a new way of thinking about identity and difference.

All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies (1982)

A landmark survey of the gaps in women's studies and Black studies with a vision of the future.

Male Cultural Feminism

Arthur Evans. Witchcraft and the Gay Counterculture (1978) Argued that pagans, witches and gay people were brutally repressed by Christianity in the Middle Ages. One of the inspirations for the radical faery movement.

Academic Gay Studies

John Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality (1980) A history of the treatment of gay people in the late classical and early Middle Ages.

Lesbian and Gay Studies Conferences and Programs

Yale, City University of New York, City College of San Francisco, etc.

ferences of color, gender, and sexuality. These writers' exploration of the overlapping identities of gender, race, and sexuality also implies criticism of "universalistic" conceptions of the making of the homosexual identity. But it dealt a double blow to lesbian-feminist thinking: not only did it challenge essentialist models of female identity, it influenced thinking about lesbian sexuality. In "What We're Rollin'

THE INFLUENCE
OF THEORY IS
SECURING THE
POST-STONEWALL
GENERATION'S
PLACE IN
ACADEMIA

Around in Bed With," an article in Heresies (1981), Amber Hollibaugh and Cherríe Moraga looked at sexual roles, fantasy, and sadomasochism as examples of sexual differences within the lesbian community. They saw simplistic notions of egalitarian relationships and the belief in politically correct sex as obstacles to freedom and understanding the true breadth of sexuality.

The political significance of different paradigms in lesbian and gay studies was demonstrated when lesbian and gay social-con-

structionists clashed with cultural-feminists in the fierce debates over pornography and sexuality. Relying on gay and lesbian historical research that showed a wide range of sexual behavior and conceptions of identity among lesbians and gay men, social-constructionists argued that sexual practices, sexual fantasy, and pornography are also defined by shifting economic contexts, aesthetic standards, and social roles. Cultural-feminists, on the other hand, interpreted pornography as a transhistorical instrument of male domination and compulsory heterosexuality. These "sex wars" generated a body of ground-breaking writing that appeared in anthologies like Pleasure and Danger (1984), edited by Carole S. Vance, and Powers of Desire (1988), edited by Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson.

BIRTH PAINS OF A DISCIPLINE

Somewhere within this far-flung constellation of openly gay teachers, student-initiated courses, independent scholars, history projects, and journals, a post-Stonewall generation of lesbian and gay scholars emerged. Representatives of this new generation are John Boswell, author of a widely read and reviewed book on Christian attitudes toward gay people in medieval Europe; Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick, who has explored male homosexuality and homosocial desire in literature; David Miller, author of an acclaimed book on police in the Victorian novel; David Halperin, who has pioneered a new interpretation of homosexuality in ancient Greece; and Lee Edelman, who has published a string of brilliant papers on gay literature, including a famous essay on the AIDS activist slogan, "Silence = Death." A good sampling of the new generation can be found in a special issue of The South Atlantic Quarterly (Winter 1989) entitled "Displacing Homophobia."

While the scholarship of this new generation builds on the large body of research in history and culture accumulated since the early seventies, it also draws deeply on French cultural theory-from authors like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, who have written on sexuality, gender, and the social power of language and metaphor. It is this synthesis of social and cultural history with the sophisticated interpretive techniques of French critical theory that ties the post-Stonewall generation to a new tendency in literary and cultural studies called "the new historicism." And it is these theoretical influences that make the work of the new generation difficult and obscure to those outside the academy. Yet it is precisely the influence of theory that is securing the post-Stonewall generation's place in academia.

Now scholars from both the older and the younger generation have banded together to create a new field of research and teaching and the institutions to sustain it. In 1986, Martin Duberman and John Boswell initiated a new trend of faculty leadership by bringing together a group of scholars from both generations to start the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies at Yale. Although that original group split over differences as to the participation of women, minorities, and independent scholars, many other groups are setting up different types of academic programs that could eventually

become the basis for officially recognized lesbian and gay studies. Boswell and a group of junior faculty and graduate students at Yale have put on three annual conferences on lesbian and gay studies, with the fourth scheduled to take place this fall at Harvard. Duberman, Esther Newton, and George Chauncey, all of whom had originally worked on the effort at Yale, started the Committee for Lesbian and Gay Studies at CUNY. There are special research seminars at MIT and Columbia, a "Queer Theory" conference was sponsored by University of California at Santa Cruz, and a graduate seminar planned at Duke. At many of these institutions undergraduate and graduate courses with lesbian or gay themes are offered by regular departments of literature, sociology, and history.

But so far the only place that actually has an officially set up and funded department of gay and lesbian studies is the City College of San Francisco. The guiding spirit and first chair of the department, Jack Collins, received his Ph.D. in comparative literature from Stanford and has taught a popular course in gay literature since 1972. CCSF is the third-largest single-campus community college in the US, and the lesbian and gay courses are offered to undergraduates and in the adult-education programs that serve San Francisco's lesbian and gay community.

The publication of John Boswell's Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality by the University of Chicago Press (UCP) in 1980 was the first mainstream success of the post-Stonewall generation of gay scholarship. Boswell's book was favorably reviewed throughout the national press and featured in mass-circulation magazines like Newsweek. Since then the University of Chicago Press has become the pre-eminent academic publisher of lesbian and gay studies, with an impressive list of authors and titles: John D'Emilio's Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities (1983), David Greenberg's The Construction of Homosexuality (1988), The Lesbian Issue (a reprint of UCP's women's-studies journal, Signs), and Esther Newton's Mother Camp (1985). It will soon publish a new journal called The History of Sexuality, which will deal extensively with lesbian and gay subject matter. Last year Columbia University Press initiated Between Men—Between Women, the first scholarly book series specifically devoted to lesbian and gay studies; it is under the editorial leadership of Richard Mohr of the University of Illinois. Though this trend comes on top of a recent boom in lesbian and gay publishing by small presses and commercial houses alike, by itself

university press publishing has conferred academic legitimacy on lesbian and gay studies.

Now there is growing appreciation for the importance and originality of research in lesbian and gay studies. And because of the political changes within the university status system, research in lesbian and gay studies is (sometimes) rewarded by a tenure-track job or a promotion. One consequence of this change is that the post-Stonewall scholars have often found jobs at elite universities that offer them time and resources for research, while the earlier academics and independent scholars must continue to do their work "after hours." The institutional mod-

ifications required to establish lesbian and gay studies as an academic discipline will probably reinforce these generational differences in academic status.

But this shift in academic legitimacy has another consequence. There are two possible ways to establish lesbian and gay studies as an academic discipline. One is to first establish the field intellectually by setting up research-oriented programs, journals, and conferences (as at Yale and CUNY); the other approach begins by designing a lesbian and gay curriculum exclusively for undergraduates (as at CCSF). Both are ultimately necessary. The intellectual path offers greater prestige, even though an undergraduate curriculum provides the economic base for any academic field in the humanities.

The problem is that most of the current efforts to start programs in lesbian and gay studies are primarily concerned with building up the intellectual status of the field. This step

LESBIAN AND
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may be neccessary in order to gain legitimacy for funding and support within the academic community, but it encourages lesbian and gay academics to respond more to academic and disciplinary standards than to the political and cultural concerns of the lesbian and gay communities outside the university. The intellectual work of scholars out of touch with those

NEITHER
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OF COLOR, OR
INDEPENDENT
SCHOLARS

communities will shrink the audience and become increasingly irrelevant to the cultural and political needs of lesbians and gay men. And the intellectual style of the post-Stonewall scholars only reinforces the potential for their academic isolation.

Neither the Stonewall nor the post-Stonewall generation has successfully incorporated women, people of color, or independent scholars into the evolving institutional fabric of lesbian and gay studies. While some white lesbian scholars and lesbian and gay male minority scholars have found institutional homes in programs of women's and ethnic

studies, those departments do not necessarily support lesbian or gay research. Among women's-studies faculty at some universities, there is hostility to lesbian and gay studies because of the field's domination by males, the anticipated competition for funds, and plain homophobia. For instance, at Yale, which has a number of "out" male academics like John Boswell, Ralph Hexter, and Wayne Kostenbaum, there is not one open lesbian on the faculty. Academic resistance to hiring some lesbian, minority lesbian and gay, and independent scholars is based on their often lacking the graduate training and degrees required for tenure-track academic teaching jobs.

These "asymmetries" were discussed in a highly charged plenary session at the 1989 Yale Lesbian and Gay Studies conference. At that panel Wayne Kostenbaum, a post-Stonewall scholar, gave a short, clever, and witty talk on the institutionalization of lesbian and gay studies, only to be faulted by a Latino student for a reading list that included few women and no people of color. Embarrassed, Kostenbaum

acknowledged the truth of the challenge. Feeling vulnerable as an openly gay junior faculty member, he then revealed some of the behind-the-scenes struggles associated with the institutionalization of the field. Some senior colleagues in his department had not wanted him to teach a course on homosexuality in literature. They eventually relented, but had insisted that he include "major" writers. Kostenbaum's dilemma—the course covered a period when he thought there were few if any major writers who were women or people of color—exemplifies the need for awareness and thoughtfulness on the issues of race and gender.

These tensions within lesbian and gay studies pose major challenges to those within the field and make it vulnerable to its most powerful enemies: cultural conservatives. People like William Bennett, former secretary of education, and Allan Bloom, author of the The Closing of the American Mind, not to speak of Jesse Helms and other fundamentalist leaders, will see the establishment of these programsfollowing in the footsteps of Black and women's studies—as another sign of cultural decline; they already believe that homosexuality and its politics are harbingers of doom. This is all the more reason for lesbian and gay studies to address its asymmetries. Otherwise, the field will ultimately become unrepresentative and intellectually narrow. As an academic discipline, lesbian and gay studies must remain in dialogue with the communities that gave rise to the political and social conditions for its existence. For a minority that does not experience the primary socialization of family and community, education in the community's traditions and contemporary problems is especially important; teachers and scholars of lesbian and gay studies have a responsibility to future generations of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals. And if the field can address those deep needs for understanding identity and sexuality, it may even contribute to more tolerant generations of heterosexuals.

Jeffrey Escoffier taught a lesbian and gay studies course at the University of California, Berkeley and has published articles in The Nation, Socialist Review, and The Urban Studies Review. He is the co-publisher of OUT/LOOK.

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A DIFFERENT LIGHT

LA OFRENDA

CHERRÍE MORAGA

Strange as it may seem, there is no other way to be sure. Completely sure. Well you can never be completely sure but you can try and hold fast to some things. Smell is very important. Your eyes can fool you. You can see things that aren't there. But not smell. Smell remembers and tells the future. No lying about that.

Smell can make your heart crack open no matter how many locks you have wrapped 'round it. You can't see smell coming so it takes you off guard, unaware. Like love. That's why it can be your best friend or worst enemy depending on the state of your heart at the time.

Smell is home or loneliness. Confidence or betrayal. Smell remembers.



Tiny never went with women because she decided to. She'd always just say, "I follow my nose." And she did and it got her ass nearly burned plenty of times, too, when the scent happened to take her to the wrong side of town or into the bed of the wife of someone she'd wish she hadn't in the morning.

She hated to fight. That was the other problem. She never stuck around for a fight. "The only blood I like," she'd say, "is what my hand digs out of a satisfied woman." We'd all tell Tiny to shut her arrogant mouth up and get her another drink. Christina Morena, who stood in front of me in the First Holy Communion line. Then by Confirmation, Tiny'd left most of us girls in the dust. Shot up and out like nobody's business. So, Christina, who everyone called Tina, turned to Tiny overnight and that's the name she took with her into "the life." Given her

"La Ofrenda" appears courtesy of Third Woman Press, from the forthcoming book, *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About*, edited by Carla Trujillo (Fall 1990).

size, it was a better name to use than Christina and certainly better than mine, Dolores. Dottie, they used to call me years later in some circles, but it never stuck cuz I was the farthest thing from a freckled face bony-knee'd gabacha. Still, for awhile, I tried it. Now, I'm back to who I was before. Just Lolita. Stripped down. Not so different from those Holy Communion days, really.

When we were kids, teenagers, we came THIS close to making it with each other. THIS close. I don't know what would've happened if we had, but I couldn't even've dreamed of doing it then. Yeah, I loved Tiny probably more than I loved any human being on the face of the earth. I mean I loved her like the way you love familia like they could do anything-steal, cheat, lie, murder and you'd still love them because they're you blood. Sangre. Tiny was my blood. My blood sister. Maybe that's why we didn't do it back then. It'd be like doing it with you mother. No, your sister. Tiny was my sister like no sister I've ever had and she wanted me and I left her because she'd rather pretend she didn't and I was too stupid to smell out the situation for what it really was. I kept watching what was coming outta her damn mouth and there wasn't nothing there to hear. No words of love, commitment, tenderness. You know, luna de miel stuff. There was just her damn solid square body like a tank in the middle of my face with tears running down her cheeks and her knees squeezed together like they were nailed shut on that toilet, her pants like a rubberband wrapped down around her ankles and I ran from her as fast as my cola could take me.

"Fuck fuck chinga'o, man, fuck!"

"Tina . . ." I can barely hear myself.

"Tiny. The name's Tiny."

"What're you doin' in here?"

"I'm crying, you faggot. That's what you want, isn't it? To see the big bad bitch cry? Well, go get your rocks off somewhere else."

"I don't have rocks." "In your head!"

But I never loved anyone like I loved Tiny. No body. Not one of those lean white or sleek black ladies that spread their legs for me and my smooth-talking. There was blood on my hands and not from reaching into those women but from Tiny's hide. From my barrio's hide. From Cha Cha's Place where you only saw my ass when the sophisticated college girls had fucked with my mind one too many times. That's something Tiny would have said. We weren't meant to be lovers, only sisters. But being a sister ain't no part-time occupation.

"Lolita Lebrón," that's what they used to call me at Cha Cha's. Of course, they didn't even know who Lolita was until I came in with the story of her with the guys and the guns taking on the whole pinche U.S. Congress. They'd say, "Hey, Lolita, how goes the revolution?" And then they'd all start busting up and I'd take it cuz I knew they loved me, even respected what I was doing. Or maybe it was only Tiny who respected me and all the others had to treat me right cuz of her. Tiny used to say her contribution to La Causa was to keep the girlfriends of the Machos happy while they were being too revolutionary to screw.

But it was me she wanted. And I needed my original home girl more than I needed any other human being alive to this day. Growing up is learning to go without. Tiny and me . . . we grew up too fast.

"Do you think Angie could want me?"

So there we are, fifteen years later, me sitting on the edge of her bed, playing with the little raised parts of the chenille bedspread while my sister there is taking off all her damn clothes, tossing them on the bed, until she's standing bare ass naked in front of me.

"Look at me." I can't look up. "Lola."



CHERRÍE MORAGA

PHOTO BY LILY DONG

I'm still playing with the balls on the bedspread.

"Look at me. C'mon I gotta know."

"Tiny give me a break, man, this is too cold. It's fuckin' scientific, no one looks at people this way."

"You do."

She was right. So, I check her out. There I am staring at her with my two good eyes, the blue one and the brown one and I knew she wanted my one hundred percent true and honest opinion that she could count on me for that since we were little . . . so I sat there looking at her for a long time.

"C'mon, man, does it hafta take so long? Jus' answer me." The blue and the brown eye were working at this one, working hard. I try to isolate each eye, see if I come up with different conclusions depending on which eye and which color I'm working with. Figure one is the European view, the other the Indian.

Tiny goes for her pants, "Fuck you."

And then I smell her, just as she reaches over me.

Her breast falling onto my shoulder, something softening.

A warm bruised stone.

I inhale. Grab her arm.

"No, wait. Let me look at you." She pulls back against the dresser, holds the pants against her belly, then lets them drop. She's absolutely beautiful. Not magazine beautiful, but thirty-three years old and Mexican beautiful. The dresser with the mirror is behind her. I know that dresser. For years now. It didn't change, but Tiny . . . she did. The dresser is blonde. "Blonde furniture," very popular among mexicanos in the fifties. We are the children of the fifties. But the fifties have gone and went and in the meantime my Christina Morena went and changed herself into a woman. And in front of this blonde dresser is brown Christina. Christina Morena desnuda sin a stitch on her body and she looks like her mother and my mother with legs like tree trunks and a panza that rolls round into her ombligo como pura miel. And breasts . . . breasts I want to give back to her, compartir con ella que nos llena a las dos.

"Well . . . ?" she asks.

And it had never occurred to me that we had grown up. The hair below her belly is the same color as her head. A deep black.

Oculto como un nido escondido. Un hogar distante, aguardandome.

It didn't stop there. She needed me to touch her, that's all. Is that so much to ask of a person? Angie and her wouldn't last long. Tiny didn't let her touch her. She never let any of 'em touch her.

"Never?"

"Never."

Denso.

"I don't get it. What do you do then?"

"I do it TO them."

"But I mean do you . . . y'know."

"Get off? Yeah. Sure."

"How?"

"Rubbing. Thinking."

"Thinking. Thinking about what?"

"Her. How she's feeling."

"You ever think about yourself?"

"No one's home."

"What?"

"I don't gotta picture, you know what I mean? There's nobody to be. No me to be... not in the bed, anyway." So, I put my hands inside her. I did. I put them all the way inside her and like a fuckin shaman I am working magic on her, giving her someone to be.

"Fuck fuck chinga'o man, fuck."

"Shut up," I say.

"What?"

"Don't say shit."

"But . . . "

"Shhhh." I press my fingers against her

"Don't say nothing, Tiny." Open your mouth and tell me something else . . .

She smells like copal between the legs. Tiny,
Tina who stood in front of me in the First Holy
Communion line, smells like
fucking copal
sweet earth sap
oozing outta every pore
that dark bark tree

flesh kissed
I couldn't kiss her, only between the legs
where the mouth there never cussed
where the lips there never curled
into snarls, smoked cigarettes, spit
phlegm into passing pale stubbled faces
mouthing dagger
dyke
jota
mal
flor
I kissed her where she had never spoken
where she had never sang
where . . .

And then we are supposed to forget. Forget the women we discover there between the sheets, between the thighs, lies, cries.
But some things you don't forget

smell I close my eyes and I am rubbing and thinking rubbing and thinking rubbing and remembering what this feels like, to find my body, una vega anhelosa, endless llano de deseo Donde 'sta ella que me regalo mi cuerpo como una ofrenda a mi misma? Ella Lejana. Una vez, . . . mía.

I open my eyes . . . Desaparecida.

I would've married Tiny myself if she would've let me. I would've. I swear to it. But, I was relieved when she put on her pants and told me to get out. I was relieved because I wouldn't have to work for the rest of my life loving someone. Tiny.

But I WAS willing to stay. This time I wasn't going nowhere. I mean, where was there to go,

really? The girl was family and I knew her. I knew her and STILL loved her, so where was there to go? You spend your whole life looking for something that's just a simple matter of saying, "Okay, so I throw my lot in with this one." This one woman y ya!

Tiny knew she wouldn't last that long.

She was already telling me in her thirties how tired she was, fighting. And then I read it, right there in the *LA Times*. All these women, lesbians who never had babies, getting cancer. They never mention Tiny's name, but Tiny was there, among the childless women, among the dead.

I thought, what's THIS shit? Women don't use their breasts like biology mandates, and their breasts betray them? Is this the lesbian castigo? AIDS for our brothers, cancer for us? Hate thinking like this, hate thinking it's all a conspiracy to make us join the fucking human race.

I burn copal. Her name rising up with the smoke, dissolving into the ash morning sky. Her flesh, softening like the sap turned rock, returning liquid to the earth. Her scent inciting . . .

memory.

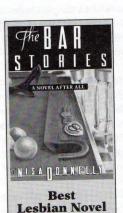
I inscribe my name, too. Tattooed ink in the odorless flesh of this page.

I, who have only given my breast to the hungry and grown, the female and starved, the women.

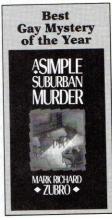
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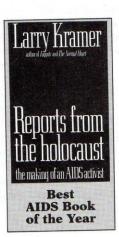
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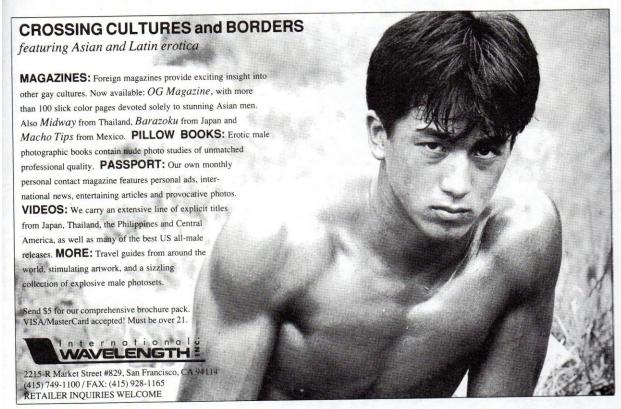
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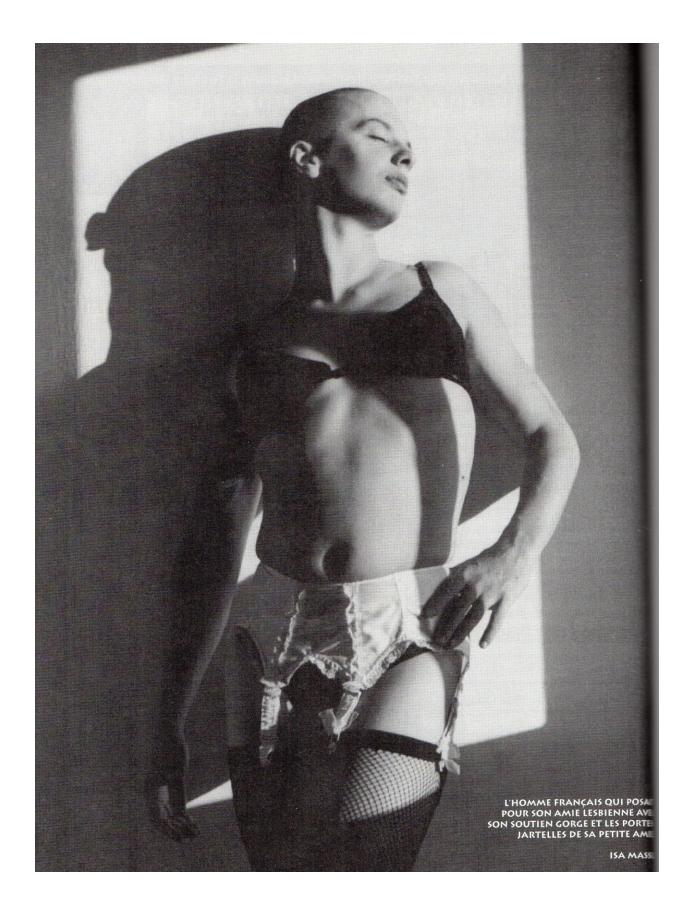
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AN INTERVIEW WITH

EDMUND WHITE

BY ADAM BLOCK

WHITE ON FRENCH AND AMERICAN GAY LIFE AND HIS FORTHCOMING BIOGRAPHY OF FRENCH WRITER JEAN GENET

I first met Edmund White in June 1989 in Washington, DC, where he received the first annual Bill Whitehead Award (named for his distinguished editor, who had died of AIDS) at the Lambda Literary Awards banquet. He was leaving directly for New York but agreed to be interviewed. I called him two days later from Montréal for an initial talk. We got together again in Paris, in October. White had accepted a full professorship in English at Brown University in Rhode Island and planned to relocate in January with his French boyfriend, Hubert. The expatriate was finally returning from his self-imposed exile after seven years. Last July, as he and Hubert were summering in Nantucket, I called to update our exchanges and capture any fresh news. —Adam Block

BEING GAY, FRENCH AND AMERICAN STYLE

ADAM BLOCK: Returning from Paris, what do you find you've missed in the US?

EDMUND WHITE: I think Americans have a much more straightforward, less mystifying attitude toward everything. For instance, in France you can have a really good friend, and he's dying, but he doesn't even mention it to you. It's considered an imposition. There is no gay community in Paris and no one to talk to. Most gay people in Paris think that it's very dull to have a gay identity. They're gay, but they don't talk about it. I think they believe that being gay-identified is very 1975.

The French are ruled by fashion; every social movement is treated as a fad and quickly declared demodé, over without even having accomplished anything. Those movements in the 1970s for the rights of immigrants and prisoners—they were not able to accomplish their goals before being pronounced 'very old-fashioned.' It was the same thing with homosexu-

ality and feminism. The same thing with Marxism. There was recently a chair in Marxist history offered in France, and they couldn't find any takers because it was considered totally old-fashioned.

As for gay liberation, Foucault argued that sexuality is not an innate part of an identity, and if we accept that it is, he said then we are buying right into a system that will always oppress us.

AB: Do you believe that?

EW: No, *I* don't. But since French intellectual life is riddled with back-stabbing, perhaps Foucault's possessive ambition to be the leading intellectual of France made him leery of being ghettoized, though that's only my speculation.

France has an entirely different system which enforces different sets of considerations. It is the size of Texas, with 50 million people. One out of six people live in Paris, and they are incredibly well informed. There are more bookstores in Paris than in the entire US. It's still possible to have a national discourse there. There is no French Jewish novel, no French Black novel—and there's not a single writer in France who would be willing to call himself a gay writer.

It's not just, 'Should I come out?' The first European Gay Literature Conference was held in London two years ago. For that first one, Yves Navarre, who had won the Prix Goncourt, Dominique Fernandez, who wrote *The Rape of Ganymeade*, and Renaud Camus, the author of *Tricks*, were invited.

They all refused. Not *one* single gay or lesbian representative came from France, except for Genevieve Pastre, who had translated Sappho. Renaud Camus has recently written a nonfiction book about the deaths of his friends. Fernandez won the Prix Femina for

his book *The Pariahs*, which argues that it's good that AIDS came along to keep us from becoming ordinary bourgeois people, and that there has been no good gay art since 1960, but that now with AIDS, we can look forward to being outcasts again. A couple of people who were invited sent angry letters, saying that they were gay and writers but not *gay writers*. *Masque* was a gay literary magazine. They interviewed me for one of their last issues, and asked me if I was a gay writer. They said that no French writer had ever answered, 'Yes.'

I don't want to attack the French or imply that they're all in the closet, because they're not: they think that we're reactionary because

we're clinging to a gay identity that cuts us off from the mainstream of human experience.

But our circumstances are very different. In America there is no general reader, just as there is no generic citizen. Everyone belongs to a special-interest group and politics is conducted by lobbies.

AB: How do the French deal with you being so willfully, openly gay?

EW: I'm treated—well. *Le Monde* recently ran a lengthy portrait of me and just barely mentioned that my books might be of interest to gay people.

I'm very divided. In a way, it's really nice to be treated like a regular writer. Here's *Le Monde*, which is like *The New York Times*, and they're calling me 'the best American writer since Henry James.' That's very flattering and it's very seductive. It's hard to say, 'I wish they'd call me, "The best gay writer in America since John Rechy."'

AB: Has the impact of AIDS on sex been different in France?

EW: The French are going on with sex—though now it's of the safer variety—but the motto of the AIDS group there for a while was:

You Must Not Abstain! I think that the French have more sex than we do. The average thirty-year-old straight guy there has sex three times a week. In America, sex is for gay people. A friend of mine once said that she thinks that very few people in the US over the age of thirty have sex.

The French are atheistic. They have no religious hang-ups. Americans are good sex because they're so aware of sin, and transgression, and ecstasy. They are either completely puritanical or completely ecstatic—which is a very neurotic but very exciting package. Whereas the French are very matter-of-fact and not very gossipy.

AB: How have the French dealt with AIDS? Have you been involved?

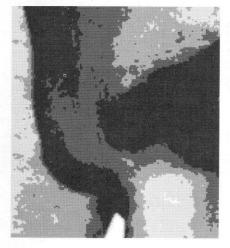
EW: Within a year after I arrived in France, Foucault died, and his lover started AIDES. I helped him in the first meetings with the GMHC model (the buddy system, which was new to the French). They have such good medical care, they don't need a buddy system, but if you're really ill, you'd rather be visited

by a gay man than a medical official.

AB: What about the suggestions that Foucault denied his diagnosis—even to his lover, Daniel Defert?

EW: Foucault himself didn't know until about March that he had AIDS, and he died in May. Perhaps at the end, he was keeping it from Daniel because he didn't want him to worry. He was trying to finish the last two volumes of his opus on sexuality, and he wanted them to be read as books—not as books written by someone with AIDS.

AB: You were saying that you're under the impression that people have a lot more sex in France. Did that have anything to do with your decision to move there?



EW: No. If anything, I had believed that it would be the opposite—thought that they'd be having less sex. I always thought that New York was the sex center of the world, and that Paris would be less so, but I have an American friend who has now come back to Paris saying that he thinks you can have a lot more sex in Paris than you can in America.

AB: In what sense do you mean that? Do you mean sex with someone you cross eyes with in the subway? Do you mean an afternoon tryst? Do you mean the kinds of public and semipublic gay sex that were going on in the States?

EW: There are bath houses in France and they're flourishing. They have glory holes and everyone is carrying on, and they're full all the time. There's the IDM sauna, which is right next to Palace disco, and then there is the Continental, which has reopened and is near the Opera House.

AB: Do they remind you of the bath houses in the States?

EW: Well, they're differ-

ent, because you don't have a room of your own as we did in the States, so you wander around and if you see someone, you grab them and try to get a room that's free—but there never is a room that's free, that's the problem.

AB: Do you find that the way the French interact sexually in the bathhouses is much different?

EW: Ummm. No, I think it's very similar. I think that they don't do much fucking, and if they do, they use rubbers. There's a huge gay population in Paris, but only a small part of it lives an openly gay life-style. Most people have arrangements—that is, they'll have three or four sexual partners whom they see all the time, or just one (but I think most have more

than one), and it's all done behind closed doors. In other words, I know a lot of people who have never been to a gay bar. And you'd never guess that they were gay. They don't dress in a gay way or anything. There is a lot of contempt for clones.

AB: There are bathhouses in American cities that remain open. Do you think that they should be allowed to stay open?

EW: I don't know what I think about that. When I read Randy Shilts's book, I was quite impressed by his arguments against the bathhouses, and I thought that maybe the reason that I wanted them to remain open is just that I

like them, I love lots of sex. But I was thinking that maybe he's right. If you look at England, it has a very low rate of AIDS, and they never have had bathhouses, whereas France has the highest number of cases of AIDS in Europe. And it's probably because they do have lots of bathrooms, bathhouses, and public-park sex. You can have a tremendous amount of anonymous sex in Paris-

between the movie theaters, the parks, the baths—it's just non-stop: you could have sex ten times a day in Paris if you wanted.



TRACKING JEAN GENET

AB: You're now undertaking a biography. Tell me about the genesis of this project.

EW: My editor, Bill Whitehead, asked me if I knew of anyone who could write a biography of Jean Genet. I sensed that he was just being kind of discreet, to see if I'd like to do it, so I said, 'Yeah. I'd like to do it.' That must have been about 1984. I began to work on Genet seriously in 1986, after finishing *Beautiful Room*.

AB: Was it surprising to you that no one in France had undertaken such a biography?

EW: Yeah, although of all the biographical subjects that could be chosen, Genet is probably the *most* difficult. So I'm not really surprised, because you have to be crazy to do it—it's an *enormous* investment in time and energy. Genet did everything to discourage his friends from ever speaking to a biographer. He did everything to cover his tracks and to throw a potential biographer off his scent, and he hated biography as a form, and swore all of his friends to silence and secrecy.

Plus he lived in a very international way from the 1960s on. During the last twenty years of his life, he was in constant motion

between Japan, North America, North Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. He just never stopped, and he would never stay anyplace longer than a few days. So just following all of his comings and goings is a tremendous task, just tracking down all of his lovers, all of his heirs.

Here was somebody who wrote in two great bursts in his life. He wrote all of the novels in

five years (1942-47). In 1956, he finished *The Balcony*, was continuing work on *The Blacks*, and began *The Screens*. So basically, all the work was done in those two periods, and otherwise he was not involved with literary people. Instead he was involved with pimps, whores, prisoners, circus people, or Black Panthers, or Palestinian soldiers. In other words, all the kind of people who are hard to find, who don't leave very many traces, and who don't want to talk with you if you are white, American, and middle-class.

AB: How is the book shaping up? Is it surprising you?

EW: It will all be news—to you or to anybody, even to a Genet scholar. I have an enormous treasure-trove of information that no one else has. I think he is one of the five or six greatest

writers of this century, so it's a real honor to write his biography.

AB: Have you encountered any resentment of you as an *American* writing a biography of this French national treasure?

EW: No. There's a feeling that I understand the French milieu well and that I have more patience than a French person would. The French don't like to write books that take years and years to write. They like to write a book every year. And they don't like biography as a form, and there is a prejudice in France that Americans are better researchers than they are, and everyone in France is predisposed toward

an American-style biography.

AB: What are the things which have been most surprising or intriguing that you've found thus far?

EW: I think the material on his childhood and adolescence is extraordinarily rich: he was brought up as a peasant boy in the Morvan, which is like Kentucky—like a hillbilly family. But the way in which he cre-

ated himself, the way he became the numberone student despite almost no advantages, I find extraordinary. His intellectual brilliance at an early age is real proof of genius.

I also think he is the *only* person who went to Mettray, the reform school, who actually *liked* it, and I think it was because he was gay and found a flourishing sex-life there. He was considered the cutest boy at the reform school, and everyone was competing for his favors. I've talked to people who knew him there.

AB: They must be quite old—when I think of even Sartre and Beauvoir as near contemporaries, both dead—

EW: When Sartre wrote *Saint Genet*, he didn't bother to ask Genet very many questions. I think that it is a brilliant act of speculation and philosophy—not biography.



AB: Was Genet a bit dismissive of it?

EW: Genet pretended that it hurt him, that it was such a deep investigation of his inner psyche that he was unable to write after that. It was just an alibi, because when the book came out he had already been frozen as a writer for two years. So he seized on it as an excuse for his writer's block. Later he said it bored him and he'd never been able to finish it.

He did almost all of his best writing in prison, and I think the single biggest fact that brought about his writer's block was the presidential pardon. In 1948, President Vincent Auriol pardoned him when he was facing a

life sentence, so when he got off, I think it kind of threw him for a loop—his whole fantasy life was to be a criminal and to be an outsider. And to suddenly be forgiven, and to be an insider: he once said to an interviewer that he wrote to get out of prison, and once he got out of prison, he couldn't figure out why to write.

I think that's the clue. I don't think he was ever co-opted or turned

into society's pet thief because he didn't have much to do with society. He always had great friends in high places, as well as all his low-life friends.

And he very much resented people who did sell out to high society and who became pets of high society. One of his friends told me that Genet disapproved of Pasolini because Pasolini liked hanging out with people like Maria Callas and lots of rich people. Genet didn't like that.

AB: Which true intimates of Genet *were* literary figures?

EW: The first big influence, and sponsor, the person who got him published, was Jean Cocteau. And Cocteau, I feel, was the single biggest influence on his life and work.

AB: Did they remain friendly to the end of Cocteau's life?

EW: No. Genet was weaned away from Cocteau by Sartre, who couldn't bear Cocteau. Nobody liked Cocteau: because he was, first of all, society's pet; second of all, homosexual; third, a collaborator; and fourth, attacked by people like André Gide for being superficial. But he was extraordinarily generous to Genet. He loved Genet and did everything to promote his career, told everyone that Genet was a genius.

AB: Was there an editor he worked with—boyfriends or literary figures whom he *stayed*

in touch with?

EW: No. He didn't like literary people. There were different friends at different periods. In the 40s, it was Cocteau, and then later Sartre and De Beauvoir.

AB: How do you think Genet would have felt about the notion of dubbing him a gay writer, or about the notion of ghettoization?

EW: He would not have

been very interested in that. He was pretty comfortable with his homosexuality, in the sense that he felt that he already knew that he was gay when he was eleven years old. It first happened when he saw a boy on a bicycle, and he had this tremendous desire to either be him or to have him: he didn't know which he wanted. When he had his first homosexual experience, he also had his first impulse to steal. They got mixed up in his mind: crime and homosexuality. But he liked both of them, of course. Crime is too big a word for it—robbery.

AB: What was Genet's response to gay lib?

EW: He wasn't very interested in it, but he did march in a gay liberation march in 1972, and he signed a few petitions and things, but he

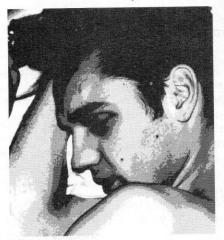


PHOTO: ADAM BLOCK

almost never had sex with a gay man. He was once in love with a gay hustler in Rome, but generally, he only liked straight men. All of his lovers were straight, and he had to find them wives, and lovers or girlfriends, and would usually build them a house—see that they were set up. And then, later in his life, he was pretty much involved with two groups of men: Black Panthers and Palestinians, and the Palestinians tolerated certain kinds of homosexual practice but not homosexual rhetoric, although I don't think he was having gay activity with either Black Panthers or Palestinians.

AB: You mentioned that he never had relations with gay men, wasn't really attracted to gay men. How do you personally relate to his sexuality?

EW: I think that what is important is to find people who respond to you in a really genuine, friendly fashion. Genet said that what he liked about both the Black Panthers and the Arabs, especially the Arabs, was that they were not appalled by the 'old body'. After age forty, most white people regard you as ugly, and if you're going to go on having a sex life, or even an affective life, you need to find people who don't *think* that. And it's pretty hard to find that—and, when you do, they tend to be heterosexual.

What I think is great about Genet is that he doesn't try to systemize his feelings and beliefs. He allows them to be separate. In other words, Genet in 1968 could go to the Democratic Convention in Chicago, be on the side of the students, the Blacks, the marginals, and so on; get beat up by the cops, who in Daley's Chicago were pretty fascist, and at the same time admire the cops' beautiful thighs.

Now, most gay men, or most people, feel obliged to reconcile what appear to be two very contradictory feelings. So in France, for instance, a lot of gay men in the 1940s when Genet was first becoming famous approved of the way the Nazis looked, so they became fascist. Some of the gays that Genet met in the 40s were extreme right. The whole crowd around Cocteau was extreme right. And Genet was a communist and a militant one while admiring

the Nazis—he got off on them sexually and condemned them politically. Similarly, he was fascinated by Hitler as a symbol of absolute evil; he was fascinated with evil and never pretended that Hitler was anything but the devil.

Anyway, the point that I'm making is that one of the signs of a sophisticated mind is to accept contradictions without trying to reconcile them. And I think that we have a sexual nature which somehow we receive. And we have to live with and accept it, one way or another. But I think it's a sign of an inferior mind if you become so caught up in your sexual fantasies that you feel obliged to live them out even on a political level...

And what is great about Genet is that he had these sexual fantasies—but they didn't lead him anywhere politically. And in fact he was able to have quite a decent, human, and, I think, honorable sense of politics while entertaining these so-called fascistic sex fantasies.

AB: These very kinds of fascination with fascism can be enacted in a field of play—not suppressed, not sublimated, not emerging only in an inappropriate and politically dangerous fashion in real life.

EW: That suggests that there is a coherence on some level, if you look far enough, between sexuality and political opinions, that rather than being identical—that is, that you are a fascist in bed and a fascist in life—they are reciprocal: you are a fascist in bed and progressive in life. But I'm saying that the more humanistic point is one that I have now reached because of my study of Genet: there's no rapport between them and you shouldn't struggle to make one. We should accept that we are not coherent. Two of the most influential thinkers for the twentieth century—Freud and Marx—are the enemies of everything I've been saying.

Adam Block is a journalist based in the Bay Area. His work has appeared in Mother Jones, The Advocate, and Image Magazine.

LIST THIS!

by Tom Ammiano and Jeanine Strobel

It appears that we are literally awash in a tsunami of lists—lists of most wanted, most wanton, wonton . . . laundry lists, Franz Lizts, *ad nauseam*. Never ones to be accused of listlessness, Tom Ammiano and Jeanine Strobel have compiled the penultimate assemblage of lists with a decided list to the aft.

THINGS JESSE HELMS'S MOTHER NEVER TOLD HIM:

- · Fairy tales.
- A small endowment is a terrible thing to waste.

LATEST GAY INFLUENCES FROM EASTERN EUROPE:

- The Lenin Sisters.
- The borscht belt, with matching shoes.
- •5,000 drag queens named "Patty Bourgeoisie."

GREAT LESBIAN FILMS:

OKAY LESBIAN FILMS:

- Birth of Insemination (the history of lesbian motherhood).
- Women In Love (Why did I pay \$6 to see 2 guys wrestle naked?).

GAY FILMS

- Women In Love (For only \$6 you get to watch 2 guys wrestle naked).
- Three Men and a Maybe.

CATEGORIES LEAST LIKELY TO BE SEEN ON JEOPARDY:

- Famous men who are impotent.
- Famous men desired by Merv Griffin.

GAY ENVIRONMENTAL TIPS:

- Moisturize! Moisturize! Moisturize!
- Fishnets are for wearing.
- Beat me, bore me, biodegrade me!

MOST POPULAR LESBIAN FIRST NAMES:

- Jan
- Anything from the Meg/Peg family
- Jill (generic ex-lover name)
- Nature-Names (Example: Tundra or Placenta)

MOST POPULAR FIRST NAMES FOR GAY MEN:

- Gore
- Rock
- Prince
- John-John
- "Girl"

GAY SPEAK—POPULAR PHRAS-ES AND WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN:

WOMEN:

- Our relationship is in transition (*My lover is buried in the backyard*).
- This is really bringing up issues for me (Where is my machete?).

•I want to dialogue with you (*Shut up*).

MEN:

- We're really close, but we don't have sex (We're lovers).
- •I'm versatile (I'm definitely a bottom).
- •I'm proud of getting older (I sold my house for an eye-lift).

TIME-TESTED LESBIAN PICK-UP LINES:

- Spare change?
- Excuse me, are you a registered voter?
- Halt! Police officer!

GAY MALE PICK-UP LINES FROM HELL:

- My, that's a realistic hairpiece you're wearing.
- •Can you help me go to the bathroom? My doctor told me not to lift anything heavy.
- •I have equity.

MOST FABULOUS FANTASIES: MEN:

•Oh, stop, Mr. Gibson—I mean, Mel—my lover's coming home.

 Tom Cruise being turnedon by male pattern baldness.

WOMEN:

- •The Bulgarian Women's Chorus.
- •Bankrupting Jenny Craig with the new Lesbian "Fuck you, I'll Eat Any thing I Want" Diet.
- Tying up k.d. lang and forcing her to type her name in upper case.

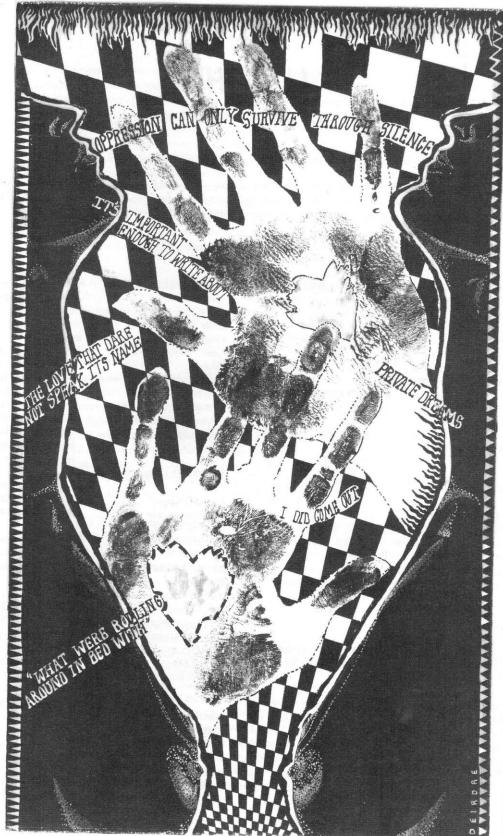
SEXUAL OBJECTS FOUND BY DESPERATE LESBIANS WHILE STAYING AT THEIR PARENTS' HOUSES:

- Anything in the crisper.
- The electric toothbrush.
- •The Shower Massage Unit.

OBJECTS HIDDEN BY GAY MEN WHEN MOM VISITS:

- Any and all temporary "house guests."
- The First Runner-Up Ribbon for the *Mr. Golden*Shower Contest.
- The Coke-Enders Calendar of Events. ▼

Tom Ammiano and Jeanine Strobel are two funny San Francisco queers.



INVISIBLE AUDIENCES

CARMEN DE MONTEFLORES

My novel, Singing Softly/Cantando Bajito,* is not lesbian in content: it centers around the lives of three generations of Puerto Rican women who suffer daily the fear and shame of racism and domination. However, the process of writing and promoting it has been very much a process of my coming out as a Puerto Rican, a woman of color, an author, and also, ultimately, a lesbian.

Being published forced me to go public with my private dreams, aspirations, highest ideals, as well as with my private pains and secrets. Writing is, for me, a process of discovery and understanding. Discovery of an inner landscape of possibility which is mediated by character, plot, image and structure. An understanding of those aspects of myself which often I cannot speak about, which no one will hear, except the blank page, or which are full of shame. Writing is the repository for all the hidden feelings and for all that has been rejected in me by unsympathetic or abusive others.

But here I come upon a profound paradox: that something so hidden and private has to be made public in order to heal, because writing also demands truth and self-disclosure to myself and to others. Whatever may generate the loving and terrifying constructions I make—fantasy, invention, deeply held values, intellect, or soul—ultimately, I will be faced with the painful labor of crossing the line between the private expression and the public statement.

*Published by Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1989.

This is where it becomes evident that writing is essentially an interpersonal creation. When I begin to consider who I am writing for (and even if I am not thinking about it), I realize that an invisible audience is affecting me. As I wrote my novel, I was aware that I was often engaged in dialogues with two audiences: my family and the market (agents, publishers, readers). These dialogues, in their content and force, replicated within the process of writing the very issues which were to become the themes of the novel: the shame of illegitimacy; the rules of secrecy, dissembling, and passing with which that shame is managed and which preserve political and psychological colonialism; the need to be acceptable, to belong; and the extraordinary fear of being rejected that often leads to self-betrayal. I discovered how buried these issues had been in bringing them to public light and how I had remained trapped in the mentality of the colonized.

П

Family As Audience

I was born in Puerto Rico and lived there until I was sixteen, when I came to the US to go to college. My father was Spanish, from Catalonia, and my mother was Puerto Rican. My maternal grandfather was also Spanish and my maternal grandmother was Puerto Rican. What was not spoken about, what was censored in all of this,

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was that my maternal great-grandmother was Black. My grandmother had not been legally married and although her relationship was probably recognized as a common-law marriage, this meant that my mother was illegitimate.

I did not learn about this until I was in my mid-forties. Race was not discussed although there was a great deal of covert racism within the family and the community. Nor was class discussed, though ultimately it was tied in with racism through coded expectations about behavior, lifestyle, and appearance. We lived

under a pervasive economic and cultural colonialism which required disimulo—dissimulation, dissembling, pretense because oppression can only survive through silence.

These roots of my family of origin affected my writing. At each step I had to struggle with the unspoken family (and societal) rules that required my silence. In the end, my inner conflict was reduced to this: what and how much was I going to say in my novel that

"they" were going to feel was okay to say? But who did I mean by "they"? Who was the audience I wanted to disclose myself to or hide from so that "they" wouldn't know who I was or what I thought and so wouldn't be able to hurt me?

These questions surfaced when I began creating the character of Seña Alba, a midwife and healer. At first, I knew very little about her, but I realized over a period of time how much her characterization was affected by my family history. Inspired by my grandmother's midwife, Seña Alba was full of the wisdom of natural things: the ocean, trees, even the ground. This poor, Black, country woman was, in my early drafts, a kind of ethereal, mythical being who, by using "correct" Spanish, belied my longing for a white-washed "literature" and exposed the class aspirations fostered in my family. But

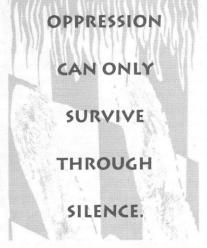
once I decided to use the rural Puerto Rican Spanish I was familiar with, Seña Alba began to change. She could no longer be a benign, Black, fairytale godmother and angel, a noble savage. Soon Seña Alba herself gave me a clue that all wasn't well in her symbolic heaven: she drank. I was slow to admit that she had a problem with alcohol. But in discovering the roots of her problem, I also discovered her deeply human story, which was shattered by poverty, misogyny, and racial prejudice. Seña Alba guided me to a recognition of those same harsh realities within my family. Her character ultimately

combined not only my childish wish for magic but also her tough humanity with a transcendent spiritual urge that bound both Seña Alba and me to the land

Then I also noted that Pilar, the main character of the novel, was so good that she was virtually characterless. She was kind to her children, endlessly patient with their absent father, thoughtful and generous with her parents and siblings, protective of her granddaughter, gallant,

courageous, forebearing. There had to be something wrong.

Because the character of Pilar was based on certain events of my grandmother's life and because I had an unqualified love and respect for my grandmother, I was at that point totally unable to explore the whole personality of the fictional character. I was afraid not only of being disrespectful of my grandmother's memory but of other family members as well. Seña Alba and Pilar, the main protagonists of my novel, represented parts of me I had not been ready to look at, so I was unconsciously censoring them. However, I kept finding clues on the page that they were more complex and basically human-fearful, ambitious, cowardly, anguished—than I had been willing to accept. This was clearly self-censorship. Eventually, as a result of continuing inner exploration, the



character of Pilar grew to her full dimensions as a woman caught between opposing worlds: the Black world of Seña Alba and the white world of Juan, the man Pilar chose to share her life with; the world of the colonized and the world of the master; between her roots and her ambition; her loyalty to her loved ones and her need to survive.

Nevertheless, it was the "language problem" in the book and the issues raised by writing a bilingual novel which revealed to me, even more powerfully than the content, the racism, classism, and sexism which poisoned

my family's relationships when I was growing up. The class system in Puerto Rico relegated the poor, the rural folk, the uneducated, the jibaros, and the people of color to a despised and feared category of "otherness." My struggle with the languages of the novel revealed to me both my complicity with and my victimization by the colonial systems under which all of us as Puerto Ricans lived. As I began to use the Puerto Rican Spanish consistently in the novel, as

well as the *rural* Puerto Rican Spanish, I had to look at how my own meanings and privileges continued to shift: when speaking to South American people, I use standard Spanish and censor myself by not using Puerto Rican slang; when speaking to the less educated, I try to pronounce each letter clearly to distinguish myself from them. I have felt that *my language was illegitimate*, just like my ancestry was. I had to deal with my shame. It was my shame about my identity that I had been censoring.

We censor in ourselves what we are ashamed of individually or as a group. We suppress in ourselves what we find objectionable. But, unfortunately, often what we find objectionable in ourselves is also what makes us different and unique. The pain of it is that those characteristics make us not fit. But can a writer afford that kind of self-censorship? Isn't self-

censorship for a writer the equivalent of voluntary imprisonment?

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Market and Audience

To be free I had to start by being more honest with myself, to self-disclose to myself. I write about what I know. I am the instrument and, as with every instrument, I have strengths and limitations. These will be reflected in my characters. It does not matter what genre or medium I use, my concerns will always be revealed

in what I do. My problems are the problems my characters are going to have.

Still, I continued to explore how I was censoring myself as I confronted other, equally complex questions when the time came to sell the book. Was I ashamed because I didn't write my first novel as a lesbian novel? Did I covertly feel that writing a lesbian novel might not be as acceptable this year as writing a "Hispanic" one? Was I opportunistic in the same way that I may have

been opportunistic and cowardly to leave Puerto Rico and come to the US to get an education instead of staying on the island and fighting for the culture I wanted? Did I sell out?

I believe that all along I was also writing for feminist lesbians who were, literally, my "first" audience as they heard me read the stories that were the basis of the novel. In my mind, I was writing about women's lives and women's relationships, about women's oppression and women's attempts at liberation within their own sphere. But I still succumbed to feelings of being marginal and illegitimate. Although I had vowed to myself to stay within my lesbian community to complete the writing of the book, I also naïvely dreamed of meeting New York agents and New York publishers who would see beyond the content of the novel and the identity of the author to the "universality" of

the theme and the "mastery" of the writing. I wanted to be "mainstream" and to derive the advantages and privileges of that position, and I wanted "them"—the white, middle-class American audience—to declare me acceptable in their terms. Legitimate. I wanted "them" to say I was a good writer, good enough to publish, good enough to review, and good enough to have stacks of books at mainstream bookstores.

The need for legitimacy made me worry that my book was just a Puerto Rican novel, so I lamely chose not to mention Puerto Rico within the text. I was anxious about how much standard Spanish and Puerto Rican Spanish to use. My fears were realized when one New York literary agent rejected the novel because she felt that too much Spanish would "only serve to annoy the reader" and that all that was necessary was a "sprinkle of it, for color." Her comments reinforced my belief that I was not good enough in Spanish, not good enough in English, and certainly not good enough as a bilingual Puerto Rican.

In addition, I was afraid that my novel was going to be lost in the crack between a feminist audience and a Hispanic** audience. Furthermore, I was concerned about offending Black feminists with my depiction of racism and my use of the word "nigger." I feared that, as someone had suggested, I was misrepresenting race relations on the island. In response to these potential objections, I struggled with recreating the collective experience of racism in the horror and subtlety of its expression within the intimacy of a family—my family.

The reality of my lesbianism came into the forefront during the final months of production of the book when my publisher and I developed the promotional materials. I, as lesbian, was going out in the world with my bilingual book about Puerto Rican women. Consciously, I considered the possibility of not revealing publicly that I was a lesbian because I was afraid of how my former college friends, or the people I used to know when I was heterosexual, would

react to my lesbianism. I was afraid they would think less of the book and not buy it. And I was afraid that, unconsciously, I might not promote the book as vigorously as I could because I thought I would be rejected both as a Puerto Rican and as a lesbian. I felt that an invisible heterosexual audience was controlling how I presented my novel to the public.

But I didn't sell out, because the question for me is not so much whether to self-disclose but rather how to disclose. I didn't write a biography, memoirs, or some kind of documentation on the effects of colonialism on the private lives of families because, as I've said publicly before, the facts are static and in that sense falsify life. For me fiction is the freedom to interpret; for me, what is real in art is what is alive. I write fiction because it gives me the freedom to disclose my emotional truth. This freedom does not come without a price, however: the final testimony to the uncensored truthfulness of Singing Softly/Cantando Bajito is that my family could not accept it.

IV

What I seek to know of truth within myself is difficult to grasp because "reality" is fluid and I am not simply one, but multiple. So my proper task as a writer is a continuing process of discovery and awe at the inner pageant of wanderers, children, midwives, grandmothers, doctors, witches, peons, masters, and magic lizards that hold me in their spell. So my question is, for all of us: are we going to love that terrifying complexity even if we don't always understand it, or are we going to create a totalitarian state within ourselves where some segments of ourselves deemed inappropriate, or subversive, or just "incorrect," will be silenced?

Carmen de Monteflores, a Bay Area writer, is now at work on a play, Bloodlines. This essay is based on Ms. de Monteflores's presentation at OUT Write 90.

About the artist: Deirdre Valdes is an illustrator and jewelry-maker who enjoys working with social and political issues.

^{**} The term Hispanic is a difficult label because it brings together diverse cultural and racial elements under the name of the colonial power, Spain, while it ignores the identity of the conquered native peoples of Central and South America and the Caribbean, as well as Blacks, all of whom have made an immense contribution to the political, social, and artistic history of the area.

WRITERS AS ACTIVISTS

AMBER HOLLIBAUGH

MOVING WORKING-CLASS
ORAL PROTEST ONTO THE
PRINTED PAGE

WRITING IS THE MOST difficult thing that I do, and activism is the easiest. The first four or five years that I wrote anything at all, I constantly told everybody that I just put it down on a piece of paper-but I wasn't really a writer. That was a serious thing for me. I didn't know how to see that identity-of being a writer-in combination with the way that I had constructed my politics. I come out of a poor, working-class family and the tradition that I understand is that you convince people with the power of your body and your voice, with a spoken language that captures them. It is an oral tradition where maybe you use a mike and maybe you don't, but it's not written. Had I used a written language, I wouldn't have been able to reach a lot of the people I care most about because they don't read, or they couldn't.

But the problem with the oral tradition as it works in my family is that it has incredible silences in it. It is both a spoken form and a form not to be violated by talking about certain topics. It's a very active thing. It has life in it, it has people and voices in it. It's also something that's not supposed to transgress into those things that people are struggling with every day and which can't be said without a certain kind of despair that can be overwhelming for those who are hearing the words.

So the tradition has to do with never saying the piece that hurts so bad. It's about how to survive, how to go forward, and about who fucked with you and who you have to get, and it's about how to survive the next piece of bad news. It's not about the inside world that you live in. Even though it's a tradition that teaches survival, part of what's assumed to be survival is silence. I was a lesbian, and as a lesbian, that was an easy tradition for me to respect. It was important to be quiet about being queer because it was crucial that people not know it, because if you broke that tradition and that silence, you potentially broke the link with the people on whom you based your survival.

When I was growing up, I had no hope. What I did have was an incredible willpower. But I had no hope. I didn't know how to get out of there, and I didn't know how to be who I wanted to be if I stayed. I didn't even know how to name what I wanted to be. And it didn't so

much have to do with lesbianism. It had to do with a world that I wanted to possess that was not offered to me.

I didn't come out until after I got involved with political movements. For me, finding political movements was the key to the interior work that I could only do much later. I first learned about political movements when I flunked high school and was told by one of my teachers, a Lebanese immigrant to the United States, that he was sorry he had to flunk me, but that it wasn't my fault—I was never meant to be in that school with those lessons and those books—it wasn't

my fault. I wasn't meant to know the things that would have allowed me to pass his course. And he gave me *The Commu*nist Manifesto.

I will forever be thankful to Gil Shasha for giving me *The Communist Manifesto*, which is still one of the most extraordinary pieces of literature I have ever read, and that was the first thing in my experience that named *class*. I had no idea, especially as a white person, that there was such a thing as *class*. And I had no idea how to see my fam-

ily and who I was and where I came from, and put that together with a future. Certainly not the future they all thought I'd have, which probably meant being married to a garage mechanic and having three kids by the time I was nineteen.

I was positive I didn't want that, but I didn't know what I did want. And even The Communist Manifesto didn't tell me where I wanted to be! But it did break something for me. It was the first thing that let me understand what it meant to be an outsider. It was the first thing that said to me, "There are reasons that the world looks like it does and has the structure that it has, and you're a part of that. You are not individual in your history, it isn't personal to you, this is about the world."

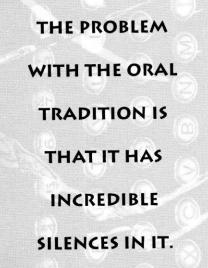
Then I looked around me, and was lucky enough to find the civil-rights movement. That was a gift in my life, like nothing else has ever been—including the lesbian and gay movement—because it had a vision of people changing the world together, a vision I have used and continue to rely on to go forward. If you ever want to know about hope, learn about that early civil-rights movement, because it was completely insistent that the world would change and that it would change in a way that never looked the same again, and that everybody who wanted in would be in it. It was the most extraordi-

nary and empowering thing that I had ever been a part of.

I continued to do political work after that. In fact, political work and being an activist were the only ways I could figure out how to deal with the reality of how I actually lived. I was a sex worker for years and years; it was the only way I could manage going to all those meetings during the daytime! The Left was, unfortunately, a middle-class white movement, which working-class people

and people of color often joined. And the structure of the movement wasn't one in which anybody who had to work before they did anything else could really feel comfortable. But many of us did it anyway.

I know there are people who have a lot of bitterness about that, but I actually don't, because being part of the movement opened up the world of poetry and great books, it gave me film, it gave me ideology. When you've come from people who have an oral tradition but no way to determine the world, you don't know why it's made up of the pieces that it is, you don't know how to name it. So ideology, for me, has never been an alien thing. It's actually been an invitation to read about my own life and my



own experience, to find myself in it and to think about why things work the way they do.

Lesbianism was a very hard thing for me to grapple with, as part of the way that I was political, because it mattered so much to me and because I paid a high price to be political: I was asked not to return to my family. When my grandmother saw me in an early anti-war demonstration, on the same day she had been notified that my cousin had been shot in Vietnam, she held me personally responsible for him being shot. I was a traitor and I was supporting the people that had killed him, and I was told not to come home.

That's a very high price to pay for politics. But it wasn't such a high price that I didn't stay political, God knows. It was just a hard place to be. And in 1966, I was a lesbian in a political movement that didn't want meeither in the Left or the early women's movement. When I was with my lover at women's conferences and we were told that we couldn't sleep in the same room because it might look bad for the women's movement, that was hard to hear.

And when I was in Canada doing a lot of deserter work, five of us who were lesbians got together and decided that we were gonna do it. We knew there was a lesbian and gay movement beginning and, by God, we were really gonna do it, we were going to come out. There was a panel we were supposed to do and it was determined that I was going to lead it because I was the best known, and so maybe if I came out first, all the other women would be safer. So I went first, and I did come out. But sadly, none of the other women did.

Well, that was kind of problematic! It looked like I was the only lesbian in Toronto. And I left Canada, quickly. Yeah—in about three

weeks! I went to Boston, which was where the gay-liberation movement that I knew was beginning. And that was an incredible explosion of identity and sexuality and politics and I was thrilled and it was terrific.

But I still wasn't writing and, back then, I didn't even do public speaking. The models that I saw for public speaking were very different from what my voice was. People that gave speeches were middle class. They used English properly and they enunciated each word correctly. These were people who *wrote* their speeches, so if you didn't know how to write,

not only didn't you write speeches, you didn't give them. And everywhere I went, everybody I saw wrote their speeches. So, I didn't think that I could do public speaking. I talked in small groups. I was great in small groups, and I was really good when I was angry, but that was about it.

When sexuality became such an incredible topic in the lesbian community, I was still very torn. I couldn't write. But there is a woman who

I did work with—because I loved her, and also because I still couldn't imagine writing on my own—who taped my words or sat at a typewriter and wrote them out. In that way, I did an article about sexuality called "What We're Rolling Around in Bed With,"* and the top blew off my world.

I didn't think that it would be such a big deal. I thought it would be like other things in the lesbian-feminist movement, an exploration of just another part of ourselves. Well, that's not what it got read like. What it got read like was

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DO AGAINST ME.

^{*} Heresies 12 (1981); reprinted in Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Tompson, eds., Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality (St. Martin's Press, 1983), pp. 394-405. The essay was coauthored by Cherrie Moraga.

that it was not possible to be out and a femme and political and working-class and have a voice and be in the movement as it was structured at that point. And so began for me an incredible battle around sexuality.

What I realized from doing that article and from going on the road doing work around the Briggs initiative** was that I had voice. Working on the initiative, I'd had to debate a lot of fundamentalist ministers and other people who defined how most folks who live in small towns in this country see the world. And that was the tradition that I come from. By going on the road,

back to those small towns, I had gone back to my people. Not my out gay people. But my hometown, my high school class, the people that I came from were in those audiences. I'd come back to be a lesbian where I'd actually grown up. I could finally reclaim the young, queer-femme lesbian who had become a communist. That was an incredibly empowering experience for me. I realized in that context-when I wasn't worried about the way I would be in front of a

university audience, when everybody looked like my hometown—that I had a voice. And I knew how to fight those men. I was as good or better a speaker than they would ever be, if I could go for what I knew, if I could talk directly from my experience. I could confront absolutely any prejudice that they had. There was nothing that they could do against me.

But the sex debates in the women's and lesbian movements still terrified me. I had just finished travelling to all those small towns, and I knew exactly how far from my background I had moved in order to come out. What did it mean if I was unacceptable again to the movement I'd helped construct? And how could I defend myself against all the things that were being written about my sexuality—about butchfemme, lesbian passion, the whole politics of queer female desire?

I was still trapped inside my own small piece of what I could do with my voice. I didn't have any other mechanism to put my experience out. I could only go to so many places, give so many speeches, be in so many demonstrations. The world was much bigger than I could reach

just doing that. It was from that position that I began to think that I had to be a writer. Not because I wanted to be a writer. But if I wanted to get my experience out in the way I saw it, the way I lived it, I had no choice but to try and capture it on a piece of paper. No decision I have ever confronted was deeper than that: if I actually wanted to have my full voice, and my full identity, and my right to go anywhere, I had to be a writer.

When I finally realized that writing for me

was about going home, it became possible for me to claim the identity writer. I've always remembered that Judy Grahn once said to Cherríe Moraga when Cherríe was just starting out as a poet, "You have a decision to make. You can either be a second-rate, middle-class writer, or you can look for your own identity and your own voice and claim it." And I still thank her for those words. \blacktriangledown

began to that to be a because I was a writer. But to get my out in the way I lino choice because I was a writer. But to get my out in the way I lino choice becapture it of paper. Not have ever was deeper I actually have my furny full ider right to go had to be a

Amber Hollibaugh works for the AIDS Discrimination Unit of the Human Rights Commission in New York City. Her essays have appeared in Pleasure and Danger and Powers of Desire and she is in the process of making a film about AIDS called Women and Children Last. This essay is based on her presentation at OUT Write '90.

^{**} California Proposition 6 (1978), an Anita Bryant, "Save Our Children"-like initiative sponsored by California State Senator John Briggs, would have mandated the firing of any public-school teachers and staff supportive of gay rights. It was defeated by California voters in November 1978.



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AN OPEN LETTER TO THE GAY AND LESBIAN COMMUNIT

FROM HOLLY HUGHES AND RICHARD ELOVICH JULY 4, 1990

On Friday, June 29, 1990, John Frohnmayer, the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), announced that he had taken the unusual step of overturning four solo performance-art fellowships that had been strongly recommended for funding by the peer panel. The artists whose fellowships were denied—Karen Finley, John Fleck, Holly Hughes, and Tim Miller—all create work that deals with the politics of sexuality. Three of the four are out and highly visible queers. We believe that the overturning of these grants was John Frohnmayer's and George Bush's attempt to appease the homophobic, misogynistic, and racist agenda of Jesse Helms and company. Frohnmayer believes he can make sacrificial lambs out of visible queer artists and no one will care, no one will speak up for us.

And, unfortunately, he may be right. Where was the outcry when the word homoerotic was included in the restrictive language passed by Congress to limit the scope of the NEA? It is only the gay and lesbian community that will speak up with an informed voice. Even the well intentioned arts organizations leading the anticensorship battle are reluctant to speak up for us, to name the specificity of the oppression. They are afraid of turning off middle America by embracing these artists' unapologetic, overtly sexual queerness. And because all gay artists and particularly lesbian artists are so invisible, our problems are invisible as well. So we must demand visibility or the issue will be lost. Yes, this is a First Amendment issue that affects all Americans, but the specific groups targeted must be named. The overturning of these grants must be seen in the context of the government's continued indifference to the AIDS crisis and the 128 percent increase in reported gay-bashing in New York City this year. The homophobes in the US government don't think we're being killed off at a fast enough rate.

We ask the gay and lesbian community to embrace this issue. There is no radical direct-action group in the cluster of arts organizations to do this work with us. We don't claim to represent the gay community or even all lesbian performance artists who live on St. Mark's Place. But the Right sees us this way. In attacking the lesbian poets Audre Lorde, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Chrystos (in Jesse Helms's direct-mail campaigns) and defunding the above-mentioned performance artists, they are trying to blacklist all of us. They want to force all of us back into the closet, where they hope we will suffocate and die in silence.

Some people say, "Well, Richard Elovich is an openly gay artist, and he got funded." We believe that this was part of a deliberate strategy to disguise the Right's homophobic agenda. This agenda is obvious if you look at the restrictive language; the word homoerotic leaps out. No other group was so blatantly targeted.

We need your help. We need to direct our outrage at Jesse Helms and anyone else who would appease his agenda—and that means Congress, the President, and the NEA Chairman. The gay and lesbian community knows from its experience in the AIDS crisis that lobbying (letters, postcards, and telegrams to Congress) is not enough. Jesse Helms must be confronted—loudly, rudely, queerly.

Further, gay men and lesbians must confront the arts institutions of this country, from the galleries to the theaters, to demand 1) that these institutions publicly support these blacklisted artists; 2) that these institutions increase their presentations of open—and we mean open—lesbian and gay artists; 3) that these institutions condemn the NEA Chair's actions and demand their reversal. To do anything less would be complicitous. In our dealings with the media, we have had to insist again and again that homophobia be addressed when discussing the NEA crisis. We need support. We ask you, the gay and lesbian community, to support the various anticensorship organizations and insist that they openly include the issue of homophobia in their efforts. These organizations are on our side, but they must be educated.

—Holly Hughes and Richard Elovich



LETTERS

AIDS WORK VS. COMMUNITY WORK?

■ Eric Rofes's sketch (Spring 1990) of the conflict between AIDS workers and gay community activists depicts this discord in personal terms. Whether he intends it or not, this is an essential basis for understanding what is happening. There is no dispute over the purposes of communitybased gay/lesbian and AIDS organizations, since participants in both "movements" invariably endorse the goals of the other. Rather, it is a matter of the way the individuals involved respond to their own interests, anxieties, and desires in carrying out their functions. AIDS work allows its gay (and occasionally, lesbian) participants the luxury of fulfillment and employment, without risk, and they prefer to keep it

Having been active in the gay movement for seventeen years, it seems to me that nothing about it has changed significantly. It is tedious slogging, with limited material or psychological reward. It is not that satisfactions are absent, but they are in short and irregular supply, well intermixed with aggravation and disappointment, not to mention the fairly steady contempt expressed by everyone else.

AIDS is the great innovation, offering a wealth of opportunity, in a fresh new context, for the next generation of activist gays and lesbians. Politicians, the media, the churches, social service agencies and professionals, moms and dads, brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces, all like AIDS much better (!) than homosexuality. And there is money galore; the AIDS organization here in Manitoba each year is given as much as it takes fifty years for the activist groups to scratch together.

In truth, AIDS work has become an industry. For the most part, it produces intangibles, with no market-force (or any other) controls. It is a bureaucracy, with the inevitable inclination to territoriality, secrecy, and self-aggrandizement, gobbling up all available resources but having no interest or responsibility outside its precisely defined bailiwick.

AIDS work may have received a special immunity from criticism because AIDS is a matter of imminent death. Up to the advent of AIDS, gay liberationists' efforts commonly were greeted with a hail of criticism from within our community, in addition to the opprobrium flung from without. In places like Manitoba, AIDS groups did not have to earn their special immunity; rather, it was handed to them by everybody else. However, this free gift of sainthood has not only prevented public discussion of their priorities but convinced them that consultation with anyone but government is unneces-

There is little cooperation or mutual assistance between AIDS groups and the community-based gay and lesbian organizations, not because of our growing resentment of their grand ways, but rather because involvement in our issues promises them only trouble. We handle all of the concerns that arise out of being homosexual, because they are all presented to us, and they are all problems for the same reasons, and they have the same solutions.

If AIDS work has no impact other than better attitudes toward and care of PWAs, do AIDS organizations care? Is it too much to expect AIDS groups to do something about the problems that *caused* the AIDS epi-

demic? To do so, they would have to recognize that there will be life after AIDS, and that some of us are working on it.

Chris Vogel, Coordinator Winnipeg Gay Media Collective Manitoba, Canada

■ Too often the debate over the so-called "de-gaying" of AIDS rapidly degenerates into namecalling and politically correct posturing. It was a relief, therefore, to read Eric Rofes on this question (Spring 1990). But while Mr. Rofes details the angst that those of us who have confronted these realities feel-how to maintain our gay liberation identities as we fulfill our broader responsibilities in AIDS service organizations-I believe he misses the most obvious reasons underlying the "de-gaying" phenomenon.

More important than the homophobia that clearly plays a significant role from both inside and outside the gay and lesbian community is the arrogance and racism that have so far typified much of the gay community's organized response to the epidemic. The sad fact is that gay community-based AIDS organizations have so aggressively fought against sharing resources and power with other communities that pressure to "de-gay" the AIDS responses is the only way for many who are poor and nonwhite-even those who are gay themselves-to assert their own right to determine how AIDS services are structured for their own

Voices that called for building broader coalitions to combat this epidemic in earlier days were too long ignored. The reality is that the internal ethnic segregation of gay and lesbian culture and politics has wedded the gay AIDS movement to a white male power structure—one which has become increasingly insensitive to the needs of the poor and nonwhite (even the gay nonwhite) as the epidemic has progressed beyond the boundaries of our largest cities' white gay ghettos.

In fact, Mr. Rofes's description of the political, cultural, and moral quandaries pale in comparison to the real threat that "de-gaying" represents to much of the AIDS bureaucracy: if power and control over resources have to be shared with other communities, what happens to all those gay people who have built secure positions and bureaucracies for themselves in AIDS organizations? At recent AIDS conferences, the issue of sensitivity to gay concerns usually takes a back seat to how we can protect our jobs and our hegemony, now that the epidemic has involved more than our own world.

Our track record is that as we have fought to preserve the gayness of AIDS, we have fought to prevent other communities from taking the power and control that they need, or limited their participation to token roles in organizations and efforts firmly based in our white gay male reality.

David R. Fair Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TRANSLATING SQUEAMISH-NESS INTO CENSORSHIP

■ Poor Stuart Edelson ("Of Torture and Tangents," Winter 1990), all he wants is to be normal. He wishes freakish deviates like Robert Mapplethorpe were not representatives of gay/lesbian life in America. Surely we'd have a better time of it if we stopped letting the weirdos steal the spotlight, Edelson laments.

Well, what can I say; as the

1990s begin, we see that this tired 1950s assimilationist schtick is still kicking around gay/lesbian communities. This time it's squeamish revulsion to anything but vanilla sex. Once again we have faint-hearted people condemning particular sexual tastes simply because they cannot relate to them. What we must affirm is sexual diversity. Not everyone has your (bland?) sexuality, Mr. Edelson. You must get over the strange demonization of s/m people and educate yourself. You don't even understand the barest basics, such as that s/m is entirely consensual and about trust.

If you don't want to do a certain sex practice, then don't do it. But if, by chance, you do want to better understand something that is foreign to you, then start by asking people in the scene to share with you their thoughts and feelings. Or you could read. S/M-phobia is of the same ilk as homophobia—the blind construction of the demonic, the Other, the sick. Do you also see how racism and sexism could come into the discussion here? I hope you do. You should.

It is obvious why you, as a gay person, might need to reaffirm to yourself that you are normal. But please don't drag the rest of us into your oppressionsickness and your longing for suburban normalcy. You must resist the impulse to turn your own sexuality into a norm.

As far as art is concerned, I am stunned by your advocacy of a sort of rating system to warn the viewer of the unexpected. Art is about being startled by the new, perhaps by something fearsome. Art is not about reaffirming one's old notions. That is not art, my friend. That is Muzak.

William Dunmyer Santa Cruz, California

JAN CLAUSEN: THE SEQUEL

■ The responses to Jan Clausen's "My Interesting Condition" (Winter 1990) are as fascinating as the original article. The first letters, either castigating or thanking you for publishing it, were to be expected. The letters in the most recent issue (Summer 1990) are especially provocative, and I can't resist adding a few of my own thoughts.

First, it is interesting that the letters ignored what for me was the most significant point: that Clausen no longer feels she can attach a label to her sexuality. This point was made quite clearly, and I am confused by the letters condemning her for continuing to call herself lesbian.

Second, as some of the letters have suggested, it is essential to create spaces to celebrate lesbian sexuality (defined as sex with women only), given that the mainstream encourages us to get so involved with the opposite sex. Where is a girl/woman to hear that it can be wonderful to love and have sex with other women? But I fail to see how Clausen can be considered a threat to lesbian space.

It seems to me that Clausen was not focusing on the joys of sleeping with a man (which would have been entirely inappropriate in a lesbian/gay publication), but was ultimately questioning rigid constructions of sexual identities and communities. If the lesbian and gay liberation movement is to survive, this inquiry is crucial. I am anxious for the day when none of us is defined and judged according to whom we sleep with.

Sharon Dale Stone Ayer's Cliff, Québec

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE COLORED MALE ME

■ What a wonderful discovery,

the Summer, 1990, issue of *OUT/LOOK* magazine! My congratulations to Jackie Goldsby for her insightful article, "What It Means To Be Colored Me," and to all members of your collective for producing a truly outstanding publication.

The magazine is enlightening and enriching. You tackle significant issues—without taboos or prejudices—and mix in intellectualism, frankness, and down-to-earth common sense like no other publication I've seen.

Your inclusiveness in promoting discussion on the length and breadth of the gay and lesbian community and our place in the world is refreshing. You also represent a standard by which to challenge most of our media and the absence in their pages of serious reportage on issues of relevance to women, people of color, and other "touchy" issues. Congratulations also on a landmark achievement: the OUT Write 90 conference.

As far as I am concerned, the OUT/LOOK Foundation deserves strong support. We all know that our community faces challenges from without. Some of us also realize the challenges from within. If we are to survive and thrive, vehicles of information that carry us forward, such as OUT/LOOK, must do so as well.

Keep on, keeping on, Michael J. Harrington Chicago, Illinois

■ I was in agreement with Jackie Goldsby's article until I got to her irritating little foray into gay men's figuration of sex and race. I felt obliged to defend my ad; to defend male sexuality.

Then it occurred to me—one of the few perks that comes with being gay is the freedom to define one's sexuality through

interaction with one's own sex! I'm not real interested in having women define my sexuality for me.

Women don't have a monopoly on grappling with the political ramifications of sex. My definitions come from male bonding. I presume Goldsby's come from female bonding. Though we share something in common, I question how productive it is for Goldsby to critique the homoeroticism of men. By definition, lesbians and gays process sexuality differently. Goldsby's intellectual understanding of male attraction is different from feeling it. I dare say there are some things she will never feel.

Goldsby insinuates my ad panders to the prurient interests of white men because my Black model has a hard hat! The flaw in her logic is the presumption that men view hard hats as class-specific. Hard hats don't reveal the socio-economic class of the wearer. In the *QI* ad, the hard hat may be more closely associated with "butchness" than class.

Goldsby implied my ad should not have been "upfront in the legitimate zone of the news." Why not? I'm not peddling guns, snake oil, or sex. I'm advocating the networking of a seldom recognized group, interracialists. Our gay press needs to make us feel more wonderful about sex again. If not in our press, where?

I resent the comparison of my ad to Robert Mapplethorpe's *Man in a Polyester Suit*. My model is an unexploited, whole person, fully clothed, presentable, and overwhelmingly appealing to men of all races at whom *QI* is aimed. *QI* is a safe place for men to share their politics, their sexuality, and a functional dialogue. We must find our own answers. Just as Goldsby said: "The broth-

ers have something to say." And we will say it ourselves, thank you.

Thom Bean Publisher/Editor, *QI* San Francisco, California

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SUSIE SEXPERT

■ Racism and erotic preference are a can of worms I have longed to see opened up in your journal. But Jackie Goldsby's essay, "What It Means to Be Colored Me," disappointed and angered me, especially in her sting of my historical lesbian erotica film show, "All Girl Action."

Goldsby remembers her experience of viewing my film clips and commentary as one of the times when her alienation and sense of insult as a black lesbian came to the fore. But she doesn't dig deep enough for me. Instead of delving into the racist images she perceived, her disgust with this one movie (Russ Meyer's *Up!*) and my accompanying commentary relies on the old smear of trivializing and sensationalizing sex itself.

Goldsby illuminates her revulsion to the film clip with outraged references to a "long, overly long tongue," and a "largerthan-life white dildo," that "rams Eve to a fascistic orgasm." These descriptions do little to unravel the racial implications of the movie, but they certainly will raise the hackles of the phallicsqueamish readers in your audience. I can hear that kind of ignorant snobbery every day in the mainstream press, which never tires of shocking America with how gross and icky sex is.

I am portrayed as a vacant pornophile who is so "thrilled by the thrusting potential of the sex toy" that I can't possibly attempt an intelligent analysis. Thanks for relegating me to the Bimbo School of Racism. As a woman who works in the sex field, I am accustomed to the expectation that I don't have any brains or sensitivity, but I'm not going to put up with it, from either fundamentalists or feminists.

Goldsby also says she doesn't expect me to understand Black homosexuality so well that I could ask the questions that matter to her. Well, why not? When I go to hear a contemporary lecturer on history, science, or politics, I certainly expect them to deliver more than a white male middleclass perspective. How they personally grew up is no excusepresumably they've had to learn and study the breadth of their subject. I'd rather you expect more from me than expect nothing!

The main clue Jackie gives me in her response to this show is when she asks if the black dyke in the film clip is being characterized as an "evil serpent." Now here's the nitty gritty—an image that draws bluntly on a classic racial stereotype. What I've seen working with Black writers, photographers, and particularly models is that they often feel in a no-win situation because of the instant racial stereotypes audiences can easily put on their sincere sexual presentation of themselves. For example, a picture of a butch or dykey-looking woman will be criticized for portraying Black lesbians as studs, gangsters, or overbearing bulldaggers. But if the subject is lying on her back, then she'll get panned for playing a slave or slut caricature; as straight, passing, or a sell-out. Women of color get the stigma of being ultra sexual; perversely sexual, no matter how they present their sexual vision.

Some react to this by putting up a wall, refusing to create or reveal any explicit erotic imagery. But that invisibility and reluctance perpetuate the racism, the conspicuous absence. The women of color who do put their sexual identity out there for the public are pioneers in confronting the racist and sexist dilemmas of erotic representation. By their exposure, they turn the "oversexed" slur into a demand, a deliberate provocation to be seen. Their appearance is a direct confrontation with the racial politics of sexual fantasy, whether they be up-to-theminute lesbian feminists or just the kind of Black dyke porn star in Up! who probably doesn't read OUT/LOOK but had the guts to do in 1973 what the shortsighted "women's community" could not look in the face.

Susie Bright Editor, On Our Backs San Francisco, California

IS IT TRUE THAT LESBIANS HAVE NO SENSE OF HUMOR?

■ I cannot allow Jan Clausen's and Mary Wings's reduction of lesbian lives to "allegiance to the cunt" to go unanswered. The loyalty many lesbians feel is not to pieces of women's anatomy but to women as whole human beings—mind, body, and spirit. This trivialization as "cuntfetishists" of women who choose to live women-centered lives independent of intimate relationships with men is shockingly reminiscent of the attitudes of the worst misogynists and homophobes.

In addition, Ms. Wings's concern about the establishment of a "National Lesbian Purity Board" is, at best, misplaced. Even if the will to do so were there, the lesbian community is too small and powerless to enforce its morality on the population at large or even on other lesbians. However, the oppressive morality of the

dominant heterosexist and patriarchal culture continues to be pushed down women's throats by all the institutions of our society. Sometimes, particularly in a period of backlash, it can even be reflected in the lives and writing of other lesbians.

Ann E. Menasche San Francisco, California

THE OLD (LESBIAN) IN-OUT

■ As a woman who is a cardcarrying member of the middle class and a teacher, I, too, find something off-putting in these increasingly vocal s/m girls with their urgent manifestos.

However, to paraphrase Andrew Holleran's "There is no substitute for an embrace," I would put it that there is also no substitute for penetration. I can't tell you the number of lesbians I've met in twenty-five years who seemed to be actually frightened of it. One hesitates to delve into the psycho/social motives here, but I would offer that to be afraid of penetration is to be afraid of one's own body. One needn't be "into s/m" to realize this.

Name withheld Long Beach, California

WHO SPEAKS FOR GAY NATIVE AMERICANS?

■ It would seem that OUT/LOOK's pages are open to anyone with an opinion on American Indian berdaches except those most qualified to speak-American Indians themselves. First we had Ramon Gutierrez (Winter 1989) with his flagrant misquotes and factual errors and his fantastic conclusions at odds with those of every authority on the subject. Now, we have Scott Bravmann citing Gutierrez (Spring 1990) and pronouncing the efforts to include berdaches within lesbian and gay history a "failure."

What Bravmann does not mention-and readers who depend on OUT/LOOK would never know-is that the recovery of the berdache tradition since the 1970s has been led, not by white romanticizers and cultural imperialists, but by gay and lesbian Indians themselves-such as Maurice Kenny and Paula Gunn Allen, whose silence-shattering articles in 1975 and 1981, respectively, preceded the "discovery" of the berdache by white scholars (including myself). Indeed, the connection that gay American Indians feel to the berdache tradition is a central and indispensable element of their efforts to challenge the homophobia that has been imposed on their communities in the past century. To deny this connection, especially in so flippant a manner as Gutierrez and

Bravmann do, is to undermine the political and cultural integrity of contemporary lesbian and gay American Indians.

This is ironic, considering that Bravmann wants to criticize social constructionists for their ethnocentrism and to offer the self-constructions of African-American and Latin-American lesbians as alternatives. But Bravmann does exactly what he criticizes. Placing theoretical knowledge over the actual experiences of Indian people, he proceeds to define the boundaries of gay and lesbian history in a way that excludes an entire segment of our community.

As for OUT/LOOK's role in all this, I can only ask: when will your readers be allowed to hear from Indians themselves? When I declined to respond to Gutierrez last year, I suggested that you offer the space to an American

Indian instead—and I provided you with the names of at least ten qualified writers. But instead we get Braymann!

Your readers can at least turn to the words of Paula Gunn Allen in *The Sacred Hoop* and the twenty different Indian contributors in *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology.* If my own view of berdaches is at odds with the pronouncements of the ivory tower crowd, I suspect it is because of the relatively greater time I have spent listening to these "other" voices rather than theirs

Will Roscoe San Francisco, California

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

To be sure your letter is considered for publication in the Winter 1991 issue, we must receive it, typed double-spaced, by September 24, 1990. Letters may be edited.

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LESLIE POWELL

REYES PEAK

Chill wind snaps on a ridge
high over Ojai Valley
in the Spring. Up before dawn
to drive this cranky mt. road
in a tired van
—Simon & Garfunkel on tapes—
Breath stops as tires skid.
Hill upon hill, as far
as the eye

Backpacking. "... There's something about the masochism of it that's very attractive."
Bloom of prickly yucca piñon pine & coulter, clumps of blue & purple flowers beside the trail.
Condor country:

"They are able to soar without movement, farther and longer than any other bird."

—A wing spread of nine feet—

& the faith healers settling the Sisquoc Valley in the '80s the people come, the condors die off

It's always the same.

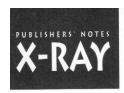
Fourth day eyes sun sore, that twinge in the shoulder—& I can't quite remember how it feels without the pack. We wind miles down the spine of the hill, to camp in dusk.
Four tired women beside a small fire, smoking grass.

BASIC ESSENTIALS

"The difficult alchemy of middle age . . . "
—Francine Du Plessiz Gray

In the cul-de-sac of rented apartments, these small totems of the single life: polished stones, a spray of grasses, metal plates that mark the kitchen. The way a blue pillow wears the light, the comfort of quilts and running shoes. With these we deal our days' providence, the tropism of earning a living, the getting ready, the getting there.

Leslie Powell is a journalist and college teacher in Southern California



Dear Reader,

The big news around here is that Jan Zita Grover has started as OUT/LOOK's new executive editor. Change can be nerve-wracking and difficult for a new organization that is still institutionalizing positions and procedures. But Jan is an adjustable sort and we're hopeful that she'll adapt to our idiosyncrasies. We're looking forward to moving successfully into the future with her.

Jan has published extensively on the visual arts and has done a lot of work on the cultural politics of AIDS. I like that she's a mother of a twenty-one-year-old daughter and that she hasn't spent her whole life on either the East or the West Coast. She's lived or worked in Ohio, Illinois, and Arizona, to name a few. She's wild about her dogs (I can't say that Rita endeared herself to me by pooping and peeing in front of my desk, but. . .) and about computer bulletin boards and networks. And, perhaps most importantly (no, not really), she came with her own computer for this computer-starved office.

It's with mixed emotions that I say goodbye to Debra "Chas" Chasnoff, our outgoing executive editor. Chas, one of the founders of *OUT/LOOK*, has had the job for two years. As a publisher, I'll miss her ability to go with the flow, her expertise in dealing with cranky authors, and her interest in making *OUT/LOOK* readable for the average reader. As her longtime companion, I look forward to a less complicated relationship. It's a bit much to live together, raise a child together, and, on top of that, work together. Talk about lesbian merge!

Another new face around here is Barbara Wezelman, who recently joined the OUT/LOOK Foundation Board of Directors. She's an accountant who's level-headed, has a great, dry sense of humor (essential ingredients for any board member), and enjoys camping.

I'm depressed by all the government's attempts to censor artistic expression but here and there are bright spots: courageous people and institutions rejecting NEA grants to protest artistic restrictions; an ad hoc group of over 200 arts organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area, including OUT/LOOK, banding together to organize Freedom of Expression Week; and fruitful discussions with our printer about the art in OUT/LOOK.



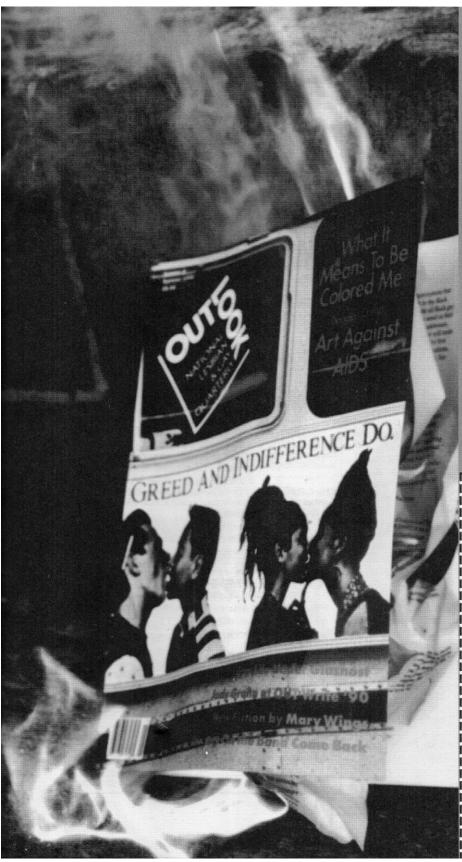
Rita makes her mark

The printer was uneasy about printing two photos in our last issue (can you guess which ones?). Some people there saw them as pornographic or didn't like what was being depicted. It was a touchy situation: we didn't want them to say they wouldn't print the magazine at all, as our first printer did, but we also didn't want them deciding what could or couldn't go in the magazine. We talked about looking at the photos in context—that *OUT/LOOK* isn't a porn magazine and that we consider the visual material we publish art. That art is offensive to some people, gay and straight, but it doesn't mean it shouldn't be published. And, to their credit, the printer agreed to print the entire issue, unmodified.

And the envelope, please. We were thrilled to be named the best special-interest publication by the *Utne Reader* Alternative Press Awards. And, for the second year in a row, the Gay and Lesbian Press Association bestowed on us the Best Overall Design Award.

Sometimes I feel like we're just plodding along—I obsess about our circulation figures, our finances, and that so-and-so who didn't do such-and-such. These awards bring a momentary lull to all that. Thanks.

Kim Klausner, for the publishers



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MISSING SOMETHING? **BACK ISSUES!**

#1 SPRING 1988

Gladys Bentley, the bulldagger who sang the blues; strategies after the March on Washington; the 1980s fem; Tokyo sexopolis; the anthropology of homosexuality; JoAnn Loulan on rites of passion; living in an unstable body.

#2 SUMMER 1988

Do addiction programs sap our political vitality?; why gay leaders don't last; comics in the closet; Robert Patrick's one-act AIDS comedy; is the Names Quilt art?; locating ourselves in the history of sexuality.

#3 FALL 1988
AIDS and the meaning of natural disaster; handling the anonymous donor question; a guide to young adult books with gay themes; fiction by Dorothy Allison; dyke softball comes out; an appreciation of Tom of Finland.

#4 WINTER 1989

Lesbian style wars; a guide to the best gay science fiction; new gay families in the South; plays by Cherrié Moraga and Sarah Schulman; homosexuality in Nicaragua; an analysis of Roberta Achtenberg's run for state office; chasing the cross-over audience in publishing.

#5 SUMMER 1989

House music's gay black roots; lesbians working on AIDS; messages to the Movement twenty years after Stonewall; lesbian and gay children of politicians; the allure of anonymous "straight" sex; East Germany faces its past.

#6 FALL 1989

Debate on legalizing gay marriage; Hollywood Square comes out; incest and other taboos; James Baldwin's lost essay on homosexuality; growing older in the

#7 WINTER 1990

Jan Clausen: when lesbians fall for men; gay images in photography; opening the Hong Kong closet; sex, lies and penetration: a butch 'fesses up; and medieval origins of antisexual attitudes.

#8 SPRING 1990

Eric Rofes on gay lib vs. AIDS; a Brazilian transvestite's response to AIDS; Gomez and Smith on Black homophobia; meet Heidi Jones: the straight gay leader; rethinking lesbian & gay history; and the separatist revival.

#9 SUMMER 1990

Jackie Goldsby on race and gay culture/politics; new Mary Wings fiction; perestroika: Soviet attitudes about homosexuality & AIDS; Douglas Crimp's Art Acts Up; The Boys in the Band come back.

Costs:
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The Happy Foundation collects documentation on the gay community. 411 Bonham, San Antonio, TX 78205. (512) 227-6451.

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FRIENDSHIP CLUB Gay men in the Soviet Union seek pen pals in the USA to exchange ideas & letters. Friendship Club, PO Box 6595, Kishinev 277050, Moldavia, USSR.

PUBLICATIONS

ENTRE Nous: Monthly calendar/newsletter for Bay Area lesbians. PO Box 70933, Sunnyvale, CA 94086, for free sample. Subs \$12/year.

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O/L OPPORTUNITIES

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Kim Klausner, Publisher OUT/LOOK, 2940 16th St, Suite 319, San Francisco CA 94103.

LEARN ABOUT PUBLISHING

We have many volunteer opportunities for people to see how *OUT/LOOK* is published. Help in our office. Must be available between 9 and 5. Call Kelly Lee at 626-7929.

DESIGN INTERN Two volunteer positions available in the design and production department of *OUT/LOOK*. 8 hours a week commitment and experience with Quark

and experience with Quark or Pagemaker necessary. Only written inquiries accepted. Attn: Art Director

WANTED: YOUR EXPERIENCEOUT/LOOK is looking for feedback from readers for use in future articles.

Dealing with Aging Parents: Anecdotal evidence suggests that lesbians and gay men are more likely to become primary caregivers for aging parents than their heterosexual brothers and sisters. Has our communities' widespread experience with caring for people with AIDS helped us in caring for our parents? How does our sexual identity affect caring for our parents?

Lesbian and Gay Teachers and Students: As school districts across North America slowly acknowledge the presence of gay and lesbian students and as more teachers come out to their students and fellow staff/administrators, gay presences and experiences are openly being acknowledged in school and college classrooms. How has your experience of choosing either to come out or not affected your experiences as a teacher or student?

If you have stories, advice, resources, or helpful readings to offer, please send them to OUT/LOOK, Attn: Executive Editor. Deadline: 12/1/1990.

OUT WRITE 91 The National Lesbian & Gay Writers Conference invites proposals for panels & workshops. Send to OUT Write c/o OUT/LOOK.

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Coming Out: The Results

The emotional significance of the coming out experience to lesbians and gay men is suggested by the extraordinary response to the Queery in OUT/LOOK No. 8—a record number of 848 people responded.

REALIZING AND ACTING ON HOMOSEXUAL FEELINGS

Most people seemed to become aware of their homosexual feelings quite early. The median age at which respondents realized that their "feelings toward other people of the same gender were sexual in nature" was age 12 for men and 14 for women. By age 17 for men and 19 for women, half of our respondents had acted on their sexual feelings. By age 20 for men and 24-25 for women, at least 90 percent of them had realized that their feelings were homosexual.

DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF "OUT"

Being "out" means a variety of things to our readers. Its most important meanings were these:

I use certain opportunities with some people	
to bring up the subject of homosexuality:	55%
I conceal nothing about myself when the	
subject of homosexuality comes up:	32%
I bring up the subject at every opportunity:	4%
Other:	7%

The importance of being "out" also varied widely for OUT/LOOK readers:

Very Important	67%
Somewhat important	25%
Neither important nor unimportant	6%
Somewhat unimportant	>1%
Very unimportant	>1%

WHO ARE OUR READERS "OUT" TO?

FAMILY: Seventy-four percent of the respondents are "out" to all of their siblings, 76 percent to their mother, and 59 percent to their father. Forty-seven percent are out to most of their relatives, while only 2 percent are out to all of their relatives.

FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES: 72 percent are out to all their friends, 38 percent are out to all of their coworkers, and 24 percent are out to all their neighbors.

Sexual identity is the aspect of our readers' identity that they are *most likely* to tell family, friends, and acquaintances about:

Sexual orientation	48%
Favorite hobby	20%
Political party identification	19%
Religious preference	8%

When it comes to those aspects of our readers' identity that others are *least likely* to know, gayness takes a definite backseat to other things:

Religious preference	45%
Favorite hobby	25%
Political party identification	17%
Sexual orientation	11%

STRAIGHTENING UP/STRAIGHTENING OUT:

How many of our readers "straighten up" their homes when relatives, friends, and acquaintances come to visit?

AI	WAYS	USUALLY	RARELY	NEVER
Parents visit	16%	24%	10%	42%
Other relatives visit	20	22	15	36
Co-workers visit	10	26	15	45
Neighbors visit	5	21	22	48



KINSEY 90: THE KINSEY SCALE TODAY

"The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats. Not all things are black nor all things white. It is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories. Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into separated pigeonholes. The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects." — Sexual Behavior in the Human Male by Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin

What pioneer sex researcher Alfred Kinsey called the heterosexualhomosexual scale is now widely known as the "the Kinsey scale." It measures a person's psychological and/or overt behavior on a continuum from completely heterosexual to completely homosexual behavior. Does the Kinsey scale accurately reflect contemporary sexual experience? This queery, which uses some of the original Kinsey questions, gives us a chance to explore this.

(continued next page) @