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OUTlook

NATIONAL
LESBIAN
& GAY
QUARTERLY

Revenge of a
Snow Queen

Blanche Boyd
Essex Hemphill
Ana Maria Simo

Lesbians at War
with the Military

Christianity and
the Homo-Sacred

Enrique Marie Presley
My Life as a
Celebutante





13

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welcome

We go to press on the heels of OutWrite '91, the second National Lesbian & Gay Writers Conference. Held in San Francisco in early March, the writers' conference attracted almost 2,000 people to its week-long array of parties, panels, readings, and receptions.

One thing that struck me this time around was the increasing visibility—almost the institutionalization—of gay “fanzines.” What just last year was seen as a very marginal kind of activity has now become a recognized part of the gay cultural scene, with new publications starting up constantly. Although the ‘zine format—small, self-published magazines, often xeroxed and sent out privately—started as a kind of “gay punk” thing, they’ve come to provide a forum for everything from the club-drag scene and younger black gays and lesbians, to teenage separatists and “polysexual” types.

This ‘zine circuit represents the proliferation of small, specialized publications, each with its own audience and style, reflecting something of the current proliferation of lesbian and gay identities, cultures, and subcultures. In an informal but energetic way, they give visibility to all sorts of local, marginal, emerging gay cultures that more established publications have only begun to explore—especially the cultures of younger gay people from all backgrounds. And however marginal they may seem, these small, self-produced magazines implicitly push the boundaries of larger, better-distributed gay magazines, both in terms of who we represent and how we represent them.

As a magazine, *OUT/LOOK* is

enmeshed in the contradictions of what is usually called “identity politics”—the idea that gay people comprise some sort of distinct and definable group, based on a stable identity and shared historical experience. My own goal as senior editor of this issue has perhaps been to question some of our own assumptions about what is lesbian and gay culture, both in terms of content and style. I wanted this issue to reflect some of the very different ways of looking at gay life, including those coming from a post-Stonewall generation for whom a politics of “positive images” is no longer seen as sufficient—if it is not dismissed outright as repressive and assimilationist. Many writers and artists are claiming the space to play with pathology, negative stereotypes, and satire, to adopt a self-mocking stance or embrace artifice and masquerade. Rather than seeking to produce an “accurate” or “affirmative” picture of gay life, they may be more interested in investigating the workings of fantasy and distortion, whether these are found in gay personals, trash fiction, or

supermarket tabloids.

Yet by questioning some of the boundaries between “gay” and “straight” cultures, by asserting a certain ambiguity, such work does not represent a step back into the closet. Instead, by implicitly assuming that American culture *is* gay culture, it affirms the impact gay culture has had upon everything. To be forced to continually counter “negative” stereotypes, or to accept some idea of gay culture as having set, pre-defined limits, already buys into so much of our own suppression. Yet to challenge these limits doesn’t just threaten the straight mainstream. It also, I think, threatens us, because it means questioning some of the sense of stability, security, and belief in a shared identity that has long grounded gay politics. Our last issue focused on how race complicates any preconceived notions of gay culture. This issue pulls together a number of pieces that invite us to question our own assumptions about what is “marginal” and explore the boundaries of our own definitions of “community.”

Liz Kotz



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Almaguer as Colonialist?

In *Making Face, Making Soul/Hacienda Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color* (edited by Gloria Anzaldúa), Gloria Yamato writes, “Now, the newest form of racism that I’m hip to is unaware/self-righteous racism. The ‘good white’ racist attempts to shame Blacks into being blacker, scorns Japanese-Americans who don’t speak Japanese, and knows more about the Chicano/a community than the folks who make up the community.” I too am sick and tired of being told by white people what my responsibilities as a Black man are, of being told that because I am Black I must always and only speak and write and think about Blackness. White people own the world, while I am confined to being Black.

I was thus especially frustrated to see Tomás Almaguer mimicking this kind of ghettoizing and essentializing rhetoric in his letter to Jackie Goldsby (*OUT/LOOK* Issue 12), in which he argues that the magazine should not publish work about people of color by white people. While I agree that *OUT/LOOK*’s top priority should be to publish material by people of color, to say that white people should only write about white people leaves us with the burden of having to remove all the silences about people of color. Under Almaguer’s plan nothing will have changed from the old homophobic, patriarchal, racist systems: whites have always focused on white people, just as men have always marginalized women, and straights have ignored lesbians and gays. Encouraging white writers to write more about whites just perpetuates their silencing, isolationism, and ethnocentrism, and

relieves them of any responsibility of having to learn about us. Wouldn’t that just suit men, too, if we told them to carry on talking about the same old male authors, politicians, and sports stars. And wouldn’t straight people be only too relieved to be encouraged to continue with their heterosexist thinking and practices.

Furthermore, I find it particularly ironic that Almaguer should deplore white appropriations of other people’s identities when he does exactly the same thing by signing his letter, “In sisterhood,” and referring to a “third-world focus” in the issue of *OUT/LOOK*. To equate the experiences and identities of people of color in the US with peoples in all “third world” countries is to conflate and homogenize differences in a gesture that re-enacts the colonizing of Africa and other parts of the world by European powers, and continued US imperialism today. I grew up and lived most of my life in Africa, where I was subject to US cultural, economic, military, and political imperialism. My experiences are very different from those of people of color in the US: while we need to

recognize our shared oppression in a racist world system, people of color in the US also need to respect the integrity of my own identity and experience; by conflating people of color in the US with “third world people,” Almaguer denies our very different situations in national and world power structures.

Ezekiel Mzika

San Diego, California

Almaguer as Racist?

My difficulties with *OUT/LOOK* continue. Despite the fact that most of your readers are white, you have chosen to step away from that readership in choosing your contributors, perhaps to edify us in what it is to be people of color, or to celebrate those cultures less known to us. These are worthy goals to be sure. You stretch me, so I’ll keep on reading *OUT/LOOK*, but the editor’s letter from Tomás Almaguer deserves comment. Racism goes both ways. As a white boy who grew up in Washington, DC, I am all too familiar with being hated because of my race. Am I being oversensitive when I catch an edge of anger, an edge of racism,



©Kris Kovick

in Tomás's letter?

For those of us who grew up with the cultural void of the American Dream, finding faerie community (for example) can be an extremely significant event in our lives, an event that helps shape our own identities. Tomás may have a strong cultural background in his Chicano roots, but many of us do not have that, and I feel put down when Tomás suggests that my search for community is laughable. Is compassion too much to ask from *OUT/LOOK's* editorial board?

White folks may control most of the wealth and political structure of our country, but we whites, queers especially, really need to find some viable cultural context, more immediate than Impressionism, Modernism, and all the other bullshit of our western white-dominated culture. Keep informing us of all points of view, which means not dismissing out of hand any group, including us WASP gay men. If we worship the earth-mother, or find growth in the New Age, or whatever, then we may be *creating* culture—a significant feat, worthy of respect and reporting.

Thank you Marlon Riggs (*OUT/LOOK* Issue 12) for giving me the power to affirm myself with pride. I am tired of apologizing for who I am.

Tom Mapp
San Francisco, California

While reading Tomás Almaguer's Welcome of *OUT/LOOK* Issue 12, I was put off by him saying, "I still admit being surprised at how seriously white queers often take their precious identities and politics. I can't help but laugh when I hear them essentializing about having gotten in touch with their 'gay spirit' or defining themselves as 'fairies.'"

Perhaps the identities of these queers have been formed partly by white privilege, but I can't believe that this means those identities should be given the scorn Mr. Almaguer shows them. A storyteller with an ounce of perspective will keep in mind how small a part her or his story is of the whole, but that does not mean her story is not worth hearing.

This cavalier attitude is in contrast to so much of what I read in *OUT/LOOK*. I'm thinking in particular of Jackie Goldsby's article "What It Means to Be Colored Me" in Issue 9. Among other things in this article, she takes on the complacency of gay white men, but her analysis is marked by a carefulness that for me sharpens the criticisms all the more. Ms. Goldsby's acknowledgment of the complexities of the issues involved and understanding attitude towards the targets of her criticism show a respect for her readership that I can't help but return.

It seems to me that every queer story is "precious"—though not in the meaning of Mr. Almaguer's use—and that is what I value *OUT/LOOK* for. I hope that his eloquently expressed frustration with the obtuseness of his colleagues (and readers like me!) won't keep him from feeling the same.

JT Kittredge
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Almaguer as Hero?

I know you will get a lot of shit from people (mostly white queers and perhaps their lovers-of-color I would guess) about Tomás Almaguer's letter to Jackie Goldsby. I just want to express my support of Almaguer's views and the struggle of dealing with well-meaning white folk who Just Don't Get It sometimes. Thanks to him for the great work he has done on *OUT/LOOK*.

A Sister
Location withheld



© Kris Kovick

You'll probably get lots of mail from white guys who think Tomás Almaguer's on-target remarks about them in his Welcome for Issue 12 were "racist." So I just want to be one white, Anglo gay man to write and tell you I enjoyed Almaguer greatly. He captured—as your entire magazine does so well—the radical, cross-cultural identity that should be the hallmark of the gay/lesbian community. It's encouraging to read pieces like Almaguer's when so much of today's gay literature and journalism is middle-class, wannabe accommodationism.

Keep on keepin' on, brother Tomás!

David L. Barlett
Chicago, Illinois

Respect Our Differences

Issue 12 was great! Although there's almost always *something* interesting in each issue, I sometimes get lost in the long polysyllabic, scholarly articles on homosexual minutiae. This time, however, even the "political" article ("Undocumented Aliens in the Queer Nation") was readable and accessible. I really appreciated the insight I gained as a white queer from Tomás Almaguer's Editor's Welcome—although it will take some time for it to totally sink in and who knows what the ultimate impact will be?

"Hannah, Must You Have a Child?" and "A Family Comes Out" spoke to me as a Jewish Lesbian moving towards motherhood. "Androgyny Goes Pop" answered some questions I have been asking myself and articulated others, as yet unanswered, about two of my favorite musicians, k.d. lang and The Indigo Girls. And "Odd Girls & Strange Sisters" addressed another area of

interest to me.

I can't resist a word on the ongoing struggle about whether what you print is good/bad/disgusting/liberating—I love you for printing *all* of it and making me *think* even when I get angry. I want to see arguments, disputes, debates, and conversation *within* our community—that's what makes us strong, helps us grow, and keeps us ever-mindful of the tolerance of diversity that must be the credo of our movement. It's been said to death but it can't be said enough—if we can't respect the differences within our community we are no better than the straights who don't accept our differences from them!

E. Martinson
White Plains, New York

She Likes Naked Men

I loved the article in Issue 12 on androgyny and pop music. It was well-written and mighty thorough, and I was thrilled to be included. However, there's one quote attributed to me that I've never made: "We love men. We just don't want to see them naked." That is quoted from a *Spin* article written about us by my old friend Michael Corcoran. Corcoran told me that he didn't have enough good quotes from us, so he was just going to make some up. There's no arguing with Michael, so I said "sure," little realizing how frequently his bogus quotes would pop up in subsequent press. I personally don't have a problem with seeing men naked, as my extensive gay male porn collection will attest. I just want to set the record straight, so to speak, finally.

Gretchen Phillips
Austin, Texas

P.S. Love all the sex in your magazine. Keep it coming.

Thanks for No Burroughs Wellcome

AIDS Treatment News, a twice-monthly newsletter published in San Francisco, recently decided to purchase an ad in your summer issue. While we made the decision in part because of the belief that *OUT/LOOK* can serve as a useful venue for promoting our work to persons who need treatment information, there was another, equally important reason.

We have been aware of the political decision-making that goes into your process of soliciting and accepting advertising (see "The Burroughs Wellcome Ad," Issue 12, p. 72), a process that we want to encourage. As more and more community publications allow ad space to be purchased by corporations and others who are hardly friends of gay and lesbian people or people living with HIV, we think your political stand is most admirable and deserves to be applauded and rewarded. It is our hope that other community-based businesses and non-profits will come to a similar decision to show support for the difficult but extremely important stand being taken by *OUT/LOOK*.

Keith Griffith
Tadd Tobias
Tim Wilson
AIDS Treatment News
San Francisco, California

Please send letters to *OUT/LOOK*, 2940 16th Street, Suite 319, San Francisco, CA 94103. Letters may be edited for length and must be received by July 1, 1991, for Issue 14.



LYLE ASHTON HARRIS **Revenge of a Snow Queen**

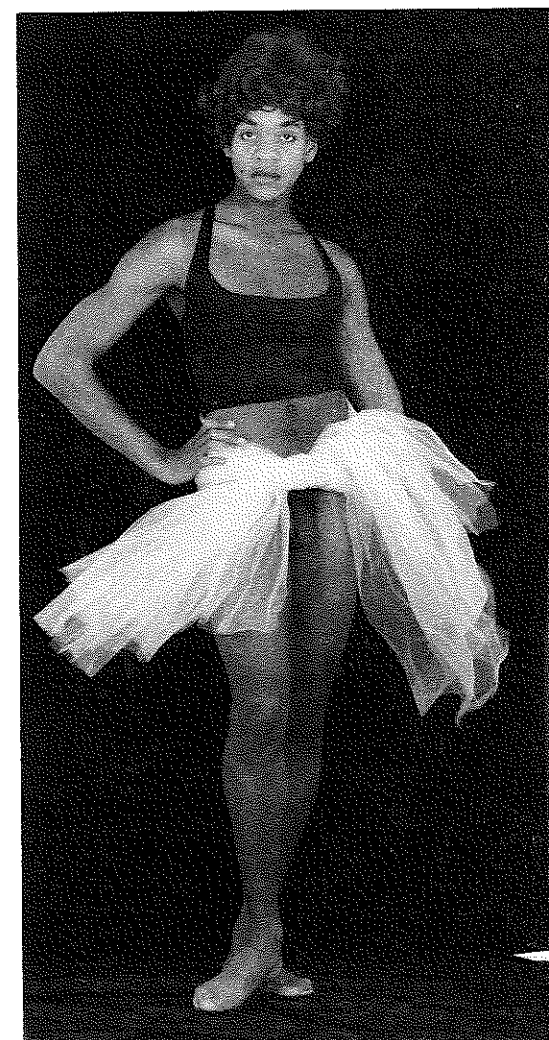
After much resistance, I have come to acknowledge my fascination personals evoke in me. I am intrigued by the blatantly spoken this type of objectification of Black men and the feeling of alienation engenders in me. ■ What led me to begin visually exploring the need to question the value placed on my own Black male body. A discourse on sexuality in the Black community—homo and hetero. begin talking about these contradictory spaces of pain and pleasure. reconstituting the Black body as site of value and pleasure. ■ I am lesbians, mainstream or avant garde, by their resistance to actively sexuality intersect. For me, it's important that we begin to question transcendental signifier. We must begin to engage in a self-reflexive interested in that space—that contradictory liberatory space where interrogate our race, gender, and class positions in order to fully claim

with the contradictory feelings such racialized desire in such voices, yet torn by and estrangement this objectification interior space of Black sexuality was a need to question the lack of public To question the quality of my Blackness. To To begin the healing of my psyche by hurt by the indifference of white gays and participate in a discourse where race and the positioning of sexuality as the racialized sexual space. I am very much we can all be vulnerable and fully our decolonized sexual subjectivities.

GM. 21-30+ y.o. (E)
 nd motivations for dating and...
 BLK Mailbox #96.
 Men of Color To me, cocksucking is al-
 most a sacrament. Allow me to accom-
 modate your dick, giving you the service
 you dream about. Put me in my sling, put
 on a condom and slide my ass over your
 dickhead, and up and down your shaft.
 GWM, 39, 5'10", 195#, beard/mous-
 tache 818 792-6758 (26)
 Sexy, white drag queen loves black dick
 (French/Greek) 415-461 4135. (28)
 White sucks, eats, drinks blacks. Bring
 beer. My place, 415-928-7736. (26)
 RGM spoke with hair leather. Phat...

Who is this ubiquitous, forever big, forever hung, sexy dominant aggressive Black top?
 Who is this Black man that we all want to possess, and yet refuse to embrace?

I choose to use photography as a way of investigating and articulating my lived experience. Through my work, I've found a voice with which to explore my personal relationship to issues of sexuality, race, and gender. I've found self-portraiture in particular to be a challenging way to interrogate the construction of my identity, as well as exploring the multi-faceted relationship I have towards that construction. For me, the autobiographical is a means of self-empowerment.



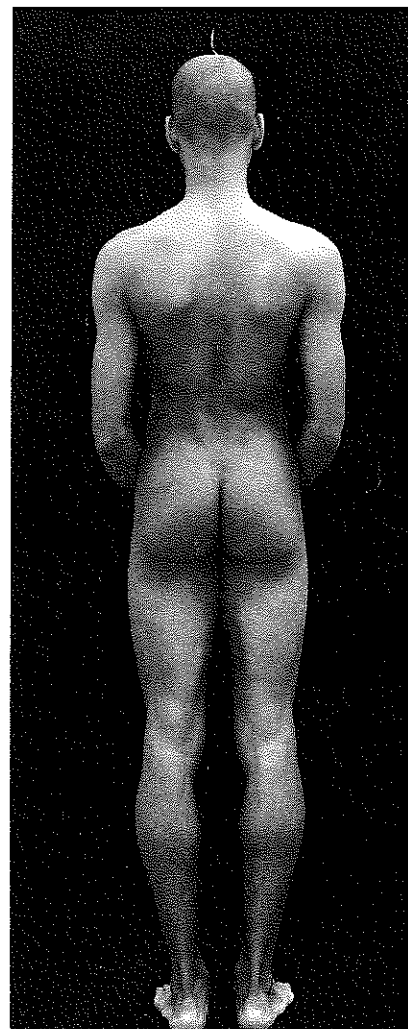
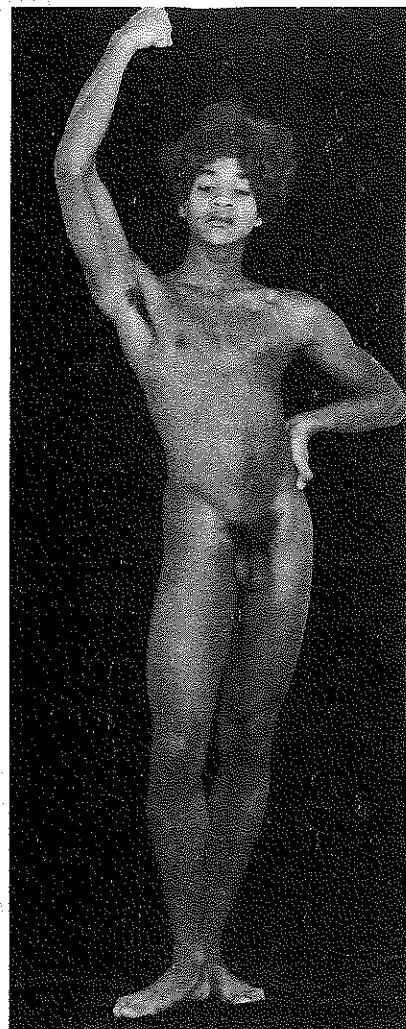
The four photomural images shown here present a juxtaposition...

Self-portraiture allowed me a way to claim a metaphoric space for myself. From the beginning I had an interest in visually exploring racial and sexual ambiguity. Through autobiography I explored the many facets of my identity: my pleasures, fears, inhibitions and desires. This metaphorical space allowed me to unveil different identities. I could choose how I wanted to be seen. Through play, I could visually address my

vulnerability, and the frustration that I experienced. I began to realize the degree to which my ideas, my thoughts, my desires were considered and treated as marginal. At best I felt I was a mimic, a harlequin, a minstrel, a trickster, a Black queen who took pleasure in this masquerade. My work at that time explored feelings of subjugation, rejection and alienation. I chose to reclaim and play on dominant racial

and sexual myths about Black people in order to create a new dialogue between myself, the image, and the viewer. And by exploring different layers of veiling and unveiling, to interrogate sexual and racial difference. The photographic play on identity and representation provides me with a means of capturing the complex polyvocal nature of Black Diaspora subjects. Through the process of veiling and unveiling, as well as layering, my vulnerability

challenges others by transgressing the boundaries imposed by the



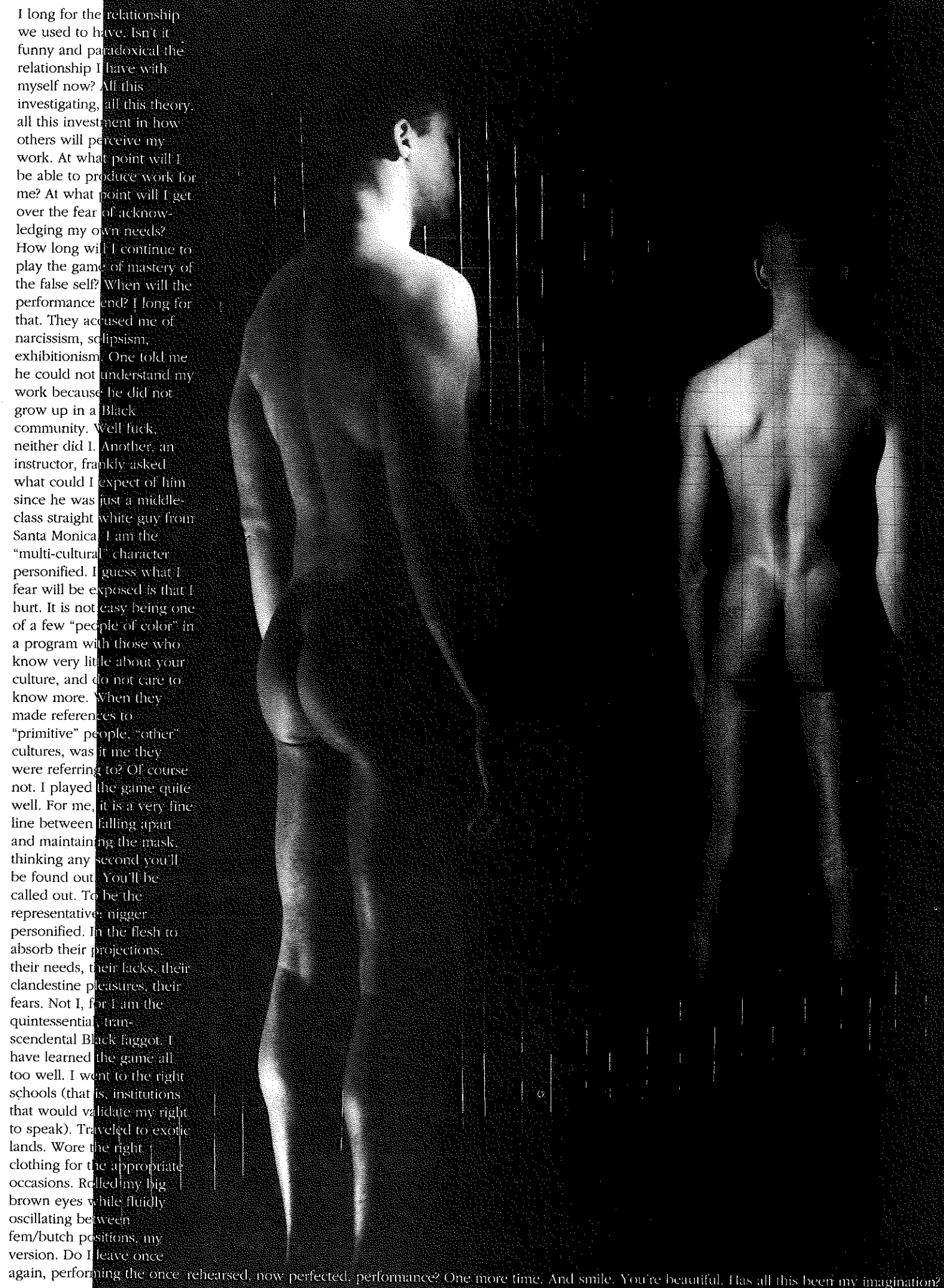
...a play of coded elements. Whether it's the excessively coded black male body, the artifice represented by the use of wigs and fabric, the nuances of posturing—confrontational, elegant, seductive, active/passive—the play on the paradoxical relationship between being vulnerable, as well as unrevealing, these images exhort viewers to examine their own conditioning of self



primary structures of sexuality and race, exploring the possibilities of fluid and multiple identities and relationships. ►

**BLACK
SELF-PORTRAITURE,
IN THIS HISTORICAL MOMENT,
HAS BROKEN MANY OF ITS LINKS
WITH THE DOMINANT 'WESTERN'
HUMANIST CELEBRATION OF 'SELF'
AND HAS BECOME MORE, THE
STAKING OF A CLAIM, A WAGER.
HERE, THE BLACK SELF-IMAGE IS, IN
A DOUBLE SENSE, AN EXPOSURE,
A COMING OUT. THE SELF IS
'CAUGHT,' EMERGING. . .**

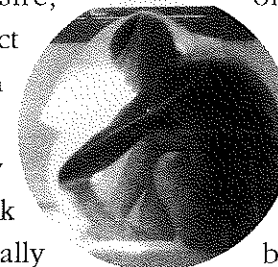
Stuart Hall



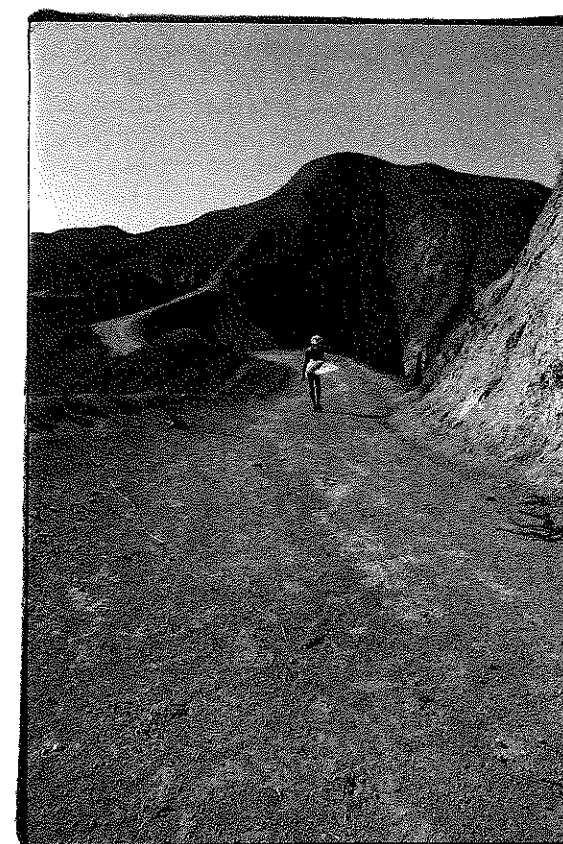
I long for the relationship we used to have. Isn't it funny and paradoxical the relationship I have with myself now? All this investigating, all this theory, all this investment in how others will perceive my work. At what point will I be able to produce work for me? At what point will I get over the fear of acknowledging my own needs? How long will I continue to play the game of mastery of the false self? When will the performance end? I long for that. They accused me of narcissism, solipsism, exhibitionism. One told me he could not understand my work because he did not grow up in a Black community. Well fuck, neither did I. Another, an instructor, frankly asked what could I expect of him since he was just a middle-class straight white guy from Santa Monica. I am the "multi-cultural" character personified. I guess what I fear will be exposed is that I hurt. It is not easy being one of a few "people of color" in a program with those who know very little about your culture, and do not care to know more. When they made references to "primitive" people, "other" cultures, was it me they were referring to? Of course not. I played the game quite well. For me, it is a very fine line between falling apart and maintaining the mask, thinking any second you'll be found out. You'll be called out. To be the representative nigger personified. In the flesh to absorb their projections, their needs, their lacks, their clandestine pleasures, their fears. Not I, for I am the quintessential, transcendental Black faggot. I have learned the game all too well. I went to the right schools (that is, institutions that would validate my right to speak). Traveled to exotic lands. Wore the right clothing for the appropriate occasions. Rolled my big brown eyes while fluidly oscillating between fem/butch positions, my version. Do I leave once again, performing the once-rehearsed, now-perfected, performance? One more time. And smile. You're beautiful. Has all this been my imagination?

THE STRUGGLE TO LIVE WITHIN MULTIPLE LOCATIONS AND TO SUSTAIN MULTIPLE STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE ARE ALLOWED TO INVAD THE MYTHICAL 'INNER WHOLENESS' OF THE SELF-IMAGE.
Stuart Hall

Ultimately, I place the Black subject at the center of what Kobena Mercer has called the matrix of desire, and inscribe myself as the subject of my own text. It is within this framework that I am choosing to articulate my personal investment in Black subjectivity and continue to visually explore it—not by denying or negating but by acknowledging and celebrating



Black desire and contradiction. My current work continues this claiming of radical Black gay subjectivity through the process of self-interrogation, and furthermore through the interrogation of location. For me transgression begins not by going beyond, but by inhabiting that racially and sexually fetishized space, and by exploring our relationship to it. ■



IN THE WORLD THROUGH WHICH I TRAVEL, I AM ENDLESSLY CREATING MYSELF.
Franz Fanon

OUT/LOOK dossier: Lesbians at War with the Military

Since the military began its antihomosexual policies nearly fifty years ago, it has kept secret files on the approximately 100,000 servicepeople it has investigated or discharged as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Now we are turning the tables. On the pages to follow, we've compiled our own files on the military's war on lesbians—and its cynical use of them when women are needed in times of war. We include in our file secret documents the military has tried to hide, advice on how to survive military purges, and the voices of lesbians who themselves have served as soldiers and officers—women who talk about the anger, patriotism, opportunities, bitterness, camaraderie, and pain they have experienced in the military.

Why lesbians? Because lesbians have served as soldiers since women's branches were added to the US military in World War II, yet they have been among the most invisible military personnel, even recently in the Persian Gulf war. The media's portrayal of a "Mom's War"—represented by images of white, heterosexually-married mothers leaving their husbands and children behind—would have us believe that there are no lesbians, no lesbian mothers, no female spouses of female soldiers, and few women of color. But there are uncounted lesbian and bisexual

women among the 230,000 women in the military today. And these young soldiers and officers, like their heterosexual sisters, include many more women of color—more than 50 percent in the Army—and women from poor and working-class backgrounds than in the general population.

Why the military? Because lesbians, like other women, join the military to leave home, learn new skills, and finance a college education as well as to find other lesbians. But while the government doles out these opportunities in return for military service, it also wages a war against all homosexuals, targeting lesbian and bisexual women especially.

Today's military policy of discharging known lesbian, gay, and bisexual personnel began in World War II. Psychiatrists who believed that it was cruel to send homosexual offenders to prison proposed that they be discharged as mentally ill instead. As a result, the military's attention turned away from prosecuting male "sodomists," to diagnosing homosexuality, making it possible to discharge women as "female homosexuals." In the decades that followed, other arguments against homosexual service in the military were tacked on—such as the "security risk" argument, added during the McCarthy era—to shore up

a policy that could not be supported with evidence. A 1981 Defense Department directive currently in effect is the broadest ever issued. It explicitly targets bisexuals and anyone who acknowledges a "propensity" toward homosexuality, whether or not they have engaged in sexual acts.

The military uses its anti-gay policy to control all women through harassment and fear. Any woman can be called a lesbian—then investigated and kicked out—who turns down a date with a man, replaces a man, does a better job than a man, or hangs out with women to escape the stress of working in a male world. Isolation, fear, subordination to men—these are the ways the military uses its anti-lesbian policies to keep all women in line.

Why not fight militarism rather than military discrimination? This is the debate that is expanding in our communities as soldiers and ROTC cadets come out in greater numbers and as our government wages "little" wars—from Grenada and Panama to the Persian Gulf—that now rival World War II in destruction. Does supporting the troops mean supporting the war and this government's foreign policy? Does opposing war mean abandoning the gay troops? If resources are limited where do we put our priorities? What about gay, lesbian, and bisexual sol-

diers—either in the closet or openly gay—who wanted to go to the Gulf to stop Saddam Hussein in what they believed to be a just war?

Lesbians have been among the best soldiers and officers in the armed forces, the most vehement critics of the military's anti-gay, sexist, and racist policies, and the leaders in the movements against war and militarism. Sometimes these seemingly contradictory tasks are taken on by the same woman. Many of us are being asked to make choices between fighting discrimination or militarism, or to

somehow combine the two.

Since World War II, a stream of suppressed studies have called the military's antihomosexual policy unsubstantiated, irrational, inefficient, and unjust. The most recent, compiled by the Defense Department's Personnel Security Research and Education Center, was immediately rejected by military officials, but was leaked to the

press and drew widespread public attention.

This dissent within the military strengthens the recent calls by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and other lesbian and gay rights organizations to dismantle antihomosexual military policy by the fiftieth anniversary of its initial implementation—January 1993. We hope our secret file on lesbians at war with the military will contribute to the debate.

Rebecca Isaacs and Allan Bérubé



Women in the Military

- During WWII women constituted 1.7% of the military (275,000 of 16,000,000); now women are 9.8% of the total (230,000 of 2,350,000).

- Women according to branch:

Army:	11.2%
Navy:	9.7%
Air Force:	13.5%
Marine Corps:	4.9%

- Women are three times more likely than men to be discharged for homosexuality; in the Marine Corps, the rate for women is eight times that of men.

Race and the Military

- Women of color constitute 37.9% of all military women: 19% of women officers and 41.2% of enlisted women.

- Women of color by branch:

Army:	50.4%
Navy:	32.6%
Air Force:	27.9%
Marine Corps:	37.1%

- African-American women make up 48.7% of all enlisted women in the Army. In the Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force, over 23% of all enlisted women are African-American.

Lesbians and Gay Men in the Military

- Since WWII an estimated 80,000 to 100,000 women and men have been discharged for homosexuality.
- Between 1,000 and 2,000 women and men are discharged annually from the military as a result of charges of homosexuality; from 1974 to 1983, 14,311 were discharged.
- Gallup and other polls report increasing public support for admitting homosexuals to the military.

	percentage in favor
1977:	51%
1987:	55%
1989:	60%
1991:	65%

- It costs the Department of Defense about \$25 million per year to train military personnel who are later discharged for homosexuality.

Women in the Gulf

- Women deployed to the Gulf by branch of service:

Army:	26,000
Navy:	2,500
Air Force:	3,800
Marine Corps:	1,000

Sources:

- The Objector: The Journal of Draft and Military Information
- NOW fact sheets
- Women's Research & Education Institute
- Human Rights Campaign Fund

when the military needs us ...

Despite its policy to exclude homosexuals from its ranks, the military has conserved personnel during times of war by discharging fewer homosexuals, then purging them when the fighting stops. The World War II army policy allowed officers to "salvage" some homosexuals, but after the war this provision was dropped. The Women's Army Corps (WAC) policy was to retain homosexually-inclined women through guidance, supervision, and transfer. Discharge was to be used only as a last resort, and only for a woman who was "an active homosexual, addicted to the practice, and possessed of a tendency to be involved continuously in such participation." After the war, when women were no longer needed, lesbians were purged in great numbers. In 1991, the practice of sending some known homosexual troops to the Persian Gulf echoed these "salvage" policies of World War II.

Following are excerpts from a "restricted" 1943 lecture on "Homosexuality" that was given to officers in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). It outlines the rationale and procedures for salvaging lesbian Wacs during wartime.

"Homosexuality is of interest to you as WAAC officers, only so far as its manifestations undermine the efficiency of the individuals concerned and the stability of the group. You, as officers, will find it necessary to keep the problem in the back of your mind, not indulging in witch-hunting or speculating, and yet not overlooking the problem because it is a difficult one to handle. Above all, you must approach the problem with an attitude of fairness and tolerance to assure that no one is accused unjustly ... Any officer bringing an unjust or unprovable charge against a woman in this regard will be severely reprimanded.

"What kind of people are we talking about? They are exactly as you and I, except that they participate in sexual gratification with members of their own sex ... It may appear that, almost spontaneously, such a relationship has sprung up between two women, neither of whom is a confirmed, active homosexual. In such cases, the underlying reason may be boredom, a craving for excitement, or curiosity. Here again, the individuals concerned can usually be constructively guided away from this practice by providing them a well-filled, active, and interesting life.

"Some women with potential homosexual tendencies can be deterred from active participation by the substitution of the 'hero-worship' type of reaction. No person is in a better position to inspire such a reaction and use it to the best advantage than the officer. If she is deserving of the admiration of those under her command, the officer may be enabled, by the strength of her influence, to bring out in the woman who had previously exhibited homosexual tendencies a definite type of leadership which can then be guided into normal fields of expression, making her a valued member of the Corps."

MURDER IN THE WOMEN'S ARMY CORPS**an interview with actress Pat Bond***Allan Bérubé*

On December 24, 1990, Pat Bond, one of the most prominent openly lesbian actresses in the United States, died in Larkspur, California, of lung cancer at the age of sixty-five. Pat was best known for her appearance in the 1978 documentary film *Word Is Out*, in which she described her life in the Women's Army Corps and in San Francisco's North Beach gay nightspots. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, she wrote and performed in four one-woman shows: *Conversations With Pat Bond*, *Gerty Gerty Stein Is Back Back Back*, *Murder in the WAC*, and *Lorena Hickock and Eleanor Roosevelt: A Love Story*. In 1990 she was among a group of lesbian, gay, and bisexual veterans who were honored by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors for their service during World War II. Pat never saw an end to a military policy that tormented her until her death.

I first met Pat when I interviewed her for my book *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two*. We quickly became friends and supporters of each other's work. In these excerpts from the interview we did exactly one decade ago (May 1981), Pat tells the story of her life in the army that was the basis for her one-woman show *Murder in the WAC*.

[When Pearl Harbor was bombed in December, 1941, Pat Bond was a high school senior in Davenport, Iowa. This excerpt begins when she was in a nearby college, where she pursued her love of the theater and another student.] I fell in love with a woman who was not in love with me. I told her and she was horrified. And so what to do? How to get away from home? I knew there were other queers out there, but where? So I joined the



army, fool that I was. But that's why young women are still joining the army: to get away from home. I just knew that there were a lot of gays in the army. I could hardly wait to get my haircut and look like everybody else!

When we got to [the WAC Training Center, Fort Oglethorpe] Georgia, as I walked in, I heard a woman from one of the barracks windows saying, "Good God, Elizabeth, here comes another one." I thought, "Well, at least they recognize that I am another one!" And we went in the mess hall and there were all these dykes sitting around with their feet up on the table in fatigues, you know, with Lil Abner boots, saying in a deep voice, "Hey Henry, pass the salt." Because those were the days of role playing. When women had men's haircuts and wore men's underwear and you could only wear men's cologne. Two kinds: Old Spice After Shave lotion and there was another tacky one, Tweed, that you had to use. I would sneak and put on perfume because I liked it a lot!

I really had nothing in common with most of the women. I was an intellectual. I was reading, and reading and reading and reading. Those were the things that interested me— theater, books, poetry. They were into baseball, football. That was it. Anyone who wasn't into those things was to be looked on with suspicion. So again I was separated, and again not really liked, not part of a group. Then for a while there in basic training, a group of women who were college graduates, or college people like I was, came through and that was glorious. They were only there for a short time, but I was in heaven. Because we understood each other exactly.

So there were all these dykes; it was just unbelievable. For some reason the army attracts gay women. I don't know exactly why. Then I thought it was because of the uniform. We wore what amounted to men's uniforms except we wore a skirt. We wore a tie, and we wore the Eisenhower jacket. Your hair had to be off your collar, it had to be that short. We got sideburns shaved over the ears—my dear, we really carried on! I couldn't believe it.

After basic training in Georgia I was sent to Shick General Hospital in Clinton, Iowa. They tell you they're going to train you. Well, they're not. It's a lot of lies. They trained me to be a medical technician, which meant that you were a nurse's aide.

We were working terribly hard. Fourteen hours a day. They would bring in convoys of men that were coming back from Corregidor, Guadalcanal. I saw six-foot-four men who weighed eighty-nine pounds. I mean, they'd been prisoners for years, some of them. And they never thought they would get out. So they were joyful.

Of course, I met a faggot there, thank God. A wild faggot! He had jungle rot. He couldn't walk around, because then it would flare up again. I used to get on the back of his wheelchair and I sailed down this hospital with him screaming "Bonzail!" And we went to a Hallowe'en party and he got in full drag and everyone loved it. He was done up as Mae West, or somebody. We had a ball.

The other guys thought it was neat.

My first sergeant—the company commander—was a lesbian. They called her "Tick." My dear, she looked like a man! She'd been a gym teacher—what else!—before she came in. And she would come in to do bed check at night and some of the women would scream. They thought a man was loose in the barracks!

[After the war, Pat was transferred to Letterman Hospital at the Presidio Army Base in San Francisco. Then she was assigned to a WAC company that was shipped to Tokyo to join the occupation forces in Japan.] We were all anxious to go because we thought we could help—sacrifice for our country. We got there, and they had a band meeting us at Yokohama playing the WAC marching song. It surprised us because we were coming over there to sacrifice. Then they put us all in trucks and took us to Tokyo. And where did we stay but the Mitsubishi Main, which was this big hotel. A maid for every two women, two women to a room. We couldn't believe it. We giggled for a full two weeks.

Later we found out MacArthur brought us over to show the Japanese women what free American women looked like—he was not prepared for 450 bulldykes! His theory was that women didn't like war. He wanted to get Japanese women the vote [as part of the post-war pacification plan]. That's why we were there. We didn't even have any jobs to do.

I had a friend—Helen. She had been going with a woman and she'd gotten attracted to this guy. It was tearing her to pieces and she didn't know what to do. She talked to me and we were trying to figure out what she could do, how she could make it easy on her lover. But she really wanted to be with this man. My lover was interested in a man at the same time, so it was hard on both of us, trying to figure out what to do.

One day Helen came to me and said that they had called her in, and that they had letters that she had written to her lover, they had listened in on phone conversations. They had told her that unless she gave them the names of ten of her friends,

they would dishonorably discharge her.

Well, she went up to her room, the tenth floor, and jumped. She was dead, and she was twenty. Then they had the unmitigated nerve to give her a military funeral! And we were all—they had to give us phenobarb to keep us quiet. We just sat and drank for three or four days after that. One of the dykes got hold of one of the officers and beat the shit out of her and we were all very pleased. It was a terrible, terrible thing.

Then one by one we heard there were more until they called up everybody in the company. Your best friend would be testifying against you, saying "Yes, I saw her dancing with another woman." "Yes, I saw her holding hands with another woman." None of the evidence was direct evidence. No one had ever seen you sleeping with anyone. "Yes, I saw her crying over somebody." That kind of testimony. Everybody was terrified. And we were so divided against each other, which is one of their skills. You suspected everyone. That's when they put us under guard so that we couldn't get out to get to anyone. They read our mail, they followed us around. We were powerless, totally.

The woman we all loved the best was our first sergeant—and she turned out to rat on every one of us. And she was gay herself. She was one of those people who had charisma, that everyone liked. Those officers, they even had men's haircuts. There was no mistaking they were gay. And they turned against us.

I went to one of the officers that I trusted, Captain —*. I didn't know then that she was gay, that she had an affair with one of our women. And I put my head on her shoulder and I said, "Captain —, they're going to kill us, I know they are." And I was crying. I can still see the Pallas Athene [WAC insignia] on her collar with my tears splashing on it. And the feel of that winter woolen uniform. Saying, "What have we done? Why are we so bad? If I fuck a man in front of them, would that change things?" Or "What would they do if I had children, would they kill them too?" You know, just

terror. And drinking and drinking and drinking until your tears mixed with your snot. No place to go, no place to turn. And the bastards knew it. Of course, you even thought you were a monster. You even thought you were strange and weird.

It was the enlisted people that got it. Captain Martha —, remember that name. She was one of the worst. She had a man's haircut, she walked like a man, she talked like a man, and she did us in. She was, I think, one of the most responsible people for Helen's death. I have fantasies still about finding her someday. Colonel — was another one. Mildred —. I have fantasies about finding them—they're in an audience, is my fantasy, and to get the whole audience to turn on them, or kill them, or beat them up just to get even.

Not everybody was given discharges for homosexuality. A lot of them were let out on medical. Some were kept in. Some that were alcoholics were thrown out for that. It was then that I said, "Aha! I am married, am I not?" [While in San Francisco, Pat had agreed to marry a gay man.] And I knew they couldn't get my lover without me. So I went to my CO and said, "I'm married. I want to go home." She said, "You're what!" So I got sent back to San Francisco. And I felt guilty like they tell me survivors of the concentration camps feel. It happened at the age when we were all just feeling our sexuality. I know women who went through that who didn't have orgasms until they were forty.

They're still at it now. Women are being transferred around, being thrown out. It has not changed. And it won't. They hate us. In World War II you went into the military because you wanted to do your duty for your country, and you also wanted to get away from home—lots of reasons. And the men—it was disastrous for some men. We're very useful and tolerated in battle, aren't we? But God help all of us when they get their filthy claws into us.

*OUT/LOOK has deleted the names of these officers for legal reasons.

Drill Instructors & Truck Drivers

Excerpted from *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two*, by Allan Bérubé.

When officers believed that a male or female trainee was gay, they could try to make them fit in by channeling them into particular duties, associating jobs with people whose personalities, interests, skills, and mannerisms fit popular notions of what it meant to be queer ... Ironically, the informal process of segregating gay men and women into "gay" duties—a process that included both assignment and self-selection—not only integrated them as homosexuals more deeply into the military organization but also helped them to develop their own work cultures as gay soldiers and officers ...

Military jobs that were popularly tagged as lesbian included the unmarried career officer, the tough sergeant, and the physical training instructor—especially those assigned to permanent training cadres. With no history of women officers to draw on, administrators who selected the first WAAC [Women's Army Auxiliary Corps] officers looked for the same qualities, including strong voices and an aggressive manner, that made good male officers. But when some WAAC officers, using male drill instructors as their models, became known for their rough language and hostile attitudes toward trainees, Colonel [Oveta Culp] Hobby [Director of the Women's Army Corps], tried to intervene. "It seems to me lately," she told a group of WAC officers in December 1943,



"that I have seen too many women officers who are hard. The last thing we want to accomplish is to masculinize a great group of women." Tough drill instructors, physical training instructors—women who had been civilian gym teachers—and WAC sergeants also were often tagged as lesbian because of their masculine roles. *YANK* described a WAAC first sergeant stationed in North Africa as "a former physical ed instructor" who "clips her hair short and wears pants." ...

But the women who were thought most likely to be lesbian were the motor vehicle operators and mechanics—the truck drivers and grease monkeys. Motor transport school was the most popular specialist course in training centers and was one of the few "masculine" duties open to Black women. At Fort Des Moines [Iowa], WAC motor corps trainees learned maintenance, repairs, lubrication, convoy operation, vehicle recovery, and blackout driving. They had the highest morale, while those in the traditionally feminine cooks'

courses had the lowest. The motor vehicle operators' course, explained a psychiatrist at Fort Des Moines, "is a masculine type of occupation and probably goes furthest in fulfilling the needs of those women who enlist in the army through a strong motivation of masculine identification." Women drivers had excellent safety records and were eager to operate heavy trucks and even army tanks. At Fort Sill, Oklahoma, a male sergeant put a WAAC driver on a ten-ton truck to "take some of the ego out of her." "Well," he told a *YANK* correspondent, "she took that man-killer out on our torture course, as we call the driving range, and shoved it around like a baby carriage." The commanding officer of a motor transport company at Fort Oglethorpe [Georgia] testified that the women in her group were frequently accused of being lesbian "because they wear coveralls." Their "masculine uniforms, appearance, and mannerisms," explained the psychiatrist at Fort Des Moines, encouraged the further "development of marked masculine

YANK
THE ARMY WEEKLY

Mail Call

In November 1945, *YANK: The Army Weekly* published the first public statement by a lesbian veteran protesting the military's antihomosexual policies.

Dear *YANK*:

I firmly believe recipients of discharges other than honorable are, in their own unique way, branded for life. I feel I know wherein I speak, for my case is one of many who received the in-between discharge "Without Honor" for a failing which I believe should be treated medically, resulting, if necessary, in a medical-type discharge.

To be more explicit, I served well for approximately three years as an officer in the WAAC and WAC. My efficiency ratings were "Excellent," and in due course I won my promotion. Then I broke—in a moment of insanity wherein another Wac suddenly attracted me in my lonesomeness. This placed me in such a mental and spiritual upheaval that I requested Washington to accept my resignation from the service. After four months of debating, it was accepted. Now that I have returned to my normal keel, I am rather shocked and saddened to see my life in ruins at my feet.

At the present moment I am trying to land a decent job. Since I entered the WAAC immediately after graduation from college in 43, I must show my discharge in order to account for the three intervening years; also, most application forms require information on military service. The result is—I am still hunting a job.

The public in general is uneducated in the psychology of handling my type of discharge, hence I find it embarrassing and impossible to elucidate upon just why I left the WAC—and just what does this type of discharge mean? Many Army medical doctors believe strongly concerning the injustice of this situation. If only people would realize this and help us with understanding rather than casting us out with condemnation!

I use the word us, for I have voluntarily drunk from the Lesbian cup and have tasted much of the bitterness contained therein as far as the attitude of society is concerned. I believe there is much that can and should be done in the near future to aid in the solution of this problem, thus enabling these people to take their rightful places as fellow human beings, your sister and brother in the brotherhood of mankind.

Columbus, Ohio
(Name Withheld)

"It was a surprise to many persons, in and out of the WAC, that some of the most efficient and admirable women had homosexual tendencies."

—Brigadier General William C. Menninger, Chief Consultant in Neuropsychiatry to the Army Surgeon General, 1943–1946

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The Implications of Militarism

an interview with Cynthia Enloe

Rebecca Isaacs

Cynthia Enloe's graduate work in Asian politics led her to Malaysia in the mid-1960s, where she studied the politics of ethnic minorities in the midst of the US military build-up in Southeast Asia. The author of *Does Khaki Become You: The Militarization of Women's Lives* (Pandora Press, 1988) and *Bananas Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (University of California Press, 1990), Enloe has emerged as a strong feminist voice on the gendered implications of militarism. She currently chairs the Government Department and teaches in the Women's Studies Program at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. Her commentary on the Gulf War appeared in *The Village Voice*.

RI: Politically there is both an anti-discrimination agenda and an anti-militarism campaign. Is it possible to both support the troops and be against the war machine?

CE: In the US it is hard to distinguish between the liberal notion of individual rights and a politics against militarism. So it can seem that WWII provided opportunities for gays and lesbians to discover and experience their sexuality, and that war in general is good for gay liberation. It is the gay equivalent of Rosie the Riveter—it looks as though wars are opportunities for gays and women during which governments overlook discriminatory policies, since they can't afford the luxury of keeping women out of industry or gays out of the military.

Militarism can allow the government to

ignore their hatred for marginalized groups in the desperation for human power, but sow the seeds for future homophobia around national security. The personal liberation during wartime conditions in WWII was followed by the Cold War's intense homophobia, which was a direct result of the way that those wars were fought.

You can push for gay and lesbian participation in the military while still being critical of militarism if there is candid discussion about the riskiness of this agenda. The reason to fight military exclusion is that homosexuality becomes despised in the society at large when the military is the final arbiter of first-class citizenship. We must try to end homophobia while working against the privileging of the military as such an important part of US society which so many young people join.

RI: How does militarism affect women and lesbians in the military?

CE: I talked recently to a career military officer who said that women in the military are still imagined to be either whores or lesbians. I thought that the dichotomy was beginning to break down, but she said the pressures are still there to be one or the other. She will continue to be a careerist because she likes the work, but she claims to be the only woman in the service that she has met that calls herself a feminist. This woman

said that the word is not used although women will speak out against sexual harassment and the trivialization of women's roles in the military. The US military currently has more processes for attacking sexism than probably any other military in the world.

RI: Yet lesbians are purged in great numbers.

CE: Yes, lesbians and straight women who are accused of being lesbians. I recently talked with a mixed group of women on a Coast Guard cutter who were all being investigated for lesbianism. They had to figure out how to relate to each other because they didn't want to fall into the trap of saying "Not me!" For those who were straight the temptation is to deny and distance themselves from lesbians.

Since 1972, when the all-volunteer force began, the military has recruited women because it desperately needs people with high school educations. Female enlistees have more education than males



and the more the Department of Defense has become dependent on women, the more edgy men of all ranks have become about the prized relationship between manliness and the military. Military recruiters are devoted to their ideas about masculinity and are resentful of the reliance on women in uniform.

RI: There is a contradiction since the military penalizes women who exhibit characteristics of this prized masculinity.

CE: Exactly. A new recruiting brochure declares that "Some of the best soldiers wear lipstick," demonstrating the requirement that women be competent soldiers without compromising military legitimacy in the larger society by being unfeminine. This is a real trick since the image of a good soldier does not parallel the images of ideal femininity. The patriarchy reveals its panic in rules such as the Marines' measurement of the exact arch women had to achieve by plucking their eyebrows. A lot of the lesbian witch-hunts have to do with this much deeper military contradiction between having become dependent on women and yet needing women to seem feminine for their own sense of masculine self-esteem and for the military reputation.

Many young women who are unsure about their sexual identities before enlisting are attracted to the military and may figure out their identities while in the military. Lesbians and unconventional straight women are attracted to the physical challenge, non-traditional work, the chance to leave home and avoid or postpone marriage. These women then become suspect for lesbianism. Women who exhibit the trappings of femininity don't fit into military culture with its emphasis on manliness including the bawdy jokes, sports, physical strength, and back-slapping camaraderie. In the Marines one is always aware of being watched and that the federal government can destroy life and livelihood. Women must see that these lesbian witch-hunts are motivated by misogyny and contempt for women.

RI: What about lesbians and gay men who identify with traditional notions of patriotism?

CE: Patriotism is closely identified in the US with whatever the government proclaims to be national security or the enemy. Europeans have a hard time understanding the traditional notions of US patriotism. They can't believe that we identify with the state and think of the military as a center of opportunity, but the fact is that the military is a holder of valuable resources to distribute.

RI: Doesn't resource distribution largely explain the disproportionate representation of women of color and working-class women in the military?

CE: Absolutely. Black women make up about 50 percent of enlisted women in the Army. It's not hard to understand this when you see how women of color are excluded from sectors of the job market and that the military is one of the few employers that offers full health-care benefits to both enlistees and their children. Black civil rights organizations have debated the political approach to Black participation in the military since the Civil War. The class implications of an all-volunteer military are that the military is one of the few locations of resource distribution in the form of jobs even in economic hard times or in areas with few opportunities.

RI: What effect does the ideology of US militarism have on women and lesbians in the third world?

CE: In every place that the US has encouraged a government to make its military its most important institution, it has been harder for women to be first-class citizens except as patriotic wives, girlfriends, and mothers. This really boxes women and men in by tying masculinity and femininity to these countries' notions of national security. Homophobia in all countries is partly fueled by false notions of national security, of who is a threat to society, who makes the society strong and vibrant.

"Equal" Treatment

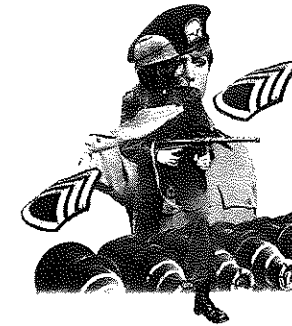
On July 24, 1990, Navy Vice Admiral Joseph S. Donnell sent a memo to Navy officers in charge of nearly 200 ships and 40 shore installations in the eastern US. Here are excerpts of this candid, now-infamous document attempting to legitimize harsh "equal" discrimination against lesbians and against gay men.

Subj:
Equal treatment of male and female homosexuals

1. With the influx of women on our ships and throughout the Navy in general, it is necessary to address the sensitive issue of female homosexuality and ensure equal treatment of male and female homosexuals ...

2. There is a perception by many that female homosexuality is somewhat tolerated, while male homosexuality is dealt with swiftly and sternly. Several possible reasons for this perception exist. Unless a woman admits to being a homosexual, it is often very difficult to prove ... Experience has shown that the stereotypical female homosexual in the Navy is more aggressive than her male counterpart, intimidating those women who might turn her in to the chain of command ...

3. Experience has also shown that the stereotypical female homosexual in the Navy is hardworking, career-oriented, willing to put in long hours on the job, and among the command's top professionals. As such, allegations that this woman is a homosexual, particularly if made by a young and junior female sailor with no track record, may be dismissed out of hand or pursued half-heartedly ...



Here we are, Mr. President

Miriam Ben-Shalom has fought for the rights of lesbians and gay men to participate in the military since she was discharged in 1976. During the Gulf War she wrote an impassioned plea on behalf of the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Veterans of America. This is an excerpt.

Mr. President, you asked in times past for a thousand points of light. Here we are, Mr. President. We are here. We are ready. We are able and willing. We urge you to set aside baseless prejudice and antiquated bias and rescind DOD directives which prohibit us from returning to the service of America in her time of need. As did the African-American patriots of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment (of Civil War fame), who were also told they were unfit to serve, that they were a detriment to morale, and a threat to security, let us prove our value on the field of battle. We are willing to go and serve where we are needed, even to the front lines in the Persian Gulf.

Surviving Witch-Hunts

Historically, it has been during postwar periods that the military has stepped up its antihomosexual purges. As troops stationed in the Persian Gulf return to the United States, lesbians, gays and bisexuals once again face vigorous military "witch-hunts." The Gay and Lesbian Military Freedom Project recommends the following action if you are being investigated or a purge has begun in your unit. **LEARN YOUR RIGHTS!** Only by using your rights can you help protect yourself from an unnecessary or bad discharge. Remember these rules:

SAY NOTHING!
SIGN NOTHING!
GET A LAWYER!
FIGHT BACK!

Take these steps:

1. KEEP QUIET/SIGN NOTHING—Anything you say, sign, or initial can and will be used against you. Military investigators are paid to convince you that they are your friends—**DON'T TRUST THEM!** Remember: no one can order you to say, sign, or initial anything.

2. DO NOT GIVE NAMES—You may be asked, and even pressured, for the names of people you think are lesbian or gay. **GIVING NAMES WILL NEVER, EVER HELP YOU.**

3. GET CIVILIAN COUNSEL—You have the right to civilian counsel, but you have to find it and pay for it yourself. There are groups (see List on page 27) that may be able to help you find inexpensive or free civilian counsel. You should talk to civilian counsel before you talk to a military lawyer and before you do anything else.

4. GET A MILITARY LAWYER—You have the right to a military lawyer and you should get one. However, a few instances have been reported of military lawyers breaking client-lawyer confidentiality. If you don't like the attorney assigned to you, you may request another one.

A letter from Congress

authored by Gerry Studds

March 15, 1991

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express to you our whole-hearted support for each and every American soldier, sailor, airman, and Marine who served so well in the Persian Gulf. As you have said so many times, every one of them has performed magnificently and deserves our respect and gratitude.

We support all our military personnel in the Gulf—including some fifty thousand gay and lesbian soldiers who have served and are continuing to serve so valiantly.

We believe that these gay and lesbian soldiers are facing unusual pressures. While enduring the same hardships of war as their non-gay colleagues and making the same sacrifices, gay and lesbian service members must hide an integral part of themselves. While a non-gay soldier can take comfort in a photograph or letter from a spouse, a gay soldier must deny the very existence of his or her loved one. When others talk about their homes and families, gay soldiers must remain silent.

This painful denial is made necessary by the Pentagon's archaic and destructive policy of barring all gays and lesbians from the military, regardless of ability. Those already serving who are discovered to be gay are summarily discharged, years of loyal and competent service notwithstanding.

As his ships deployed to the Persian Gulf last fall, Admiral Joseph Donnell, Commander of the Navy's Surface Atlantic Fleet, issued a confidential memo describing lesbians as "hard-working, career-oriented, willing to put in long hours on the job and among the command's top professionals." He then directed his officers to immediately discharge all lesbians. Though its own studies—as recently as January 1989—have repeatedly urged its rescission, the Defense Department continues to vigorously and brutally enforce the anti-gay ban.

Many patriotic gays and lesbians choose to enter the military anyway, concealing their sexuality in order to serve. Thousands of these brave men and women were part of Operation Desert Storm. They have risked their lives for our country while being told in no uncertain terms that "if the Iraqis don't get you, the US Military will."

In 1948, after serving valiantly in World War II, African-Americans were finally given equal status in the military. Despite the Pentagon's strident claims that racial integration would cripple the military, President Truman issued an Executive Order compelling the Defense Department to end racial discrimination. No one would argue with his decision today.

We submit that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is as wrong as discrimination on the basis of race. The only difference is that gay people cannot be detected simply by the color of their skin. Gays always have and always will serve in the US military—the only question is when they will be allowed to do so with dignity.

Mr. President, you have praised our service personnel and encouraged us to support each and every one of them fully and proudly. We urge you to afford our gay and lesbian troops that same well-deserved respect and to end the military's shameful discrimination.

Sincerely,

Gerry E. Studds, M.C. (D) MA
Mel Levine, M.C. (D) CA
Henry A. Waxman, M.C. (D) CA
Bill Green, M.C. (R) NY
Robert Matsui, M.C. (D) CA
Don Edwards, M.C. (D) CA
Charles B. Rangel, M.C. (D) NY
Patricia Schroeder, M.C. (D) CO
Ronald V. Dellums, M.C. (D) CA
Chester G. Atkins, M.C. (D) MA
Howard L. Berman, M.C. (D) CA
Barbara Boxer, M.C. (D) CA
Jim McDermott, M.C. (D) WA
Stephen J. Solarz, M.C. (D) NY

Jolene Unsoeld, M.C. (D) WA
Neil Abercrombie, M.C. (D) HI
Maxine Waters, M.C. (D) CA
Joseph P. Kennedy, M.C. (D) MA
Alan Wheat, M.C. (D) MO
Eliot L. Engel, M.C. (D) NY
Craig A. Washington, M.C. (D) TX
Ted Weiss, M.C. (D) NY
Peter H. Kostmayer, M.C. (D) PA
Barney Frank, M.C. (D) MA
William Lehman, M.C. (D) FL
George Miller, M.C. (D) CA
James H. Scheuer, M.C. (D) NY
Les Aucoin, M.C. (D) OR

Vic Fazio, M.C. (D) CA
Nancy Pelosi, M.C. (D) CA
John Miller, M.C. (R) WA
Thomas Andrews, M.C. (D) ME
Eleanor Holmes Norton, M.C. (D) DC
Michael J. Kopetski, M.C. (D) OR
Connie Morella, M.C. (R) MD
Anthony C. Beilenson, M.C. (D) CA
Gary L. Ackerman, M.C. (D) NY
Ron Wyden, M.C. (D) OR
Lane Evans, M.C. (D) IL
Peter Defazio, M.C. (D) OR

Resources: The Military and Militarism

LIST

If you or someone you know is thinking about joining the military or ROTC, currently serving in the armed services or ROTC, or a veteran, the following organizations can be of help. They will provide information, legal assistance, referrals, counseling, and support.

ACLU/Lesbian and Gay Rights Project 132 West 43rd Street New York, NY 10036 (212) 944-9800, ext. 545	Midwest Committee for Military Counseling 59 E. Van Buren Street, suite 1400 Chicago, IL 60605 (312) 939-3349	National Gay Rights Advocates 540 Castro Street San Francisco, CA 94114 (415) 863-3624
Alexander Hamilton Veterans Assoc. 401 Van Ness Avenue, room 128 San Francisco, CA 94102 (415) 431-1413	Military Law Task Force, National Lawyers Guild 1168 Union Street #201 San Diego, CA 92101 (619) 233-1701	National Organization for Women 1000 16th Street NW, suite 700 Washington, DC 20036 (202) 331-0066
Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Veterans of America 1350 N. 37th Place Milwaukee, WI 53208 (414) 342-6543	National Center for Lesbian Rights 1663 Mission Street, 5th floor San Francisco, CA 94103 (415) 621-0674	New England Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Veterans 338 Newbury Street Boston, MA 02115 (617) 436-0760 (619) 267-6664
Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund 666 Broadway, 12th floor New York, NY 10012 (212) 995-8585	National Gay and Lesbian Task Force 1517 U Street NW Washington, DC 20009 (202) 332-6483	Veterans CARE PO Box 3126 Rohnert Park, CA 94927-3126 (707) 829-5393

BOOKS There is a small but growing number of books that document the history of women, lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals in the military and provide information on how to deal with military harassment.

<i>Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women During World War II</i> , Allan Bérubé. New York: Plume/Penguin, 1991.	<i>The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s</i> , Susan M. Hartmann. Boston: Twayne, 1982.	<i>Perverts by Official Order: The Campaign Against Homosexuals by the United States Navy</i> , Lawrence R. Murphy. New York: Harrington Park Press, 1988.
<i>Does Khaki Become You: The Militarization of Women's Lives</i> , Cynthia Enloe. UK: Pandora Press, 1988.	<i>In the Men's House</i> , Cpt. Carol Barkalow and Andrea Rabb. New York: Simon & Schuster/Poseidon, 1990.	<i>Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era</i> , D'Ann Campbell. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.
<i>Fighting Back: Lesbian and Gay Draft, Military, and Veterans Issues</i> , ed. Joseph Schuman and Kathleen Gilbert, distributed by Midwest Committee for Military Counseling (see address and phone number above).	<i>Matlovich: The Good Soldier</i> , Mike Hippler. Boston: Alyson Publications, 1989.	<i>Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution</i> , Maj. Gen. Jeanne Holm USAR. (Ret.). Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1982.
<i>Gays in Uniform: The Pentagon's Secret Reports</i> , ed. Kate Dyer. Boston: Alyson Publications, 1990.	<i>Mixed Company: Women in the Modern Army</i> , Helen Rogan. New York: Putnam, 1981.	
	<i>My Country, My Right to Serve: Experiences of Gay Men and Women in the Military, World War II to the Present</i> , Mary Ann Humphries. New York: HarperCollins, 1990.	

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"PEOPLE REFUSED TO ROOM WITH ME"

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We shoot drugs, and we are your sisters

Risa Denenberg

As a teenager, I shot heroin and sniffed cocaine when I wasn't dropping acid or smoking hash, but I was at odds with my lesbian persona. Some years later my lover was a woman who shot cocaine, and I didn't even know she was doing it. I guess I'm as qualified as anyone to see the unique interactions between lesbianism, injection drug use, and invisibility.

This is not a story about AIDS. But it is one story of invisibility that AIDS forces us to examine. AIDS makes us look at how we have sex and who we have it with. Likewise it should make us look at our drug use—which drugs we choose, how we get them into our bodies, and why we choose them.

I work in an HIV clinic where approximately 25 percent of the intravenous-drug-using women I interview have had sex with other women. Most don't call themselves lesbians, but primarily identify themselves otherwise—as mother, intravenous drug user (IVDU), woman in recovery, Puerto Rican, Black, butch, caretaker, or person with AIDS. In the AIDS activist community lesbians often advocate for IVDUs without recognizing our common bonds and without looking at the issues of lesbian drug use. Clearly a set of blinders is operating to our detriment.

"There is a lot of recreational drug use out there," says Cynthia Acevedo, of New

York's Women and AIDS Resource Network. "A lot of lesbians live a dual lifestyle, you know, in and out of the closet. Lesbians need to break the denial."

Acevedo had a lover who was HIV-positive. She feels that lesbians' refusal to look at both drug use and bisexuality can be lethal, and knows lesbians who have been infected with HIV through sex with women. She believes many lesbians engage in denial while involved in relationships with drug addicts or alcoholics. "Lesbians entering relationships are blind," she says. "No one wants to be alone. We take so much battery in the world and it causes lesbians to create the illusion of having an isolated community to relate to."

Some research suggests that both gay men and lesbians have more substance abuse problems than straights, probably as a result of conflict about sexuality and the experience of homophobic rejection by family, peers, and society. Injection drug use is a phenomenon directly, although not exclusively, associated with poverty and racism. Factor in homophobia, and one can begin to understand the pressures that lead to lesbian drug use.

A young woman who is kicked out of her home for being gay is drastically deprived of options for making a living, especially if she hasn't finished high school. Her options—tricking, modeling, dancing, squatting—all



put her at risk for drug use. If a woman comes out later in life, after marriage and children, other traumas, such as domestic violence or losing custody of her children, may lead to substance abuse. How much anti-woman violence, anti-lesbian harassment, loss of job or children will a lesbian endure before looking for a way to numb the feelings of pain and loss?

Whether we use drugs or not, it's hard to think about claiming addiction as part of a lesbian culture that is already fraught with stigma and exclusion. But whether we acknowledge it or not, addiction is with us. Just as lesbians are often invisible in the straight world, injection drug users who have sex with women aren't always visible in the lesbian world. All lesbians struggle with issues related to visibility, yet those of us who call ourselves lesbians often attempt to create a homogenized portrayal of who we are and what we do. It's a picture that hardly includes all women who struggle in the bedroom with other women.

Yvonne and Michelle are an

African-American couple living in Chicago who have been lovers for six years, although Michelle sometimes stays with her ex-husband with whom she has four children and with whom she learned to use drugs. The children all live with her mother-in-law. She and Yvonne used to shoot heroin together but managed to quit four years ago. They are a very elegant butch-femme couple. Yvonne works as a baggage handler at the airport. When Michelle found out that she and the two-year-old baby were both HIV positive, she began buying valium on the street to help her sleep at night. A year later, she began smoking crack and exchanging sex with men and women for the drug. She misses her clinic appointments unless Yvonne takes off from work to go with her. Yvonne is beside herself. "How am I supposed to feel knowing she's out there fucking men? I must really love this girl."*

Viewing two women in a pose of sexual contact, affectional exchange, tenderness, bickering, or raw intimacy, it seems simple: they're lesbians. And yes, there is some com-

mon denominator among all women who share these feelings and experiences with other women. But clearly, some women with affectional and sexual relationships with other women may not self-identify as lesbian or gay. The world builds barriers that damage and debilitate our capacity to take postures of self-affirmation and self-identification. Women who live with more barriers, more "isms," inevitably have more layers of defense against calling out our experiences too loudly. Lesbians of color sometimes say that the term "lesbian" is just a white middle-class creation that doesn't describe their world or their experience; the exclusive identity of lesbian separatism can also be viewed as the class privilege of women who can afford to disentangle all family and ethnic community affiliations.

Self-identified lesbians who do not shoot drugs generally don't embrace or identify with injection drug users. They may refuse to acknowledge drug addiction in friends and lovers with whom they live, work, or play. The behavior that often surrounds drug addiction or even social drug use is problematic for the "women's community": sex with men for drugs or money, affiliation with male drug users, and simply not identifying as lesbian or gay. And just as women who inhabit a primarily lesbian world often choose to hide their drug use, women who trick for a living and shoot drugs may prefer to hide their lesbian preference to avoid being ostracized by peers whose camaraderie is essential to survival.

In my experience within ACT UP/New York, very few HIV-positive lesbians participate openly, and while lesbian visibility is the norm, few lesbians discuss IV drug use among their peers. Yet certainly IV drug use occurs among lesbians and is a significant risk for acquiring HIV infection. Lesbian AIDS activists have readily tackled the safe-sex issues for lesbians—why not the drug risk?

Sometimes I wonder how many of the lesbian activists I meet are in the closet about present or former drug use, fearing lack of support from other lesbians. And

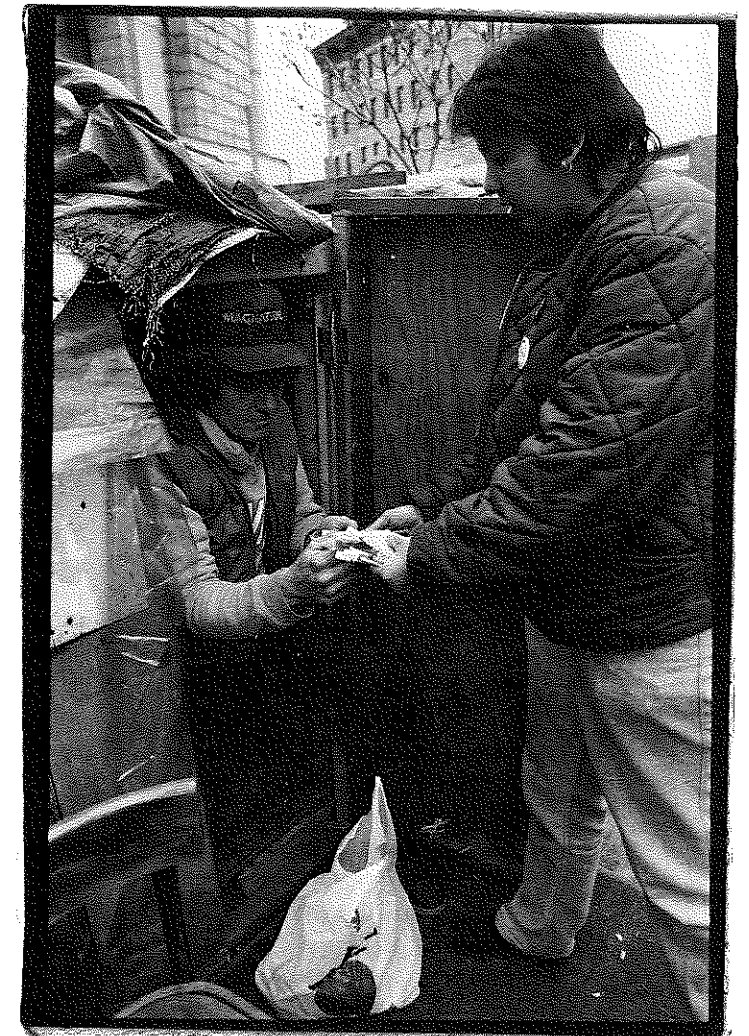
how many women are cleaning up simply due to fear of HIV or knowledge of risk of HIV? More Downing, an AIDS researcher from San Francisco, feels the problem is only now starting to be reflected in our community. "What I see is the clean and sober contingent of the Gay Pride March gets longer and longer each year. That reflects how bad it's been all along."

Charlotte is a thirty-four-year-old

Black attorney living in Atlanta and working as a junior partner in a law firm. She is sitting in her office, the door is closed, her head is resting in her hands. She knows she has a brief to finish by four this afternoon, but she can't get herself going. She rises, buzzes the secretary to hold her calls, takes her briefcase into her private bathroom, locks the door. She takes out her clean works. Luckily for her, her doctor does not object to writing her prescriptions for them. He believes that she uses them for B-12 injections. She opens her bag of coke, cooks it up, draws it into the syringe, and shoots it into her groin. This way no one sees the marks. Charlotte started shooting cocaine in law school but stopped during a five-year relationship. She began again when her girlfriend left her for a man. Now she hasn't had a lover in six months, but it doesn't seem to matter any more.

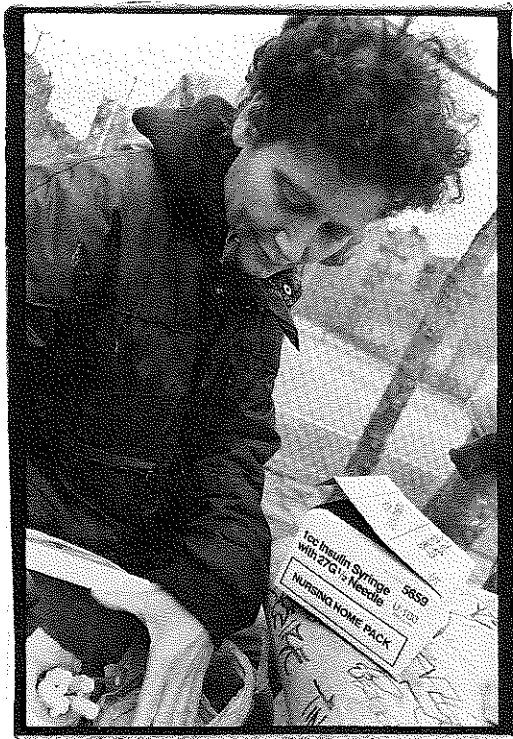
Although the phenomenon is rendered invisible, lesbians are shooting drugs—on the streets, in offices, at parties, in shooting galleries, in their homes. There has been almost no documentation of the phenomenon and unfortunately, some of the research that does exist is flawed. The National Lesbian Health Care Survey (conducted by Judith Bradford and Caitlin Ryan), published in 1990 by the National Lesbian and Gay Health Foundation, surveyed nearly 2,000 lesbians regarding a variety of health concerns, including drug use. Twenty percent of the respondents said they used cocaine; one percent used heroin. Unfortunately, the wording of the question regarding drug use ("How often do you use ... heroin, cocaine, alcohol, etc.") would likely be answered as "never" by

It's hard to think about claiming addiction as part of a lesbian culture that is already fraught with stigma and exclusion.



women in recovery, but the authors apparently interpreted a "never" response to mean never having used the drug. The survey also did not ask about method of use. Its methodology limited respondents to women who identify somewhat openly as lesbians. We can draw some information from the survey results, but it's likely that they underestimate the scope of prior and present drug use among lesbians.

In studies of drug use specific to women, several findings have emerged. Women IVDUs often have more medical problems than their male counterparts; young women are more likely to trade sex for drugs (especially crack) than men; women IVDUs



report more needle sharing, more anal receptive intercourse, and more unemployment than men who shoot. These findings are probably applicable to women IVDUs who have female lovers.

One small but important study examined the social organization of lesbian IVDUs in San Francisco, and looked for data related to risk of HIV infection. In 1987, Lesbian AIDS Project researchers Patricia Case, More Downing, Bonnie Fergusson, Jennifer Lorvick, and Lea Sanchez recruited women who were active IVDUs, not currently in treatment, who had sex with women and identified themselves as lesbian or gay. Twenty-eight women (nine Black, ten white, six Latina, two Native American, one other) participated in the study, which included HIV testing and an open-ended taped interview. The researchers documented a combined impact on lesbian IVDUs of stigma—for sexual orientation and needle use. They found that women tended to identify primarily as lesbian or IVDU, rarely both. They also documented the following activities and attitudes: needle sharing was common, but so was needle cleaning; most women viewed the risk of woman-to-woman transmission of HIV as low (eighteen had sex while they or their partner was menstruating); almost all had sex partners who were also IVDUs; and fifteen of the women had

I work in an HIV clinic where approximately 25% of the intravenous-drug using women I interview have sex with other women.

had sex in the past five years with men (seven of these only for money).

Luz and Beatrice are Puerto Rican

women in their twenties who share an apartment in the South Bronx. They are sex workers, walking the streets for money every night. Luz used to have a regular clientele, but she recently did some jail time and lost track of her johns. Bea was in college studying social work when she met Luz at a girl party and fell for her. She got turned on to shooting speedballs with Luz, who was basically using her to get money for drugs. Eventually, Bea dropped out of school and couldn't get money any more from her family, so she started working the streets, too. They still occasionally have sex, but they always share drugs ... and works. In fact, Bea has never learned to inject herself and can't stand needles so she always has to have Luz hit her.

A hazy portrait of lesbian injection use in this country emerges from conversations with current users. Lesbians shoot heroin, cocaine, speedballs (mixture of heroin and coke), and speed. Most start young, in their teens or early twenties. Lesbian drug users who grew up in impoverished communities tend to maintain strong ties there, and may have been introduced to drug use by family or associates. Those who were raised in middle-class neighborhoods are more likely to have experimented with drugs after moving away from home for work or school and are more likely to have been kicked out of their homes because of their sexual identity. Middle-class lesbians are more likely to be estranged from their families than their working-class counterparts, and more likely to identify with the lesbian community from which they attempt to hide drug use.

Most lesbians, like other IVDUs, say they shoot drugs because they love getting high. Many became involved sexually with women while in juvenile detention, jail, or prison. Others formed affectional and sexual bonds with women while working in the sex industry. They consider dancing, stripping, or tricking with men to be work; for sex, love, and intimacy they turn to women. Sex work

often preceded injection drug use. Not all injection drug users are addicts; some lesbians get high only on the weekend and function well in jobs and other responsibilities. In Atlanta and San Francisco, lesbians may "party" in each other's homes, a hotel room, or public restrooms. In large northern cities like New York, Chicago, or Philadelphia, lesbians are more likely to go to shooting galleries to obtain and share drugs.

Women with professional or service industry jobs who have addictions often maintain their jobs at the expense of all other affiliations. Relationships may founder due to secrecy of the drug habit, or codependency within the relationship. These women may be sexually active early in drug addiction, but drug use—both heroin and cocaine—often leads to greatly diminished sex drive in women. They present a picture of isolation, secrecy, and fear of exposure and job loss. When caught, usually due to poor job performance, insurance will often pay for in-patient drug treatment, jail time is usually averted, and recovery from addiction is more likely.

Other lesbian drug users often have stable relationships that endure the impermanence of homelessness and incarceration. Many women get together inside, wait for each other on the outside. Some alliances may involve three or more women, usually a butch with her "girls." Some of these women may support the family by turning tricks. Some lesbians turn tricks with women for drugs, less often than for money. In some of the more stable arrangements, children are raised, parents are cared for, homes are maintained despite the havoc that drug addiction is causing.

Heather is a sixteen-year-old

kid from an Irish, working-class family in Boston who was kicked out of her home when she was fourteen because she was caught having sex with girls. She has lived on the street for several years and shoots heroin, two or three bags a day. Usually she acts as a lookout to score the dope or has sex for it. She is careful to use clean needles and usually makes men wear condoms when she tricks. One

night she was gang raped in a shooting gallery after scoring. Her lover took her to the emergency room where both women were harassed as lesbians by the medical staff and security guards. They left without getting any treatment.

Is shooting drugs always a problem? Cocaine, heroin, and speed are all addictive. Heroin is immunosuppressive, as is methadone, undoubtedly. Illegal drug use leads to risk of arrest, jail time, economic uncertainty, and constant anxiety. Some users don't become addicted to their drug of choice, but most do. Most suffer chronic health problems such as hypertension, asthma, pneumonia, tuberculosis, kidney failure, liver disease, hepatitis, syphilis, and HIV infection. The risk of HIV infection is profound in IVDUs, affecting as many as 80 percent in some communities, such as New York City.

The consequences of drug use are worse for poorer lesbians who are less likely to get treatment and more likely to do jail time for drug use than those in the middle and upper classes. Many lesbians I have spoken with started shooting drugs before they were eighteen, used drugs off and on for twenty or more years, went to jail two or three times, and were never offered drug treatment. Poor lesbians who are actively shooting often lose custody of their children, are homeless and at risk of serious health problems and infections, including HIV infection.

Sarah and Karen are an interracial

couple living in San Francisco. Sarah is a thirty-year-old Jewish graduate student; Karen is a thirty-eight-year-old Japanese college professor of Asian Studies who stopped drinking ten years ago. They have lived together for three years in an insular lesbian community where many of the couples they know are having kids and buying homes together. They are having a hard time. Karen has stopped wanting to have sex and Sarah is becoming withdrawn, spending a lot of time away from home and missing classes. Karen thinks Sarah is drinking too much and has been pressuring her to get some help. In fact, Sarah has been drinking heavily and shooting cocaine every weekend, but Karen doesn't know about the coke. Sarah believes it's

okay because she's not doing it every day, and Karen would just nag her if she knew. Besides, most of their mutual friends would be shocked.

Lesbian drug users in recovery are easier to find than their active counterparts. They're in twelve-step program meetings like Narcotics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, and Alcoholics Anonymous. They tell their stories, seek and give support, and learn to stay off drugs one day at a time. These programs do work for many, but what do they really offer lesbians? Nothing is geared to lesbian affirmation, and many lesbians in recovery are in the closet in their programs or at the meetings.

Sabrina Sojourner, a boardmember of Sisterlove Women and AIDS Project in Atlanta, also questions the value of these programs for lesbians and people of color. "This thing about powerlessness, being powerless, it's the wrong message to people who are dually or triply oppressed." Sojourner has worked to set up informal networks of lesbians in recovery in Atlanta to combat what she's discovered through observation: that without new options women who stop using often become angry and depressed, and must deal with a poor state of health that was easier to ignore on drugs. She also points out how pretentious and snobby non-using lesbians can be towards these women.

Drug treatment is not available for most IVDUs who seek it; waiting lists are long in many cities. Some drug habits (like crack addiction) are not treated by most drug programs. Many programs only offer drug detoxification: they help to clean the drug out of the body and deal with the physical problems associated with withdrawal, but usually don't offer long-term help for staying off drugs.

In-patient programs are more available to people with insurance. These programs last for months and generally provide planning for returning to the community. All drug programs require participation in twelve-step meetings. After leaving a pro-

gram, addicts expect to continue going to meetings at least several times a week for the rest of their lives.

Jan Auerbach, a thirty-two-year-old lesbian in recovery whose lover died of AIDS, finds the recovery community homophobic, but thinks the gay community is more addictaphobic. "Lesbians have nowhere to turn, really. It's harder to deal with the lesbianism than the addiction with my family, but there's certainly no support for addicts from the gay community. They would be supportive of a recovering alcoholic, but a drug addict—no way. And NA is homophobic. They want to stop having gay and lesbian groups." Auerbach, like so many of the lesbians in recovery that I have spoken with, is doing AIDS work now.

Gay Wachman, a lesbian who works with the needle exchange group of ACT UP/New York in order to get clean needles and information to addicts, observes: "IVDUs get the least of everything—attention, resources, research, support, health care, and outreach programs. Lesbian drug users just get the worst of this neglect."

Wachman is angry about what she has seen. So am I. Talking to lesbians who are active and former IVDUs, and to lesbian activists involved with these issues, has impressed me with the reality that, for many of these women, there is nowhere to turn. Our ability to see and measure the phenomenon of lesbian injection drug use is limited by our own narrow vision and by the homophobia we face.

Lesbians who shoot drugs are everywhere, complex, rich in experience and spirit, and overwhelmed by the chronic reiteration of rejection from all sides. I think that a community that identifies as lesbian but rejects its drug using sisters is impoverished by its omission; conversely, a community that could honestly face these issues and create forums, dialogue, and solutions would certainly be enriched by such inclusion.

*Portraits of IVDUs in this article are composites taken from the author's research.

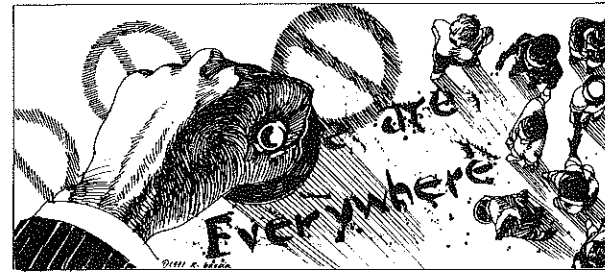


Illustration by Rebeca García-Conzález

Infernal Twins: Censorship as Social Death and What To Do About It

Ana Maria Simo

Arts funding and arts censorship have always gone hand in hand, like a set of inseparable, infernal twins, identical in the core, cosmetically different on the surface. One is clean-cut, benign, innocent, presentable; the other, the unspoken one, stinks of exclusion, corruption, deals.

The system in place until last year's NEA "censorship" blowout—the now-sanctified peer-panel system—was so well oiled in its hypocrisy, so systemic and structural in its exclusion, corruption, and dealmaking, that more often than not it operated on automatic pilot, without ever engaging the morality of its players. That is the beauty of ethnocentrism: you can never, ever be wrong.

On Being a Token

I have sat on a few of those panels that select and reward, as the token Latino woman. The panels were always dominated by white men who thought they could never be wrong, or white women or white gay men blinded by their own ethnocentrism. While only bona fide heterosexual Caucasian males can aspire to be full-fledged white men, the "faux white man" slot is open to all other willing and able Caucasians, and even to some of us in the darker shades.

This is how a major panel I sat on worked: the first half-hour was for bonding—white

and faux-white men swapped academic and art colony gossip, asked about their spouses' health, made lunch appointments, and lovingly dug out shared college memories. Then they started discussing the grants among themselves.

At lunch break, they went out together. I was not invited. Not once during the two days we spent together did any of these people talk to me—not even when I butted in on their grant discussions, as I often did. When I spoke, they would sit stolidly, stony-silent, carefully avoiding eye contact with me or, in some cases, looking through me until I was finished; then they would suddenly become animated again and pick up their discussion where they had left off. The other outsider on the panel, an older African-American professor, chose to remain silent—no doubt a survival strategy learned in white-controlled academia.

When the moment came to adjudicate the couple of unofficial Latino slots, however, all heads turned toward me. And one of the faux, a female, even smiled and actually talked to me: they wanted to know who was the most deserving little brown person. They wanted advice. Like a child, I was expected not to talk unless talked to. And I was not talked to until it was time to render them a service.

Even then, I was not supposed to have the final word on what Latino writer should get a

grant. I had to fight tooth and nail to prevent a grant from going to an abysmally bad Latino writer. I realized that these people were unable to tell us apart, to tell the gifted from the mediocre—to them, we were all alike. The “minority” slots, those informal quotas, had been shoved down their throats by well-meaning arts administrators. As far as they were concerned, those were lost slots. Not only were they incompetent to discern: they couldn’t care less who filled them.

I did not behave as I was expected to. I talked back. Did I change anything? Absolutely not. I simply exhausted myself. Other than making sure that a couple of good non-white writers got the quota grants and blocking a shameful attempt by someone on the panel to give an undeserved grant to a famous crony, my efforts neither opened their consciousness nor changed the system. From his silent corner, the professor must have been chuckling at me.

Unfundable Art

While “minority art” has been an imposed nuisance for the “peers” who have traditionally controlled those panels, lesbian and gay art has until recently either been considered non-existent or seen as a notion to be ridiculed, an amateurish, community thing—in other words, judged as bad, therefore unfundable, art. Because the “peers” love to think of themselves as progressive and blasé, the quality argument was, in the pre-NEA scandal days, the alibi of choice for their political censorship and plain moral cowardice. Their social role was to carefully control transgression—how much and what kind was allowed, when, where, and how—and to make sure that such transgression remained “artistic,” that is, cut off from dangerous social resonance.

As any artist who has been around the granting game knows full well, a radical queer worldview is funding poison. What is noteworthy about last year’s NEA debacle is not that some queer artists got axed, but that they were awarded grants in the first place. They slipped through, I think, not just

because some of their work was strong enough to demolish the “quality” alibi, but because the arts establishment desperately needed fresh blood to replenish its tired experimentalist wing.

Performance art, which has long had high female and queer representation, was a primary site of experimentation in the 1980s. In the 1990s, the time had come to reward that form. The experimentalist establishment thought they were maintaining aesthetic continuity and preserving power. In other words: they were rewarding their own people, their

In a vibrant, emerging culture we still have a chance to create new

very own Young Turks. Drunk with their power to decontextualize art, they were blind to the political implications of some of the art they ended up funding, and to the virulent right-wing backlash it would provoke. Understandably, much of the art establishment’s ire at the right-wingers had to do with the latter’s primitive attempts to recontextualize artistic transgression.

Personally, I hate the freedom to be inconsequential or partially invisible. The status quo ante, the gentlemen’s-agreement-back-room-type censorship, which the arts establishment is now scrambling to restore, is the opiate of queers and non-whites.

A Violent, Poisonous Death

What is censorship? What does it mean? Why should society at large, and our communities in particular, care about it?

The dominant culture is dying a violent, poisonous death. Symptoms of this death are the rise of the cult of military power, the nostalgia for a purer and simpler America that never existed, the destruction of the welfare safety net, the attacks on civil rights, the fear of homosexuals, mounting ideological vigilantism, and increasingly open censorship.

That culture—a dying culture of waste, conformity, and ignorance, rabidly ethnocentric and racist—extends its tentacles from prime-time television to non-profit regional

theaters, from *New York Times* art criticism to *Village Voice* cultural hype, to many a “minority” cultural institution that has foolishly chosen to jump through its rotting hoops. It is a culture molded by the media and by the academic system. And, ironically, it is a culture that is often replicated in our own queer communities.

The dominant culture fears us queers for the same reason that it fears schools that allow children to think in Spanish or non-whites who refuse mindless assimilation. We are threatening because our very existence

such as ours, artist-community dynamics.

negates its monocultural, ethnocentric tenets. That mainstream culture, and the economic and political power to which it is connected, is predicated on insularity, exclusivity, censorship, and suppression of anything that it cannot melt in its infamous melting pot.

I hate the elitist idea that artists deserve some special status, that if someone steps on our artistic toes it is a sacrilege. We are no better than anyone else. The only reason why people should pay attention when an artist is censored is because it is indicative of the health of society-at-large, and serves as a warning sign of things to come. Like police violence, arts censorship brutally pulls society into focus.

The recent censorship of queer artists is an attempt to ban the self-representation of homosexuals. Cultural genocide is the goal. No community has ever survived without a strong sense of its collective self. And no people can forge such a sense of self, such a collective identity, unless they can represent themselves on their own terms, as they see fit. The arts are one arena—among others—to forge that identity.

Cultural genocide: a clinically accurate term that should be rescued from rhetorical excess. With different degrees of crudeness it is performed on non-whites, on working class people, and on queers. The queer brand seems to be the crudest. Why this need to

make explicit what has long been a de facto ban on queer representation? After all, the old system of suppression through ridicule and elitism was working pretty well. The recent emergence of queer visibility, particularly in the arts, seems to have been the precipitating factor.

Because of its genocidal intent, the censorship of queer artists should be understood as an attack against each and every lesbian, gay, and queer person in this country—and, by extension, an attack on all non-white and non-mainstream communities, since the same structures of oppression are at work. Yet this has not happened, perhaps because the artist-community relationship is only slightly less adversarial among queers than in society-at-large. However, there is a new queer political activism that values and uses the media and other cultural artifacts. Queer artists are increasingly politicized. The potential for a unique confluence now exists.

Most people in our queer communities probably do not read much of what is considered literature, have never been to art school, seldom, if ever, go to the theater, and do not know what an experimental film is. The dominant culture’s high and even nouveau “low” art does not bother with people like this. They are left out of the arts debates, and they are never talked to. Most of the arts establishment considers these people to be strictly mass entertainment fodder. We, queer artists, cannot afford to do the same.

While ultimately some of us may decide to continue making art in a coded, self-referential language, one that can be deciphered only by other artists and small specialized audiences, we should all critically re-examine the need for such a strategy. The mainstream culture takes for granted that this is what non-commercial art is at the end of the twentieth century. However, as queer artists, we are dealing with an entirely new culture, and we should question each and every one of our assumptions at every step of the process. Every single scrap we inherit from this dying culture should be examined, turned around, scrutinized—particularly critical theory.

What To Do?

The first thing we need to do is to make people aware that artists are their alarm system, their trip wire. When the dominant culture steps on us, they are not simply depriving an artist of rent money, but suppressing an entire community's self-expression. That means that we must break the insularity that the dominant culture has created between artists and the rest of society, and we must begin that process within our own communities. In a vibrant, emerging culture such as ours, we still have a chance to create new artist-community dynamics.

I find the *artiste maudit* pose within the queer communities absolutely ridiculous—a bad imitation of mainstream art tantrums. The exciting thing about being a queer artist in America at the end of the century is that, for us, the union of artistic vision with community support seems within reach. Because we are obsessed with words and images and incessantly ruminate about them, because we have a leisure that most people do not have, we may be able to see things sooner, make connections, have visions—visions that, if given back to the community, the community may eventually recognize as its own. Art does not always offer instant gratification.

Taking On The Mainstream

The second thing we should do is to take on the cultural mainstream. Access to television should be our community's main priority. Television is where social and political battles are won or lost. We should relentlessly pressure PBS both locally and nationally. We should also start pressuring the networks, including the ethnic networks.

Queer artists should come out of the closet en masse in our next grant application, whether the subject matter is queer or not. We should demand funding for queer art as such, in order to gain societal recognition for the notions "lesbian artist," "gay artist," "queer artist." Remember that twenty-five years ago there was no "minority artist" category. If openly queer grants are consistently turned down, then NEA-type scandals, fol-

lowed by lawsuits and direct action could follow. Funding obtained under false pretense—for example, by never saying the word "lesbian"—will inevitably obfuscate the work made.

However, much more important than pressuring the media and funding sources is developing within our own communities both the economic resources and the mechanisms that will allow us to give our own money to our own artists, and to invest it in profitable and liberating ventures.

Fund-raising for AIDS and direct activism has been very successful. We must now start funding lesbian and gay art ourselves. We must endow queer scholarships and give financial aid to queer student groups. We are in the midst of an economic recession. The AIDS crisis has not abated. And yet, we must look toward the future.

America hates pushovers. Let's stop pretending that we are nice, innocent people eager simply to exercise our First Amendment rights. We are not nice. We are *not* just like any other straight artist except for sexuality and sometimes subject matter. We are historically threatening. However, as gay people and as artists, we have something the mainstream lacks and covets—energy and creativity. We have something to say; they have nothing. We have life; they are dying. Let's stop being so damned self-protective. Let's stop asking for crumbs. Let's take on the mainstream—not to be assimilated, but to unleash upon it a torrent of new thinking, art, political action, and social innovation.

In the end, the mainstream's greed will be greater than its hatred. They need us queers and non-whites to survive. The white dominant culture is quickly sinking this country into moral and physical bankruptcy. They know the country is deteriorating and their solution is a big leap backwards, to Eisenhower-era pieties. This culture needs us to bring it back to life.

This article was adapted from a presentation given at OutWrite '91, the second National Lesbian and Gay Writers Conference.

ENRIQUE

MARIE

PRESLEY

Unmasked!

behind the celebutante mystique

AN OUT/LOOK EXCLUSIVE

Mr. Presley's photographs courtesy of Blake Sorrell



The following is an excerpt from an autobiographical work-in-progress entitled *Call Me Ricky: The Enrique Marie Presley Story*.

HOLLYWOOD— How do you say Celebutante?

Jodhi Stein, A Good Publicist/ Hollywood Lesbian (*Gives good phone*) "Celebutantes are not born, they are created. How much is fact, how much fiction? Is he or isn't he? Did he or didn't he? Will he or won't he? (*Ms. Stein, Sharon Glass on line one, Jodie Foster on line two.*) Only his publicist knows for sure. Hold that thought, doll, I gotta take these calls."

SCANDAL! The Celebutante Murder Trial

Jeff Stryker, Adult Film Star/Attorney (*Turn-offs: Rude men, cruelty, house music. Turn-ons: Romance, meaningful relationships, light B&D.*) "The infamous 'Celebutante Murder' trial was my first case out of UCLA law school. Representing Enrique Marie was quite an experience. But, boy, was I nervous. Not only was I green, but, gee, everyone knew that I was a porn star and that I have this incredibly large penis. And if that didn't call into question my credibility as an attorney, well, I don't know what else did."

Selecting an unbiased jury was no easy thing. So many people

were prejudiced against me because of my previous career and because most of the Hollywood crowd were a little jealous of Enrique's sudden celebrity status—even if it was for being the prime suspect in Faye Dunaway's murder. After several weeks of selection, we had finally settled on a jury made up of eleven gay men from Silverlake and Paula Abdul."

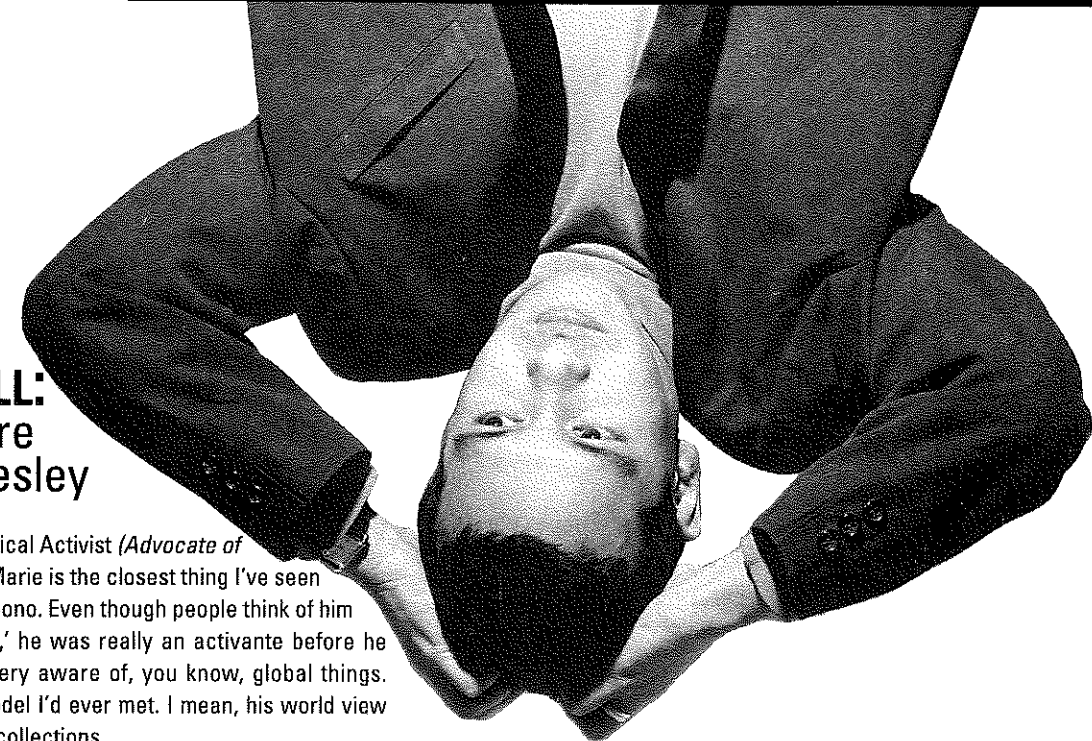
BEFORE THE FALL: The Socially Aware Enrique Marie Presley

Naomi Campbell, Supermodel/Political Activist (*Advocate of cruelty-free cosmetics*.) "Enrique Marie is the closest thing I've seen to Mother Teresa since Sinéad or Bono. Even though people think of him now as a celebutante or 'shopgirl,' he was really an activante before he became a celebutante. He was very aware of, you know, global things. Definitely the most aware male model I'd ever met. I mean, his world view went way beyond the Paris Spring collections."

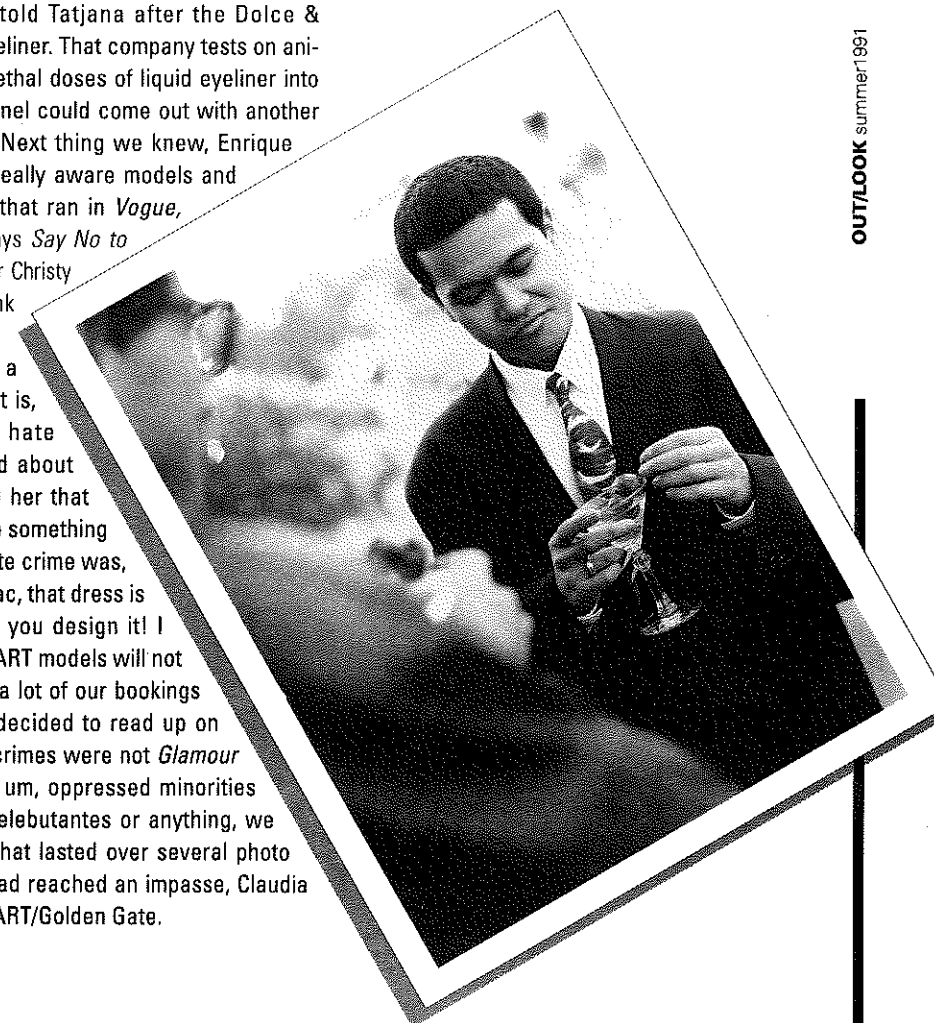
"He was responsible for making me the socially aware activante I am today. He sat me down and said, 'Naomi, beauty is power. So, you're like really powerful because you are so goddamn gorgeous. You need to use that power to help make this world a better place to live. You need to be the spokesmodel for IMPORTANT GLOBAL ISSUES!' And that's how he and I got around to forming SMART—SuperModels Against wRong Things."

"At first, SMART did small projects like educating other models about the correctness of cruelty-free cosmetics by driving home the injustice of animal testing. Like, for example, we told Tatjana after the Dolce & Gabbana show, 'Tatjana, don't use that eyeliner. That company tests on animals. How would you like it if I injected lethal doses of liquid eyeliner into your lhasa apso just so the House of Chanel could come out with another beauty product? Tatjana, that's wrong!' Next thing we knew, Enrique Marie had banded together all of these really aware models and raised money for the No to CRUELTY ads that ran in *Vogue*, *Elle*, and *Mirabella*: Linda Evangelista says *Say No to Cruelty. Say Yes to Beauty!* and The Only Fur Christy Turlington would EVER wear is a Hot Pink Katherine Hamnett FAKE Fur Mini-Trench!"

"Soon, we had a reputation of being a very beauty-positive activante group. That is, until we tried to address the issue of hate crimes. Claudia Schiffer's boyfriend read about hate crimes in the *Village Voice*. He told her that this was wrong and that SMART should do something about it. But she misunderstood what a hate crime was, and began to say things to clients like 'Isaac, that dress is a hate crime against women. How dare you design it! I refuse to wear it for political reasons! SMART models will not wear hate crimes against women.' Then, a lot of our bookings started cancelling. Well, Enrique Marie decided to read up on hate crimes. When we learned that hate crimes were not *Glamour Don'ts*, but an actual social problem for, um, oppressed minorities like people who aren't supermodels or celebutantes or anything, we were shocked. A lot of infighting began that lasted over several photo sessions. And after we realized that we had reached an impasse, Claudia and Elaine Irwin left the group to form SMART/Golden Gate."



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OUTLOOK summer 1991

OUTLOOK summer 1991

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You don't sing and dance in juvie, honey.
—Joan Jett to Cherie Currie in The Runaways' *Dead End Justice*

THE PEN Cell Block H

*A Celebutante Without a Scene:
A Scene Without a Celebutante*

I could overhear the sound of the TV at the guard's station. He was watching *The Young and The Restless* when a *CBS Newsbreak* came on. I heard **Connie Chung's** voice: "A suspect has been taken into custody for questioning for the ritualistic slaying of actress **Faye Dunaway**, notoriously dubbed by the Los Angeles entertainment

community as The Celebutante Murder ..."

It had been two-and-a-half hours since I had placed the call, and still no response. Where was *SHE*? Didn't *SHE* know of the degradation I had undergone? Stripped of my fabulous **Hugo Boss** ensemble (couture, thank you), my dignity, my pride, my **Sports Connection** membership card! Printed. Photo'd. ID'd. Yes, I was now a con. But this was my life. Not yours, or yours, or yours. But mine ... My LIFE AS A CELEBUTANTE!

I got up from the bunk in the holding cell and began to pace. Would *SHE* ever get here? I dug my hands into the pockets of the cell block's standard-issue trousers and realized that they were made of the same fabric that **Rei Kawakubo** used in the Fall 86 **CDG** line. I wondered if I would be able to keep the pants when I was finally released. If I was finally released.

Suddenly I heard the rapid click-click-click of **Manolo Blahnik** stilettos hitting cold concrete around the corner of the cell block. And before you could say "**Code Blue**," there *SHE* was, with her **Day Runner** in hand, and **Cellular/Port-a-Fax** combo slung over the padded shoulder of her **Armani** suit jacket.

"Jodhi."

"**Enrique Mariel**!" she shrieked. "What have they done to you? Oh my god." She turned dramatically to the guard and barked, "LET my people go!" (*She commanded such respect.*)

The guard fumbled for his keys, unlocked the cell, and led us both into a private conference room. I wondered, *How much do you tip in this situation?* I mean, he was technically a doorman. (And a *damn hunky* one at that!) It didn't matter. **Miss Manners** be damned—I was in jail!

We sat down, and before I

could open my mouth, she started in with a plan of attack. And once she got started, there was no stopping this **Vogue** lesbian! She was not your run-of-the-mill **Volvo**-driving dyke. She was much more glamorous—she took **cabs**! But that's why I called her. **Jodhi** was my publicist, and she was the best.

"First. I am SO SORRY for taking so LONG. I was tied up in a LONG meeting with **Jon** and **Petey** at **Le Chardonnay**, and **Victor** kept sending out MORE AND MORE FOOD! He's my FAVORITE chef and all, but it got to the point where I had to say, 'Hey, **Victor**, I LOVE YOU BUT you're gonna have to pay for my next lipo if you send out any more food!' Can you BELIEVE it? But ENOUGH about me. Now, YOU, pet. OH, and sorry—but we HAVE to make it quick—I've got a 3:30 at **Mondrian**, and a 5:15 at **Patina**."

"**Jodhi**, I've been framed for that **Faye Dunaway** thing and I don't know what to do. Help me, **Jodhi**. I don't want to end up a piece of used *boy pussy* in the *big house*!"

"Okay. Okay. Give me a minute."

You could almost hear the gears turn in her head as she focused all of her energy on the correct strategy. She pressed her spread fingers across her temples and her eyes rolled back. I sat in awe of pure genius at work. There were only two minutes of meditative silence until she completed the process and reached into her quilted **Chanel** bag for her **Borghese** and a compact, and regimentally reapplied her lipstick. She smacked her lips and smiled slyly in my direction.

"Okay. Here's the plan," she was almost whispering as she tried to stifle a slight case of the giggles. And in excruciatingly delicious detail, she outlined an all-encompassing, 23-point publicity strategy that would make *The Celebutante Murder* a **cause célèbre** for

Hollywood, for California, for America, for the world! **Randall Adams** look out—**Enrique Marie Presley** was about to be **hot copy**!

"But do you think it'll work?"

"Trust me, before I'm through with you, you'll be BIGGER than **Leona** and BIGGER than **Zsa Zsa**, but BETTER! You'll be BIGGER than **James Brown**! Oh god, I THINK I'M GETTING WET! This is going to be my MASTERPIECE! I'll have that **Executive VP of Worldwide Marketing and Publicity** slot at **Columbia** locked in!"

She was overcome by a wave of **Industry Power-Lust** and let out a maniacal cackle, but was suddenly brought down to earth: "Shit! I broke a nail!"

We talked numbers and before you could say "Put it into turnaround," it was a *done deal*. I'd convinced **Jodhi** to waive her fee in exchange for **Sandra Bernhard's** private **Voice Mail** number and an alligator clutch from **Hermès**. She said that she knew of an up-and-coming young attorney who would handle the case *pro bono* because of all the press it would garner. ("He's SUCH a **publicity whore**, VERY high profile ... and he's CUTE. You two will be so GOOD together!")

We got up and said our good-byes—air kiss to the left, air kiss to the right. She reached into the **Chanel** bag once more, pulled out some **Borghese** mud, and tossed it to me: "You're looking ruddy, babe. Fix it." What a pro.

"**Presley**. Your lawyer's here."

I heard the gate being unlocked as I got up from the bunk and removed the cucumber slices from my eyes.

"Hi, I'm **Jodhi's** friend, **Jeff**," he said extending his hand, "I'll be representing you in court."

Imagine my shock when I realized that **Jodhi's** friend—the up-and-coming, publicity-whorish young attorney—was none other than **Jeff Stryker**! That's right **THE Jeff Stryker**: star of **STRYKER FORCE**, **POWERTOOL**, and other contemporary all-male classics; and exclusive licensor of the world's only signature dildo!

"But you're **Jeff Stryker** ..."

He blushed and nodded his head. He sensed my apprehension at the possibility of going to court for murder one with gay porno's number one star as my attorney. What could **Jodhi** have possibly been thinking? Was this some kind of joke? Some kind of cruel, wicked ... hot, sexy, throbbing joke?

"Look, I know what you're thinking. But let me tell you right now I'm very qualified for the job. I've used the money I've made from my

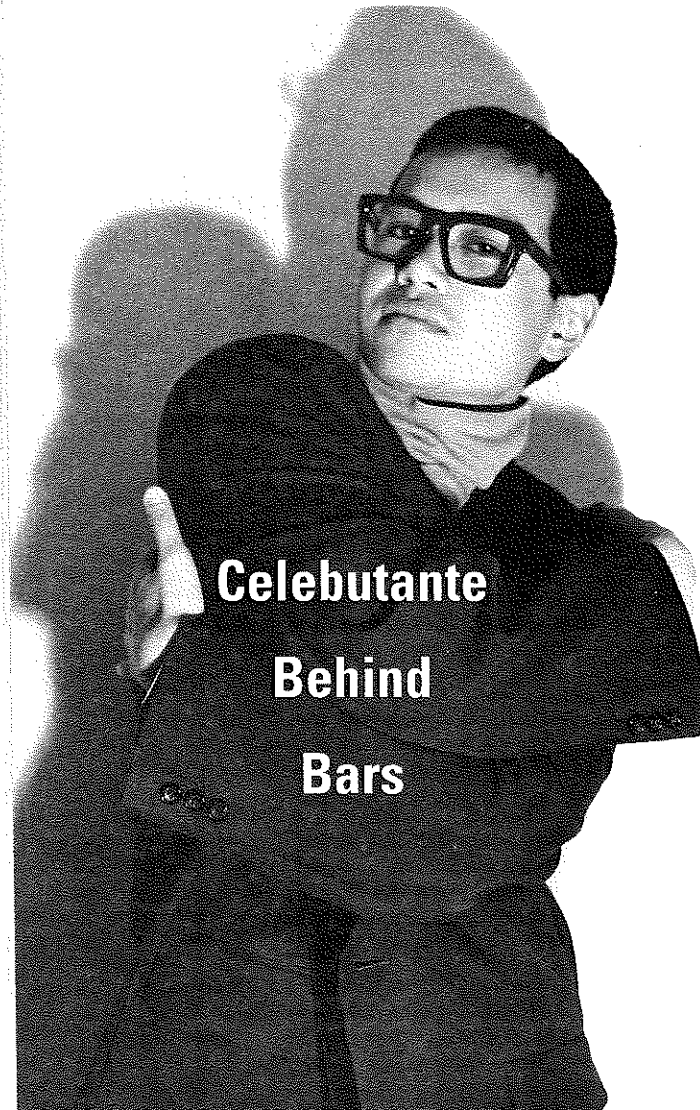
videos to put myself through the law program at **UCLA**, where I graduated at the head of my class. I also passed the **Bar** on my first attempt. True, I haven't got a hell of a lot of actual trial experience, but I do have high **marquee value**, something **Jodhi** and I both agree on as being integral to the outcome of this trial. Think of all the press we—you'll generate. Besides, you need me. That homicide detective, **Upshaw**, is out for your blood. Word is that he's got enough on you to build a strong case for the D.A. It's only a matter of hours before they'll formally press charges ... Not many attorneys would touch this case, especially *pro bono*. So what'll it be? It's your call."

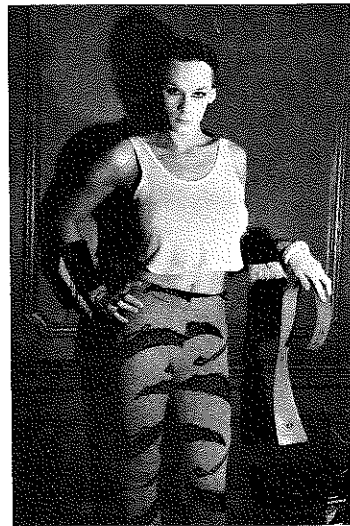
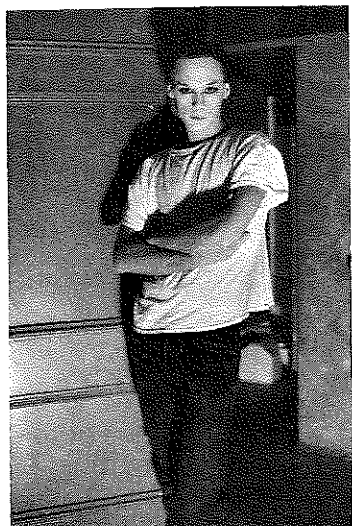
He was right. I was in some deep shit and I couldn't afford a **Melvin Belli**, let alone a **Matlock**. But he was a porn star and I couldn't help wondering ...

"Alright. You're absolutely right. Thank you for consenting to do this, **Jeff**. I'm really grateful ... Ummm, would you mind ... Uh, could you ... I've, um, seen a lot of your movies and uh ... Well, I've always wondered ..."

He flashed that same boyish smile I remembered from his realistic portrayal of "Jeff, the mechanic" in *THE LOOK*. There was a wicked twinkle in his eyes as he slipped a **Gold Circle** condom from out of his hip pocket. He undid his lizard belt and let the **Ungaro** trousers fall to his ankles ...

It's *real*, girls. Eat your hearts out. I did.





tripych: Scott/Mavis Davis Drag Queen 1988 © Vivienne Maricevic

MRS. AMERICA AT THE CONGRESS OF DREAMS:

writing identity and desire
between Dennis Cooper & Erica Jong

Dodie Bellamy

This past year I was invited to Dorothy Allison's birthday party. Allison is the red-haired, fiery author of *Trash*, a collection of stories with a Southern lesbian gothic theme and an S/M twist. My first thought was, of course, "What should I wear?" I figured black would be a safe bet, but when I looked in my closet all I could come up with was a black linen dress, tasteful enough for work or a funeral—but for Dorothy's birthday? I wore it anyway, hoping I'd somehow blend in. To say the least, I was wrong. Surrounded by fifty large women in bustiers and pierced body parts, I looked down at my basic black dress and sensible one-inch pumps and I thought, "I look like Nancy Reagan." So, I sat on the floor watching Dorothy unwrap various implements and sex toys, impatiently waiting for her to get to my present, a burst of rhinestones in the shape of a sword, and the young man next to me said, "I think you're the only straight person here." Well, I launched into him in a huff—*what do you mean by straight person I was in a lesbian relationship for 15 years I'd hardly call me a straight person you take these famous historical women they have sex with a woman for two hours and everybody wants to proclaim them as lesbian heroes grrr rrr rrrrr.*

This does bring up the issue of "Where do I fit in?" I am a happily married woman—but I'm married to gay novelist Kevin Killian, which isn't exactly the same as being married to a regular straight man. (This is better.) While I had occasional skirmishes with men in my youth, until my mid-twenties I led a lesbian lifestyle, more specifically a hippie lesbian lifestyle in Indiana:

sprouts, homemade bread, cats, dreams of living in the country in a fringed suede jacket—you name it. Then I found myself leading a straight life, in San Francisco of all places. Having made this switch it's impossible for me to really feel like a straight woman. But, then, maybe regular straight women don't feel like straight women either. Maybe nobody really feels like a straight woman. While most of the subject matter of my fiction evolves around straight interpersonal stuff, I always feel like an outsider, like I'm in drag. I wrote about this in a recent story—my protagonist, Mina Harker, is having dinner with a man she calls Rendezvous:

... He's sitting across from me in the Mexican restaurant, antlers and stuffed birds hang with Christmas glitter above our chatting heads. Why just push my chile relleno across the plate, why not push him a bit: "Do you know why I wanted to know you, it's because I dreamt about you, I had these *very intense* dreams about you." Rendezvous says he's flattered to be part of my unconscious, rather than the typical line women use on him: "you've got such big blue eyes." Blue eyes seem to trail me *there is something very private about them* ever since my Puerto Rican husband all the men I've slept with have had them ... *dreamlike, the sea, the sky; needles* ... to be more precise I've had four in a row, a statistic that says more about the demographics of San Francisco intelligentsia than my desire *they call her the Aryan mistress—naked together their skin is so white you need sunglasses just to look at it.* I continue, "Rendezvous, you don't seem like the kind of guy who'd be lacking in interested women." "Oh, quite the opposite." The opposite of what? I

can tell from his tone he isn't talking *drought* but he isn't bragging either—as always Rendezvous is understated. Across the room, Latin men with stringed instruments begin a serenade. How could this be happening that I, The Immemorial Mina Harker, could be having dinner with a textbook heterosexual, a man in a million, sexually secure, in charge, unlike the geeks *maudits* I've known who squirm and fret every time they look at a mirror *where are the interesting little wormholes for me to poke my fingers into?* After a few more sips of margarita he comments, "There's something very male about you." He says this casually, as if observing my shoe size. Fidgeting there in my black lace bra and panties I feel like one of those cross-dressing married men Dear Abby's always featuring, who get run over by a car and at the hospital their secret is found out. *Get this guy in the Fredericks of Hollywood!* I wipe the cheese from my chin, "Male about me?" This is where I tell him that getting to know a person feels like crucifixion. He puts down his fork peers sincerely through his glasses and replies, "No one's ever put it to me quite like that before."

To prepare for this talk, I spent the past couple of weeks alternately reading Dennis Cooper's new novel *Frisk* and Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying*. I know I fit in somewhere between the post-punk homo-nihilism of Cooper and the airy raciness of Jong, but I can't quite figure out where. I first read *Fear of Flying* in the early 70s. Back then, I, like everyone else present here, was much younger. I read it at a time when I was trying to lead a lower-class version of Jong's plot—instead of racing across Europe I was hitchhiking from Bloomington to Sarasota and back. I thought it was a fantastic book, I thought Erica Jong was describing my soul. This time around, I found it so irritating I wanted to rip it to shreds with my bare teeth. But why?

I think most of my problems stem from Jong's relationship to spectators, both the characters who observe her double in the book, and the reader. Early in the book, the protagonist, Isadora, visits a German library and discovers that sections from books dealing with Hitler's regime have been covered over with "oak-tags," whatever they are. This leads to her vision of the writer's purpose:

I thought of how long it had taken me to stop writing clever columns about ruined castles, and neat little sonnets about sunsets and birds and fountains. Even without fascism, I was dishonest. Even without fascism, I censored myself. I refused

to let myself write about what really moved me: my violent feelings about Germany, the unhappiness in my marriage, my sexual fantasies, my childhood, my negative feelings about my parents. Even without fascism, honesty was damned hard to come by.

Honesty, of course, is more slippery than Jong's naive Hollywood fantasy of the writer whose goal is to Tell the Truth.

Let me give you an example of Erica Telling the Truth: The setting is a psychoanalytic convention in Vienna when Isadora and the recently-met Adrian are seducing one another:

Meanwhile, he's got my ass and is cupping it with both hands. He's put my book on the fender of a Volkswagon and he's grabbed my ass instead. Isn't that why I write? To be loved? I don't know anymore. I don't even know my own name.

"I've never met an ass to rival yours," he says. And that remark makes me feel better than if I'd just won the National Book Award. The National Ass Award—that's what I want. The Transatlantic Ass Award of 1971.

"I feel like Mrs. America at the Congress of Dreams," I say.

"You *are* Mrs. America at the Congress of Dreams," he says, "and I want to love you as hard as I possibly can and then leave you."

...The rest of the evening was a dream of reflections and champagne glasses and drunken psychiatric jargon. ... I had another champagne and made the rounds with Adrian. He was introducing me to all the London analysts and babbling about my unwritten article. Would they consent to be interviewed? Could he interest them in my journalistic endeavor? The whole time he had his arm around my waist and sometimes his hand on my ass. We were nothing if not indiscreet. Everybody saw. His analyst. My ex-analysts. His son's analyst. His daughter's analyst. My husband's ex-analyst. My husband.

And by extension, of course, the reader is also the captive audience of this exhibitionism. In her vague description of these "wild" proceedings, Jong clearly is more interested in who's watching her protagonist than in what she's doing. Jong's main problem in telling her tale of explicit sexual adventure is all the repressive female cultural shit she has to overcome to write it; she never can get beyond this overwhelming sense that she's doing something daring. It's not that Jong doesn't show spasms of talent—but if

she could only drop this image of Isadora as sexual-superwoman-with-the-most-fantastic-ass-ever-born, living out the fantasies of her repressed baby-toting sisters, whom shocked bystanding women glare at and men lasciviously leer at—if she could go beyond who's looking and get down to the specifics of her experience, there might have been some hope for this hopelessly bad novel. Maybe she *could* have gotten at the Truth, no matter how naively.

I'm not particularly interested in positive images of women, I'm interested in *complex* images of women. Complexity is something that comes in the later stages of a marginalized group's art. And recently, in lesbian writing, some exciting takes on sexuality have appeared in the work of such writers as Dorothy Allison and Jane DeLynn. Privately, I like to ram feminism—it's disappointed me, the same way the 60s disappointed me. But after years of steeping myself in feminist theory, I'd be kidding myself if I didn't admit that every word I put down on the page is infused with feminism. Feminism, and my lesbian past, have forever denaturalized my relation to heterosexuality, both in bed and across my pages. Feminism is sort of like your mother: you can't get rid of it, but how do you get beyond its limitations? Rather than measuring everything against the norm, the way Jong does, what I find in the work of radical gay male writers (e.g., Cooper, Robert Glück, Killian) is that there's no validation or even necessarily explanation applied to sex and its representation. The tone is more simply, this is an experience. The work of these writers has inspired me to explore my own sexuality as I find it, rather than writing about it in the prescribed fashion. It strikes me as odd that this *is* a radical perspective. In choosing to write in a fashion outside the norm, the writer is then freed to explore experience, to deal with formal concerns, allowing some depth and complexity to seep in. I've always been drawn to the marginal: the women who've inspired me most have been Sylvia Plath, Diane Arbus, and Flannery O'Connor. I hope I have learned something from the brutal mythos of Plath, the relentless eye of Arbus, the harsh mysticism of O'Connor. But this focus on misfits and freaks, no matter how beautifully done, has been a very painful place to be inspired from. In consciously placing itself outside the norm, radical gay fiction has given me positive images of marginality.

In addition, this writing has taught me new ways of looking at subject-object relations. As we all are aware by now, in the traditional heterosexual literary paradigm, men are the subject and women are the object. Lots has been written in recent years about the woman writer's transformation from object to speaking subject. What I find interesting about gay men's sex writing is that in it men are both subject *and* object, and as a woman writing about heterosexual relations, this model of portraying men as objects has been invaluable. But sometimes this mixing of straight/gay, female/male perspectives gets confusing, until my writing feels like an amorphous gender-bending soup. I end with a passage from a recent Mina letter that deals with my sense of taking on, not so much female drag, as gay male drag:

Bill, ... you should have been at the *OutWrite* party last March—the gala event was held in a vacant mansion—a gilt elevator rattled and art nouveau banisters snaked to the second floor. As I tunneled aimlessly through the maze of empty rooms the festivities took on the aura of *Mysteries of Udolpho*: anybody with this much money who would choose red flocked wallpaper had to be demonic. In the grand ballroom an apparition, the seamstress son of a Wisconsin welder, with this glorious creation flouncing from his waist: more than a skirt ... a tutu ... ruffle upon ruffle of stiff sequined netting in violet, red, gold and green ... the top layer an inspiration of camouflage-patterned cotton, colliding blobs of khaki and brown—scary when neofascist youths parade it on Haight Street—but on a tutu it gives the effect of lush tropical plumage peeking through the bush. I ran up to the dressmaker and gushed, "Do you make those for women too?" He undid the drawstring, stepped out of it and handed it over! I slipped the tutu over my party dress then rolled the waistband, drawing up the hemline from mid-calves to knees in honor of the occasion. The dressmaker threw his arms in the air and exclaimed, "There, you're officially a fairy!" And I was—in every sense of the word—transcending gender, transcending species *Tinkerbell à la mode*.

This article was adapted from a presentation given at the "Queer Perspectives" panel at *OutWrite '91*, the second National Lesbian & Gay Writers Conference.

If Freud Had Been a Neurotic Colored Woman:

Reading
Dr. Frances
Cress
Welsing

Essex Hemphill



Saria Johnson-Calvo

"Any force which estranges and alienates us from one another serves the interests of racist domination." — bell hooks

"That there is homophobia among Black people in America is largely reflective of the homophobic culture in which we live ... Yet, we cannot rationalize the disease of homophobia among Black people as the white man's fault, for to do so is to absolve ourselves of our responsibility to transform ourselves." — Cheryl Clarke

In 1974, the year that Dr. Frances Cress Welsing wrote, "The Politics Behind Black Male Passivity, Effeminization, Bisexuality, and Homosexuality," I entered my final year of senior high school.

By that time, I had arrived at a very clear understanding of how dangerous it was to be a homosexual in my Black neighborhood and in society. I had no particular inclinations to slip on a dress like skin, wear loud lipstick, and wiggle my hips through the four a.m. shadows and street lights of the tenderloin or the boulevards where erotic desire was claimed by the highest bidder or the loneliest man. Facing this then-limited perception of homosexual life, I could only wonder, where did I fit in? I had no particular inclination to chase down men while wearing platform pumps and mini-skirts. None of this behavior was the least bit appealing to me.

Conversely, I was perfecting my heterosexual disguise; I was practicing the necessary use of masks for survival; I was calculating the distance between the first day of class and graduation, the distance between graduation from high school and departure for college—and ultimately, the arrival of my freedom from home, community, and my immediate peers. I believed my imminent independence would allow me to explore what my hetero-disguise and my masks allowed me to conceal.

It is fortunate that the essay by Dr. Welsing that I am citing here had not come to my attention during my adolescence. I can only imagine how little resistance the assault of her ideas would have been met with by me at

that time. At seventeen, I wasn't coming out of nothing I couldn't get back into immediately, and that included closets. But in 1974, the concept of "closets" had not come to my attention. I knew not to reveal my homosexual desires to my peers or discuss them with my family or any school counselor.

During the course of the next sixteen years I would articulate and politicize my sexuality. I would discover that homo-sex did not comprise a whole life nor did it negate my racial identity or constitute a substantive reason to be estranged from my family and Black culture. I discovered, too, that the work ahead for me included, most importantly, being able to integrate all of my identities into a functioning self, instead of accepting a dysfunctional existence as the consequence of my homosexual desires.

Dr. Frances Cress Welsing, a controversial Washington, DC-based general and child psychiatrist, emerged on the Black cultural scene in the early 1970s. Her claim to fame is her controversial essay, "The Cress Theory of Color-Confrontation and Racism (White Supremacy): A Psychogenetic Theory and World Outlook" (1970). This widely disseminated essay appears with her article "Black Male Passivity" in her recently released book, *The Isis Papers: The Keys to the Colors* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1990). She is a sought-after public speaker, and in recent years, her ideas have been embraced in the re-emergence of Black cultural nationalisms, particularly by rap groups such as Public Enemy.

Welsing's "Theory of Color-Confrontation" forms the intellectual and political basis for her examination of various issues confronting Black Americans, including issues of sexuality and homosexuality. Her arguments about race and sexuality, based on her theories, are her *sincerely* held beliefs. She contextualizes her positions on sexuality in a myopic analysis of Black masculinity, an analysis constructed from a still very limited, very patriarchal, and culturally conservative view of what Black liberation should be.

For Black gays and lesbians, Dr. Welsing is

not as easily dismissed as Shahrazad Ali, author of the recent book of internal strife, *The Blackman's Guide to Understanding the Blackwoman* (Philadelphia: Civilized Publications, 1989). While Ali, like Welsing, attacks Black homosexuality, she reserves her harshest commentary for Black lesbians. She writes, "The lesbian Blackwoman has arrived at her final limit and literally blows a fuse in her brain which blocks out her real gender and replaces it with a masculine role. Of course, just as male homosexuals, she overdoes it and makes herself a spectacle that is not welcome among civilized people. She is rough and tough and ready to battle ... She needs a special exorcism," is what Ali advises Black males. By dismissing the lives of Black lesbians and gay men, Ali is clearly not advocating for the necessary healing Black communities presently require; she is advocating for further Black factionalization. Yet her virulently homophobic ideas, without a political or historical foundation, lack credibility and are easily dismissed.

Dr. Welsing is much more dangerous because she attempts to justify her homophobia and heterosexism precisely by grounding it in an acute understanding of African-American history and an analysis of the psychological effects of centuries of racist suppression and violence. Rather than dismissing Black homosexuality, Welsing explains it as a "functional" reaction to white racism. In so doing, she carries the Black community to the threshold of *Black* racism. While we may disagree with Welsing's views, we must acknowledge her own obviously fertile intellect, and the power that her ideas have in many parts of the Black community. Welsing's seductive fusion of her own ideology with widely held Black nationalist concepts only shows how potentially damaging the effort to counterattack racism can be, even for those intelligent enough to see the connections between racism, homophobia, heterosexism, classism, and all other oppressions spawned by patriarchal and white-supremacist domination.

In her article "Black Male Passivity,"

Welsing is suggesting that Black homosexuals are engaged in sexual genocide, in treason against the race.

Welsing refuses any logical understanding of sexuality. By espousing *Black* homophobia and heterosexism—imitations of the very oppressive forces of hegemonic white male heterosexuality she attempts to challenge—she places herself in direct collusion with the forces that continually move against Blacks, gays, lesbians, and all people of color. Thus, every time a gay man or a lesbian woman is violently attacked, blood is figuratively on Dr. Welsing's hands as surely as blood is on the hands of the attackers. Her ideas reinforce the belief that gay and lesbian lives are expendable, and her views also provide a glimpse as to why the Black community has failed to intelligently and coherently address critical, life-threatening issues such as AIDS.

Arguing against an acceptance of homosexuality within the Black community, Dr. Welsing cautions:

Black psychiatrists must understand that whites may condone homosexuality for themselves, but we as Blacks, must see it as a strategy for destroying Black people that must be countered. Homosexuals or bisexuals should neither be condemned nor degraded, as they did not decide that they would be so programmed in childhood. The racist system should be held responsible. Our task is to treat and prevent its continuing and increasing occurrence.

In other words, Dr. Welsing is suggesting

that Black homosexuals are engaged in sexual genocide, in treason against the race, and are programmed by white racism to commit acts of self-destruction such as choosing to love and be loved by members of the same gender. If we dare follow her ideas to their illogical conclusions, then we could easily argue that *every* Black action that fails to conform to Black societal codes of morality and ethics is caused by racism. Such reasoning allows for the shirking of responsibility for our actions and choices. It is simply too easy to say, "The devil made me do it."

Welsing's widely disseminated color-confrontation theory is the justification for her homophobic and heterosexist assault. Her theory is very seductive, particularly for Black people oppressed for so long. It is very much like cocaine; a dose of her ideas momentarily provides one with a rush of empowerment, but after the high is gone and one comes down, the harsh realities of racism still remain, just as sexual diversity, as created by nature, still remains, irrevocable, uncontrollable.

Yet what gives her ideas power is her capacity to *account for* Black male homosexuality and bisexuality by presenting them as predictable behaviors within her color-confrontation model.

The basis of her theory, which forms the framework for her puritanical assertions about sexuality and gender in general, is as follows:

Racism (white supremacy) is the dominant social system in today's world. Its fundamental dynamic is predicated upon the genetic recessive deficiency state of albinism, which is responsible for skin whiteness and thus the so-called "white race." This genetic recessive trait is dominated by the genetic capacity to produce any of the various degrees of skin melanination—whether black, brown, red or yellow. In other words, it can be annihilated as a phenotypic condition ... Therefore, white survival and white power are dependent

upon the various methodologies, tactics, and strategies developed to control all "non-white" men, as well as to bring them into cooperative submission.

This theory grounds her perspective on Black male homosexuality and bisexuality, allowing her to define them as dysfunctional behavioral responses to oppression. Asserting that "Black male homosexuality and bisexuality are only the long-run by-products of males submitting in fear to other males," she claims that they have "been used by the white collective in its effort to survive genetically in a world dominated by colored people ... Black acceptance of this imposition does not solve the major problem of our oppression but only further retards its ultimate solution."

In attempting to account for homosexuality among whites, Welsing writes:

White male and female homosexuality can be viewed as the final expression of their dislike of their genetic albinism in a world numerically dominated by colored people. This dislike of their appearance, though deeply repressed, causes a negation of the act of self-reproduction (sex), in various forms. This is the eventual origin of homosexuality ...

Unlike the white male, the Black male does not arrive at the effeminate bisexual or homosexual stance from any deeply repressed sense of genetic weakness, inadequacy, or disgust, which I refer to as *primary effeminacy* (effeminacy that is self-derived and not imposed forcibly by others). Instead, the Black male arrives at this position *secondarily*, as the result of the imposed power and cruelty of the white male and the totality of the white supremacy social and political apparatus that has forced 20 generations of Black males into submission.

It is less than sophisticated reasoning to

To argue, as Welsing does, that racism causes homosexuality is to suggest that Black liberation will somehow eradicate Black homosexuality.

reduce the social complexities of sexuality and its expression to the governing control and influence of white supremacy. To the extent that the history of racism has undeniably affected all facets of the lives of people of color (and whites as well), it is a legitimate concern to bring to any examination of sexuality. But to the extent that sexual identity and sexual practices represent conscious, personal choices, the most we can do is examine how sexuality is impacted upon and influenced by racism, in the same way that we can examine the impact of capitalism, religion, or patriarchy on sexuality.

However, to argue, as Welsing does, that racism *causes* homosexuality is to suggest that Black liberation will somehow eradicate Black homosexuality. If such eradication is to occur in the process of dismantling and destroying white supremacy, then what method(s) will be employed to achieve this? Does Black liberation ultimately require the confinement or extermination of Black homosexuals? Will Black liberation cancel out homosexual desire? The answer is surely a resounding *no!* Will Black liberation fail without the unqualified participation of Black gays and lesbians? The answer is an equally resounding *yes!*

In the glaring absence of a progressive feminist analysis, Welsing expediently ignores all efforts to achieve a co-gendered liberation. By arguing that Black men are alienated from their manhood by Black women (their mothers in single-parent contexts) and society (white males), Dr. Welsing embarks upon the classic, homo-bashing tirade of Black nationalist bullies who have consistently attacked homosexuals as weak, irrelevant cocksuckers. She also buys into the patriarchal concept that the only legitimate family is one headed by a man with a submissive woman by his side. She blames Black women

who have been hurt by Black men and left with raising children alone for fostering the existence of Black homosexuality, because "the alienation, hate, and disgust felt towards adult males are visited upon their sons subtly."

This transference of "hate and disgust" supposedly alienates Black male children from themselves and their manhood. "Black males soon learn that it is easier to be a female child than a male child, and more promising to be an adult Black female than an adult Black male." She additionally argues that this attitude is reinforced in Black male children by the Black women teachers they come into contact with who may also be "hurt and disgusted" with Black men and again, transfer this to Black male children.

Arguing that the alienation between Black men and women and the absence of male role models in the home and in the community promotes homosexuality, bisexuality, effeminization, and passivity, she writes:

There is only one solution—that Black males collectively face the horrendous presence of white males and conquer the accompanying fear engendered by this act. After the white man is faced, he must be resisted steadfastly and fought if he continues to wage war on Black people—as he has demonstrated historically that he intends to do. And it is Black males and not females who must do the fighting.

Finally, Dr. Welsing trots out the standard beliefs regarding prisons and the confinement of Black men—that they, too *breed* homosexuality. Writing of an ex-prisoner patient whom she identifies as an example of twenty generations of racist abuse, Welsing confides in us that he said:

"It is easier to endure the life on the

inside than to try to put up with the pressures of being a man, a husband, and a father in the street." The intent of racist programming had been achieved: "Give up trying to be a Black man. Why not be a woman?" Many Black males have answered unconsciously, "Why not!" The braided and curled hair, the earrings and bracelets, the midriff tops, the cinch waisted pants, the flowered underwear, the high-heeled shoes with platforms and the pocketbooks are all behavioral answers to the above. They say in loud and clear language, "White man, I will never come after you. I cannot run in my high-heels—you know that. And I may mess up my hair."

Welsing's reasoning is so flawed, outdated, and totally hetero-reactionary that I am curiously reminded of the child who found himself faced with having to tell the emperor he's wearing none of the beautiful clothes that his court is leading him to believe he's wearing—or, as in a more recent example, of the discovery that Milli Vanilli didn't really sing a note of their hit song "Girl You Know It's True."

I suspect, however, that if Freud had been a neurotic, Black nationalist colored woman living in the noxious racism of America, out of desperation he might very well have formulated homophobic and heterosexist theories such as Dr. Welsing's. Even among the oppressed there is a disturbing need for a convenient "other" to vent anger against, to blame, to disparage, to denigrate. Such behavior is surely as detrimental as any an oppressor can exercise against the oppressed. There is no excuse for such behavior just as there is no credibility for Dr. Welsing's theories regarding sexuality. At best, her views reinforce the rampant heterosexism that has paralyzed the Black liberation struggle. She widens the existing breach between Black gays and lesbians and their heterosexual

counterparts, offering no bridges for joining our differences. And throughout it all, she does not foster an understanding of our differences as she would lead us to believe, but instead offers justifications for homophobia and heterosexism to continue.

Despite the popularity of Dr. Welsing's views among many Black nationalists, other voices offer much needed alternatives to her rhetoric. Black gays and lesbians can take sustenance and inspiration from the words of Cheryl Clarke, who in her 1983 essay, "The Failure to Transform: Homophobia in the Black Community," firmly urges us:

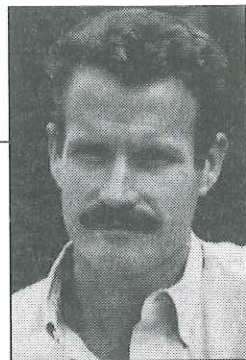
Open and proud Black gay men and lesbians must take an assertive stand against the blatant homophobia expressed by members of the Black intellectual and political community, who consider themselves custodians of the revolution. For if we will not tolerate the homophobia of the culture in general, we cannot tolerate it from Black people, no matter what their positions in the Black liberation movement. Homophobia is a measure of how far removed we are from the psychological transformation we so desperately need to engender. The expression of homophobic sentiments, the threatening political postures assumed by Black radicals and progressives of the nationalist/communist ilk, and the seeming lack of any willingness to understand the politics of gay and lesbian liberation collide with the dominant white male culture to repress not only gay men and lesbians, but also to repress a natural part of all human beings, namely the bisexual potential in us all. Homophobia divides Black people as political allies, it cuts off political growth, stifles revolution, and perpetuates patriarchal domination.

So, Dr. Welsing, do you want to have a revolution, or are you just acting like you do?

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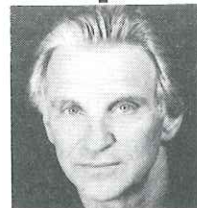
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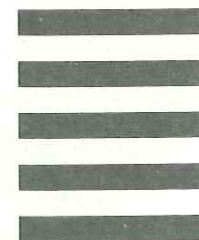
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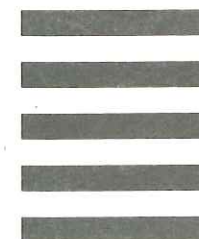
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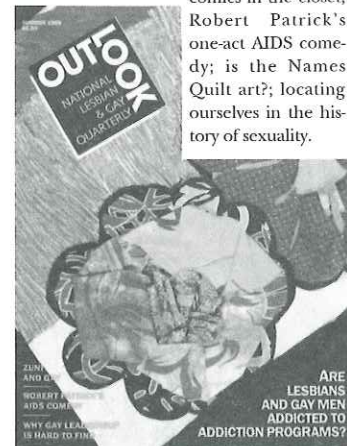
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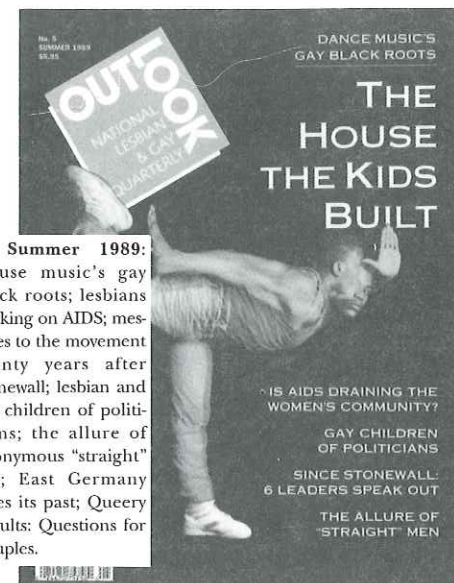
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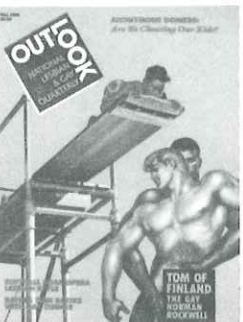
2. Summer 1988: Do addiction programs sap our political vitality?; Why gay leaders don't last; comics in the closet; Robert Patrick's one-act AIDS comedy; is the Names Quilt art?; locating ourselves in the history of sexuality.



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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; Queery Results: Chores.



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Kenny Fries

Forms of Love

I am laid out on the table when they come.
Hands mold my body, again and again, until

I am shaped by their desire. Eyes gape
at my distorted form in the hospital bed.

But tonight, your hands move down my thighs.
Your fingers know my scars. Your tongue

surrounds my toes. All they have left I give
to you. My legs around your neck when you

enter me—chest to chest, face to face,
eyes wide open in this full-bodied love.

Rapture

Mute. Pinned to the bed. Your body
on top of me again. Your hands hold

my face as our mouths connect. I am
gagged by your tongue. Sounds rise

in my throat and I want to spit you
out of me.

But I bite your lip and the taste of
your blood stifles my cry. Your nails

cut into my wrists and when you break
from me, my blood will stain your palms.

This is how it is—every night, clean,
no words.

the revolution of little girls

Blanche Boyd

FICTION

When my mother asked me to come home and take care of her during her facelift, Meg didn't want me to go. "First of all, this is your home now, not Charleston. Second of all, I'm worried about you."

We had just bought our house in Vermont, a wonderful house with huge granite outcroppings behind it. Plate-glass windows across the front stare at a river. "You buy the house," Meg said, the first day we looked at the property. "I'm buying the rocks."

Meg is rock crazy, and our living room contains a long shelf of rocks she claims talk to her. Meg, who was beaten as a child, says that from rocks she learned to be quiet. "Cigar-store Indian," her mother called her, but the violence in her home was rarely directed at Meg. I like picturing her at nine or ten, skating around Los Angeles, her braids flying behind her, finding her stony companions and lugging them back to her room.

The first time Meg invited me to have dinner at her apartment, she held up a clay-colored rock that reminded me of a loaf of bread. "I found this one in Venice," she said, "the first time my mother tried to kill herself."

Meg was not quiet that night. She went through each rock, explaining, but I was too flustered to listen. I already knew that Meg's mother had been a minor movie star, her father a studio publicist, and that they got married on Cary Grant's yacht. The rocks just looked like rocks to me.

I was thinking that Meg did look like an American Indian, because of the long black braid. Her eyes seemed faintly Chinese. She was slight, but her forearms were heavily muscled, like a man's. She did not look to me like the daughter of a minor movie star. I kept staring at her forearms. "Your arms are remarkable," I said.

Some people don't understand sexuality between women. I don't claim to either. "But what do you do?" my mother once asked me.

"You mean in bed?"

My mother was looking jowly, and she'd just dyed her hair a reddish brown.

I thought her question over, wondering whether she really wanted an answer. "Nothing much. We hold hands. Stuff like that."

The giant gold tooth of pyrite and the quartz crystal the size of a football that rest in the center of Meg's rock shelf belong to

me. "I guess I'm not subtle," I said when I brought these objects back from Peru.

It was because of Peru that Meg didn't want me to take care of my mother during her facelift. "You just seem kind of crazy since you got back."

"You talk to rocks and you think I'm crazy." But Meg is a psychology professor, and she doesn't use words like *crazy* casually.

I'd gone to Peru to be initiated by a shaman, and, in the three months since my return, I'd been pursued by a group of imaginary little girls. "Some people get in touch with their inner child," Meg said. "You have to get a crowd."

"So I'm extreme."

I ended up in Peru through a series of accidents. When I met Meg, I was working as a book editor, and a cookbook I'd just written turned out to be a best-seller. *How to Cook Redneck* was a joke, really. It contained recipes like Hog's Head Cheese—"Take one half hog's head. Boil till soft ..."—and recommended cooking green beans "till soft and slightly burnt. Should be crusty on bottom, with fatback disintegrated into gummy little pieces." Many of the recipes were quite good, except for Hog's Head Cheese, which I would not eat under any circumstances.

Because of the cookbook I began to get magazine assignments, and I quit my job because I could. The offers I was getting were too interesting—skydiving, Iceland, Thailand—and a studio even hired me to write a screenplay. The screenplay developed a small reputation: unproducible but hilarious. Movie producers continued to court me.

"My life has gotten very strange since I met you," I said to Meg when we were in Iceland, on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, at a place where the skin of the earth is only inches deep and huge mud pots boil through the surface.

"You seem normal enough to me. Your life was strange before I met you."

Meg is tenured and unfirable, so she has a license to be eccentric as well as lots of free time. "There's nothing wrong with you,

Ellen," she said one night when we were staying at the Beverly Wilshire, "except that you're so alive."

Neither of us liked the Beverly Wilshire—too artificial, and LA was upsetting to Meg in general—so the producer I was negotiating with gave us his beach house in the Malibu Colony for a week. There was no room service, but we lounged in the hot tub and watched the waves breaking on the beach. I saw Larry Hagman taking a walk one morning, Linda Ronstadt the same afternoon. "I could get used to this," I said. Actually, my skin was getting weird from the chlorine in the hot tub, and from the persistent sun.

"No, you couldn't," Meg said. "You'd be bored to death. We both prefer the bleak and difficult East."

Meg and I stayed in LA for ten days, and she drove me to the Santa Monica neighborhood where she'd grown up. A fashionable Cajun restaurant had replaced her house. Her father was in a nursing home nearby, but we didn't go see him. Her mother had died ten years ago of an overdose.

Meg is puzzled and troubled by my obsession with my past. "You haven't lived in South Carolina for twenty years, but it's always in your mind."

"Not always."

"Always."

When we bought the house in Vermont, we began trying to make a home for ourselves. Immediately we had trouble. Neither of us had lived with anyone in years, so we each had our own silverware and plates, and we didn't know which to use. We weren't sure who should cut the grass. I liked to cook and Meg didn't, and was that a bad pattern?

Meg and I met in Alcoholics Anonymous.

When I had been sober for three years, I started going to a women's meeting in Cambridge. The meeting was called After Three, and it was geared for women who'd been in the program awhile. Meg didn't say much in these meetings, but what she said was interesting. There was a composure

about her that I liked. Her words had an aphoristic quality. "I'm a happy person," she liked to say, "except when I'm not."

We started playing racquetball together, and I saw her arms. I saw her legs. One day, as we were dressing to play, I saw her naked back. Her body was precisely muscled, like an anatomy drawing. "Do you work out with weights?"

"I swim every day, and I don't eat much fat."

I knew when she asked me to dinner that she had decided to go to bed with me.

During the years I was drinking, I'd had several lesbian relationships I'd thought were important. Sober, I was beginning to think that my attractions to women were merely a symptom of my alcoholism. Then I met Meg.

Meg was showing me her rocks when I said, "I've never done this sober."

"Done this?" Her eyes changed and I saw that she understood. I wished she would laugh. She put down the rock she was holding, and I actually felt as if I might faint. "Oh, well," I said.

"Sex is a state, Ellen," Meg said quietly, "not an act. If you think it's an act, you'll miss it."

I had the sensation of moving through water. There was a lassitude that made my arms and legs heavy. When I leaned against her, she put her arms around me. Some people think there is a central pulse in the world, a core beat. I had not understood that notion before. "Do you feel that?" I said.

She nodded, and I felt her trembling. "Slow," she said. "Slow."

I had felt physical transformations before: on LSD and other mind-altering drugs, and at the ashram after Rama struck me on the forehead, but I had never experienced what happened to me with Meg. She was rough sometimes, and I was too. Sometimes she sucked my breasts so hard I cried. Because of my uncle, I get easily afraid. "Breasts are made for this," she whispered. "I won't hurt you." We both got scratched and bruised, but sometimes we

were so gentle I drifted out of myself and could not distinguish my body from hers.

I saw visions making love with Meg, dark, swimming images of boys I'd been attracted to, women I'd thought I'd wanted, and people I'd never seen before: a man staring up at me through water, androgynous children with wise faces. Once I saw a landscape like a desert, with high, reddish stone pillars in it. "I think I just saw another world, Meg. Another planet or something." I wanted to describe it to her, the strange light, the sensation that I was flying. "I hope I'll always remember that this happened."

"You'll remember."

"I hope so."

She had sat up and was lighting a cigarette. There was still sweat across her shoulders, a flush above her breasts.

"Sometimes I can't believe you still do something so unhealthy to your body."

"You say things like that a lot. That you hope you'll remember this or that. Like you think you're going to lose something."

"You're just so careful with yourself otherwise."

"Ellen, I'm dealing with my addictions in the order that they're killing me. Smoking hasn't cost me enough yet. Why do you think you'll lose this too?"

"I don't know if that's what I'm saying."

Soon after that, I began to cry whenever we made love.

At first Meg was kind. "Just don't stop," I'd say, "just please don't stop."

"You're the one who's stopping, Ellen, with all this crying."

But there was an inaccessibility about Meg that troubled me, something I couldn't get to. She said, when I tried to explain, "Maybe you mean my adulthood."

"I mean something else."

"You mean cigar-store?"

"No," I said, though I wondered if I did. Maybe the very quality that had drawn me to Meg was what I was now resenting.

I felt Meg's withdrawal from me begin, then accelerate. "I think you're creating it," she said. "There's a kind of black hole in you

I can't possibly fill. When you reach for me, it feels as if you're actually pushing me away."

"That sounds like shrink talk, Meg."

"You're just so hungry."

"Is that bad?"

"It is if nothing I can do is enough for you."

The first of the imaginary children appeared to me in a dream. The shaman was lying on the porch of my mother's beach house, on a chaise lounge with a beach towel over his belly. He looked pregnant. "Don't you want to see her?" he said. "Don't you even want to see her?"

"No, I certainly don't." I had started to leave when a little girl came through the door to the kitchen. She was maybe five or six years old, fat, with blond greasy hair, and she was wearing my little white dress. Her eyes were crusted over, and she tapped the floor in front of her with a long red cane.

The shaman spit on me, a misty stream of Tabu perfume. "Take her with you," he said.

Then the little girl and I were in my Jaguar, and we were driving to Burger King. She began to hit me with the cane. Her eyes were open and red with hate. The blindness had been a trick. "I'm your appetites," she whispered fiercely, "and you'll never get away from me."

The last thing I remember is that she was eating a small mountain of cheeseburgers, one after another, and vomiting them back up on the floor of my car.

I awoke from this dream in our living room, not in bed. I was soaked with sweat, and I'd poured a jar of Planter's peanuts into a small mountain on the glass-topped coffee table. My mouth felt dry and pasty with nuts.

"Ellen?" Meg was standing in the doorway behind me. She was wearing the red silk robe I'd given her when we were in Thailand. "What's the matter?"

"I guess I'm too hungry," I said.

I bought the Jaguar because of the shaman.

His name was Don Eduardo, and several books had been written about him, which I hadn't bothered to find out before I went to Peru. I wasn't really a journalist, though people kept treating me like one.

The shaman was a small, beetlelike man with a thick black mustache that curved down around his mouth. He wore his black hair in a ponytail. He spoke only Spanish, but the anthropologist who had organized the trip translated.

The shaman talked a lot about "power animals," archetypal sources with which the initiate must develop relationships. He said there were four cardinal power animals: the snake, the horse, the eagle, and the jaguar. Of these, the jaguar was the most important.

"I don't think he meant a car," Meg said.

"I know that." But I could offer no other explanation for why I'd bought an automobile I didn't trust and couldn't afford.

"It took three people to make a Jaguar," Meg said. "One to build the car, one to hold the candle, and one to dance around it singing the incantations." She held her arms up and waved them around.

But Meg admitted she liked the leather seats and the walnut-burl dashboard. "It's a very sexy automobile."

"You have no idea how much dancing around and singing incantations I did just like that in Peru. It looked a lot like that."

The anthropologist had organized a group of Americans into a kind of New Age comedy to reenact the entire shamanic initiation in only two weeks, a process that ordinarily takes years. I did think it would make a very funny article.

The first night of ceremonies took place in the Nazca Plains. On the desert at Nazca, huge figures are drawn across the earth. These figures—among them a monkey, a spider, and even a whale—are visible only from the air, which has led to much rather silly speculation that they are related to visitors from outer space. The figures are, however, quite old. They date from the fifth to the fifteenth century, and their origins and purposes are obscure.

At midnight we entered a figure called the Needle and Thread, a long thin triangle with a spiral at its base. After chanting and drinking sacred potions, we were to walk, one by one, into the spiral. The spiral was doubled, turning back in on itself at its center, so by walking in, we would walk back out.

It was pitch dark, and I was a little spooked by the chanting, and by the fervor of the other participants. They had all drunk Don Eduardo's potion, which contained, according to the anthropologist, a psychotropic cactus unclassified in the West. Being a member of AA, I had decided to take my mysticism straight.

"Don't you see the jaguar?" one woman said to me, pointing into the darkness.

"I don't do drugs anymore." When it was my turn to enter the spiral, I sauntered in.

Immediately I was nervous. I concentrated on the vague outline of the path. In a dozen steps the path began to disappear. I could hear my own breathing, and I felt something catlike in my shoulders. My legs felt like haunches. I began to see clearly, and I walked the dark path easily. I suppressed the desire to roar.

At breakfast the next morning I told the anthropologist what I'd experienced. He told Don Eduardo, who stared hard at me for several seconds, then said something rapidly.

"Don Eduardo says that perhaps you are afraid of your sexuality."

The anthropologist was boyishly good-looking, and he enjoyed telling me this.

"Isn't everybody?" I said.

The anthropologist translated again. "Don Eduardo says no, and that he has twelve children."

"Tell him maybe his wife should be afraid of her sexuality."

Apparently Don Eduardo understood English even though he didn't speak it, because he laughed out loud.

The second child appeared to me at breakfast with Meg. We were sitting at the

dining-room table, eating my special granola. Light glittered on the river. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a child staring at me. She was sitting right at the table with us, and in front of her was an empty bowl. This one was maybe seven or eight years old. She was wearing a Supergirl suit of red, white, and blue, decorated with stars. A blue towel was tied around her neck, in imitation of a cape. Her hair was set in ringlets, like Little Lulu's. I could remember Little Lulu from comic books when I was a child. I had never liked Little Lulu. "You look absurd in that outfit," I said, "especially with your hair like that."

Meg's spoon stopped in midair. She was wearing a green Chinese robe with a large pink poppy embroidered on the back. Her black hair was not braided but hung loose down her back. "What's the matter with my hair?" she said.

Through the doorway to the bedrooms came the little blind girl, tapping her cane. "She's not really blind," I said to Meg. "It's an act."

Comprehension appeared in Meg's eyes, then relief, then alarm. "The child you saw in your dream?"

"Meg," I said, "what's the difference between a vision and a hallucination? Do you think there is one?"

"Well," Meg said, as if this were an entirely ordinary conversation, "if I thought this granola was a steak, that's a hallucination. A vision is superimposed over reality. I mean, you can tell it's not real."

Meg likes my granola. It's a recipe I made up, and it's not in *How to Cook Redneck*.

"Suppose I told you there's a little girl sitting here with us and she's wearing a Supergirl suit."

"Are they talking to you yet?"

"No."

There was a long silence. "I'd say you shouldn't have gone to Peru."

This story is an excerpt from Blanche Boyd's novel, *The Revolution of Little Girls*, published in May by Knopf.

Ruth L. Schwartz for P.

The Same Moon

We cannot alter history
by ignoring it
nor the contradictions
who we are.

A Black woman and a white woman
in the open fact of our loving
with not only our enemies' hands
raised against us
means a gradual sacrifice
of all that is simple.

Audre Lorde
"Our Dead Behind Us"

1 Because you danced so sexy, arms above your head,
and when you saw me watching you,
you gave me back a smile I could taste,
and I wanted to swim through the gap between
your front teeth
and roll around for hours
on your warm tongue,

because when I think of you
my nipples scratch at the front of my shirt
like chickens wanting to be let out
into the sweet, wormy grass,

because when we stood talking,
that first night,
I saw the moles on your left cheek
like dark, tiny petals outlined in the bar's
raw light,

because you woke at 5:00 a.m.,
needing to go home before
your children woke,
and as I drove you on the silent freeway,
holding your hand in the near-light,
our breath frosted the windshield on the first day of July,

because I was terrified to call you,
and called you anyway,
and loved you anyway,

I thought we might survive it,
the journeying between our different worlds.

2 After the picnic-blanket day
when we first told our stories,
I knew there was nothing
I could possibly offer you,
absolutely nothing.

"Except yourself," my roommate said.
"Except yourself," you echoed later.

I grieved your Mississippi childhood,
teachers, white and Black, who didn't want
to teach Black kids,
the cousin who molested you,
the sister who molested you,
mother gone, father you didn't know.
Thinking the space between your teeth
was ugly.
Covering your mouth when you smiled.

You brought me flowers, signed the card
"Forever Yours"—words I couldn't understand.
Forever? Mine?

3 On the road to Monterey
you let me drive the winding parts
played Tracy Chapman on a battered portable
slept against my arm

Your sister's apartment. Her sizing me up—
"She's cute"—as if I wasn't there.
You played with the hair on my leg
while the TV blared
and she talked about the babes she'd fucked.
I felt comfortably ornamental,
nothing at all required of me.

4 I loved hearing your voice on my answering machine
especially after we started saying
"I love you" to each other
and you'd say it on every message,
sometimes just "love you,"
leaving the pronoun out
so it became an incantation.

We saw each other so briefly
between jobs, the kids—

an hour in my too-quiet, booklined room;
when you didn't want to talk,
you'd read the spines aloud,

or an hour at the bar, your world,
you regal as a queen with your Crystal Geyser,
knowing everyone,
leaving every dance, every conversation
unfinished between us,
introducing me around—
"She's cute," they'd tell you
while I tried to remember names.

5 Finally I met your children,
bought them Slurpees.
A canyon I'd never seen—
them skipping between, ahead of us
down to the shallow pond where tadpoles swam.
I couldn't believe how easy it was.
I caught some of the little frogs
with my bare hand
and you chided me like a mother
and they leapt back to their water.

Later, outside my house
with the nightsmelling bush wafting its scent
to the curb,
I said I loved you
and your whole body seemed to flower
open. You threw back your head.
"Tell me," you said,
and I did, I did.

6 But you were living in a cheap motel,
San Pablo Avenue,
you and the kids crammed into one room—
clothes and papers scattered everywhere,
and on one dresser-top, an iron
held out like a hand,
a lone gesture toward order.

At one end of that motel courtyard
a tall palm tree waved its fronds—
peaceful, incongruous.
At the other end, a single orange phonebooth,
a battered phone.
Once when we were talking, you had to get off
because a woman said it was "urgent."
Turned out she was trying
to get some crack.
Turned out she knew you,
had seen you in a meeting once,
back in the hospital, when you were detoxing.
Into the phone she said,
"and give me some extra
for my friend here, too ..."
You looked around, wondering who she meant.
Then your palms started sweating
then every part of you started sweating.
"I'm a rock star. I'm famous," she said
(you explained the drug slang to me later.)
"I ain't famous no more," you croaked,
the sweat coating your voice,
dripping through the parking lot,
up the stairs,
back to your one room.

7 You said you were torn between her and me.
"It's like you each know different parts of me."
We were walking around in your new neighborhood,
but you didn't want to go too far.
"People see a white person,
they'll think you're a cop."

You said the part of you that loved me
was the kid-part, who you were
before the streetlife. Before drugs.
Suddenly I *saw* you,
bright, eager, shining kid.
Beautiful dreamy girl. Shoeless
and alone
down the long, sharply pebbled road.

Where in your life
where in mine
could we walk?

8 Some of the things you said to me:

that you liked me in tight jeans

that you weren't right for me
I should be with a conservative whitegirl
with a good job

that you'd always wanted to go to Paris
be a writer
help people
get on a bus and just ride

that without the kids you'da been
dead or in jail by now

that someday I'd thank you
for keeping me out of your life

that there was a hummingbird outside,
drinking the gladioli

that you'd miss me

and I said I'd miss what
happened, and what never did:

our spirits completely transcending
and completely barricaded by
our real lives

9 Still it goes on opening in me.
Still my breasts like wanting mouths.
Still the grief after I talk to you.
Still the joy, unreasoned.

10 So few words between us now,
except how we still find each other
beautiful—

you saying, "turn around,
let me see you in those jeans,"

me with my fingers in your hair,
tight and soft back of your neck,

you warning me it's rough,
it'll cut my hands.

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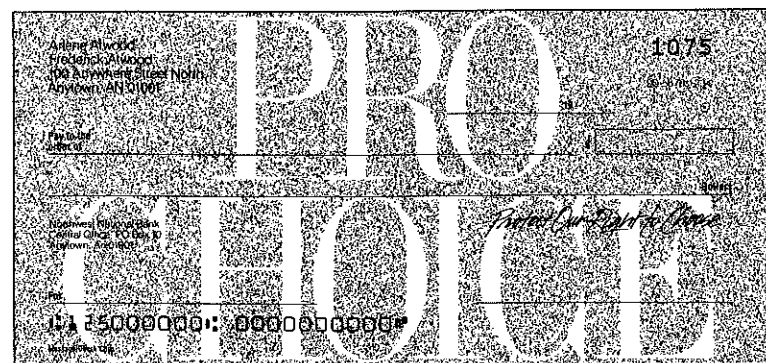
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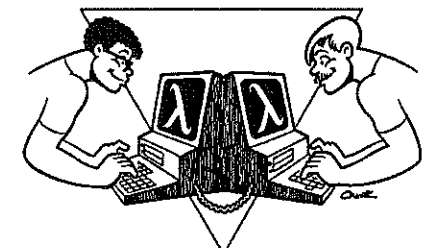
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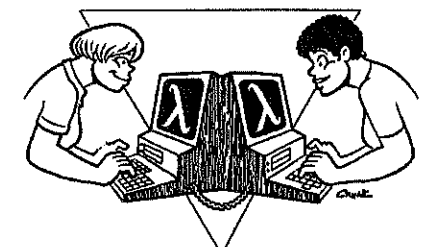
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Lesbians and gay men are beginning to recover, discover, and uncover the ways that religion and spirituality fit into their individual lives and into the life of their communities. It is no longer satisfactory, for many gay people, to reject outright "the Church" or other forms of traditional religious belief and practice. For many lesbians and gay men, however, the simple truth is that Christianity has censored, and continues to condemn, same sex practice as "vile" and "unnatural." Consequently, Roman Catholicism and Evangelical Fundamentalism have remained prime targets for gay activists. Yet in actuality, lesbians and gay men have always been a part of "the Church," and their ability today to chip away at the homophobic elements in these institutions has allowed a growing wedge of gay and lesbian Christians to create a more accepting, loving, and nurturing faith.

In this section, we have brought together two personal essays dealing head-on with the commonly-held belief that gayness and church simply don't mix. One of the crucial points of entry in discussing gayness and the church is the dynamic between the body and the spirit. How, for example, does the mechanism of sexual repression as a spiritual ideal get reworked when sexual identification is considered a primary human category? The strength of gay and lesbian spirituality within the Christian tradition begins, perhaps, not from a disembodied love for God or fellow human beings, but rather, from the physical realities of the erotic need for others and even God.

David Plante's reading of St. Paul's Biblical warning against "carnal love" confronts one of the signature texts against lesbians and gay men, while he wrestles with his Roman Catholicism. Nancy Wilson reveals how necessarily intertwined spirituality and sexuality remain in our lives, and how it is possible to embrace fully both lesbianism and Jesus.

Rüdiger Busto

Homo-Sacred



by Robert Lenz with permission of Bridge Building Icons

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans

David Plante



I recall the winter light coming through the windows of the classroom, and the nun, Mère Sainte-Epiphane, standing in that hard light, her long black skirt hiding her shoes so she appeared to float a little above the unpolished wooden floor, telling the class in Canadian French that we shouldn't try to read the Bible because we wouldn't understand it. Only those who had devoted their lives to the study of the Bible understood God's word properly. We should rely on them for explanations and not try to interpret the word of God according to what we might want that to be, because not what we wanted God to be was true, but God in himself was true, and the truth of his word required knowledge we did not have.

About Saint Paul, we were taught that he was the man, the military man, who most understood Christ's teachings, and therefore the church's. Paul was the authority on all interpretations of the Bible, and what the laws of the Bible he interpreted most had to do with was what everyone in the class of pubescent adolescents most thought about: the body of flesh.

Mère Sainte-Epiphane, who heard this from we had no idea what higher power because we didn't think she herself read the Bible, relayed to us that according to Saint

Paul we had a body and a soul, and the body was always trying to destroy the soul by drawing our attention to it rather than allowing us the full attention to the soul it needed for our salvation. To save our soul, we must strictly control our body, as Saint Paul did.

We were not, however, responsible for what we dreamed.

A colored holy picture of the saint was passed from student to student, all at our desks, for us to study. He was a Roman soldier wearing armor that reproduced the chest muscles, the nipples, the curves of the groin of his body, and he had a halo over his head. His picture made us entirely aware of our body, but his teaching was that we, as soldiers of Christ, must subject our body to a will above our body, a will that said the soul, not the body, mattered. We were put in armor by Saint Paul that exactly reproduced our naked body, that reminded us all the time we wore it of our naked body, and that didn't allow us to expose our body to be touched, even by ourselves.

One afternoon, in the attic where I liked to go after school to look through the cardboard and wooden boxes that'd been packed away there before I was born, I lifted old sheets of newspaper that covered a box filled with books and, taking these out to examine them, found a large book that interested me for being so big and heavy, with a thick green binding and a silver top stain. I looked through books for pictures, not text, and I opened this one onto a picture of Christ walking along a dirt road and as if followed by the devil, both figures rather different from the Catholic Christ and devil — smoother, softer, vaguer about the edges, and in pastel colors—and I was so struck by the difference I became suspicious and examined the book more closely. I held in my hands a Protestant Bible. Quickly, I went down the ladder with it, and in the kitchen, where my mother and brother were having tea at the table, I held the book up and shouted, "I found a Protestant Bible in our house." My mother and brother didn't seem interested. I went to the door that led to the

cellar and threw the Bible down the stairs.

"Go get that," my brother said.

"No," I answered. "It's a Protestant Bible."

My mother asked, "How did it get into the attic?"

"I don't know," I said. "But we've got to get rid of it."

"Go get it," my brother said again, and I insisted, "No." He went down the cellar stairs, picked it up, and came back, smoothing out the crumpled pages.

I went up into the attic again and, looking through more books, forgot the Bible.

Some days later, drying the dishes my mother washed, I remembered the Bible and asked where it was. She looked out the window over the sink, then said, as if about an act that had been horrible but necessary, "It's gone."

What had most frightened me about the Protestant Bible was that I knew it was read in an entirely different way from the Catholic. A Protestant interpreted the truth of God's laws in whatever way he wanted.

But the Protestant Bible was gone.

Then one of my brothers, the one who had rescued the Bible I'd thrown down the cellar stairs, married a Protestant. My mother and I thought she was wonderful: so free, so bright, so outgoing. Not like us. But my father disapproved of her for being Protestant, my father who was in no way free, bright, outgoing.

Protestants were freer than I. Protestants could be as aware of their bodies as they wanted, and in the locker rooms and on the beaches where my older brother and my new sister-in-law took me sometimes on a summer Sunday, they enjoyed this awareness. In our family, the body, especially that of my father, was a secret. If I was obsessed by my body in private, I was embarrassed by it in public. The Catholic meaning of the body was private, and Protestant was public, and these meanings were very different from one another. Even Saint Paul would not be an absolute authority to a Protestant, but someone whose words about the body and soul could be read in the way he wanted to read them.

When I became a freshman in a Jesuit college, I had to take courses in theology, and I learned, to some extent, the authoritative readings of the Bible. But the more I learned the official interpretations, the more I was drawn to the unofficial, or what I imagined were the unofficial, ways, for the freedom of being able to read as I wanted, and I turned from Knox's Roman Catholic translation of the Bible to the King James as a deliberate act of rebellion, and also with the excited sense that I was reading a work that was, according to strict church law, forbidden, as was *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman. I bought the Protestant Bible in a bookshop in Boston and kept it hidden in my room. As I studied the Catholic Bible, I read, for inspiration, the Protestant, which, for everything that I as a boy had been told made the Protestant Bible an occasion of sin, freed me from the rules of the Catholic. I read the King James Version of the Bible as I imagined a Protestant would read it—not necessarily for understanding of God's intent, but for inspiration; not to learn the impersonal laws governing all men, but for an entirely personal movement in my soul.

I wanted the Bible to inspire me with a movement in my soul equal to the movement I felt, in body and soul, when my roommate opened the door and came in at the end of an afternoon from a class and threw his books on the floor and threw himself on his bed, his worn buckskin shoes on, and asked me how my day had been. I wanted to find in the Bible a Protestant Saint Paul who, superseding the Catholic one, would justify me in my freedom to love my roommate, physically and spiritually. The only justification needed from the Protestant Bible, I imagined, was to feel the truth of a certain passage, even if I did not understand it. Justification in the Catholic Bible was intellectual, was Scholastic. I wanted to read the Bible for inspiration in the same way I was inspired by my roommate to love him, and I also wanted my reading of the Bible to inspire my love for him.

And so I read the Protestant Saint Paul. (I never did read the Catholic, because my

courses at college didn't require me to.) I read:

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves:

Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

For this cause God gave them up into vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the women, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. [ROMANS 1:20-32]

How could I, in my superseding Protestant freedom, interpret this passage in Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans, the passage appearing in the very first chapter, in terms of which I, alas, found myself reading the entire epistle?

Panicked, I had to defend myself against the Protestant Saint Paul, who horrified me. I

had to find something wrong with him. I told myself, what this passage implies, among other terrible things, is that God "gave over men" to burn in their lust for one another as a punishment for worshipping the creature more than the Creator; that God "filled" people who didn't retain him in their knowledge with "unrighteousness, fornication, uncleanness," and the rest of it. So, for one man to make love with another was not a sin in itself, but a punishment for worshipping the creature rather than the Creator, a punishment for which these people are to be further punished, receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet, which was to become backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, and on and on, including disobeying their parents and being made unmerciful.

The truth about myself as a practicing Catholic was that I loved God, in himself, and never thought of him as a corruptible man or, much less, as a four-footed or creeping thing, though I must confess I did think of him as a bird, a dove, in his manifestation as the Holy Spirit, for which not I but the entire church should be condemned. I loved God, but, for some reason, God nevertheless punished me by making me fall in love with my roommate. This was very clear: he didn't punish me by making me a backbiter, etc., because I loved my roommate. He punished me, for no reason that I could imagine myself guilty of, by making me fall in love with my roommate.

Mère Sainte-Epiphanie was right. I shouldn't have read the Bible without proper guidance. I didn't understand.

The very awareness Saint Paul had of the lustful body indicated his attachment to it. "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" There was a strong point to seeing Saint Paul's thorn in the flesh, even if it were not sexual, as a constant, painful awareness of the body, an awareness he thought was the ruin of his soul. But to a person, as I was as an adolescent, for whom laws against the flesh were also laws against the spirit, Saint Paul's con-

demning the body condemned the soul. His struggle to free the soul was nullified by his condemnation of the body.

I knew it was unjust to him that he, the great radical who proclaimed the end of the Law, should, in the end, be known above all as the man who stood for the law; unjust that his strictures against the flesh should override his amazing proclamations of the freedom of the spirit. And yet he did see the two, body and spirit, as incompatible, and in that he was a danger to me.

In that first year of college, I didn't doubt that I loved my roommate any more than I doubted I loved God. Saint Paul said that was impossible.

I'll call myself Daniel and I'll call my roommate Charlie.

Daniel and Charlie were sitting in a bar in the old North End of Boston. They were in a booth with tall sides that had dates and names carved in the dark wood. The table was wooden, too, and carved with dates and names. Daniel was apprehensive because he and Charlie were underage, and every time Charlie asked the waitress for another two beers, Daniel got worried that she would ask for their IDs. Charlie didn't seem to worry, but said to the waitress, joking, "I like this place. It's where the real he-men hang out." She said, "You bet."

Charlie and Daniel were discussing circumcision, the pros and cons. It was a way for two young men to talk about male sex.

Charlie said, "I can't understand why removing a baby's foreskin should have become a law of religion. Why?"

"Is it, do you think, a sin for a Jew not to be circumcised?" Daniel asked.

"I think that a Jew who isn't circumcised isn't a Jew, according to Judaic Law, so, not being a Jew, an uncircumcised Jew wouldn't be sinning because he wasn't circumcised. He wouldn't be anything."

"Can you imagine circumcision being such an issue it defines by religious law what you are?" Daniel said.

"As I said, I don't understand," Charlie said. "Saint Paul talks about the circumcision of

the spirit taking the place of the circumcision of the flesh."

"Does he?"

"Christians are supposed to have circumcised souls. That's what makes them Christian."

"I don't know what that means."

"It means, I think, not abiding by the letter of the law, but the spirit."

Charlie smiled. "Do you feel you have a circumcised soul, Dan?"

Daniel smiled back. He said, "I do, and my soul so abides by the spirit rather than the letter, I don't believe in sin anymore."

"That seems radical," Charlie said. "What made you decide that?"

"It just occurred to me that what I thought was sinful I did only because of a Church law that condemned it. In fact, there's no reason at all for it to be condemned, because in itself it's—" He stopped for a moment to drink beer and try to cool down, for what he had to say he must say dispassionately to convince Charlie of it. "—it's completely natural," he said, "as natural as having a foreskin."

Charlie didn't ask what it was, but he asked, "How do you know it's natural?"

"My spirit tells me," Daniel said.

"I don't know if that'd pass in an examination on syllogisms, Dan."

"Well, take it this way," Daniel said, leaning across the table toward his friend, "take it the way Saint Paul would take it, if Saint Paul were myself or if I were Saint Paul. He says over and over, in Romans, that people can't live fulfilled lives according to the law, but only according to the spirit, and the spirit is above the law. He even says that it's only because of laws that there are sins, and without laws there wouldn't be sins. He says that he knows that there is nothing unclean of itself, but a thing is unclean to someone only if he thinks it is unclean. He also says that a man is happy who doesn't condemn himself for what he allows himself. I can quote you chapter and verse for these—the first, chapter 5, verse 13; the second, chapter 15, verse 14; the third, chapter 15, verse 22—"

"You mean," Charlie said, "you've read the Bible?"

"The Protestant," Daniel said.

"And?"

"And it made me want to talk with Saint Paul. I want to tell him that he contradicted himself so badly in his letters, especially in Romans, that everything he says is canceled out, or would be canceled out if he himself had been responsible for the contradictions. But I believe something else, something greater than himself, something above the laws of logic, made him contradict himself, and instead of this condemning his writing, it—this something greater than himself—saved it, at least for me."

Charlie, leaning with his elbows on the table edge and his shoulders hunched forward, looked at Daniel.

Daniel said, "I'd say to Saint Paul, 'You may not be aware of it, but something in your writing knows that the body and soul are not opposed to one another, but as much one as our great American poet Walt Whitman said they are.'"

"I thought you'd have to get Walt Whitman in there," Charlie said.

Daniel said, "I'm talking to Saint Paul, I'm saying to him, 'You wrote, To be carnally minded is death,' and you also wrote, 'My brethren, ye also are become dead to the law of the body of Christ; that ye be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God,' which is an image based on carnal love for the body of Christ, it seems to me, however mystical the marriage is. No, you can't use the imagery of sexual love on one level, on what you consider a high and justified level, and condemn sex on another, what you consider a low level. And you do that all the time. You could say that it's impossible to act out on the low level what is possible on the higher level, so the lower level must be condemned. Well, if you think that, you should use an entirely different set of references for the higher level. Don't you see that you can't use an image of what you damn, which is the body, for what you praise, which is the soul?"

You say over and over that the body and the soul are separate and opposed, and the true believer must put off the carnal body to take on Jesus, but in the end you go back on yourself and, as though giving in to a passion greater than your strong intelligence, you use the image of the body to identify what you repeatedly insist has nothing to do with our mortal bodies: the body of the church itself, the mystical body of Christ? "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another"—Romans, chapter 12, verses 4 and 5. Don't you see that it's when you allow yourself to be inspired—as in chapter 15, verse 22, you say a happy man does without condemning himself—you, despite your personal struggle to separate the body from the soul, unite the body to make sense of the soul, you are inspired as if by grace beyond your thinking, and beyond contradiction too? Don't you realize that your very awareness of the body, instead of condemning you, gives substance to the very faith that will save you and us all?"

Charlie said, "I think you should tell that to the Jebbies."

Daniel laughed.

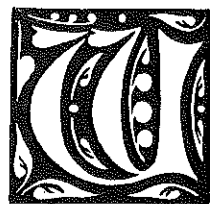
Daniel and Charlie left the bar because Charlie had a date. Daniel walked to the MTA station with him so Charlie could get a trolley, and then he continued to walk. He went along streets lit by streetlights toward Faneuil Hall, and up Cornhill to the courthouse, and up onto Beacon Hill behind the statehouse; then at Louisburg Square, where the dim, old-fashioned lamps seemed to hiss, he turned down to the dark Boston Common.

As Daniel passed the hill on the Common, he saw Saint Paul at the top, looking up into the nighttime sky, in which the stars defined a great body, Christ's, risen with arms outstretched, which Saint Paul contemplated with greater love than Daniel would ever have for anyone in his life.

This essay is excerpted from *Incarnation: Contemporary Writers on the New Testament*, edited by Alfred Corn (Viking, 1990).

Soul & Body

Nancy L. Wilson



hen, at age twenty-one, I walked into my first gay bar (The 1270 on Boylston Street in Boston) it was like walking through the looking glass for the first time to the right side. The music playing on the juke box that night is burned forever in my memory. I knew the sheer joy of seeing women dancing with women and men with men, understanding for the first time why anyone would want to dance with anyone. This engaged my every nerve, all of my body. For the first time I felt fully alive and embodied in a public place. I remember how I trembled, holding and dancing publicly with a woman whom I had only previously held that close in bed. A wall between our private and public life came crashing happily down around us.

That same month I walked into my first Metropolitan Community Church service, in the little chapel at the Arlington Street Church (Unitarian) also on Boylston Street. Sitting with eleven or twelve other gay and lesbian people, I wept through Communion. Body and soul were united on Boylston Street in my twenty-first year when I simply walked through the looking glass to my new spiritual home. I felt naked and vulnerable in the presence of a God who was *not* ashamed to be called my God. I found out

that embodied freedom was possible for me, a lesbian Christian.

I am grateful to the core of my being, for being born a lesbian in the latter half of the twentieth century, and that when I came out a fledgling gay church was there to greet me. I can only imagine what it would have been like to be a lesbian with a call to Christian ministry at any other time in history.

Growing up lesbian in the fifties and sixties was a lot like being on the wrong side of the looking glass. For me, it was a bizarre blending of *Alice in Wonderland* meets Paul's lament in I Corinthians 13, "Now we see through a mirror dimly ..." I suppose I am unrepentantly a lesbian "essentialist," believing that my lesbianism is as old as I am, with the quality of givenness, an ontological quality not unlike (though not identical to) ethnicity.

That essentialist bias is qualified by my understanding that human sexuality is a complex matrix of factors. Like many gay philosophers and poets, I believe that gay men and lesbians are a curious amalgam of "ethni." So I do not believe our gay culture is solely the creation of external, sociological, oppressive forces. At the core we experience a deep longing for our "kind." Through a worldwide homophobic fog we are beginning to see, even dimly, the outlines of a *global* gay and lesbian reality. It is

diverse and peculiar in every culture, yet united at some deep, mysterious core of being. We are everywhere.

But, oh, the cost of knowing that. Ours is the generation of transition, layers and layers coming out, clearing the fog. We know now the *joy* of seeing each other, while we try to heal the pain of all the years of not seeing.

In the midst of this, some of us ask: Who is God in our struggle and celebration? Jesus of Nazareth, Cosmic Christ, what have *you* to do with us? How can we incarnate you in *our* body and blood?

We are sexual outlaws like those Christ ate and drank with. Ones who break rules about gender and roles, the trans-people, whose very existence exposes the lies of patriarchal ontology. We are very dangerous.

I think it was Rev. Jim Sandmire who first pointed out that it was at Metropolitan Community Church that gays and lesbians in the US first gathered in large groups openly in the daylight. That moment in history is only a little more than twenty years old. It's too close to us; we are too close to it. We can't yet understand the magnitude of this shift in consciousness.

I came out sexually as a lesbian on Holy Thursday in 1972 at the age of twenty-one. Two months earlier I broke my silence, when I looked in a mirror and said, "You are a lesbian." I had never had sex with anyone, touched my own genitals or really taken a deep breath. I was a sexual "anorexic," starving for touch, imprisoned by a fear that if I let myself know I was a lesbian (realizing that the world was so unfriendly), I would lose the little love and acceptance I thought I had.

Finally, in a leap of ecstatic courage, I told a woman who was a dear friend that I was in love with her. The surprise and delight of making love to her that night still fills me. What was supposed to be queer, perverted, and debased was, I found, lovely, sacred, and healing. Even in our virgin awkwardness, I felt alive and radiantly welcomed into another's arms, mouth, and

body. Our lovemaking was the ultimate hospitality. That spring became a blur of sexual passion, exposed homophobic terror, college graduation, coming out to my parents: all the initial costs of embodied freedom.

I remember a warm autumn evening in the chapel on Boylston Street at the new Metropolitan Community Church of Boston. During communion the congregation began to sing softly, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." I felt my spirit yielding, melting into the arms of a God whose simple assurances flooded that moment. I tried to fight the sweet pleasure of giving in. Always I had believed I must shield myself, and those close to me, from my passionate love of God, my longing for my own people, and my own sexuality and need to be touched. Now I was healed of that belief in the company of these new friends God gave me.

My first two years of MCC ministry resembled a roller coaster ride. That fall my picture appeared on the front page of the City Section of the Boston Globe: I didn't "come out," I fell out. Immediately the Boston University School of Theology was scandalized by my presence. Only Dr. Robert Treese's advocacy and friendship, coupled with the fact that I quickly cast my lot with MCC and closed the door on the Methodist ministry forever, saved me from being expelled.

Feminist scholars and students in the Boston Theological Institute, many of whom were lesbians, ran from me as if I had the plague. Only securely heterosexual feminists seemed able to speak to me. Women I used to smile at, or dance with, at The Saints (a lesbian bar in Boston), snubbed me at school. While feminists were in the process of post-christianizing themselves, I fell in love with the first church I felt included all of me. I became determined to integrate the best of feminist analysis and prophecy into our new movement. I came to believe that Jesus Christ was in the midst of the embodied freedom I was embracing, just as other feminists were running from the least hint of traditional Christology.

In the early seventies I was just moving into feminism. But I could not identify with middle-class feminists, and they shrunk from the working-class and street-culture roots marking the early gay movement in America.

During my early ministry as a lesbian spiritual leader of a gay and lesbian congregation, there were many crises. I had to disarm several people who aimed guns and knives at me in church. While I was celebrating communion, a man raced up to the altar, knocked over the sacred elements, and punched me in the face. We had frequent bomb threats. One night a group of fundamentalists came into our worship. During the Lord's Prayer they began to shout obscenities. We gathered in a circle, singing, until they departed.

In those days I watched gay teenagers die of alcoholism by the dozens. And I saw children and young gay people beaten senseless by police in bars and at police stations. I went to court again and again to help them. Suicides took an endless variety of forms. A deacon at MCC in Providence, whose Catholic guilt and father's rejection drove him berserk, handcuffed himself to a chain-link fence, doused himself with gasoline, and immolated himself. If I am ever tempted to see an idyllic time of gay and lesbian carefreeness before the AIDS epidemic, I stand corrected. There may have been moments of "Camelot" in a few gay centers in the US, but embodied freedom has clearly never come easily.

The first woman clergyperson that I ever saw wearing a clerical collar was myself in a mirror. We had no time for formalities. Just one month in seminary, I was the most theologically educated MCC woman clergy-in-the-making. Larry Bernier, the founder of MCC in Boston, just dressed me in a collar and I began preaching, serving communion, and pastoring. Three years later I was ordained in MCC after I had pastored two churches. I remember working very hard to make myself look older than my twenty-two

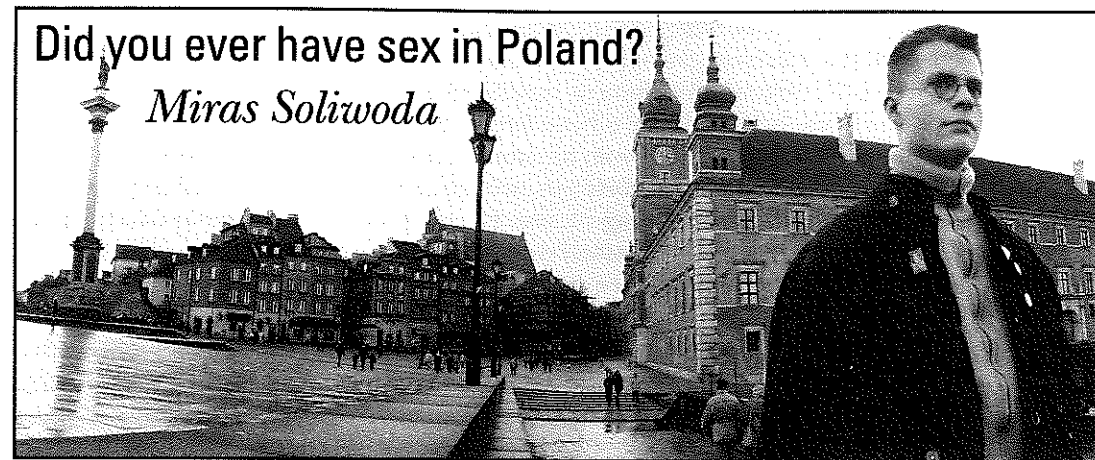
years. MCC had about twenty churches then. It was a very young, fly-by-night operation, and I simply had no idea how important the vision of MCC, and of a gay and lesbian spiritual re-awakening, would become.

In MCC, I cut my ecumenical teeth. Suddenly I found myself in the company of Pentecostals, Evangelicals, Catholics, and Salvationists, whose vocabularies of faith and worship were strange, attractive, and sometimes alienating. Meanwhile we just did the best we could, expressing our need of one another and mutual love. We sacrificed precious dogmas and precious practices just in order to be together. I hated wearing a clerical collar. I found it a slave symbol that had ironically come to mean male spiritual superiority and privilege. This was politically and theologically repulsive to me. But I wore it (although I rebelled and didn't wear one at my ordination), because it shocked the world to see a woman in one. It might have been pure transvestism to me, like wearing my cousin Billy's suit to play Abe Lincoln. A lavender clerical shirt, blue jeans and a lavender blue jeans jacket was the favorite outfit of my early ministry.

Since that time, my life has been given to ministry in MCC. I've spoken at the White House, to the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches, before "governors and kings." But my greatest joy has been pastoring an MCC Church on a daily basis. I have the privilege of participating in the healing and empowering of my own people, the friends whom God promised me. Today, I still see Christ crucified in the wounds, both external and self-inflicted, festering in our people. A whole generation of gay and lesbian youth growing up in the midst of the AIDS holocaust needs to claim embodied freedom in fresh, challenging new ways.

This article was excerpted from an essay in *Amazing Grace: Stories of Gay and Lesbian Faith*, ed. Malcolm Boyd and Nancy Wilson, to be published by The Crossing Press in September, 1991.

Slawek Starosta by Marc Geller



"How are you? What's your name? Where are you from?" These are inevitable questions that I have to answer wherever I show up while travelling around gay America.

"Wow, really, from Poland? How exciting!" most Americans react to my answer. "So, did you have gay sex before you came to this country?"

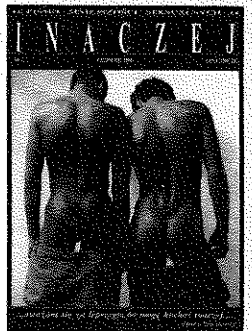
Believe me, it gets more than annoying to tell the same story several times a day. I'd rather write it ...

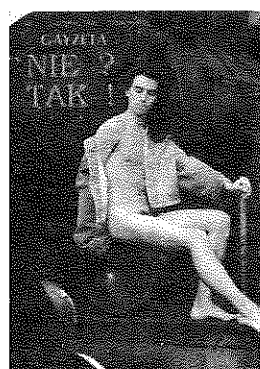
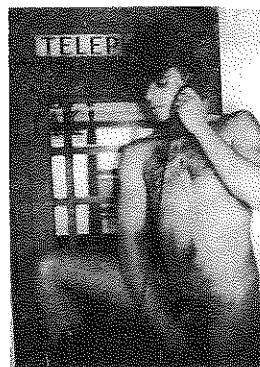
"There was a Queen's Way right in the middle of town. You started from the toilet at Plac Trzech Krzyzy, headed for Widok and never got to Marszalkowska alone," recalls Jarek, one of the best-known gay men in Warsaw. "Oh, of course, only if you knew what picking up boys was all about."

Having led a cruising life for seventeen years he counts his boyfriends and lovers in the hundreds. "Nine hundred or a thousand, probably more," he reckons. Quite an achievement in a country where the existence of homosexuals was not officially recognized until last year and where an exclusively gay establishment has yet to open. Hard to believe, I've found out, for somebody who grew up in New York or San Francisco, imagining any communist country as a grey, sad place where people do nothing but work and get drunk.

Working as a journalist for a few straight magazines in Poland, I found it quite hard to write about gay and lesbian issues before 1989. The subject always seemed too controversial to my editors. After the fall of the communist government, things changed—specifically gay publications were created and I joined one of them called *Nie? Tak!* Through my interviews, I've found that despite the political changes in my country, the social conditions of gay life in Poland remain difficult.

Homosexual intercourse has not been a crime in Poland since 1932. Unlike the Soviet Union or Romania, no one was jailed directly because of his or her sexual preferences. Nevertheless, it has never been an easy life for gays and lesbians in my historically unfortunate country. During the Nazi occupation homosexuals were taken to the Auschwitz concentration camp and condemned to death. After the war, the communist authorities could not reconcile the fact that homosexuals are born in a communist society "heading for paradise," so they simply ignored it. Homosexuality was taboo in mass media and society has learned about it mainly from jokes. I was brought up in the countryside through the 1970s and into the 1980s. There I had no idea if other gays lived on the earth or where to look for them.





During that time (I found out later) gay men gathered in a few straight bars and cafes chosen by the gay community without formal permission or even the knowledge of the managers. Three years ago I interviewed the current manager of Cafe Antyczna for an article about gay life for the straight magazine *Razem*. She seemed to dream about preventing gays from using the cafe. Her attitude was typical of many Poles.

"I didn't know what sort of place this was when I was sent to work here. I had noticed something strange about most of the customers but I realized the truth only a few weeks later when some friends of mine started to joke that I was running the 'Fag's Gallery,'" she said. "I have nothing against homosexuals, I feel for them and try to be sympathetic because I realize they are ill people ... But I'd rather be away from them." The editors at *Razem* never ran my story.

Solidarity's rise at the beginning of the 1980s did not stir the gay community into action, but did create a new atmosphere of freedom. Although democratic changes were suddenly and unceremoniously reversed by martial law at the end of 1981, it became clear that the emergence from the underground of various social and political minorities was only a matter of time.

At eighteen, in 1985, I moved to Warsaw to start studying at the university. Since it's quite a big town (over 2 million inhabitants), I presumed I would eventually meet other gays. And I did—wandering around the Centralny railway station. The gay world was completely underground. I was happy to enjoy its private parties and "brief encounters" under the darkness of night, and I didn't realize yet that it wasn't enough.

A few years later, by lucky chance, I ran into people creating the Warsaw Homosexual Movement (WRH). The group of fifteen to twenty guys used to meet at changing, coincidental places and discuss what should be done to organize gay life in Poland. Not much could be done as long as the group wasn't legally registered. We still lived in a

communist system and any kind of public activity needed legal recognition. WRH was refused recognition by the court on a number of occasions, so the organization could not get a public place for rallies, publish its own materials, or even open a bank account.

It was Jarek who organized the first specifically gay disco in Warsaw in December 1987. Having come out to his family and friends, he attended the initial meetings of WRH and agreed to open the state-owned local club he was running to gays one Saturday.

"I couldn't let my staff know what was going to happen nor advertise openly that it was a gay disco," he recalls. "I informed some people at the railway station and that was enough. Over 100 guys moved from the station platforms into my club that night. Most of them felt quite confused to be surrounded by so many other gays at the same time and the atmosphere was pretty stilted. Only after a few hours, having drunk a lot of alcohol, did some of them start to dance and it ended up being quite a successful evening. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to repeat it because the inevitable gossip reached my bosses."

I was abroad when my country suddenly became democratic in 1989. Traveling around Western Europe I learned how the gay world could be organized and I thought we would create one in Poland very quickly. I went back full of hope and energy ...

But the Solidarity-led government and the new president, Lech Walesa, have proven themselves to be even more socially conservative than their communist predecessors. They are strongly influenced by the Catholic church, which cannot be expected to be helpful to the gay community. Although Walesa denied the rumor spread by gay activists from Gdansk and reported by western newspapers that he would eliminate gays from Polish society, he did say (to the reporter of *Warsaw Gay News*) that he would decide after the election whether we should be treated as "outcasts of society" or not.

Having endured living in a "hide-and-seek" way, most Polish gays find it difficult to cope with a new challenge. Coming out, even to the family or close friends, still seems frightening and unnecessary. Forget getting involved with gay activism.

"I don't need any noise around me," says Adam, a forty-year-old lawyer. "I have some gay friends whom I meet regularly. We socialize at home and I quite enjoy it. And it's not a problem to have quick sex in a public lavatory when I can hold the temptation no longer. That's enough for me."

"You know, gay life loses all of its charm when it becomes open and normal," adds twenty-six-year-old student Mariusz. "I do like all these weird, unsure and unsafe situations which happen while I'm cruising on the streets or at the railway station."

The Association of Lambda Groups, the only national gay and lesbian group in Poland, has yet to find a regular meeting place, let alone run a successful social or political campaign. Even the emergence of AIDS has not mobilized the group. Although Lambda has offered free condoms to anyone who would like to use them, not that many gay men in Poland do. Most gay men keep naïvely thinking that it might be a problem only for those who had sex with foreigners. HIV testing is not anonymous—few people decide to do it and no one knows how many Poles are infected.

Lambda is predominantly gay men. Several women have joined the group, but they have yet to create their own program, and the gay men are not always interested in the women's agenda. Women use Lambda for a social meeting place as well as a political one, and there is one club that is sometimes mixed in Warsaw. "Out" lesbians are scarce in Poland, and very

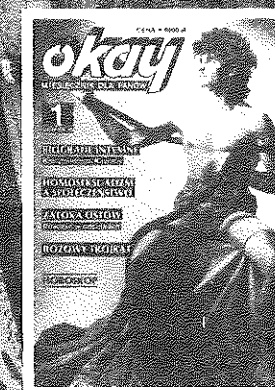
few are visibly politically active. The Catholic society expects all women to accept the role of "the Pole-Mother" and build a large, "happy" family; the feminist movement is not improved by the social changes and coming out seems to be extremely difficult for Polish lesbians.

It is much simpler to end a system with a revolution than to create a real democracy. It's even harder to change people's attitudes and views, to build something completely new, like an open and proud gay world within a conservative, intolerant Catholic society. Polish lesbians and gays are still at the very beginning of their journey.

There are some signs of progress. The most well-known, openly gay activist from Poland, pop musician and singer Slawek Starosta, has opened the Lesbian and Gay Club Fiolka and Pink Service Travel Agency. The agency distributes Polish gay literature and a fairly wide selection of publications from western Europe. Pink Service is also planning to organize the first Gay Pride Day in Warsaw. Slawek, with his band Balkan Electricque, has been responsible for the first gay-initiated AIDS information campaign with the release of the record *Do love, Don't kill*.

Having spent a while in San Francisco, I might find it quite hard to go back to living in gay Warsaw. I will though, to the surprise of my American acquaintances who did not believe that I had gay sex in Poland. San Francisco's gay community, facing far fewer difficulties with governmental repression than any other one in the world, seems to me the most decadent that I've ever encountered. No happier either. Paradoxically, being here makes me appreciate the "discreet charm" of gay life in Poland—full of struggle as well as exciting discoveries.

Photo by Marc Geller



Seeing Ourselves on Screen

New Books on Lesbians, Gay Men, and Film

Shari Zeck

The Woman at the Keyhole: Feminism and Women's Cinema

by Judith Mayne. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film

by Richard Dyer. New York: Routledge, 1990.

How Do I Look? Queer Film and Video

edited by The Bad Object Choices. Seattle: Bay Press, forthcoming July 1991.

Several years ago, I remember going back to college after visiting my parents and being ordered by my best friend to go to a new movie in town. She was from New York, took ballet, and generally impressed this mid-western gal with her taste and refinement. So when she said she had already seen the film four times I figured I was in for a real treat.

The film was *Personal Best*, and before the week was out I had seen it four times, and my cultured friend had seen it eight times.

Ten years after *Personal Best* thrilled audiences in Bloomington, Indiana, and places like it, there is still an appalling dearth of images of gay men and lesbians that show us as sexual beings. Certainly film and video production by openly gay people continues to increase and expand into new markets,

but unless one attends particular universities, is aware of and can afford to attend film festivals, or lives in a large city like New York or San Francisco, this work isn't readily available to the average Joe or Jane.

One of the things that was so exciting about picking up a copy of Vito Russo's 1981 book *The Celluloid Closet* was that it gave me a new way to view the selections at my local video outlet and the week's movies in my TV Guide. He validated my sense that there was something funny going on between Edward Everett Horton and Eric Blore in those Astaire/Rogers vehicles. With Russo as guide, for gay men and lesbians, film history was made immediate, visible, and at least partly accessible—even if littered with innuendo and way too many suicides.

The three books under discussion here cannot really offer a

substitute for seeing, but they can help us to understand our desire to see ourselves on screen and to interrogate that desire, and the ways in which it is thwarted and satisfied. The ability to make oneself heard or seen and the ability to alter what others hear and see is necessary to the very survival of lesbians and gay men. I am pleased and impressed, then, to see Judith Mayne's *The Woman at the Keyhole* take up the issue of female authorship in the cinema and relate it specifically to lesbian authorship and to the representation of lesbianism.

Film authorship has been much maligned in film studies in the last twenty years. Mayne's reappraisal of ideas of authorship is something of a reclamation of this area of study. The specter of essentialism, of assuming that traits such as gender, sexual orientation, or race determine particular filmic structures or meanings, has deterred critics from considering such information important. Mayne finds questions of authorship more compelling, for political and theoretical reasons, than the fear of essentialism. She examines some of the possibilities for seeing authorship as a kind of structure within film texts. For example, the work of Dorothy Arzner, a lesbian director in the American cinema in the 1930s and 1940s, provides examples of relationships between women and of levels of irony that reflect Arzner's existence as a lesbian—a little detail overlooked by most of the criticism of Arzner's films. Arzner's lesbianism tips the critic off to look for structures of lesbian authorship in her films.

The way in which Mayne reads Arzner's Hollywood films is applicable to avant-garde work as well, for "lesbian authorship,

as defined in Arzner's films, as well as in [Chantal Akerman's] *Je tu il elle* and [Ulrike Ottinger's] *Ticket of No Return*, explores the relations between women in erotic terms ... " The notion of "authorship" Mayne is working with, then, is connected to the consciousness of a lesbian filmmaker and is no more or less important than other elements of the narrative.

Mayne covers much of the territory of feminist film theory in a way that at once summarizes debates and pushes them forward. She "unpacks" notions of spectacle, for instance, in order to lead into a discussion of what she calls the "homotextual." Using the example of the popular film *The Big Sleep*, a film that has been a focal point of a lot of film theory (feminist and otherwise), Mayne reads the film not through the relationship of Marlowe (Humphrey Bogart) and Vivian Rutledge (Lauren Bacall), but through the (repressed) relationships of Vivian and her sister and of Marlowe and Harry Jones (Elisha Cook, Jr.). For those not conversant with the "psycho-speak" of film studies, her forays into psychoanalytic discourse may be troubling, but her readings of films both familiar and not-so-familiar, across national boundaries, genres, and periods of filmmaking, are refreshing.

In *Now You See It*, Richard Dyer also weaves through European and North American mainstream and avant-garde film to create a kind of history of lesbian and gay film culture. Changing conceptions of sexual identity and shifting agendas for the politics of sexual minorities in this century inform Dyer's study of gay and lesbian films much more than they do Mayne's readings.

He defines his object of study as "films made, to some significant degree, by people who considered themselves to be, in whatever the parlance of their day, lesbian or gay and which openly embrace gay/lesbian subject matter." Dyer, too, finds the sexual identity of the filmmakers a necessary bit of information for the analysis of a particular film, and he often uses biographical details to support his readings of individual films.

Sometimes this practice leads him to avoid discussing larger historical forces. The various versions of Christa Winsloe's "Manuela loves her teacher and maybe her teacher loves her" story in the film *Mädchen in Uniform*, Dyer attributes to Winsloe's transition to lesbian life in Berlin. There is scarcely a mention of the struggles with censors, or the different edited versions of the film. (In one, Manuela lives; in another, her suicide attempt is successful.) Certainly, as Dyer says, the "known fact of a woman [lesbian, gay male, black] director informs our reading," but those facts need not be the only thing that makes those films lesbian/gay cultural documents.

Though this work is not as encyclopedic as *The Celluloid Closet*, Dyer attempts to be as inclusive as possible as he moves through the last seventy-five years of film, while still giving fairly detailed analyses of important films. Dyer is generous in his judgments of filmmakers, and he is equally generous with regard to the work of other critics he draws from. He places his own readings of the films alongside the readings of others, giving the impression that the world of film criticism is a lot more amicable than most film conferences I've attended would suggest.

The gathering of voices that Dyer puts together clusters around groups of films such as Weimar cinema, Genet's *Chant d'amour* and films related to it, and lesbian films. This is a lot of ground to cover in a 300-page book, and sometimes the analyses lack depth. But the payoff is in the wide range of materials to which Dyer gives his readers access.

For those interested in gay/lesbian film and video studies in general, the forthcoming collection *How Do I Look? Queer Film and Video*, is a real find. The essays presented are from a conference held in New York in the fall of 1989 by the Bad Object Choices, originally a discussion group. In smart and challenging ways, they cover such topics as porn, lesbian visibility, and race and representation. Contributions by Teresa de Lauretis and Judith Mayne (who gives a version of her ideas on Arzner and lesbian authorship discussed above) expand debates in feminist film theory, an academic province whose usefulness to gay and lesbian film and videomakers was questioned at the conference. Kobena Mercer and Richard Fung discuss representing race. Cindy Patton talks about pornography and safe sex, and Stuart Marshall discusses the uses of gay history, with particular attention to the Third Reich.

Giving a hint of what each of these papers is about is difficult, since the particularly exciting thing about this collection is the richness of the topics covered, and how much they overlap. Each paper is followed by a transcript of the discussion that followed its presentation, demonstrating (more than these six excellent essays alone possibly could) how exciting thinking

about lesbian and gay political and representational strategies can be. The exchange in the wrap-up session about the relevance of feminist film theory to actual film- and videomakers is an important reminder that ours is a political struggle, and like all political struggles, it takes place at many locations and in many forms, not all of which neatly coincide.

I was especially struck by Stuart Marshall's remark that it is important to recognize that "we are talking about two discrete areas of *practice* [film and video production, and film and video academic theory], each with its own problems, its own institutional struggles, its own history." What has been so powerful about the independent film movement from the 1970s on, says Marshall, is that it has

offered the opportunity for these practices to come together.

Another place where these practices come together in a different sense is in those of us who watch films and video. The problems image-makers face in gaining access to the means to create and distribute their products have their complement in the incredible, often frustrating desire we have in some way to see ourselves on screen or in print. In the now-fashionable preference for the term "queer" as opposed to those theoretically tainted, identity-politics-laced, non-inclusive terms "lesbian" and "gay," for instance, people who have their homes vandalized or their persons assaulted for being seen outside a gay bar (for being, precisely, visible) are rendered invisible once again. "Queer" may be a more theoretic-

cally sound category, but it may be a strategically dangerous one.

In looking at these three new books on lesbian and gay cinema, problems of access and sometimes painful desire to see continue to bother me. The language of film theory, for instance, with its emphasis on psychoanalysis and deconstructive terminology can give the impression of a coded discussion among members of a secret club. The fascinating-sounding films that people are making and writing about will never show up in my downtown theater, and probably won't be in the video store either. But sampling the breadth of work by both makers and critics of film and video at least gives me a sense of new possibilities. Maybe I'll see someone like myself on the screen yet.



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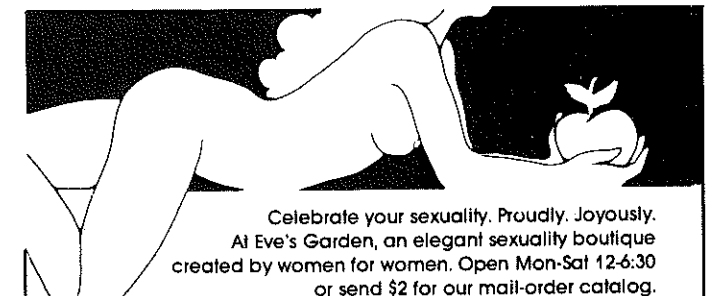


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TOO MALE, TOO FEMALE . . .

When we started *OUT/LOOK* we planned to create a forum for discussion of all the most important issues facing our communities. But we never expected the steady stream of passionate—sometimes supportive and sometimes furious—letters we receive. Among the most fascinating patterns that we have experienced are the regular complaints that the magazine is “too male” (from lesbians) and “too female” (from gay men). This in spite of our dogmatic attention to the gender balance of authors, artists, and articles in each issue. That pattern is replicated in the many contradictory characterizations that *OUT/LOOK* gets from its critics. I hope that means that *OUT/LOOK* is the open forum that we intended to create.

rites of passage

A community organization such as ours, like other small businesses, typically reaches an important point of transition at the end of its third year of operation. Often the original founders leave for other ventures when the project consolidates its early promise. *OUT/LOOK* is now at that crucial stage. **Kim Klausner**, with whom I shared the publisher's job, is the most recent founder to leave. Her knowledge of nonprofit management and financial planning were essential to *OUT/LOOK*'s success. *OUT/LOOK* is now staffed by people equally dedicated to the goals of fostering debate and expression of free speech for the lesbian and gay communities. We are pleased to welcome **Robin Stevens** as our new managing editor. She comes to us after working for the last two- and-a-half years at *Mother Jones* magazine.

Since its inception *OUT/LOOK* has won recognition for its design and visual appeal—two years in a

row from the Gay and Lesbian Press Association and most recently from *Publish!* magazine. *OUT/LOOK* is again a finalist for the 1991 **Alternative Press Award for Best Special Interest Publication**, and received a San Francisco Cable Car Award for sponsoring the lesbian and gay writers' conference. We appreciate this growing recognition of *OUT/LOOK*'s role in the political and cultural life of our community.

PUBLIC DEBATE

In the spirit of OutWrite, we are presenting a series of three cultural and political debates in San Francisco this spring to discuss the role of lesbians and gay men in the military, sexual liberation, and multicultural politics. As we enter our fourth year, we especially thank our subscribers and sustainers for making this work possible.

Jeffrey Escoffier

THANK YOU

Thanks to the following subscribers who responded to the 1990 year-end fundraising campaign, but were not listed in the previous issue.

Catherine Carhart, Berkeley, CA
Tom Humphreys, Honolulu, HI
Wilfrid Koponen, Stanford, CA

SUSTAINERS

We would like to express thanks to all of our subscribers who have become sustainers of *OUT/LOOK*. With this issue we would like to acknowledge the following for supporting us with \$100 and above sustainer contributions (since the publication of Issue 11).

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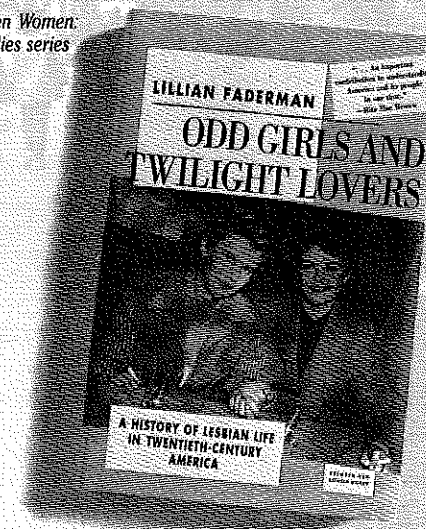
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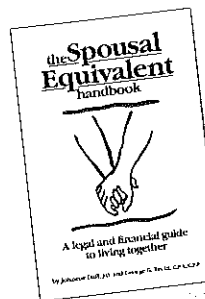
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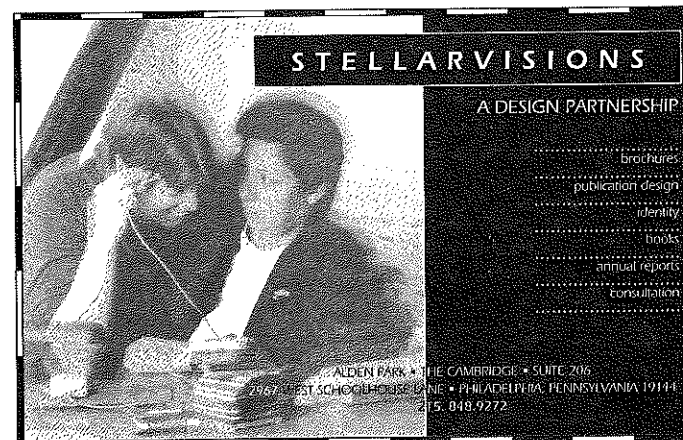
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announcements

Queer by Design—a working conference for lesbian and gay graphic designers, art directors, photographers, illustrators, and other communication professionals. What are the political and artistic questions facing those of us in the communication arts? This regional conference is in the planning stage. Please send proposals for panels or speakers to *OUT/LOOK* Design, attn: Dominic Cappello, 2940 16th St., #319, San Francisco, CA 94103. A SASE must be included if a reply is requested. *Queer by Design* is tentatively scheduled for Oct. 1991 in San Francisco.

The International Lesbian and Gay Association—ILGA is a worldwide federation of national and local groups dedicated to achieving lesbian and gay rights around the globe. It now has more than 200 group memberships, with every continent and more than 40 countries represented. For information on membership contact: Information Secretariat/Antenne Rose, 81 rue du Marché au Charbon, B-1000 Brussels 1, Belgium. (32) 2-502-2471.

The International Lesbian and Gay Association's 13th annual conference—June 30 to July 6, 1991, in Guadalajara, Mexico. The fee for the conference is US \$350, and includes accommodations and meals. For more information about the conference or ILGA membership contact Robert Bray of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force at (202) 332-6483. Conference mailing address: ILGA Conference, Apdo Postal 1-2497, 044100 Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. (52) 36-372-690 or (52) 36-320-507.

Call for Submissions—Anthology on women exploring the mind/body relationship seeks writings based on personal experiences. Can include illness, child abuse, spirituality, sexuality, childbirth, eating, aging, etc. Deadline: July 1991. NO manuscripts. SASE FOR GUIDELINES. A. Stevens, 50 Pleasant St. 9E, Brookline, MA 02146.

Anthology of Memorial Services—for gay men and lesbians who have died of AIDS. Please send letters, tapes, obituaries, or stories of public or private memorials documenting our community's unique tradition of remembrance. We encourage contributions from gay men and lesbians of color. Carrie Singleton, Community AIDS Network, 1955 Monroe Drive NE, Atlanta, GA 30324.

Call for submissions—Lesbians & Revenge: I'm seeking authentic experiences of lesbians and creative revenge for a possible book. Have you "gotten even" or been subject to an ex-lover's revenge? Are you willing to write and/or be interviewed about the experience? Seeking actual experiences, not fantasies. If initiated by you, how did it feel to do it, immediately afterwards, and in retrospect? If the victim, how did it affect you and what do you feel about it now? What was the outcome for the relationship over time? Submissions to: Creative Revenge, PO Box 30, 3543 18th Street, San Francisco, CA 94110.

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OUT/LOOK Design offers expertise in the development, design, and printing of books, magazines, brochures, educational materials, advertisements, annual reports, posters, announcements. Contact *OUT/LOOK* Design at (415) 626-7929, 2940 16th St., #319, SF, 94103.

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publications

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

real estate

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to place an announcement/classified ad—Rates: per word: \$1.50; per bold word: \$2.00. 10% discount for four-issue placement. **Deadline:** Copy must be received by July 2, 1991, for Fall 1991, Issue 14. **Et Cetera:** All ads must be prepaid. Post Office boxes, phone numbers, zip codes, abbreviations, and initials count as one word. Hyphenated words count as two. Include your phone number with your order. **No personals.** Send ad copy and payment to: *OUT/LOOK Classifieds*, 2940 16th Street, Suite 319, San Francisco, CA 94103.

contributors

Dodie Bellamy ("Mrs. America at the Congress of Dreams") is a San Francisco-based writer whose book of stories, *Feminine Hijinx*, was published by Hanuman last year. She is currently working on a novel, *The Letters of Mina Harker*.

Allan Bérubé ("Lesbians at War with the Military") is the author of *Coming Out Under Fire*, and an editor of *OUT/LOOK*. He is currently at work on a book about working-class gay men in the Bay Area.

Blanche Boyd ("The Revolution of Little Girls") is the author of *The Redneck Way of Knowledge*, a book of personal essays, as well as two earlier novels. She grew up in Charleston, South Carolina, and now lives in Connecticut.

Rüdiger Busto ("Homo-Sacred") is teaching a class on ethnicity and religion at Stanford, and is an editor of *OUT/LOOK*.

Risa Denenberg ("We Shoot Drugs, and We Are Your Sisters") is a nurse, health writer, and activist. She was a contributing author to *Women, AIDS, and Activism*, published by South End Press, and writes a regular column on women's health for *OutWeek*.

Kenny Fries ("Forms of Love," "Rapture") lives in Provincetown, Massachusetts. His new book of poems, *The Healing Notebooks* (Open Books, 1990), was recently nominated for a Lambda Literary Award.

Rebeca García-González is a Puerto Rican lesbian artist and graphic designer living in San Francisco.

Tommy Gear (designer, "Revenge of a Snow Queen") is a Los Angeles-based designer.

Marc Geller is a San Francisco-based photographer whose work has appeared in *The Advocate*, *Women's Day*, *Popular Science*, and *OutWeek*.

Lyle Ashton Harris ("Revenge of a Snow Queen") is a Los Angeles-based artist and photographer whose works have been exhibited in the US and Great Britain.

Essex Hemphill ("If Freud Had Been a Neurotic Colored Woman") is a poet, performance artist, and the editor of *Brother to Brother* (Alyson Press).

Rebecca Isaacs ("Lesbians at War with the Military") is a lawyer, an *OUT/LOOK* editor, and an activist in the feminist and lesbian/gay rights movements. She currently directs a domestic violence program.

Sarita Johnson-Calvo is an artist who has been contributing illustrations for progressive causes for almost a decade. She currently teaches a class for school children in connection with the Oakland Museum.

Liz Kotz ("Welcome") is a San Francisco-based critic and curator who writes on film, video, and visual arts. She will soon be on her way to New York to attend Columbia University.

Vivienne Maricevic is a New York-based photographer who has been exploring different aspects of erotica since 1978.

Her work includes "Live Sex Shows," "Porn Stars," and "Transsexuals & Transvestites."

Ellen B. Neipris is a New York based photojournalist whose work appears in *AIDS Demo Graphics* and *OutWeek*.

David Plante ("The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans") was born in Providence, Rhode Island. His works include *The Accident* and *Difficult Women*. He has received

a Guggenheim Fellowship and an Award in Literature from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

Enrique Marie Presley ("Unmasked! Behind the Celebutante Mystique") is a columnist for *Sin Bros.* magazine in LA. He is a survivor.

Ruth L. Schwartz ("The Same Moon") is a poet living in Oakland. She has worked at the San Francisco AIDS Foundation since 1986, where she coordinates the AIDS Hotline. She is editing an anthology of poetry on AIDS.

Ana Maria Simo ("Infernal Twins: Censorship as Social Death") is a Cuban-born playwright living in New York City. Her latest play, *The Opium War*, premiered at INTAR theatre in April. She is currently working on a novel, *How to Kill Her*.

Miras Soliwoda ("Did you ever have sex in Poland?") is a Polish journalist and activist.

Blake Sorrell has been photographing humans for years, with work appearing in *FAD*, *Fortune*, *Moda* and *Parenting*.

Nancy L. Wilson ("Soul & Body") has been senior pastor of Metropolitan Community Church in Los Angeles, the denomination's founding church, since 1986.

Mary Wings is an artist and the author of *She Came in a Flash* and *She Came Too Late*. She is currently working on her lesbian ghost story *Stiff Kitten*.

Shari Zeck ("Seeing Ourselves on Screen") is a PhD student in Cinema Studies at the University of Iowa, where she's working on a dissertation on female bonding, lesbian spectatorship, and the films of Margarethe von Trotta.



