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OUTLOOK

NATIONAL
LESBIAN
& GAY
QUARTERLY

LEATHER SEX

What's Happened?

John Preston
& Pat Califia

**Sleeping
With the Enemy?**
Interracial Relationships

**Reading, Writing,
& *Rubyfruit Jungle***
Gay Lit in High School

From Moscow to Acapulco
Greetings From A Queer Planet









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Cover: Black light photograph by Christopher Enzi
 for *OUT/LOOK*. © 1991, Christopher Enzi.

Back cover: Postcard illustrations by Trina Robbins.
 It's a queer world after all. © 1991, Trina Robbins.

Inside front: Dykes take the capitol in Sacramento,
 California, October 18, 1991, to protest Gov. Pete
 Wilson's shameful veto of Assembly Bill 101, which
 would have prohibited employment discrimination
 based on sexual orientation. Photo by Brook Dillon.

Right: Drypoint etch by Cindy Sneeringer.



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THEY ARE 'GAY SENSITIVE' —

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"THEY TOLD ME TO INTRODUCE MY LOVER AS MY ROOMMATE"

"GAY PROGRAMMING WAS ONLY 2 HOURS A WEEK"

"STAFF MEMBERS REVEALED MY HIV STATUS"

"PEOPLE REFUSED TO ROOM WITH ME"

**"MY AFTERCARE REFERRAL WAS A
STRAIGHT COUPLES GROUP"**

**"I WAS FORCED TO KEEP
SECRETS ABOUT MY LIFE"**

**"I HAD TO TAKE OFF
MY LABYRIS"**

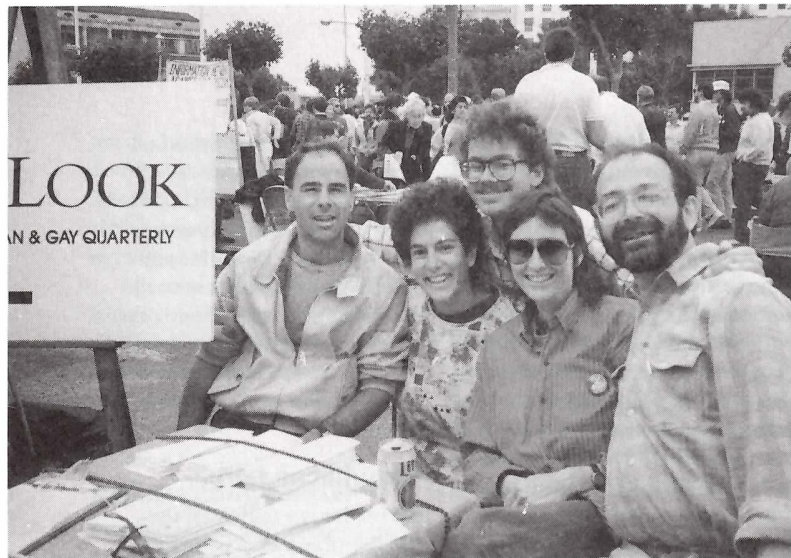
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OUT/LOOK's founders: from left, Peter Babcock, Debra Chasnoff, Michael Sexton, Kim Klausner, and Jeffrey Escoffier.

On the bulletin board in my bedroom, I have a picture from June 1987. Three faggots and two dykes grinning behind a card table covered with brochures for a yet-to-be-published magazine called *OUT/LOOK*.

San Francisco Lesbian and Gay Freedom Day that year was our first tip-toe into the outside world. We had no money, no authors, no artists, no office—no readers. Just an idea.

Now we have all of that. But we've lost one of us.

Peter Babcock, one of the five co-founders of *OUT/LOOK*, died on October 1, 1991 from AIDS. He was 40 years old.

Before working with Peter, who was a graphic designer with a background in Berkeley electoral politics, I rarely linked the terms "progressive" and "professional" in the same sentence. But Peter was adamant that the key to this new magazine's success, and distinction, would be professionalism. For Peter, that meant adhering to demanding timetables, borrowing from mainstream marketing techniques, and insisting on a sophisticated image—for all of our promotional materials, and of course, for the magazine itself.

Peter's instincts often challenged the rest of our group's left/feminist sensibilities. Political projects weren't supposed to care about design elements or business plans. But Peter insisted on those things because of his vision of a publication that would make the gay and lesbian community proud and leave a dignified impression on the larger, mainstream culture.

"Who cares what straight people think!" we would sometimes say in exasperation after another meeting in which he pushed us to raise our standards, and set our sights, on a grander vision of success than some of us aspired to. But now I understand that he cared so much about creating a "professional" magazine because he was wary of ghettoizing our struggles, our creativity and our love.

I think it's fair to say that on the spectrum of political sensibilities among the original *OUT/LOOK*ers, he was the most "assimilationist." But Peter's desire to be respected by the larger community was not done at the expense of those gay men and lesbians who live on the margins.

He was enthralled with the true diversity of lesbian and gay experi-

ence, far more than many I know who rhetorically embrace it. At one editorial meeting he pushed us to publish pieces about men who seek anonymous sex in sleazy peep shows. Nothing was too politically incorrect for him, for he was convinced that *OUT/LOOK*'s boldness would only strengthen the lesbian and gay community.

As AIDS weakened his body over the last year and a half, Peter reluctantly cut back his involvement with *OUT/LOOK*. First he left the editorial board, where we have yet to regain the kind of ideological balance we had before he left. Then he resigned as President of the *OUT/LOOK* Foundation. We have missed his marketing savvy and visionary energy ever since.

OUT/LOOK was not the only institution committed to social justice that benefitted from Peter Babcock's passion for excellence. He put his company, Media/Design, to work designing direct-mail fund-raising packages for such groups as Human Rights Watch, Environmental Defense Fund, Nicaragua Network, and Jesse Jackson's 1988 presidential campaign. Most people reading this magazine have probably received a fund raising appeal that Peter designed.

Remembering his boundless energy and continual cache of "great new ideas" will always inspire me to dream big, strive for excellence, and reach out to the wider world.

Our hearts go out to Peter's longtime partner, David Jernigan, and the other friends and family members he loved so much. Thank you, Peter, for envisioning *OUT/LOOK* and infusing your energy and talent into all of our lives.

Debra Chasnoff
Founding Editor

WELCOME

5

OUT/LOOK winter 1992

LETTERS

Dueling Sensibilities

Kudos to Andrea Lewis for her thoughtful reflections on multiculturalism and the views of Edward Albee and those similar to him. As a supporter of the goals of multiculturalism, however, I found myself in agreement (and disagreement) with both authors. As the multicultural program evolves, I find myself simultaneously celebrating and becoming more and more uncomfortable with some of its received truths.

I think Lewis is quite right: Albee speaks from a position of power and privilege that he, sadly, seems to be unable to perceive. However, I believe that Albee is on the mark nonetheless. To suggest that there is some sort of "Black" or "gay" or whatever kind of sensibility that only members of those groups can tap, and that writers, academicians, etc. possess this sensibility simply because they are members of the particular target group under discussion is frighteningly wrong. Clarence Thomas should be an obvious example of how false this idea is for the black community; Roy Cohn would do well as a gay example. This is a gross form of "essentialism," or the notion that there are mystical, intrinsic personal qualities associated with race, gender, or sexual preference. It is a wrong idea. We are all individuals—color, etc. are simply superficial identity markers, not magical forces that endow an empowering perspective.

That said, I fully agree with Lewis and identify with her desire to have all groups treated with the sensitivity and accuracy that comes from sincere and intimate familiarity. The multicultural project as I see it, however, involves two simultaneous and dangerous-

ly conflicting sides as it strives to accomplish this end. The first is the empowerment of minorities through self-reflection and supportive community identification after years of economic, political, and cultural oppression. The second is the breaking down of borders between communities, so that people in all groups can respect one another and live together. What I have found, unfortunately, is that as groups draw inward they tend to breed chauvinism in their own, thus short-circuiting the second, and more important, goal of mutual respect.

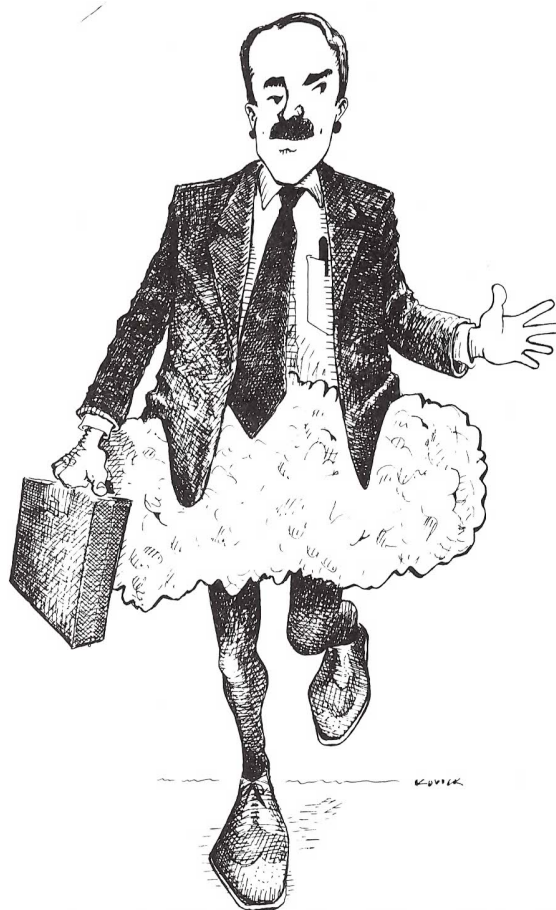
Simply put, we become like straight whites in our cultural arrogance, ignorance, and fear of difference—we become a diverse

collection of cultures proud of our own but contemptuous of others. Not a pretty sight. Edward Albee's consciousness may need raising, but who cares? He still has a mind, and he has seen the dangers quite clearly. To me, the real issue is: How to meet them?

Erik Stommen
Plainfield, NJ

"Republican fairy"

This reader is a middle-of-the-road Republican fairy who realizes he doesn't know or understand gay diversity. *OUT/LOOK* is an important education resource to me. I could not answer your questions about what I like or do not like about *OUT/LOOK*. I hope and expect you to educate



I AM JUST YOUR AVERAGE MIDDLE
OF THE ROAD REPUBLICAN FAIRY.

Kris Kovick

me about things about gay life I do not know. I don't like or dislike what I learn, nor could I advise you where to find more writing or art.

My only hope for *OUT/LOOK* is that your editors have minds which are more open than mine, and put no undue restrictions on what you decide to publish.

Anonymous

No Laughing Matter

I was offended and angered by a cartoon on page 5 of *OUT/LOOK* #14. The cartoon shows a woman with a clipboard, identification badge attached to a white coat, and a stethoscope around her neck (presumably, she is a physician). In large letters is printed, "Lesbians Physicians Conference 1991 Taos." In much smaller print is written, "Free Breast Exams—inquire within." This cartoon offends me on many levels.

As a lesbian physician, I continue to struggle to be "out" in a profession in which the straight male majority dominates. I read *OUT/LOOK* because I believe it to be gay-supportive. Since we are an oppressed minority, we are often the victims of the jokes told by others. We also have an ability to poke fun at ourselves. I wonder about a cartoon that depicts a lesbian physician with small print proclaiming, "Free Breast Exams...." Are we poking fun at ourselves or are we joining others who make fun of us?

Your cartoon mocks lesbian physicians by implying that we would not respect the boundaries of the doctor-patient relationship, and that we would seek sexual pleasure from performing breast exams. In printing such a cartoon, you appeal to the homophobia in all of us, by reviving what straight people keep telling us: "You people cannot be trust-

ed. You will do anything in an attempt to satisfy your insatiable sexual appetites. Women fondling womens' breasts—Oh my God!"

I am not so naive as to believe that all physicians are so dedicated to the ideal of meeting their patients' needs while separating out personal feelings. In Maryland, I often read reports of physicians who have seduced their patients. Nevertheless, I believe that physicians, in general, and lesbian physicians, specifically, are very mindful of the differences between what we do in the examining rooms and what we do in our bedrooms.

Carolyn A. Hammett, MD
Baltimore, MD

100% Safe Sex

It is tragic to read Walt Odets's report in the fall issue that up to 40% of San Francisco's twenty- to twenty-five-year-old gay-identified men may be infected with HIV. Odets knows better than I whether there is a death-wish among them. I would like to comment, in a constructive spirit, on only one of his statements: that safe sex information has reached these men.

It is true, or very likely, that they have all been exposed to some type of safe-sex guidelines. However, the safe-sex situation is confusing even to doctors. Some cases of HIV transmission remain unexplained. The media sensationalize reports of increased risk, and downplay reports of decreased risk. Besides the strictly medical questions, there is anything but a full consensus about what degree of risk is tolerable, and how risky behavior must be before we deem it unsafe, and those who indulge in it neurotic.

To my knowledge, partnered

and group masturbation is 100% safe, and it's the only partnered sexual activity that is 100% safe. Those who indulge in it tend to speak rapturously about it. One can be either monogamous or promiscuous, without concern for disease transmission. In private, and among those over 18, it is legal in all 50 states. It would seem to me the solution for these young men who want to have sex and also to belong. Yet outside the largest cities organized group masturbation is unavailable, and it's not very available even there. Wouldn't it help prevent some future cases of HIV transmission, and give frustrated men a place to go and be safely sexual? What is there to lose by trying it?

Daniel Eisenberg
Tallahassee, FL

Too Male

I will not be renewing my subscription.

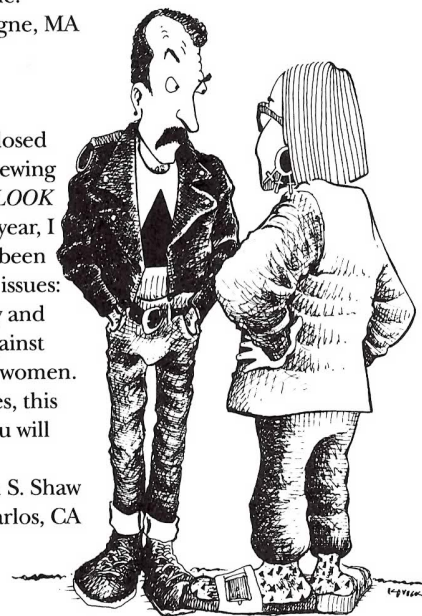
- 1) I will be moving to Canada.
- 2) The magazine has become almost exclusively *gay*. Even the lesbian material is informed by a gay sensibility. There's less and less in the magazine for me.

Montagne, MA

Too Female

As you can see by the enclosed form and check, I am renewing my subscription to *OUT/LOOK* for one year. During that year, I will continue what I have been doing for the past several issues: monitoring the articles by and about gay men as over, against those by or about lesbian women. If the imbalance continues, this will be the last renewal you will get from me.

Marvin S. Shaw
San Carlos, CA



What Happened?

An S/M pioneer reflects on the leather world past and present

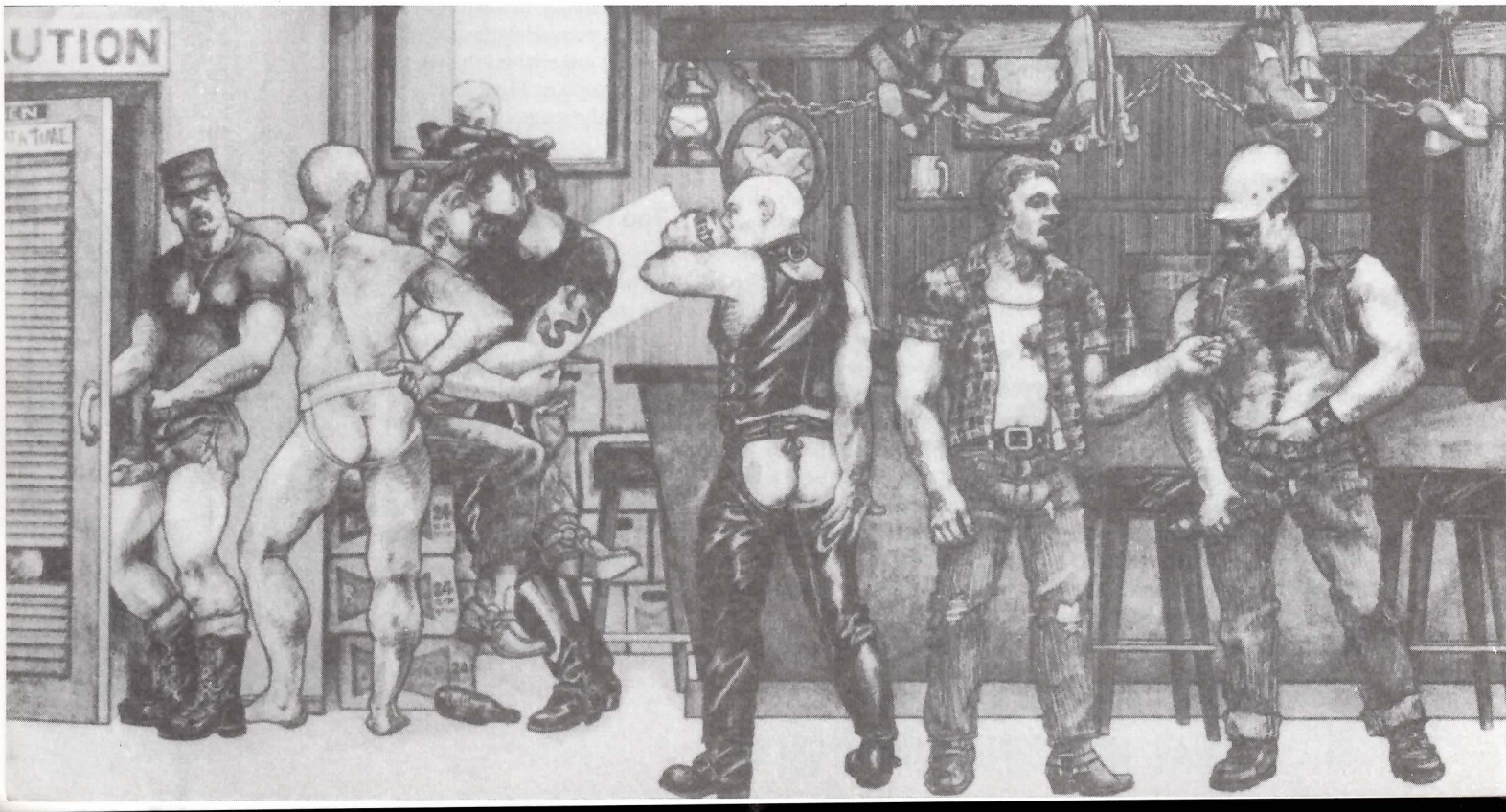
by John Preston

I made my entry into the world of S/M back in the late sixties in places like the now legendary Gold Coast in Chicago. I had a friend who would wake me every morning with his insistent phone calls demanding the details, wanting to hear every description of every forbidding bar I entered, every hot man I

encountered, and every sexual invention I experienced.

"Why don't you just come with me?" I finally asked him in exasperation.

"No. No!" he answered. "Everything you tell me is wonderful, but I know that this is only fantasy for me. If I went, I'd only be a voyeur. It's like anything else that's good in the world. It's



best when it's a secret and when only the people in the know find these places. When sightseers start coming and the tour buses start to make their stops, something gets lost. I don't want to be part of ruining what's going on."

Twenty years later, I was stopped at the door of a widely publicized and heavily promoted leather event in New York City, one of the many "Mr." contests that've sprung up recently. I couldn't enter, the doorman told me, because I didn't "look right." I hadn't broken any of the really ardent taboos—I wasn't wearing cologne nor did I have on a cashmere sweater—but I wasn't "in uniform." I didn't have on a leather jacket, leather pants, or engineer's boots.

I would have left, but my companion wouldn't give in so easily. "Don't you know who this is?" he exclaimed. "This man wrote *Mister Benson!*" Ah, the magic title! Administrators were called in and the door opened.

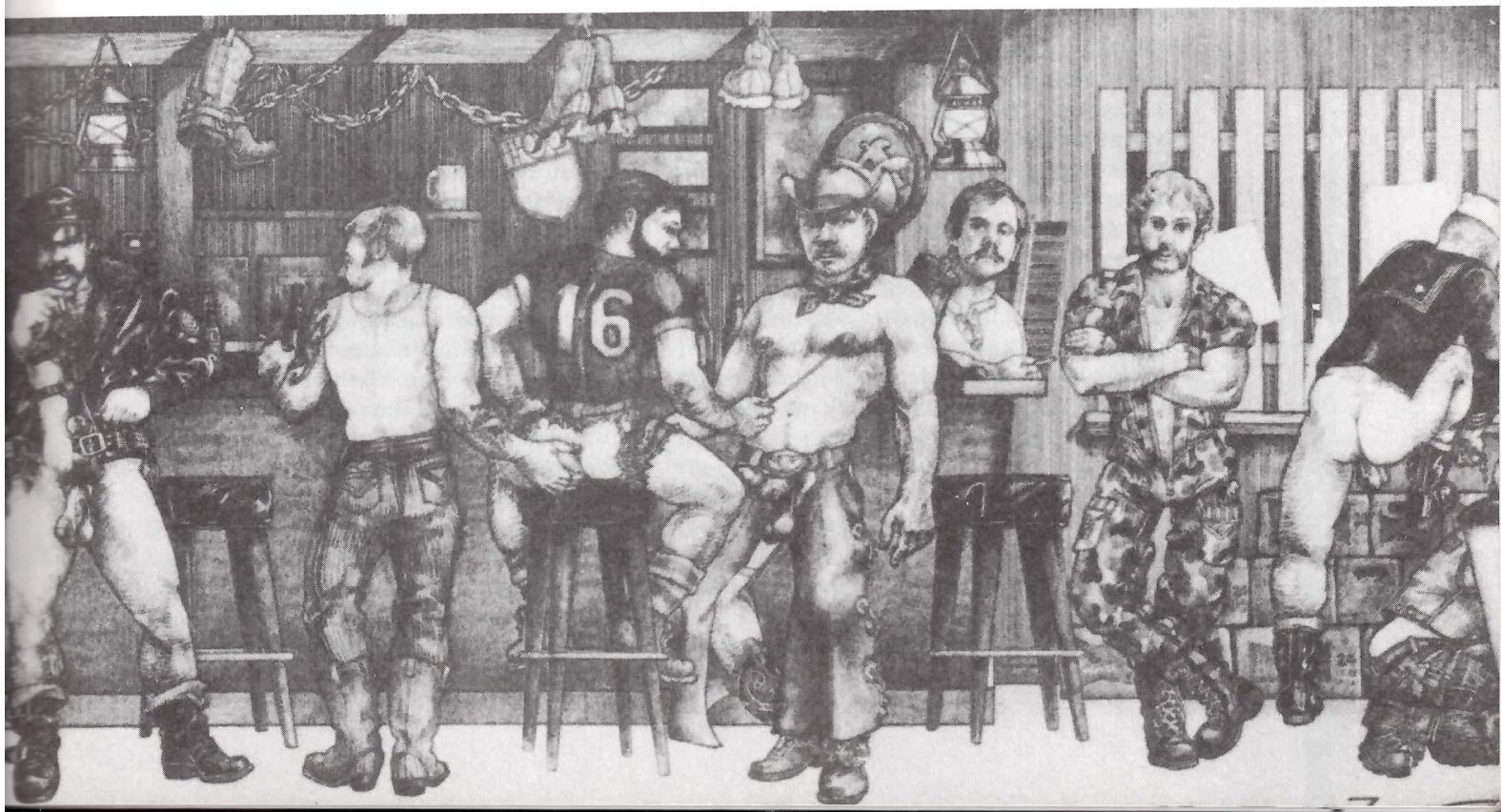
As I wandered about the sea of beleathered

men, I remembered my old friend. It seemed pretty obvious that his prediction had come true. The world of S/M had been overtaken by the sightseers. The crowd embodied many things I liked, things I had even dreamed about in the old days. There were gay men and women gathering to have a good time without guilt. I truly loved their visibility. I understood many of their motivations. But I also knew many of them—most of them—weren't really involved in the S/M scene. They weren't gathered for sexual purposes; they were there for other motivations.

I listened to the speakers who interrupted the parade of handsome men on stage. They were talking about the "leather brotherhood." They talked about teaching people about the "good" aspects of the "leather lifestyle." They wanted acknowledgment from the general society that they were constructive members who were simply finding an "alternative way to love."

And I thought: *Give me a break!*

A scene at The Detour Bar in Los Angeles, mid 1970s. This print by Zach hung above the bar in San Francisco's legendary fisting club, The Catacombs. © 1977 Zach. Courtesy of Gayle Rubin. Photographs by Karen DeCasas.



The cynical side to my personality wanted to tell them to shut up and bring the dancing boys back on. I wanted erotic entertainment, not socially uplifting propaganda. These political gesturings were interfering with the real business of the evening, so far as I was concerned.

I was struck by that response, hardly one that could be expected of an old political warhorse like myself. After all, I give those same political speeches all the time. What I realized I resented was the intrusion of those politics into what I considered a sexual space, a private space, even a ritualized holy space.

I was, after all, still looking for sex from the leather world. What I was encountering was actively antisexual, as negative for the pursuit of orgasm as a religious revival. But I also realized that most of the rest of the audience was loving what they were hearing.

The speakers continued. There was to be a leather contingent at a gay rights rally. Cheers from the audience. There was to be a workshop on leather love at a community mental health conference. More applause.

Even when the men did come back on the stage—this time in jockstraps—they were asked questions about their “commitment to the community.” While they paraded their naked asses to an appreciative assembly, they talked about using their titles to prove that leatherfolk were sane and considerate, intelligent and honorable.

I stood there in my “street clothes”—loafers, dress shirt, slacks—and while I was fantasizing about reddening one of the naked butts, the objects of my lust were worrying about the leather community’s public image.

My dress wasn’t really so unconscious as it

might seem. At a certain point I stopped wearing regimental leather. My sexuality is focused on S/M. I want to “be real” all right, but not in terms of fitting in. It seems that, at some point, many of the men who were really into S/M dropped the costume and started to challenge the others in leather bars with their conscious lack of dress. It’s a better bet to dress *against* the fashion, if you really want rough sex. Many of the denizens have given up their leather and gone back underground to reclaim their place on the cutting edge.

My own first experiences with S/M were intensely physical and emotional episodes.

When I first encountered a world of S/M people—and that world was

entirely men—being one of those who shared those

experiences was a form of bonding. It was the

result of what Geoff Mains would have

called a tribal urge. While the bonding

was profound, it was based on hav-

ing shared raw sex and on the accep-

tance of raw sex as a desired goal.

Before, and even after,

Stonewall, the first impulse of

gay activism, to be a form of pro-

gressive and even revolutionary politics, was

left behind. In the place of that rebellious

attitude there was an almost immediate plea

for social acceptance. The first line of politi-

cal defense was to proclaim our ability to

have monogamous relationships. The first

line of ethical defense was to claim that we

were not child molesters. The first line of

moral defense was to declare that having

homosexual sex was no different than having

any other form of sex.

The original leather bars were places

where men could gather and, in sharp con-

tradiction to those positions, say: *In your face!*

Leather was gay sexuality stripped of being

nice. It offended. It confronted. It took sex as



leatherman's Harley Davidson cap, late 1950s-early 1960s. Courtesy of Mark DeCicco.

its own ultimate value. It was a reaffirmation of the revolution, not a dilution of it.

The response of the rest of the gay and lesbian community was fear and loathing. Just as the baths and their own form of sexual anarchy embodied desire we were never supposed to tell the straights about, so were images of gay men in boots and jackets, with pierced tits and tattoos, supposed to be hidden away. But they weren't hidden. We refused.

S/M sex was a way that many of us explored the most profound elements of ourselves. There were white men who underwent submission in contradiction to our prescribed roles in society. There were men of color who encountered the force of their sexual imagery rather than trying to analyze it. Men who had been told all their lives that they were frail queers suddenly found themselves in places where they could confront themselves as strong and resilient.

What I remember most was being excited. I also was often scared. Fears and anxieties that had been long repressed forced themselves right up to the surface and demanded that I confront them. I remember learning to trust someone whose power over me was real. Yet the men who initiated me into S/M did so at my request, with my compliance, a stark change from the men and women who had emotionally abused me without my consent or even knowledge. The men I met in the dark underworld of S/M were not unwelcome authority figures forced on me in everyday society, but they were men I chose myself, something that I had learned to accept and deal with. Those dynamics were the reasons many of us talked about the transformational and spiritual power of S/M. Those powers came because they were outside the precincts of a society that had been ordered for the sake of civil control.

S/M was a great adventure, a place where a young man could find mentors to show him the ways—top/bottom, slave/master. Trust and experience produced an immediate emotional attachment that didn't seem possible in polite gay society. While I would spend my early evenings listening to dinner guests

talk about their shared vacations or new condo, or share all kinds of other distant, mannered forms of information, I could go later to the leather bar and find a man who would want to be thrown against the wall and kissed, who would welcome a knee pressed hard against his crotch, who didn't want me to stop when I twisted his nipples hard.

I simply didn't pay enough attention to my friend's caution. T.R. Witomski, Aaron Travis, Phil Adros, myself and others were also writing about that world. As we all did it, we were also popularizing it, and romanticizing it. What was supposed to be semiprivate, part of the great fuck-you of leather and S/M instead became a drifter's guide to the underworld. Once the gates were open, the mystique began to erode.

What has happened to the borderline world that leathersex and S/M used to define? What's the territory twenty years later? My god, it's not what I knew and it's not what I wrote about. Leathersex has gone the way of all politics: it's lost its edge. It's been codified, measured, and packaged. The magic of trusting one person, a mentor, and of letting those one-on-one bondings spread out until a brotherhood was formed has been replaced with impersonal how-to manuals.

There are classes in S/M technique. The source of my own and my friends' passions in our introductions to S/M was always the adventure, the quest, the sense of trust that would come from delivering oneself up to a master's hands. The first time I was put into bondage was by a New Jersey state trooper who drove me to a deserted nature preserve and strung me up from a tree. The first time I did a real S/M scene was with a biker who put me on the back of his Harley and roared through the streets of Philadelphia. All of these were parts of the initiation. And now there are classes for it? Taught, not by demons who drove bikes through our fantasies, but by bottoms who want to be restrained "with respect"?

Drummer and its companion magazines, owned by the same company, have fewer and less-interesting fantasies in them. Instead,



they've become technical journals, all about the fine "laws" that've been developed on the ways and means of the new leather world. Luckily, Larry Townsend's column is still there, answering the questions of both the leather fraternity and its pledges, but there's also a mental health column, a how-to-become-a-caring-and-loving-master-to-your-slave-while-you-both-learn-to-grow-and-become-better-people kind of thing that belongs on the pages of one of those anemic self-help journals, not in a sex publication devoted to breaking the rules.

The often anarchistic sense of brotherhood among S/Mers has been replaced by a whole series of formal clubs, all directed by *Robert's Rules of Order*. What's interesting about them, and I've attended meetings of many of them, is the split between membership and leadership in these associations. The membership will tolerate a certain amount of posturing by the leaders, so long as the sex is still delivered. There is a great deal of redemption in these clubs; there are still people who are interested in the erotic possibilities. (My favorite memory of one of these groups is a meeting of Avatar in L.A. where I was invited to give a reading. I kept it short, and, I hope, hot. When I was done, the men in the audience applauded and then proceeded to strip down and beat each other up. It was a marvelous evening.)

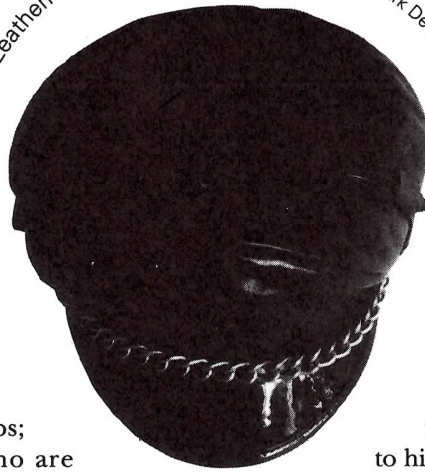
The leadership of these groups is now often seen marching and demonstrating, seeing its own agendas as a new form of liberation ideology. The March on Washington, the Lesbian and Gay Health Conference, all have leather contingents, all of them seeming to be coming to the assembly asking to be let in as exemplars of good citizenship.

Clearly something is happening here. But it's not that leather and S/M have become the norm of gay life or society. Not that many people have taken up extreme forms of sexuality and made them parts of their lives. There are two movements that are taking place. One is simply the fear of the unknown and the undisciplined that's so endemic to the American male. To exist in a place that is anarchistic, where the rules are anti-establishment and where the experiment includes one's own body and self is something that American men—gay or straight—aren't willing to tolerate. Rules and regulations must be enforced. There must be an "objective" means to establish someone's accomplishment or level of achievement.

Thus we have all the workshops, the endless patter of silly bottoms talking about "the right way" to do things. (If you want an antisexual experience, take a man, tie him up, whip his ass, and then listen to him lecture to you afterwards that you paid more attention to his right buttock than to his left. He wasn't after an anarchistic S/M experience; he didn't want someone to show him his own shadows; he wanted an act executed as he directed it. Forgetting the experience, the how-to S/Mer falls back on the rule book. "And where did you get your training? What workshops have you gone to?" he asks, with all the social-status consciousness of a Boston banker asking where you went to college.)

Those are simply the annoyances of small minds. Those aren't terribly interesting; they are only aggravations. They're similar to the wimps who beg for acceptance from the larger society, giving to that society respect and power it doesn't deserve and accepting that society's definitions without investigating

Leatherman's cap, mid 1970s. Courtesy of Mark DeCicco.



them. I once watched a Mr. Drummer bring his "slave" up on stage, tie him to a rack, and then "whip" him with all the passion I'd show while waving away a bothersome bee with a fly-swatter. His "slave" did have a nice bit of blush on his butt when it was done, but nothing that was going to last beyond the hour; he hadn't endured anything. This was not a display of great obsession. The purpose of the demonstration, the Mr. Drummer told the audience when he was done, was to show the love the two men had for one another. How could anyone deny their mental health and their pursuit of an affectionate monogamous relationship after viewing all of this? Well, any onlooker wasn't going to see much lust, that's for sure.

There's a great quote from an Edwardian lady that goes something like this: "I don't care what they [homosexuals] do, so long as they don't frighten the horses." No horse would have been frightened by this little display. But the idea that such a bit of showmanship was going to win hearts in the mainstream was laughable, and it certainly didn't address the question of why that mainstream acceptance was desirable, and at what cost would it be received? Who was going to have to pay what to get this endorsement?

My sexual desires and fantasies are quite catholic, I must admit. It's hard to define a single act or type or person or activity that I am interested in to the exclusion of others. One of my preferences, though, is to take a nice young man who's wearing jockey shorts and put him over my knee and spank him, hard. (It doesn't count unless he cries.) The whole point of the liberation of our sexuality in past decades was to allow this to exist without all the trappings of love, romance, and other controlling devices. Of course I could carry on an intelligent discussion with one of these young men. Without doubt, I would be open to having another plane of relationship with him. But those things shouldn't be necessary. The simple pleasure of watching a well-rounded rump turn pink and then red under my ministrations has its own aesthetics and is its own justification.

What's more interesting, and what tells us more, is an investigation of just why the S/M world is so attractive to people who wouldn't otherwise have a thing to do with it. Let's begin with the simple fact that most people who attend leather functions, even when in full costume, aren't involved in S/M. They're after something else. Why are they looking here? What's the enticement?

There are a number of inducements in leather life that would appeal to any man, and many women, that are simply not addressed in the rest of gay life, certainly not in the gay movement:

Intimacy. Never underestimate the power of this personal need for connection. An S/M experience may have elements of the superficial built into it—it is an experience between the projected roles of the participants that are not necessarily the real essence of either person—but the sharing of the episode produces a powerful linkage between the people who do the acts. Even people who participate in very minor levels of S/M activity expose at least some of their personal erotic fantasies, and the sharing of secrets can be the first step in intimacy, and a very powerful step at that.

Gender. Most gay men avoid issues of masculinity like the plague. But we're haunted by them. We have, in many ways, been emasculated first by the general society and then by a movement that is so focused on either gender equality or on certain narrow definitions of feminism that *any* acting out of masculine roles is forbidden. The interdiction doesn't mean the issue goes away. Wearing leather and finding a place where masculine behavior among men is welcome is often a new and liberating experience. It follows, too, that women who are attracted to S/M find this a place where they can explore parts of their identity they have been prohibited from investigating by the "politically correct."

Bonding. Gay men's need to bond in groups is one of the least recognized aspects of our culture. If I am no longer of my tribe, what do I do? Where do I go? The answer is: I find another tribe, even if it means starting it



for myself. The urge to settle in a gay ghetto, to find a geographically described community where I feel I fit in, is the same urge that makes me want to wear the same costume as a tribe of men to which I want to belong. What a polo shirt, moustache, and jeans gave that man in the eighties, he gets from a leather outfit in the nineties.

The gay world hasn't been good at providing this kind of bonding, this sense of belonging, for its members. Why should we be surprised by the emergence of gay leather clubs when for all practical purposes they're composed of the same men in racial, class, and economic terms as Rotary and Lions in the straight world? If you've ever been to a meeting of a leather organization and seen its nationalistic bent, patriotic fervor, and reliance on ritual with the singing of common songs, and the pomp and circumstance of its hierarchy, you can see that the need being fulfilled is strikingly similar to what's going on at any other men's civic benevolent society.

Most gay and lesbian organizations ask much of their members, but deliver little in return. We demand that gay men and lesbians give time, money, and effort to promote the cause, but we seldom present those people with any rewards. A leather club, on the other hand, gives one an immediate sense of fraternity or sorority in the most common and acceptable form. You are nominated for membership; someone likes you. You are voted into membership; you have a circle of friends. You are often elected to a leadership position (such clubs have untold numbers of offices to fill); your friends think you are a competent person.

If you doubt the power of this bonding or the criticism of the movement organizations,

notice that the only times the gay and lesbian movements can recruit substantial numbers of people are those events when the community is under obvious attack or when the goal is to confront an oppressor. Nothing advanced the gay and lesbian cause so much as the Anita Bryant controversy. The last March on Washington was held in defiance of most of the national leadership who would have preferred quiet lobbying done by their paid professional staffs. That's because those have been the occasions when an enemy forces an identity onto the group. More people have been happier marching against a Republican administration than will ever find fulfillment in a consciousness-raising group.

Because people are looking for such important elements for their social and communal lives in what was a sexual arena, they aren't doing the work that could be accomplished in that domain.

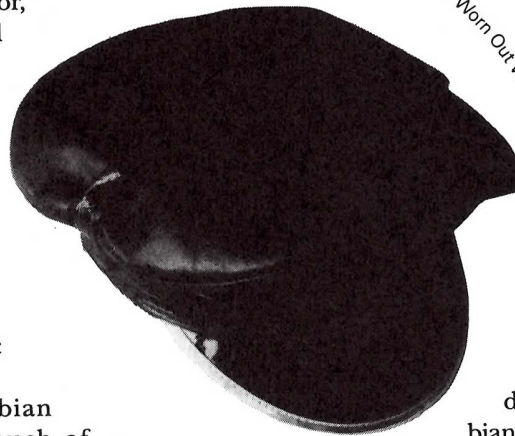
We should separate all these conflicting needs and desires from one another. Let's demand that gay and lesbian organizations fulfill their mandate to create community. Let's

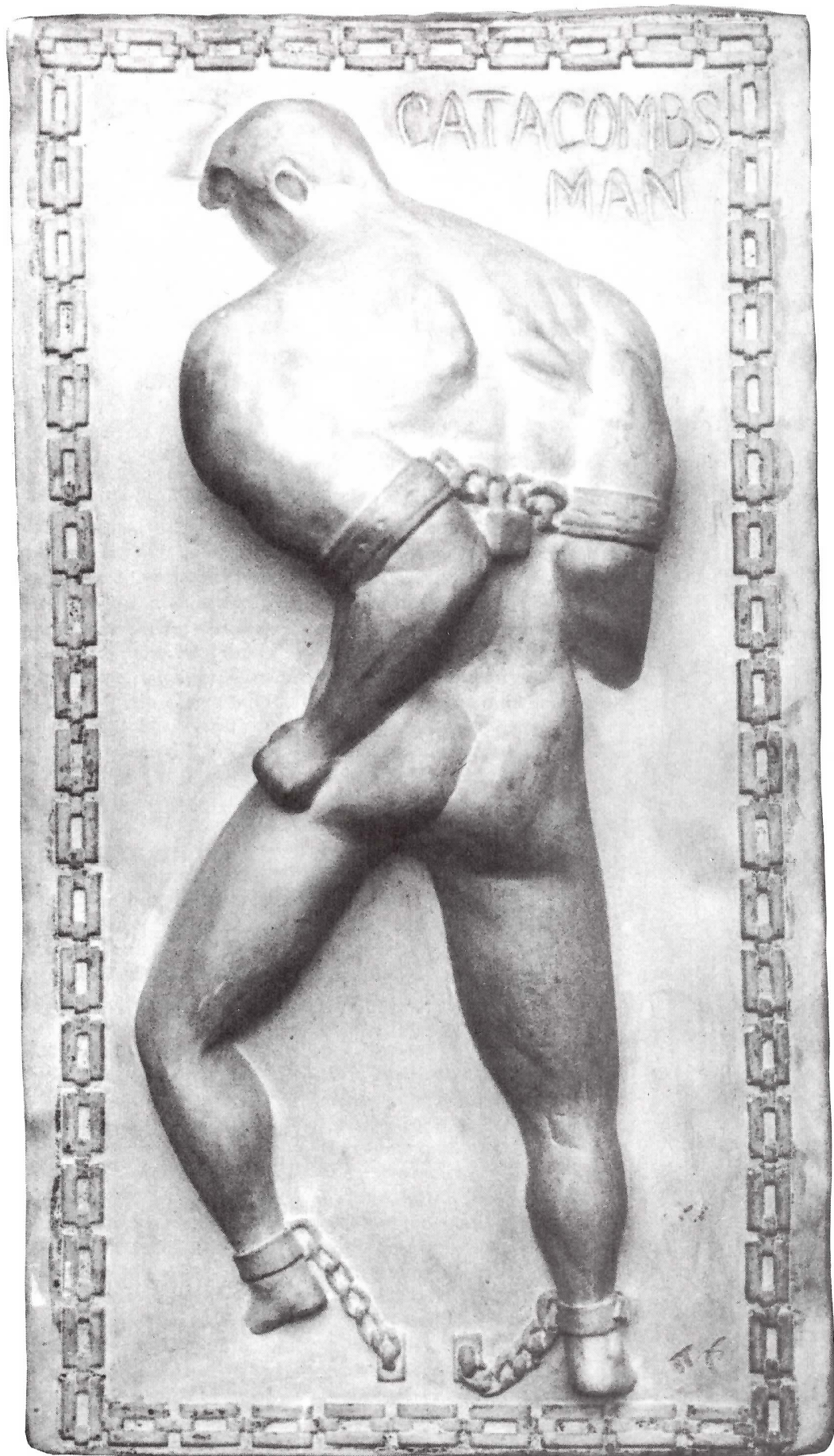
not expect a world that's founded on the backs of sexual outlaws to become a place where social petitions for acceptance are made. Let's find the essential, often frightening, exciting edges of our sexuality and our spirituality and integrate them with the search for authentic masculinity.

We're not doing bad things; some of us may be silly, but our impulses are in the right direction—we just haven't figured out where and how to do them. ♦

This essay was condensed and reprinted from *Leatherfolk*, an anthology published by Alyson Publications in October 1991.

Sentry cap, 1990s. Courtesy of Worn Out West.





Catacombs Man, from the Catacombs' original location on 21st Street in San Francisco. The plaster cast is signed "T.T." (probably Tony Tavorossi), but the artist is unverified. Courtesy of Gayle Rubin.

The Limits of the S/M Relationship

or Mr. Benson doesn't live here anymore

by Pat Califia



Above and right, watercolors from *Gwendoline and the Missing Princess*, by John Willie (John A. S. Coutts), ca. 1950. *Gwendoline* was serialized in *Bizarre*, a magazine Willie published from 1946–1959. © 1974, Belier Press.

John Preston's novel *Mister Benson* was the first best-seller among modern leathermen. In the mid-seventies, when it was being serialized in *Drummer* magazine, I literally saw leathermen waiting in line at newsstands to get the latest installment. This amazing popularity was an index of how common and potent a fantasy the book presents.

There is no question that the two main characters, Aristotle Benson and Jamie, are respectively "a real top" and "a real bottom." Aristotle Benson is not merely sexually dominant and sadistic, he is also wealthy, educated, and older than Jamie. Mr.

Benson's power as a master flows seamlessly from his status in the real world. Jamie is younger, malleable, has no real goals, and lives (without benefit of a job or rights to use the furniture) in Mr. Benson's world.

It's a truism in the S/M community that bottoms outnumber tops about ten to one. You can argue about the exact ratio or try to even the figures by claiming that real bottoms are as rare as tops, but most leathermen, leather dykes, bisexuals, and heterosexual kinky people would probably agree that there's a scarcity of tops.

The negotiating process that takes place before an exchange of power in an S/M scene is supposed to ensure consent and equal gratification for both partners. If this is true, why are so many more sadomasochists wearing their keys on the right? This would certainly seem to imply that one role is potentially more rewarding than the other. If some of us aren't getting what we want (which seems guaranteed in a subculture in which bottoms outnumber tops), maybe we need to make some changes.

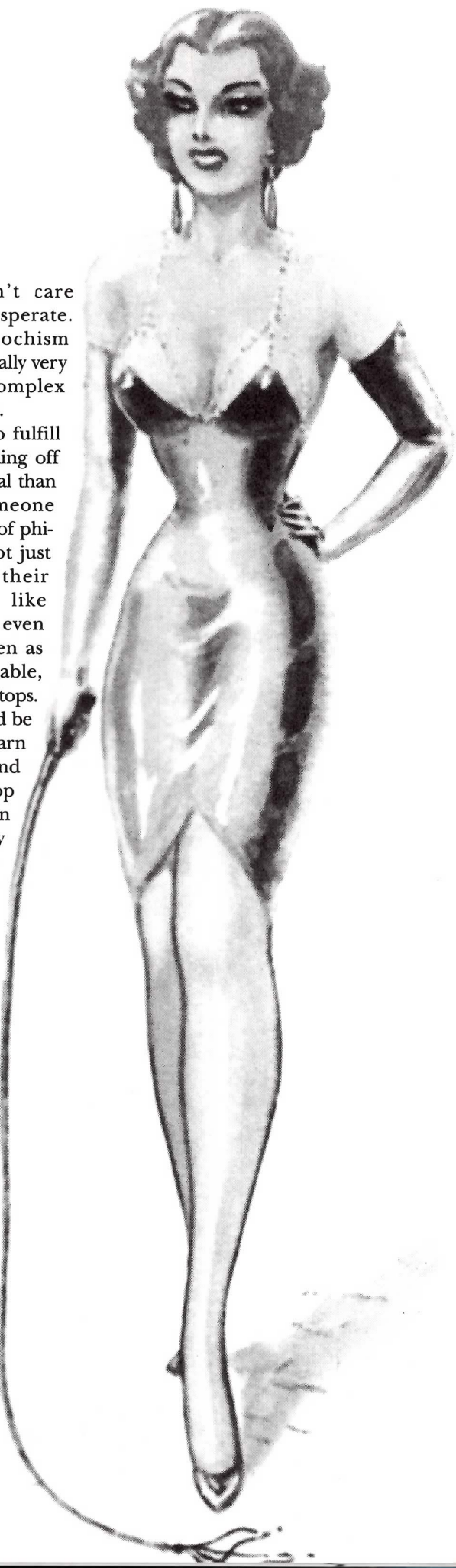
I have yet to meet a top who didn't feel that he or she was frequently depersonalized and objectified by the people who cruise him or her. This is an odd sensation. You know that somebody wants you bad, but you're not sure they know who the hell you are. I've often been approached by bottoms who want a scene, but they have no idea what *my* scene is. When I try to tell them (gently, at first) that I am basically a sadist and have no interest in body worship, domination, French maids, or bondage unless these activities can be combined with physical pain, they often choose not to believe me. I'm not seen as being responsible because I communicate my preferences; I'm seen as being withholding.

Some of this is the result of poor social skills. It's hard to find compatible partners, so many of us don't get to practice our dating and negotiating techniques enough to make them effective. Because of that lack of experience, some players do not know that there are different kinds of tops and bot-

toms—or they don't care because they are desperate. Some forms of masochism and fetishism are actually very sophisticated and complex forms of masturbation.

It's much easier to fulfill these fantasies by jerking off or hiring a professional than it is to persuade someone else to cooperate out of philanthropy. But it's not just bottoms who treat their potential partners like things. Bottoms are even more likely to be seen as generic, interchangeable, and replaceable than tops. Dare I say that it would be healthy for tops to learn a little more respect and humility? Usually a top with a good reputation has acquired it by establishing an ongoing, successful relationship with a heavy, respected, experienced bottom. But tops rarely acknowledge this. I have often heard bottoms say that their intelligence or competence is belittled by tops, and that their opinions are disregarded. Bottoms often feel that they are expected to do more than their share of the shitwork and give tops the credit.

Why, then, do so many of us prefer to be bottoms instead of tops? Partly, I suspect, because it's so





much easier to come out as a bottom. You can have zero skill, zero experience, and zero energy and still be a credible bottom. (You'll probably also be very lonely, because good bottoms have to put their hearts and sweat into it.) A bottom who tries to switch often gets ridiculed or discounted. If they stick with it and prove that they can be good tops, they may find themselves stuck in that role. People quit thinking of them as available submissives. Our community doesn't consciously try to make it easier for novices to learn how to be good tops. I'm not talking about learning safe physical technique here, I'm talking about learning how to structure a scene so it's safe and satisfying for *the top*.

When we discuss safety, consent, and limits, we focus almost exclusively on the concerns of the bottom. Almost all of the technical information that's in print about how to play safely is intended to protect the bottom from physical injury or emotional trauma. There's very little attention paid to equivalent needs on the part of the top. When was the last time you read something about how to whip somebody without throwing your back out? Every properly socialized novice bottom begins his or her first scene with a safe word held firmly in reserve. How many beginning tops even think of giving themselves a safe word? We expect every bottom to have limits. But the top who has limits will at some point be accused of not being "a real top." Mr. Benson never needs to call a time-out.

A bottom goes into a scene expecting to experience a combination of physical sensations, psychological and emotional stimulation, and suspension of disbelief that will ultimately result in a feeling of being purified, transformed, and healed. This transcendental experience is sometimes referred to as an "S/M orgasm." A good bottom has an open mind and a trusting attitude and is flexible and responsible enough to cooperate with and enhance the top's best efforts. When a strong connection exists between top and bottom, the top undergoes an ecstatic experience that is partly made up of a vicarious ver-

sion of the bottom's trip and is partly the top's independent experience. This is how bottoms get tops off, and it mystifies people who assume that all sex has to be genital.

But it usually isn't enough. Both tops and bottoms do have genitals. Very few people would be happy if none of their scenes included a vanilla orgasm. Yet many scenes (especially public ones) are nongenital. It seems a bit odd to attend a large gathering of sex perverts and see almost no fucking. Why does this happen so frequently?

Most play parties require safer sex only. I suspect that there are a lot of us who say nice things about safer sex, but don't do it. We take the HIV-antibody test, and if it's negative, couples don't take precautions. Some of us choose to have no sex in public rather than practice safer sex with latex barriers.

Many of us are understandably reluctant to let other people see us being vulnerable. So-called vanilla sex can actually reveal more about you than your technical expertise with exotic S/M games. It's interesting that a group of people who are so fond of challenging erotic taboos seem to be unable to break through this very basic barrier and eliminate shame about being naked and getting touched.

If you want to get somebody high by sensually hurting them, genital sex can sometimes make that more difficult. Once somebody starts producing endorphins and getting off on pain, genital stimulation can be distracting and bring him or her down. Of course, there are also masochists who find sexual arousal necessary before they can give a peak performance.

But there's something else going on that nobody really wants to talk about. Tops often wind up playing with bottoms when they are attracted to only a few specific qualities the bottom possesses—for example, the bottom's pain threshold, ability to get fisted, or willingness to cook a gourmet seven-course meal and serve it.

It's especially irritating to be expected to provide a genital orgasm for every person you top when the community expectation

seems to be that "real tops" don't need to come.

As hot as it may be to empathize with the bottom's excitement and as wonderful as it may be to feel powerful and in control, much of the sexuality of topping remains voyeuristic. The time that the top devotes to preparing and executing the scene is focused on making sure the bottom gets where he or she wants to go. The time that the bottom devotes to ensuring the success of the scene is focused on getting into a mental and physical state that will make the scene possible. Even at the end of a very good scene, a top is often left with the sensation of being neglected and frustrated.

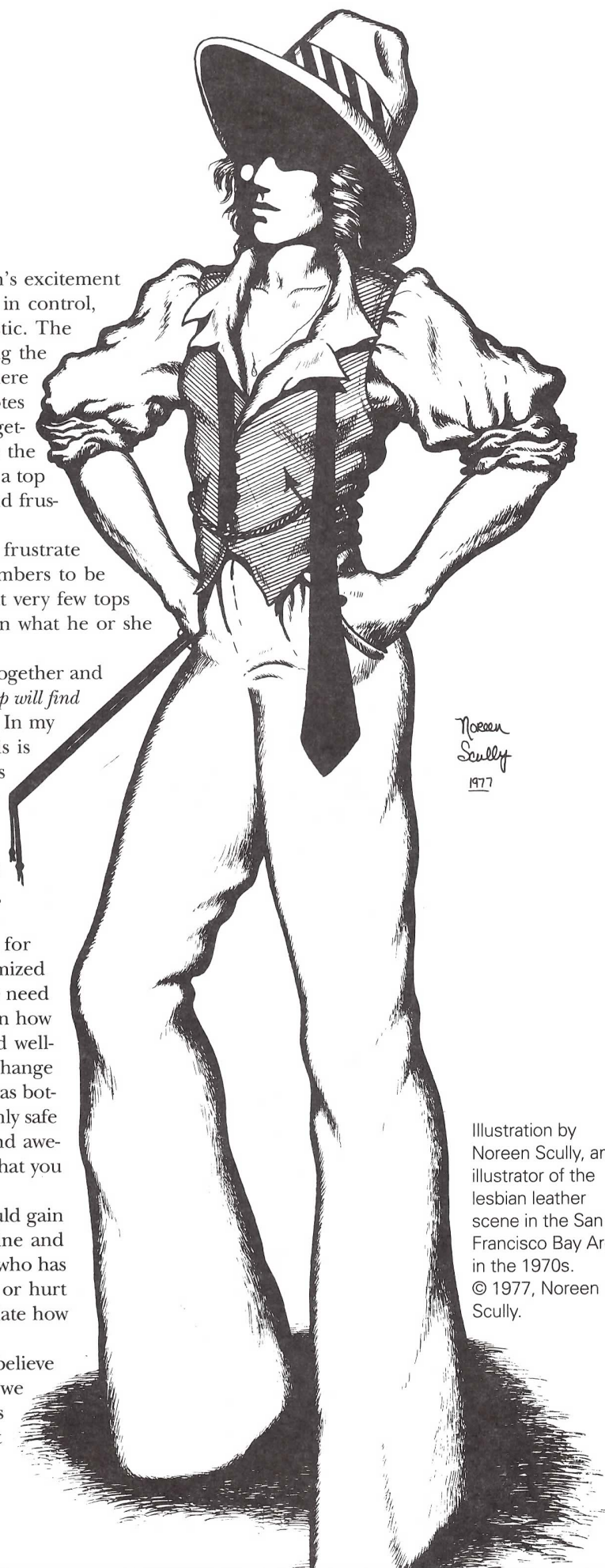
I am not saying that bottoms are conspiring to frustrate tops. I think most bottoms want their opposite numbers to be happy and satisfied. But bottoms have to realize that very few tops are ready to stop just because the bottom has gotten what he or she wants.

One possible solution is for the bottom to pull it together and find the energy to pleasure the top *in a way that the top will find as transforming as the scene that he or she gave the bottom*. In my experience, very few bottoms do this. Whether this is because of a lack of ability or a lack of motivation is not for me to say. I would like to think that as a community and as conscious, aware individuals, we have the power to get together and change our scripts. The "sexual service" that most bottoms are prepared to offer tops is not centered on the top's pleasure, but on the bottom's pleasure in being used.

Tops need to be more aggressive about asking for what we want and stop acting like a bunch of victimized codependents held hostage by rapacious bottoms. We need to nurture and teach bottoms who are willing to learn how to switch instead of stomping on their tentative and well-meaning efforts. Tops get a lot of social power in exchange for pretending they don't need S/M or sex as much as bottoms do. But how lofty and grand can you be if the only safe way for you to come is to jerk off? How powerful and awe-inspiring can you be if you are so afraid of yourself that you can't tell other people any of your libidinous secrets?

I would like to see a community in which tops could gain status by having the guts to put their asses on the line and take a little of what they dish out. How can someone who has no idea what it feels like to be physically restrained or hurt know the value of what the bottom is giving or calculate how much "punishment" to dole out?

Thanks to the women's movement, we no longer believe that biology is destiny. But I sometimes wonder if we have not transferred many of our old gender patterns to the top/bottom dynamic. We sometimes forget



Noreen
Scully
1977

Illustration by
Noreen Scully, an
illustrator of the
lesbian leather
scene in the San
Francisco Bay Area
in the 1970s.
© 1977, Noreen
Scully.

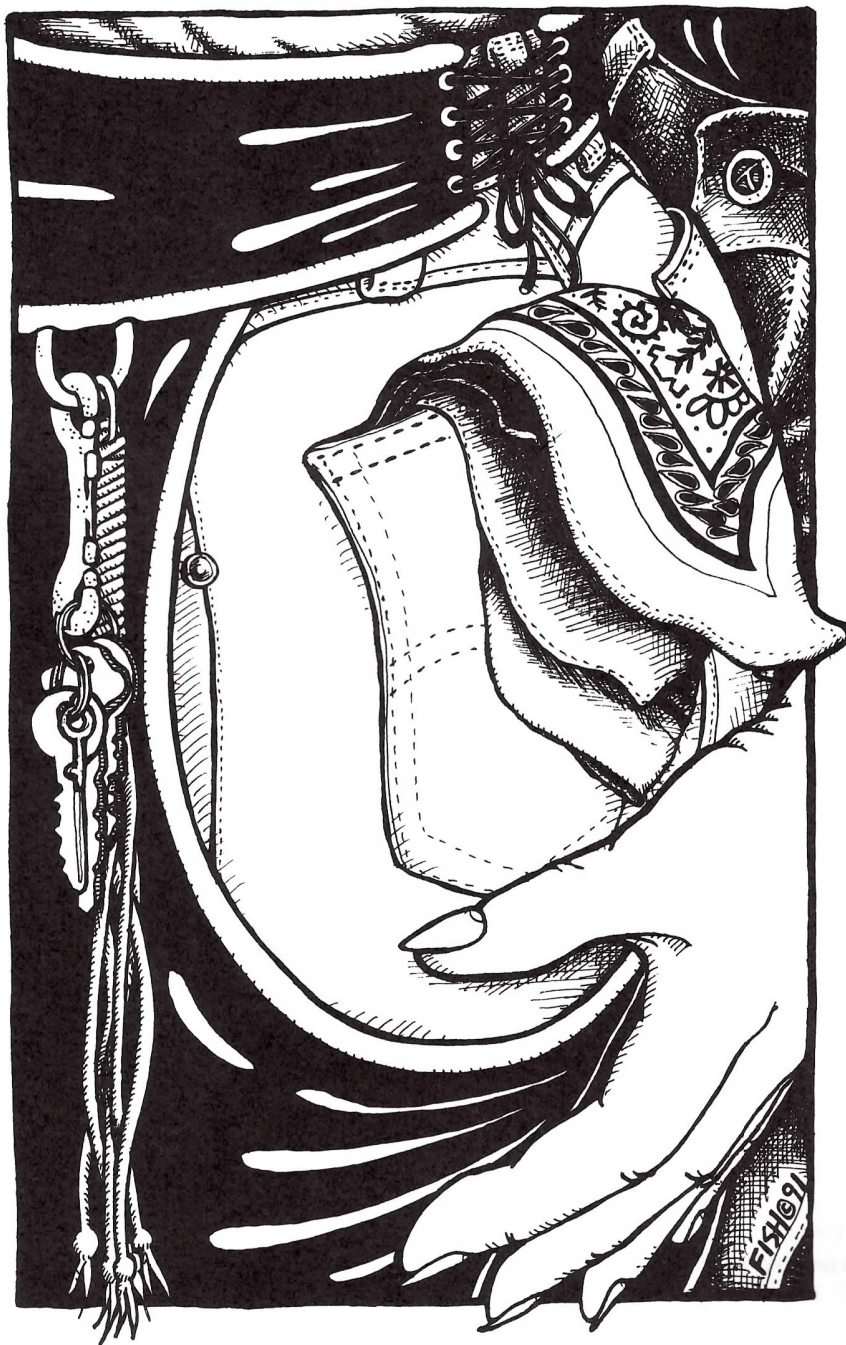
that we assume S/M roles to gratify our fantasies. We still assume that being penetrated is a submissive act and sticking it in is dominant. Pleasure is still assumed to degrade and

disenfranchise women. This sounds too much like the values of the New Christian Right to me. We've made a major improvement on heterosexist mores by insisting that

the bottom can be a man or a woman, has control, has the right to consent or refuse, and should always get off. But I think we should be challenging the very meanings that we assign our sexual acts. This is the truly radical potential of S/M. Are we frightened by the idea of having that much freedom?

Perhaps another role model from the seventies, which differs from the Mr. Benson paradigm, can be helpful to the S/M community of today. There was a lot of overlap between the sexual practices and fetishes of the fisting subculture that existed prior to the AIDS epidemic and the gay men's leather scene. Unfortunately, leather social forms have survived and flourished while the iconography, rituals, and etiquette of fisting culture have nearly been wiped out. Contrary to what the CDC say, fisting is not the cause of AIDS, and you can do it without artificially altering your consciousness. One of the reasons why fisting was so popular among gay men was that it offered a solution to some of the dead ends

Below and right, illustrations by San Francisco illustrator Fish, 1991.



that are inherent in the fifties-style, ironclad roles of more traditional S/M.

I came out into S/M by hanging out with gay men and a bisexual woman, Cynthia Slater, who partied at a San Francisco fisting club called the Catacombs. In the handballing community, it was an axiom that "a man who says he doesn't get fucked is not gonna put his fist up my asshole." At Catacombs parties, a novice who also insisted he was an exclusive top was likely to be stripped and ravished, often perhaps without adequate attention being paid to negotiation and consent. Exclusive tops were thought to be brittle and pretentious; exclusive bottoms were thought to be sexually boring and greedy.

The fister's sexual icon was a man who was bad enough to dish it out and big enough to take it. Being a bottom didn't detract from one's status as a top (unless you spent your whole life in a sling with your legs in the air). Rather, it became a new signifier for sexual potency and masculinity. Good tops were assumed to deserve their own time on the bottom, and arranging bottom trips for men who were usually tops was something the community took a lot of pride in. This was seen as something nice you did for somebody who was a hot man, not an attempt to conquer, humiliate, or diminish him. Tops who put their asses in a sling got congratulated, not dished. It was, by definition, not a tight-assed subculture.

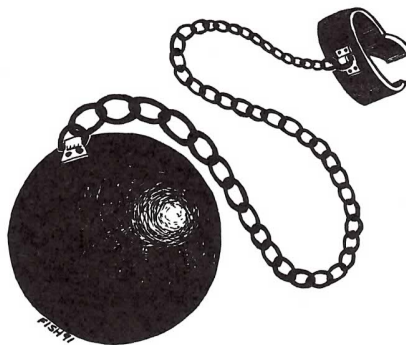
The S/M community tends to be polarized. People identify themselves as tops/sadists/dominants/masters/mistresses or bottoms/masochists/submissives/slaves. We might benefit from defining ourselves as sadomasochists first, and tagging on the role choice or preference second. We also need to give more acknowledgment to the switches in our community. Right now, they're in a sort of limbo, like bisexuals or preoperative transsexuals. Everybody knows they're out there, but nobody wants to own them or say they belong. Switches are some of the most interesting and challenging members of our community. In my experience, they also tend to

be more honest. Newcomers need to know that they don't have to hang their keys on the left *or* the right.

Why do we assume that you need one top and one bottom to make a scene or an S/M relationship happen? Bottoms can team up to create joint rituals in which both of them get the type of stimulation they enjoy. Instead of relating to a top's standards or taking the dominant's orders, the other bottom's ability becomes a challenge that you must strive to meet. Solo masochism—or is it solo sadism?—is an option that we don't discuss often enough. A drive to meet or exceed your own past performance or the spiritual and physical state you wish to achieve becomes your incentive, rather than the top's gratification.

The bottom's experience and needs will probably always be the template of safe, sane, consensual S/M. It is the focus on the bottom's desire that distinguishes S/M from assault. Paradoxically, if we can honor and validate bottoms more *and* start honoring the bottom side that most tops possess, the top role may become much more alluring and less intimidating. Tops might become more plentiful. The scene might be more confusing, more ambiguous. We might have to talk to each other more. But we'd all have more fun. And that would be a Good Thing. ♦

This essay was condensed and reprinted from *Leatherfolk*, an anthology published by Alyson Publications in October 1991.





*Lesbians not only
politicize our differences,
but eroticize them as well.
We just don't talk about it.*

Confessions

of a Chicana PhD

by Carla Trujillo

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OUT/LOOK winter 1992

The questions began the first day of class. Fourth grade. Five Black girls cornered me in a hallway and demanded to know "what" I was. I didn't know "what" I was. I never had to think about it before, but immediately realized that whatever I was mattered. Remembering that my family ate a lot of beans and tortillas (we were poor) and that my parents spoke fluent Spanish, I blurted out, "Mexican ... or something like that." "Well," they replied, "you better find out quick." I did. At home that evening, at my instigation, my father lectured me on the historical roots of the family. We were Mexican Americans, a people mixed with Spanish and Indian. "We are poor," he said, "but we work hard and we are proud. Always be proud of who you are, *mijita*. Never let anyone think they're better than you because you're Mexican." To my ten-year-old mind it made me secure to have my identity confirmed.

My parents never denied their ethnicity or allowed us to forget our past. While Mexican *corridos* rang through the house, cooking, politics, and religion were discussed. This free exchange made learning profound and rapid. Consequently I soon figured out the family's (at least my mother's) view of interracial relationships. Women in the family often commented on male cousins who had married white women. Disapproval ran rampant, focusing on "those gringas" not being up to par particularly in the domestic arena as dutiful wives,

good housekeepers, or even makers of tortillas. And although I participated in the anger my mother and aunts directed towards these white women, they actually seemed to be more upset with the men (but they never said as much). It was as if they implicitly understood that these men valued white women for reasons beyond domestic abilities and duties. If the marriage ended in divorce, which often happened, there was always a defiant, "I told you so!"

This early inculcation stayed with me as I grew up. Before I "came out," whenever I dated white or Chicano men, I always considered the implications of doing so, and so did my parents. Parental approval or disapproval depended on my date's class as well as his skin color. The number of acceptable men was narrowly defined and strictly enforced, encompassing only Mexican Americans of lighter skin and "class" (later I discovered this to be a relative term), or white men of any class. Eventually, however, my father would have accepted anyone from the male species.

I've been out as a lesbian for thirteen years and the issues around interracial relationships haven't become any less complicated. If anything, they've gotten more tangled. Contradictions abound, particularly in the lesbian community, which supposedly espouses beliefs in racial validation, recognition, and self-education for those who haven't yet "dealt with" their racism. Contrary to Jackie

Goldsby's observation that gay men eroticize differences while lesbians generally politicize them (*OUT/LOOK* #9), I contend that lesbians not only politicize our differences, but eroticize them as well. We just don't talk about it.

Early on I also learned from my father that our society is an unjust one. At work he had been bypassed for a training stewardship as a welder for a white man with less seniority. Immediately he had the San Francisco office of the US Commission on Civil Rights sending in an investigative committee from DC. He also hired a labor lawyer to file suit against the employer. The company backed down and reinstated my father. Of course we couldn't afford the lawyer, but at age thirteen I was beginning to understand that sacrifices were sometimes necessary and that fighting for your rights is always a just cause. This was a lesson for me in entitlement to rights as a human being regardless of race or class.

Later, in college, I was active in various feminist groups and worked on issues concerning Chicanos and women of color. At the time I was one of the very few lesbians of color, much less Chicana lesbians. My lack of access to other Chicana lesbians in this isolating world limited me to white or Jewish women as lovers. And while this was acceptable considering my options, I couldn't shake the views and opinions of mixed-race relationships learned as a child. Something was

Is guilt waiting
If I'm attracted to a white woman,
in ambush
does her whiteness have
in the bedroom?
something to do with it?

amiss. I mistrusted my white lovers' motivations and attractions to me. I mistrusted myself. Was lack of access to a diversity of women the only issue involved? If not, what else was at work here? Many Chicanos never graduate from high school, and fewer still go on to college. Despite my background I was able to go to college and had to make very quick adjustments in order to survive that middle-class world. And while I never considered myself "better" than anyone who hadn't gone to college, grudgingly I had to admit higher education had changed me. While my identity remained firmly rooted in a world without advantage, I now had access to it. My acquisition of privilege, however, gave way to what felt like a fracturedness in my ethnic identity, upbringing, and general trust of the world—especially the lesbian world. The more I thought about my place of privilege, the more I thought about others without it. The more I thought about who I was attracted to, the more I questioned my underlying motivations.

Because of the egalitarian lessons learned from my father, I had to believe that any woman, regardless of class, race, or education, could be a potential lover. Politically it was wrong to feel any other way. But could I believe it in my heart? I continued on to graduate school in the Midwest, where I had a brief relationship with a poor white woman. No one in her family had gone to college. She was in the Army reserves when I met her, and there was hesitancy between us even though our attraction was readily apparent. We continually misunderstood each other, making assumptions about the other's exposure to and experience in the world. She admitted feeling inadequate around me, never comfortable with what she thought were my expectations. In a supermarket I once asked her to pick out an avocado. When I realized she didn't know what an avocado was I was shocked. I simply assumed that everybody knew what they were. Confused about her lack of exposure to what I thought were everyday (read: white) things, I was naïve enough to think "white" could compen-

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25

sate for anything, even lack of money. Our efforts at communication were futile and ironic. I was a Chicana working on a Ph.D.; she was white and in the military reserves.

All of my father's speeches, rhetoric from the lesbian community, and Marxian and post-feminist analysis did nothing to provide the "how-to's" in linking theory with actual practice. My comfortable, though ignorant, self-concept had been shattered. I was stunned, realizing that class differences, not racial differences, were at the core of the problem. In my isolation there was no one who understood my confusion. Those I told were often silent, disapproval in their eyes, disappointment in the little that they did say because I questioned doctrinaire, politically "correct" positions on love and life. Had college done this to me? Using my academic situation as therapy, I began to research Chicano performance in higher education. I armed myself with the efforts of others to better understand myself. This was difficult, for I found practically nothing in the academic literature on working-class Chicanas pursuing doctorates.

Eventually I began to pursue feelings for other Chicana lesbians. Was there some other reason why I hadn't been partners with other Chicanas? Thinking I had been tolerant of difference and experience, I had to

acknowledge that this was not always so. I wanted a Chicana lover, but I was also afraid. In college I never took the time to question why I was never, conveniently, "compatible" with Chicanas that I did encounter. Now I was asking myself if I had dealt with my own self-hatred enough to love another Chicana completely. I wasn't sure I had. I had to admit, however, that my attraction was colored. I was looking for a certain Chicana, one who understood me and accepted my future lifestyle. Having fought so hard to get this far, and meeting so many middle- and upper-class white people who didn't understand me, I was desperate for someone who could take me into her heart and accept where I was going. At one time I thought she could be any Chicana I was attracted to, but now I realize it wasn't such an easy goal: class had intersected with race and my options had been narrowed even more.

Over time, I dated several Latinas and remained in a relationship with a Chicana for several years. She fulfilled me, and for once I felt I had finally come home. Her strong identification as a *Mexicana* meant that there was no need for me to explain, translate, or pray for understanding. Many things went unsaid because they were understood: language, the love of food, our customs, the importance of family, music, the color of her skin, her eyes, her hair. Coming home. Needless to say, she also had a college education. And even though the relationship eventually ended, I was touched deeply, a desire lingering for others like her long after the breakup. This hasn't changed.

The rhetoric of Chicano nationalism tells me that those of us who have white lovers dislike something about the Mexican in themselves. True nationalism exalts the efforts to uplift the race at all costs. You become politically "suspect" if your intimate partner is not of the same race. Why we tend to equate one's political philosophies with sleeping partners I'm not sure. Perhaps it's an overall suspicion of anything white, dominant, or privileged. Guilt by association always prevails. Though I see Latina lesbians together, I

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gives?
from personal attraction?

see much more variation. I notice that many lovers of very political lesbians of color are white. I see ethnic studies faculty with white lovers. I know that many famous Latino artists, writers, and musicians are with white women. So what gives? How is it one's political philosophies can differ so much from personal attraction?

I ask a good friend of mine, who identifies herself as a Chicana nationalist, a theoretical question: If she met two women, one white and the other Chicana, both with equal characteristics, which would she choose? "The white one," she says without hesitation. "I do this work all day and at night I don't want to come home and continue to process. It takes a lot more work to be with another Chicana. I can't process all the time. I need a break, something different to come home to." When I push her on how others might perceive this relationship, she replies sharply, "I don't let people judge me in my personal life." This is not to say her white lover of six years is naïvely out of touch with my friend's activism and beliefs.

Another strongly identified Chicana friend indicated she could be with no one else except another Latina. "After all," she said, "I wouldn't be able to be myself. I'd

always have to be on my guard. Watch what I say. I've been with white women before, but it's a lot more work. I don't think we should be in "mixed-up" relationships. That's what we called them in the seventies; that's what they are."

Recently I was drawn to a white woman who expressed her attraction for me but confessed she had a "problem" with Mexicans. "I don't know where these views come from," she acknowledged, "the media, whatever ... I feel uncomfortable telling you, of all people, that I have these problems." I admire her vulnerability, yet I raged at the words and challenged her, "What, then, do you call me?" "Well, you're different." She continued, "Besides, you should be glad that I admitted my racism to you." Rather than sustain my anger, I am, finally, disappointed. My accessibility to others who choose to eliminate me on the basis of group membership is something I encounter every day. This is just one more pitfall in the paradox of being Chicana with some of the privileges and trappings of dominant white society. The thought of fighting this woman's racism and the possibility of a resurgence of my own self-hatred are too much to bear. I can't possibly think of working so hard to love someone.

As a Chicana I have to deal simultaneously with dual identities. Michael Omi and Howard Winant's theorizing on race relations in America locates these racial identities at the "micro" level, your personal identity based upon daily interaction with others; and the "macro" level, where dominant society impinges its categorization upon you. Since people of color are so dually affected, we must be dually conscious of how these identities are played out in a racist society. Gloria Anzaldúa says that we are all either racist, have internalized racism, and/or possess cross-racial hostility. Two people of different races who fall in love are not absolved from any of these conditions. If I'm attracted to a white woman, does her whiteness have something to do with it? How much advantage do I gain access to if I'm with a white woman? If a white woman is attracted to me, how do

skin color, culture, and my luscious Latina lips play a role in her attraction? Is guilt waiting in ambush somewhere in the bedroom?

Finally, about this thing called attraction. I would like to believe that a woman's race has nothing to do with my attraction to her, but that would be a lie. Sure, it's hard to shake early patterns, but I've worked very hard to accept and love all aspects of myself as a Chicana. On the other hand, I have Chicano/a friends who are only attracted to blonde, blue-eyed people. They may own up to self-hatred, shrug and say, "Yeah, I know it's bad, but hey, it's what makes me wet." We've heard it all before, but there's something wrong with a society that teaches us to value only certain "standardized" aspects of beauty. I can't lie and tell you that I'm not attracted to white women. It's just more difficult to consider a white woman a serious contender for my heart. To dismiss a white woman as a potential partner simply because of race is as dehumanizing as those white women who have nothing to do with me because I'm Mexican. For me to love a white woman means I must know that she's taken a step past herself. She must learn where her prejudices and stereotypes originate and then find out who Latinas really are.

I realize that I'm more accessible to white middle-class women. I've learned a white science, language, procedure. I have learned, out of necessity, to arm myself by acquiring "their" language and fighting my battles more effectively using "their" tools. Though I have run the risk of becoming fractured, fearing the potential loss of self, I realize I haven't lost myself at all. Education and upward mobility have indeed affected my lifestyle. I can never, however, deny or negate the part of myself most integral to my identity, that is, being Chicana and having been poor. My life is one of paradox, and whether my sense of isolation is self-imposed or not, I know that my options leave nothing more than honesty to get me through each day. I expect this from my partner. To do or believe otherwise and compromise this honesty is something I simply couldn't live with. ♦

How to write a poem

for David Trinidad

by Michael Lassell

Make arrangements to have dinner
with a man you hardly know
but whose work you've admired
from afar.
When he arrives at your apartment
show him
around. Exchange
pleasantries. Be embarrassed
as usual
by the mess, the
peeling paint, the kitchen grease,
an excess of
the undusted and
uncared for, unanswered letters
six months old.
Explain the boxes of records and books
piled in every corner:
"My lover is moving out," you will say,
"which is also why I don't have a car,
which is why intimacy's
a bitch on a budget."

When you squat into his Civic
he will ask, "How long were you together?"
"Ten years," you will answer,
"more or less. I cried
most of January, but I'm
pretty much over it now."

Go to dinner at Hampton's on Highland.
Refuse to valet park.
Sit in the smoking section.
Do not say, "People who smoke
should have their lips cut off
with garden shears," which is
how you actually feel.
Say, "I don't mind,"
and wonder why you'd rather risk
lung cancer than
disapproval.

You will share nachos
with sour cream and guacamole
on the side (he hates one, you
the other). Having been so
appetizer honest, you will tell the
stories that make up your lives:

You will tell him about the
erection you got posing nude for
Don Bachardy while Christopher Isherwood sat
looking on,
smiling and nodding,
rocking and dying in Santa Monica.

He will not tell you
how Rachel was killed. You will have to
read that later, between the lines.
You will see in his face
someone you will be missing
somewhere down the line.

Talk about Gavin, Dennis, Rudy—
poets you have loved or read—
Hockney photocollages and
O'Keeffe's *Hundred Flowers*,
thoughts in common,
continents of difference.

You will agree that the older you get
the more reasonable reincarnation seems
as an explanation.

Do not touch at all
all night.

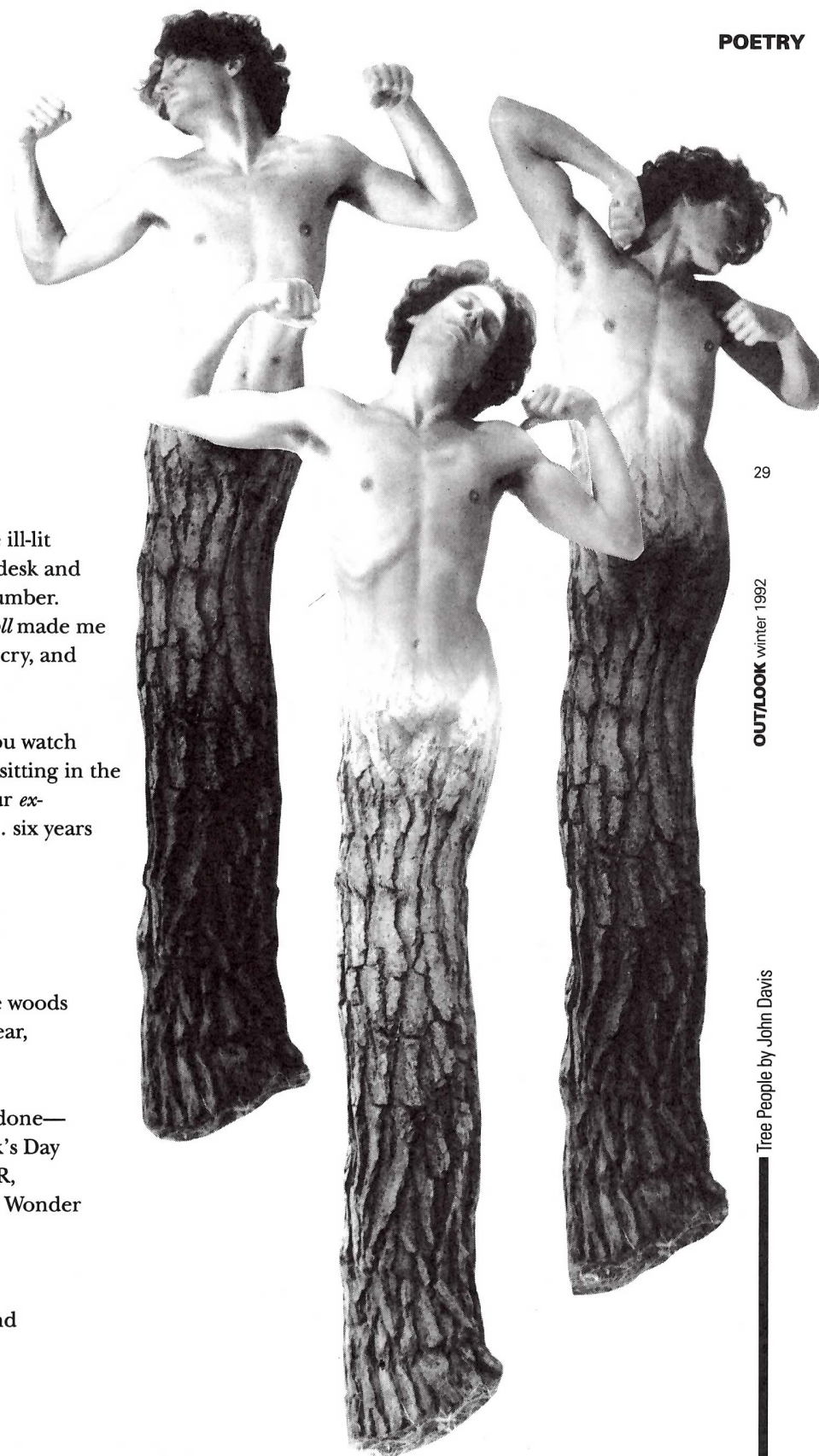
POETRY

When you get home
walk once through each of the ill-lit
empty rooms, then sit at your desk and
read his tiny books. Dial his number.
Say to the machine: "*Living Doll* made me
laugh, and *November* made me cry, and
I like you a lot."

Then write it all down while you watch
a sentimental movie on HBO, sitting in the
vinyl recliner your lover ... your *ex*-
lover gave you for Christmas ... six years
ago—or was it in 1602?

Hold back the tears,
then let them come.
After all,
if an act of grieving falls in the woods
and there's no one there to hear,
does it really hurt at all?

When you and the movie are done—
eleven minutes into St. Patrick's Day
by the digital clock on the VCR,
know you have made a friend. Wonder
who will die first.
And wonder again if
when you die
there will be anyone left behind
to mourn.



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OUT/LOOK winter 1992

Tree People by John Davis

Editor's Introduction: One of the most frequently recurring, but private, topics of discussion among the men on *OUT/LOOK's* editorial board is interracial relationships. This issue invariably raises questions about the tension between one's individual sexual desires and the growing pressure to maintain primary relationships within one's own ethnic group. Rather than attempt a self-consciously theoretical analysis of these questions, we decided that the men of color on the board should try to tease out a few of the issues from a personal point of view. Admittedly, the men on the *OUT/LOOK* board do not speak definitively for all men of color on this issue. The fact that all four editors have graduate school educations, for example, means they speak for

only a small segment of the "colored" population. On the other hand, having negotiated their way through the hallowed bastions of white institutions, they have learned to manipulate "the master's tools" in more ways than one!

Both Latino editors, Tomás Almaguer and Rüdiger Busto, come from working-class barrios in the Southwest, have been active in Chicano politics for many years, and are now academics. Ming-Yeung Lu is an immigrant from Hong Kong active in several political organizations and is currently working on a PhD in modern thought and literature. Ken Dixon is an actor, administrator, and long-time African American activist. The following candid conversation took place over coffee.

Sleeping with the Enemy?



Why Have Interracial Relationships Become an Issue?

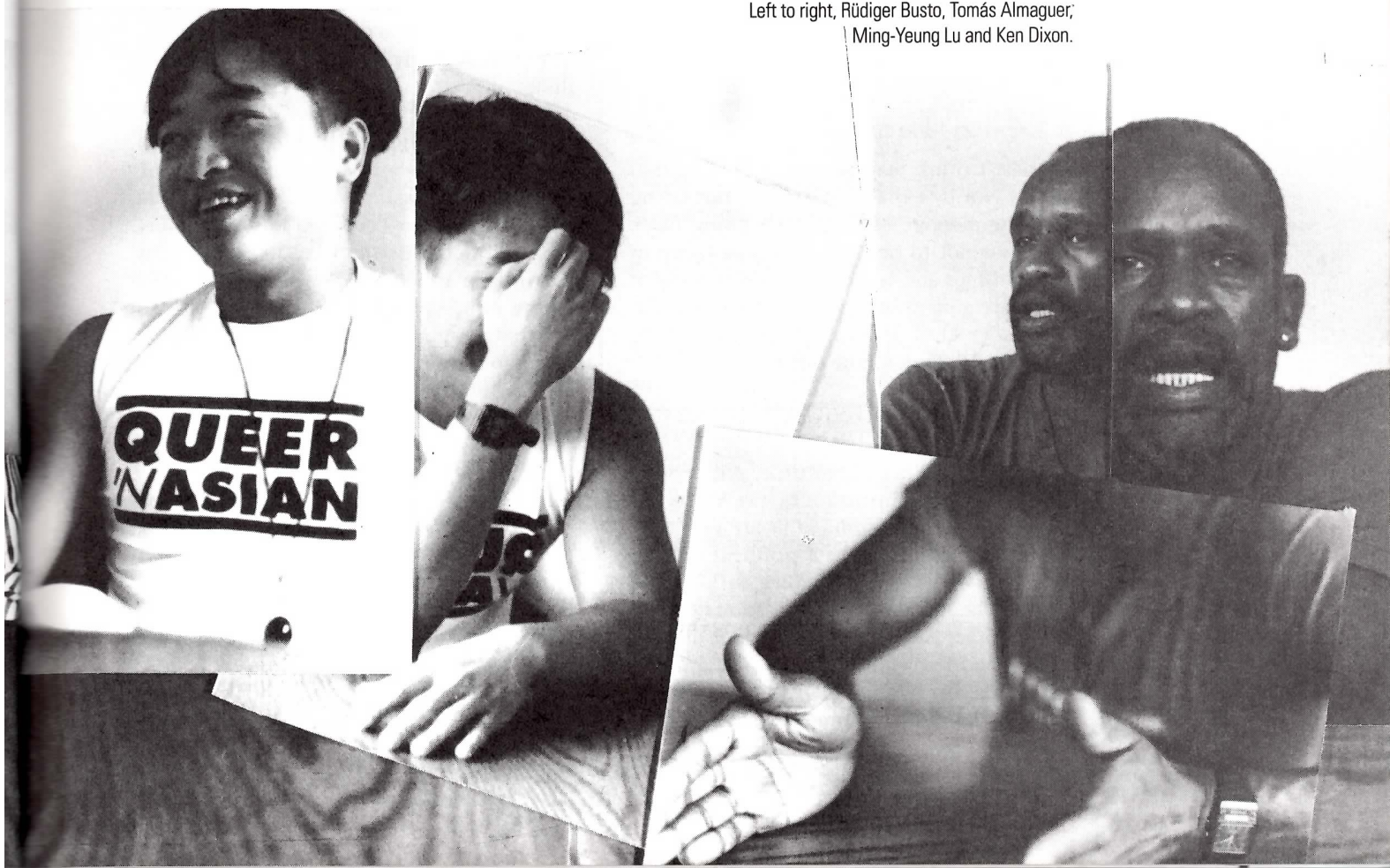
Tomás: It seems to me that one of the things happening in the cultural and political sphere is the tremendous emphasis given to dating people within one's own group. I think Marlon Riggs's film, *Tongues Untied*, crystallized some of that sentiment. The credo of the film—"Black men loving Black men is the revolutionary act"—set off a lot of discussion about interracial relationships.

Ming: That's an interesting entry point because Marlon is one of a few Black gay men creating images within the African American

community. This discussion has relevance for other groups out there, like the one I'm a member of—Gay Asian Pacific Alliance (GAPA)—which to some degree suggests to the larger gay and lesbian community a controversial racial separatism. I have lots of gay Asian friends—some new immigrants from Chinatown, some just like me—who have never had problems dating other Asian men and their "objects of desire" are pretty much the "United Nations"—that is, of all races. What I'm trying to say is that the statement "Black men loving Black men is the revolutionary act" has to be understood in a certain socio-political context, in this instance a racist and homophobic society. For someone like

Talking About Men, Race, & Relationships

Left to right, Rüdiger Busto, Tomás Almaguer, Ming-Yeung Lu and Ken Dixon.



myself, who has a colonial background, coming from Hong Kong, and has been taught to aspire to "white" culture as a model of success, dating other gay Asians was difficult for me for a long time. Loving another Asian becomes a deeply liberating and affirming "event" both personally and politically.

Ken: I went to graduate school in Boston and was one of fifteen graduate students in clinical psychology, two of whom were Black. All my educational experience, virtually all my work experience has been in the mainstream culture. However, I've had relationships pretty much equally with Blacks and whites.

Rudy: There's two things going on here. One of them is the "official" back-to-the-race, politically correct, going back and dating "one's self" like Marlon Riggs's film, but then when you look at his own relationship...

Ken: He has a white lover...

Rudy: Exactly. So there's something going on. An apparent rift between theory and practice?

Tomás: I think Marlon tried to clarify that point. Not by explaining it away, but saying that the message of Black men loving Black men was not to be taken solely in terms of relationships and sexuality, because people of color are getting in touch with themselves in a broader kind of way. Marlon was talking about us learning to love ourselves.

Rudy: But isn't that a cop out?

Ming: Within my community we're very invested in the affirmation of gay Asians loving each other, but some of us are very careful not to make it into a political dictum because we're not out there to legislate desire. The first time I had a passionate affair with another Asian gay man (but not the first time I had sex with one) was during a Gay Pride Week in the first months of my immersion in the GAPA community. I remember

feeling that I'd finally come to a fulfillment of who I am. But that feeling wore off pretty quickly, because I had to deal with the tensions existing between two gay Asian men. When the romanticism wears off you are forced to see that affirmation in perspective. If you make it the primary condition of a fulfilling relationship, then I think it's not only naive, but can be oppressive itself.

Rudy: It has to do sometimes with cultures.

Ming: Or class.

Tomás: That's really weird for me. I understand people getting in touch with their own and all of the political sensibilities that go along with that. At a very fundamental level it often represents assimilated, middle-class gay men of color reconnecting with their ethnicity and undergoing a profound cultural catharsis. It represents a coming home for many people, an affirmation of sameness. But I didn't become gay just to go to one corner of the candy store. I want the whole thing!

Ming: Precisely. But the problem is that a lot of us gay Asians are stuck with sugar daddies—or white sugar—and do not realize that candies have always come in lots of varieties. For me, a community like GAPA not only provides a space where we can have the choice to be both gay and Asian, but also to say that we gay Asians are there for each other, to love and fuck. Personally, I used to go through the personal ads and skip the Asian ones—that, to me, means not having a choice.

Rudy: Wait a minute; so not considering the Asian personals was not a choice?

Ming: To go out with another Asian was not a choice for me because I repressed that desire. There was something in the back of my mind which excluded that possibility. I'd been acculturated to see white people, white men in particular, as more attractive. Even though

To go out with another Asian was not a choice for me. I'd been acculturated to see white

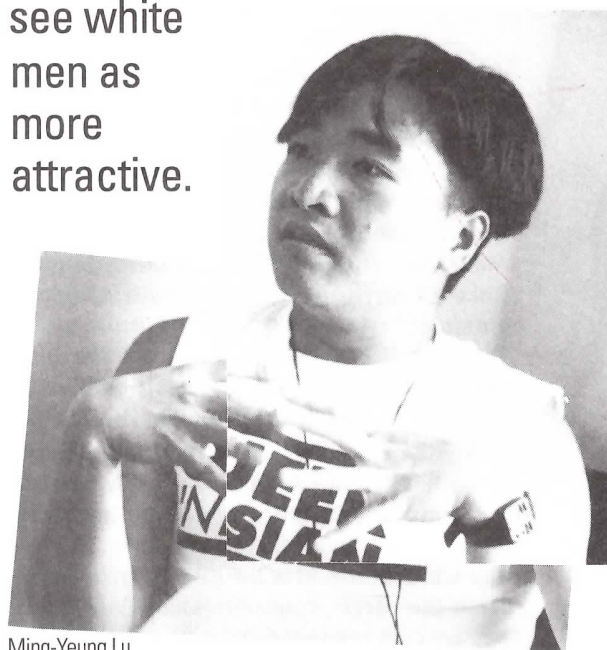
I was brought up in a city which is 90% Chinese, or Asian, if a white person came into a room suddenly the atmosphere, the class atmosphere became elevated. For me, the gay Asian community now provides the means to have a choice. Now I can say I'm attracted to Asians as well as to white men.

Rudy: Well, I definitely have a "type": somebody approximately my age with dark hair, white, educated, and middle class; although now I'm living with a fair-haired man and we're very different kinds of people in temperament and tastes. As far as lust goes, I'd like to believe that I'm more open to the directions lust leads me. A friend of mine says that there are "types"—men who you fuck—and then there are "boyfriends." I know, for example, that I'm increasingly attracted to Latino men, but I've never had a relationship with one. This attraction is a recent development probably having to do with the large Latino population here in the Bay Area. When I went to college in the late 1970s, there were no gay student organizations on campus; there were no gay Latino or Asian men that I knew personally. Now campuses like Berkeley have a whole range of organizations and groups. I think it's very liberating for gay college students of color to have organizations. I wish I had had that advantage. Back then all of the gay men that I knew, every last one of them, were white.

Being Gay in Our Own Communities

Ken: I grew up in a Black community, in a Black neighborhood and to be gay was to be effeminate—basically a Black queen. The first man I fell in love with was Black. He was a football player, and he had been in the Marines. My experience with him was always one that didn't have really as much to do with race as it had to do with his difference from everything my father said gay men were. We were together from the time I was sixteen until I was twenty two. I didn't really start dating white men until I got to graduate school, so it wasn't so much me climbing to power.

men as more attractive.



Ming-Yeung Lu

Ming: What Ken says brings up the community issue again. For me there was no gay Asian community, and so there was a lot of alienation from my own community. When I came out, not knowing other gay Asians, I naturally dated from the majority of the "gay community" which was white. And until there was a gay Asian community, I didn't have choices. This is something new that I see happening to my friends and myself.

Rudy: That's true for me also, because I'm half Latino and half Asian, and that has meant living on the margins of both of those communities. Then you add on the dimension of sexual preference! Who were my role models going to be when both racial communities are essentially homophobic? The only gay people I had access to were, of course, white men.

Tomás: My earliest sexual experiences were exclusively with other Chicanos, from a very early age. I didn't become sexually involved with white men until I was in my mid-twenties. At that point, I was thoroughly colonized and had internalized the racist messages of white society. When I finally came out—and

My desire was to be with an upwardly mobile middle-class white man and participate in middle-class America that way.

because they are symbolically negating their privilege by assuming the bottom role. There is an interesting sexual politic that underlies the way these desires get played out.

PC Sex

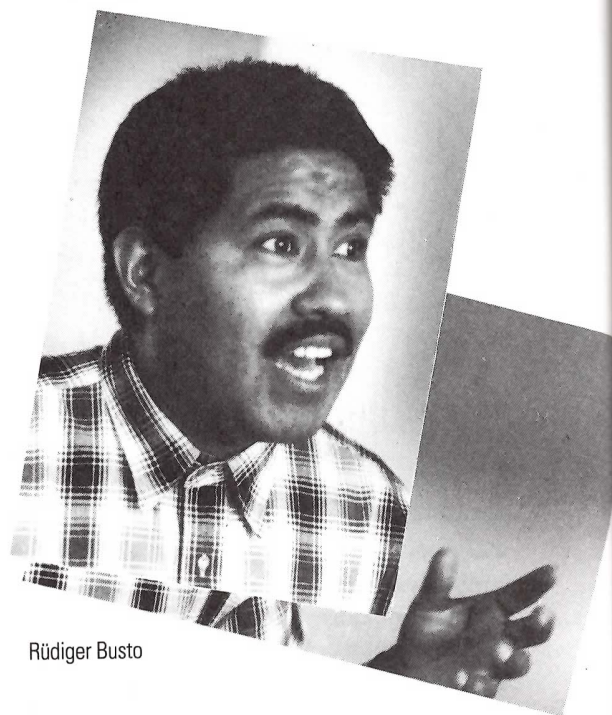
Ken: But I'm not sure if desire needs to be put in politically correct terms. You see someone that you're attracted to. Do you then want to know, is he the right class? Is he the right color? I mean, that's not what you're thinking about in that instant. For me I find that stuff comes up maybe after I'm in a relationship. I've been in long-term relationships with all types of men, except for someone Asian. I cannot remember saying to myself, "Oh, this is a nice Black man that I should be in a relationship with." It's more like, "This is the man I want to take to bed."

Tomás: I've just never been able to get beyond thinking about categories of people. I understand and appreciate what you are saying, but it doesn't compute for me. I'd like to be able to get into a more aggressive affirmative action program; it may be time to press for the Chicano agenda. It might be a nice change—white boys can get pretty boring after awhile.

Rudy: So, what about lust?

Ken: Maybe I'm apolitical in some ways, but for me there's a place in the world for lust. Lust is just that. If you go out to a club and you want to sleep with somebody, you don't run through a list of what you are looking for in a partner.

Tomás: We're so different. I'm just the other way. That list immediately comes up for me. The check list. Ok, what categories does this person embody? And I eroticize all of those categories: white, middle class, mid- to late twenties. I could go down the list. Or I could give you the catalogue, the J. Crew Catalogue! Or perhaps any one of the homoerotic Calvin Klein ads.



Rüdiger Busto

Ken: I'm curious, has that changed over time?

Tomás: No. I've been totally fixated with those categories. That doesn't mean that I like the same story-line or that the role I play is just as fixed. No, I love turning the tables on white boys. I become the producer and director of the sexual drama; I don't relinquish all the power but enjoy playing with it. It's like the sisters always say: "The personal is political."

Ming: What if you're interested in a guy who fits all of the categories on your check list, but he turns to you and says, "Well, you're not white. I don't want you for that reason."?

Tomás: That happens, but that's his problem—he's got provincial tastes. What is the real turn on and what makes things work is for the person to buy into the eroticization of someone being Latino. That's when the sparks fly. They also objectify the hell out of us and cast us into their own latently racist sexual dramas.

Interracial Relationships

Ming: Being in an interracial relationship is a complicated issue, and I'm not ready to theorize or make it black and white ... or yellow! It's not so much having to do with what or whom I fantasize about when I masturbate. When I go to the gym, I may see this great all-American looking boy and start to imagine what it would be like to have sex with this guy, with this GQ image. That's fine, and I can do that, but I know that if I get into a relationship with him there will be a lot of complications with the social and political parts of it. I guess there's all these different levels of questioning.

Tomás: But that's the difference between sexual attractions and desires versus getting to know people and entering into a relationship.

Rudy: Ken, it's interesting that you don't really think about the class or the race of a person if you find him attractive. I want to push you on that. When you see someone who's attractive enough to want to go to bed with, your initial reaction is just pure lust. But isn't there a second order reflection where you think, "Well, but I couldn't have a relationship with him because he's 'blank?'"

Ken: Well, no, because it depends on the situation. If I'm out cruising to sleep with somebody, I'm not thinking about a relationship. I mean, it's going to be something that happens during the course of that encounter that's going to bring up the idea that maybe this is a person I'm interested in and want to see again. I met the man I'm living with now

at a straight disco. What attracted me to him was his beard and the lust in his eye, to be perfectly honest. I was already in a relationship with someone and no one had looked at me like that in a long time! He wanted me to go home with him and I wouldn't. I said, "No, I'm in a relationship and I'm monogamous." But it never dawned on me—I didn't say, "Oh, he's got a cute beard and he's got lust in his eyes and he's white!"

Rudy: What about roles and power relations in your relationships? You can't deny that something goes through your mind about who is going to do what to whom as soon as you tear each other's clothes off!

Ken: When I've been involved with Black men there's a lot more power issues; who's going to be on top and who's going to be on the bottom. I think it has to do with growing up in a matriarchal society and Black men having less power in their own social structure. So when two Black men come together you just complicate that because they have both come out of a matriarchal society. Somebody's going to have to vie for position on top. But I haven't been that kind of person, so my relationships with Black men have suffered in some ways because I don't play that power game.

Rudy: With a white man are the roles any less complicated?

Ken: I think that it is different. My experience with Black men is that I don't play out the role. I'm not a top and I'm not a bottom and I don't let any man, white or Black, or any other, put me in that kind of slot. With Black men it comes up more.

Ming: What about the problems within interracial relationships themselves?

Rudy: When I'm walking with my lover on Market or Castro street, I find myself singling out interracial couples and thinking, "Oh yeah, those two people are of different races

and that's very interesting to see. I wonder how they met." This, of course, is completely apart from the fact that I am also on the street with a white man, never imagining that someone might be looking at us through some sociological or psychological lens.

Tomás: So what do you process when you see this? What occurs to you?

Rudy: Well, often, when I see a white man with an Asian man I get a little angry. I just assume, especially if the Asian man seems to be younger, that the Asian man is being fetishized by the white man. If I see a white man with a Chicano, you know what I think? I think that there's got to be a power struggle going on. That there's probably a lot of negotiating and working out of cultural conflicts, which recapitulates in microcosm the struggle historically between Spanish-speaking and English-speaking people. When I see a Black man and a white man together I don't think too much about it because I'm used to seeing that combination.

Ming: When I walk down Castro street holding hands with another Asian man, we get a lot of stares.

Ken: That also happens when two Black men walk down Castro holding hands.

Ming: If I were in a relationship with a white man, he would have to understand where I am coming from in terms of my politics, my socialization and so on. If he ran around flaunting his white privilege, it would be really hard for me to deal with that. It would bring up all of those questions about insecurities and power relations that I don't think I'm ready to deal with at this point in my life.

Tomás: It's almost like white men are in a different world. I mean the way they process things and the way they think about them. Even the little things immediately come to mind, especially cultural sensibilities....

Rudy: ...the food! For me it's also been the way arguments take place. It's a very reasoned, rational, let's-talk-it-out kind of thing. The way I grew up, boy, you screamed and yelled until you got it out, then it was over. But in my relationships with white men disagreements have had to take a certain "civilized" format, and to me that is always odd. But you know, I have to say that I'm also attracted to Jewish men. Not to generalize, of course, but many Jewish men that I have been attracted to seem to have a sense of 'culture' in terms of tradition, roots, and family orientations. I find that enormously attractive...

Tomás: There is definitely a cultural bond between Chicanos and Jews and also Chicanos and Irish Catholics. Jews, for example, are as close to being truly ethnic or "colored" as white people get but I'm convinced that they share other European Americans' view of us as "domesticated savages." Our Europeanized culture and Judeo-Christian background makes us a safe "other"; we are not their complete antithesis, like the African American man.

Ming: I am also attracted to Jewish men. I had a boyfriend who was Jewish and I respected the culture in the sense of traditions. I wonder though, how are issues of anti-semitism and racism similar or different? One would expect some similarities in that Jews are also viewed as outsiders, but they are not quite the same.

Rudy: What happened to love? That's always the foil when talking about the politics or theories about interracial relationships. What do you do with love? Yes, our desires are conditioned by society, but you could fall in love with people you don't think you'd ever fall in love with! Again, the "types" versus the "boyfriend."

Tomás: Those things do seem to happen. I'd like to think that in spite of all the odds, love does seem to find a way. ♦

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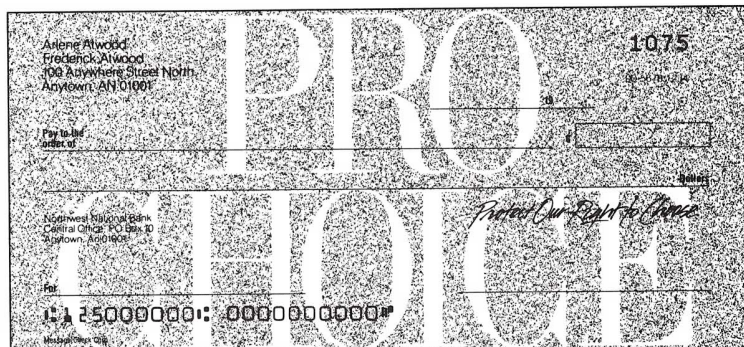
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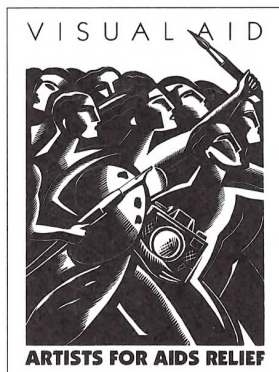
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\$15.00
more: \$ _____

TEMA



Richard Davenport, *Self Portrait with Headset*, 1983, 22" x 30". Watercolor and gouache.

PORTFOLIO: Healing Arts



For more information, contact Visual Aid, 530 Bush St., Suite 403, San Francisco, CA 94108 415-391-9663

For visual artists, time and space and imagination are free, but access to other materials—gouache, oils, acrylics, film, photo paper, plexiglass, velvet—is often restricted by economic considerations. For artists with AIDS, the spiraling costs of health care and scalper's-rate drugs compete with the means to continue their work.

Visual Aid/Artists for AIDS Relief assists San Francisco area artists with AIDS and other life-threatening diseases. The group was founded as a not-for-profit organization in 1988 with the hope that artists—most of whom are self-employed and uninsured—would not have to choose

between medicine and art materials after an AIDS diagnosis. Visual Aid is run by volunteers out of a donated office, and raises most of its money from T-shirt sales. In the future, the group hopes to open a studio where artists can share work space, ideas and inspiration.

Four times a year Visual gives out grants (all for \$250 or less) in the form of vouchers redeemable at local art stores. The eight artists whose work appears on these pages have all received grants from the group. Richard Davenport (whose work appears at left) also credits Visual Aid for critical encouragement, support—and even healing. “Art really does provide a way of healing, in a way that’s not immediately apparent,” he says. “Being able to do art is every bit as important to me personally as being able to have *ddl*.”

He hadn't painted in years, but when he got sick as a result of AIDS about a year ago, Davenport knew it was time to pick up a brush again. His health forced him to leave his job as a bookkeeper and all he could afford was “crayons and manila paper—*maybe*.” A friend tipped him off to Visual Aid. Now, his health improved, Davenport paints out of a tiny room in his San Francisco apartment. Out come vibrant watercolors, surreal scenes from funerals, and haunting dream images intricately adorned in gold leaf. He's enrolled in a painting class at the University of California, and an exhibit of his work is on view there through January. Visual Aid helped out with the framing.

Earl Corse, *Are there Faeries in Your Garden?*, 1985, 14" x 32". Collage glued to panel, surrounded by strips of album covers.

Earl Corse, born 1949:

My works are my children, my only offspring. I began work on them in 1985 and have worked in isolation, mostly, and so don't have a good idea of where I sit in the scheme of things. There are a lot of different things I do that are not represented by this piece. I usually don't plan the pieces. They come from my subconscious and are developed as ideas as I do them.

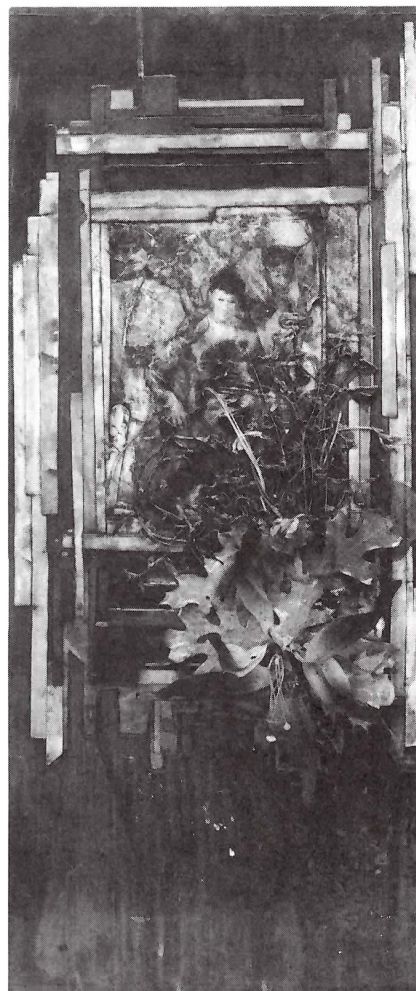
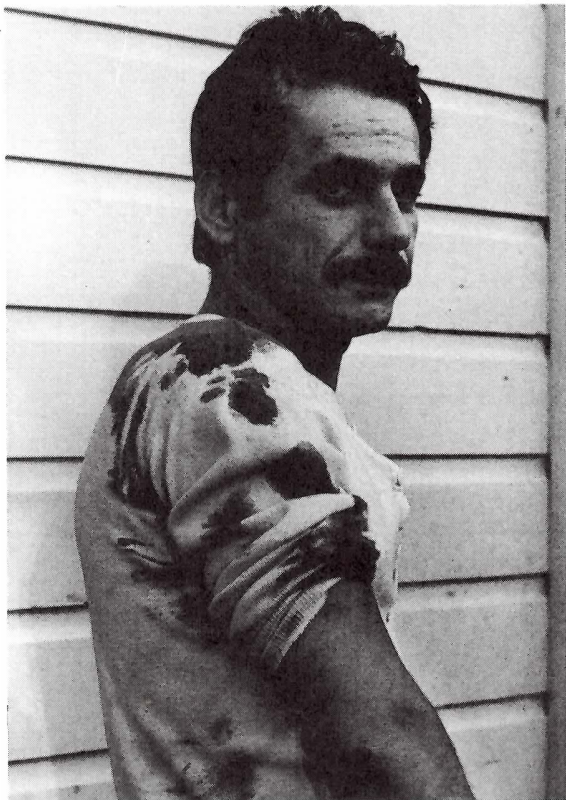
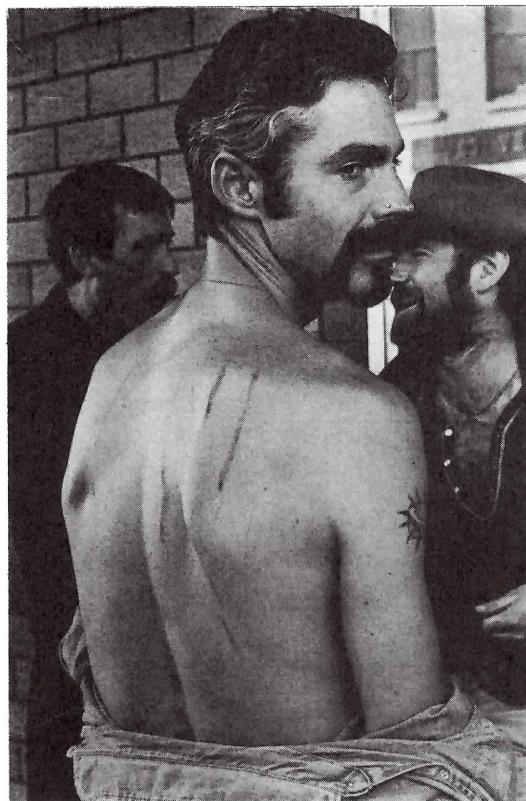


Photo by Karen DeCasas



Crawford Barton, born 1943:

My basic love of portraiture and photojournalism of the gay community of San Francisco has not changed with the advent of AIDS. I have no desire to do "sad" photographs, nor do I feel that AIDS is a death sentence which I must illustrate. Therefore, I plan to continue to shoot moments of enlightenment and celebration, hopefully timeless images which will live long after AIDS itself is dead, for AIDS is what is dying, not homosexuality.



Crawford Barton,
Assault and Battery (left), 1976, 9 1/4" x 13".
Crime of Passion (right), 1976, 8 1/2" x 13".

Black and white photographs.
Man at left was the target of a gay bashing.

Sam Allen, born 1940:

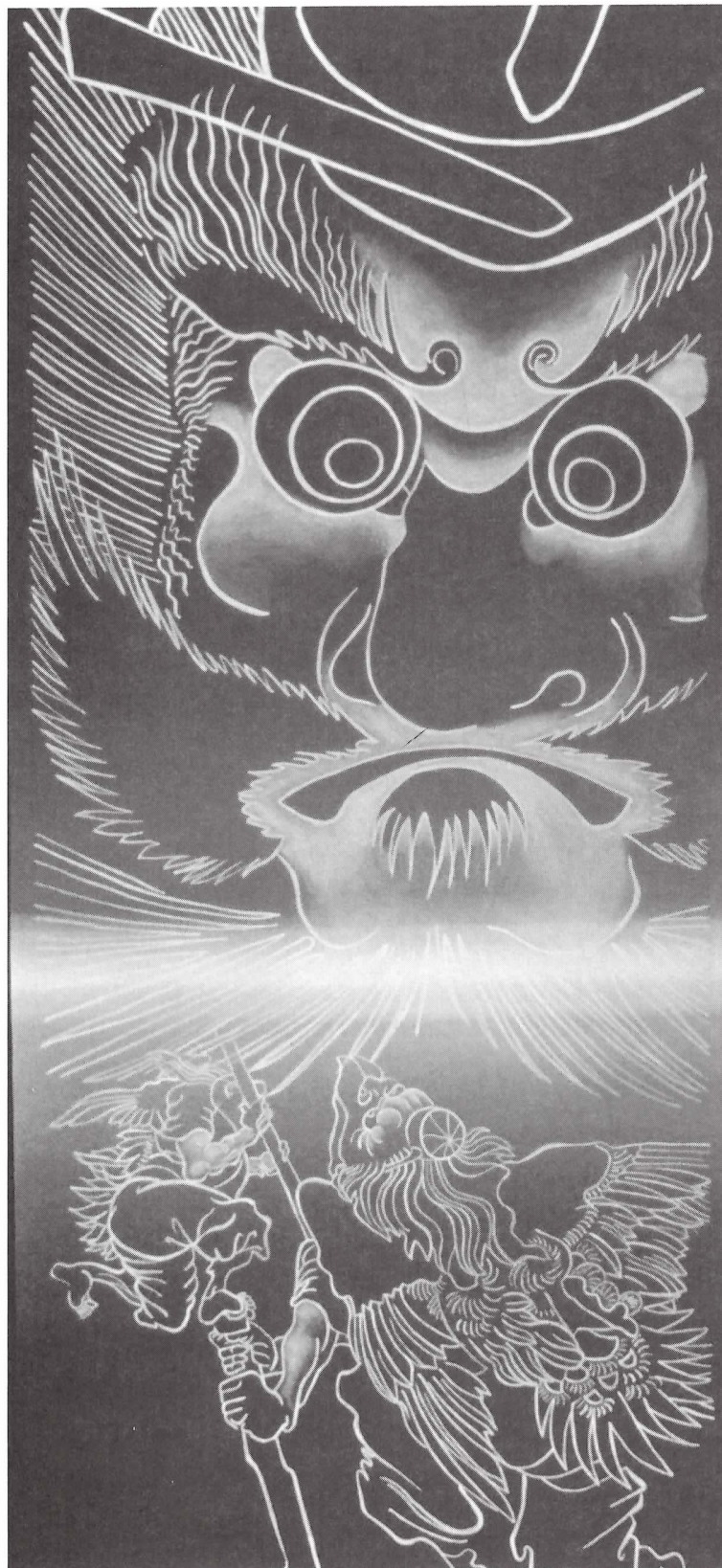
I work in a unique medium of cut paper. I screen my own sheets of color from which I cut the myriad of shapes required with an X-Acto knife. I assemble and glue these pieces on a black background; the black lines of the Cut Paper Drawings are the background revealed between these pieces. I have been a Bay Area resident since 1972. I am mostly self-taught, owned a graphics business for twelve years, and was co-founder of *The Advocate*. I have worked exclusively in cut paper for eleven years and nowadays do mostly private commissions.



Sam Allen, *Two Diners*, 1985, 21" x 30".
Cut paper.

Ed Aulerich-Sugai,
*Battle Between Karasu
 Tengu and Shoki*,
 1989, 27" x 12".
 Watercolor, gouache,
 and acrylic on paper.

Ed Aulerich-Sugai,
 born 1950:
Ghosts is based on demons
 from Japanese mythology.
 Shoki, the Demon Queller,
 has a role in these paint-
 ings. Historically, he origi-
 nates in Chinese mytholo-
 gy, and in my painting, he
 maintains his Chinese
 scholar's cap. He embodies
 physical strength and
 endurance of thought. The
 ghosts are symbols of
 weakness and negative
 power. *Ghosts* represents
 spiritual survival. The battle
 between Shoki and the
 ghosts is a metaphor for
 the will to survive.



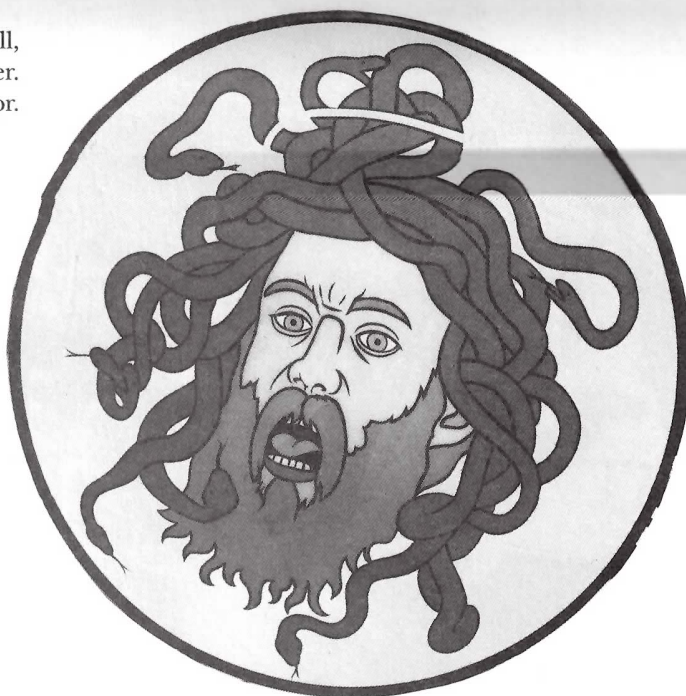


John Davis, born 1964. *Boy with Sewing Machine*, 1990, 6 1/2" x 9 1/2". Tinted photograph.

David Cannon Dashiell,
The Pantocrator, 1990, 36" diameter.
 Acrylic on plexiglass security mirror.

David Cannon Dashiell,
 born 1952:

I started painting and drawing after a long hiatus, in the mid-1980s (before testing became available) when I first suspected that I might be HIV positive. The work became both a way for me to privately deal with my own fears and anger in regard to the epidemic, and provided me the means to deal with these issues in a public forum. Now that I've been diagnosed and the amount of time and money that I have available to work dwindles, it's comforting to know that there are organizations like Visual Aid to help share what often seems like an unbearable load. I hope that my work does justice to their generosity.

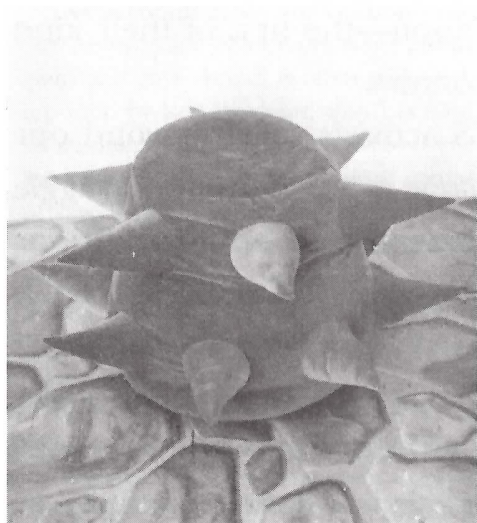


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Mark Paron, *Urchin* (left), 1991,
 20" circumference at base, 24" height.

Velvet and polystyrene pellets.
Rubber Rug (right), 1989, 43" x 93".

Rubber cord woven into
 metal mesh backing.





Around the World lesbians and gays are emerging from their closets and assessing new organizing possibilities

by Rebecca Isaacs and Robin Stevens

During the summer of 1991, headlines heralding international political organizing saturated the gay press. Lesbian and gay clout seemed on the rise. Homosexuals finally pressured Amnesty International to include lesbians and gays in their human rights work; lobbyists convinced US congressional representatives to complain to Mexican national and state officials about their homophobic response to a gay conference

scheduled there; massive gay rights demonstrations took place in the Soviet Union—the first of their kind in that country.

As US activists reach beyond our borders, one of the things we struggle with is learning to build coalitions without imposing US political models or values. The politics between first and third world lesbian and gay activists parallel the inequality and power imbalances between nations.

The Amnesty debate raised concern that lesbian and gay politics of first world culture was being imposed on some unwilling third world nations. Others responded that lesbians and gays in repressive societies do not embrace homophobic traditions as their own and welcome support.

International activism is hot. But what does it all mean? That American lesbians and gays are taking an increasing interest in the situation of those who live outside of our borders is clear. So is the fact that around the world, in repressive, often dangerous situations, lesbians and gay men are demanding human and civil rights. At *OUT/LOOK* we've felt limited in our ability to analyze international activism by our American paradigm. Working on this section, we made phone calls and faxed requests for quantifiable information around the world. What we found was piecemeal—there are no “bureaus of gay information” anywhere, let alone in those countries where gays must stay underground for safety.

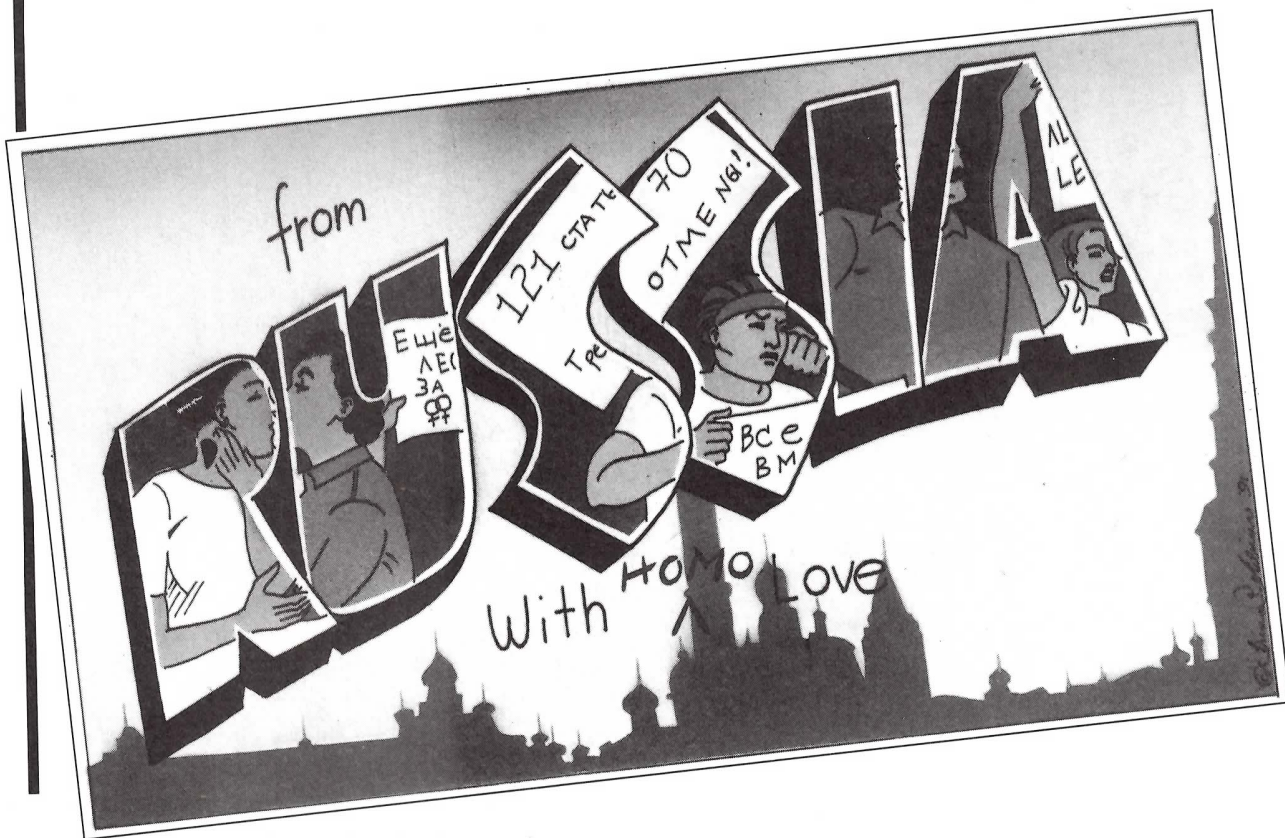
It's also particularly difficult to assess the level and meaning of lesbian and gay activism in other countries, because of language barriers, and the way U.S. news reports are filtered in much of the gay press. “Objective” news reporting is almost uniquely American; subjective accounts from abroad don't fit into our newspapers. Nationally, news about lesbians and gays abroad is often gathered and reported by Rex Wockner, who has syndicated an international news service to over forty local papers. Since his network of contacts is private, organizations and periodicals who choose to have direct contact with activists in other countries must start from scratch. This merely highlights the lack of resources available to and the inaccessibility of lesbian and gay groups.

We consider solicitation and translation of foreign work to be a long-term project, and we hope to be presenting such work soon. The following articles however, have been

written by US-based writers with a history of international contact and activism. Julie Dorf and Masha Gessen report on their experience organizing a human rights delegation to the Soviet Union (under the auspices of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission), and discuss the fine line between using US organizing techniques and exporting US culture. Los Angeles-based writer and activist Charlotte Innes traces the international organizing efforts that led to Amnesty International's September decision to begin to work on behalf of those imprisoned for homosexual activity; she also gives us a glimpse of what's next on the international agenda. Tede Matthews recounts the Mexican reaction to the announcement that a gay conference would be held in Guadalajara, and colorfully evokes the events of the International Lesbian and Gay Association gathering, which was finally held in Acapulco. The interaction of Latino activists at that conference rekindled playwright Cherríe Moraga's activist fire. Here she writes about the prospect of autonomous Latino lesbian and gay organizing throughout the Americas.

Respect for cultures and traditions, and the need for autonomous organizing are part of the recognition of class, race, gender, and geopolitical differences that preclude a unified lesbian and gay international movement with a fixed agenda. Lesbian and gay identities take on different forms in different cultures. It can be extremely difficult for those in poor or repressive systems to reach out; visibility is risky and resources are scarce. At this early stage we must begin the work to ensure that many voices shape international lesbian and gay political discourse and organizing. ♦

Research assistance for this section by Kate Krauss. Special thanks to Julie Dorf of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission.



by Julie Dorf and Masha Gessen

On July 22, 1991, a Czech Air plane carrying sixty-four American queers landed in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). We were on our way to the International Gay and Lesbian Symposium and Film Festival in the Soviet Union. It was absurd. It was exhilarating. It was mostly our fault.

A year earlier, two Moscow lesbians asked Julie, an American who has traveled to the USSR frequently, to help attract foreigners to a lesbian

conference in Moscow the following December. Ever the pragmatist, Julie suggested they schedule it for a warmer month and network with some gay male activists who had talked about a film festival. As far as anyone could tell, the idea was then shelved, the way dreams are in this land of grand ideas and bleak reality.

But a few months later, when Roman Kalinin (a founder, with Jim Toevs and Julie, of the International Gay and Lesbian

Human Rights Commission) was touring the United States, the idea reared its head again, this time as a definite plan. By the end of his tour, the event had acquired dates and an advertising tag line: "TURN RED SQUARES INTO PINK TRIANGLES." Meanwhile, Gorbachev was preparing decrees that would outlaw public demonstrations.

Masha decided to get involved when she met Roman in New York, figuring that she would never forgive herself for not getting involved if the conference did come off—which, she thought, it wouldn't.

If it did, we knew it would be earth-shattering. Julie had tried a number of ways of disseminating information about gays and lesbians in the USSR, but none elicited the level of commitment required from the other activists to help their fledgling movement. Only activists who had spent time in the Soviet Union seemed to develop an affinity bordering on obsession that we had come to call "catching the bug."

In the manipulative tradition of good organizing, Julie concluded that if a large number of Americans spent time in Russia with lesbians and gay men, they would not only catch the bug, but would infect others upon returning to the States. She visualized a ripple effect that would make it possible for Soviet activists to receive the material aid and information they sorely needed.

Masha acquired the bug either through an unfortunate accident of birth or thanks to the Fates, depending on her mood. "My name is Masha Gessen. I am imprisoned in Los Angeles, where I just moved from New York; I grew up in Moscow, so I had no choice but to work on this conference," was how she introduced herself at the orientation session in Prague prior to our arrival in Leningrad.

Organizing a group trip meant that we—the Commission, with two full-time staff living on unemployment, half a dozen volunteers, and a program budget of less than \$10,000—had to make all of the arrangements, from visas to airplane and train tickets, inside and outside the USSR. (Our group was 60 percent what travel agents called "deviants"—people whose itineraries require special arrangements). To complicate matters further, together with our Soviet partners we had decided to make all arrangements independently of the government. This piecemeal approach was undeniably superior to the familiar Soviet monolith: it allowed us an unusual level of independence from the government and resulted in better, more reliable accommodations.

The delegation was to spend five days in (as most of the activists we worked with called Leningrad at this point) St. Petersburg and four in Moscow. In St. Petersburg (where we chose to begin because of the city's relatively liberal government and modest press presence), Olga Lipovskaya, a leading (heterosexual) Russian feminist, helped with the logistics, since no one on the organizing committee had any conference-organizing experience. Olga and her boyfriend pulled strings for everything from hotel reservations to meals, buses, and security.

Since the ultimate success or failure of our trip rode on communication, we decided to cut no corners in translation. We paid the interpreters in dollars, making them the only paid conference staff. (The two of us, our two tour managers, Rich Schimpf and Alan Robinson, and Russ Gage and Jim Toevs, who managed much of the financial matters and logistics, received free accommodations and a 100-rouble—or about \$3—per diem.) On the first day of the conference we were greeted by our team of ten cream-of-the-crop interpreters. They may have been the best in the country, but the thought of one of them attempting to translate Robin Tyler's comedy routine or Harry Hay's Radical Faerie discourse filled our hearts with dread.



St. Petersburg

Red-eyed from six hours of successive meetings with the organizing committees of both cities, we arrived a few hours before the opening plenary. We ran around the so-called palace of culture we had rented setting up the registration table, finding technicians to set up microphones, pinning up NAMES Project quilt panels, and briefing the security team of men who looked like Russia's Twelve Most Wanted. Their job on the first day was to guard the entrance through which, the Soviet organizers were convinced, thousands of people were going to start pushing at any minute. We, on the other hand, were expecting only a few of the couple of hundred people who had received invitations—practically the sole means of publicizing the St. Petersburg leg of the conference—to saunter in at some point during the day. Deep in our hearts, we knew we would be giving a conference and no one would come. We were wrong.

In the space of a few minutes, about half an hour before the scheduled beginning of the opening plenary, pandemonium struck in the previously deserted lobby. Blue invitation cards (the Soviet organizers had requested hard-to-find colored stock for all conference documents to circumvent counterfeiters) flashed in the crowd: All 200 must have shown up. A woman insistently yanked on

Masha's sleeve. She was a reporter from *Moscow News*, perhaps the largest independent newspaper in the country, published in both Russian and English. Like all press, she had not been invited. She explained that she had returned from a trip the day before and overheard a clerk at the PanAm counter (mind you, we flew Czech Air) talking about a delegation of gay and lesbian Americans. From this point, it was a simple matter of tracking us down—something many other reporters, including Soviet television stations, also managed to accomplish.

The St. Petersburg organizers had made it clear for months that they viewed any potential publicity as a threat to their work and safety. They feared gay-bashers and provocateurs, as well as "undesirable" gay people—prostitutes and black-marketeers—whose presence might discredit the conference. Their fears went double for the press.

A crowd of people who had been barred from entry because they had no invitations accumulated in front of the building fairly quickly. Local friends of foreign delegates arrived and were also turned away. On one occasion, we had to ask a Soviet television crew that had snuck into the building to leave, knowing full well that we were forfeiting a chance to influence their coverage. We had made a commitment to respect our Soviet partners and to remember that no mat-

ter how painful the moment, we had no right to second-guess their decisions: as Soviets frequently remind Americans, we always leave, and they always stay.

Encounters with people whose sense of gay pride seemed to have been nurtured in complete isolation (people from all three Baltic then-republics, Byelorussia, the Ural Mountans, and remote areas of Siberia) would amaze us throughout our visit. A painfully shy middle-aged female librarian from the Urals gave an interview to one of the American journalists. The journalist asked her if she knew any other lesbians or had ever had a relationship. Her answer was a quiet "no." The journalist asked if she thought there was anything wrong with being a lesbian. This time her "no" was outraged, accompanied by a look that could shame even a reporter.

We had worried about the workshops. Organized along four tracks—"AIDS and Health," "Education," "Arts and Culture" and "Politics and Activism"—they were the product of Masha's sleep-deprived mind, aided by random and painfully general notes from conversations with Soviet gay and lesbian activists. As program coordinator, she had drafted the schedule, which we then faxed to the Moscow and St. Petersburg organizing committees. St. Petersburg responded with some names of suggested Soviet presenters

"Soviet Stonewall," July 31, 1991: US and Soviet activists stage a demonstration in front of Moscow's Bolshoi Theater to protest Article 121 of the Russian penal code (which outlaws gay sex).

but no changes to the substance of the program; Moscow simply acknowledged receipt.

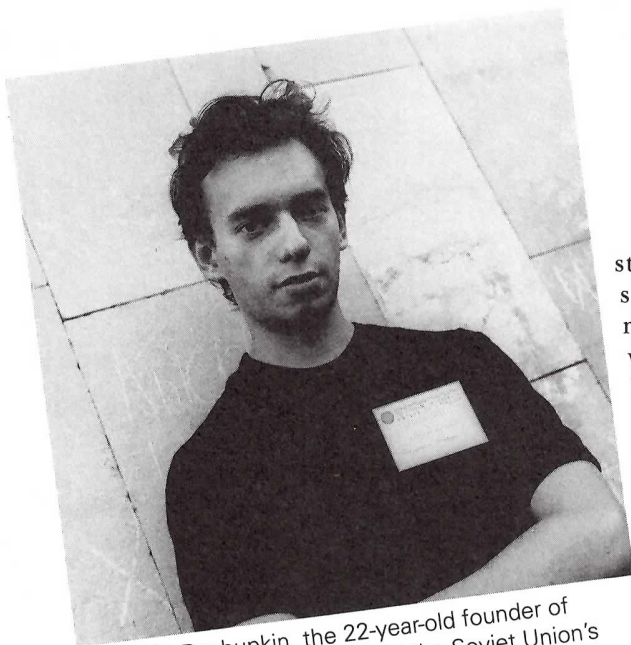
The response created a conundrum typical in dealing with the Soviet Union: while we were conscientiously avoiding even the appearance of importing Western culture (having deftly chosen a bicultural and bilingual program coordinator), our Soviet partners extended a hungry invitation to import as much of that culture as possible. The path we ultimately chose was to urge the American delegates, who had already set the agenda, to approach the workshops not as lessons in North American queerness but as forums for exchange of information and ideas. We didn't need to be quite so worried—the Soviets kept us in check.

At the end of the "Gay and Lesbian Identity" workshop on the first day, after the American participants used up the allotted 90 minutes in presentations, the Soviet participants said, "OK, we have listened to you, now you listen to us." An hour later, the group broke up reluctantly, and only after it became clear that we would have to cancel a plenary session if people did not interrupt their socializing to join the audience.

Although it sometimes interfered with our stated agenda of holding a conference, we felt that socializing was in many ways our biggest accomplishment. The price of our success was a logistical

Photos by Marc Geller





Gennady Roshupkin, the 22-year-old founder of the Moscow AIDS Project, and the Soviet Union's most visible person with AIDS.

nightmare. The drivers of our hired buses refused to drive back to the hotel with three people to a seat and an aisle full of passengers; so many Russians came back to the hotel for dinner that we had to get additional tables in an adjacent dining room; the number of requests for the pricey single rooms exceeded room availability; and the dozen Russian speakers in the delegation found themselves working for hours at a time (the interpreters didn't work dinners).

The interpreters found themselves in other challenging situations. Alex Kon, a middle-aged heterosexual intellectual whose pedantic British English made him one of our best interpreters, was assigned to the poetry reading. But having to translate poetry into both English and Russian was only a small part of his challenge. A member of the American delegation brought a poem during the reading of which he

stripped—an outstanding occurrence in a country where shorts have become marginally acceptable only in the last five years. Alex not only translated the poem without skipping a beat, but participated in the finale by marching out of the room

arm in arm with the naked author.

A lot of things came full circle in our five days in St. Petersburg. Toward the end of a session on gay and lesbian visibility, a very young Russian lesbian stood up and addressed some of the Americans. "I am sick of talking about how we have to show heterosexuals that we are just as normal as they are," she declared.

"We just are. If they can't take it, they can go to hell." We are queer, we are in St. Petersburg—get used to it!

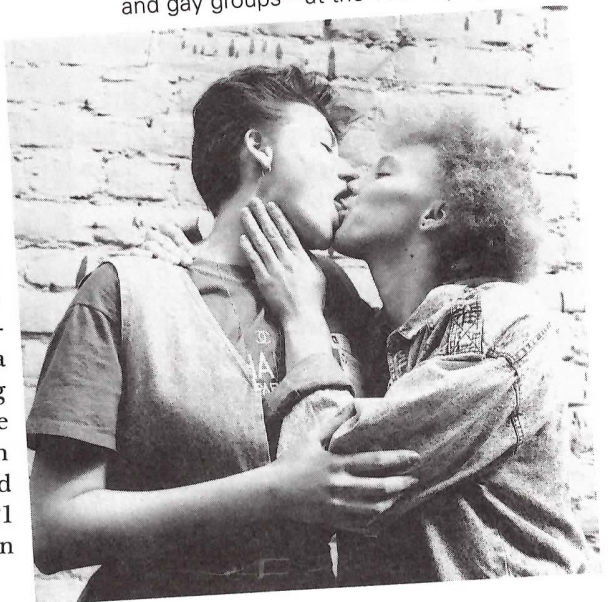
But along with such liberated outbursts, we had the sobering experience of visiting a St. Petersburg prison where we talked with men imprisoned under Article 121 of the Russian

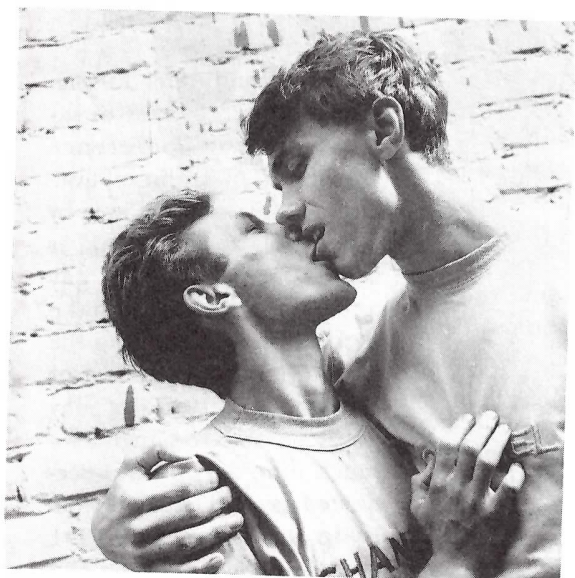
penal code, which outlaws male homosexual contact. We visited the "degraded" ward, where the prisoners calmly told us of the kinds of humiliation they have long learned to accept, and added almost apologetically that they didn't think we could do much to help.

Moscow

From the day we had arrived in St. Petersburg and begun negotiating with the Moscow organizers who met us there, it slowly and painfully sank in that there was a problem with holding a conference in Moscow: the Moscow organizers didn't want one. They—meaning, primarily, Roman, who brought back from his US trip a decidedly un-Soviet appreciation for the mass media—believed strongly that grand-scale visibility

Asya Savinova, left, and Yelena Khakimova founded Siberian Initiatives—a coalition of Siberian lesbian and gay groups—at the 1991 Symposium.





Alexei Starosyenko, left, and Veniamin Vol'nov, are activists from Barnaul. They began working together after Veniamin came out in an article in a Siberian youth newspaper.

and not small-scale skill building was the ultimate goal of our presence. The number of lesbians and gay men who could attend the working sessions, and even the 20,000 people who bought tickets to the film festival, were miniscule compared to the number of people we could reach through well-orchestrated public demonstrations and the resulting media coverage.

Soviet press coverage exceeded all expectations. The formerly staid Communist Party newspapers featured front-page photographs of men kissing; the most popular Russian television news program devoted one evening's most colorful segment to the conference; even the Russian Orthodox newspapers took note, in their own reactionary way.

We spent hours with the

local organizers trying to decide what type of demonstration to have and where to have it. Red Square was out of the question for them. It was "too serious"—meaning too dangerous: few Soviets would show up. We decided on the area in front of the

Bolshoi Theater, historically a gay cruising spot. The arguments about the best place to hold the demo, the best time, the best slogans, and the best speakers felt like routine direct action—never mind that the Russian-language discussion was accompanied by Crimean champagne and a mysterious mushroom dish we were fed every evening.

Save for the logistical difficulties of rallying in two languages (Masha had to translate for all the speakers, since our interpreters did not work in front of the cameras),

the demonstration itself felt mundane, as demonstrations go. We stood on the cracking but grand theater steps and chanted to the curious (and sometimes confused) crowd: "We are not afraid!" "Fight AIDS!" "Repeal Article 121!" We had all but forgotten that this demonstration was an unprecedented action when Roman, who had begun a speech, handed the megaphone back to Masha for the translation and choked, "I can't speak anymore." An internationally known gay activist, he had never participated in a gay demonstration in his native language or in his own country. And only two years earlier he had been writing under a pseudonym.

Roman wasn't the only person holding back (or, increasingly, not holding back) tears that day. "Now I



Ksenia Sokolovskaia and Mila Ugolkova—two of the three founders of the Moscow Organization of Lesbians in Literature and the Arts.

remember what I am fighting for," said a cynical Washington fundraiser. "Sometimes I forget."

Sometimes we all forget, and it takes the sight of hundreds of people risking their careers, families, and freedom for contact with other gay people to renew our appreciation for the freedom we take for granted.

Epilogue

We had not even begun to tire of regaling our US friends with stories of what had been dubbed the "Soviet Stonewall" when the news of a right-wing coup d'état interrupted our happy, activist chatter and threw us into a panic. Desperately worried about our Soviet colleagues

and friends, who had been so visible just a couple of weeks earlier, we burned up the phone lines. Members of the US delegation stayed glued to the television screen and repeatedly caught glimpses of familiar faces.

As it turned out, the gay involvement in the resistance to the coup was not limited to the barricades in front of the Russian Parliament building, where Russian President Boris Yeltsin weathered the siege. Roman and several other people used computer equipment we brought, and trained them on, to reproduce Yeltsin's decrees, thousands of copies of which were passed through the crowds and pasted on walls throughout the city, a small TEMA (a Moscow gay publication)

stamp on each one.

Roman and other Russian activists are reluctant to say what role the conference experience played in motivating gays to risk their lives by joining the resistance. And as Russian lesbian and gay activists struggle to make their voices heard during the most tumultuous period of change since 1917, we may never be able to gauge how much nine days of unprecedented gay and lesbian visibility in the summer of 1991 contributed to shaping the history of the Russian gay community. But in our hearts, we know that there were two Russian revolutions in August of 1991, and we can only hope that the ultimate result of both will be freedom. ♦

The demonstration at the Bolshoi: US and Soviet activists stage a kiss-in in front of a curious and sometimes confused crowd. Here, the authors finesse their way into Moscow headlines.





Welcome to Fagland!

by Tede Matthews

Guadalajara is the birthplace of so much that is seen by the outside world as quintessentially Mexican: mariachi music, tequila, and the *charro*—the cowboy who epitomizes rugged machismo. This “manly” city also has a huge gay population. A popular gay Guadalaran expression goes: “The *tapatio* (Guadalaran) men are real *charros*—by day they carry their pistols in hand; at night, they carry vaseline.” For the most part, the gay *tapatio* population is silent and closeted, but the Grupo Orgullo

de Homosexual Liberación (GOHL) has been active for ten years, and the Grupo Lésbico Patlatonalli has been organizing lesbians for five.

I’ve had an interest in the situation of lesbians and gay men in Latin America since the early seventies when I helped to organize gay resistance to the CIA-orchestrated Allende coup in Chile; so when I heard that the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) had decided to have its thirteenth annual conference in Guada-

OUT/LOOK winter 1992

lajara, I knew I wanted to attend. I'd never participated in ILGA before, but over the years I've had extensive contact with the Mexican movement, especially the *Colectivo Sol*, a gay mens' group in Mexico City. Here in the US, I've been active as an out gay man in Latin America solidarity movements, so I realized that holding such a gathering in Mexico would be historic. I also knew it would be a formidable task for GOHL and Patlatonalli—two chronically underfunded groups—to organize an international event.

What I didn't anticipate was that when the Guadalajara organizers publicly announced the upcoming conference, nearly a year in advance, they would rip open a Pandora's

box of vile and ignorant reaction that would eventually lead to the cancellation of the conference.

After the organizers released information about the conference to the press, the alarmist Guadalajaran media resounded with charges that the conference would tarnish the international image of the city. Local church officials became incensed that Sodom was about to descend on their bastion of holy machismo. The governor of Jalisco, Guillermo Cosío Vidaurri, promised to take "whatever steps necessary" to prevent the conference, and the Jalisco Association of Hotels and Motels threatened to expel any members who rented their establishments to

Entre Nosotras

A Personal Response to the 13th International Lesbian & Gay Conference in Acapulco, June 30–July 7, 1991

by Cherríe Moraga

I seldom attend conferences anymore. Having spent most of the late seventies and much of the eighties in political meetings, one day I suddenly stopped going. In the aftermath of the Gulf War and the Sandinista loss in the Nicaragua elections, however, I began to feel a renewed sense of political urgency. This summer I planned a two-month sojourn to México which

was to culminate with the eclipse marking the end of *el quinto sol* and the birth of *la epoca de conciencia humana*. The International Lesbian and Gay Association conference was to take place there a week earlier. *Ya es hora*, I thought. I decided to attend. One major question prompted my decision: "What role do Latino queers have in the reclaiming of las Américas?"

Upon my arrival, I found

there were two conferences going on at the ILGA conference in Acapulco. One consisted of "them" (the general conference-goers, predominantly European and white North American males); the other was "us" (the Latino attendees, from all parts of the Américas). *Us and them*. I admit it is a defensive posture, formed by the experience of being Chicana and lesbian, living within the context of US

the organizers. Graffiti appeared throughout Guadalajara condemning the "Homosexual Congress" with such heartwarming sentiments as "Death to Homosexuals" and "Homosexuals: Carriers of AIDS."

The silver lining of the whole controversy was the beginning of public dialogue about homosexuality in Mexican media and society. "We definitely moved from the crime section to the front page," says GOHL member Jorge Romero Mendoza, "and that is a great success. There were editorials everywhere talking about us as citizens, not as 'anti-socials' and sinners, as was the case before."

Enlightened elements of Mexican society showed their support. Several renowned non-gay human rights activists participated on a June 20th panel in Mexico City titled "Human Rights of Gays and Lesbians,"

including the actress and author Margo Su and Oscar Chavez of the Mexican Commission of Amnesty International. Even Mexico's Attorney General, Ignacio Morales Lechuga, was quoted as saying that a "culture of respect must be created" that includes lesbians and gay men.

Nevertheless, after the Guadalajara organizers reported several anonymous death threats issued by clandestine paramilitary groups, ILGA announced from its office in Brussels, Belgium that it would cancel the conference. "ILGA most strongly condemns this utterly homophobic attitude on the part of the local and state governments and urges everyone concerned about human rights to protest to the Mexican governments," an ILGA spokesperson said in a statement issued to press around the world.

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racism and, as a consequence, its racist gay and lesbian movements.

Many of the conference-goers from Latin America did not assume the same defensive posture. Consisting primarily of mestizos living in countries with a majority mestizo population, the Latin Americans did not see racism as a major concern. To them sexual oppression and a virulent homophobia were of paramount importance. The US Latino's insistence on viewing gay and lesbian oppression within the complex system of racism, classism, and US imperialism fell on "foreign" ears to a number

of Latin Americans. Many Latin Americans considered the US Latinos to be highly privileged, enjoying a measure of gay freedom and visibility not allowed them in their own countries. To some extent this is true, but it was difficult to convey how severely racism circumscribes that freedom for lesbians and gay men of color in the US.

These contradictions stirred up many thoughts in me. In seeking to conceive a Latin American diaspora of gay men and lesbians, north and south, the politics become increasingly complex. Unlike the African diaspora, Latin Americans do not

share one fundamental race as a basis for union. We are a *mestizaje* of African, European, Native, even Asian ancestry. Nor do we share a common language. We speak Spanish, Portuguese, English, and indigenous tongues. We have, however, shared common oppressors: first Spain and Portugal, now the US. There are Latin Americans who are white and privileged and enjoy the spoils of war against their own Latin American kind. Some are even gay; and, in seeking freedom from that one oppression they suffer, they turn unquestioningly to Western models of liberation. But these models will

Money

Mexico has the longest history of lesbian/gay activism in Latin America. In the midseventies, a gay mens' discussion group emerged at the Autonomous Metropolitan University (UNAM). Its members went on to found the first gay militant group, the Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action (FHAR). Other groups, such as the lesbian Oikabeth and cosexual Lambda emerged soon after. By the late seventies, Mexico City had its first gay pride day march.

Observing several Patlatonalli street actions in November 1990, I became aware that even the cost of photocopying leaflets

was prohibitive to them. As they handed out leaflets decrying sexist and homophobic violence against women, they asked for small donations from the public to cover costs. Many actions that even the poorest lesbian or gay groups in the United States take for granted are out of the picture for most Latin American groups.

Even as Patlatonalli and GOHL struggled to organize for an international conference amid adverse public reaction, ILGA was facing the worst financial crisis in its history (the organization is still on the verge of having to fire its only paid staff person). Whether through incorrect assumptions, miscommunication, or lack of resources, the Guadalajara organizers were on their

ILGA's organizing failed to respond to the move ...

not serve the total Latin American experience. A new model that emerges out of this awesome diversity, spanning all classes and races, must be created.

I hope this will be the mandate of the First Latin American and Caribbean Lesbian and Gay Conference, scheduled for the spring of 1993. Plans were initiated during the Latin American meetings that took place in the early days of the ILGA conference. A provisional conference committee was selected, geographically representing the whole of the Américas. I was pleased to witness the acknowledge-

ment of women's leadership (five out of the six members of the provisional committee are female) and the unquestioned inclusion of Latinos in the US as full participants in the Latin American debate. Most telling was the fact that Spain was not allowed to vote at the Latin American meetings, but Aztlán (the Chicano homeland) was.

Latino discussions occurred within the context of the workshops that ILGA had prepared, so the range of issues specific to the Latin American experience was severely limited. For example, there was no discussion of homosexuali-

ty and lesbianism within indigenous communities, nor was there a serious examination of the effect Catholicism has had on Latino lesbian and gay sexuality. In short, ILGA's organizing failed to fully respond to the conference's move from "first" to "third" world.

Ideally the 1993 Latin American conference will reflect a set of concerns and mode of communication homegrown from Latino experience. We hope to form an autonomous network of Latino lesbians and gays throughout the Américas that would work in defense

own financially, with no appreciable assistance from ILGA.

Since all ILGA conferences must be organized by a cosexual committee, GOHL and Patlatonalli collaborated. GOHL, a primarily male organization, has more access to resources and better contact with groups outside of the country. They publish the ILGA Latin American Bulletin. GOHL had run an office and a lucrative after-hours club called "Boops" until it closed after an explosion destroyed its front door. Patlatonalli, faced with severe sexism in Mexico, has never had the resources of GOHL.

Cha-Cha-Changes

The cancellation of the conference threw lesbian and gay activists throughout the world into a state of anger and confusion. Anger at the Mexican authorities was frequently followed by questions: why did ILGA, and the Guadalajara organizers, wait until the final weeks before the conference to cancel it? Others expressed concern for the safety of the members of Patlatonalli and GOHL, who publicly and bravely came out under a barrage of bias and hatred. The impact was especially devastating for Latin American activists who had worked to overcome severe financial hurdles to be able to attend.

In the eleventh hour, after most people

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... from the "first" to the "third" world.

of our human and civil rights, through direct action, education, and information. That proposition, if realized, could connect the Latin American independence and US people of color movements with the issues of sexuality and homophobia. This integrated analysis and practice is still sorely lacking in most third world liberation struggles.

Leaving the Conference Tables

One thought kept going through my mind throughout my week's stay in Acapulco. Activism isn't

about going to conferences. It's nice, coming here. After the workshops, you take a walk along the beach. At night you go out dancing with the Latin girls at every kind of Acapulcan bar. A week later, you go home with a bunch of phone numbers in your notebook, slips of paper with addresses of people you won't see again ... until next time. But that's not activism, it's entertainment.

What role do Latino queers have in the saving of las Américas? I didn't get an answer to that question at ILGA, but I know it's the right question to

ask. I ask it in 1991 in the face of the "Free Trade Agreement" with México, one year before the 500th anniversary of Indigenous resistance. As gay men and lesbians, we struggle for the right to our love; but we must expand the definition of that struggle to include the sovereign rights of all nations of people, whether that be the Mohawk Nation in Canada or a true Queer Nation, representative of all our cultural communities. We must leave the conference tables and make ourselves active participants in the reclamation of this continent. ♦



Lesbians lead Mexico City's 1991 gay and lesbian pride march. This illustration is by marcher Rebeca García.

had given up hope, the Mexican organizers announced that the conference would be held after all—in Acapulco, instead. Word didn't reach everyone in time, but delegates from around the world who did know scrambled to adjust canceled plans, and help poured in from some unlikely quarters. The Los Angeles-based gay news magazine, *The Advocate*, donated \$7,000 to be used for scholarships for the Latin American delegates. Under pressure from various US officials, including Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) and San Francisco Mayor Art Agnos, Mexican authorities strove to make amends (on the eve of the free trade agreement, the Mexican government is very sensitive to US opinion of its tarnished human rights record). The Mexican federal government and the state government of Guerrero provided free use of conference facilities at the Copacabana Hotel.

Out of the Airport and Into the Streets

So, after false starts and enough melodrama for a juicy *telenovela* (a Mexican TV soap opera), the queer troops descended on Mexico. The

first stop for many of us was the thirteenth lesbian and gay pride march in Mexico City on June 29.

People began to gather at the gateway to Chapultepec Park after 4:00 PM. The wide expanse of concrete was covered with a rainbow of banners representing some of the Mexico City groups. It was a familiar scene: people passing out leaflets for that evening's dance, a youth hawking posters, drag queens posing, dykes kissing. One banner was emblazoned with a chorus line of multicolored male torsos in bikinis.

By the time the one dyke-on-bike took off, about 250 marchers had gathered under dark storm clouds. Due to bureaucratic ineptitude, the police hadn't arrived yet, so the marchers claimed Paseo de la Reforma, Mexico City's main drag. The favorite lesbian chant, with the beat of a popular Mexican folk song, echoed off of the skyscrapers: "No, no, no señor, no me casaré/ así le dije al cura y así le dije al juez./ No, no, no señor, no me casaré/ estoy enamorada ¡Pero de otra mujer!" ("No, no, no sir, I won't marry/ So I told it to the priest, I told it to the judge./ No, no, no sir, I won't marry/ I'm in love, but with

another woman!")

The *jotos* (faggots) chimed in with, "*Condon seguro, te saca del apuro*" ("A condom, for sure, will keep you out of trouble"), as they passed condoms out to the bystanders. As a grand finale to the march, a lesbian and a gay man stripped off their clothes for an impromptu dance homage to sexual liberation.

Lavender Tide in Acapulco

Acapulco is a pleasant venue for a conference. The big banner hanging over the entrance to the Torres Gemelas Hotel welcoming us to Acapulco was better than the police vans that might have greeted us at the Hotel Azteca in Guadalajara. Acapulco, a city that thrives on tourist dollars, is accustomed to tolerating "difference."

When the conference was rescheduled, ILGA predicted that about forty people would show up. There seemed to be almost that many people just from the Mission barrio of San Francisco. One hundred thirty delegates, from about thirty countries, found their way there.

Intercultural tensions surfaced almost immediately.

Voting was to be limited to paid ILGA members. Many people present, especially Latinos, strongly objected. Someone pointed out that having to pay for the right to vote was de facto economic apartheid. Representatives from Latin American groups said that they could barely afford to be present, much less pay the membership fee. After much debate, ILGA leadership decided that all who wished would receive provisional membership and have full voting rights at the conference. The provisional memberships would be subject to confirmation at the next year's conference in Paris. The whole struggle over suffrage was, to say the least, tinged with irony. Because of the last-minute venue change, ILGA officials in Europe had decided that the conference was "unofficial" and that "constitutional matters such as elections or ratification of new members" would have to wait until the next official conference, back on European soil in 1992, the 500th anniversary of the European conquest of the Americas.

This is not to say that the whole conference was a flop. The original plans had set aside the first day, Sunday, for a one-day mini-conference for the Latin American delegates. The Red Latinoamericana (Latin American Network) and its coordinating council of five women and one man grew out of that meeting. They will organize their regions to develop a coalition to plan for

the first Latin American Lesbian and Gay Conference, tentatively planned for 1993. The network may decide to become a member of ILGA, but it will maintain its autonomy.

As with any conference, much of the drama and important work went on outside of the workshops. People made new friends (the balconies of the Torres Gemelas were the site of many a dramatic tryst, the pounding surf the perfect soundtrack for late night lovemaking). Local gay bars hosted nightly parties, causing the conference to begin a little later each morning.

We encountered many people in Acapulco who wished us the best of luck and went out of their way to point out that homosexuals have constitutional rights and should live free from harassment. The local press was basically supportive (with a few questionable headlines, my favorite being "80% of Homosexuals are Catholic").

Connecting the First and Third Worlds

The gathering, and all its resounding ripples, was a giant step forward for the worldwide lesbian and gay movement. The Latin American Network now has the formidable task of organizing a huge and diverse region. Those of us who work in the United States need to maintain better contact with what is happening beyond our cultur-

al, political, and psychological borders. At this point, we need to encourage the emerging lesbian and gay movements in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. We also have to learn how to support other gay movements without dominating them with our expectations and "charity."

As we begin communicating with people from other cultures, other queernesses, we must be aware of the artifice of assumed reality that we have affixed to our definition of being a gay man, lesbian, or bisexual. The strategies that we use to shape our actions may not be all that useful to a gay men's support group in Soweto or a lesbian collective in Lima. What is useful is communication: the knowledge that there is a growing international network that can mobilize picket lines in front of consulates overnight. International networks allow us to share resources, information, and moral support. Over the last ten years, right-wing political forces have linked up as never before. A born-again computer network broadcast congratulations to the ProVida (ProLife) group for their anti-gay march in Guadalajara. As lesbians and gay men, we have historically been able to communicate across most boundaries even as we drag our baggage behind us. Using technology and our various ideologies and histories as tools, we can construct a strong environment in which our movements can thrive. ♦

Taking on the World

by Charlotte Innes

On September 6, 1991, Amnesty International, the world's largest human rights organization, took a momentous step. At its biennial international conference—this year held in Yokohama, Japan—Amnesty delegates agreed, by consensus, to adopt as “prisoners of conscience” gay men and lesbians who are put in jail solely because of their homosexuality, including those who are imprisoned for private sexual acts between consenting adults. The decision came after seventeen years of debate within Amnesty and after a year of intense lobbying by gay and lesbian groups around the world. Small wonder that a Queer Planet victory poster proclaimed, “They said yes! We said party!”

Some have questioned whether Amnesty will implement the decision.

Past homophobia by Amnesty's central London office (which has all-important control over the research and assignment of cases) makes doubt a valid response. But

most Amnesty

watchers see the Japan

decision as a victory, with great potential to improve the human rights climate for gays and lesbians worldwide. As the world's most universally accepted human rights organization, Amnesty has over 700,000 members in more than 150 countries. Already, struggling gay and lesbian groups and even isolated individuals have begun to gain strength and confidence from Amnesty's stand on gay rights, and from the

activism that helped to bring it about. They see this decision as a beginning—the first tentative step of an international gay and lesbian human rights movement that may have a powerful effect on global and local institutions. As one 22-year-old US activist said: “If there's one thing this has taught me, it's never close your mouth.” Gays and lesbians all over the world are talking to each other and they probably won't stop.

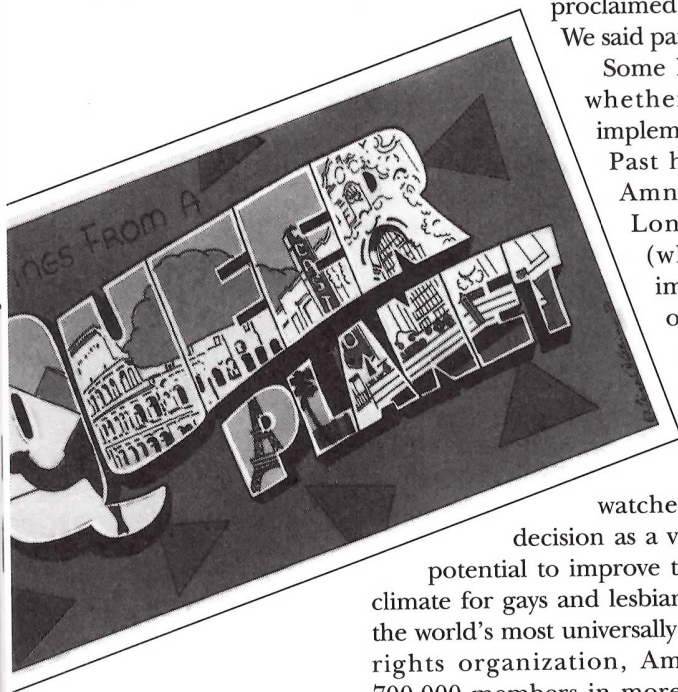
Activism Influenced Amnesty

Like most movements, this new global coalition has grown haphazardly: part by chance, part by intention, with isolated spurts of activism. Few who started work to change Amnesty International planned an international network. Most simply saw Amnesty as a workable project.


“Amnesty is a place where it is very logical for us to expect help, perhaps unrealistically, because we do not expect good liberals to be homophobic,” says Masha Gessen, an editor for *The Advocate*, a Los Angeles-based gay news magazine. A longtime Amnesty observer, Gessen also helped to organize an international human rights delegation to the Soviet Union (see story this issue).

Internal Amnesty debate about gay and lesbian prisoners began formally in 1974 with a question from Amnesty's Danish section. But external protest about Amnesty's reluctance to change their policies on gay and lesbian prisoners has been around for much longer—almost as long as Amnesty, which was founded in 1961.

The king of Amnesty lobbyists is the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) Amnesty Project, based in Sweden. For thirteen years, ILGA sent out survey letters to Amnesty sections, before each biennial



where you can be arrested for saying something nice about gay people: 1. Austria, 2. England



**AMNESTY?
ONLY IF
YOU'RE
HETERO**

A protest at Amnesty International's San Francisco office, on the occasion of Amnesty's 30th anniversary in May.

conference, asking for their position on the issue and thus keeping it alive. As the Japan conference neared, ILGA's prodding grew more fierce. Typical was an ILGA ad campaign in newspapers around the world showing a young man in chains, behind bars. "Does Anybody Care?" the ad inquired. "Somewhere right now a lesbian or gay has just started another day in prison..." The ad called on Amnesty and other human rights organizations to work on behalf of these prisoners.

Protest really began to heat up when Amnesty first came out in favor of helping gay and lesbian prisoners. In 1979, Amnesty declared that the persecution of homosexuals is a violation of their human rights. Since then, Amnesty policy has been to help gays and lesbians imprisoned for their activism, but *not* those arrested solely for being gay, or for having homosexual sex.

This policy helped activists, but overlooked those arrested, abused and sometimes even killed for being in a gay bar or for looking gay (the most common reason for police harassment). It also excluded hundreds of gay men arrested under laws banning gay sex—in Australia and the Soviet Union, for example, where cases have been tracked by ILGA and others.

But resistance to change was strong. As recently as last October, even sympathetic

Amnesty members were ready to support what came to be called "the compromise proposal." Amnesty might be able to help people arrested for looking gay, some argued, but it would be too controversial to help those arrested for engaging in the act of homosexual sex.

"That would have been a very dangerous distinction for them to endorse," says Julie Dorf, the co-founder of the year-old International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission. "This 'compromise' would have effectively eliminated the right to privacy for gays and lesbians from the human rights agenda. It would have been morally indefensible."

What's Next?

Having gained a taste for international organizing, those activists who played a role in Amnesty's change of policy say they can't look back. Not only are they planning continued work with Amnesty to ensure that the Japan decision is implemented, but they also see further possibilities for change by working with the United Nations and other international organizations.

In Europe, ILGA plans to consolidate its Amnesty and prisoners projects and work more closely with Amnesty to amass information on cases of imprisoned gays and lesbians.

International Activist Groups

compiled by Kate Krauss

When contacting queer groups (particularly those outside of the US), use discretion in marking packages, envelopes, or facsimiles. Not all groups operate under safe conditions.

International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA)

The largest, best organized international gay and lesbian organization.

Information Secretariat:

Misha Ramakers
c/o Antenne Rose & FWH
81, rue Marche-au-charbon
B-1000 Bruxelles 1
Belgium
Tel and Fax:
+32-2-502-24-71

Women's Secretariat:

c/o Groep 7152/Schadee
Vivienstraat 49
NL-2582 RS Den Haag
The Netherlands
Tel +31-70-3512950

Lesbian and Gay Prisoners Project:

c/o Homosexuella
Socialister
Box 17128
S-104 62 Stockholm,
Sweden
Tel +46-8-32-0309

International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission

IGLHRC
540 Castro Street
San Francisco, CA 94114
tel 415-255-8680
fax 415-255-8662

International Lesbian Information Service

ILIS
c/o COC, Rozenstraat 8
1016 NX Amsterdam
The Netherlands
tel +31 (20) 23 45 96
fax +31 (20) 26 77 95
e-mail: geo2: erica, goed-heer

Queer Planet

c/o Queer Nation
Box 34, 3543 18th Street
San Francisco, CA 94110
tel 415-985-7141

Asian Lesbian Network

c/o Anjaree
P.O. Box 322
Rajdamnern
Bangkok 10200
Thailand

Red Latin America Network

La Red Latinoamerican
Taskforce
c/o. IGLHRC, see listing

International Lesbian and Gay People of Colour Conference

c/o Black Lesbian and Gay
Center (BLGC)
BM Box 4390
London WC1 3XX
England

International Lesbian and Gay Youth Organization

c/o LHJO
Postbus 542, 1000 AM
Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Kimeta Society

Funds international gay and lesbian projects up to \$4,000 (Canadian).

291 Ontario Street #5
Toronto, Ontario
M5A 2V8 CANADA

Books & Resources

Out In The World: International Lesbian Organizing

by Shelley Anderson,
Firebrand Books, Ithaca,
NY, 1991. An extremely
useful compendium of les-
bian groups around the
world. (\$4.95, 55 pages.)

The 2nd ILGA Pink Book

Utrecht, 1988. Surveys gay
life and politics around the
globe, country by country.
(\$13.95, 272 pages).

Spartacus 91/92: Guide for Gay Men

20th edition, 1991. An inter-
national travel guide for
men which includes infor-
mation on gay life and
organizations in the US and
a number of countries
worldwide. (1,111 pages,
\$27.95).

Odysseus 91

A travel guide for gay men
and lesbians. Similar to the
Spartacus guides above,
but includes information for
both men and women.
(About 520 pages, \$21.00).

In the US, thanks to lobby-
ing by civil rights groups, an
Amnesty delegation visiting
Los Angeles to examine
police abuses will weigh the
harassment of gays and les-
bians in its report. The dele-
gates were from Canada and
England.

In the Soviet Union, where
many gay men have been
imprisoned for their homo-
sexuality, work by IGLHRC
paved the way for Amnesty to
approach gay rights organiza-
tions there almost as soon as
the decision was passed in
Japan.

One coalition that grew
out of the Amnesty struggle
was the Gay and Lesbian Task
Force to Change Amnesty,
which pulled together lobby-
ing efforts from around the
world. Even though some
Amnesty sections resented
what they saw as outside
influence, the pressure was
instrumental in changing the
policy.

The task force has request-
ed an Amnesty-sponsored
international conference to
present the new policy and its
ramifications to gay and les-
bian organizers, to show how
the new policy will be imple-
mented. The group has also
called on Amnesty to perform
a major study on the abuse of
gays and lesbians, and to add
the words "sexual orientation"
to its written charter. Amnesty's
statutes charge the group to
help prisoners arrested because
of their color, sex, political be-
liefs, religion and ethnic origin,
but not sexual orientation.

The task force has withdrawn a boycott threat against the organization, but will continue to monitor the group to ensure that the decision is implemented. Amnesty has also accepted GLAAD's offer to do sensitivity trainings on gay and lesbian issues for Amnesty volunteers.

Other international human rights projects have also taken off. The Washington-based Gay and Lesbian Watch successfully lobbied the US State Department to include abuses of gays and lesbians in its annual report on human rights violations around the globe.

One of the most important steps to lessen gay and lesbian invisibility on the international front was taken by an ILGA chapter in New York, which gained official status with the Department of Public Information (DPI) at the United Nations. This is the first time a gay and lesbian group has received official recognition by the UN, and it paves the way for further ILGA participation in US agencies. Though ILGA failed to achieve the more important status of non-governmental organization earlier this year (thanks in part to the interviewing committee's homophobia), ILGA is still pursuing that position. Status with the public information department allows the group to appoint two permanent representatives to attend weekly DPI briefings where material about all UN activi-

ties is distributed. The group will be an official source of information on gay and lesbian issues to UN delegations, and it will use knowledge gained through the department to beef up its next application for non-governmental status. ILGA is also exploring recognition by the World Court and the World Health Organization.

"We have our foot in the

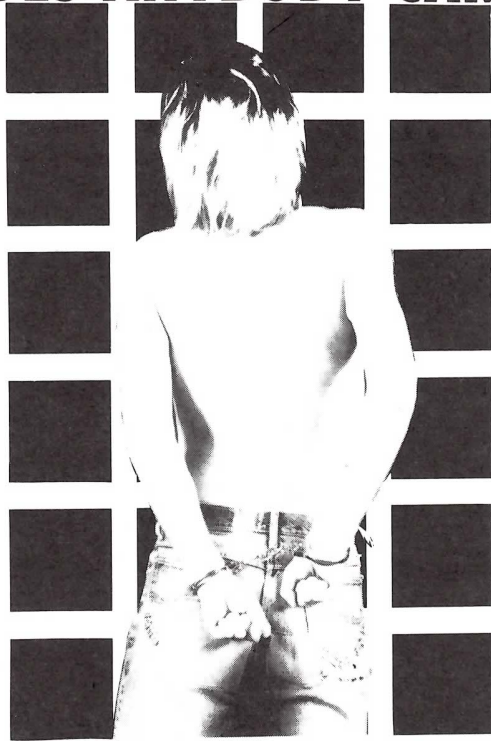
door now; the United Nations has recognized we can be useful to them," said Michael Weltmann, Co-Chair of the New York Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center ILGA Committee.

"Now it is up to all of us to use that information and access to the decision-makers, to put lesbian and gay human rights to the forefront of United Nations issues." ♦

An ad from ILGA's global campaign to push Amnesty International to include jailed lesbians and gays as prisoners of conscience.

Somewhere right now, a lesbian or a gay has just started another day in prison. Behind Soviet barbed wire . . . or Australian steel bars . . . or Chinese bamboo . . . or . . . Profession? Dancer, poet or maybe farmworker . . . The crime? Simply loving another consenting adult of the same sex.

DOES ANYBODY CARE?



In September, national sections of Amnesty International will once again vote on whether Amnesty should finally begin adopting prisoners jailed because of their homosexuality. Help us convince Amnesty and other human rights organizations to work on behalf of these prisoners.

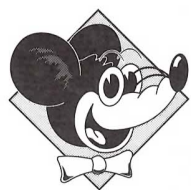
INTERNATIONAL LESBIAN AND GAY ASSOCIATION "AMNESTY PROJECT"
c/o **Tupilak** (Nordic cultural workers)/**Reporter** (Nordic monthly)
Box 170, 101 22 Stockholm, Sweden
postgiro 498 37 677 (ILGA/Al)

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OUT/LOOK winter 1992

DPN

DISEASED PARIAH NEWS AS BROUGHT TO YOU BY OUT/LOOK



"Oncomouse"

Editor's Introduction: Diseased Pariah News is a small, smartly designed "zine" produced by and for people with HIV disease. It calls itself "unapologetic," and offers those living with AIDS "an atmosphere free of teddy bears, magic rocks, and seronegative guilt." Its appeal, however, extends beyond those who have had an HIV-positive diagnosis.

In DPN, founders Tom Shearer and Beowulf Thorne established an honest forum for dealing with illness, mortality, pain, death, and how those issues affect the relationships between the people. That's not to say that the 'zine's focus on AIDS, or its grounding in San Francisco's gay male community are incidental: it has been written, designed, and supported by gay men; the cartooned adventures of Captain Condom chronicle the melodramas of safer gay male sex; and it is informed by a camp sensibility. That it strikes universal themes says a lot about its quality, as well as how much those outside of the gay community have to learn from it. Here, OUT/LOOK excerpts some of DPN's material.

Mister Manners' Courteous Responses to Stupid Questions and Comments

After being diagnosed with AIDS, I discovered that I kept hearing the same things over and over. Below are the five most common questions and comments with appropriate responses. Upon being diagnosed, I suggest you photocopy and distribute these to well-meaning family and friends. It will save everyone so much time.

1. You're so brave, I don't know how you do it.

I don't. Bravery is when you disrupt your everyday schedule to save an infant from a burning building or a senior citizen from a mugger. Having AIDS is not brave . . . it's IRRITATING!

2. Are you trying the latest treatment?

Yes, but give me a moment to catch up, it takes time to infuse myself with Chinese cucumber juice, boil my blood and hug a teddy bear in front of the mirror while telling my reflection, "I love you, I love you."

3. I feel guilty because I'm HIV negative.

Alright, then hand over your savings passbook, negotiable bonds and any Certificates of Deposit that are due to mature SOON right over to me. Giving is a divine act which should ease your conscience.

4. Look at this as a learning experience.

I do. I've learned that insurance companies consider a cough in 1987 a pre-existing condition that will cancel my policies, Social Services requires my death certificate as evidence of AIDS before dispensing benefits and that doctors always want more blood.

5. We're all dying, I could get hit by a car at any moment.

Good! I hope you do.

(Courtesy of K. Reeves)

DPN can be yours! Send \$7.00 to **DPN**, P.O. Box 31431, San Francisco, California 94131. Hurry! Before the price goes up!

THE SERENE OPINION

From the bowels of the mighty Kaiser-Permanente flagship, your slightly under-the-weather Serene Editor, increasing his formal participation in the HIV phenomenon by spending a week Inside, greets you, peering one-eyed and drugged through a fog of flower perfume, dictating my slurred but probably still quite immortal verbiage to the infamous Santa Tom Rielly, a man of incredible generosity and energy but barely adequate typing skills.

Most parts of me that were broken are now fixed. Unfortunately, in my effortless morphine-befuddled passage through the much-feared ordeal of bronchoscopy, a great deal of special bronchoscopic nose goo ran into my eye. It is, in case you didn't already know, impossible to cry out with a tube down your larynx. So, as I lay there making soundless help me, help me faces, attempting to draw attention to my plight, the artificial snot did a bad thing to my eyeball. Or perhaps it was the hours of attempting to find the thing that I sure thought was in my eye. Anyway. It's broke.

So, I find myself once again drugged and in pain and much more than half blind. Luckily, I come from a long and dirty line of poor white trash sharecroppers who evolved to live on dirt and rocks if necessary. Despite a tendency to die of heart attacks at age forty, and a dismaying predilection for particularly unattractive forms of cancer, we are rather hard to kill, being as we are the more

or less human equivalent of the hearty and disgusting cockroach.

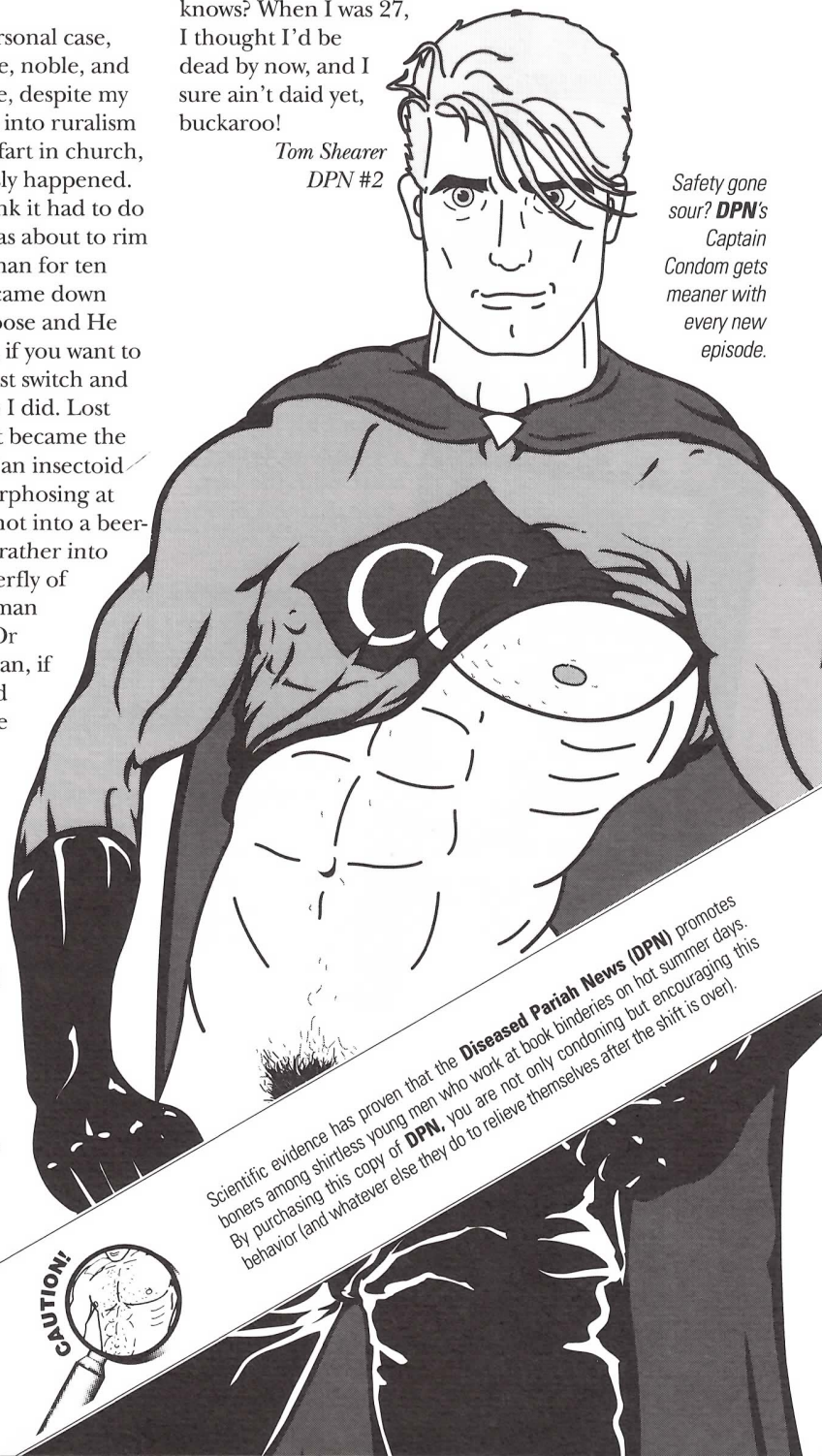
In my own personal case, since I'm so brave, noble, and un-cockroach-like, despite my occasional lapses into ruralism and tendency to fart in church, *something* obviously happened. What? Well, I think it had to do with the time I was about to rim this one-legged man for ten bucks and Jesus came down and gave me a goose and He said, "Silly goose, if you want to grow up classy, just switch and lick My assie!", so I did. Lost the ten bucks but became the delicate result of an insectoid miracle, metamorphosing at the final instant not into a beer-swilling hog, but rather into the glorious butterfly of the modern gay man that I am today. Or modern queer man, if you prefer. Naked dicks may give me AIDS but names will never hurt me....

Meanwhile, back at the hospital: AIDS certainly has its teeth in me, but I feel damn good and you can count on me for some while yet. I don't really expect things to get gruesome for at least a year, at the earliest.... I realized today that I *am* going

to live to be 33, and 34 is not out of the question. 35? Who knows? When I was 27, I thought I'd be dead by now, and I sure ain't daid yet, buckaroo!

Tom Shearer
DPN #2

Safety gone
sour? **DPN's**
Captain
Condom gets
meaner with
every new
episode.



Scientific evidence has proven that the **Diseased Pariah News (DPN)** promotes boners among shirtless young men who work at book binderies on hot summer days. By purchasing this copy of **DPN**, you are not only condoning but encouraging this behavior (and whatever else they do to relieve themselves after the shift is over).



"Darn!"

One of our editors is dead!

Can DPN withstand the test of fire?"

When I reached Tommy's ward, I looked into his room and saw the usual things: his hospital roommate watching TV, Tommy's friends, Tom R., Tom E., Glenn, Joel; his brother, Squeak; and a stranger, standing around his bed. But a couple of things were odd: the fact that the blinds were drawn and everyone was so quiet. The answer was obvious to me: Tommy was asleep, and everyone was taking care not to disturb him, since he'd been having trouble resting lately. I tiptoed around the dividing curtain and was horrified. "Tom," I said to myself, "Your color looks terrible! How did you get so jaundiced overnight?" I

still hadn't caught on, but Tom R. mercifully prevented

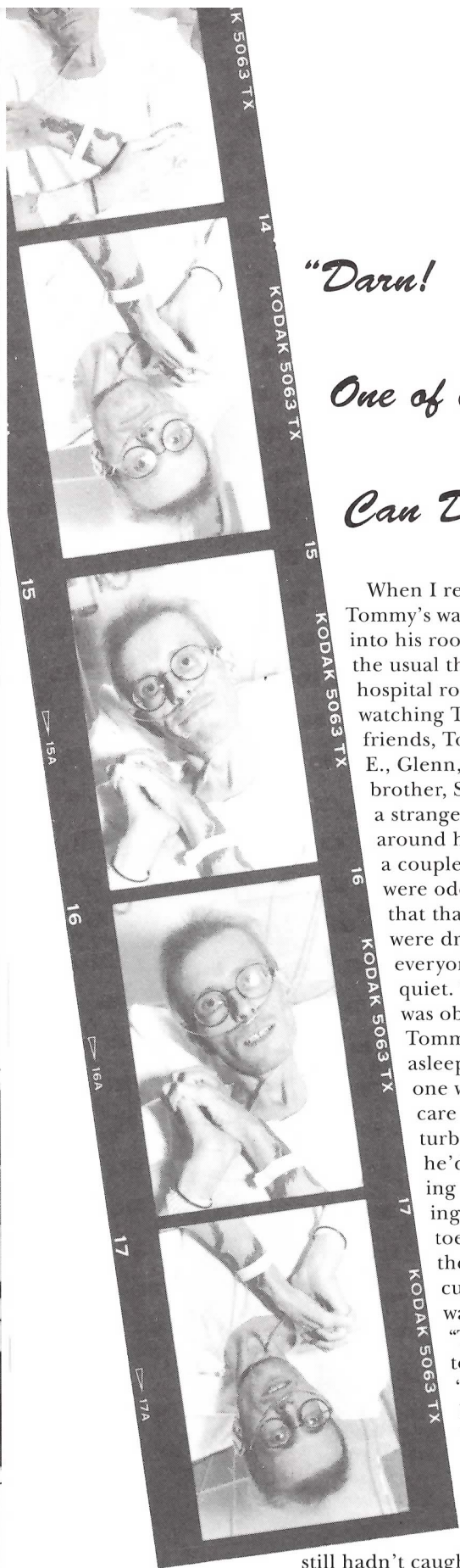
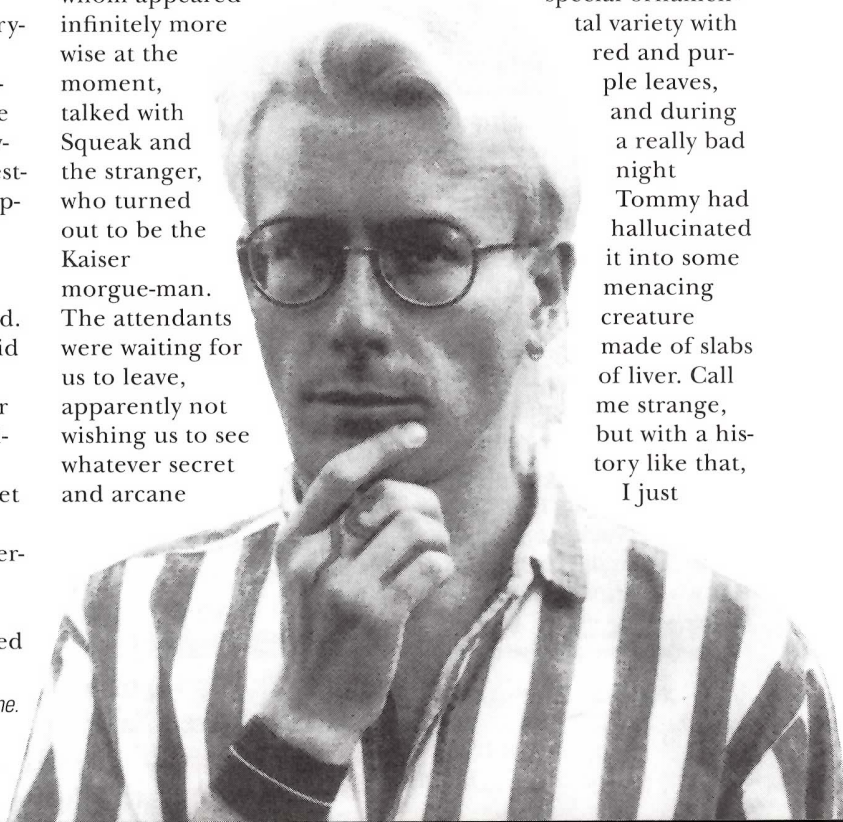
me from committing a horrible *faux pas* in front of the family by apologizing for not calling me, and telling me that Tom had just croaked. (He would have wanted me to use that word, honest!)

Well what do you say? I'm glad, because I wasn't really looking forward to home care, anyway? Gee, it's nice that Denise (Tommy's sister-in-law) won't have to change Tom's diapers? Silence seemed to be the most eloquent thing. I stood around feeling awkward while Tom R. and Tom E., both of whom appeared infinitely more wise at the moment, talked with Squeak and the stranger, who turned out to be the Kaiser morgue-man. The attendants were waiting for us to leave, apparently not wishing us to see whatever secret and arcane

things they do with the stiff before they wheel it into the basement. And the bed, I wondered, what do they do about that? Change the sheets, obviously, but is there some sort of ritual decontamination? Or do they just spray the vinyl surface of the inflata-mattress with Windex and put on a new set of linens for the next patient?

Everybody had already gathered Tommy's things, except for the lonely looking oxalis plant that Tom E. had given Tommy earlier in the hospital stay. It was a special ornamental variety with red and purple leaves, and during a really bad night Tommy had hallucinated it into some menacing creature made of slabs of liver. Call me strange, but with a history like that, I just

These photos are by Marc Geller . . . whereas I took this one.

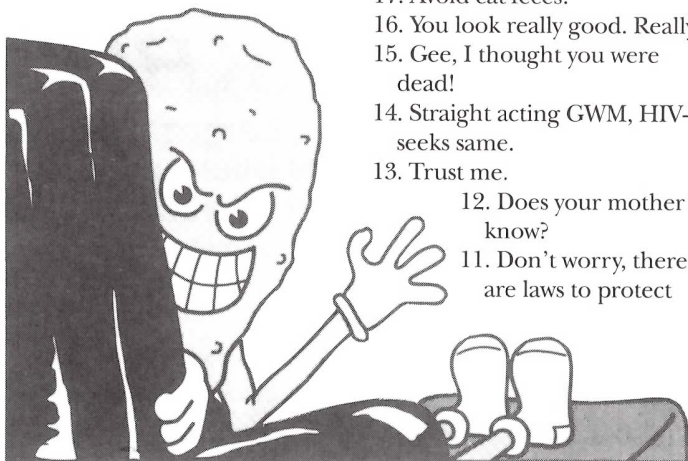


couldn't bear to see it thrown away. It's doing quite well in the bathroom now . . .

After lunch we went to the Neptune Society, the bargain basement cremation place, or as Tom R. calls it, "Akbar and Jeff's Cremation Hut, where the elite meet to be heated to a crispy treat!" That's right, for only \$795, they bag 'em, burn 'em, and urn 'em. The perfect post-mortem plans for the ecologically responsible gay man, but membership has its privileges, so sign up while you're still ticking!

What was the first thing we saw when we walked into the lobby? A huge wall unit, filled floor to ceiling with lovely optional upgrade urns. That did it, the stresses of the day and the previous night finally broke through and we lost our composure. No, we didn't start crying; the proprietors probably wouldn't have minded that. We burst out laughing at the tackiness of it all, much to the chagrin of the receptionist. "Please," she said, "Show a little respect for the other patrons!"

Beowulf Thorne
DPN #3



DPN's leering film and video critic, Porn Potato.

Counterpoint:

Why some people aren't laughing

When I received my first copy of the Diseased Pariah News (#1), I thought it was one of the most vile, unwholesome, disgusting, evil things that I had ever seen. I wanted their offices burnt to the ground, their press equipment melted and sold as scrap, and the editors auctioned off into white slavery to forever peddle their papayas in some Bangkok opium den.

When issue #2 came around, I wasn't quite as adamant as before, but still took offense to DPN's flippant attitude. After all, this was me they were making fun of, and I was still getting used to the idea of having the gay plague.

By issue #3, I had enrolled in a support group and started taking an interest in AIDS politics. One of the things that I've learned is that we all have to come up with our own way of dealing with HIV, and DPN's approach was one of them. DPN may not be my own personal style, but if it works for others, that's all that matters.

— A letter to DPN from "Wyoming Willie"

18 PHRASES THAT TURN OUR STOMACHS WORSE THAN AZT

18. If you have got the time, I've got the cock (Oops! Wrong list.)
17. Avoid cat feces!
16. You look really good. Really.
15. Gee, I thought you were dead!
14. Straight acting GWM, HIV-, seeks same.
13. Trust me.
12. Does your mother know?
11. Don't worry, there are laws to protect you from that kind of discrimination.
10. You're angry.
9. A promising new protocol!
8. You need to look for the deeper meaning in all of this.
7. Bend over. Lie down. Open your mouth. (Oh, other contexts, other lives!)
6. That arm just doesn't seem to want to give me a vein today.
5. Otherwise you're fine.
4. I know who gave this to me.
3. Are you sure you're all right?
2. Let's not play the numbers game.
1. It's not the numbers; it's how you feel.

BLUE calendar



©Nina Glaser

San Francisco

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Blue Calendar is 192 pages and small enough (4.25"x5.5") to fit in a coat or pants pocket.

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and others...

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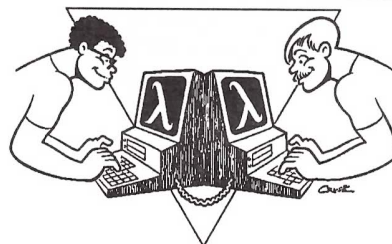
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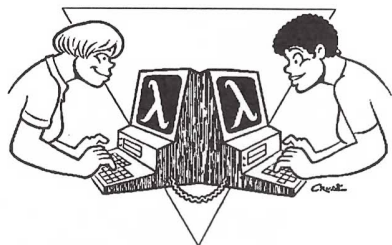
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COMPOSITION

Reading, Writing, and *Rubyfruit Jungle*

High School Students Respond to
Gay and Lesbian Literature

“Have you ever read *Rubyfruit Jungle*?” a senior colleague asked me my first year teaching. A year out of college, but not yet out as a lesbian, even to myself, I was not eager to have my athletic walk, my feminist view of literature, my short hair, or my reluctance to wear skirts seen as signs of lesbianism. I studied his face for the motives behind the question.

“Uh, yeah, I read it a while ago. Why?” I stuttered cautiously.

by Nancy Boutilier

"Do you think twelfth graders could handle it?" he asked.

I laughed, trying to appear only slightly interested in his question, "I dunno, but let me know how it goes if you do teach it."

He never did teach the book, and it took me five more years at the East Coast boarding school where I was teaching to dare to introduce Rita Mae Brown's classic to my twelfth graders. By that time, I had self-identified as a lesbian, and although my lesbianism was not what I'd call common knowledge on campus, I was gradually becoming more actively "out." I was also growing painfully aware that in order for a campus to be safe for its gay, lesbian, and bisexual students, all students—gay and straight—need to know that gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, as well as straights, have written books, voted on laws, fought in wars, marched for civil rights, and transformed society in a variety of ways. If lesbians and gay men remain invisible in textbooks, and our issues remain censored from the curriculum, the self-esteem of gay and lesbian students will suffer, and the ignorant intolerance of their peers will continue.

So I took up one of my favorite bumper sticker mottos: Let change begin with me.

I certainly do not assume that all teachers are in such a happy predicament.

I taught at a New

England boarding school—a prep school that prides itself on diversity and embraces the idea of multi-culturalism, if not quite the practice; I had more control over the curriculum than most public school teachers.

Aside from *The Catcher in the Rye* (which alludes peripherally to homosexuality), Larry Kramer's play *The Normal Heart* was the first work I taught that centered on gay life. I found room in the ninth-grade drama curriculum to introduce students to *The Normal Heart* between *Romeo and Juliet* and Athol Fugard's *Master Harold and the Boys*. Shakespeare's play set the theme of two lovers trying to live in a world that condemns their relationship. It also introduced discussion about tragedy that gave students a way to respond to Kramer's play. Fugard's play illuminates the relationship between the personal and the political in ways that shed light on Kramer's intentions.

I recount this thematic and structural analysis of the plays to point out how fully prepared I was to defend my book selection based on literary elements and dramatic theory. Paranoid? Perhaps, but I was also pushing myself to take action against my fears and to cross the boundaries that seemed to be set in unspoken stone. If anyone did want to voice objections, I readied myself with answers framed in language designed to set people at ease rather than to be confrontational.

In a senior elective course called "Images of Women," I set Rita Mae Brown's *Rubyfruit Jungle* and Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* alongside the stories of D.H. Lawrence, Ernest Hemingway, and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. The emphasis these texts place on sexual awakening as a rite of passage and independence as the result of coming-of-age makes them rich with relevance for high school seniors looking ahead to graduation. Once again I prepared myself with a dissertation-length defense of each book's place on the reading list, knowing that Rita Mae Brown would more likely be called into question than Ernest Hemingway.

Encouraging students to rethink issues, to

"Danny has taught me many things, from how to make my hair stick to how to judge people by their substance and character."

question their own knowledge, is one of education's aims. I was confident from the start that the gay and lesbian texts that I introduced to the classroom would spark new thinking for most students. However, I also worried that when it came time to discuss the books in class, everyone would fall into a self-conscious silence, waiting for "someone else" to speak.

I opened our first discussion on the subject in that course by asking "Where do you get your information and image of lesbians?" No answer. "How about gay men? How do you know what they are like?" After a long silence, one boy suggested he had no image of gay men or lesbians. I asked "How do little kids know who to call sissy, fag, or dyke on the playground?" That prompted someone's recollection of rumors about a grade school gym teacher. With that, a lively discussion about images and stereotypes was well under way as I resisted my urge to break out in song with an impassioned rendition of Meg Christian's "Ode to a Gym Teacher."

The Students Respond

Across the board, the writing generated by the gay and lesbian literature was superb. It had a refreshing degree of risk taking, matched by a readiness to rethink every thought if someone was prepared to offer an alternate perspective.

"I keep asking myself to what extent Rita Mae Brown is trying to encourage women to experiment with members of the same sex," began one senior boy's first journal entry about *Rubyfruit Jungle*. A week later, he wrote: "One thing this novel seeks to accomplish is dispelling the myths that go with lesbianism. Through [the characters of] Carolyn and Faye the book shows that lesbians can, in fact, be very feminine..."

"I was hurt afterward to think that my first thought was 'yuck, how gross!'"

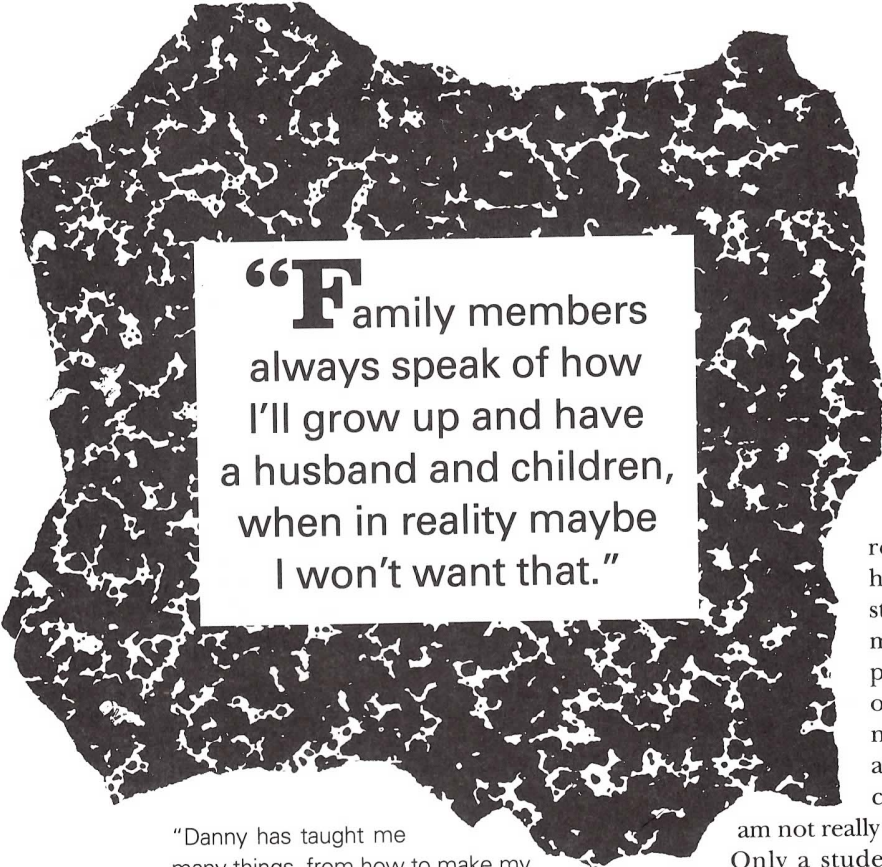
On his final paper, this student compared Molly Bolt with Jane Eyre:

While Jane reveals that a woman can make it on her own without a man, she has killed Bertha in the process and finds her happy ending with her return to Rochester. *Rubyfruit Jungle* should now serve as *The Manuscript*, if you will, for how women should treat one another in this new age. Molly, like Jane, follows her own path and her own dreams. She eventually perseveres and makes a movie of her mother.... Molly is independent, she makes it on her own, but she positively influences all the people in her life. She is constantly enlightening those she comes in contact with. She is tough, but also compassionate and loving at the same time. *Rubyfruit Jungle* should be the novel of today's women's movement.

The Normal Heart brought one student to discover and write:

I didn't realize before reading this book that there are many relationships in which there is a real bond of love between two men.... I had no idea that there were gay men who loved other men as much as two heterosexuals do.

Often students found writing to be an outlet to process information about relatives or friends of their parents. Yes, one student even wrote a lengthy profile of his gay hairdresser, concluding:



“Family members
always speak of how
I’ll grow up and have
a husband and children,
when in reality maybe
I won’t want that.”

“Danny has taught me many things, from how to make my hair stick to how to judge people by their substance and character ... He is just one person in this huge home we call earth, but he has made a difference in my life.”

In one class of thirteen, two students indicated that they knew of a gay relative, and three others wrote about knowing someone with AIDS. The relevance of the literature to student lives is reflected not only by the percentage who acknowledge their own connection with it, but also by the power of those connections to reshape their lives.

One student wrote about learning that her uncle had tested HIV positive. She concluded: “I don’t know much about my uncle’s condition, but reading *The Normal Heart* helped me to understand some of the things he’s going through... A little more knowledge now, will save a lot of pain later...” (and her paper ends as printed here, with an ellipses marking the absence of closure).

Other students found themselves willing to reexamine their personal responses to the images of gay lifestyles offered by the literature:

I was never taught that being gay or lesbian was wrong, only that being straight was right. I was rather disappointed in my reactions today when in class shown a picture of two men kissing. I was hurt afterward to think that my first thought was “yuck, how gross!”

She admitted “before reading *The Normal Heart* I had never thought about the struggle that one who is gay must go through to live a simple and peaceful life.” The optimistic final note of this ninth-grader was “I hope that after a lot more thinking I do come to the conclusion that I

am not really prejudiced against anyone.” Only a student struggling to reconcile inner conflict and willing to be honest could write as this student did:

I’ve always respected other people’s right to be gay, they should be able to get married by the church and by the state and do whatever they want without there being a scandal. I think that it’s “normal” for them to be gay, even though I’m scared of ever “turning” homosexual. I shouldn’t be scared if I really believed what I just wrote, but it’s just those other people that really don’t understand scare me, they say such bad things about people that are gay. They talk about how it’s so wrong or that the devil is in them. Maybe if I really did believe, I wouldn’t be scared by that, but I am.

Some realizations focus on the “other” and some center around the self. One student writes: “I realized that gay men and lesbians aren’t just existing in those ‘other’ states and those ‘bad’ parts of cities.” Another writes of the lesbian protagonist in *Rubyfruit Jungle*: “Molly really knows who she is as a person, not as a label, and likes that person, whereas I haven’t even begun to be able to

recognize who I am."

Many students are fascinated by their own socialization process. One wrote:

Rubyfruit Jungle shakes the ideas of homosexuality that have been implanted in my mind for years. These images come from everything and anything around me. They come from the second look I give to both men and women holding hands with individuals of the same sex. The images come from having family members always speak of how I'll grow up and have a husband and children, when in reality maybe I won't want that.

Rubyfruit Jungle allows me to speak about a topic banned from conversation.

Salvaging homosexuality from banishment, this particular student concluded her journal with a poem of her own that reshaped Rita Mae Brown's image of the jungle:

Covering it, hiding it, sharing it
with words of friendship
when down deep and itching, impatient
sensation to touch
bare skin to bare skin
begins to awaken: the hunt
to venture in jungles that are
off limits.

Such outbursts or poetry in a journal are not common fare. Inspired writing usually reflects the degree to which a student engages with the literature. Writing that strikes a student's heart is the best catalyst for an eruption of the creative in that same student.

One ninth grader wrote:

I hated it! I hated the play. I hated the discussion. I have semi-patiently sat through over a week's discussions on the topics of homosexuals, AIDS, transvestites, etc. I have not once made a scene in class, nor did I walk out ... I simply did not like the play. I found it very unenjoyable to read about the intimate

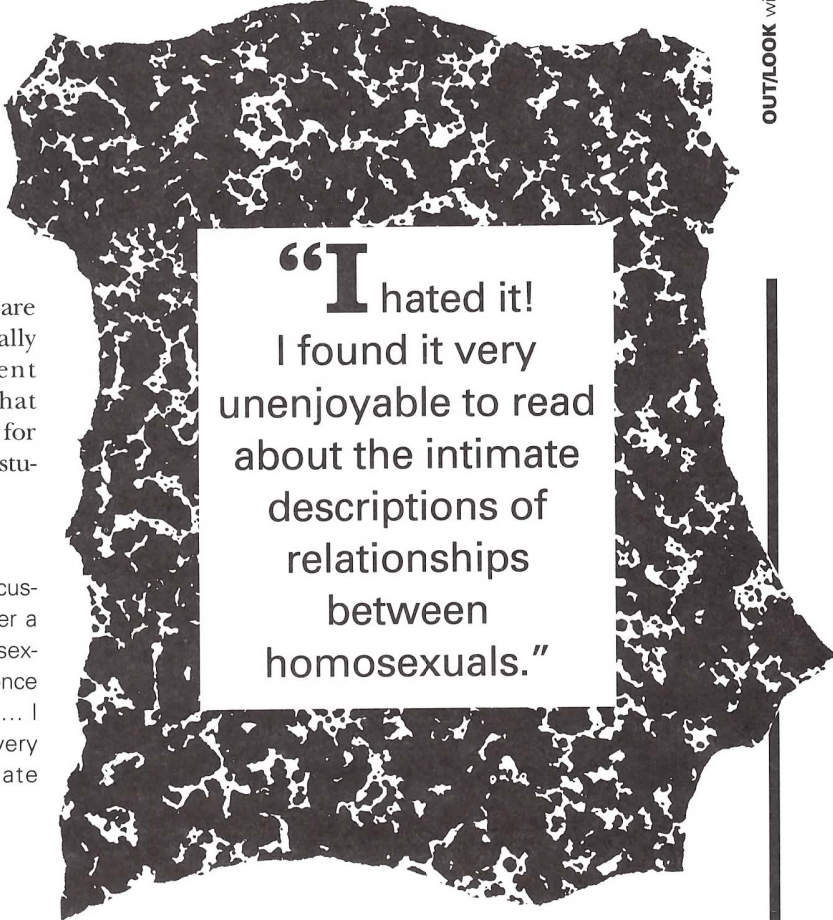
descriptions of relationships between homosexuals. Some would say because I admit that I'm homophobic, but that raises another issue. I may be homophobic, but by that I mean I'm not comfortable reading, seeing, or hearing about homosexual behavior. I do not have a hate for all homosexuals.

Such a passionate negative response to a text is as much a reason for keeping that book on the reading list as a passionate positive response. Often, the element of self-discovery prompted by a literary work is a compelling reason to teach it. Gay and lesbian literature seems to encourage both passion and self-discovery in student response.

Before reading *Rubyfruit Jungle*, I always considered myself a liberal in the "true" sense. What that is, I had no clue prior to this semester. I have never been a racist and certainly had nothing against "progressive" women, but I just knew, when it all came

75

OUT/LOOK winter 1992



"I hated it!
I found it very
unenjoyable to read
about the intimate
descriptions of
relationships
between
homosexuals."

down to it, the men called the shots. I guess this course has changed that thinking in a lot of ways. Reading *Rubyfruit Jungle* made me think about my sister who is three years older than I am. She has always been a better student, athlete and whatever else than I have. She is also very attractive and great around people. The reason why Molly Bolt evoked so many memories of my sister is that I could only imagine my surprise if my sister happened to announce that she was a lesbian. I guess I'd respond much like how many people took to Molly after she opened up and showed people the great things in her closet.

I guess you really had to know me in the earlier stages in my life because for me to address Molly's homosexuality as being "a great thing" is truly incredible. Before, when I was asked about lesbians, I simply would say that they made me sick. But Molly evoked these romantic images about it. When I finished section two, she was just beginning to reach me. I really can't remember where section two left off. Anyway, there was something so natural about these women to women relationships.

When students see that their own teachers are ready to connect literature with life they are more willing to include the study of self in their study of literature (and self is so often at the heart of a teenager's life). When students discover that literature can serve as a window for viewing life, the image they see is often a double image of the world beyond the glass and the self reflected back.

A Letter to the Editor

A year after I left the school on a leave of absence, a colleague sent me an issue of the school's student paper which recounted an incident of homophobic harassment. I wrote a letter to the editor that announced the reg-

istration of my Domestic Partnership with another woman. I said in the letter which was published the following week, that I wanted to stand with those students who had been harassed, pointing out that "any attack on one of us in the gay and lesbian community is an attack on us all." Near the end of the letter, I wrote:

To my English student who asked last spring "Is there such thing as a lady homosexual?", the answer is still "Yes," but I have often regretted that I missed the opportunity to tell the class the whole truth. I know now that half-truths are dishonest. The closet is a half-truth, if not an outright lie, and it is the liar that suffers most for his or her lies, but those lied to are cheated as well. Friendship insists on honesty, and education ought to encourage honesty above all else.

I received a number of letters in the weeks following my letter to the paper, many from students who had been in that particular class. Some students admitted to their own speculations, their denial of rumors heard about me, and all who took the time to write expressed support and admiration for my decision to come out. Many reflected on their own "readiness" to hear the truth. The following letter was my favorite:

In your letter you spoke about how you wished you had told us the truth. I'm ashamed to say this, but I wasn't ready to hear that fall term of my freshman year. I probably would have rejected you like so many others have, simply out of ignorance. I can't speak for the whole class when I say this, but I think that by spring term you could definitely have told us, and that most of us would have accepted it. That just goes to show the wonderful influence you had on us (at least on me). It just goes to show that ignorance is the main thing to battle, and that if you can educate others, much of the hatred and prejudices in this world would be gone. ♦

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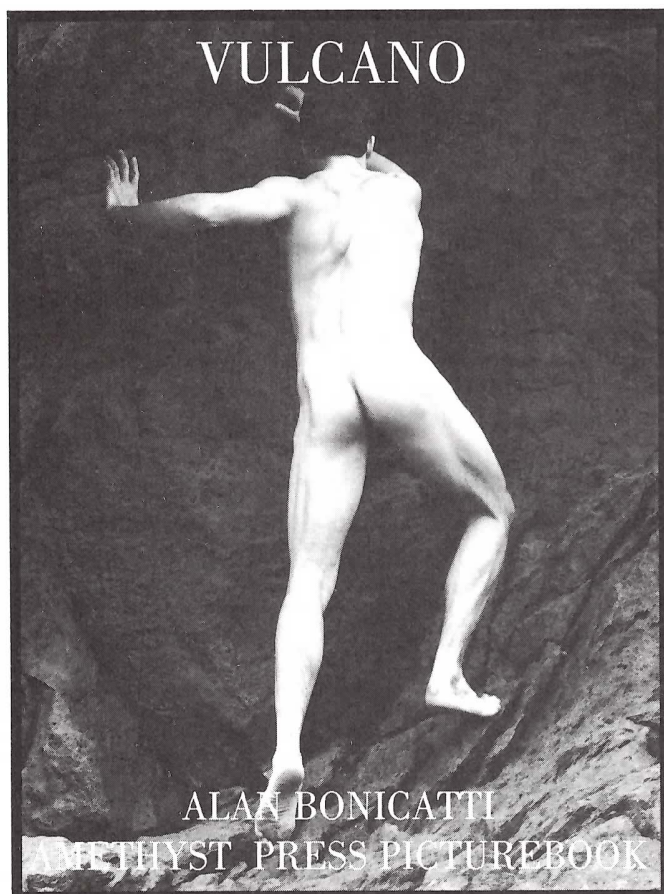
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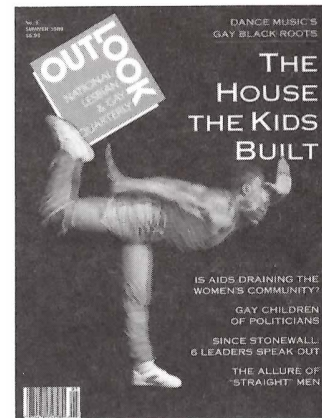
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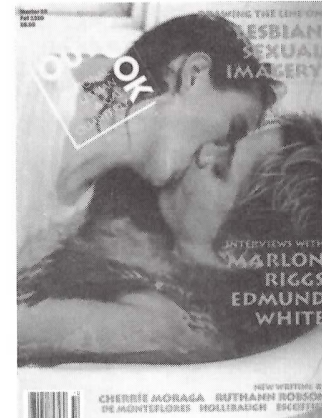
14. Fall 1991: Who's Afraid of Edward Albee?; Pomo Afro Homos' groundbeaking theatre; AIDS Survivor Guilt; Lesbians & Gay Men in Sports; Fiction by Monica Palacios and Gil Cuadros; Bursting the Lavender Bubble at the National Lesbian Conference; Lesbians, Gays and Religion.



< 5. Summer 1989: House music's gay Black roots; lesbians working on AIDS; messages to the movement twenty years after Stonewall; lesbian and gay children of politicians; the allure of anonymous "straight" sex; East Germany faces its past; Queery Results: Questions for Couples.



< 8. Spring 1990: Eric Rofes on gay lib vs AIDS; a Brazilian transvestite's response to AIDS; Gomez and Smith on Black homophobia; meet Heidi Jones: the straight gay leader; rethinking lesbian & gay history; the separatist revival; Queery Results: Friends & Lovers.



< 10. Fall 1990: Kiss & Tell: reactions to sexually explicit lesbian images; interviews with Edmund White and Marlon Riggs; Europe 1992: what does it mean for gay men & lesbians?; inside the Ivory Closet: gay studies and the community; Hollibaugh and de Monteflores on writing; Queery Results: Coming Out.

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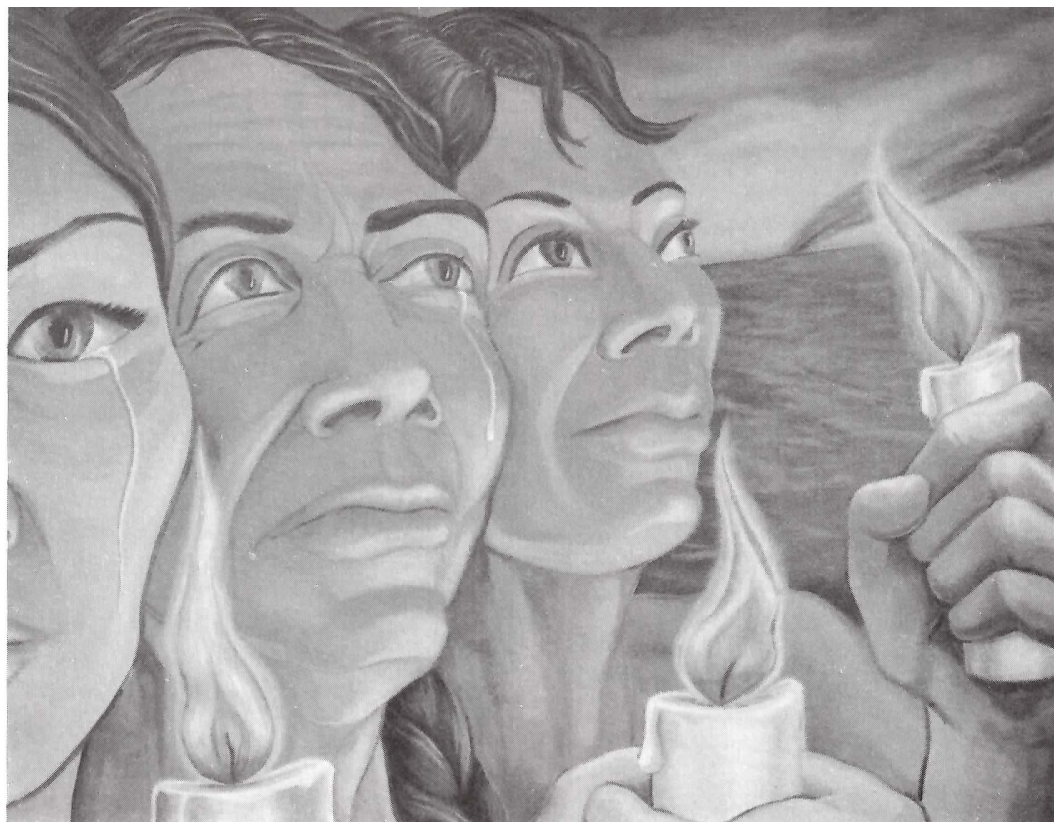
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Judy Baca's "Triumph of the Heart," from her participatory mural project, *The World Wall: A Vision of the Future Without Fear*. Detail of cover art from *Haciendo Caras*.

Masquerades

Viewing the New Chicana Lesbian Anthologies

by Deena J. González

***Making Face, Making Soul, Haciendo Caras:
Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color***

Gloria Anzaldúa, ed.
Aunt Lute, San Francisco, 1990.

***Chicana Lesbians: The Girls
Our Mothers Warned Us About***

Carla Trujillo, ed.
Third Woman Press, Berkeley, CA, 1991.

Working within the confines of the liberal arts tradition, at a small, elite college "of the New England type," I am forced to assign texts in which minorities think and act "normally." In "Minority" Studies or Ethnic Studies, the establishment reconfigures itself as anti-establishment; in print, the same dynamics and contradictions plague us. In white publications we are expected to talk nicely; in gay ones, we can talk nasty, but only if we do not break out of prevailing racial ideologies (for instance, Tomás Almaguer's brief but refreshing analysis of white gay privilege in *OUT/LOOK* #12 was castigated in subsequent letters by some offended readers).

As a Chicana lesbian, as a middle-class woman of color, as a national minority of radical consciousness, I believe positionality is everything and more. Positioning and scholarship used to be termed "exploring one's assumptions"—that is, determining where one is racially, culturally, and politically. Ironically, we were told to exclude the personal from our writing. Today we are more forthright.

When *OUT/LOOK* asked me to review Gloria Anzaldúa's *Haciendo Caras* and the new Chicana lesbian anthology edited by Carla Trujillo, I could not help but attempt to contextualize this review in the very real misrepresentations and prejudices we encounter daily. *Haciendo Caras* and Trujillo's *Chicana Lesbians* take up where earlier volumes left off and differ from the Latina lesbian anthologies of the early 1980s in substantive ways. In *Haciendo Caras*, as in her previous anthology (co-edited with Cherrie Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back*), Anzaldúa engages general readers, familiarizing them with trends, tendencies, and intellectual tra-

ditions that have emerged in communities of lesbians, radical feminists, and straight women of color across the country. In this anthology, academics, artists, cultural workers, and creative writers construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct theory.

Racism and heterosexism provide organizing themes, as do anti-racist practices and lesbian pride. Although straight women are included in Anzaldúa's new anthology, as they were in the older one, their partner-patriarchs' voices are markedly absent, making this, then, a decidedly womanist and woman-centered reader. Cultural criticism unifies the essays and creative selections, as do expressions of rage against colonization, and the problem of de-colonization in the academic mainstream and in mainstream feminist circles. It is an anthology that is best read by the uninitiated in sequential order, after a tour of either *Bridge* or any number of other works by Asian American, African American, or Native American women.

Sharing inclinations similar to Anzaldúa, Trujillo's *Chicana Lesbians* is a testament to the power of unmasking, of reconfiguration. Creative pieces intermingle easily here with "scholarly" reflections. The purposeful blurring of the lines separating theory and action, creativity and scholarship, calls into question the meanings of oppression. A brilliant analysis of lesbian sexuality and discourses by the historian and creative writer Emma Pérez, and the powerful reflections by such poets as Cathy Arellano and Natasha López, as well as by Anzaldúa and Moraga, constitute a book that entertains, enlightens, and enlivens readers.

Like Anzaldúa's current anthology, this work challenges Eurocentric organizational schemes and, by extension, Euro-Americans and heterosexual people of color who accept those methodologies unquestioningly in "their" canons. More importantly, these two editors refuse to hide behind the mask heterosexist Chicanas and Chicanos wear. The editor's introductory essays convey a sense of the repression and oppression, as well as the perseverance and resistance undertaken by women of color in this society.

Challenges reign in every corner where we gay/lesbian people of color reside. There are

those bothered by our self-labeling as "third world" people. Many white-identified third worlders masquerade in "the" academy as people of color in drag. Some of these folks are nicely wedded to their first world "allies." Chicana/os in the Southwest are as colonized a group as you will find in any corner of the globe; our languages erased, we have suffered the deformation of our social, political, and cultural worlds under a practice that was initially colonialism and continues now as colonization. For that reason, many of us (including a handful of Chicano activists residing in the university) decided to take one label, "Chicana/o," affirming our commitment to fight all colonialisms. But try explaining this to an aspiring third worlder happily ensconced in the first world, or protective of that first-world lover.

If you want evidence that the multiple, crisscrossing perspectives crafted by women of color are different, read Trujillo and Anzaldúa's books. And if you want to see how straight critics appropriate these writings, watch for subsequent articles or anthologies in publications spun off of these two new works, and others like them.

For example, literature professors Héctor Calderón and José David Saldivar, in a recent collection entitled *Criticism in the Borderlands: Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture, and Ideology* (Duke University Press, 1991), suggest that Chicana lesbian writing is not quite the cutting edge some literary critics would have us believe. Although lesbian and gay material is reviewed, no self-identified lesbian or gay man is included in this anthology as an author. The authors may have attempted to invite a lesbian or gay critic, but the point is—as we always say to white feminists or straight editors—none were found. That, as we well know, is as much the issue as anything else.

A second issue (which stands in such sharp contradiction to these women-of-color lesbian anthologies) has to do with what is done to our work once it appears in the pages of straight criticism. A review in *Criticism in the Borderlands* of Moraga and Anzaldúa's *Bridge*

Editors' Bookshelf

OUT/LOOK editors take a brief look at a few new books

**Families We Choose:
Lesbians, Gays, Kinship**
by Kath Weston,
Columbia University Press,
New York, 1991.

Anthropologist Kath Weston studies family forms forged by lesbians and gays in San Francisco and finds traditional kinship ties being reconstructed in new and innovative ways—through close friend-

ships, same-sex lovers, ties with ex-lovers, and through the establishment of new biological families, which are often embedded in friendship networks. These families do not simply represent a simple assimilationist impulse, she argues. Rather, they symbolize a bold strategic attempt to make inroads into an institution once believed to be off-limits.

—Arlene Stein

Michel Foucault
by Didier Eribon
Harvard University Press,
Cambridge, MA, 1991.

The impact of medical discourse and practice on the individual and the culture of Western Europe was an important theme of Foucault's work. So it is very frustrating that this readable biography of Foucault offers little exploration of Foucault's fatal encounter with AIDS. On the whole, though, Eribon's biography is a good introduction to Foucault's life and ideas. It provides biographical information that was generally unavailable and does not skirt the issue of Foucault's homosexuality.

—Jeffrey Escoffier

... drawing links among gender, sexuality, and class ...

fails, for example, to focus on the fact that it is an anthology pulled together by lesbians, whose specific intention was to compile women-of-color-identified materials in one place. Essentially speaking, the lesbian co-editors of *Bridge* "othered" the straight mainstream. But this conclusion escapes straight critics and is consistently ignored by others who then go on to impose upon these works a heterosexual genealogy.

In the same anthology of Chicano criticism, a work about one of our most important gay Chicano authors, Arturo Islas (who died recently of AIDS) fails to even hint of the author's gayness. What is suggested, instead, is that the author's narrator has "problems" with authority. Just another Chicano author, just more Chicana anthologizers. In some anthologies, even works written by lesbian critics neutralize the power of Chicana lesbian voices. Even "integrated" anthologies written for heterosexuals, in

whatever form or medium, require self-censorship.

We are our sexuality, but straight critics and their gay apologists are the last (and least likely) audience to grasp that fact. Hence, the white-identified third worlder—resident in the first world—will take issue with any Chicano faggot who calls him or her on his or her willingness to abide white-imposed hierarchies of domination. Hence, straight Chicana/os will smugly participate in canonizing, while disregarding their privileges—even as they "include" others. Lesbians of color are supposed to swallow or imbibe in these rhetorical stances, to believe that inclusion = acceptance = equality = respect.

The Anzaldúa and Trujillo works, then, give radical lesbian women of color a forum, and provide sympathetic but unpositioning liberals an opportunity to veil or unveil us before largely straight and increasingly unsympathetic audiences. The possibilities

***To the Friend Who
Did Not Save My Life***

by Hervé Guibert
Atheneum, New York, 1991.

This novel has an interesting historical backdrop: Hervé Guibert was a close friend of Michel Foucault's (whose death from AIDS is portrayed in the novel). In the form of diary entries, the book offers portraits of the narrator's social circle and their reactions to the narrator's struggle to come to terms with his illness, the treatments he seeks and, ultimately, of death. For all the promise of the material, however, it rarely ever engages the reader, and no characters are strongly enough developed to claim our interest. — J.E.

Cures: A Gay Man's Odyssey

by Martin Duberman,
Dutton, New York, 1991

This is a remarkable book, one of great courage and candor. Duberman, a leading gay scholar, prize-winning playwright, and social critic, has mined his voluminous and detailed diaries to recreate a picture of closeted life in the 1950s. Duberman tells the story of his many attempts to "cure" his homosexuality (primarily at the hands of psychiatrists). He also tells the painful tale of his emotional growth and ultimately the political liberation that the gay movement offered. — J.E.

***Out There: Marginalization and
Contemporary Cultures***

Russell Ferguson, et. al, eds.
New York: New Museum of
Contemporary Art, 1990.

This anthology brings together a range of essays about cultural marginalization. Of particular note to lesbian/gay readers is Monique Wittig's classic "The Straight Mind," Simon Watney's essay on Africa and AIDS, Kobena Mercer's "Black Hair/Style Politics," and a piece on lesbian film by Martha Gever. Pretty heady stuff, but noteworthy for its attempt to draw links among gender, sexual preference, and class differences. — A.S.

... a picture of closeted life in the 1950s ...

for consecutive and multiple appropriations are endless. Without some of our work in print, we face total erasure, and risk not being present in historical or cultural memory. With work in print, but in the hands of disidentified, disembodied straight critics, we stand to be—as we have been in mainstream documents across the ages—configured to serve the interests of domination, to be iconographed as the "minoritized" voice. They now have or own our words; they think they "hear" our voices, our languages, but we are still absent. Poor choices.

This fundamental dilemma can be generalized across many other groups, across many fields and arenas. What I say is hardly new or surprising to any lesbian activist-scholar or gay scholar-activist who came to academe or to the world of writing through activism. What is surprising is that for all of their talk of positioning, many straight critics, both white and of color, continue to perpetuate

the fallacies of the dominant discourses of capitalist oppression and repression.

Wouldn't it be a terrific day if some morning we awakened to anthologies entitled *White Women Critics Examine White Women's Work*, *Conference Proceedings of the National White Women's Studies Association*, or *Chicano/a Hets Assess Chicano/a Authors*, *Closet Cases Probe Safely Gay/Lesbian Novels*? Let us keep our privileges, but give them just the right radical veneer? Better yet, let's position everyone else *but* ourselves, because that might require that we leave behind our white husbands, closeted lovers, first world enemies, oppression, repression ... positionality, please.

Gracias for writers like Anzaldúa and Trujillo, who have suffered the consequences of being out (by not being hired in academic jobs or by being appropriated constantly as *the* resident dyke, Chicana voice, and you all know the rest...), and still manage, like the writers in their anthologies, to give gifts. ♦

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Christopher Enzi's (Front cover) "paintings" are untouched photographs of live models who have been painted with fluorescent paint in sets he has built in his San Francisco studio.

Fish (pp. 20, 21) is a San Francisco leather dyke and artist who someday hopes to be way-laid in a dark alley by a gang of her own hot bitch creations. Meanwhile, she co-edits a girl 'zine called *Brat Attack—Do it Yourself S/M*.

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Kris Kovick's (pp. 6-7) book, *What I Love About Lesbian Politics is Arguing with People I Agree With*, will be out in December, 1991.

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Cindy Sneeringer (p. 3), a freelance illustrator, resides in San Francisco and enjoys the eloquence of the female form.

Carla Trujillo ("Confessions of a Chicana PhD") is the editor of *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About*. She has taught women's studies at UC Berkeley and San Francisco State University. She is an *OUT/LOOK* editor.

Old myths die hard. Queers don't like children. Shouldn't work with children. Can't be parents. Shouldn't be parents. Do or don't have sex *as* children. Do or don't have sex *with* children. We hypothesize that some stereotypes might be shattered with the results from this survey. Results will be analyzed in a future issue of *OUT/LOOK*.

Relationships With Children

1. Do you have a significant relationship with one or more children, with whom you have regular contact?
Yes ____ No ____
2. Circle the ways you are connected to the child/ren:
 - a. relatives
 - b. relatives of my partner
 - c. child/ren of friends
 - d. my own child/ren
 - e. I work with child/ren
 - f. I am a parent
 - g. other: _____
3. Are you out to the child/ren that you have a significant relationship with?
Yes ____ No ____
4. Are you out to their parents?
Yes ____ No ____
5. If you have never been a parent, do you want/plan to become a parent?
Yes ____ No ____
6. If no, circle any of the following reasons why you don't:
 - a. I feel that I'm too old
 - b. I am not in a relationship that would support parenting
 - c. I don't like children
 - d. parenting would not be compatible with my work/social/political activities
 - e. I think it's wrong for lesbians and gay men to be parents
 - f. the legal obstacles to adopting a child where I live are too high
 - g. I don't have access to a method of conception I would feel comfortable with
 - h. other: _____
7. If you work with children, are you out to any of the children you work with?
Yes ____ No ____
8. If you work with children, are you out to your employer or any of the adults who work there?
Yes ____ No ____

Parenting

9. If you are or have been a parent, are you out to your child/ren?
Yes ____ No ____
10. Have you ever given up custody of a child?
Yes ____ No ____
11. Have you ever given up custody involuntarily?
Yes ____ No ____
12. If yes, was your sexual orientation a factor in losing custody?
Yes ____ No ____
13. If you have some or total custody of your child today,
 - a. are you legally a parent?
Yes ____ No ____
 - b. do you co-parent with a lover?
Yes ____ No ____
 - c. do you co-parent with a former heterosexual partner?
Yes ____ No ____
 - d. do you co-parent with a former lesbian/gay partner?
Yes ____ No ____
 - e. do you co-parent with another adult of the same sex with whom you have never been lovers?
Yes ____ No ____
 - f. do you co-parent with another adult of the opposite sex with whom you have never been lovers?
Yes ____ No ____
14. When you became a parent were you identified as heterosexual or involved in a heterosexual relationship?
Yes ____ No ____
15. When you became a parent were you identified as lesbian/gay or involved in a lesbian/gay relationship?
Yes ____ No ____
16. Have you adopted a child?
Yes ____ No ____
17. If yes, were you out to the placement or

government agency?

Officially: Yes ____ No ____
Unofficially: Yes ____ No ____

18. Have you ever been a foster parent?
Yes ____ No ____
19. If yes, were you out to the placement or government agency?
Officially: Yes ____ No ____
Unofficially: Yes ____ No ____
20. Should gay/lesbian parents be out about their children to teachers or daycare providers?
Yes ____ No ____
Only if children are old enough to have an opinion and they feel comfortable about it. ____

Children and Sexuality

21. How old were you when you first met an openly lesbian or gay adult? ____
22. When you were a minor, did you ever have a consenting lesbian or gay sexual experience with another minor?
Yes ____ No ____
23. When you were a minor, did you ever have a consenting lesbian or gay sexual experience with an adult?
Yes ____ No ____
24. If yes, what was the youngest age you had such an experience? ____
25. How do you feel about that experience in hindsight?
Positive ____
Negative ____
No opinion ____
26. As an adult (age 18 or over), have you ever had a sexual relationship with a child (age 12 or under)?
Yes ____ No ____
27. As an adult (age 18 or over), have you ever had a sexual relationship with a teenaged minor (age 13 - 17)?
Yes ____ No ____

Demographics

28. Are you male or female?

___ 1 male ___ 2 female

29. Which of the following categories best describes your sexual orientation?

___ 1 gay or lesbian

___ 2 bisexual

___ 3 heterosexual

30. What is your current HIV status?

___ 1 diagnosed AIDS/ARC

___ 2 HIV-positive

___ 3 HIV-negative

___ 4 don't know

31. What is your age?

___ years

32. What is your race?

___ 1 Asian/Pacific Islander

___ 2 Black/African American

___ 3 Hispanic/Latin

___ 4 Native American

___ 5 White

___ 6 Mixed race

___ 7 Other (Please specify):

33. Please estimate your total personal income taxes for all of 1990. (Please

include income from all sources: salary, bonuses, share of profits, investment income, interest, rental income, etc.)
\$ _____

34. Where do you live?

city: _____

state: _____

Thank you

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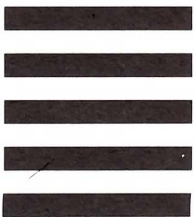
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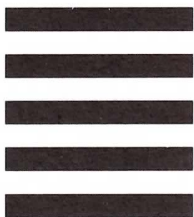
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