

No. 7
WINTER 1990
\$5.95



When Lesbians Fall for Men



SEXUAL LIES: A BUTCH 'FESSES UP
PHOTOGRAPHY: THE HOMOEROTIC LENS
OPENING THE HONG KONG CLOSET
WHAT'S WRONG WITH MAPPLETHORPE



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VOLUME 2, NUMBER 3 WINTER 1990

OUT/LOOK, National Lesbian & Gay Quarterly
(ISSN 0896-7733) is published quarterly by the
OUT/LOOK Foundation, 2940 16th Street, Suite 319,
San Francisco, CA 94103, (415) 626-7929.

Postmaster: Send address changes to OUT/LOOK,
2940 16th Street, Suite 319, San Francisco, CA 94103.
Second class postage paid at San Francisco and addi-
tional mailing offices.

Correspondence: OUT/LOOK welcomes letters to
the editor, queries, unsolicited manuscripts, and art-
work. Submissions cannot be returned unless a
stamped, self-addressed envelope is included. No
responsibility is assumed for loss or damage. Letters
may be edited for length. Send all editorial, business,
advertising, and subscription correspondence to the
address listed above.

Subscriptions: Annual rates are \$21 for individuals,
\$29 for libraries and institutions, and \$31 internation-
al. All rates are in US Dollars.

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Deadline!

How are we going to lay this out in 3 days?



A Typo?

Who turned off the waxer?



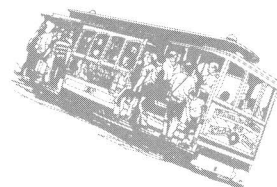
What's wrong with the type size?

Who's supposed to design this new ad?



Will somebody proof this again?

Who is helping me on this layout?



O.K. - can we finish the.....

SAN FRANCISCO OCT. 17 1989

5:04pm

My **G**od! **d**earth? **H**ere? **S**th this it?

I can't get a **phone?** There go the shelves!

Do we have food?

Where are the candles?

Can we

drink the water?

Was Cathy coming over
the Bay Bridge?

Where is
a **R**adio?

Where is Peter? Doug?

Was Jenny **D**owntown?

Amid the chaos, despair, loss, confusion, helplessness
and comradery, most San Franciscans survived the
earthquake. Thanks to the neighbors who helped and
comforted us all. To friendship. To family. And to a
deeper, richer appreciation of each and every day.

"O, Say Can You See" ...As Far as We Tell You to Look

IN TO ELSIE, a poem dedicated to his black maid, writer William Carlos Williams commented that "The pure products of America/ Go crazy." You could easily substitute "politics" for "products," given the series of political decisions that have been rolling out of Washington lately. First there were the maddening Supreme Court rulings on civil and reproductive rights. Then came last summer's potboiler, the equally enraging controversy about the Corcoran Museum's cancellation of the Robert Mapplethorpe exhibit and the subsequent "Helms Amendment."

Though there may not be a *Hardwick* facing the Court this term, the rulings it already has issued will have a dramatic impact on the gay and lesbian community—since it is often through the laws, statutes or constitutional amendments designed to protect women or people of color that we have obtained protection for the precious few rights we do have.

While not outlawing abortion *per se*, *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* opened the floodgates for right-wingers to deluge lower courts with cases that restrict reproductive freedom. On the civil rights front, there was *Patterson v. Maclean Credit Union*, a case which lacked the visceral impact of a sweeping *Brown v. Board of Education*, but, like *Webster*, continues the process of whittling away our rights. As a result of *Patterson*, minority employees still can lodge discrimination claims during the process of applying for a job, but Section 1981 of the 1866 Civil Rights Act no longer provides them with redress if prejudice obstructs their promotion once they've been hired.

It would be an easy leap of conservative faith to use the ruling in *Patterson* to discriminate against gay men and lesbians in the workplace, or to use the new restrictions on reproductive freedom generated by *Webster* to justify state intervention in the lesbian baby boom. It seems that desecrating the flag (as is the pleasure of this issue's back cover artist, Gene Wesley Elder) is turning out to be our first—and perhaps last—right to be protected by the Rehnquist court.

Out to ban public funding of (amongst other images) "homosexual" art, the Helms Amendment is one of the most obvious anti-gay rulings to emerge from Washington recently. It's particularly chilling, not only because of what it says, but because of the form which it takes. It appropriates

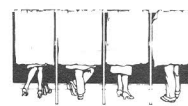
the language of the non-discrimination clause, the building block of gay civil rights, only to turn around and censor gay speech. With Congressional elections rolling around in 1990, our sometimes allies on the Hill have issued generic objections to "censorship of artistic expression." No one has dared defend the right of homoerotic images to exist in and of themselves.

Because these assaults are scattered and buried under an avalanche of obscure references to code and section numbers, and because they don't always affect us on the basis of our sexual orientation, we may be numb to the political sum effect these Congressional and Court actions are having. As dispersed as these attacks seem to be, they actually betray a shrewd sophistication. The construction of a kinder, gentler nation seems to depend upon the piecemeal dismantling of the liberties of those political constituencies who challenge the identity and privilege of the conservative mainstream.

Indeed, the conservative right has launched a new cold war, with a new cast of demonized "others": We're diseased-ridden infectious carriers; we're violently crazed drug pushers and addicts; we're lazy do-nothings who want to ride the backs of hard-working white men; we're sexually promiscuous women who don't want to bear our responsibilities when we fuck around and fuck up. The danger for those of us on the political margins is that this name-calling is so specific and so withering in its specificity, that we may not notice who's alongside us on the firing line. Let's not allow these seemingly blind-sided attacks to prevent us from seeing that all of our backs are pressed against the same wall.

Jackie Goldsby, for the Editors

Desecrating
the flag is turning
out to be our first —
and perhaps last —
right protected by
the Rehnquist court.



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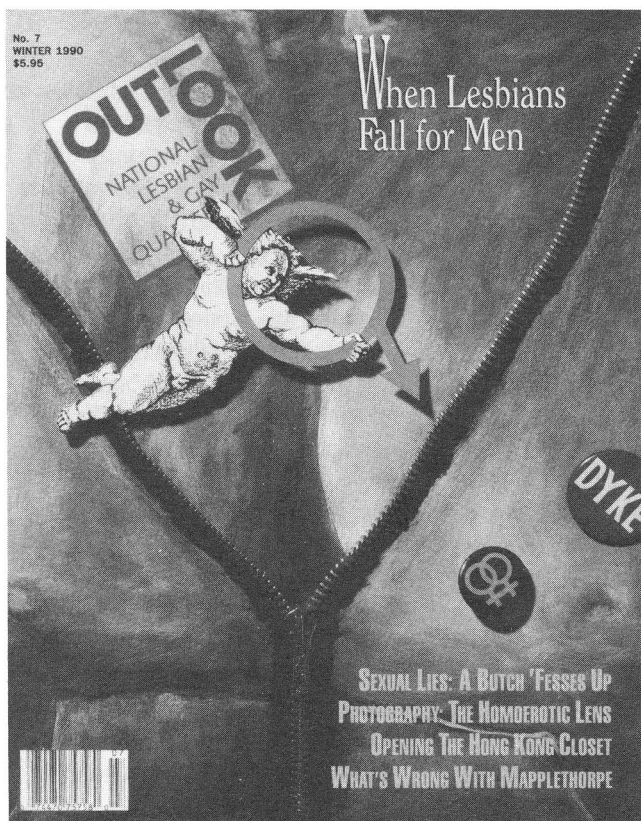
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FRONT COVER Art by E.G. Crichton. Design by Jill Davey.

Crichton has been the art director of *OUT/LOOK* since the magazine started. She has created bosoms in one medium or another since she was seven. Davey is a graphic designer in Berkeley, California.

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Reactions to "Incest and Other Taboos"

• Although you claim at the outset that you are doing an article about incest, ["Incest and Other Taboos: A Dialogue between Men and Women," Fall 1989], in fact through much of the piece you skirt the edges of the issue and talk about everything but that. This makes sense to me in a very sad way: the actual facts about incest in our culture are hard to look at, are in fact so painful that it is easier to look past them. But, in keeping with the willingness of this magazine to go anywhere, let's try to look.

First of all, incest is not the same thing as "intergenerational sex," though that term is a slick way to slide past the real issues. If you are a 40-year-old man sleeping with a 20-year-old man, that's your business. To move from that to a discussion of incest involving a 40-year-old father and 20-year-old son is neither an accurate nor useful portrayal of incest within our culture. To begin with, 97 percent of incest perpetrators are men, and 87 percent of the victims are girl children. If we are going to talk about incest let's begin with that. Secondly, incest is not an act of mutual consent between adults, but a violent crime adult men perpetrate upon the children they are supposed to protect. (Yes, I know that the sexual molestation of children happens outside of families too, but we are talking about incest.)

One of your panelists makes the comment that he would rather have been sexually molested by his father than forced to play in the Little League. Perhaps the term "sexual molestation" allows us to soften the images we want to carry with it. Let us substitute the literal occurrence of incest for that term. Would that columnist like to reiterate his statement this way: "As an eight year old I would rather have been anally raped by my father than have to play baseball." Or perhaps, "I would rather

have been raped by my father with my head stuffed into the toilet to muffle my screams, than have to join the Little League." These are the kinds of stories I have heard from male incest survivors.

Of course children are sexual beings and have the right to their own sexuality. That's exactly why the incest taboo exists in all cultures. Children should have the freedom and the safety to explore and discover their sexuality in an environment where they are safe to learn at their own pace. While an eight-year-old child is indeed a sexual being and beginning to explore that, s/he isn't mature enough, physically or emotionally, to become an adult's sexual partner. To use that child's emerging sexuality to gratify adult needs is sexual abuse, and, as practiced in our culture, it is almost always either physically or emotionally coercive.

As a four-year-old child I, too, had the right to my sexual feelings. I was raped repeatedly by my father with my head in a clothes hamper to muffle my screams, I was told he would kill me if I told anyone, I was masturbated upon, orally and anally raped, and called "cunt" and "whore" while my father did these things. Aside from the obvious physical pain of being raped by a man ten times my size, what I had taken from me was exactly my right to my sexuality, as well as my right to be protected by the man I trusted most in the world. John, it's your life, honey; I would have preferred the Little League.

Pam Shepherd
Santa Fe, New Mexico

• I read your dialogue about incest and sexuality with interest. I have a few comments. First, I want to identify myself as a child sex abuse survivor, so that people can see a bit where I am coming from with my comments.

In general, there seemed to be a theme running through the dialogue that unless a person had been forcibly raped

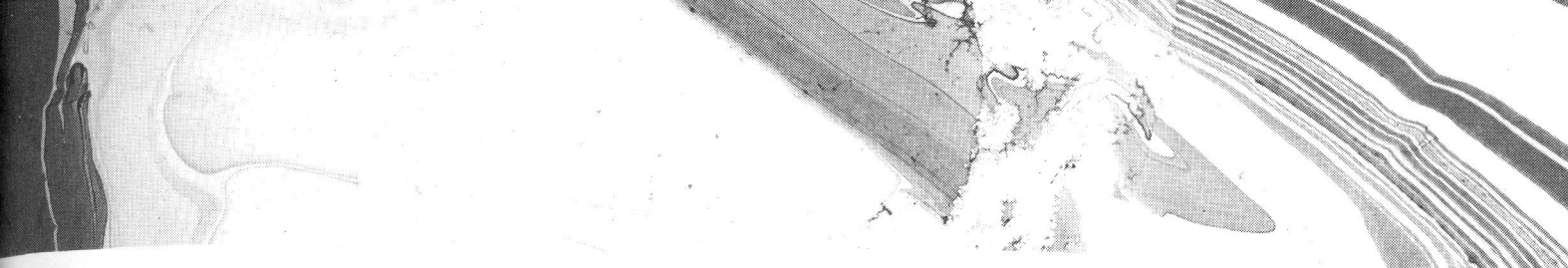
as a child, then that person really wasn't a victim. If the child's body responded to the sexual encounters, then the sex was consensual. "Liz," one of the women in the dialogue even comes out and states openly that some people "falsely" identify themselves as survivors, i.e., if the encounter consisted only of "kissing" or "spanking" then the person has no business joining an incest group. My response to "Liz" is simply that she doesn't know what she is talking about. She has said that she isn't a survivor. Who is she to decide whether people should join incest groups or not? "Carol" at least is willing to let the individual survivor decide for him/herself. But then she "doesn't want to hear about this anymore." My question to these non-survivors is: why does the presence of incest/sex abuse survivor groups constitute such a threat to you?

Were any of the dialoguers incest/sex abuse survivors? None of them identified themselves as such. Either the group consisted entirely of non-survivors, or else the statements that I outlined before effectively silenced the survivors. It is quite clear that you are not dealing with a man/woman issue. Rather, you are dealing with issues between non-survivors, who somehow feel threatened by the survivors "coming out of the closet," and survivors who need to break their silence and speak the truth. I, too, hope that this article is only a 'first'—and is not your last word on this subject.

Nina Boal
Baltimore, Maryland

• Childhood sexual abuse [is] obviously a topic that evokes a lot of feelings, and I appreciate your willingness to talk about it and share your thoughts and reactions.

One of the issues you addressed was whether street kids who are taken in by



older men might be better off than they were in the families they escaped from. A substantial number of the runaways and hustlers I have worked with [as a psychotherapist] were sexually abused as children. Some learned to use sex as a commodity, and to disassociate from their feelings during sexual contact. They may continue this pattern later on by finding men who will take care of them in exchange for sexual favors. But when sex is exchanged for survival needs, it can replicate their earlier abuse. They may feel bad about themselves, and resent the man who took them in.

I understand that this isn't everyone's experience, and that some gay men appreciate the older men who helped them get off the street. However, I believe that a young man who was molested as a child has a better chance of recovering from the abuse if he has adults in his life who can provide some assistance, without expecting sex in exchange for their help.

Rik Isensee
San Francisco, California

- We generally enjoy OUT/LOOK, but as survivors and/or advocates for survivors, we found your article [about incest] misleading, inflammatory, and lacking in substance. You've indulged in the "let's stir up the pot" school of journalism: dump a lot of emotionally charged issues and statements together and see what kind of controversy you can create. The fact that you as editors, anonymously threw out opinions such as, "I'd rather have been sexually abused than forced to play little league," both cowardice and basic ignorance about sexual abuse. (Have you ever met anyone whose core self-esteem, capacity for love, intimate relationships and sexuality was severely damaged because he was forced to play little league?)

The basic premise of your article was to discuss incest as one of a variety of

sexual taboos. This approach demonstrates a basic misunderstanding of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse is not about sex. As one therapist put it, "If I hit you over the head with a frying pan, you wouldn't call it cooking." Sexual abuse takes a sexual form, but it is not primarily about sex. It is about the misuse and abuse of power, the devastation of trust, an irreparable crossing of boundaries. Sexual abuse is not a debatable question of cultural taboos or norms. It's not about when it happened, who it happened with, whether the child was six or sixteen, whether it happened once or every day. It is a crime and children are the victims. Sexual abuse is not defined by an external standard of measure, but by the experience of the child. If you had sexual experiences as a child that were positive or neutral for you, we're not talking about your experience. We're talking about the hundreds of thousands whose early sexual experiences have left them with a legacy of self-hate, confusion, continued victimization, and far-reaching problems in adult life.

Lesbians and gay men who are struggling with painful feelings and traumatic memories of sexual abuse are not doing so to be part of a popular club, but because they are suffering and want the pain to stop. Survivors of sexual abuse often want to die, feel isolated and different from other people, believe there is something evil, wrong, and shameful about them, suffer from nightmares and panic attacks, and have debilitating problems with sex and intimacy. They deserve support and room to heal so they can move forward in their lives. They don't need their experiences minimized, questioned, or debated in the national press.

In addition...[t]he incest survivors' movement is not just a women's movement. The 400 plus participants at the Second National Conference on Male Sexual Abuse held in Atlanta last

fall] could attest to that. Although women (and lesbians) first brought this issue to the surface, more and more men (of all sexual preferences) are talking about experiences of childhood sexual abuse. Not all gay men support what you euphemistically call "intergenerational sex."

Laura Davis, Santa Cruz, California
Ellen Bass, Santa Cruz, California
Susan Frankel, San Francisco, California
Mike Lew, Boston, Massachusetts
Thom Harrigan, Boston Massachusetts
Hank Estrada, Santa Fe, New Mexico
Patrick Meyer, Santa Cruz, California
Robin Moulds, Northampton, Massachusetts

On Closets & Hunks

- I have a cheer and a jeer, to coin a phrase.

First, three cheers to Boze Hadleigh's candid, delightful, and outrageous interview with comedian Paul Lynde ["A Hollywood Square Comes Out," Fall 1989]! Let the public become aware that most show biz gays have little in common with such figures of fun as Liberace, Little Richard, or Boy George. As a lesbian, I applaud Hadleigh's and Lynde's sharing of the great Agnes Moorehead as a lesbian—first time I saw it in print where it wasn't denied!

Now, the jeer: to those uniformed gay men who chose actor Sasha Mitchell as a favorite hunk ["Lustafters and Lustbusters," Fall 1989]. Mitchell was recently quoted in TV Guide as saying that Vietnam anti-war protestors were the sort who would "abandon a friend in a tough neighborhood." I don't know or care if Mitchell is gay; what he is, is obtuse, ...he works against the fair-minded socio-political agenda which is in the best interests of gay people.

Hey guys: it's just as easy to lust after a liberal hunk as a reactionary one.

Chris Kokino
Santa Monica, California

• I'm 20 years old and I still live with my parents. Your Paul Lynde interview literally took my breath away. That interview really named names, man! Maybe I'm dense or naive...but I didn't even know Paul Lynde was gay, and he's one of my mom's all time favorites.

When I finally get up the nerve to come out ...I can show her the interview in your magazine! It's important for people like me and people like my parents to know that you can be a hit in this world and also be gay.

Jeff Olsen
Delton, Michigan

Lesbian Battering Nothing to Laugh At

• The "cartoon" by Rhonda Dickson on the inside of the front cover of the Fall 1989 [issue of OUT/LOOK] is offensive, tasteless and potentially very damaging to Battered Lesbians. It dangerously represents an incident of Lesbian Battering in a "humorous" light. Battering and violence in our relationships is a very serious problem which our community is only slowly beginning to grapple with. This portrayal will effectively silence many lesbians who are currently trying to extricate themselves from such violent situations. Once again a "community" forum is making light of their predicament. They are made to feel responsible for causing their partner's violence—note the caption: "Lesbian Survival Hint: Respect those subtle signs of refusal." Meanwhile it is clear from this portrait that a woman's right to personal safety within all her relationships and particularly in her most intimate one is of no concern to the artist.

I recommend to you all Naming the Violence: Speaking Out About Lesbian Battering, edited by Kerry Lobel (Seal Press, 1986).

Terry Person
Chair, Lesbian Task Force

National Coalition Against Violence
Dover, New Hampshire

Rhonda Dickson responds:

I regret if my cartoon offended anyone who may be living in an abusive relationship. It is not my intent to promote any form of violence—whether it be physical or psychological—within the context of my work. The idea which I meant to convey in the cartoon was that some people will go to any lengths (at times) to avoid physical intimacy (a twist on the old "Honey, I've got a headache" gag). In my interpretation of the cartoon, the woman had bandaged herself in lieu of a verbal refusal. It never occurred to me that the cartoon could be seen in another manner.

This experience has shown me how truly diverse our viewpoints can be.

Marriage & International Reciprocity

• Your lead article, "Gay Marriage: A Must or a Bust?," [Fall, 1989] caught my attention immediately...[b]ecause I face the dilemma of deciding whether to be legally married or not.

For five years I have had a Danish lover. We manage to spend a third of the year together either here in the US or there with never more than two months apart at any time. Because of the new Danish law allowing marriage between same-sex partners, we face the necessity of making a decision whether to do so or not.

It's really a rather strange situation for me. I've always thought of our relationship as like a marriage. There is a real difference, though. A legal marriage carries a binding commitment. If problems develop, it's not easy to walk away. (In fact, a divorce will be required.) If temptation arises, it won't be so easy to give in. The decision must be made: do I want to commit myself legally to our relationship?

There would definitely be advantages

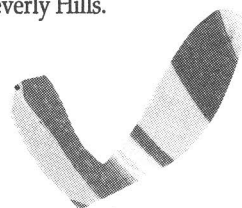
for me. I would get my lover's pension if he should die before me. Under the same circumstances, I would inherit his estate (without the 80 percent tax charge non-spousal beneficiaries). I would become eligible for permanent residence in Denmark. I could apply for a Danish passport, if I wished. I would have national health insurance benefits in Denmark. Unfortunately, my lover would not share similar benefits because our marriage would not be recognized in the US.

That raises an interesting question, though. The US recognizes legal marriages performed anywhere in the world. How could that continue without also recognizing our marriage? Would the US go to the extreme length of no longer accepting any marriage performed in Denmark to avoid having to recognize ours? Or would our marriage be a step toward legally pursuing gay liberation?

Name withheld

Editor's note: Lambda Legal Defense Fund says it's unlikely that the US would recognize your marriage to a Danish citizen since gay marriages are not legal anywhere in this country. In fact, if you declared you were married at the border, your partner might not be able to enter the country because of immigration laws which exclude lesbians and gay men.

Erratum: In the Fall 1989 issue, author Boze Hadleigh was incorrectly described as living in West Hollywood. He really lives in Beverly Hills.



Your views are important!
To be sure your letter is considered for publication in the Spring 1990 issue, we must receive it by Jan. 5, 1990.

THE TOP 10 (WELL, 14) BOOKS

THAT WERE MOST INFLUENTIAL TO
OUT/LOOK EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS
WHEN THEY CAME OUT
(AND THAT ARE STILL WORTH READING)

ANOTHER COUNTRY, James Baldwin (New York, Doubleday, 1962).
The novel represents Baldwin's vision of love—its disasters and hopefulness—between men and women, gay and straight, whites and blacks. It was my introduction to positive portrayals of gay love in literature.

CITY OF NIGHT, John Rechy (New York, Grove Press, 1963).
I was fascinated by this male hustler's view of the homosex underculture of America before gay lib. Peopled with ubiquitous "youngmen" and their loneliness, isolation, dreams, and brief intimacies.

CIVIL WARS, June Jordan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981).
There are three quintessential essayists in the American literary canon: Ralph Waldo Emerson, James Baldwin, and June Jordan. Wild, daring, bordering on the anarchical, these essays taught me that the road to truth was necessarily radical in the context of American politics, and that there were others like me: black women for whom "the fact of my loving another woman" was as natural and necessary as freedom itself.

COMING TO POWER, Samois, ed. (Boston, Alyson Publications, 1982).
I'd had my separate vacation, shopping for a new sexual identity in San Francisco. Now the commuter train was returning me to husband, children, suburban tract house—me with my nose buried in this book, every organ a-throb, brain chugging with the train: "Is this what they do, is this what they do?"

FLYING, Kate Millet (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1974)
This book captured the intense emotions I felt a few years after coming out, when the questions I asked myself grew more

complex than wondering about the gender of the people I was attracted to. Millet's searing self-revelation in this memoir of non-monogamy captured both the exhilaration and pain of trying to be true to myself sexually, politically, and artistically.

THE FRONT RUNNER, Patricia Nell Warren (New York, Morrow, 1974).
A romantic fantasy set in the halcyon days of early gay liberation, this tear-jerker brought me out of the closet and into the race for a Billy Sive of my own.

INTERNATIONAL MALE CATALOG.
All the confusion, conflict, denial, guilt, and other headtrips about being gay evaporated when my eyes (closely followed by my penis) reacted to the stunning men in this catalog. IMC is a slick mail order catalog of trendy male fashions featuring the hottest young white men around. Totally prurient, homoerotic and great for those afraid to buy real porn.

THE LAST OF THE WINE, Mary Renault (New York, Pantheon Books, 1956).
A novel of classic male love, a photograph of Socratean Athens. I read it for its love story, for an introduction to the sociology of ancient Greece, and for the cameo roles played by historic figures.

OUR LADY OF THE FLOWERS, Jean Genet (New York, Grove Press, 1963).
A beautiful, poetic and erotic novel that I loved for its moving portrait of life among criminals and drag queens.

RUBYFRUIT JUNGLE, Rita Mae Brown (Plainfield, Vermont, Daughters, Inc. 1973).
My girlfriend and I took turns reading this book out loud to each other in bed.

At the time it was the first lesbian novel I had read that was funny and had a heroine I wanted to be like.

SMALL CHANGES, Marge Piercy (New York, Doubleday & Co, 1972).

ZAMI, Audre Lorde (Trumansburg, NY, Crossing Press, 1982)

I loved reading **SMALL CHANGES** because it so accurately described the world into which I had just entered—the intensity of emerging feminism, lesbianism and the white counter-culture movement of the early 1970s.

ZAMI, on the other hand, was exhilarating because it encapsulated everything about being gay that I wasn't or hadn't experienced—being black, working-class, coming out in the 1950s, and being part of the bar scene.

STIGMA: NOTES ON THE MANAGEMENT OF SPOILED IDENTITY, Erving Goffman (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1963).

A vivid exploration of how social stigma—both visible and invisible—affects a person's identity and his or her relation to the society that "spoils" a person's sense of self. This book entirely changed my intellectual conception of what it means to be gay.

THIS BRIDGE CALLED MY BACK, Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, eds. (New York: Persephone Press, 1981).
Others seemed to know that I was a dyke before I was really ready to admit it to myself. So they made sure I joined their softball teams, went to their solstice parties, and read this collection. The sistahs in this collection dish the 411 'bout the realities of living colored, female, and/or lesbian in the U.S. of A. so cleanly that it's still required reading for anyone who dares call her/himself a feminist. ▼

HOW CAN YOU BRING YOUR DRINKING OUT OF THE CLOSET WHEN YOU'RE STILL IN IT?



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What Does It Mean
When A Lesbian
Falls In Love
With A Man
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MY INTERESTING CONDITION

by Jan Clausen

SCENE: a Brooklyn back yard steeped in humid summer dusk. Four women are sprawled comfortably in lawn chairs, cold liquids in hand.

- Has she gone off the deep end, or what?
- She's got plenty of company, from the stories I'm hearing.
- Yeah, it's the in thing this year. The heterodyke.
- She's lost it.
- So? It happens. Like my grandma used to say—many are called, few are chosen.
- It pisses the hell out of me. I mean, who the hell tells these women they can make their name off of us, set themselves up as 'spokeswomen' and 'leaders' and shit, and then...
- What goes through my mind when I hear a story like this is, do you suppose she was really straight all along?
- She and what's-her-name had been together for ages. I can't believe she was faking all that time.
- You think she's faking now? Which is worse?
- Don't forget, she comes from a pretty privileged background. I guess when you've grown up white and middle-class, it's a big temptation to just sort of fade back into that cozy old patriarchy.
- White, middle-class, and fem!
- Who's knocking fems?
- Relax, Isis, nobody's knocking fems. But I do think carrying a purse is going a little far.
- She carries a purse now?
- I saw her in a dress.
- Does she shave her legs, too?
- Hey, I shave my legs.
- Chill, Dido, as long as you continue your

time-honored custom of wearing at least three articles of men's apparel at all times, you'll remain above suspicion.

- Very, very funny.
- So what's the boyfriend's story? What's he like?
- Who gives a flying fuck?
- So to speak.
- Nobody seems to know much about him. I think she's sort of been keeping him in the background.
- Well, wouldn't you? In her position?
- Honey, you won't find me in that position.
- Oh yeah? Then how come I find the latest issue of *On Our Backs* in the john, every time I come over?
- Touché, Artemis. Pass the Doritos, will you? And just remember, everybody likes a little ass but nobody likes a smartass.
- Look, everybody, I never mentioned this, but I almost slept with a guy, last year when Lilith dumped me.

An awkward pause. Then, all at once:

- Well, that isn't the same thing at all!
- Temporary insanity. You weren't responsible.
- Anyway, you didn't go through with it.

PEOPLE TALK. It's human nature. I've done plenty of it myself. I remember, for instance, ages ago, regaling friends with the scandalous news that Jill Johnston had gotten married. I remember our sarcasm at the expense of a black feminist poet who was partial to women but insisted on calling herself "bisexual" instead of "lesbian." I remember

indignant gossip about Holly Near's rumored backsliding. I do not blame myself or anyone else too much for this behavior. Gossip is one of life's staple pleasures, small reward for all the pains. Besides, it's so useful, helping as it does to delimit the boundaries of peer groups, enforce community standards, strengthen self-definition in a blurred, ambiguous, often hostile world. In lesbian-feminist communities, where identity has been constructed virtually from the ground up over the past 20 years, these functions help to make it an irresistible form of entertainment.

For many if not all of the years I spent as a technically irreproachable lesbian, I was perfectly well aware that I hadn't shed my potential for physical attraction to men when I came out officially in 1974. I remember at least one mid-80s conversation about sexuality and roles in which I told a lesbian friend that, strictly speaking, I should probably be considered bisexual. I mentioned this casually, without anxiety, partly because I had no reason to expect a judgmental response, but also because I assumed that my own sexual potential was no different from that of many other lesbians who at some time in their lives had enjoyed sex with men. It never seriously occurred to me that I would shortly find myself in a situation where this theoretical capacity would have practical implications.

Though I probably wouldn't have expressed it quite so crudely, I believed, along with most of my friends, that our lesbian way

of life was superior to even the best of heterosexual arrangements. Although I'd never been a separatist, and had long been critical of essentialist thinking, I also harbored what I would have admitted to be the rationally untenable conviction that lesbians themselves were politically and even morally superior to other people—more “evolved,” if you will. Besides, I assumed that being a dyke was more fun and less socially constraining than being straight, homophobia notwithstanding. Why, then, would I ever choose a man, when the world is full of women?

“Slipping is crash's law,” said Emily Dickinson. In retrospect I can trace a certain amount of slippage in my commitment to the classic lesbian-feminist ideal of woman-identification when I review some of the stresses and disappointments of my own lesbian-feminist life, a point I'll come back to later. Following a painful experience with a group of women writers—one of those situations in which politics and personalities combine in virulent negative synergy—I began to work with a largely heterosexual Central America solidarity organization. For years I'd watched my short list of male friends dwindle toward extinction; now I added several new ones.

Yet the crash seemed sudden indeed when, in 1987, after a period of time during which my crushes on unavailable women had created turmoil in my hitherto monogamous relationship, I became passionately involved with a man I met on a trip to Nicaragua. That event naturally hastened (I don't believe it caused) the end of my dozen years' partnership with a woman in whose company I had participated in the building of a world, the new feminist world of multi-issue activism all mixed up with ideas and books.

From day one of my newly “fallen” state, I resisted considerable pressure, both external and internal, to explain myself. “I don't want to take a position on my body before I know what position my body's in,” I insisted to a friend. I was in several kinds of shock, most notably that of the sudden separation from my long-time companion, which by her choice was absolute. I was hardly in shape to make immediate, articulate sense of what I was

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My gut reaction was rebellion against the personal/political equation itself.

going through. I knew I needed privacy and time to let meanings emerge, but these suddenly seemed to be terribly scarce commodities in a social universe in which "the personal is political"—and in which, I now understood, my own lesbian family had attained the status of a semi-public institution.

My gut reaction was rebellion against the personal/political equation itself, for it now seemed to me that in the name of creating a theory responsive to the subjective experience of private life, we feminists had perhaps ended up prematurely abolishing private life altogether. I felt the need of a zone of experience off limits to instant political critique.

In this, I knew I had something in common with participants in the feminist sexuality debate who have talked about the complexity and intractability of desire. But though the connection helped support my determination to say yes to what I wanted rather than to what I or anybody else thought I should want, it didn't do much to diminish my sense of isolation. My favorite "sexperts" talked about *lesbian* desire; Joan Nestle, for instance, might have written a sex-positive essay called "My Mother Liked to Fuck," but I didn't assume she meant it was okay for me to like it.

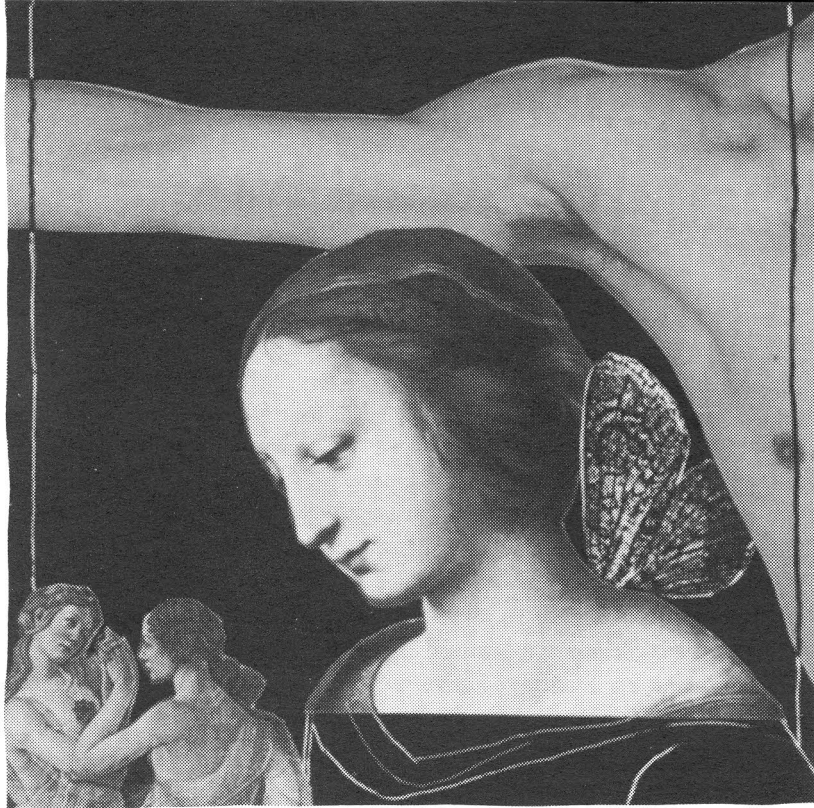
I knew that some (many?) dykes would assume I had become radically Other through the deceptively simple act of taking a male lover. I knew they would come up with a range of patronizing or condemnatory explanations for my behavior, explanations of a different order than would have been invoked by any but my ex-lover's closest friends were my new lover a woman. I also knew, viscerally, that I was not all that different, that my life before and after the "crash" was on a continuum. I felt that if some lesbians did not like the Jan Clausen who manifested the capacity to love a man, then they had never really liked Jan Clausen, for we were not two separate women. I bitterly resented the double standard which dictated that dykes should embrace a Virginia Woolf, an Eleanor Roosevelt, a Muriel Rukeyser as long-lost lesbian sisters given their sometime love for women, but would cast me into the outer darkness

because of my refusal to pledge eternal allegiance to the cunt.

Paradoxically, while I was able to draw strength from this intuition of ultimate wholeness, I was simultaneously plunged into an experience of profound discontinuity, my basic sense of who I was called into question. This experience, I believe, casts a novel and potentially valuable light on lesbian identity as it has been constructed by lesbian-feminists over the past two decades, since that identity has usually been discussed either from the perspective of women bidding a relieved goodbye to heterosexual life or from that of those securely ensconced within a lesbian world. Besides, it makes a good human interest story, full of dramatic irony. It is also some version of the story of more and more lesbians who are rethinking the exclusivity of their sexual orientation.

For all these reasons, I want to set down some of the contradictory feelings, startling juxtapositions, and no-win situations I've confronted since becoming involved with a man. This is difficult to do without divulging details about my past and current relationships which are nobody's business, but I'm going to try anyway, with the understanding that the account will have to be partial.

TO BEGIN WITH the literal level, the physical: I feel like Tiresias, in the weird position of being able to make a direct comparison between two very different forms of sexual pleasure. After all those years of joining in on the casual putdowns of heterosex that are a lesbian version of locker room talk, it's startling to discover how much I enjoy the *specific* things that two diversely sexed bodies can do together. I also enjoy a new feeling of specialness which hints at a hidden rivalry I hadn't suspected in lesbian lovemaking: my



two small breasts suddenly without competition, my softness the softest. At the same time, I feel newly vulnerable in my body, not because of what my lover says or does but just because we don't share the physical being around which a damning mythology of female impurity has been constructed. I no longer casually complain of premenstrual symptoms, announce as part of the day's news that I got my period. I don't shave my hairy legs, but I feel defensive about them.

I mentally compare the two kinds of love-making to two literary genres, poetry and fiction (lesbian sex is, of course, poetry), or to choreographic styles. Sex with my male lover astonishes me by its physical directness. So far (and how can I tell to what extent this might be attributable to something about heterosexuality, rather than something about our two personalities?), it seems much less dependent on some delicate emotional balance than what I've experienced with women. It's intense, inventive, very much what I want, yet that doesn't mean that I don't privately apply some version of the standard lesbian critique of heterosexual practice: why must everything have a beginning, middle, and end, in that order? For months it makes me uneasy to be touched or gone down on, since those things remind me of being with a woman; oddly, "intercourse" at first feels like less of a betrayal.

It's a shock to find myself once again facing problems I dimly recall from my heterosexual youth, built-in inequities I thought I'd cleverly sidestepped by choosing my own kind. Suddenly, out of two people in a bed, *I'm* the one elected to run the risk of unwanted pregnancy. Out of a pair drawn together by deliciously mutual lust, *I'm* the one who, by physiological law, will occasionally be left dangling at the moment of someone else's climax.

The emotional disparities are equally unsettling. To judge from my recent experience, that old saw about men not sharing feelings has a lot of truth to it. Or rather, their assumptions about when and how and how much to share are so wildly divergent from women's that the two sexes might have been socialized on different planets. At times this comes as a clear relief to me, after years of analyzing to death every slightest stirring of affect. I am learning other ways to be close. But at times it just feels lonely.

I know that I love my lover as a man; to claim that I love him as a "person" would be a transparent evasion, and to say that I'd like him to be who he is only female would be both nonsensical and a lie. Yet at times when we make love, I feel so close to his pleasure that I have the illusion of experiencing his feelings, and when that happens I say to myself that it's as though I were making love with a woman, and I am very happy. I want my separation and my fusion, too.

I miss my ex-lover's body, but that missing is inseparable from all my missing of her. I no longer feel, as I did in my early 20s when I lived with a man following a first brief lesbian affair, that it would be terrible to die without touching a woman again. Sometimes I wonder where that urgency went. For the time being, I take casual erotic interest in members of my sex. I notice myself noticing femmes much more, after years of liking butches, and wonder whether indulging my own femininity to the hilt has freed some latent butch impulse. I wonder also about the astonishing malleability of my sexual inclinations: am I some sort of weirdo, or is it just that most people are a lot more complicated

Heterosex ironically represents for me the anarchic power of the erotic.

than the common wisdom of either gay or straight society encourages us to think?

Increasingly, I recognize myself as the creature not merely of two sexual worlds, but of two cultures. Sometimes this is a fairly superficial matter of style: imagine my dismay the first time I found myself on the IRT express the morning after a night with my new lover, and noticed that I was reading *The Guardian* while he was buried in *Monthly Review*—I thought the Male Left I'd always been warned about had me in its toils for sure!

On the other hand, my increasing contacts with straight people (mostly in politically radical, feminist-influenced circles where I was known as a lesbian before my current relationship) often bring to my attention subtle and not-so-subtle ways in which my experience and that of "my" lesbian and gay community are neither seen nor understood, despite good intentions. This is sad and frustrating, and makes me glad to spend time in lesbian and gay settings where I'm very much at home—except that I'm on the lookout for criticism. I also have a tendency to poke and prod my consciousness to make sure I'm still sufficiently gay-identified to react appropriately to issues that no longer affect me so directly as they would have when I was with a woman.

The truth is that I don't quite belong in either place. And though the boundaries between the two worlds seem to have blurred somewhat in the last five or ten years, I still too often have to choose to be in one setting or the other.

I experience the usual horrors of dissolving a very long-term lesbian relationship, in the particular form that falls to the lot of she-who-leaves. But the anger, the guilt, the worry over consequences to family members—above all, the pain of losing a piece of one's life—all are complicated by "the man issue." Stunned by the emotional dissonance produced by starting a new relationship before finishing the old one, I'm only partly able to trust my instinctive sense that it's "infidelity," not my new lover's maleness, that underlies my feeling of being in the wrong.

I do feel wrong; bad; a bad person. One day when I finally take in how strong these negative judgements are, I am able to name them accurately. I realize that my feelings of guilt amount to a form of self-hatred.

I remind myself that *I am still a woman*. As the song says, "They can't take that away from me." Startled, I perceive how crazily tangled my identities had become, so that being my (woman) lover's lover was synonymous with being a lesbian was synonymous with being female. My sense of vertigo comes partly from the fear of losing all at once.

My new relationship affords an exhilarating sensation of risk-taking only partially attributable to the fact that it involves physical acts which lesbian-feminism has placed beyond the bounds of its revisionist norm of healthy womanhood. At this moment in the dialectic, heterosex ironically represents for me the anarchic power of the erotic, in contrast to the bourgeois respectability of a stable lesbian family unit. Without denying that I chose to live in that unit, and that there are aspects of it which I now miss profoundly, I come to see that it was to an extent I found oppressive a unit of *production*. As such, it was heavily organized around the care and feeding of feminist institutions, the needs of a growing child, the manufacture and distribution of an unending stream of feminist theory, criticism, poetry, and fiction. It mirrored in form what it seemed to negate in content: the middle-class nuclear family I grew up in.

By contrast, my love affair with a man is "without issue," utterly useless to the world at large: just what gay relationships are so often accused of being. It upsets the established order, and therefore initially pleases almost no one except the two of us. It belongs unequivocally in the realm of private life, an exquisite relief to me after years of feeling like a walking revolutionary project.

Reactions from other lesbians run the gamut from a curiosity that seems to border

on mild envy of my daring ("Maybe I ought to try it—no man could hurt me worse than X and Y and Z did," is typical here) to the rigid rejection of my nightmares. Mostly, my friends are helpful. Both they and more remote acquaintances are quite eager to discuss their own experiences with men. Overnight, I seem to have become the repository of heterosexual confessions, the occasion for articulating thoughts about areas of their lives that lesbians don't frequently discuss with one another.

On the other hand, the venerable tradition of shunning and excommunication is alive and well. It's true that nobody but my ex-lover chooses to rub my nose in the classic ideological critique of my behavior. However, two friends of hers who had also been my friends express their support for her by cutting me off cold, an extreme of conduct I have to assume they justify on the basis of my new lover's sex. And I hear the secondhand stories. "I've defended you," a friend reassures me. "Defended me from what?" "Oh, I was at this party. Some women you don't know were talking about you, saying you'd left your lover and run off with a man." *But I'm still living right here on 11th Street*, I thought.

One of my favorite responses came from a close friend who remarked, after meeting said man, "I realize I'd somehow imagined he'd be *tall*—I guess I must have exaggerated the stereotypical male qualities." In other words, she'd pictured me with a Generic Member of the Opposite Sex, which is pretty much how I suspect most lesbians are inclined to view the relationship. I find it striking that I'm rarely asked what it means

to me that my lover is black, though I often feel the racial difference is at least as charged with tension, fascination, promise, and difficulty as is the sexual one. In addition, there's the fact that he's from another country, which contributes to the quality of familiarity-within-otherness that for me is a special power of our connection: hello, stranger, don't I know you from someplace? The dynamics of this love affair are so much more complicated than the technically accurate bulletin "lesbian gets involved with straight man" would suggest.

As vastly different (and incommensurable) as our experiences are, there's a kind of symmetry in our identities: both of us are people who have known oppression and privilege in the world, in ways that enter the relationship. If it's going to work, both of us have to keep trying to understand new things; each of us has to stand behind the other's liberation. My own efforts to do this are shaped in crucial ways by lessons I learned in lesbian-feminist circles, through struggles with my own and others' racism, through friendships with women of color, through reading Third World feminist writing.

Meanwhile, back on the sexual identity front, the dilemma of terminology takes up a ridiculous amount of energy, both my own and other people's. "But what do you *call* yourself?" dykes keep anxiously prodding, until the lack of a label seems like more of an embarrassment than the actual behavior. (I'm reminded of stories I've read about the disgrace and discomfiture associated with being "kiki"—neither butch nor femme—in lesbian circles in the 1950s.) I feel put on the spot when a lesbian organizer solicits my endorsement of her group's demonstration, then insists I identify myself as a lesbian on the leaflet; I end up telling her the story of my life over the telephone. I feel put on the spot again when a lesbian editor solicits a coming out poem of mine for inclusion in an anthology of gay and lesbian poetry. It's clear to me, however, that the poem in question is a lesbian poem, and I'm furious when another lesbian passionately denounces me for "lack of

The lack of a label seems like
more of an embarrassment than
the actual behavior.

I invent ironic self-descriptions: Stateless Person of the Sexual World. Lesbian-feminist Emeritus. Twilight Girl.

ethics" because I agree to the inclusion.

I discover that I have to keep on coming out to straight people—not in so many words, perhaps, but the method hardly matters. When I describe the plots of my novels, when I challenge heterosexist assumptions, when I explain how it is I have a daughter without having been a biological mother, naturally I'm viewed as a dyke. Currently, I'm fast becoming the semi-official lesbian at the institution where I teach: there are other women on the faculty who have female lovers in the here and now, but I've got the rep. Of course I sometimes feel like an impostor. Yet when I tell straight people I have a male lover, I feel doubly exposed, my sexuality open to prurient speculation not only because I've done unspeakable things with women, but because I apparently couldn't live without the almighty penis.

I decide that this difficulty in devising appropriate labels is merely the most obvious symptom of an underlying process marked by many layers of ambiguity, which might aptly be termed *identity loss*. I amuse myself by inventing ironic self-descriptions, metaphors for my non-identity: Stateless Person of the Sexual World. Tragic Mulatto of the Sexual World. Lesbian-feminist Emeritus. Twilight Girl. In conversations with myself, I make reference to "my interesting condition"—that old-fashioned euphemism for pregnancy which seems to me to convey not only the thinly veiled, at times intrusive, curiosity with which others regard me, but my own hopes for extracting meaning from the mess.

THERE'S AN OBVIOUS solution to my dilemma over labels, and perhaps to the deeper questions as well. Why don't I simply accept my bisexuality, proclaim it to the world, and perhaps become active in some sort of group?

Throughout much of my adult life, the insights of identity politics have shaped my world view, informing my activism, my writing, and in many respects the conduct of my

most intimate relationships. I've been privileged to know many brilliant, principled women who've used the precept that "the most profound and potentially the most radical politics come directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else's oppression"* as though it were a surgeon's scalpel with which to dissect experience in the interests of healing. Given this, it may seem peculiar that I would willingly remain in identity limbo.

On the other hand, I've often felt uneasy about the intensity of the lesbian-feminist focus on identity. It sometimes leads to an obsessive narrowing of perspective. Stress on the potential for change in individuals and social structures is too often abandoned in favor of an essentialist preoccupation with what one "is," as defined by an ever-growing list of measures. At the worst, I've seen paranoid opportunists wield simplistic political theory—and their own identities—as though these were blunt instruments with which to discipline adversaries.

I now experience a foreboding of exhaustion at the prospect of digging out, dusting off, "dealing with," polishing up, inhabiting, and promoting yet another identity. I do not want to become an identity junkie, hooked on the rush that comes with pinning down the essential characteristic that, for the moment, seems to offer the ultimate definition of the self, the quintessence of oppression, the locus of personal value—only to be superseded by the next revelation.

I have a second problem with "identifying" as bisexual, even as I accept the term as a technical description of my sexuality. I do not know what "bisexual" desire would be, since my desire is always for a specifically sexed and gendered individual. When I am with a

*See "The Combahee River Collective Statement" in Barbara Smith ed., *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (Latham, NY: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983).



Monica Thwaites

In choosing to love a man, it was, on some level, chaos itself I needed to invoke.

woman, I love as a woman loves a woman, and when I am with a man, I love as a woman loves a man. So bisexuality is not a sexual identity at all, but a sort of anti-identity, a refusal (not, of course, conscious) to be limited to one object of desire, one way of loving.

British feminist Jacqueline Rose has argued for recognition of a "*resistance to identity*" which lies at the very heart of psychic life." Basing her discussion on elements of Freudian and subsequent psychoanalytic theory, she paints a picture of identity as a deceptively smooth facade hiding an endless turmoil of contradictory impulses and desires. Socially powerful groups have a stake in promoting the illusion of unconflicted identity because the maintenance of their power depends on keeping in place a constellation of apparently fixed, "natural," immutable social relationships and psychological postures. She spots an irony in the feminist tendency to view psychic conflict as "either an accident or an obstacle on the path to psychic and sexual continuity—a continuity which we, as feminists, recognize as a myth of our culture only to reinscribe it in a different form on the agenda..."*

I suggest that when we assume lesbian identity to be unambiguous, when we are dismayed to discover attractions to men co-existing with woman-loving, we reinscribe in a different form a prevailing cultural myth about sexuality—one which the early gay liberation movement, with its emphasis on exploration and human variety, attempted to debunk. Rose's argument did help me understand my suspicion that in choosing to love a man, it was, on some level, chaos itself I needed to invoke. It confirms my reluctance to hurriedly replace my lost identity. It also encourages me to inquire how that identity functioned in my life. What benefits made it worth my while to ignore contradiction and conflict? (It's worth re-emphasizing that I'm focusing on what it meant to me to be a lesbian-feminist, as opposed to what it meant to be lovers with a woman.)

One answer to the question is suggested by my nagging feeling that in getting involved with a man, as I put it to myself, I

stopped being golden. I cannot explain this feeling in rational terms, since I always cast a jaundiced eye on theories of the natural superiority of women, ridiculed separatism, and was vocal about the flaws in lesbian politics and culture. Nevertheless, being a lesbian-feminist apparently provided me with a sense of special worth which is palpable in its absence, and which I don't believe I will ever get back, no matter the future course of my love life. Apparently I bought into the superstitious notion that oppression is destiny, and the more oppressed the more politically valuable and morally admirable the person. My identity was both a membership in an elite sorority and a lavender badge of courage which partially compensated for a lot of things I disliked about myself, like class background and skin color.

I see this quite clearly when I think about my writing: when I felt that my work was *only* that of a woman who is white and middle-class, and consequently doubted what of any real and lasting interest I might have to say to the world about its predicament and its glory, I could take comfort in the fact that it was also the work of a lesbian, someone on the cutting edge. If I now say that my identity was part of an elaborate guilt management system, I don't mean to dismiss very real questions about the relationship of artistic insight to various forms of privilege, but rather to remind myself how damaging I've found this reductive approach to be. It makes me too cautious, leads me to veil my feelings, smothers whatever fire I may have in me to share, which is fueled by a subtle, infinitely nuanced combination of early experience and adult learning.

My lesbian identity also bestowed, I thought, a basic dignity that my gender had denied me. This was partly a practical matter—as a lesbian, I interacted less frequently with men, thereby avoiding a certain amount

* Jacqueline Rose, "Femininity and Its Discontents," *Feminist Review*, No. 14 (June, 1983). Italics added.

of sexism—but the symbolism was just as important to me. I was still a female in a patriarchal system, of course, subject to rape, unequal pay, and the tender mercies of the military-industrial complex. But I *felt* emancipated, felt I'd declared my independence and was therefore less compromised by my second-class status. When I contemplated the possibility of no longer being able to call myself a lesbian, what came to mind was the sense of humiliation I associated with being a straight woman.

My symbolic autonomy had its advantages, but now I actually feel far less helpless as a woman-in-relation-to men than I'd anticipated. I believe this evolution has its parallels in the experience of many lesbians who have become re-involved in friendships and working situations with men, following a period of de facto separatism.

If I'm to begin to account for where I've ended up, I need to touch on another dimension of my experience. This is difficult, because it involves my intense anger at women, an anger I would like to neutralize with reasoned analysis, and of course am unable to. The truth is that the lesbian-feminist way of life I knew was very hard on women, yet we were not supposed to notice or complain about that fact. We were supposed to content ourselves with our elect status and the glory of our exhausting service.

I got trashed. I watched friends get trashed. I watched feminist institutions consume staggering quantities of energy and time and go under anyway. I saw a lot of people I loved leave town, which would have been more bearable if so many of them hadn't stopped speaking or writing to each other and to me, for one or another political/personal reason. I saw the destructive pressure on lesbian couples that comes from treating people as political symbols. (A ludicrous but

believable example of this: a friend was urged to stay in a difficult relationship in order to provide a positive example of an interracial couple.) Of course all of this happened in a context of oppression; I'm not saying we simply did it to ourselves. Yet I wish we could have been gentler with one another, and more honest about how hard and sometimes disillusioning it was.

This essay is not "The Goddess That Failed." I'm in no way arguing that you can't live a really good life in a community of women—only that my own experience in a particular community of women convinces me that all human connections are risky, fragile, and non-ideal. Do what you feel like doing—to hell with living by theory!

But isn't that just a convenient excuse for beating a retreat into heterosexual privilege and general wishy-washiness (as my old self might have argued)? I doubt it, at least in my case. Anybody who thinks relationships between black men and white women enjoy a lot of societal approval should study the recent murder of Yusuf Hawkins, a black youth gunned down several miles from my apartment by a gang of whites upset by what the papers refer to as "interracial dating."

It seems to me, however, that there's a much deeper and more painful issue buried here, that of the division between women who can "pass" and those who can't, between women who love women but *appear* less threatening to the straight world and women who from an early age fit the stereotype of the butch lesbian and are brutally punished for it.

Because my core sexuality is fluid, I never experienced the childhood terror of being a queer in a heterosexual universe (I felt different, all right, but not because of my sexuality). As a result, loving women seemed like an adventure, not something to be hidden or agonized over. And once I came out, I rarely got hassled on the street the way my lover did, no matter how short my hair was. I believe it's this sort of disparity in lesbian experience that gets encoded in a lot of the angry discussions about "dykes who sleep with men," in a way that's reminiscent of the very painful tensions among people of color

I do not want to become an
identity junkie.

The truth is that the lesbian-feminist way of life I knew was very hard on women.

involving skin tone, class, and access to the dominant culture.

A close friend who's been a great support to me since I became involved with a man gave voice to a poignant moment of insecurity which perhaps crystallizes the terror behind this issue: "You get the feeling maybe pretty soon you'll be the only one left." I think I will remember that remark long after I've dismissed all the punitive, judgmental "don't you dare's"; I record it here precisely because it is a feeling, and, as such, is in some absolute sense unanswerable, except by a social transformation which could remove the need for anyone to experience dread or loneliness because of sexual choices.

I find that my own loneliness lessens as I continue to insist on being all the parts of who I am. I recently attended New York's Lesbian and Gay Pride March—an event I'd avoided in Year One of my interesting condition—and found to my great pleasure that I felt very much at home. Here, surging down Fifth Avenue, was a grand celebration of human diversity, an infinite shading of inclination—the diametric opposite of narrow correctness. Who could resist this, I thought, who wouldn't want to be a part of this? But I know full well how many are itching to destroy it.

Several weeks later, I participated in an abortion rights demonstration held in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's Webster decision. At the rally in Foley Square and on the march uptown, I saw people I knew from many different lives: old comrades, lesbian and straight, from my days in the Committee for Abortion Rights and Against Sterilization Abuse (CARASA); new friends from the Central America solidarity movement; a gay man who'd briefly been my roommate, and who had helped calm my fears of being an outcast from gay civilization; co-workers from the patchwork of jobs that support my writing habit. I marched part way with a black feminist film critic I'd met recently, talking about teaching, writing, and Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*.

As we neared Foley Square, a young, tall, white gay man with a round, pleasant face

came up to me and said he'd just finished reading my novel. His enthusiasm produced the confused rush of pleasure strangers' praise for my writing usually generates, mixed with the relief I experience these days in knowing that no matter how shaky my sense of self, my lesbian books are out there in the world, speaking their piece.

Suddenly, the crowd sat down in the street. I thought of my first civil disobedience arrest many years ago, when I was still in college. The mood seemed similar now—spontaneously militant in a way that felt downright old-fashioned. A lot of things could happen. In the next block, an ACT UP contingent was exercising its First Amendment rights, burning a small flag. The gay man turned to me. "What would they do if they knew we were all dykes and faggots?" he grinned. I smiled back, wondering for a moment what my fan would do if he realized this dyke was sleeping with a man. Then I let the worry go. All of us came from such incredibly different places, and here we were together. I knew I was exactly where I wanted to be. ▼

Jan Clausen is the author of Sinking, Stealing (Crossing Press, 1985), The Prosperine Papers (Crossing Press, 1988), and Books & Life (Ohio State University Press, 1989). After putting this essay into the mail, she immediately rushed home and got to work on her next writing project, a collection of short stories.

About the artist: Monica Thwaites is a Vancouver glass and graphic designer who also owns a children's mural painting business.

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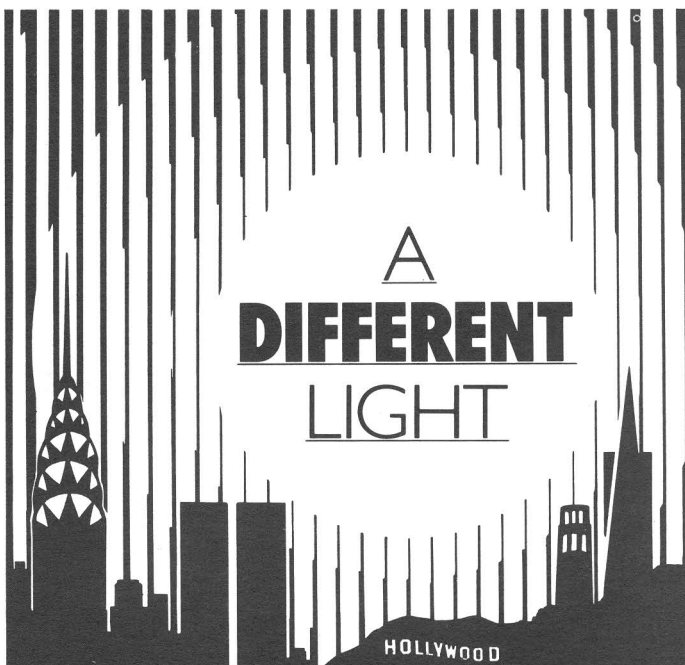
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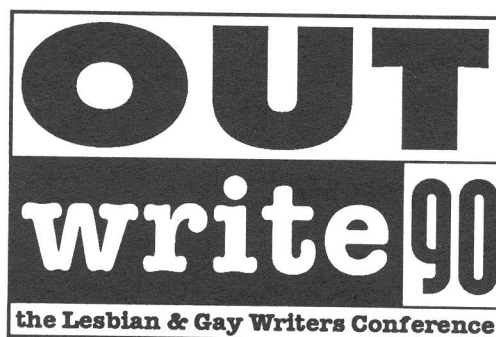
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Bérubé, Judy Grahn, and Barbara Smith.

FAMILY IS BELOVED by persons of all cultures, but for Latinos, having blood or fictive kin in the same house, or at least nearby, is perhaps even more precious.

My friend Chenco (a nickname for Juvencio) lives with his Nana, or grandmother, and his lover Marco in Compton, near Los Angeles. Until two years ago, Chenco was a classic closet-case, living at home with his parents, working all day for the phone company and studying at night for his degree. Although he had been swirling through the triple X, all-adult bookstores seeking quick thrills for years, he says he never expected to develop a relationship with a man.

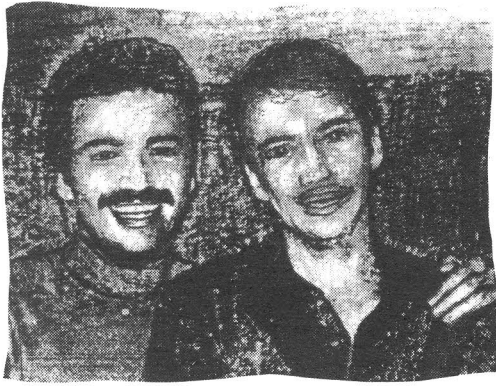
At 28, Chenco was a model son. Both of his parents worked, his mother for the local school district and his father for a transportation company. Nana, Chenco's mother's mother, had come to live with the family in the mid-sixties, when Chenco's mother had gallstones. Seeing how useful she was to the family, Nana had felt obligated to give in to her daughter's request that she stay in Compton and let a foreman run her ranch back in Mexico. Gloria, the daughter, thought she was doing her mother a great favor, moving her out of the dusty Sonora desert.

Chenco met Marco in 1978 when Marco followed him out

of a bookstore. It was Chenco's first experience saying more than a few words to a gay man. The fact that the 23-year-old Marco was not only butch, but of Mexican origin like himself, at first disturbed, then later delighted Chenco.

Unlike Chenco's upbringing, which was solidly middle-class and suburban, Marco's had taken place on the streets and in the dully painted institutions of the California Youth Authority. The first time Marco had gone to Juvenile Hall, his mother had moved back to Mexico with her boyfriend, not even saying good-bye. His father, Marco could not remember. Introduced non-violently to gay sex at 13 in a juvenile ward, Marco had developed an open, robust bisexual identity, but secretly preferred men. It was a preference he kept to himself.

Although Chenco and Marco had met in the tawdry circumstances of the semen-stained bookstore, a genuine feeling existed between them from the moment they first spoke. They exchanged phone numbers, began meeting regularly, and a relationship bloomed. Chenco would go for long cruises in Marco's low-ride '63 Impala, listening to music with his hand on Marco's leg. Sometimes they would park at the beach or in Griffith Park and make love in the front seat. On Chenco's paydays, he would



Chenchu would go for long cruises in Marco's Impala, listening to music with his hand on Marco's leg.

splurge on a nice dinner out and a motel, where they could enjoy each other in comfort and at leisure. As time went on, they grew to love one another and could not bear to be apart more than a day or two at a time.

Their lovemaking flourished as Marco taught Chenchu how much more there was to a man than what could be discovered in a bookstore. Chenchu, in turn, began to educate Marco about the hazards of shooting up drugs and living life in the shadows. Because of love, the two became a bit more like each other, grew less extreme, more centered and content. Marco introduced Chenchu to drag shows and other nightlife, and Chenchu took Marco to his first professional basketball game to see Kareem.

Unfortunately, Marco's years in correctional facilities had also inducted him into the tragic "family" of intravenous drug users. Sticking a needle full of cocaine or crystal methamphetamine in his arm or thigh was as much a part of Marco's life as going to bookstores or cruising a certain park in his Impala, looking for sex. Since work was hard to come by for an ex-con with tattoos covering most of both forearms, Marco was a thief, a drug dealer, a smuggler, and sometimes even a hustler—and none of these by his own choice. Of necessity,

Marco lived in a rented, run-down house with up to eight other people, all of them involved in the smuggling and sale of Mexican heroin.

One day when Marco was broke and "jonesing" for a quick fix, he tried to sell his blood plasma at a vampire shop that deals in blood products in downtown L.A. He was turned down flat because a previous "donation" he had made had come up positive for the HIV virus. Although Marco did not know much about virology, he recognized the name of the virus that causes AIDS and immediately called Chenchu at work.

Later that day, sitting in Marco's low-rider in the parking lot at PacBell, Chenchu tried to reassure his partner. He told him not worry, that he would get tested right away, and that no matter what happened, he would take care of it. They devised a code: if Chenchu tested positive, he would tell Marco the Los Angeles Lakers lost their basketball game; if he were negative he'd say they won, since both Marco and Chenchu were big Lakers fans.

They also agreed on one other thing. If Chenchu were negative, he would take care of Marco until he became very sick, then would help him overdose with heroin and die in peace. If they were both posi-

tive, Chenchu made Marco promise to "blow his brains out" with his .38 snub-nose before injecting himself with the lethal dose. They made this pact calmly and without emotion because both felt they were *muy hombre* and thus not afraid of death, only dishonor. Now they admit they couldn't face their own terror then, and the suicide pact gave them a sense of control.

TWO WEEKS after that conversation, Chenchu left work early to make his appointment at the county health services office that does anonymous HIV testing.

When he got home, Chenchu recalls he was "sweating like a pig" because he was wearing a long-sleeved dress shirt and a tie. He turned the key and let himself into the large yellow suburban tract house, hoping his Nana would be asleep and no one else would be home.

Seeing that the house was quiet, Chenchu went into the kitchen, took the receiver off the wall phone, punched in a number, then waited with exasperation while the phone rang four times and a man's voice on the recording answered.

"This is for Marco," he whispered. "The Lakers lost again."

As he stepped back into the

dining area, Nana swept into the room and embraced him warmly. It's impossible to guess, by looking at her, that Katarina Yacovna de Villalpando has lived a life of great hardship. Self-educated but well read, she can play Chopin on the piano, make lace by hand, and is skilled in both Mexican and Jewish cuisines. Well over 90, she recently decided to take a home-study course to improve her English, and insists on practicing it.

As she had her favorite grandchild in her embrace, Dōña Katarina noted that his face was sweaty, but pale, and asked him about the heat. He mumbled something about going upstairs to take a shower.

Nana started to mention how she'd gotten a good deal on canna lilies from the nice Nissei gentleman at the nursery, but her voice trailed off as Chencho looked impatient and uninterested. The two of them looked at each other for a long moment before she spoke again. "*Mijo*, the Lakers won last night, I hear on the radio," she said.

Without another word, he kissed her cheek, chugged down the rest of the Miller and left in a hurry.

Nana watched him run up the stairs, two at a time, with deep concern. She wondered why Chencho, who had never missed a day of work, even

when he was really sick, would lie just so he could sit around and drink beer. In the past year or so, he had become noticeably distant and often seemed depressed, lonely, and worried, as he had today. He spent a great deal of time talking on the private phone line he'd had installed in his room. The tone of his voice a few minutes earlier chilled her skin.

Nana recalls having touched the silver *Chai* she wore around her neck and over her heart. Chanting in Hebrew in her mind, she beseeched the God of Abraham to keep her grandson well.

Deeply disturbed at Chencho's strange behavior, Doña Katarina forgot about fixing supper and climbed the stairs to door, which was shut. Raising her fist to rap on it, she stopped when she heard him talking on the phone. When Nana heard him discussing the double-suicide plan, she walked in and demanded to know what was going on.

SHE WAS so pissed off," Chencho recalls. "She said in Spanish, 'No one of my bloodline is a coward. No one takes a human life.'" Marco was still on the phone, and, at Nana's direction, Chencho asked him to come right over. In the mean-

time, he took his shower and Nana went back downstairs to start supper. Nana never let mere crisis keep her from her duty.

After Marco arrived, Nana sat them both down on Chencho's bed and told them the part of her story that she had believed she would take to her grave with her. "No one alive knows about this," she warned Chencho. "Not your mother, who is my only child, and not your grandfather, of blessed memory..."

Chencho protested that no matter what she was going to tell them, she could not possibly understand what it meant to be, as he called it, a "freak of nature." Nana silenced him with an upraised hand. "I'm going to tell you this and you're going to listen and believe, and forget all your stupidities," she said. "I know what you are. I have always known. Remember, it is you and not your mother who inherited my gray eyes. It is because of me that you are how you are, and I am no freak of nature."

So she told her tale: back in Mexico in the 1920s, Nana had married a widower she did not love because they were both lonely and each of them wanted to have a child. After their daughter, Gloria, was born, they had lived as partners and friends, not as husband and wife.

Although indignant tongues wagged in the nearby village,

"It is because of me that
you are how you are, and
I am no freak of nature."



Doña Katarina rode astride, never side-saddle, mended fences with her own hands, ate and drank with the ranch hands, and nursed many an ailing steer or riding horse back to health. As time went on, she earned the respect of the villagers and country folk alike, for she was a woman of personal ability, compassion, and courage.

Attentive of her responsibilities as a mother, Katarina taught Gloria how to read Spanish by the time she was three, then began to teach her English and Hebrew to broaden her understanding. Five years after their marriage, her husband Don Chuy, was killed by *gringo* border bandits who had swooped down on the small herd of horses he and two of his hands were driving into Hermosillo. Although theirs had not been an ideal marriage, Katarina grieved deeply and Gloria was inconsolable.

Shortly after Don Chuy's death, Doña Katarina had befriended a spinster who lived alone on a small ranch that had belonged to the woman's parents. Rosario Castillo had been a *soldada* in the Revolution, and was rumored to be a drunk, a Protestant, a witch, and the lover of Yaqui half-breed cowboys. As Katarina discovered, Rosario was

none of those things, but the tall, dark-skinned *mestiza* did have some peculiar habits. She spoke Yaqui fluently, dressed and laughed like a man, broke and trained horses for a living, punched her own cattle, hunted her own meat, and smoked hemp out of a corn-cob pipe.

A shrewd businesswoman, Rosario Castillo was known for the quality of her work and the beef she sold. Men who befriended her found her fair and friendly, but never social or coquettish. It was said that she had killed a man who had threatened her father when she was very young, and that she had been a fearless *soldada*. After the Revolution, Rosario had returned to her parents' homestead and cared for her widowed mother until the old woman's death. It was said she had dug her mother's grave with her own hands and that only the priest and a few Indians had been present for the wake and the funeral.

Bolstered by her friendship with Rosario, Katarina also befriended the Mayo and Yaqui peoples of the region, and began learning their languages. The Yaquis called her "Pa-Washiko-Imbecani," "White-Woman-with-Gifts." Rosario explained to them that Katarina was a

medicine woman from a distant tribe called Yehudim. Mixing western medicine with traditional Indian knowledge of the region, Doña Katarina became famous all over northern Sonora as a midwife, physician, and veterinarian.

The two women became inseparable, and Rosario soon became part of the crew at the ranch. At least twice a week, she would ride up at sunrise to work with Katarina's stock and men. She taught Gloria how to ride like a *charro* and how to train her horse to do rodeo tricks. As Gloria grew into womanhood, she did not seem to notice that there was great affection and respect between her mother and the strange, pipe-smoking woman who had befriended them.

When Gloria married the eldest son of a neighboring rancher, Katarina and Rosario threw a huge fiesta after the wedding. The two women ran the ranch for 20 more years after that. During that period, Gloria and her husband sold their ranch and moved to Los Angeles to seek new opportunities. When Gloria became ill with a serious case of gallstones, the ever-dutiful Katarina had come north to stay with the family.

That had been in the mid-six-



There was great affection and respect between her mother and the strange, pipe-smoking woman.



JORGE DEBACA

ties, and she had not returned in nearly 25 years. Each week she had received a letter from Rosario, and each week she'd gone into her room, lit a candle and read the letter aloud to herself by its flickering light. When Rosario died suddenly of a heart attack, Nana had taken to her bed for nearly a month, almost consumed with grief.

"And now," Nana said, "You will tell me I don't understand and that you have a right to throw away your life because you are sick? Did God not grant you the intelligence to know that one does not face fear with cowardice; one does not run away from the enemy, but stays and fights?"

Nana asked her daughter and son-in-law for a small loan and the three of them, Nana, Chencho, and Marco, went to Nana's old ranch in Sonora for nearly a year. "*Para que se les quite lo pendiente,*" she had said: "To knock the idiocy out of them."

Marco had been very sick for a few weeks, desperate for drugs, but he had to console himself with the marijuana that grew wild in the ditches near the river that ran through the ranch. "I still like the smell of it," Nana admits. "It reminds me so much of my Rosario." Each day, either Chencho or Marco drove Nana to Rosario's

little homestead, where she had been buried next to her mother by her Yaqui friends who lived nearby. Nana would sit and talk to her, leaving beans and tortillas with cheese the way she'd liked them. Sometimes she'd even leave a little of Marco's hemp along with a few flowers on the grave for Rosario to enjoy.

The three of them still live together; they spend their summers on the ranch and the rest of the time in Compton. Marco stays clean and sober through the 12 Steps of Narcotics Anonymous and has found a job as the night janitor at a department store. Chencho has completed the requirements for his engineering degree, and expects to land a promotion.

Although neither Marco nor Chencho drinks or does any drugs, they lead an active social life and take Nana with them nearly everywhere they go.

Each day both of them drink an herbal tea Nana brews for them from roots and herbs she gathers near the ranch. They watch their diets and stress levels, and give each other a great deal of love and comfort. They say they no longer live in fear of AIDS because they know they can count on each other, which in turn gives them hope. Most of all, they say, they have a

strong sense of family, because Nana is there, and Nana is in charge because she knows best. ▼

The story is true, but all of the names and some of the details have been changed to protect the privacy of this family. All three individuals gave their permission for the story to be written and published.

Adam Gettinger-Brizuela is a writer in the gay and Chicano communities who is interested in describing HIV disease in communities of color. He lives in San Diego.

About the artist: Born in Texas, raised in San Francisco, and educated in Los Angeles and Berkeley, Jorge Debaca produces artwork from table pieces to large wall hangings.

SEX, LIES, & PENETRATION

A Butch Finally 'Fesses Up

BY JAN BROWN

WHEN I WAS 17, I worked the street. I used to tell tricks that I would stay all night for \$100, that I would swallow for \$40, that I never came with anyone else but with them it was different.

I lied back then for survival. It was just good business. I got paid more.

The person I was back then has been dead for half a lifetime, but lately I've been thinking about more current lies. The lies about fucking and about sex that the person I became, and those like me, have told, have believed, got you to believe, and that all of us have needed for so long.

We've had our asses on the line for a long time. We're the dykes on the sexual edge, the radical fringe of lesbian. We started the dialogues on fucking, butch/femme, s/m, domi-

nance and submission—the how, the why and what it all meant. We spoke at workshops and conferences, did hours of counseling over beers or coffees, and started the support groups. Some of us wrote the books and made the videos. We all got shit on from great heights. We argued, explained, fought, consoled, and recruited.

We also lied a lot.

It's those lies that I've been thinking about lately. The lies we needed to tell and the lies we all needed to hear.

My first two girlfriends wouldn't let me fuck them. Penetration was not what lesbians did, I was told. With the exception of a menstrual sponge, entering a vagina with anything, even a finger, was what men did to us. Penetration represented the kind of inherently oppressive sex we were

trying to leave behind. Well-read girls knew that fucking was a vestige of the heteropatriarchal power structure. Women, we all knew, came by clitoral not vaginal stimulation.

The quicker thinking and cleverer among us pointed out that hets did cunnilingus too, but it still remained a relatively guilt-free mainstay of the correct lesbian.

We said that penetration which occurred between two women of inherent equality wasn't a metaphor for power imbalance. Because of their shared history as women, there was no difference between who was doing the fucking and who was getting fucked. The fuck was an equal exchange.

This explanation, originally viewed with suspicion, eventually relieved almost everybody.

The reality, for me and my

Fucking between equals is passionless.

kind, whatever we told you and whatever you believed, is that fucking between equals is passionless. Penetration without context is meaningless. Sex that is gentle, passive, egalitarian and bloodless does not move us. Lesbians were right to be so suspicious about penetration back then. There really is, in fact, no equality in penetration.

When we fuck, we possess. When we are fucked we become the possession. For some, it is the only time in our lives we can give up control as we are taken or achieve total control as we take.

REMEMBER WHEN we all agonized over our fantasies? For many years we struggled with the guilt about what we saw behind our closed eyelids. We would talk about our rape fantasies, our fascination with being overpowered. We'd talk with our hands over our eyes about our jerk-off routines. The image that took us by force was often male. We knew that in those guilt-ridden fantasies, the responsibility was no longer ours and there was no consent involved.

Many of us felt like traitors in the grip of, and betrayed by, non-lesbian, un-feminist and self-destructive sexual fantasies.

The party line, via Andrea Dworkin, and later, Shelia Jeffries, was that lesbians raised in a hetero-patriarchal society could not help but internalize oppression and turn it into self-

hate. Every lesbian was advised to examine and analyze her fantasies, recognize them for the damage they represented, and work to change them. Later (Jeffries again), the still aroused but guilt-ridden were directed to cease fantasizing at all. Apparently, divesting oneself of the taint of misogyny was impossible. The only answer was no fantasy at all.

Our side of the fringe, who looked like we were having a good time in spite of it all, were approached by lesbians who couldn't seem to abide by the no-fantasy party line edict. We explained to them that even though many of us might jerk off to gang rape, torture, daddy in our beds, and other undeniably incorrect imagery, it was really nothing to lose sleep over.

We emphasized the simple difference between fantasy and reality. We explained the control we had over our fantasies that we didn't have in the real situations. We did not lust after real rape, real incest or real torture. The pull was in our ability to finally direct what happened to us. The eroticism, we soothed, was in the power we had for the first time to control the uncontrollable.

Well, we lied. The power is not in the ability to control the violent image. It is in the lust we have to see how close we can get to the edge. It is in the lust to be overpowered, forced, hurt, used, objectified. We jerk

off to the rapist, the Hell's Angel, to daddy, to the Nazi, to the cop and to all the other images that have nothing to do with the kind of lesbian sex that entails murmurs of endearment, stroking of breasts and long slow tongue work. And, yes, we also dream of the taking. We dream of someone's blood on our hands, of laughing at cries for mercy. We wear the uniform and the gun, we haul our cocks out of our pants to drive into a struggling body. Sometimes, we want to give up to the strangler's hands. Sometimes we need to have a dick as hard as truth between our legs, to have the freedom to ignore "no" or to have our own "no" ignored.

Many of us graduated from the university of self-destruct. Some of us are street survivors, incest survivors. We lived with abusive boyfriends, or drifted through years of substance use. We carry many kinds of scars. All of us see ourselves as the "other," as the "alien queer." We each have our own history, but what links us is what we lust after. Those images, that sex, keeps us alive—out of prisons and locked wards, abusive relationships, and bad-odds fights in bars.

We don't need to be judged, pitied or analyzed. We practice the kind of sex in which cruelty has value, where mercy does not. We arrive at places where adrenalin inspires us. What keeps those of us who refused

Penetration without context is meaningless.



KRIS KOVICK

Dildos did not represent the penis.

to abandon our “unacceptable” fantasies sane is the knowledge that there are others like us who would not leave because we scream “Kill me” at the moment we orgasm.

We lied to you about controlling the fantasy. It is the lack of control that makes us come, that has the only power to move us.

Soon after the great vaginal penetration question was settled and the anti-fantasy faction was dealt with came the issue of the lavender silicone cucumber-shaped dildo.

Even though dykes had been using all kinds of dildos for years, no one talked about it. It was seen as bar-dyke and regressive, certainly not lesbian-feminist.

Few lesbians would admit to owning one. I can remember a screaming fight I had with someone at a pro-and-con porn workshop who was denouncing the use of dildos as, yet again, “What men do to us—not what lesbians do.”

I’d been told she kept hers in a shoe box under the bed.

Our answer was to explain that dildos were absolutely lesbian. They were our heritage and history, a link with those who had bravely gone before. Dildos did not represent the penis. Couldn’t we take ours off and put it in the drawer? It was a removable object purely for pleasure and did not endow its wearer with any innate ability to keep its recipient barefoot, in the kitchen or oppressed.

Then we threw away the

lavender silicone cucumbers. They were embarrassing and they broke. We bought bigger dildos, we wore them under our jeans (or our skirts). We bought the kind with simulated veins and balls from porn shops. We walked differently when we wore them to the bar. Girls bought us drinks, we used the men’s john. I named my collection of graduating sizes “The Tools of the Patriarchy.” We looked people in the eye when we had that bulge in our crotches. Some of us perfected our long-forgotten skills of rolling on a condom.

A very butch friend asked me for help in figuring out why she liked her femme girlfriend to fuck her with a dildo. “Nerve endings,” I told her. It meant she had the right anatomy to come from vaginal stimulation. And we were both happy with that lie. The reality is what we both knew, that we all want to be fucked senseless, as Sharon Olds points out in the *The Solution*. More that that, some of us need to be also taken sexually in a way only possible by being entered and used by a cock and what that represents. Because we are dykes, we want a dyke on the other end of that cock.

We lied to you and I lied to my friend. Plastic dicks represent much more than sex toys for pleasuring nerve endings in vaginas. When we strap one on, it becomes ours.

We found it difficult to lie to anybody about blow jobs,

though. Nobody would have believed us anyway. The imagery has no equality. A woman is on her knees, her throat is full, her lips are at the base of another woman’s cock. It is about the urge to dominate, take and degrade. It is about the fierce need to submit. To serve somebody. The hit is in the very lack of the traditionally erogenous. The throat has no nerve endings. The dick is, after all, man-made. The neurons firing in the mind make up for their lack. The heat is in the history. Context.

Remember when the whisper campaign about fist-fucking started? Fist-fucking, we were told, was violent and dangerous. Un-safe, un-natural, misogynistic and dangerous. Not true, we countered, and after all, it was at least queer (except for one friend I know who was introduced to it by imaginative bikers). Faggots fist-fucked each other in the ass—we fisted cunts and the occasional asshole. Fisting was natural, lesbian and safe, we reassured. Couldn’t babies’ heads come through that passage safely?

We developed technique. Small hands were prized. We became lubricant connoisseurs. Big hands became more prized—knuckles up, knuckles down, the ninety-degree twist. Fisting made a lie of the myth of the vaginal orgasm.

But okay (you were right) fisting is dangerous after all. Yes, we lied, but the danger is not in

Couldn't we take ours off and put it in the drawer?

The glorious and sacred myth of the stone butch.

the potential for soft tissue damage. The danger lies in the transformation from a body with an intellect to a body with a need. We realize we really are corporeal as well as intellectual and sometimes need overrides. Fisting is out-of-control sex. To be fisted is to be taken back to the animal—to what we were told we didn't ever want to become.

Then there is the ongoing and contentious great butch debate, or what I call the "Is my butch my boyfriend?" argument.

We always told you that, although we were butch, we really didn't want to be men. Butch was not synonymous with male we promised. Butches might look very masculine, but in reality we were butch women. There was, in fact, nothing male about us.

Guess what? Right again. We lied. There is little "woman" left in us.

Even though many of my butch buddies "pass" on the street, most of us, me included, couldn't hang out safely with the boys at the pool hall without breast reduction and a handgun. Still, we do not think of ourselves as women. Or, in fact, as lesbians.

Now I'm not talking about middle-of-the-road androgynous, butchy types here. I'm talking "other" again. When we hook up with another butch sexually, we are faggots. When we have a girlfriend, we become her man.

We become male, but under our own terms, our own rules. We define the maleness. We invent the men we become.

So now I guess it's time to get

around to that most cherished and well-loved old lie about butches, the one I and most of the rest of us out here on the edge told ourselves for so long we almost believed it. The lie that destroyed a few of us along the way. The one that says butches don't need to get fucked.

Like faggots who only cruise "straight" men, we are accused of being the homophobes in our community. We are told we are the dykes who hate women, who deny our own sexual feelings because they are women's feelings, who therefore must always be the active, never the passive in the fuck.

The glorious and sacred myth of the stone butch. Lesbian herstory and all that. It's the lie we tell that says butches don't hunger too for someone who would know what we needed instead of believing what we told them we wanted. And who could take us down.

The truth, for many stone butches, is that we failed as women early on. Butch is who we are, but also who we had to become. The existence of an individual sexual need in us is incongruous to the women we almost invariably choose as partners—the successful-as-female lesbians.

We have a horror of the pity-fuck. We cannot face the charity of the mercy orgasm or the thought of the contempt in our partner's eyes when we have allowed them to convince us that they really do want to touch us, to take us, that they really do want to reach behind our dick and into the cunt we both wish did not exist.

The myth of the stone butch says that we don't need, that the sexual gratification we get is from doing the fucking.

Girls, we lied to you for years. We knew you wouldn't want it any other way. The price a butch pays for getting fucked, real or imaginary, has been more than many of us can bring ourselves to pay. Living the lie makes us harder than stone.

So, there it is. You suspected us all along anyway, didn't you? We did lie—but we told you what you wanted to hear and sometimes what we needed to hear, too.

Those of us out here on the edge were the ones who talked about sex when nobody else did, wrote about it, put ourselves on the line and tried to figure out what it all might mean. You ridiculed us, you laughed at us, you lied about us, you copied our clothes, you protested against us, but you jerked off over us. Ultimately, some of you joined us.

And why tell all of this and why now? Not that any of us feel guilty, you understand. It's just that some of us were believing our own mythology. Losing ourselves in our own lies, losing ourselves in our yearning to cease being "the other."

I like the smell of the truth and maybe we need a whiff of it. Once in a while. ▼

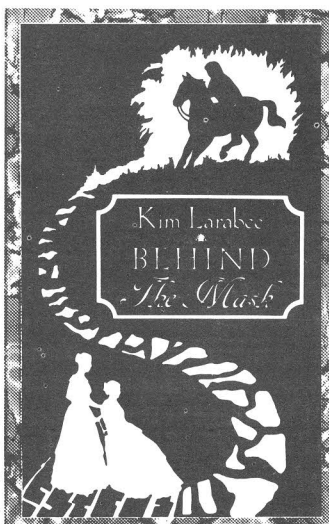
Jan Brown lives in Vancouver, Canada. She's not enough of a cynic to give up wearing leather.

About the artist: San Francisco-based cartoonist Kris Kovick is a femme top who believes you can still be butch without having to give up being a bimbo.

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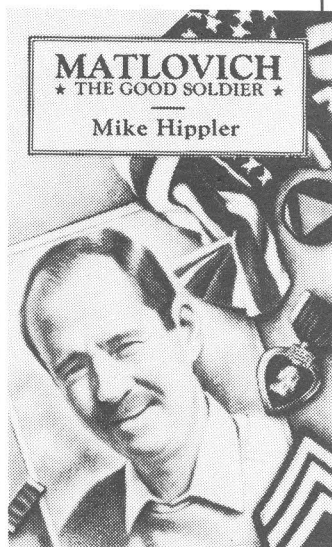
"If you have a yen for vicarious adventure, low-key intrigue and some nicely done erotica, *Behind the Mask* is just the sort of spritely romp you're looking for." Lee Lynch, author and syndicated columnist

THE BUCCANEER, by M.S. Hunter, \$9.00. The pirates of the seventeenth-century Caribbean created history's only predominantly gay society. In this well-researched novel, M.S. Hunter presents the exploits of Tommy the Cutlass and his shipload of randy buccaneers. Join them as they get involved with some of the past's most notorious individuals — and most exciting adventures. This is historical fiction at its swashbuckling best.

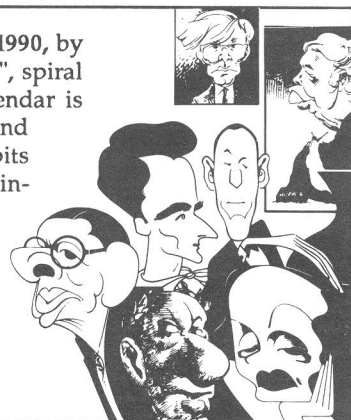
A DIFFERENT KIND OF HERO

MATLOVICH, by Mike Hippler, \$9.00 trade paperback, \$16.00 cloth-bound. Air Force Sergeant Leonard Matlovich appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine when he was discharged for being gay — and decided to fight back. This courageous activist did not fit the usual gay stereotype, and his outspoken, generally conservative views created controversy over his role as a community leader. Mike Hippler has written, with Matlovich's cooperation, the definitive biography of this gay hero.

"A surprisingly intimate and revealing account of one man's transformation from conservative military man to militant gay activist." — Cleve Jones, Executive Director of The Names Project



THE GAY DESK CALENDAR, 1990, by Michael Willhoite, \$11.00, 7" x 10", spiral bound. This handsome desk calendar is fun to read, beautiful to look at, and easy to use. Each week is full of bits of gay and lesbian history and includes a caricature of one of our more notable personalities drawn by *Washington Blade* caricaturist Michael Willhoite. *The Gay Desk Calendar* makes an attractive gift that will be used all year long.



OUR LIVES

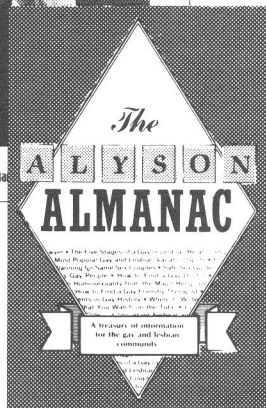
LONG TIME PASSING, by Marcy Adelman, ed., \$8.00. Here, in their own words, women talk about age-related concerns: the fear of losing a lover; the experience of being a lesbian in the 1940s and 50s; the issues of loneliness and community. Most contributors are older lesbians, but several younger voices are represented.

"A ground-breaking, life-changing triumph." — *Women's Review of Books*

THE ALYSON ALMANAC, by Alyson Publications staff, \$7.00. This new almanac for gay and lesbian readers carries the tradition of "Poor Richard" into a new era.

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The End of the Season

WELL, ANOTHER summer's practically gone and I haven't written a word. I'm a lazy pig. I admit it. Here it is the eve of our last day. Won't you please meet Cheezy and Jo, the goodtime gals who own the place. They're hard drinking lesbians of the old school. It's their first summer in the tourist trade. How'd they get here? Won Lotto. Used the money to finance their dream: landowning. Found it plenty cheap and pretty right here in Loon Lake, Saskatchewan. And it ain't got a speck to do with that novel by Doctorow.

Cheezy and Jo hired some locals to help 'em build the cabins. They only completed five. The locals were appalled when they saw the color scheme, and ran off. Who in their right mind painted lake houses sixteen thousand fluorescent shades? But Cheezy and Jo got a deal on some indoor/outdoor Day-Glo and figured what the hell. The

Saskatchewanese traditionally welcome strangers with arms wide open. About Cheezy and Jo they're beginning to wonder.

The biggest cabin's only eight foot by ten. The idea is to encourage the guests to spend time outdoors. After all, that's what we're here for.

Cheezy and Jo are from Toronto which explains their love of weather, as Toronto doesn't have any. Not so at Loon Lake. For the seven weeks of summer, it's paradise. My suntan's great. Problems are few. And though I wouldn't turn down a massage, I'm pretty relaxed.

"Ya-hoo," hoots Cheezy, chugging a beer.

"Right-o," says Jo, spitting out a cigar tip. They laugh like crazy 'cause Kruschev's out paddling around in his inner tube, swigging a bottle of vodka, and doing tongue tricks.

Out of Cabin 2 peeks a dark beauty. Vita Vail. That's not her real name. I've changed it to protect her. She's a famous novelist who's come here to work. Like me, she hasn't written a word. She's very moody about it.

When Vita first saw Cabin 2 she had a fit. Said, "Hell, my limo's bigger than this!"

Jo rubbed her five o'clock shadow. "Princess, we put in a goddamn loft so we could squeeze you in a desk. I wouldn't complain if I were you."

Now Vita's having another fit. She stomps her feet and hollers at the swimming crowd, "Shut up out there! I'm trying to fucking think!" She storms over to Cheezy and Jo. "This place is about as peaceful as a yeast infection."

A million years ago, before the first successful novel, Vita and Jo were lovers.

"I want some ice," Vita demands. "Might as well be as drunk as the rest of you."

"Max?! We'll have Max bring you some."

Vita opens her change purse.

"No tipping," winks Cheezy.

Kruschev, still paddling around, is, as you might have speculated, the ex-head of the Soviet Union. Not nearly as dead as everyone thinks. He's been hiding in Western Canada disguised as a retired Ukrainian railway worker. When he's not in his inner tube, he's in his chauffeur-driven Volkswagen. He's so fat Cheezy's had to remove the front seat. Max just plops him into the back like a three hundred pound pillow. Kruschev visits the Ukrainian community daily. Last Christmas he dressed up as Santa Claus and threw candy.

Kruschev paddles over to Vita Vail who's walking the perimeters of the lake with her second scotch. Kruschev says the first English word that comes to mind, "Disneyland."

by Peter McGehee

Illustrations by Randy Moore

I watch from my cabin where my summer boyfriend, who ought to be working on his father's farm, is massaging me. Miss Finny from Cabin 4 has brought us a piece of Tunnel of Fudge. We've rubbed it all over ourselves in honor of Finny who's done nothing his whole vacation but bake, bake, bake.

Boyfriend and I met at the Liquor Board Store. He used to work there Tuesdays and Thursdays until I rescued him. I'm the first person he's ever known from the South. I come up here to escape the humidity.

Jo says to Cheezy, "Take Vita another drink."

"You take her one. I'm not her goddamn slave." Cheezy remembers all too well what a pain in the ass that loft was. "We oughta be chargin' her double. Nobody appreciates what you do for 'em."

"I do."

"I'd kill ya if you didn't."

"Like hell."

"Like hell my ass."

Cheezy gooses Jo.

"Stop that."

"Can't help it, honey. Every time I look at you I get hungry."

"Well the meat loaf'll be ready in an hour."

"That mean we got time for a 'Charlie's Angels' rerun?"

"Fucking A."

"E-e-e-e," squeals Cheezy, carrying Jo down the porch. She can barely lift her. Still they sing, "Two little pigs, fingers in their figs."



Cheezy and Jo write rhymes. This is their latest.

Kruschev holds a round table discussion on The Problems of the World. Under the table Boyfriend extends his leg into my crotch.

Kruschev blames the Americans for everything. The Canadians, with the exception of Boyfriend, agree whole-heartedly. This means I'll have to either wash the dinner dishes or answer for the sins of my country. I choose the dishes.

Miss Finny asks to be excused and returns to his cabin to work on something "very special." Miss Finny's body is covered in bristly red hair. Every day he experiments with a different color clothing. Today is fuschia. He resembles a rusty azalea bush.

Jo's hair's a mess. Frizzy and long. Cheezy brushes it, pulls it back, ties it up in a silk polka-dot necktie that used to belong to her daddy (before he was killed in World War II). Cheezy never knew him, but she sure knows this tie. She wore it when she was a little girl on several Halloweens. She wore it again when she joined the Alice B. Toklas Society at McGill. And she wore it again when *Annie Hall* came out.

Jo's hand reaches up and squeezes Cheezy's. They look out at the lake like they're the luckiest two people alive.

Vita sits for an hour with a pencil in her mouth, staring at a blank page. She has not yet discovered what she's writing about. She realizes, of course, that a draft or so later she'll pull

out her Olivetti portable and type it up, edit it, then type it up again. The day will even come when she'll sit down to her computer and put it onto disk. She tries to see the book in finished form. See herself signing copies at the launching. See herself afterward in bed eating a box of peanut brittle and reading it.

She's been advanced twice the usual amount on the sure-to-be-smash. A Vita Vail Romp, to quote her salivating agent. She'd like to decapitate that bastard. Poke out his eyes and use his head as a bowling ball. Strike.

She looks out at the lake. Wishes Cheezy and Jo had a ski boat. Writes something finally about a girl who sees imaginary wires out of some skyscraper in Chicago. The girl thinks she's some kind of psychic trapeze artist and jumps out the window. She ends up in the hospital, bandaged from head to toe, and berates her lover, "Why didn't you stop me?!"

Vita goes for a walk. Masturbates in the bush. She cries. She tells herself you can't have everything. She wonders if it was wrong to break things off with Mary Ann.

She sees herself chopped into pot roast-sized pieces, wrapped in cellophane, marked down and spoiling on some supermarket shelf.

She walks to the end of Loon Lake Road to use the pay phone. She calls her analyst. They hold their usual session, long distance.

Boyfriend tells me, "Next year I'll go to agricultural school. Then in two more, I'll take over the farm. But I'll raise cattle, not grain. I plan to make a living." He pokes me with a finger.

I step on his toes, give him a kiss. He licks my lips, says, "At some point I'll have to get married." Licks 'em again. "Have to have kids. But you can come visit." He squeezes my butt.

"We'll take 'em hunting. Teach 'em how to curl, play hockey."

"I don't know how to play hockey."

"Can you ice skate?"

"Sure."

"Then there's nothing to it."

He watches me button my shirt and says, "Sometimes I think about joining the Marines. God, I'd love to travel. Ever been to South Dakota?"

Boyfriend's eyes make me crazy. They go on forever. Blue like the sky out here.

We hitch out to his father's fields and fuck. Have to wear a lot of Off but it's worth it. He's sexy as all get out. Has chunky lips, just like the rest of him. One big cuddly sausage.

Kruschev is forming a marching band. So far he's the only member. He wanted to be drum major, however his talent on the saxophone placed him elsewhere. Max, the chauffeur, found him a green and gold band uniform at the Sally Ann. It was much too small so Jo cut it in half and stapled it onto Kruschev's clothes. Kruschev marches around the lake playing "Gimme a Pigfoot and a Bottle of Beer." It makes me homesick. What I wouldn't give for a plate of Mexican food.

Vita Vail bangs her fists against her head. God, am I glad I'm not famous like her and am just here on vacation.

The meat loaf is moose. Kruschev is extremely excited about the menu and will feed very little to his dog. Vita just picks. Mainly she drinks. Boyfriend is starved. So am I. Miss Finny fusses with a special cake that is an exact replica of Cheezy and Jo's cottage. Tears of pride swell in his eyes as he sets it onto the table. It's painful for him to cut it. Kruschev pinches him as he reaches over to hand me my piece. Kruschev doesn't realize Miss Finny's a man.

"Staying busy's the secret to success," says Finny. He owns two houses, a car, and a large parcel of Saskatchewan farmland which he resents because it was given to him by his father. Miss Finny is from a family he'd rather forget.

Cheezy and Jo get all choked up making a speech about how

*This place is about as peaceful as
a yeast infection.*

great the summer's been and how we've each helped to make it the best time of their life. They say they'd invite us all back next summer free if they could afford to, but business is business. They pass around a brand new guest book for us to sign.

"My autograph must be worth a fortune," says Kruschev writing vigorously. "Much more valuable than my paintings." I forgot to mention Kruschev's considerable talent with the brushes. I've bought two pictures from him. One of Caroline Kennedy and one of an unknown woman searching an unknown soldiers' cemetery for her son.

Boyfriend's taking me to the Meadow Lake Stampede. I ask Kruschev, "Can Max drive us?"

"Sure." Kruschev puts butter on his toes and lets his dog lick it off.

On the drive to the Stampede, Max speaks! His father used to be an ambassador to China. Max is fluent in Mandarin and has a doctoral degree in Chinese puppetry. "Fat lot of good it did me, eh?, driving around some has-been politician."

The Stampede is a bit of a bore. Dusty and hot, but the sunset is spectacular and makes all the waiting around worth it. Plus the cowboys. Then come the mosquitoes.

I tell Boyfriend about Texas. He's impatient. Sees some of his friends and goes off to say hi.

When he hasn't come back in half an hour, I go looking for him. He acts like he doesn't even know me when I find him. He always does this when we're

Vita Vail bangs her fists against her head. God, am I glad I'm not famous like her and am just here on vacation.

in public so no one'll know he's gay. Usually it doesn't faze me. Tonight it hurts. I've had it. I decide to go back to Loon Lake without him. Should have never fooled with him to begin with. Serves me right.

Vita Vail is on the fairgrounds. I catch up with her. She's unusually friendly. We have some laughs, talk about New York, and smoke a joint she has. I think maybe she'll take a real liking to me and help me out with my career.

When she asks what I do, I tell her I'm a writer. I say it with pride.

"Have you published?"

"Short stories and one book, small press stuff."

"Well take it from me, you'll never be happier. I've written five best sellers, all of 'em shit except the first. I'm changing all that now, though. Gonna write me a novel about a woman who turns into a pot roast." She looks off into the vast distance.

"Listen," I say, wringing my hands. "Could I ask you a favor? Could you introduce me to your agent? I've tried like a dog to get one, and they're all very nice and friendly and usually read a story or two, but they tell me I won't sell. I'd sell if they wanted me to. It's just a matter of getting the right person interested."

Vita sympathizes with my dilemma but I can tell it depresses her. She wants to go back to camp which is not such a bad idea.

I run into Boyfriend who's waiting by the car with Max. I ignore him completely and instruct Max not to unlock Boyfriend's door. Boyfriend tells me to go to hell and kicks in the fender. I feel like a real bastard but tell myself I'll have to start living without him tomorrow so I might as well start practicing tonight.

The sky's perfectly clear. I roll my window down humming "Better Luck Next Time."

Cheezy and Jo lure me into a midnight game of water chicken. Cheezy's on Jo. I'm on Kruschev. Vita's on Miss Finny. I miss Boyfriend.

Kruschev and I win. He loves winning. Wants to chicken fight Reagan or Connie Stevens, he says.

Cheezy slips her bathing suit off under water and puts it over her head. She attacks Jo with a mud ball. Pretty soon they look like a feature out of *National Geographic*.

Finny brings out a raspberry cheesecake. I go back with Vita to Cabin 2. She hands me back the story I gave her to read.

Kruschev's out paddling around in his inner tube, swigging a bottle of vodka, and doing tongue tricks.

"Not bad," she says, taking off her glasses. "I can see why someone would say there's not much of a market, but we'll talk."

"OK talk."

"Tomorrow."

Boyfriend's sitting on the steps to my cabin. I'm so damn glad to see him and relieved and in love that I feel like a greeting card, all flowers and slow motion. We kiss and cuddle and my hands go through his hair and he leans against my shoulder and says, "Don't go. Don't leave me. Ever."

Cheezy fixes a night cap for her and Jo. Takes them with her to bed.

Jo's sad. Cheezy can tell.

"What's wrong?"

"Just feel empty's all." Jo sips the thick liquid and rolls over.

"Menopause," Cheezy tells her.

"Lesbians are exempt from menopause."

"No they're not."

"Well they oughta be."

Miss Finny reads the newspaper. Brushes his teeth. He climbs into bed without messing up the covers. He recites a mantra he learned fifteen years ago that makes you forget about desire, sex, and loneliness so you can get to sleep and dream about them instead.

Boyfriend makes a hell of a lot of noise coming, sounds like a gorilla. Cheezy and Jo, on the other hand, sound like cats. Boyfriend takes twenty dollars out of my wallet. Says, "To remember you by." I love parting with money.

After breakfast Vita asks me back over to Cabin 2. It's rainy and chilly and she's got a fire

going.

"Talked to my agent early this morning. He'll see you if I say so. I'll leave you the number." She lights a cigarette. "If you'll excuse me now, I have to pack."

Happy as a clam, I take Kruschev's inner tube out on the lake. I get drenched dreaming of success, fame, and the lecture circuit.

How jealous all my friends'll be!

Back at the cabin Boyfriend's dancing to Bowie. I put on "Hello, Dolly" and belt it out with good ol' Carol Channing.

Miss Finny, from his cabin, sings along while icing a last batch of muffins. Cheezy comes round to say, "I'm inviting all the guests for one last lunch. R.S.V.P."

Kruschev carves the roast. It smells like heaven. Max looks suspicious. Vita turns green. She says she's decided to become a vegetarian. Jo gives her an avocado and a cantaloupe. Vita runs from the table retching.

Cheezy and Jo settle in front of the TV. The Toronto Blue Jays are up against the New York Yankees. Cheezy and Jo wear Blue Jay t-shirts and sun visors. They sing along with "O Canada" then bite the caps off a couple of beers.

The Yankees make three runs in the first inning. The Blue Jays strike out. By the end of the third, it's seven to nothing. Jo's worried. Cheezy goes to the kitchen and returns with an uncooked chicken. She puts it in a jock strap, sets it on top of the TV, and surrounds it with four quarters, tails up.

"Germ warfare," says Kruschev. The Blue Jays get a hit.

I meander over to Vita's. She's gone! Vacated on the sly. All her bags. Everything! She hasn't left me the name of her agent. She hasn't even paid her bill!

I feel furiously desperate for about five minutes, then I spot a notebook on the edge of the loft. It's Vita's journal. I contemplate phoning *People* magazine with the scoop, but realize Vita's not that famous. I read it instead. There's nothing remarkable: sexual fantasies, personal frustrations, professional anxieties, musings about Life, Mary Ann's phone number at her parents. The most recent entry is one line, scratched out, "We miss only the dead, only that which we cannot have."

On the way back to Cheezy and Jo's I throw the journal into the lake. Let 'em find it in years to come. Then I realize it was written in felt tip.

Boyfriend and I sit on the

porch. We watch Miss Finny pack his car. Listen to Cheezy and Jo whoop it up as the Blue Jays get closer to victory.

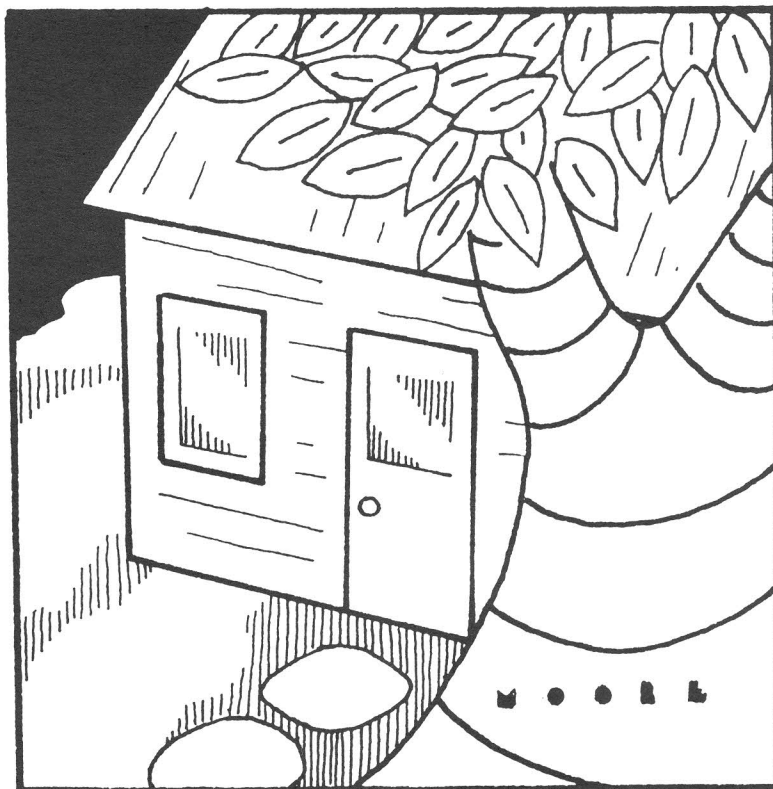
Kruschev walks by carrying a miniature Canadian flag. He's decided to re-enter the political arena via the mayor's race in Saskatoon. Do we have any ideas for a speech?

Boyfriend rests his knee against mine. Smiles. Looks at the lake and beyond.

I laugh 'cause I don't know what else to do. Getting older and older, and still not knowing. ▼

Peter McGehee is from Arkansas and now lives in Toronto. He wrote The Fabulous Sirs, Beyond Happiness, and The Quinlan Sisters, and performed in them across Canada and the US. He has had numerous short stories published and recently has been included in several international anthologies.

About the artist: Randy Moore lives in the Midwest and has designed graphics for publications for 13 years.





Are you a Fruit?

Commenting on his use of a tomato--along with the pink triangle--in one of his paintings (shown on this issue's back cover), Elder shares a bit of tomato history.

The History of the Tomato

In the 16th century, the fruit/vegetable was known in France as *pomme d'amour* (love apple). At the time, love apples were frowned upon in England for being conducive to excessive passion. Across the Atlantic, rumors were circulated by the Puritans that tomatoes were poisonous, causing the fruit to go out of fashion for the next 200 years. Tomatoes finally became a popular food in the United States, but not until after the Civil War.

"Those of us accustomed to having the highest court in the land pronounce upon paramount issues of our national life," Elder says, "will not be surprised to learn that in 1893 [in *Nix v. Hedden*], the justices resoundingly declared the tomato, a fruit, not a vegetable.

Gene Wesley Elder

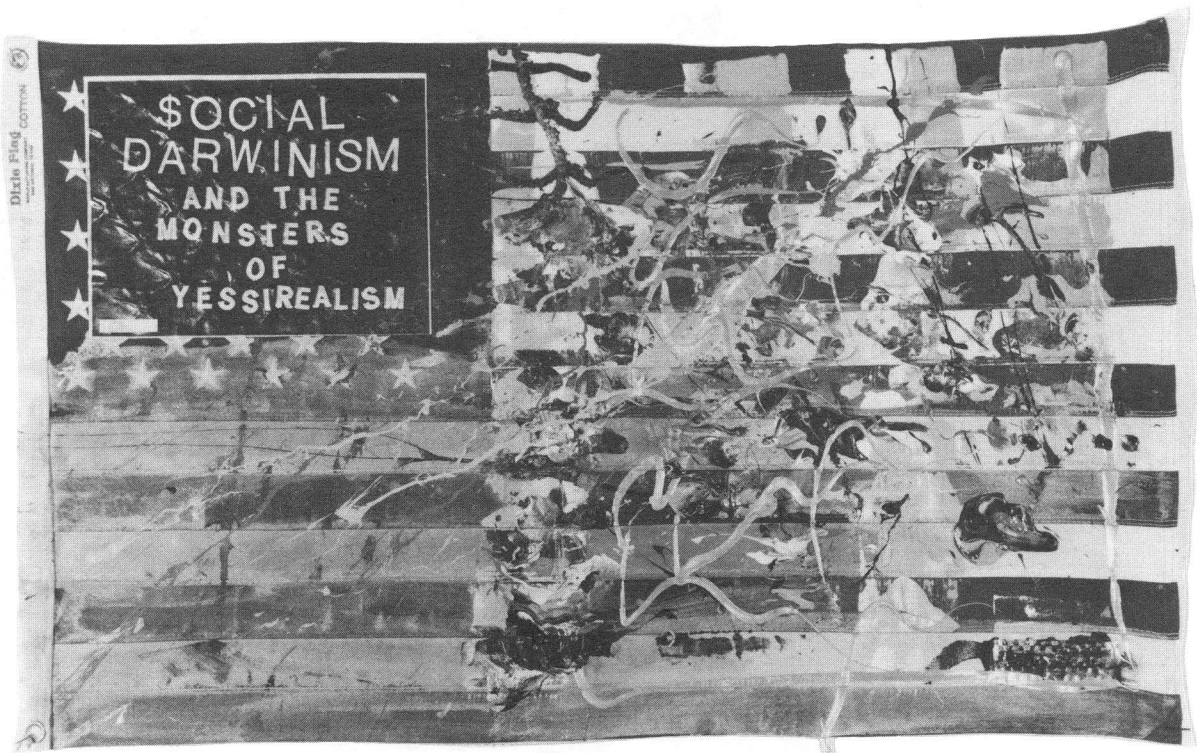
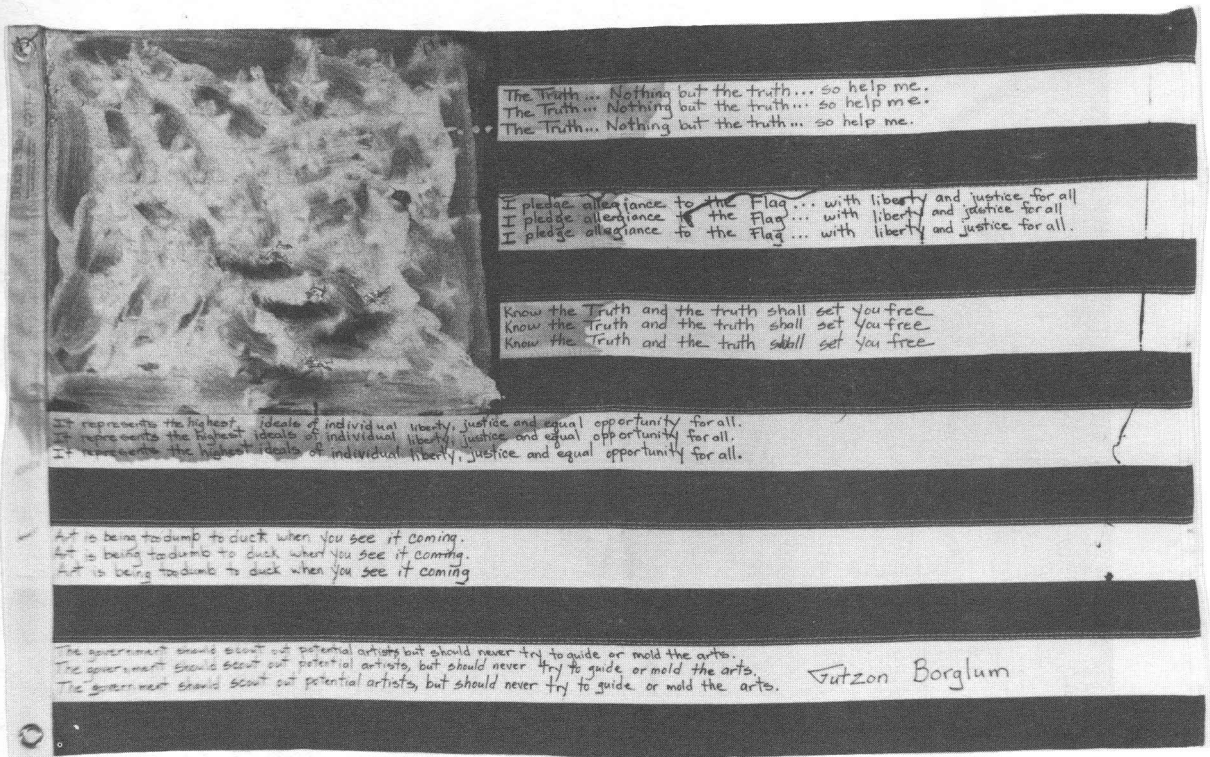
NOT ALL PATRIOTIC Americans support recent Congressional legislation that outlaws the burning and defacing the United States flag:

To burn or not burn the American Flag?...I am concerned about this and also about President Bush's birthday cake that was decorated like the American Flag. This was then sliced and eaten. Considering that the American Flag was then processed through the digestive system where it was turned into shit seems to be more of a desecration than burning.

...my birthday is on July the 4th, I am a fifth generation Texan and a descendant of David Elder who fought in the American Revolution. As a patriotic gay American, I am continually reminded that all gay Americans have their Constitutional rights taken away from them by the military, by the police, by city, state, and federal institutions. But let us not get upset about that. That involves real people. Let's get upset about the flag.

So wrote Gene Wesley Elder, in a letter to the editor of his local San Antonio paper this fall. The letter wasn't published, but when the state of Texas instituted a law making it a Class A misdemeanor to "intentionally or knowingly damage, deface, mutilate or burn" the flag (US or Texan), Elder did have a chance to share his views on the front page of the *San Antonio Light*, when an exhibition of his flag protest paintings, ***Dangerous Ideas***, came under attack.

Elder, who used four United States flags as his canvases told the *Light*, **"I am not desecrating the flag, I am liberating it."** Days later in a Letter to the Editor responding to published attacks against his work, he continued: **"I'm liberating it from conservative, neurotic, possessive, pseudo-patriots who insist on wrapping themselves in the flag and ignoring the First Amendment."**



Gene Wesley Elder



Wilhelm Von Gloeden 1905

Gay Images in Photography

Picturing the Homoerotic

by Allen Ellen Zweig

IN THE 1970s there was a new proliferation of photographs of the male nude—clearly the result of the sexual revolution, and the feminist and gay movements, making inroads into the social consciousness. Suddenly women were photographing men as erotic love objects (in ways that men had been picturing women for centuries), while gay male photographers began expressing their sexual preference in pictures. Such an outpouring of erotic male photography has not been seen since the late 19th and early 20th centuries when male nudity was, for the most part, presented under the guise and imprimatur of a pastiche classicism. Stick a laurel wreath on a naked boy, as did Baron Wilhelm Von Gloeden, and you had art, and not a little bit of Eros as well.

Yet Eros is in the eye of the beholder, and few serious observers have examined the exact role of the homoerotic in photography, consigning it instead to some subcategory of the erotic (which was always the *heteroerotic*, anyway). Photography critics either have ignored the question of homoeroticism, limited the works of art they examined to contemporary "art" photographs aimed at gay men, or marginalized homoerotic photography along with pornography.

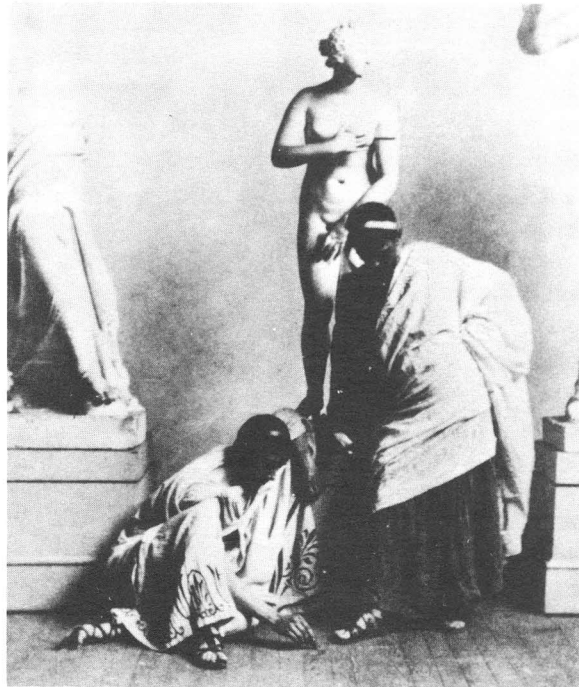
So what exactly is homoeroticism? It has to do with feelings of desire and affection between members of the same sex, but not necessarily their physical expression which is more properly the province of pornography—especially when that expression is sexual. These feelings can encompass the full range of male (or female) bondings, from friendship to teacher-student relations to the fellow-feeling of brothers or men at war; and often an erotic aspect to these relationships may lurk like a phantom in the background.

There is a considerable body of historical work that could be said to fall into the homoerotic canon. These are images by photographers who have long been recognized for their contribution to the medium, but rarely have been discussed for their homoerotic potential. Understanding this past can help place present accomplishments in perspective, for today's photographers dealing with homoerotic motifs, like Duane Michals, Arthur Tress, and the late Robert Mapplethorpe, invariably have been aware of, and found inspiration in the implicit same-sex eroticism of those earlier pictures.

One important example is an atypical picture by Thomas Eakins, the American 19th-century realist painter. Eakins often photographed his students, active and robust young men, in *plein air* settings. But among a series of pictures on classical themes is one showing two of his students from the Pennsylvania Academy wearing Grecian togas. One figure stoops and draws on the floor; the other stands and looks down as if receiving instruction. The composition seems a likely illustration of the Greek ideal of a mutual intellectual exchange as described in Plato's *Symposium*:

...when the lover is able to contribute towards wisdom and excellence, and the beloved is anxious to improve his education and knowledge in general, then and then only ... is it honorable for a boy to yield to his lover.

This suggestive reading of the picture is only further encouraged when we realize that the statue hovering in the background between the boys is the Goddess Aphrodite, goddess of love.



Thomas Eakins

An informed gay audience can read both the intended and clandestine clues.

In contemporary terms, a somewhat similar atmosphere of "exchange"—intimate, tender, and potentially sexual—appears in Arthur Tress's picture of two teenage boys sitting on some steps, *Teenage Runners*, 1976. Among his contemporaries, Tress has most consistently pictured homosexual fantasies and male beauty in a surreal manner. In a large group of pictures from the 1970s, he created elaborate psycho-sexual *mise en scene* dealing with specific power relations in gay sex that often were metaphoric depictions of pornographic situations. Here, however, the camera has closed in on the two boys, yielding a composition that seems more documentary in effect. One boy peels a band-aid off the other's thigh. It is a moment of odd intimacy between youths; at that age, boys are eager to prove and maintain their manhood by denying their gentler selves. However, the utopian ideal of teenage homoerotic encounter is strengthened by an iconographic element: the boy on the right's gym shirt is emblazoned with the word XAVIER, referring to a Catholic boy's school in New York City. We only have to look at the slender pair of naked limbs in Tress's picture to clue into the potential for ardent teenage sexual excitement.

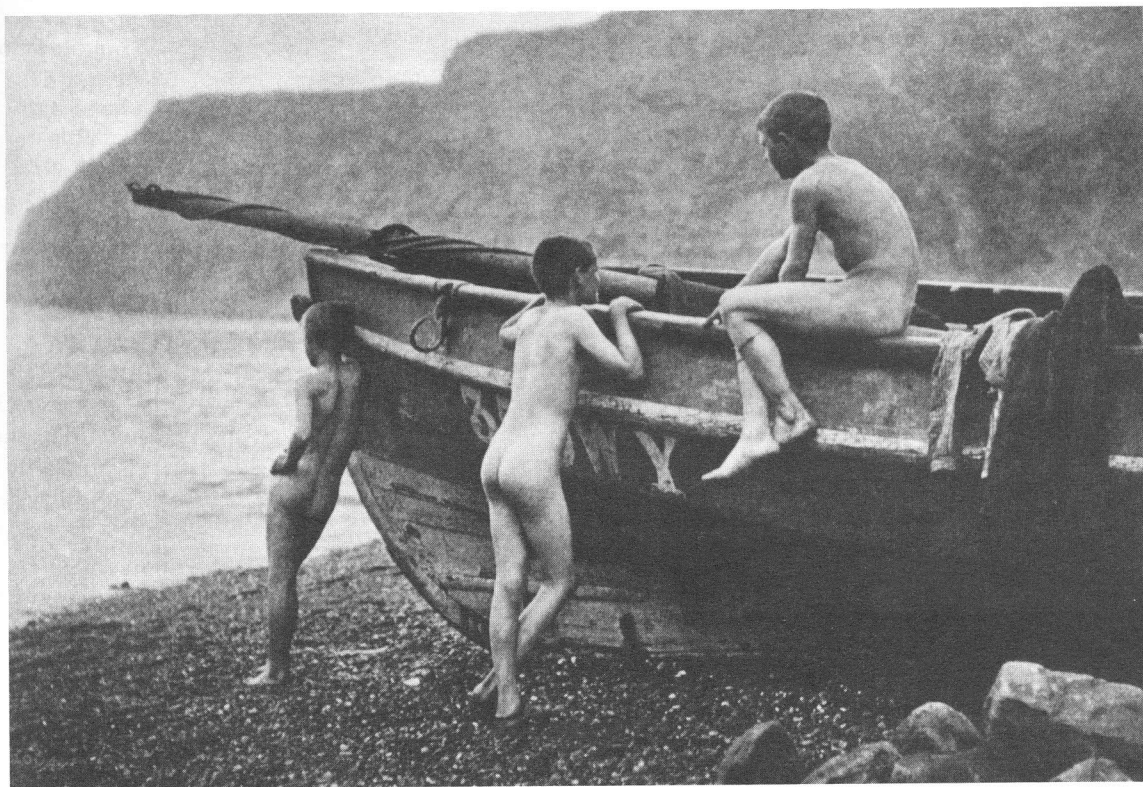
What Makes a Photo Homoerotic?

In both of these examples, the element of homoeroticism originates from two sources: first, the figures in the photographs appear to engage in an intimate exchange of knowledge and affection, potentially erotic. Second, we as viewers, recognizing this (if we are male and subject to this pull) gravitate to the sweet intimacy they illustrate. When we do, we likely project onto the image our personal sexual preoccupations.

There is of course a third homoerotic direction—indeed, perhaps the most vital one—which involves the feelings between the photographer and his subjects. After all, the homoerotic is a human emotion, not an artistic quality. The photographer unavoidably brings to this male imagery an emotional point of view. Whether these sympathies are acknowledged by him as homoerotic, or are the subconscious expression of a latent interest, they likely will be the subtext of his pictures in which male bonding or male beauty are central concerns. It is up to the viewer to decode in the photographs the homoeroticism implicit between the photographer and his subjects.

Arthur Tress
Teenage Runners
1979





Frank M. Sutcliffe
Natives
1980

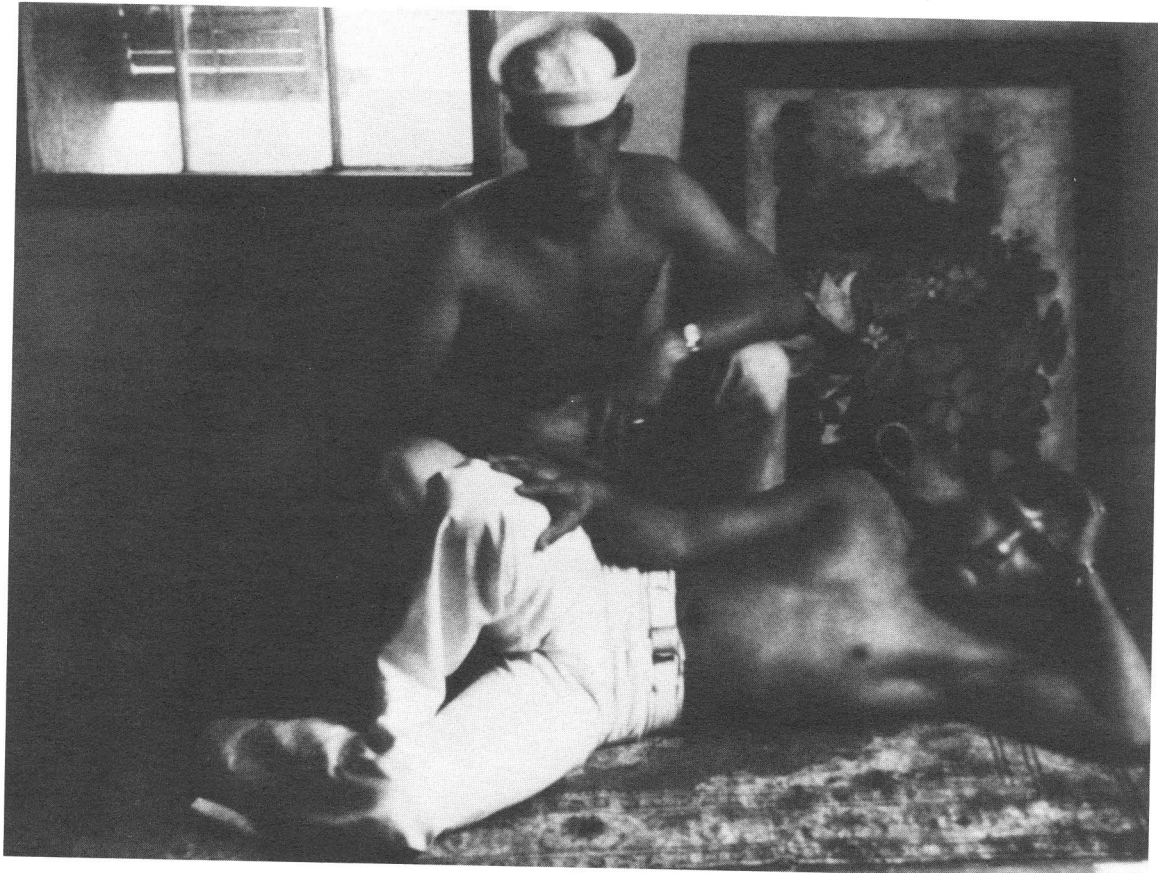
The question of the photographer's *intention* is frequently raised as a barrier to reading homoerotic elements into a photograph; critics, curators, and heirs fear that so-and-so will be labeled "gay." As if that would be so terrible. Or, as if defending the honor of a master photographer (such as a 19th century master like Eakins), few will admit a homoerotic interpretation because it cannot be proved.

Yet we don't need to ascertain a photographer's homosexuality to bolster a homoerotic interpretation, although biographical clues certainly can be used. It would be a simplification of photographic history, though, and simple-minded as well, to suppose that only homosexual photographers deal in homoerotic images. Furthermore, the very concept of the "homoerotic," much like the "homosexual," was hardly current in thought or discourse until the full flower of Freud and would not have been available to photographic commentators and critics until well into the 20th century.

That artistic *intention* may not decide the issue can be seen in a photograph by the Pictori-

alist photographer, Frank M. Sutcliffe. The aims of the Pictorialists were high; they were the leading exponents of photography as art. With their belief in the subjective vision, the manipulated print, and a frequent romantic bias (soft focus, imitative painterly effects), they set out to escalate photography from its secondary position beside the other fine arts.

Sutcliffe was essentially a genre photographer, artfully documenting the everyday life of an English harbor town. In *Natives*, however, he moved beyond the local moment into a transcendent realm, by posing three young nude boys against a beached fishing coble in imitation of some generalized classical conception. These boys are like *kuroi*, the antique statuary of graceful nude youths, come to life in the 19th century, deliberately posed in such a way as to express an ideal of serene physical grace. But a heightened degree of eroticism is implicit: the long stem of the boat's mast stretches out toward the distant horizon like an erect penis. However chastely intended, the picture is ripe with phallic suggestion.



Marie Cosindas
Sailors, Key West
 1966

A relatively recent example of ambiguous intentions yielding equally provocative results is the Polacolor photograph by Marie Cosindas, a portrait photographer of a certain class of beautiful people in, out, and around the *demi-monde*. Her *Sailors, Key West* features two men, one lounging like an Odalisque, the other crouching by his buddy's back in a proprietary manner. Already, a division of male and female roles is hinted. The reclining man also adopts an open-legged position, while their similar display of naked arms and chests seems a candid, even calculated, sign of seduction. But whether they offer themselves to the female photographer or beyond to a larger public, the dewy lighting, muted colors, and close correspondence of the men's hands and groins at the picture's center, develop an atmosphere of ambivalent erotic invitation. They may or may not be *real* sailors, but pictured as they are, they play with the sailor as a homoerotic archetype.

The Cosindas work is an instance where the photographer's own gender, sexual orientation, and even intention, does not *a priori* mitigate against the reading of male homoeroticism in a picture. The opposite can also hold. With *Certain Words Must Be Said*, Duane Michals, one of the most active man-to-man picture makers, has given us a sublimely poetic "image with text" where a reading of lesbian love seems inescapable. The composition is vintage Michals: an interior in which two women are fixed in a suspended moment, a contemporary *tableaux vivant*. One woman looks out a window expectantly and is bathed in the glow of daylight; the other is seated nearby beside a bed. Though what is "happening" between them is not represented, Michals (one of the first and certainly the most prominent contemporary photographer to combine words intrinsically with his images) suggests in a handwritten caption that we are witness to a same-sex intimacy

The homoerotic is a human emotion, not an artistic quality.

of profound delicacy and tension:

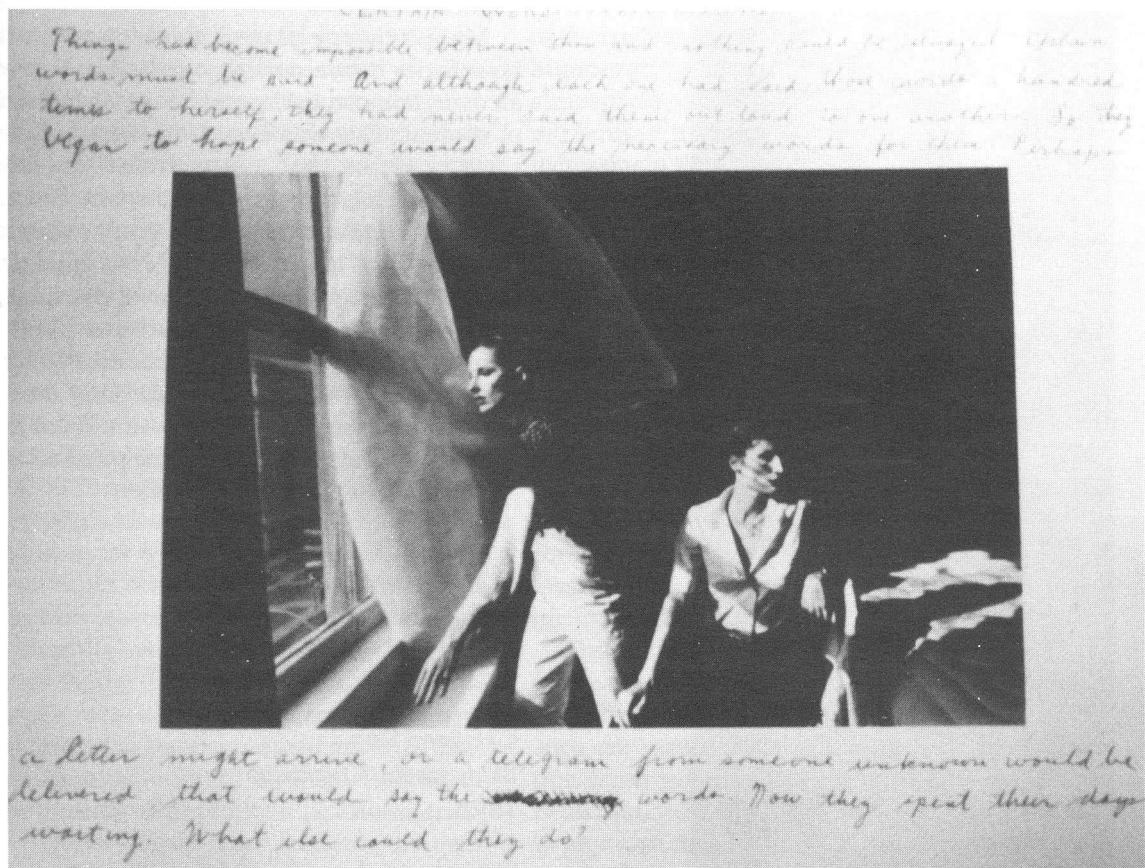
Things had become impossible between them and nothing could be salvaged. Certain words must be said. And although each one had said the words a hundred times to herself, they had never said them to each other out loud. So they began to hope someone would say the words for them. Perhaps a letter might arrive, or a telegram delivered that would say what needed to be said. Now they spent their days waiting. What else could they do?

Combined, word and image are elliptical, dealing in fundamentals of human feeling, not social categories. Originally, *Certain Words* was shot for an editorial fashion layout. So much for intention.

The iconography of images with homoerotic themes is not limited to allusions to the classical

world like Von Gloeden's campy Hellenism, Eakins' more sober Platonic illustration, or the reflective reference to Greek statuary in Sutcliffe's Natives. Nor are exceedingly macho archetypes—like Cosindas's sailors or the cartoon porn figures of The Cowboy, The Trucker, or The Construction Worker—the only images to set off the erotic pulse. Homoerotic intent has also been signalled through the use of certain religious motifs, especially the arrow-pierced figure of St. Sebastien.

In the late 19th century, the American F. Holland Day was one of the most important Pictorialists to deal with Christian themes, though a significant portion of his photographs followed the homoerotic conventions of the period and were highly refined. He often took *chiaroscuro* portraits of young boys dressed up in classical garb, or posed as figures of Pan, Orpheus, or other mythological figures.

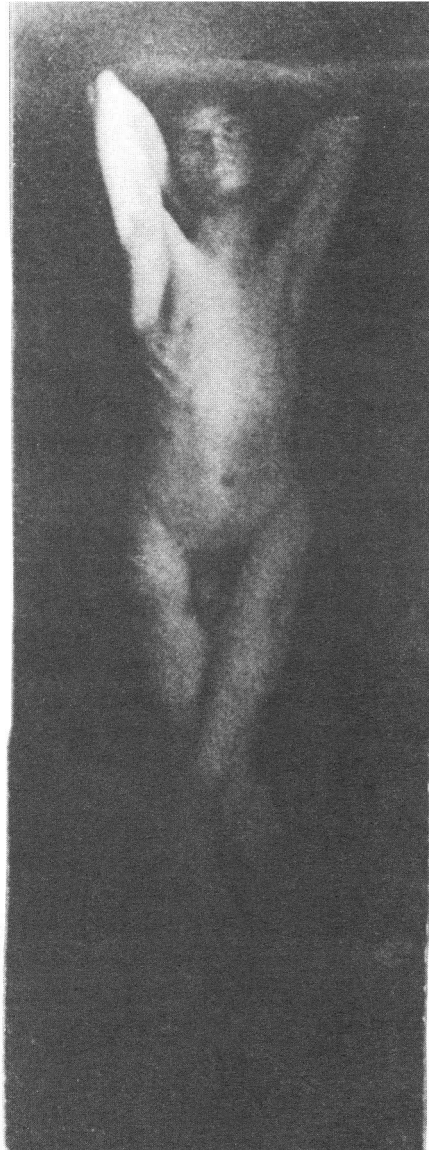


Duane Michals
Certain Words
Must Be Said
1976

Credit: Sidney Janis Gallery, New York

Study for the Crucifixion shook Boston society. Full frontal nudity was new for Brahmins.

In the last decade of the 19th century, and especially after the Oscar Wilde scandal, the lure of Christian martyrdoms presented apt if exaggerated analogies to gay aesthetes like Day. He made over 250 photographs on the theme of Christ's Passion, and a smaller number of St. Sebastians. He himself posed as Christ, and these images, such as his *Study for the Crucifixion*, shook Boston society. Full frontal nudity was new for Brahmins. Such a pose is now almost a cliché for sexual ardor: arms upraised, head thrown back, torso stance contraposto, hips tilted and knees bent. The body is modeled by soft, shimmery lighting. The crucifix, however, is barely shown; the circumstances that are the reasons for the pose are neglected in favor of the pose itself.



A New Twist for Art's Sake

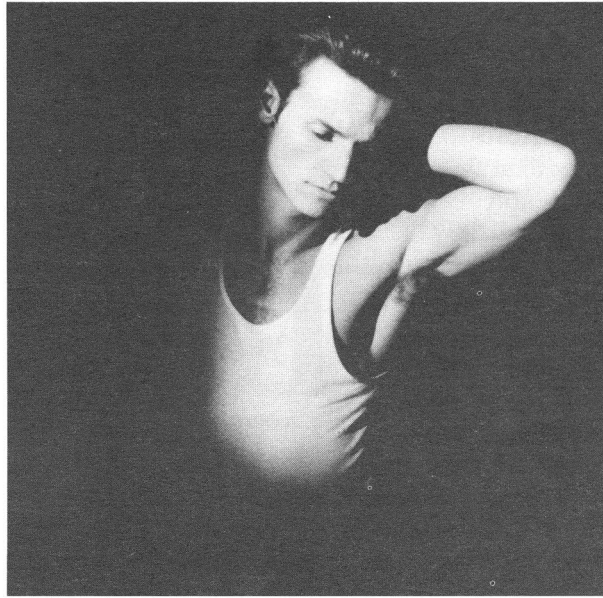
Some contemporary photographers who work with homoerotic imagery invert the religious themes of the past to produce non-religious icons. Robert Mapplethorpe's *Dennis Walsh, New York* is such a photograph. Light models the stretched torso and upraised arms, while the rest, except for the model's head, drops off into a dense grey, then an opaque black. The smooth and toned muscularity of bicep and chest give the pose a concise seductive message. Except for his T-shirt, the model appears to exist in a social and historical vacuum; all is subordinated to sheer physical presence in the now. No external themes—not Truth, Virtue, or Martyrdom—exist to certify his pose. Allusion to classical statuary has given way to appreciation of perfect proportion as it exists in the real world. The theme appears to be the love object as diety.

Mapplethorpe played shrewdly with the boundaries between subject and style, between an overt homoeroticism and a formalism devoid of content. This was even true of his toughest images, those that concentrated on sado-masochistic relations or were otherwise sexually graphic. "I'd rather call it pornography than call it homoerotic," he once said. "If it's a good photograph, it has to be good *beyond* the subject, too." This is an understandable remark from a photographer who, even in his most pornographic work—those images showing men or body parts engaged in sex acts—could not help but artfully compose and print the picture.

F. Holland Day
Study for the Crucifixion
1898

Credit: The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Alfred Stieglitz Collection

Mapplethorpe's censors hope to deny the very existence of the homoerotic.



Robert Mapplethorpe
Dennis Walsh, New York
1976

Credit: The Robert Miller
Gallery, New York

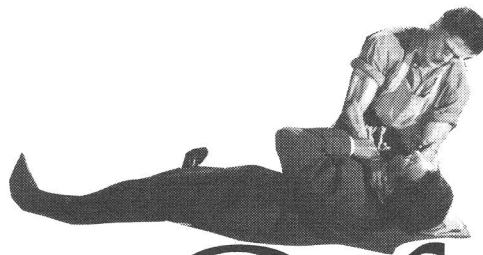
Mapplethorpe emerges from the art for art's sake tradition in which classical formal values, not moral bias, find succor. The lessons of commercial fashion photography and advertising—each branded by surrealism's juxtaposition of odd objects and dreamlike drama—have also widely influenced photographers like Tress, Michals, and Mapplethorpe, who have chosen to work in the directorial mode. There, the photographer creates his own narrative vision, mapping out the scene with the same dedication as the film *auteur*. For this new generation of photographers working in a more open social atmosphere, it has been their own erotic ideas and impulses which have found expression in their art—just as surrealism was the visualization of many Freudian ideas.

The history of homoerotic themes in photography takes on compelling interest in light of the recent controversy over the cancellation of a major Mapplethorpe show scheduled for the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, DC. Mapplethorpe's censors, who have sought to deny Federal funds "to promote, disseminate, or produce obscene or indecent materials including but not limited to depictions of...homoeroticism..." quite simply hope to deny the very existence of the homoerotic as a valid field of artistic inquiry. With such moralistic language guiding our laws, how long would it be before exhibitions by Thomas Eakins and F. Holland Day would be deemed by government fiat unacceptable for funding support, and unworthy of public viewing in the largest civic sense?

Tress, Michals, and Mapplethorpe are just three of the contemporary photographers whose explicit homoeroticism is indebted to the liberalizing atmosphere that the gay liberation movement in particular helped spawn and which now is increasingly threatened. But there are many others who have been contributing to an enlarged sense of the male homoerotic, among them the Americans Edmund Teske, Robert Giard, the late Peter Hujar, Keith Smith, David Lebe, and women like Starr Ockenga, Eva Rubenstein, Ernestine Ruben, Lynn Davis, and from Canada, Sorel Cohen. Among lesbian erotic image makers are such photographers as Tee Corine, Morgan Gwenwald, Ruth Bernhard, and Joyce Culver. In the 1980s, Bruce Weber has made a huge dent in the homoerotic canon with his exceedingly chic studies of corn-fed American beefcake. In France, the color fantasist Bernard Faucon has created elaborate and imaginative narratives using boy mannequins.

The field remains wide open because the homoerotic need not be a category of picture-making, but a by-product of it. And an informed gay audience can read both the intended and the clandestine clues; gay and lesbian photographers in particular are willing to address these *cognoscenti*. But in any case, the truer the inquiry into the land of personal intimacy and affection that the photographer—male or female—dares go, the surer we are of finding homoeroticism a constant, not an exception, in the history of photography. ▼

Allen Ellenzwig is a photography critic and curator in New York City.



THE HARM EMERGING from the Robert Mapplethorpe controversy is more complex than the issue of inhibiting free expression. There are other evils that, as a gay man and an artist, I need to explore.

I have a strong ethical aversion to censorship, and as an artist, self-interest alone also prevents me from condoning it—no matter how offensive, to some, a form of artistic expression may be. Because of the subjectivity of taste, the only possible definition of art must be: anything an artist calls it, and of the artist: anyone claiming to be one.

Nonetheless, I reserve the right to object when art itself, or how and to whom it's presented, hurts people. The principle of free expression doesn't protect the flasher or the obscene caller; similarly, evoking the sacred word ART doesn't excuse everything. In the now-infamous Mapplethorpe case, art can't justify violating the sensibilities of the unsuspecting nor the rights of the disenfranchised. It also doesn't give anyone license to define me.

The bone I have to pick is not with artists who create as they feel they must (jerks or geniuses that they may be). I do not believe an artist has any obligation other than to commune with his or her muse, if that's the right word for an age such as ours. It's the arrogant, out-of-touch, custodians of culture whom I wish to take to task.

I believe it's just as wrong to deny a person the right to avoid

Of Torture and Tangents

Consequences of the Robert Mapplethorpe Exhibition by Stuart Edelson

an experience as to have one, so I see little distinction between the planners of the Mapplethorpe retrospective I saw at the Whitney Museum of American Art last year and the would-be censor. Both would impose their tastes and views upon us.

If the Mapplethorpe exhibit had contained a device that reached out from the wall and slapped the faces of randomly selected viewers, the museum's insurance underwriter would have insisted that viewers be warned before entering, and that they sign a release. As it happened, there was such a device, in the form of explicit male S/M imagery that was brutal and scatological.

Because people were assaulted psychologically, not physiologically, the organizers of the show chose not to warn us. You'd turn the corner and there these pictures were, horrifying many who wandered in. Besides feeling extreme personal ambivalence for Mapplethorpe's subject matter, and apart from painful empathy with other shocked museum-goers, I felt slapped by the images for several reasons.

Any art employing social or political themes cannot avoid didactic interpretation, and Mapplethorpe's photographs of a controversial corner of gay male sexuality is no exception. Because of the absence of a diversity of gay male life shown to society at large, the perpetuation of the same old thing (the violent or the foppish) inherently misrepresents gays and compromises the community. The leather-man is to the gay male what the bearded Hasid is to the Jew, the watermelon-man is to the African-American and the baby-doll is to women. All stereotypes have a basis in fact. There are such gays, Jews, blacks, and women, and they have as much legitimacy as any-

In my case, the last thing a victim of puritanical censure wishes to do is condemn the sexual proclivities of others. Nevertheless...

one, but they don't represent the whole. But these types are used to perpetuate the myths upon which stigma is predicated. More importantly, it is painfully difficult for individuals in those groups to gain a true sense of self when all they see are those stereotypical portrayals.

By selecting Robert Mapplethorpe's particular window through which the uninitiated might glimpse gay male sex, the curators offered nothing new, merely the traditionally hostile and ignorant view of gays promulgated by the homophobic. (The Moral Majority has overturned gay civil rights bills with such stuff as this.) Whatever the curators' intentions (sensationalism is the less lofty, prime suspect), once again we were given the side show treatment that keeps us alien from our fellow citizens. It would be ironic if their motive was to shake-up the bourgeoisie (common to the avant guard [*sic*]), since society always has been better equipped to deal with its deviates as exotic freaks rather than as the folks next door.

Another reason I felt slapped is tougher to deal with because of the peculiar tyranny that accompanies membership in an embattled group. We are forced to feel responsible for what fellow members do, and to regard what we do as reflecting on the whole. This, to my mind, carries the greatest of burdens—the denial of our individual identities. Also, because of our defensive posture, no member of a vulnerable minority wants to play into the hands of the

oppressor, to appear an assimilator or, horror of horrors, as an "Uncle Tom." In my case, the last thing a victim of puritanical censure wishes to do is condemn the sexual proclivities of others.

Nevertheless, there are ethical issues that I must address. I never abandoned morality to the preachers of fire and brimstone. I consider myself a highly moral, proud gay man. The only shame I ever feel is when I become conscious of employing a double standard. I sometimes have used our oppression to rationalize suspending my critical faculties, when it comes to my group. How often have I tolerated the insufferable in the name of solidarity?

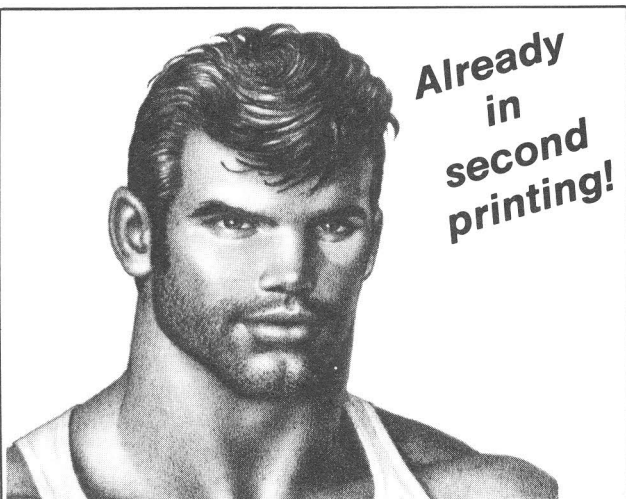
This is no longer supportable; I find it impossible to remain mute, giving tacit approval of a Mapplethorpe image that suggests the torture, mutilation, and murder of a fellow human being. If rallying around this assault on my values is what's expected of me, because of the expedient goals of the group, the compliance of the victim, or the abhorrent politics of other dissidents, Brother, you may man the barricades without me. Like ART, oppression doesn't excuse everything. No matter what we've suffered, we're all still accountable for what we do.

The controversy surrounding this exhibition has led the government to compromise its support for the arts. I believe this consequence might have been avoided entirely with that simple expression of respect for

others: the warning I missed for myself and those other museum-goers. We rate films for general commercial distribution—G through X—which gives people a choice and successfully avoids provoking some viewers into calling for limits on our freedom. Even the 'adult book shops' keep the stronger stuff aside, lest it offend. Perhaps the pornography dealer is more scrupulous than the museum curator, at least in this case.

Because of our identification with AIDS, we gays live in an age of growing fear and hatred. There are people for whom we can't die painfully or fast enough, and "fag-bashing" is dramatically on the rise. During this vulnerable period, the indiscriminate exhibiting of controversial material has the effect of anti-gay propaganda. It contributes to the contention that gays stand far outside the mainstream of what convention defines as recognizably one's fellow-man. This very technique was most successfully employed in preparing the German public for the annihilation of their Jews. Alienating the majority from gays will make it that much easier to collect us and destroy us "for the public good." Whether or not the organizers of the Mapplethorpe exhibition were aware of it, timing alone makes the show a political act—a potent anti-gay statement that endangers us all. ▼

Stuart Edelson is a sculptor and a writer who lives in New York City.



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IN NEARLY TEN years of visiting, studying, working, and living in China and Hong Kong, I had never managed to meet any women who identified as lesbians. It wasn't because I didn't look: Whenever I got on a conversational basis with someone who seemed relatively open or enlightened, I would ask about homosexuality.

In China the response usually revealed an incredible degree of ignorance and naiveté. It was refreshing not to be met with homophobia, but the wide-spread ignorance was baffling. It was considered slightly scandalous even for a man and woman to hold hands in public, even if they were married, and sexual knowledge was scarce.

There were exceptions. During my first visit in 1980, one of my guides was an independent young woman who struck me as a sister. She didn't let on, except when I started talking about feminism and used the word "lesbian."

"What is 'lesbian'?" she asked.

"Women who love women," I answered. She excitedly wrote the word down on a scrap of paper and stuffed it in a pocket. End of discussion.

Opening the Hong Kong Closet

by Lenore Norrgard

Later, when I was studying in Beijing, I asked a young friend about lesbians, and she got that by-then-familiar blank look on her face. In a few minutes, though, she recalled a story she'd heard about two young women who went to the Marriage Bureau to register their bond. They were promptly arrested for their naiveté. Homosexuality is illegal in China, yet ignorance about it is so vast that these two apparently were not even aware of the taboo.

In 1985, I worked with the Hong Kong Council of Women to set up the colony's first women's center, and became acquainted with the Association for the Advancement of Feminism (AAF), an all-Chinese radical feminist group founded the year before. When two

"When we go out, we dare not appear as a couple."

US lesbians and I asked Shun Hing, a founding member, about lesbians, she said she did know of one, but none in the organization. I'd heard there was at least one men's bar in Hong Kong, but never was able to find out about lesbian anything. Until this year.

I was in Hong Kong in June and met with some AAF friends. One morning Shun Hing and I got into a discussion about marriage and relationships. I mentioned my new girlfriend, and was rewarded with the news of a lesbian pairing—not only within AAF, but within Shun Hing's household. Slightly checking my enthusiasm, I asked if the pair might be willing to talk with me. Shun Hing was sure they'd be delighted.

Josephine, 24, and Choi Wan, 32, are both journalists and active members of AAF. I met them at the Women's Center after a meeting of AAF, and we set off for a noisy cafe for an interview—mostly in English, some in Chinese—that spanned two restaurants and a cab ride. We were all so eager to exchange information, even six and a half hours together didn't exhaust all there was to say.

Their first question:

"Could you tell about us? We never would have guessed about you—when Shun Hing told us you had a girlfriend, we kept asking if she was sure, what kind of girlfriend did you mean, maybe she was mistaken!"

"No, I didn't guess about you, either."

Disappointment. "But, we share a room."

"Shun Hing and Kan Ha share a room, they're not lovers."

"But we share a bed!"

"Oh—I didn't notice you shared a bed—if I'd noticed, I would have wondered!"

The two had no qualms about being interviewed for *OUT/LOOK*.

But they had their own questions to ask me:

"What is so important about coming out?"

"Why is the abortion issue so explosive in the US?"

They told me how they both have lived for several years in a formation quite unusual for Hong Kong: a collective household of feminist women. While each had been interested in men before the two became lovers, this is the first relationship for each of them with a member of either sex. Josephine only had admitted her love for Choi Wan to herself for a full year before approaching her; when she finally did, her fear of rejection was realized. It took another year before Choi Wan was willing to explore a relationship with Josephine. They've been lovers now for nearly a year. They seem happy and say, "Now we just have the usual problems of lovers."

LENORE: What is the attitude towards lesbians and gay men in Hong Kong?

CHOI WAN: I think people accept lesbians more than gay men because they never consider women as sexual beings. People feel homosexuality is more unacceptable for men, because a man is the one who takes action, and if he loves [another] man, people feel he's not a real man.

Last year, the government reviewed a really harsh law against male homosexuality

—the maximum punishment is life imprisonment. There was much public discussion on the issue. There was a group of students who organized a panel and I spoke on it for AAF. This was before I had become lovers with Josephine.

The man who spoke before me was saying that we have to be more tolerant towards others' preferences and I felt sort of funny. I thought, why are they always saying, "the others," so that there's a difference between "they" and "we?" "They" are the homosexuals, and "we" have to be tolerant. When it came to my turn to speak, I said I don't think we should say "they" or "we," because when I was young, in our school we young women were very close. I was trying to tell them, you may have a friend who is a homosexual, and actually, you may be a homosexual, you cannot be so sure that you are not. This attitude of "they" and "we" is very common.

L: What's the most difficult thing for you about living this lifestyle?

CW: That I cannot let my family know about it. With my friends it's okay, they accept me. I still do not want to face the struggle between myself and my family, especially my parents. My mother was concerned when I moved into a women's community that I might become a lesbian. I told her it doesn't matter, it's not important. But, she said, you may get AIDS from it. I said no, you don't get AIDS from homosexual relationships, even a heterosexual relationship will give you AIDS. But she is not convinced.

"This time you get on with that girl, the next time with the other."

Another thing is, when we go out we cannot appear as a couple. Sometimes I want more physical closeness on the street.

JOSEPHINE: I would say the same thing, except I don't mind if my parents know, because I am not close to them. Of course, if they don't ask or show concern about it, I don't want to tell them.

I would not tell my colleagues, only close friends. Those that I've told have accepted me. But when we go out, and appear in public, we dare not appear as a couple, and we always argue, because she wants to hold my hands, and I won't let her. I just can't allow this, because I know a lot of people, I'm a reporter, and I have to be careful.

L: You both have friends who accept your relationship. Are they very progressive or what?

CW: I think most of my close friends are more progressive, or at least more open towards differences. Those who are not close to me know I am very rebellious, they know my character. So if they think it's sort of queer for them, they don't think it's very queer to happen to me. And I do not care very much what they think.

J: Close friends I identify as progressive, I don't mind if they know. But among my colleagues I have some close friends who are not so open, so I would not dare to let them know.

L: What would happen?

J: They will distance themselves, and it may hurt my career. My

boss had made homophobic comments.

L: Do you have any emotional or psychological support for living as lesbians?

J: If I get alone with friends, I find support, but I don't have particular support from lesbians. Sometimes when I talk to our other housemates, I make jokes. I may say to one, oh, maybe one day you will find that you are a lesbian, too, and then she rebuffs me immediately and says that it will never happen.

L: Is she afraid that you might approach her sexually?

J: No, no, no.

CW: She does not think that a lesbian relationship is a normal relationship, so she'll never be in one.

L: I tried to find out about lesbians in China when I was living there, it was very difficult. I was amazed at the level of ignorance and naiveté. I've heard that most imprisoned women in China are jailed for sex "crimes."

CW: Many women remarry before getting a divorce, so they are sent to jail. It happens very often, because they cannot get a divorce, so they just marry again, then get caught. A lot of women are imprisoned for premarital sex, also.

It's true, in China they're especially naive about lesbianism. Homosexuality among men they can understand more,

because it's more often represented in stories. You never read about women having relationships with women.

Except, there is a novel about women in Guiyang, in south China. In this area they had arranged marriages, and it was very common that before women got married, they could be very close friends. The story is about two women who are very, very close.

It had been arranged for both of them to marry. The younger woman met her fiancé before the wedding, and she felt he was terrible, and she couldn't accept the marriage. Now, in that area there's a very funny custom. The first night a newly-married couple stays together, if the woman doesn't like the man, she can just refuse to lie down, she just stands up the whole night. The next day she returns to her family's home. And then, she stays with her husband only one night each year, on New Year's Day. She continues returning to her family, and it continues like this until she is pregnant—then she has to stay with her husband permanently.

In the story, the younger woman refused to lie down with her husband on her wedding night, and she got beaten by her husband, but still she refused. Then she asked the older woman to do the same, but she had promised her family that she would accept her husband, so the younger woman killed herself.

So the novelist, a man, tries to say that the woman turned to a woman because the feudal system forced her to marry a man she did not like.

L: But the women's relationship wasn't sexual.

CW: It is sexual, because the novelist describes what's happening between these two women by comparing what they're doing to what men and women do together. The women always stay together, sleep together, do everything together.

L: I read a newspaper article about this, the Communist Party was criticizing the feudal system of arranged marriage, saying it caused lesbianism.

CW: But actually, I do not think in that way. That's what they think.

L: Did you see the article in the *South China Morning Post* [a Hong Kong daily] last year about homosexuals in China? It talked about some secret lesbian social groups in Beijing, and about men more openly cruising in Shanghai.

CW: No, but I once met a lesbian from Beijing, she is now living in Hong Kong. Somebody told me she was a lesbian, but we haven't had the chance to talk with her. She's interested in women's issues. Once AAF had a meeting about the women's movement and other social movements, and we invited her friend and her to come and talk and they came. But somebody from the New China News Agency [which serves as Beijing's unofficial embassy in Hong Kong] also came, and so that woman could not talk, she could only sit silently.

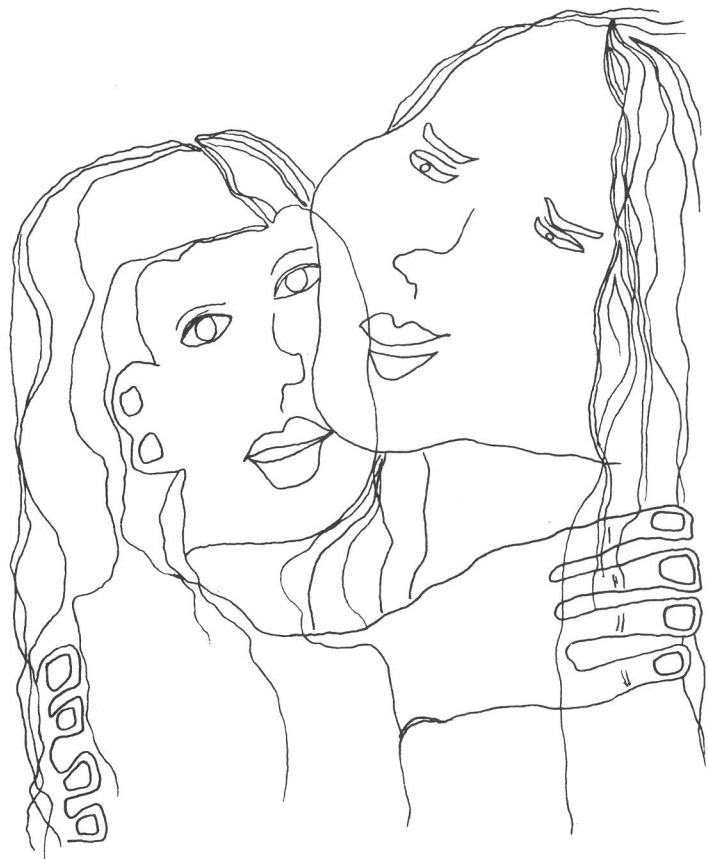
L: What is it like living as a lesbian in Hong Kong?

J: Maybe I can tell you some about the other lesbians. Choi Wan and I are isolated from them. There are two social circles, the upper-middle class circle and the working-class circle.

Both classes have a culture of dividing into men and women [butch and femme]. The one in the woman's role has to be passive and wait for the approach

of the one in the man's role. If she takes an active role, those who act in the male role will not approach her, and all the lesbians in that circle will condemn her. So everyone must know clearly which role each individual will play, and each individual must act in her role.

In the upper-middle class circle, women of both roles have to dress very well to show their economic status. Those who act like a male have to wear suits



"Ga Ga thought to be dependent on a femme was very humiliating."

with ties, shirts, everything. And the "women" have to wear dresses, and make-up, everything like that. They will appear in public just like heterosexuals. And for those who are living together, the one who acts in the female role has to do all the domestic work, and the other will go out and earn a living, and the lesbian couple will live the same as in the heterosexual relationship.

The working class is the same. The difference is that the working class will not dress up.

Usually they change partners quite frequently. The working class is the same. They go out to discos or bars, whether they are with their partner or not. Their circle is very small. So this time you get on with that girl, and the next time you get on with the other, maybe that other person is the previous lover of your girlfriend. So they're only changing partners, and they can't expand their circle.

L: What do you mean, "frequently?"

J: They perhaps have two partners a year, maybe more. Usually there's no more than two a year. It makes me think they can have one stable partner on the one hand, and have a lot of other girlfriends. That's typical for the upper-middle class. But it's for the men, I mean, for those in the male role.

L: So the butch can have many partners, but the femme can have only one. That's a very accurate mirror of heterosexual society.

J: It's the same culture as the heterosexual society.

L: And would the working-class butch support the femme?

J: Usually both work, because they can't manage if one stays at home.

I wrote an article for the lesbian issue of *Nu Liu* [AAF's quarterly magazine]. It's an interview of two women. One of them, Ga Ga, is a working-class lesbian, and once she lived with a woman who danced with men to earn her living—in fact she was a prostitute. Ga Ga lived for quite some time with that woman, and found it was very difficult to continue that kind of relationship, because she is butch and the prostitute was femme, and Ga Ga thought that to be dependent on a femme was very humiliating. That femme was always buying Ga Ga lots of things, and Ga Ga found it unbearable. So they parted.

CW: We had a discussion with a lesbian and a gay man, and the lesbian told us about this butch and femme phenomenon in the lesbian culture, and the gay man said that within the men's groupings, the butch will only stay with the butch.

J: The men in a couple will both be butch. And whether they are single or in a couple, at social functions they will still divide into butch and butch and femme and femme.

CW: The butches will call the femmes "sissy." I think feminine traits are looked down upon among the gay men. The butches despise the femmes, so they will not mix with them. The

guy who told us about this is really butch. But he admitted it's a kind of chauvinism. A kind of sexism.

L: What about coming out?

CW: Gay men can be sentenced to life imprisonment, that's the law. But already there are some gay men who have come out. They never appear—rather, they write things. They are still not very strong as opposed to all these reactions from the general public.

Actually, the government wants to change the [anti-gay] law. Many of our [British] government officials are gay men, and they posed the question, saying the law can be used to blackmail them. The government wanted to make changes, but the reaction from the public is so strong. Some people really want to maintain the law, and some would only reduce the penalty to a shorter term.

L: Where does this attitude come from?

CW: It's really just ignorance, or prejudice. The church, both the Protestants and the Catholic Church, are very much against changing the law. And the people in the [Hong Kong] Democracy Movement are not speaking out at all. And the gay men's organization is still very, very weak.

To a certain extent, so long as you keep your homosexuality to yourself, it seems it doesn't hurt you very much. Most of the people think, don't speak up, keep it to yourself, and your life can still go on like that.

"Gay men can be sentenced to life imprisonment, that's the law."

And so we dare not come out. I read an article about a man in Taiwan who has come out, he goes around speaking about the issue. But in Taiwan there's no law against homosexuals. This man can come out, even though he may have alienated himself from his friends.

In Hong Kong the gay men may be forced to be organized because of this law. But the lesbians, no.

This year the Art Center showed a series of homosexual films. A number were documentaries of the gay movement in the States. One was about this person, he was killed—

L: "The Life and Times of Harvey Milk!"

CW: Yes, I watched this one. I was very impressed by the movie, very moved. And I was telling Josephine, ah, we should come out!

J: I said, I am afraid!

CW: When they had defeated the initiative, when they finally won, Harvey Milk was speaking to the public, and he was on television and in the newspaper saying, "You should come out now! Everyone should come out! Tell your friends! Your family!" I was very moved by that scene. He was wonderful.

Josephine and Choi Wan live almost completely isolated from other lesbians—they are feminists who are repelled by butch-femme roles, and Josephine especially is concerned with

maintaining a long-term relationship rather than "always changing partners." They have no role models.

As the 1997 return of Hong Kong to Chinese rule approaches, the two consider their future—as feminists living as lesbians—with trepidation. Josephine favors emigration, while Choi Wan feels the responsibility many intellectuals feel to stay and serve the motherland, in her case by furthering radical reform.

Since Beijing's June crack-down on dissidents, more Hong Kong subjects than ever are searching their hearts about whether or not to try to emigrate. I don't know what Josephine and Choi Wan will decide, or whether their relationship will survive their decisions. Being educated, they are among the few with a chance for emigration.

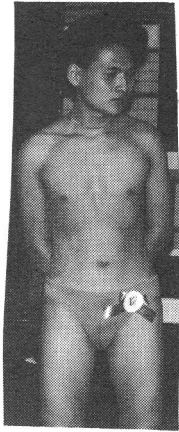
Most of our sisters and brother, though, will have to stay and face a closet that probably will be locked more tightly than the one they've been used to.▼

Lenore Norrgard is a Seattle freelance writer who has been active in the lesbian/gay/bisexual and feminist movements since 1975. She speaks Chinese and is currently writing on the Chinese Democracy Movement.

About the Artist: Joyce Ma is a member of the Association for the Advancement of Feminism in Hong Kong.

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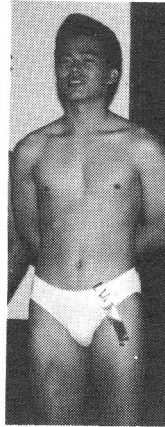
The Thai Ministry of Public Health sent its staff to see what this *safe sex stuff* was all about.



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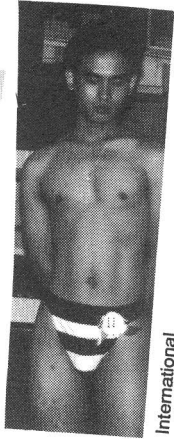
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Get that Condom on Your Loogboub

by Debra Chasnoff

ONE OF THE seldom-touted advantages to being gay is the small-world networking that goes on in our community, the sharing of names and addresses that can open doors to subcultures in other countries which usually elude other travelers.

Last summer, the gay passport came through again for me. A lesbian colleague of a gay male friend gave me the name of a woman who recently had organized the first formal group of lesbians in Thailand. While traveling in Bangkok, I contacted her, and when we got together, she introduced me to a British lesbian who was living and

working there. That woman invited me to go with a group of her Thai lesbian and gay male friends to a gay bar where a safe-sex "show" was to be presented.

When I walked into Loogboub (which translates into The Zucchini or Cucumber or Watermelon—no one was quite sure), I was surprised to find a full house, as it was only six o'clock in the evening. I was even more surprised at the demographics of the assembled audience: instead of the crowd of men in their twenties and thirties I'd expected, there were about 60 teenage boys and 20

middle-aged women, some of whom had brought along their small children to watch the show.

The boys, it turned out, all worked as prostitutes at gay bars in the vicinity. The owners of seven of the 50 gay bars in Bangkok each had sent representatives from their staffs. The women were employees at the Thai Ministry of Public Health, sent by their supervisors to see what this safe sex stuff was all about. Eventually the government contingent migrated to the upstairs balcony. For them, the "show" was more than what took place on stage—it encom-

passed the reactions of the boys downstairs as well. The children were there because their mothers were. In Thailand, settings with sexual connotations are no more off limits to kids than any other settings, a tradition I experienced again a few days later when a woman working at a strip-tease joint pulled my one-year-old son out of his stroller and into her bar to receive a round of hugs and kisses from her co-workers.

Finally the show begins. The bar's dance floor has been transformed into a stage; a picture of the King and Queen of Thailand, and a small shrine to the Buddha adorn one corner of the platform—just as they seem to do in every corner of Thai life.

Natee Teerarojjanapongs, a well-known Thai choreographer, is the organizer and MC for the evening. He jumps up to the microphone proudly displaying his tee shirt that says (in English), "AIDS Kills. Don't Be Silly. Keep that Condom on your Willy," and introduces an official from the Office of the Prevention of Communicable Diseases and the Deputy Director of the Ministry of Public Health. A TV camera begins filming for the late night news. The head of the gay bar association is welcomed along with a newspaper editor who gets a round of applause when he holds up the day's paper with a two inch headline (in

Working as male prostitutes is a job here, not necessarily a sexual orientation.

Thai): "Gay Bar Cooperating with Ministry of Health to Fight AIDS, Wants People to Use Condoms."

This mainstream support is all very new, Natee explains to me later. He's been doing these kinds of shows for months, but only recently with the support of the government. It seems that after the international AIDS conference in Montreal earlier this year, the Thai government came under tremendous pressure from the World Health Organization to do something about AIDS. With its enormous traffic in opium and large legal prostitution business, the number of Thailand's cases of IV drug-related and sexually transmitted AIDS is skyrocketing. Health analysts have determined that within five years, the Thai AIDS caseload will rival that of Zaire, which has one of the worst in the world.

For years Thai politicians have denied that their country has an AIDS problem for fear of damaging the sex industry—which

is the cornerstone of the nation's economic mainstay, tourism. Men from Europe, Australia, the US, and other Asian countries flock to Thailand for sex holidays; and, many people told me, it's perfectly acceptable for Thai men—married and single—to go to a male or female prostitute for an evening's entertainment, in the same way others go out to see a movie.

Finally, though, some government dollars are trickling into AIDS education, and Natee's programs for the go-boys are one of the recipients of these scarce funds. Ironically, by most estimates, homosexual transmission accounts for a only small fraction of those infected with HIV in Thailand.

AFTER THE INTRODUCTIONS, the lights dim and two men and two women dressed in traditional Thai costumes dance to a song with lyrics about how life has no problems. Natee returns to shatter the sentiment with graphic descriptions of what AIDS does to the body. "And how do you get AIDS?" he inquires.

"Needles." "Transfusions."
"Mothers give it to their babies."
No one says sex. "Not surprising," my guides for the evening explain. Thai people are very uncomfortable talking about

...they move to a song extolling a Buddhist sentiment about how you should do something good, and something good will come back to you.

sex; even though they freely engage in it, and many buy and sell it, they'll do anything to avoid discussing it.

"Sex," Natee affirms. "How many people here use condoms?" he asks encouragingly. No hands go up.

Back come the dancers, in slightly less formal garb. This time they move to a song extolling a Buddhist sentiment about how you should do something good, and something good will come back to you.

Natee then introduces the owner of the bar, and asks him to come up and tell the boys exactly when you need to use a condom. He's welcomed like a hero when he arrives on stage, but says he is too embarrassed to explain because of the women in the audience. He feels like crying he's so embarrassed.

Natee comes to his rescue. The boys squirm in their seats, and then start to giggle as he explains different kinds of sexual acts. "Small sex"—where there is no penetration, or where you use condoms—is okay he says. "Big sex"—penetration, no condoms—is bad news. You also need a condom for "big, big sex"—a blow job. "If you don't like how a condom tastes," he advises, "just put one of our luscious Thai fruit juices on it. Pineapple, for instance, tastes great."

"If you don't like how a condom tastes," he advises, "just put one of our luscious Thai fruit juices on it."

For the first time in the show, I don't need a translation. The dancers have returned to grind to Michael Jackson's *Bad*. Apparently the twist on the meaning of the word hasn't crossed the Pacific, since the point of using this song in the show is to reinforce the idea that if a customer doesn't use a condom, he is bad.

Then the climax. Natee asks for volunteers to demonstrate how to put on a condom. Dead silence. Finally ten boys are dragged on stage. To their great relief (and that of the women in the balcony as well), Natee hands out a bunch of long vegetables along with ten condom packets. It's a race. Some of the boys, the ones who are obviously femme, can't seem to put the condoms on their squashes correctly. The people next to me explain that the since the femmes are sexually passive, they probably have never put a condom on themselves.

Just as the thought, "So this is what young Thai gay men look like" starts to run through my head, someone leans over and tells me that, of course, not all of these boys are gay. The femmes definitely are, but probably only a few of the others. Working as male prostitutes is a job here,

not necessarily a sexual orientation. Their situation could be just like that of the thousands of Thai teenage girls who sell sex to men just so they can send money to their families who live in poor, rural areas.

The volunteers go back to their seats, each with his own "Don't be Silly" shirt. I wonder if they all speak English, but am told that the shirts are primarily for their customers to read. Plus in Thailand, any tee shirts with English words—regardless of their meaning—are very popular.

Two more songs and dances. The first a popular tune about Bangkok, accompanied by a monster dressed up as "AIDS" who attacks, but then loses, his fight with a dancer dressed up as Bangkok. And then, a US anti-AIDS rap song.

After the show, congratulations are proffered all around. "When the water comes, you have to take it," Natee tells me while the TV reporters get ready to interview him. He sees this welcoming of safe sex education as a historical moment in Thailand—not only for protecting his gay brothers, but for making gay people more visible in a culture that has kept them invisible. "Isn't it great," he asks, "that we'll be associated with something good—healthcare prevention—rather than with something illicit?" ▼

Natee sees this welcoming of safe sex education as a historical moment in Thailand.

Debra Chasnoff is the managing editor of OUT/LOOK.



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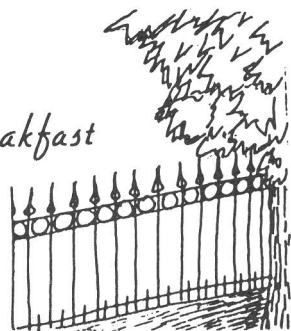
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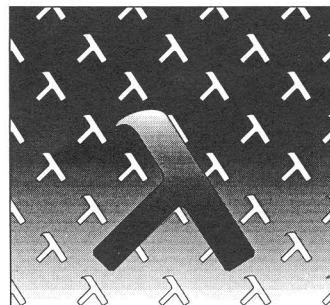
U.S. Postal Service
 STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION
 (Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

- 1A. Title of Publication: OUT/LOOK 1B. Publication No. 08967733
 2. Date of Filing Oct.31, 1989 3. Frequency of Issue: Quarterly
 3A. No. of Issues Published Annually: 4 3B. Annual Subscription Price: \$21.00
 4. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: 2940 16th Street, Suite 319, San Francisco, California 94103 5. Complete Mailing Address of the Headquarters of General Business Offices of Publisher: same as above.
 6. Full Names and Complete Mailing Address of Publisher, Editor and Managing Editor: (Publisher) Jeffrey Escoffier & Kim Klausner, OUT/LOOK, 2940 16th St. Suite 319, SF, CA 94103 (Editor) N/A (Managing Editor) Debra Chasnoff, OUT/LOOK, 2940 16th Street, #319, San Francisco, CA 94103
 7. Owner: OUT/LOOK Foundation, 2940 16th Street, # 319, San Francisco, CA 94103
 8. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities: Not Applicable.
 9. For Completion by Nonprofit Organizations Authorized to Mail at Special Rates—The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes has changed during preceding 12 months.
 10. Extent and Nature of Circulation: Average No. copies each issue during preceding 12 months Actual No. copies of last issue
- | | | |
|--|--------|--------|
| A. Total no. copies | 16,189 | 16,991 |
| B. Paid and/or requested circulation | | |
| 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, and counter sales | 4,285 | 5,150 |
| 2. Mail subscription | 10,248 | 11,041 |
| C. Total paid and/or requested circulation | 14,533 | 16,191 |
| D. Free distribution by mail, carrier, or other means. Samples, Complimentary, and other Free copies | | |
| | 210 | 180 |
| E. Total Distribution (sum of C & D) | 14,743 | 16,371 |
| F. Copies Not Distributed | | |
| 1. Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing | 1000 | 620 |
| 2. Return from News Agents | 446 | 0 |
| G. TOTAL (sum of E, F1, and 2) | 16,189 | 16,991 |
11. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.
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Confessions of a Speaker's Bureau Speaker

012345678910

TEN FOR BRAVERY

ZERO FOR COMMON SENSE

012345678910

by Meredith Maran

FROM MY HIDING place in the wings, I watch the auditorium fill, feeling the familiar thump of tension throb through my gut. Will he be the one?, I wonder, eyeing a muscular young white man in Budweiser tee shirt trading mock punches with another young man who looks, to me, just like him. Or maybe one of them, I muse, as a giggling group of permed blondes in pastel crop tops and acid-washed minis slide into their seats.

Scanning a crowd for potential attackers, monitoring an environment for potential danger is pure reflex for me by now: catching a neighbor's narrowed glance as I kissed my lover on the porch this morning; removing my hand from my lover's just moments ago as we walked past the "Gay Student Union" sign defaced by scribbled swastikas.

But it's verbal, not physical queer-bashing I'm worried about right now. And, I remind myself, there are reasons I have chosen to be subjected to these strangers' probings—reasons, and rewards to be reaped.

The auditorium is full now.

Beholding 160 Ohlone Junior College students, most of them born and raised here in Fremont, a conservative white-flight suburb 50 miles south of San Francisco, I find myself trying to pick out the one who might tilt me over the precarious precipice I totter on during these engagements. Who among them will ask the question that will push me past the tolerable discomfort of disclosure to the toxic shock of overexposure? Who will make the recurring nightmare of my childhood—

my classmates are pointing and laughing as I suddenly realize I've come to school naked—come true?

And who will be the ones who make it all worthwhile—the ones who sidle up to the speakers after every engagement, eyes averted and pronouns scrambled, whispering their secrets, murmuring their gratitude, seeking counsel. The ones who wait until the room is empty to confess to homophobic sins of the past, and pledge repentance. The ones whose uncles and brothers and, yes, husbands were wrenched from their closets by the deathgrip of a virus...

"We're ready," the teacher murmurs to me, then strides to the podium and calls the class to order. I hear the familiar introduction "...join me in welcoming...from the Pacific Center for Sexual Minorities in Berkeley...to talk to us about homosexuality...", followed by the familiar obedient, ambivalent applause.

Waiting for me at the podium is Adam, the man who today plays fag to my dyke. And smiling nervously at me from the very back row, where she sits with Adam's boyfriend Stephen, is my lover, Ann.

And then...we're on. Breathing deeply, I swallow the last of the terror I'll allow myself to taste today, and turn to survey the crowd. Not scanning surreptitiously now, but claiming control.

I smile at Adam, cuing him to begin. A calming warmth spreads through me, unclenching. I become a different person; I



Janet Bogardus

**The usual
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homoproximity
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muscle-
flexing and
high pitched
femme-
flirting.**

see these people differently. They are no longer weapons that they or I may use against me. *I* am the weapon now; they are one big moving—and moveable—target. And I remember why I have pushed past my fear to be here today: before the four of us leave here, we will move them.

As Adam launches his requisite sexual-history-in-100-words-or-less, I take the pulse of the crowd. The usual reactions to homoproximity begin to emanate from various corners of the room: macho muscleflexing and its twin, high-pitched femmeflirting. Studied indifference; barely concealed fascination. Genuine boredom; apoplectic rage. And the one I always look for, and always find: the one who sits squirming, eyes alternately averted, and blazing—equally desperate for denial, and confirmation.

"...in a relationship with Stephen for the past two years..." Adam is saying; ..."very happy." It strikes me that I could probably recite this summary of Adam's romantic situation from memory—we've spoken to groups together several times now—but I know almost nothing about any other aspect of his life.

It strikes me then that the people we speak to during these engagements—the students and workers and inmates and teachers—know even less of our lives. That by opening only the sexual aspect of our selves for discussion, we are inviting them to see us as one-dimensional sexual beings, and simultaneously demanding that they relinquish that stereotype.

I rush to reassure myself: after all, speaking imperfectly to straight people about what it means to be gay is far better than not speaking to them about it at all. And I know before we leave here we'll have proof of that.

Adam completes his "intro" with the standard declaration that there is "no such thing as a stupid question," then nods at me to take my turn.

"I'm Meredith," I say, pleased to hear only a bit of quaver in my voice. "I'm 37; I've got two children from a heterosexual marriage, and I've been in a lesbian relationship for five years..."

As I begin to unwrap the package these people now find before them, I wonder how many layers of tissue I'll remove before this hour is up. As always, I promise myself to uncover only as much as I must to neutralize the livid homophobes, to activate potential allies.

I wonder how many of my own limits I might violate, how many half-truths I might utter in the process, and how I might stave off the humiliation hangover that invariable follows—the reruns of that childhood nightmare.

AND THEN THE intros are over, it's time for questions. Nothing in my 20 years of political work has prepared me for working without a net this way—without TV cameras, throngs of fellow demonstrators, printed words, party line rhetoric.

Nothing in my 20 years of political work has ever felt this unquestionably and immediately effective.

"For Meredith: How do your children feel about you turning gay?"

"Do you consider yourself normal?"

"How did your parents react when you told them?"

"Don't you miss having sex with men?"

"Answers" emerge from my lips like overplayed hits from a jukebox. My children are well-adjusted and happy; they know some people think it's wrong to be gay, but they love having two moms and they love Ann. Gays and lesbians are a minority, but like other minorities we're different, not abnormal. My parents weren't surprised; I've been vocally bisexual all my life. No, I don't miss sex with men.

"For Adam: Don't you ever want to have children?"

"How come you don't look like a homo?"

"Are your brothers and sisters gay?"

"How can you stand doing it with a guy?"

Adam's witty responses seem canned to me, but scanning the audience I see that his practiced jokes are having the desired effect: somehow all 164 of us are laughing—if not

with, at least seemingly not at each other—and a bit of the tension in the room is being siphoned off.

"...so we've arranged a little surprise for you today," Adam is saying. "We'd like you to imagine these people we've been talking about—our lovers. What they look like, what kind of people they are."

Adam pauses dramatically. "And now we'd like to introduce them to you. Here are Ann and Stephen."

One hundred and sixty necks are twisting now, straining for a peek at these strange creatures, the objects of Adam's and my respective desires. (For this purpose, I think wildly, my name really should be Eve.)

Stephen and Ann approach the podium, and we manage to sort ourselves into couples with only a few nervous titters—I'm painfully aware that the people in this room would be *much* happier if Stephen would settle lovingly at my side, and Ann would slip her delicate hand into Adam's.

"Are they who you expected them to be?" Adam asks the audience.

I'd been ambivalent about this plan when Stephen proposed it; now I wish I'd vetoed it. Three hundred and twenty eyes are rating me and then my lover, coldly comparing our faces, hair, clothes, bodies. Did we really think we could smash stereotypes by displaying Ann's androgynous look versus my femme appearance, and Adam and Stephen's matching butchiness?

All I can know in this moment is that we have crossed a line of mine. This hurts.

This is encouraging these strangers to think untrue things about who I am and who my lover is and who we are together. This hurts more than it has to hurt to place yourself in a room like a bull's-eye so that strangers can hurl their deepest fears and rages at you. This hurts more than it helps—me or us or them. And it hurts even more when the inevitable questions ensue.

"Is one of you the husband and one of you the wife?"

"Does one of you play the man's role in bed?"

"What *do* you do in bed, exactly?"

Ann and I take turns answering, carefully following the Speaker's Bureau rules: making eye contact, speaking only from our own experience, contradicting with compassion, not confrontation.

"No. We're lesbians because we want to be lovers with women. If we wanted husbands we'd be straight!"

"If what you mean by 'the man's role' is to be the initiator and the aggressor—we share that role."

"We do everything in bed that heterosexual couples do—except we don't use a penis to do it."

BUT AS WE SPEAK in measured, reasonable tones, another voice begins to speak—and then to yell—inside me. This voice knows half-truths are lies. This voice won't joke or equivocate or prettify; it won't tell "fairy tales" with politically correct endings; it wants the truth to be known.

"My children were taunted at school because I'm gay and they didn't know enough about hate to hide it. Is there not enough guilt in motherhood without that?"

"I have never felt normal; I have spent my life alternately shunning and simulating normalcy. But being gay didn't cause it, and coming out hasn't changed it."

"My father and I haven't spoken since shortly after I came out to him. But the whole truth about our estrangement is a lot more complicated and painful than that."

"There are times I *do* miss sex with men; more precisely, there are times I wish I had a penis and times I wish my lover did. In my experience, there are indescribable joys *and* fundamental fallacies (ha!) in *het and lesbian sex*."

I need to touch Ann, to remember reality. I slip my hand behind her back, put my fingers on her soft skin, just as someone asks:

"Do you show affection in front of your children?"

Only this morning, I remember, Ann and I were kissing in the kitchen when nine-year-old Jesse demanded that we "cut the mushy

Nothing in my 20 years of political work has ever felt this unquestionably effective.

**320 eyes
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coldly
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our faces,
hair,
clothes,
bodies.**

stuff." Instead we grabbed him and smothered him with "mushy stuff." But that is private. That is the stuff of my life, and I refuse to reduce it to a gay-affirmative anecdote.

I say, simply, "Yes."

"Do you have fights about jealousy?"

Jealousy? Does that include the infantile possessiveness that transforms a temporarily inattentive lover into an abandoning parent? Or the chronic confusion of the lesbian friend/lover/friend continuum—the difficulty of distinguishing, even with the best of intentions, between loving and lusting? But these are our private battles and triumphs.

I say, simply, "Yes."

"Do you see yourselves as married?"

Images flood me: Ann and I on our way to The Wedding ceremony at the March on Washington, arguing our way past the White House about the meaning, the value, the values of gay marriage. Ann and I arriving at the wedding site, agreeing with laughter and love in our eyes to participate. Ann and I holding each other and crying as we share our vows with 2,000 other couples. Ann and I arguing, ever since, about whether we are, or ever should be, "really married." But that is the teflon and velcro of our precious differences, the magnet and steel of this miraculous relationship. That is private.

Ann and I smile knowingly at each other and say, together, "No."

Time is called, the teacher thanks us for coming, the students applaud with unexpected enthusiasm. The four of us are surrounded by the usual well-wishers ("I have an aunt I used to be real close to, but I cut her off when I found out she was gay. Listening to you people made me decide to apologize to her. Thank you so much for coming!"), and people with one toe jutting out of the closet ("My boyfriend and I both think we're bisexual and we both want to experiment with people of the same sex. Do you think that means we'll break up some day, or is there hope for us?").

And then we collect our bounty—the evaluations—and scurry back to the car.

NO LONGER on display, I am ready to reclaim the untidy complexities of my many-dimensional existence. I am ready to apply stain remover to my sons' acid-wash jeans and 49ers T-shirts; to fight and to make love and to grocery shop with my lover; to plant basil and primrose in my garden; to earn money and spend it; to burrow through the many half-truths I hear and tell and imagine each day to find and hold and live the closest I can to the real thing, the truth.

I'll toss through sleep tonight, restless with the nightmare's residue—naked and vulnerable, unsafe and overexposed. I'll agonize over what I showed that I should have shielded, or what I gave that I should have kept.

But when I wake tomorrow, I know euphoria will kick in. I'll remember that there were some intractables in the crowd, as there always are and always will be. But mostly I'll remember that in that classroom there were also people—a significant number of people—whose minds were jiggled, if not changed.

People who might *not* yell "dyke" at Ann and me when we walk down Anystreet, USA. People who might join a coming-out group at Pacific Center or find some other lifeline from isolation. People who might rise to the challenge of nurturing their gay children. People who might even make the synapse leap from this particular form of prejudice to the cultural brain root of fear and loathing.

People who might be brave enough—if not today, then maybe tomorrow—to take that circuitous ride from homophobia to common sense. ▼

Meredith Maran is an editor of OUT/LOOK.

About the artist: Janet Bogardus is a San Francisco artist whose focus is print-making and artist's books.

Pacific Center Speaker's Evaluations:

What were your views about

homosexuality prior to this session? **Scared and uninformed. Homosexuality is a sickness.** It was easier for me to accept women because in pornos you usually

see women & women rather than men to men. Have those views been changed by interacting with today's speakers? **Yes. The fact that 2 men & 2**

women love each other. Love is love to anybody whether you are an animal or a person. I'm not saying I'm progay or prolez

but love is a splendid thing. The Speakers caused a 180 degree change in my attitudes. It seems like there actually are two lifestyles. I

bet none of the homo's are spiritually involved. Do any of them put the Lord Jesus Christ in their lives first? No, I've just become more disgusted

with homosexuality. Was there anything about today's speakers that surprised you? **No - they're just people like me & you!** That they

brought their lovers out and how normal they really are. How would you rate today's speakers? 10 for bravery. 0 for common

sense. The girl Meredith was very honest & open. The guy Adam was so cute **I couldn't believe** he was gay. Terrific! Except, I'm going to put

you all on my prayer list. Was there anything about these speakers you particularly liked or disliked? **I disliked their being happy to be homosexual. It**

was a glorified freakshow. Were all of your questions answered? **Do lesbians use vibrators? If so, why not** just do it with a man? Any

additional comments? **I'm glad they didn't show affection in front of the class. I think it would've caused a negative reaction. I**

feel bad for looking down on homosexuals and I thank you for sharing your lives with me. *Is the woman with the two sons encouraging*

her sons to have relationships with girls? When you go on dates, how do you know who pays?

What It Was Like the Night Cary Grant Died

by Eloise Klein Healy

Cary Grant was dying all that time
we took to talk about romance
and what little chance there is
to see on screen even the evening we spent,
talk and turn of events, how everything went
this way for the dyke singer and that
for the queer star, and what a funny
type we are, so normal in our taste
for bliss, but then there's the way
we kiss, unseemly on the screen
to see so much between two women,
the queen card played upon the queen.

And Cary Grant was dying until dawn
the night we carried on and on
about romance, the chances in a glance,
the votes we cast for whom we've asked
into our hearts' open beds. What was it
Dietrich said? No more talkative alive
than dead, that one, and who's to blame
for her closed case, the gorgeous face
that couldn't change its straight facade.
It would have been too odd to see
a woman in a pair of pants begin
her dapper dandy dance. An audience
would have died from it—the fragile pair,
the dalliance, the slicked back hair.

The King of Romance drifted off from Iowa
and Hollywood the night he was to say
what it was like for him. The night he died,
the night we came away from talking until dawn
about the scenes and sounds that don't go on
the screen in living color of what's between
a woman lover and her lover.

Eloise Klein Healy has published three books of poetry. She coordinates the Women Studies Program at Cal State Northridge and serves on the Board of Directors of the Woman's Building in Los Angeles.

DOWNPOUR

by Boyer Rickel

The garden, lush with poppies, anemones, reds
on blues on yellows, is,
during this, the first hard storm in months,
a marketplace, spatulate
leaves and wind-tossed buds

a bartering, purposeful throng.
And the man who tends it, who just stepped out,
who stands on moony nights or even
in this daylight downpour, slack
as if listening

for the need of growing things,
this man, if you could see him as I do
from the kitchen door
in secret, like a cat,
is love in flesh and bone

for all his giving,
the almost-glow imparted
to the iris blade he runs
like living ribbon through his fingers—
is emptiness, the one

beside me here this afternoon
and mornings as I roll my pantlegs up
to wade the low
cool household lake
between his dreams and mine.

Boyer Rickel's poems have appeared in Poetry, North American Review, Ironwood, and Prairie Schooner. He teaches composition and poetry workshops, and helps administer several writing programs at the University of Arizona.

The Medieval Origin of Antisexual Attitudes

A REVIEW ESSAY BY MICHAEL B. SCHWARZ



The Crucifixion of Eros

Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*
(New York: Random House, 1988)

Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*
(New York: Columbia University Press, 1989)

James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988)

SEXUALITY HAS been in a state of near constant change for most of the 20th century. Despite what one might suspect, however, the 20th century is not unique in this respect. As many historians are now arguing, the fourth and fifth centuries saw a similar period of effervescence and change. Over the course of several hundred years, a new sexual culture and morality emerged in the Mediterranean, a morality that was distinct from its Palestinian and Roman antecedents, and that has been transmitted to the present day through civil and criminal laws relating to sex.

The idea that sex is sinful; that it is something we need to confess; that it represents the truth of human nature; that through it we express the subjectivity, passion, and longing at the very essence of our personalities—it can be argued that each of these ideas is the result of changes that occurred during the late fourth and fifth centuries.

The notion that sex has a history, of course, is not new. Writers and scholars from the Renaissance to the 19th century were acutely, and often blushing, aware of the differences between contemporary and classical sexual standards. While traditionalists saw Christian sexual ethics as an improvement over classical norms, 19th century sex radicals like Havelock Ellis, John Addington Symonds, and Oscar Wilde appealed to the civilizations of Greece and Rome as a model for a more enlightened sexual world.

In the latter part of the 20th century, we no longer appeal to the ancient world as an ideal to be emulated or to prove our moral superiority. We are, however, still interested in understanding the origin and the meaning of our system of sexual morality, a system that is the product of specific cultural and historical processes. This idea—that historical and “natural” forces are responsible for

changes in sexual attitudes and behaviors—has a long and distinguished history. But the ideas that historical forces shape the very concept of what is “natural,” and that historical forces not only complement nature but eclipse it are the product of a relatively new movement in the history of sexuality, a movement tremendously indebted to the pen of French philosopher Michel Foucault.

The discussion over whether sex is basically a natural or a historical product (the essentialism-versus-social construction debate), however, is something of a false problem. We need not choose one or the other. That our conception of nature is itself historically constructed in no way changes the fact that biology provides a context for the development of ideas about sex. This is a philosophical problem, and not a particularly deep one.

Instead of debating unanswerable either/or questions, historians have increasingly begun to focus attention on the specific ways in which the relationships between sex and society, sex and subjectivity, and sex and group cohesion have been understood. This, in fact, is precisely what Foucault attempted to do in *The History of Sexuality*. Like the authors under review, Foucault was interested in exploring the ways in which our predecessors thought differently than we do, just as he was concerned with the origins of modern ideas of sex.

One of the most important books in this tradition is Elaine Pagels' *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*. In it we confront a general historical and sociological theory about the meaning of changes in sexual morality, and a discussion of the transformation of sexual values that occurred during the first five centuries of the modern era. According to Pagels, a professor of religion at Princeton University, sex

Since Christianity upped the ante and concentrated on

pertaining to sex has been a "special case" in our culture,

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physical
beings out of
control.

became of central importance to western theology, morality, and ethics in the fifth century for a practical social and political reason: the changing place of Christianity within Roman society.

To explain how and why sexuality emerged as a "special case" within Christianity, Pagels divides the movement into three developmental phases. During the first 250 years of the religion's existence, Christian ascetics rejected and attempted to disrupt many forms of secular authority—whether related to the state, family, or community. Although many early Christians chose to renounce sex, their decision to do so was no more significant than their participation in the penitential fast or their decision to live apart from society in the desert.

Once the Church began to expel heretics and enforce the idea of a celibate priesthood, however, sex became increasingly controversial. An extreme ascetic movement emerged within the Church that saw sex as the antithesis of salvation. Finally, following the conversion and baptism of the Roman emperor Constantine in 312 AD, Christianity emerged as a full-blown hierarchical Church tied to the political power structure of Rome. Within a century the Church would make orthodox the notions that sex is intrinsically sinful and that all humans are subject to original sin.

Pagels' book is essentially a sociological and historical analysis of this institutional development. As the Church transformed itself from a persecuted movement into the religion of the emperors, Christian citizens of

the Roman Empire gained an increasing interest in maintaining the family, state, and society. After this period, Christians and Christian theologians tended to discuss sex in ways that did not threaten the social stability of the Empire, the Church, or the communities in which they lived. From the fifth century onward, the sanctity of the family was maintained and supported by the Church and the importance of obedience to authority of all kinds was put into high relief. As Peter Brown puts it in his masterful *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual*

Renunciation in Early Christianity,

various forms of sexual renunciation were part of Christian culture from its very beginnings.

For early Christians, "the heat of young love and the cares of the married household, the itch of sexual temptation and the dull ache of the belly tended to mingle indiscriminately"; but by its

fifth century, Christianity had singled out sexual desire for special attention.



Pictured right:
Love in a Tub
Medieval bath
houses were
often associated
with sexual
license and
prostitution.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH of the fifth century did more than merely give sex a special place within its theology. Sexuality became the central issue in debate over notions of free will and moral freedom. Until this point, Christian theologians disagreed—and disagreed violently—about the proper role of sex and sexual restraint within the Church.

The key figure in the emergence of these new ideas about sex and society was St. Augustine of Hippo, a North African monk

sexual behavior as the root of virtue, everything

evoking particularly inconsistent attitudes.-Susan Sontag

who believed that sexual desire was "the most foul and unclean of human wickednesses, the most pervasive manifestation of man's disobedience to God's designs." Pagels and Brown both show that Augustine's belief in the intrinsic sinfulness of sexual desire became a standard premise of western beliefs about sexuality within a remarkably short period.

The changing interpretation of the story of Adam, Eve, and the serpent illustrates the radical nature of this shift in values. To men like St. Ambrose and St. Jerome, sexuality was the result of a regrettable decline "by which Adam and Eve had lapsed from an 'angelic' state into physicality." In Paradise, Adam and Eve were purely spiritual. For St. Augustine, in contrast, Adam and Eve had been created fully human, endowed with the same bodies and sexual characteristics as other people. But Adam and Eve were unlike other people in one crucial respect: they enjoyed a harmonious unity of body and soul in Paradise.

This harmony between mind and body, flesh and soul disappeared after Adam and Eve's fall from Paradise. Because of Adam's "rebellion" against the authority of God, because, that is, he ate the famous apple, a "rebellion of the flesh" occurred in him—a "spontaneous uprising...in the 'disobedient members.' "

Rather than being about a decline from spirituality into physicality, then, the fall from Paradise became for Augustine, and for nearly every interpreter of the story of Adam and Eve after him, a story of the decline of mastery over the body. Augustine, whose own attempts at sexual renunciation could not rid him of nocturnal emissions and spontaneous erections, concluded that sex functions not only independently of the human will but contrary to it. As a result of sex, Augustine wrote, "man has become antisocial by inner corrosion." Humanity's fundamental problem

for Augustine, then, was not that we are physical beings but that we are physical beings out of control.

The development of the idea that humanity is ineffectual is significant because it uses the language of sexual politics to enforce submission to the authority of parents, the state, and the Church. While earlier Christians viewed the flesh as an inconvenient container for the spirit—a distraction from the "real" world of the spirit—later Christians viewed the body as a conveyor of sin.

Pagels contends that Augustine's interest in social control, as opposed to moral freedom, was a reflection of Christianity's changing place within the Empire. Embattled subcultures, she argues, tend to reject the authority of mainstream society; mainstream religions tend to reenforce the power of the status quo. And this affects our most intimate perceptions, including our relationship to sexuality and the body. As Pagels concludes, "From the fifth century on, Augustine's pessimistic view of sexuality, politics, and human nature would become the dominant influence on western Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, and color all western culture, Christian or not, ever since."

Brown's conclusions are more equivocal. He writes,

To modern persons, whatever their religious beliefs, the Early Christian themes of sexual renunciation, of continence, celibacy, and the virgin life have come to carry with them icy overtones. The very fact that modern Europe and America grew out of the Christian world that replaced the Roman Empire in the Middle Ages has ensured that, even today, these notions still crowd in upon us, as pale, forbidding presences.

Although this argument does not contradict Pagels' thesis, Brown does attempt to save Augustine from total condemnation by pointing out that it was not sex he thought was bad but the moral dilemma it represented. St.

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Later
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sin.



Devil and Bathers: A common medieval belief held that the Devil induced sexual desires

Ambrose, who viewed *all* sensuality as anathema, was an extreme figure even when compared to Augustine, who at least saw moral courage in the face of death as more significant than sex. Brown, one of the most brilliant historians writing in any language, writes on the interaction between the life of the community and the symbolic structure of its thought.

Unfortunately, although Pagels and Brown establish that Augustine's theories caught on with surprising speed, neither of them addresses the question of the cultural transmission of sexual values from the sixth century to the present. James A. Brundage, however, provides something of a solution to this in his *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*. Although it is not nearly as satisfying as either Brown's anthropologically influenced cultural and intellectual history or Pagels' focused historical thesis, Brundage does offer us a comprehensive history of legal doctrines concerning marital sex, adultery, concubinage, homosexuality, masturbation, and incest from the first century AD to the Reformation. Encyclopedic in tone and nearly 700 pages long, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society* is clearly not a book to be read at the beach. It is, however, a fascinating and surprisingly practical book.

Brundage begins by posing a strikingly relevant question in explaining his interest in the subject: "Why," he asks, "did we have those peculiar statutes banning fornication and contraceptives? Why did the courts fine prostitutes and let their clients off scot-free? Why...did some states prescribe the death penalty for sexual relations between consenting adults?" Brundage's simple but eloquent answer is that the system of legal theology rooted in medieval Catholicism still exists in United States statute law—which he demonstrates throughout the book, including a brief discussion of the 1986 Supreme Court decision on sodomy, *Bowers v. Hardwick*.

should have no body; to be modern one should have no soul.
-Oscar Wilde

WHAT ARE the implications of the sexual revolution of the fifth century for 20th-century lesbians and gay men? The answer is not a simple one.

The history of homosexuality, and especially the history of the growth of modern gay subcultures, has occurred in the context of deep suspicion about sex and sexual pleasure. This concern with scrutinizing pleasure is still very much with us today. There is a strong minority in America that still believes that sex is meant for procreation and is otherwise a demonic and sinful force.

Even so, the contrast between the sexual ethos of Christianity in the early Middle Ages and that of the gay community today could not be more stark: early Christian asceticism was dedicated to the eradication of sexual desire, while today's gay community actively celebrates desire and acts upon it. In the age of AIDS, however, the celebration has taken an unlikely turn requiring the gay community to "control" sexual outlets for medical reasons. It may be ironic that Augustinian anti-sexual attitudes should be under attack from a new, sex-positive form of sexual self-control. But this is precisely what is occurring. Safer sex, a rationalistic, scientifically based attitude toward sexual risk, aims not at constraining sexual desire but at enhancing sexual pleasure within the realm of medical possibility. It concerns itself with sexual acts more than with sexual thoughts.

The gay movement also shares with second- and third-century Christianity a marginal status within society. We can see from Brown, Pagels, and Brundage how issues of sexual morality were related to issues of group cohesion for early Christians. It is equally true for ourselves: a community dedicated to coming out—to asserting sexual freedom in the face of stigma and even violence. That such a community can generate a set of sexual rules that constrain sexual

expression may seem to be a contradiction. It is not. If the lesbian and gay movement has stood for anything, it has been that we remain free to create new meanings for sexuality. Tension may exist between the desire to act in certain ways and the inability to fulfill desire. But this is not the same thing as accepting an entire world view that pits sex and pleasure against personal happiness. Because we are free to create new, non-authoritarian sexual meanings, sexual self-control need not be an expression of Augustinian bodily asceticism, as some gay activists have maintained. Nor, as the Christian right has argued, is practicing safer sex an admission of the validity of traditional sexual morality. Both positions are wrong, and for the same reasons.

Both the refusal to let sexual meanings be defined by an archaic, essentially antihumanistic world view, and the insistence that rational and epidemiologically verifiable criteria be used in evaluating the risks of sexual activity demonstrate the remarkable creativity of the modern gay movement as well as its essentially modern and secular nature. This emphasis on science and the value of human life contrasts sharply with the otherworldliness of an early Christianity concerned more with the salvation of the soul than with the preservation of the body. As sexual politics—whether connected to AIDS issues, domestic partnerships, or abortion rights—becomes more and more a part of everyday politics, we should not forget that we as gay people are a progressive force in the politics of desire. Our issues are not marginal concerns—they strike at the heart of freedom and democratic values. ▼

*Practicing
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sexual
morality.*

Michael Schwarz was a book reviewer for The Body Politic. He lives in Berkeley, California.

THE CARE & FEEDING OF OUT/LOOK

People who are concerned about *OUT/LOOK*'s financial viability often ask us why we don't have more advertising. We wish we did have more and we're putting more of our resources towards attracting it, but it's a difficult proposition for many reasons.

Most commercial publications rely on a combination of subscriptions, single issue sales, and advertising for income. Local newspapers distributed for free rely entirely on advertising to keep them afloat. Academic journals have relatively few ad pages and look to subscriptions, and often an institutional subsidy, for their revenue.

For journals of opinion, such as *OUT/LOOK*, *The Nation*, and *National Review*, those sources of revenue combined aren't enough to cover the ever-increasing expenses of publishing, which is why we rely on our sustainer program and other fundraising to balance the budget.

Advertisers prefer magazines in which the editorial content reinforces what they're selling (cake mixes in women's magazines or sneakers in sports magazines). Industries which don't have specialized products (cars, liquor, cigarettes) want to reach hundreds of thousands or millions of readers/consumers with each ad they place. *OUT/LOOK* isn't desirable to them in either of these ways. And many companies shy away from *OUT/LOOK* because they don't want to associate themselves with gay issues even when it would make economic sense to advertise with us. Corporations hate controversy and gay is considered controversial.

Some major national advertisers, particularly in the liquor industry, have gone out on a limb, and are starting to advertise in gay publications. Getting a four-color, full-page Seagrams ad would add a *significant* chunk of money to our barely balanced budget. But, by running alcohol ads, would we encourage more drinking in a community which has been hard hit by alcoholism? The same question arises for cigarette ads.

We also don't run sex ads—not because we disagree with what's being advertised, but because we easily could fill up half our pages with male sexual images, and that would tip the visual balance of a magazine which is inviting to both sexes.

So, where does this leave us? Our intrepid ad rep, Lisa Geduldig, has been working hard to introduce *OUT/LOOK* to potential advertisers and succeeded in increasing our ad pages in this issue. Based on preliminary market research, *OUT/LOOK* is a particularly good place for travel, book, and mail-order businesses to advertise. Our readers have a higher than average income, buy an amazing number of books per year and travel frequently. As a reader interested in helping *OUT/LOOK* maintain its financial viability, please ask people you know in these sectors to consider advertising with us. *OUT/LOOK* readers notice who's advertising in the magazine and who cares about our community.

WRITERS & ARTISTS FUND

We're thrilled to announce that this issue marks the first time that writers and artists are being paid for their work in the magazine. We're particularly grateful to the people who've donated to our Writers & Artists Fund, which is earmarked for expenses associated with the writing and art in the magazine:

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Leslie Austin, New York, NY
Kristen Balloun, San Francisco, CA
J.E. Bennett, Lakewood, OH
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Claudia Christie, Somerville, MA
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Billy Cosby, Oklahoma City, OK
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John Ford, Palo Alto, CA
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Maureen M. Futtner & Lisa Channer, South Amherst, MA
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George H. Tinker, Genoa, IL
Leslie Trumbull, New York, NY
Tim Walton, Boston, MA
Jay Weiser, Brooklyn, NY
George F. Will, Tucson, AZ
John B. Wilson, San Francisco, CA
Gene Wolery, Gilroy, CA
And 11 others who preferred to remain anonymous.

SUSTAINERS WE THANK YOU!

Anonymous, in appreciation of the work
of Carla Cerrato

Carrie Anderson, Honolulu, HI
Christine L. Anderson, Philadelphia, PA
Greg Armstrong, Dallas, TX
George W. Atkinson, Laguna Beach, CA
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Michael, Witbrock, Pittsburgh PA
Paul J. Witte, Alexandria VA
Cindy Yager, Garnerville, NY
Gayle Yamamoto, San Diego, CA
Tim Young, Baton Rouge, LA

And 35 others who preferred to remain anonymous.

We'd also like to thank the following institutions
for their generous support: The Horizons Founda-
tion, The Morgan Pinney Trust, National
Community Funds, Resist, and the Zellerbach
Family Fund.

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WHEN VIOLENCE STRIKES: THE RESULTS

IN OUR SUMMER 1989 issue, our queery was about the extent of homophobic violence in our lives. Over 400 of you responded. Of the responses that have been tallied so far, 48 percent came from men, 52 percent from women. Ages ranged from 19 to 68, with the average age being 35. Eighty-eight percent of the respondents were white, and 79 percent had a college education or more. Readers from 36 states plus the District of Columbia and Canada sent queeries in.

Most of you said you never experienced incidents of violence. But at what price? *Seventy-two percent* of you also modify your behavior to avoid anti-gay/lesbian harassment and violence. As one person said, "I'm not that obvious—which is why I don't meet with more harassment." We're left wondering how the violence statistics would be altered if gay men and lesbians never hid their sexual orientations.

Percent of respondents who have experienced anti-gay violence:

	During the Past Year			Since Age 18		
	Never	Once	2+Times	Never	Once	2 + Times
Verbal Insults	39	21	41	9	8	83
Physical Violence	82	12	6	47	17	36
Property Damage	91	6	3	73	11	16
Chased or Followed	87	9	5	59	18	23
Assaulted/Wounded with a weapon	99	0.4	0.4	93	4	3
Sexually Harassed without assault	84	6	10	61	11	28
Harassed by Police	92	4	4	70	15	15

In 15% of the violent incidents reported, the perpetrator made reference to AIDS.

80% of You Did Not Report Violent Incidents. Here are some of your reasons:

"Usually it's the cops doing it or supporting it."

"The police refused to take a report."

"I don't want to bring attention to myself."

"It involved my father."

"I didn't think it was serious enough to warrant police attention."

Modifying Behavior: The only question where we found a significant difference between men and women was whether or not you modify behavior to avoid homophobic harassment. 40% of women do, compared to 31% of men.

And what does modify mean?

"I rarely touch people in public."

"I try to act and look straight."

"I write under a pseudonym."

"I de-dyke my house to avoid physical violence from my family."

"I separate myself as much as possible from straight society."

"I carry a 9mm semi-automatic handgun." ▼

Linda Platt, a graduate student in the Social/Personality Psychology program at City University in New York City, prepared this analysis.

#7 Who Does The Chores?

The details of domesticity seldom make the front pages, but they can occupy primary importance in our daily lives. Sociologist Marion Tolbert Colman of the University of Texas at Austin is studying the division of housework in lesbian and gay households. *OUT/LOOK* readers who live with their lovers can help solve the mysteries of who does the work when there are no social expectations to guide us. Because it is important that both members of a couple respond, we've enclosed two copies of this questionnaire. It is critical that partners do not compare their answers. After completing the forms, however, you are allowed to read each other's responses, provided you don't change anything, and don't call the *OUT/LOOK* office to resolve any fights that may ensue. All responses are confidential. Deadline for receipt of completed queries is March 1, 1990. The results will be published in an upcoming issue of *OUT/LOOK*.

Thank you and happy housekeeping!

PARTNER #1

1. Your age _____

2. Your birthdate _____
(month/day/year)

3. Your Partner's birthdate _____
(month/day/year)

This information will be used to match partner responses.

4. Your ethnic background:
___ Asian ___ Black ___ Hispanic
___ White ___ Other _____

5. Your household includes:
___ 1 lesbian couple
___ 1 gay couple
___ other (please specify) _____

6. How long have you lived together?
___ years ___ months

7. Where do you live?
___ rented dwelling
___ dwelling you own
___ dwelling your partner owns
___ dwelling you own together
___ other _____

8. Your education:
___ less than high school
___ high school
___ some college
___ college graduate
___ trade/vocational school
___ some graduate school
___ completed graduate school

9. Your work? ___ full time
___ part-time ___ do not work for pay

10. If you work for pay, what is your occupation? _____

11. What percentage of the household income do you contribute? _____

12. How much money do you make per year? _____

(very important to answer)

13. What is your household's total annual income? _____
(very important to answer)

14. How do you and your partner handle the following expenses:

Mortgage / rent

___ You pay all ___ Partner pays all
___ 50-50 ___ negotiate ___ common fund

Utility bills

___ You pay all ___ Partner pays all
___ 50-50 ___ negotiate ___ common fund

Groceries

___ You pay all ___ Partner pays all
___ 50-50 ___ negotiate ___ common fund

Household maintenance

___ You pay all ___ Partner pays all
___ 50-50 ___ negotiate ___ common fund

15. On average, how often do you discuss household expenses with your partner?

___ daily
___ once or twice a week
___ once or twice a month
___ less than once a month
___ never

16. On average, how often do you and your partner disagree about household expenses?

___ daily
___ once or twice a week
___ once or twice a month
___ less than once a month
___ never

17. For each item below, give three responses.

"% Percentage":

Fill in the percentage of the task you do.
If you hire help to do a task, note with an H.

"Choose": Put "1" if you *would* do this job if you had the choice. Put "2" if you would *not* do this job if you had the choice.

"Negotiate": Check if you and your partner formally discuss responsibility for this task.

Task	%	Choose	Negotiate
car maintenance	_____	_____	_____
caring for pets	_____	_____	_____
carrying trash	_____	_____	_____
cleaning:			
bathroom sink	_____	_____	_____
tub/shower	_____	_____	_____
toilet	_____	_____	_____
child care	_____	_____	_____
contact landlord	_____	_____	_____
driving when together	_____	_____	_____
dusting	_____	_____	_____
folding clothes	_____	_____	_____
laundromat	_____	_____	_____
groceries	_____	_____	_____
handwashing	_____	_____	_____
dishes	_____	_____	_____
household repairs	_____	_____	_____
indoor cooking	_____	_____	_____
ironing	_____	_____	_____
load/unload:			
washer/dryer	_____	_____	_____
dishwasher	_____	_____	_____
mopping	_____	_____	_____
mowing yard	_____	_____	_____
other yardwork	_____	_____	_____
outdoor cooking	_____	_____	_____
pay household bills	_____	_____	_____
put away dishes	_____	_____	_____
sweeping	_____	_____	_____
vacuuming	_____	_____	_____
other:	_____	_____	_____

Over, please

18. How much time per week do you spend on housework? _____ Does your partner spend? _____

19. Overall, what percentage of the total work in the household do you do? _____ Does your partner do? _____

20. What percentage of your household work do you pay to have done? _____

21. On average, how often do you discuss household chores with your partner?

___ daily ___ once or twice a week ___ less than once/month ___ once or twice a month ___ never

22. On average, how often do you and your partner disagree about household chores?

___ daily ___ once or twice a week ___ less than once/month ___ once or twice a month ___ never

23. In general, are you pleased or displeased with the divisions in your household? _____

Why?

(continued below)

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SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94103

.....
24. On tasks where you have negotiated division, are you pleased with the results of that negotiation? _____

25. If housework is a source of conflict, briefly summarize the specific issues over which you experience conflict.

26. My partner's QUESTIONNAIRE is: ___ enclosed ___ being sent separately

Thank you for your cooperation.

#7 Who Does The Chores?

The details of domesticity seldom make the front pages, but they can occupy primary importance in our daily lives. Sociologist Marion Tolbert Colman of the University of Texas at Austin is studying the division of housework in lesbian and gay households. *OUT/LOOK* readers who live with their lovers can help solve the mysteries of who does the work when there are no social expectations to guide us. Because it is important that both members of a couple respond, we've enclosed two copies of this questionnaire. It is critical that partners do not compare their answers. After completing the forms, however, you are allowed to read each other's responses, provided you don't change anything, and don't call the *OUT/LOOK* office to resolve any fights that may ensue. All responses are confidential. Deadline for receipt of completed queries is March 1, 1990. The results will be published in an upcoming issue of *OUT/LOOK*.

Thank you and happy housekeeping!

PARTNER #2

1. Your age _____

2. Your birthdate _____
(month/day/year)

3. Your Partner's birthdate _____
(month/day/year)

This information will be used to match partner responses.

4. Your ethnic background:
☐ Asian ☐ Black ☐ Hispanic
☐ White ☐ Other _____

5. Your household includes:
☐ 1 lesbian couple
☐ 1 gay couple
☐ other (please specify) _____

6. How long have you lived together?
 _____ years _____ months

7. Where do you live?
☐ rented dwelling
☐ dwelling you own
☐ dwelling your partner owns
☐ dwelling you own together
☐ other _____

8. Your education:
☐ less than high school
☐ high school
☐ some college
☐ college graduate
☐ trade/vocational school
☐ some graduate school
☐ completed graduate school

9. Your work? ☐ full time
☐ part-time ☐ do not work for pay

10. If you work for pay, what is your occupation? _____

11. What percentage of the household income do you contribute? _____

12. How much money do you make per year? _____
(very important to answer)

13. What is your household's total annual income? _____
(very important to answer)

14. How do you and your partner handle the following expenses:

Mortgage / rent

☐ You pay all ☐ Partner pays all
☐ 50-50 ☐ negotiate ☐ common fund

Utility bills

☐ You pay all ☐ Partner pays all
☐ 50-50 ☐ negotiate ☐ common fund

Groceries

☐ You pay all ☐ Partner pays all
☐ 50-50 ☐ negotiate ☐ common fund

Household maintenance

☐ You pay all ☐ Partner pays all
☐ 50-50 ☐ negotiate ☐ common fund

15. On average, how often do you discuss household expenses with your partner?

☐ daily
☐ once or twice a week
☐ once or twice a month
☐ less than once a month
☐ never

16. On average, how often do you and your partner disagree about household expenses?

☐ daily
☐ once or twice a week
☐ once or twice a month
☐ less than once a month
☐ never

17. For each item below, give three responses.

"% Percentage":

Fill in the percentage of the task you do.
 If you hire help to do a task, note with an H.

"Choose": Put "1" if you *would* do this job if you had the choice. Put "2" if you would *not* do this job if you had the choice.

"Negotiate": Check if you and your partner formally discuss responsibility for this task.

Task	%	Choose	Negotiate
car maintenance	_____	_____	_____
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cleaning:			
bathroom sink	_____	_____	_____
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toilet	_____	_____	_____
child care	_____	_____	_____
contact landlord	_____	_____	_____
driving when			
together	_____	_____	_____
dusting	_____	_____	_____
folding clothes	_____	_____	_____
laundromat	_____	_____	_____
groceries	_____	_____	_____
handwashing	_____	_____	_____
dishes	_____	_____	_____
household	_____	_____	_____
repairs	_____	_____	_____
indoor cooking	_____	_____	_____
ironing	_____	_____	_____
load/unload:			
washer/dryer	_____	_____	_____
dishwasher	_____	_____	_____
mopping	_____	_____	_____
mowing yard	_____	_____	_____
other yardwork	_____	_____	_____
outdoor cooking	_____	_____	_____
pay household bills	_____	_____	_____
put away dishes	_____	_____	_____
sweeping	_____	_____	_____
vacuuming	_____	_____	_____
other:	_____	_____	_____

Over, please

18. How much time per week do you spend on housework? _____ Does your partner spend? _____
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___ daily ___ once or twice a week ___ less than once/month ___ once or twice a month ___ never
22. On average, how often do you and your partner disagree about household chores?
___ daily ___ once or twice a week ___ less than once/month ___ once or twice a month ___ never
23. In general, are you pleased or displeased with the divisions in your household? _____
Why?

(continued below)

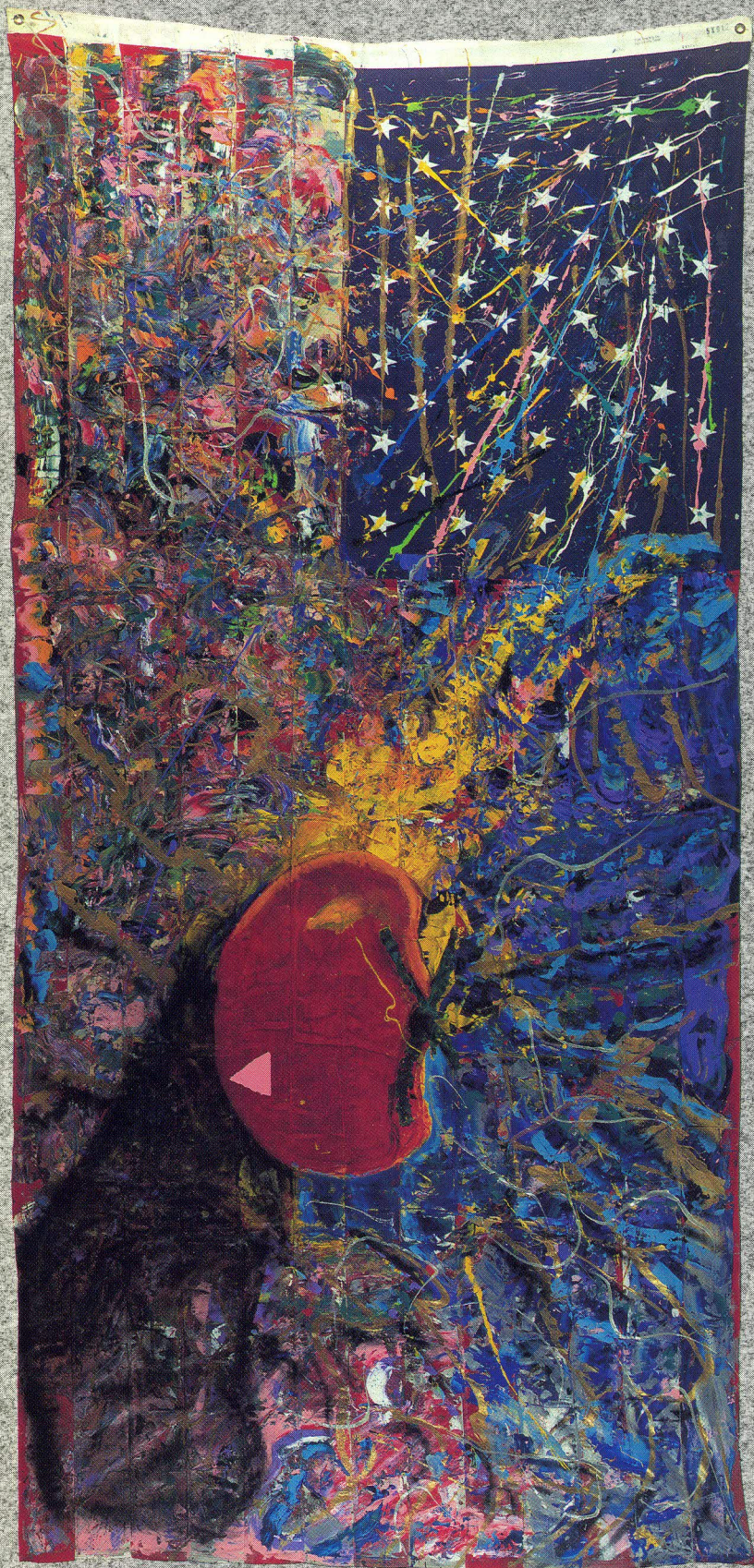
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-
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25. If housework is a source of conflict, briefly summarize the specific issues over which you experience conflict.
26. My partner's QUESTIONNAIRE is: __ enclosed __ being sent separately

Thank you for your cooperation.



INSIDE: DESECRATION OR LIBERATION? From *Dangerous Ideas* by Gene Wesley Elder