

Dear

WORLD



QUEER ART & LIT



Welcome to Dear World, where related but disparate views inform and corrupt each other.

We're interested in the dark, seamy overlaps between sexual pleasures/sexual politics, sexual acts/political actions/political actors — and much more!

We told you what we liked: fanzines, beer bellies, Venus In Furs, The Book of Repulsive Women, New Age (Velvet's), drag queens, special interests, conflicts of interest, Sister Double Happiness, smart vampires (foolish choices), Margo St. James, Margo Howard Howard, Walter B., Roland B., Myra B., Shanghai Gesture, Jodie Foster, Reynaldo Hahn, butch-fem, Denton Welch, intimate embarrassments, Topkapi, Edith Massey, My Place, On Our Backs, anti-fascists, lesbian strippers, crack pot theories, theories, charm and attack, Madonna's pasties, Johnny Sheffield's tits, Sean Connery's pits, body parts, Bear Magazine, Bugger's Baroque, mannersims, the Raincoats covering Lola, the (late) One Way, STH.

We looked for people with smart ideas about diets, slogans, fist puppetry, promiscuity, fashion, toys, radical gardening, slings (arrows), smut, sex lives of the Supreme Court, boys, girls, personal ads, hard core. We encouraged you to let your hair/guard down in the mode/tone of your contributions, asking for fictions, facts, remnants, pieces of your charm, criticisms, visuals, tactics, gossip, politics, alerts, agonies, advice, mishgas, dark secrets, complaints (no problem too small), stains (indelible), delights, unmentionables, unnamables, plots (schemes), works in progress, works in limbo, leftovers...

The following is what we received...Dear World.

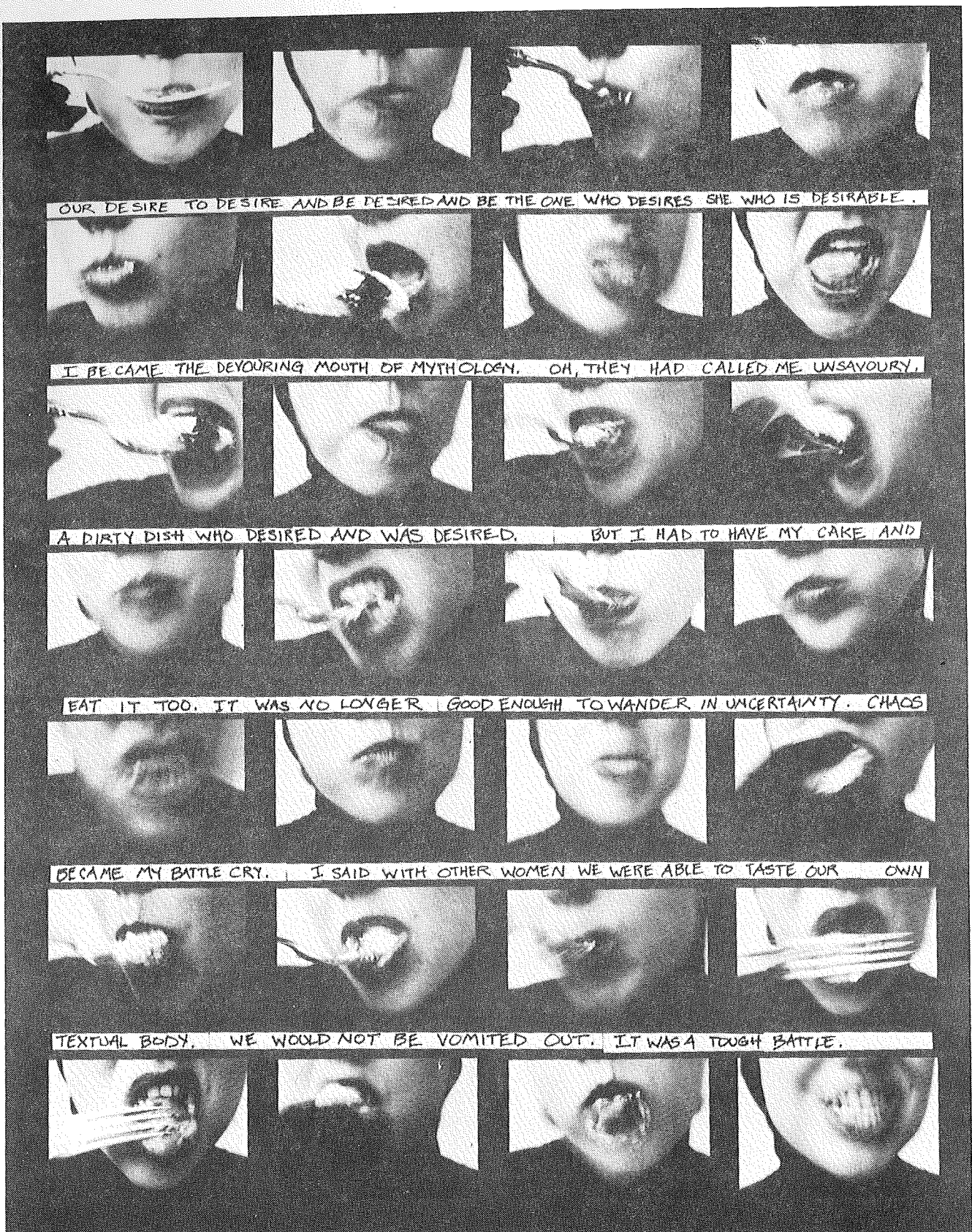
Dear

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OUR DESIRE TO DESIRE AND BE DESIRED AND BE THE ONE WHO DESIRES SHE WHO IS DESIRABLE .

I BECAME THE DEVOURING MOUTH OF MYTHOLOGY. OH, THEY HAD CALLED ME UNSAVOURY.

A DIRTY DISH WHO DESIRED AND WAS DESIRED. BUT I HAD TO HAVE MY CAKE AND

EAT IT TOO. IT WAS NO LONGER GOOD ENOUGH TO WANDER IN UNCERTAINTY. CHAOS

BECAME MY BATTLE CRY. I SAID WITH OTHER WOMEN WE WERE ABLE TO TASTE OUR OWN

TEXTUAL BODY. WE WOULD NOT BE VOMITED OUT. IT WAS A TOUGH BATTLE.

KAUCYILA BROOKE



HER BODY, MINE, AND HIS

Dorothy Allison

*

FROG FUCKING. HER HANDS ON MY HIPS; my heels against my ass, legs spread wide; her face leaning into my neck; my hands griping her forearms. Her teeth are gentle. Nothing else about her is. I push up on the balls of my feet, rock my ass onto my ankles, reaching up for every forward movement of her thighs between mine. Her nipples are hard, her face flushed, feet planted on the floor while I arch off the edge of the bed, a water mammal, frog creature with thighs snapping back to meet her every thrust.

My labia swell. I can feel each hair that curls around the harness she wears. I imagine manta rays unfolding great undulating labia-wings in the ocean, wrapping around the object of their desire. Just so my labia, the wings of my cunt. I reach for her with my hands, my mouth, my thighs, my great swollen powerful cunt.

Her teeth are set, hips are thrusting, shoving, head back, pushing, drawing back and ramming in. I laugh and arch up into her, curse her and beg her. My feet are planted. I can do anything. I lift my belly, push up even more. Fucking, fucking, fucking. I call this fucking. Call her

lover, bastard, honey, sweetheart, nasty motherfucker, evil hearted bitch, YOU GODDAMNED CUNT! She calls me her baby, her girl, her toy, her lover, hers, hers, hers. Tells me she will never stop, never let me go. I beg her. "Fuck me." "Hard," I beg her. "You, you, you...Hard! Goddamn you! Do it! Don't stop! Don't stop! Don't stop! Don't stop!"

jesus fucking christ don't stop.

don't stop.

I have been told that Lesbians don't do this. Perhaps we are not lesbians? She is a woman. I am a woman. But maybe we are aliens? Is what we do together a lesbian act?

Paul took me out for coffee in New York and gave me a little silver claw holding a stone. "A little something for that poem of yours," he told me. "The one about the joy of faggots. I've been reading it everywhere." He drank herbal tea and told me about his travels, reading poetry and flirting with the tender young boys at all the universities—going on and on about how they kneel in the front row and look up to him their lips gently parted and their legs

pressed together. Sipping tea he told me, "They're wearing those loose trousers again, the ones with the pleats that always remind me of F. Scott Fitzgerald and lawn parties."

I drank the bitter coffee, admired his narrow moustache and told him how much I hate those blousen pants women are wearing instead of jeans. It's hell being an ass woman these days, I joked.

He started to laugh, called me a lech, looked away, looked back and I saw there were tears in his eyes. Said, "Yes, those jeans, tight, shaped to the ass, worn to a pale blue-white and torn like as not showing an ass cheek paler still." Said, "Yes, all those boys, those years, all the men in tight tight pants." Said, "Yes, those jeans, the pants so tight their cocks were clearly visible on the bus, the subway, the street, a shadow of a dick leading me on. Sometimes I would just lightly brush them, and watch them swell under the denim, the dick lengthening down the thigh." He stopped, tears all over his face, his hand on his cup shaking, coming up in the air to gesture, a profound sad movement of loss. "All gone," he whispered, the romantic poet in his suede professor's jacket. "I never do it anymore, never. Never touch them, those boys, can't even imagine falling in love again, certainly not like I used to for twenty minutes at a time on any afternoon.

I started to speak and he put his hand up. 'Don't say it. Don't tell me I'm being foolish or cowardly or stupid or anything. I loved the way it used to be and I hate the fact that it's gone. I've not gone celibate, or silly, or vicious, or gotten religion, or started lecturing people in bars. It's those memories I miss, those boys on the street in the afternoon laugh-



ing and loving each other, that sense of sex as an adventure, a holy act."

He put his cup down, glared at it and then at me. Indignant, excited, determined. "But you still do it! Don't you? You dykes. You're out there all the time, doing it. Flirting with each other, touching, teasing, jerking each other off in bathrooms, picking each other up and going to parties. Fucking and showing off and doing it everywhere you can. You are. Say you are. I know you are."

I said, "Yes." I said, "Yes." I lied, and said, "Yes." Paul, we are. "Yes."

She has named her cock "Bubba." Teases me with it. Calls it him, says talk to him, pet him. He's gonna go deep inside you. I start to giggle, slap Bubba back and forth. Can not take him too seriously, even though I really do like it when she straps him on. Bubba is fat and bent, an ugly pink color not found in nature, and he jiggles obscenely when she walks around the room. Obscene and ridiculous, us, still he is no less effective when she puts herself between my legs. Holding Bubba in one hand, I am sure that this is the origin of irony—that men's penises should look so funny and still be so prized.

She is ten years younger than me...sometimes. Sometimes I am eight and she is not born yet, but the ghost of her puts a hand on my throat, pinches my clit and bites my breast. The ghost of her teases me, tells me how much she loves all my perversities. She says she was made for me, promises me sincerely that she will always want me. Sometimes I believe her without effort. Sometimes, I become her child, trusting, taking in everything she says. Her flesh, her body, her lust and hunger—I believe. I believe, and it is not

a lie.

When I am fucking her I am a thousand years old, a crone with teeth, bone teeth grinding, vibrating down into my own hips. Old and mean and hungry as a wolf, or a shark. She is a suckling infant, soft in my hands, trusting me with her tender open places. Her mouth opens like an oyster, the lower lip soft under the tongue, the teeth pearls in the dim light. Her eyes are deep and dark and secret. She is pink, rose, red, going purple dark...coming with a cry and a shudder, and suddenly limp beneath my arms. I push up off her, and bite my own wrist. It is all I can do not to feed at her throat.

I drank too much wine at a party last fall, found myself quoting Muriel Ruykeyser to Geoff Maines, all about the backside, the body's ghetto, singing her words "never to go despising the asshole nor the useful shit that is our clean clue to what we need". "The clitoris in her least speech," he sang back and I loved him for that with all my soul. We fed each other fat baby carrots and beamed at our own enjoyment.

"Ah the Ass," Geoff intoned, "the temple of the gods." I giggled, lifted a carrot in a toast and matched his tone. "And the sphincter—gateway to the heart."

He nodded, licked his carrot, reached down, shifted a strap and inserted that carrot deftly up his butt. He looked up at me, grinned, rolled a carrot in my direction and raised one eyebrow. "Least speech," I heard myself tell him. Then I hiked up my skirt and disappeared that carrot, keeping my eyes on his all the while. There was something about his expression, a look of arrogant conviction that I could not resist.

"Lesbians constantly surprise me," was all Geoff said, lining up a row of little baby carrots from the onion dip to the chips, pulling the dish of butter over as well. He handed me another carrot. I blinked, watched as he took another for himself. "I propose the carrot olympics, a cross-gender, mutually queer event." I started to laugh and he rolled buttery carrots between his palms. His face was full of laughter, his eyes so blue and pleased with himself they sparkled. "All right," I agreed. How could I not? I pulled up the hem of my skirt, tucked it into my waistband, took up the butter and looked Geoff right in the eye. "Dead heat or one on one?"

FAGGOT! That's what he called me. The boy on the street with the baseball bat that followed me from Delôres Park the week after I moved here. He called me a faggot. My hair is long. My hips are wide. I wear a leather jacket and walk with a limp. But I carry a knife. What am I exactly? When he called me a faggot I knew. I knew for sure who I was and who I would not be. From the doorway of the grocery at 18th and Guerrero, I yelled it at him. "Dyke! Get it right, you son of a bitch, I'm a dyke."

I am angry all the time lately, and being angry makes me horny, makes me itchy, makes me want to shock strangers and surprise the girls who ask me, please, out for coffee and to talk. I don't want to talk. I want to wrestle in silence. When I am like this, it is not sex I want, it is the intimacy of their bodies, the inside of them, what they are afraid I might see if I look too close. I look too close. I write it all down. I intend that things shall be different in my lifetime, if not in theirs.

Paul, Geoff, I am doing it as much as I

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can, as fast as I can. This holy act. I am licking their necks on Market street, fisting them in the second floor bathroom at Amelias, in a booth under a dim wall lamp at the Box—coming up from her cunt a moment before the spotlight shifts to her greedy features. I have tied her to a rail in a garage down on Howard Street, let her giggle and squirm while I teased her clit. Then filled her mouth with my sticky fingers and rocked her on my hipbone til she roared. We have roared together.

Everywhere I go the slippery scent of sweat and heat is in the air, so strong it could be me or the women I follow, the ones who follow me. They know who I am just as I know them. I have ripped open their jeans at the Powerhouse, put my heel between their legs at the Broadway Cafe, opened their shirts all the way down at Just Deserts and pushed seedless grapes into their panties at the Patio Cafe. The holy act of sex, my sex, done in your name, done for the only, the best

reason. Because we want it. I am pushing up off the bed into Alix's neck like a great cat with a gazelle in their teeth. I am screaming and not stopping, not stopping. Frog fucking, pussy creaming, ass clenching, drumming out, pumping in. I am doing it, boys and girls, I am doing it, doing it all the time. ☉

Prepared for *The Body in Context*,
September 8, 1989



"The Constitution does not protect any personal bonds that are formed from the use of a motel room for less than 10 hours. Those brief relationships are not those that have played a critical role in the culture and traditions of the nation, and are therefore not protected by the constitutional guarantee of freedom of association."

UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT JUSTICE SANDRA DAY O'CONNOR



GOOD BITE OF GUILT

Kathleen Ritchey

*

I GOT INTO THE CAB AND SHUT THE DOOR. It was a guy driving and he smelled. The music and the smoke lingered even after I had rolled down the window. He looked at me, my outfit. He didn't ask, "Where to?" just sat there and stared. I gave him an address and he grunted. Drove down the block, still looking, and he began snorting air in through his nose, rhythmically. I guess that's what some people call a laugh. He must have recognized the address. Eying me still, he took in the chains, the bone, the left breast. Even my strictest friends said I'd taken the amazonian thing too far.

"Thought you were a man for a second there" he said and started that laughing again. He drove through the light on Divis. Block after block, he laughed. He turned, he laughed. Snorting, really. It went on and on. I shifted in my seat and so did he, laughing.

Usually nothing compliments me more than to be taken for a man. When I was fifteen this black woman in a green Chrysler Cordova followed me three blocks before she got a good look at my chest. Her smile didn't change but her eyes, fixed on my tits, softened so noticeably

that it changed the shape of her head. For months afterwards I imagined her in my room at home, scratching me till I bled with Lee Press-On nails. More pleasant associations are rare, but now this guy would not stop laughing.

You see, I'm not used to taking this kind of shit from low-life like him, or maybe I'm just all too used to it. I'm my own boss, I work in a private women's cabaret just outside the city as a professional nude contortionist. They say my self-stimulation act is profoundly politically correct, if not liberating.

I try and ignore him and concentrate on tonight's contest at the club. Best secondary sex characteristics of the opposite gender held a cool \$250 for me and my chest hair. Only I couldn't center at all with this moron next to me, sucking in air through his large, red nose.

"You're a dyke" he said, slowing to the red light at Fell. I said nothing.

"Tell me" he goes on, "what is it about men you don't like?"

I look out the window and adjust my spurs.

"Why are you so hostile, then, if you're cool with men?" he says.

Now at this point these arguments usually turn down to the genitals. Their dimensions, their functions. Slots and tabs. I sighed through my leather and brought up an arm to hold my head. It seemed to work. My elbow twitched rockingly, making my cleats protrude into the delicate tissue around my eye, but I didn't care. He started up otherwise.

"You're just too big on yourselves is what you are, you dykes. Well you can just fuck yourself." He turned down Oak, wiping his forehead with the back of his hand. His eyepatch slipped. Beneath was an eyelid, but an eyelid like a blanket in front of a wall. From the way he wrinkled his nose, he could probably feel it was down, but he didn't try and fix it.

He turned up Fillmore, and it felt like we were going in circles. I glared at him. We were way out of the way. He swiped a cat at a corner turning blind and I watched it shoot away, yowling. Made me think of Lucy, this friend of mine who realized she couldn't stop drinking beer when her cat got cat-leukemia. She loved that thing to death, even though it had had its ears removed (mange or something) and it didn't even look like a cat much any more.

This was absurd. I tucked my body in a little closer to my heart. I wasn't gonna sit with this cab driver and discuss my personal habits. I bet straight women never had to put up with this bullshit, fuck them too. They deserved his kind. I wanted to



had to put up with this bullshit, fuck them too. They deserved his kind. I wanted to hide in a cave with my own and howl at the moon, now.

"Who do you care less about," he mused on, "your mother or your father?"

I knew what I had to do. I would curse this car. It wasn't even hard. I sat, imagining this great, stinging pain, and how it might descend. What a stupid prick. The blood and diet pepsi dripping from the steering combine, I was singing with it.

Then I heard something rattling against his side of the car, but I didn't realize it was a cane with little harley decals till he pulled it out at the light at Fillmore and Hayes and put it in his right hand, the one he wasn't using.

I guess it made him feel like a big man, with a cane to hit me with in case I got post-menstrual on him. I noticed one of those yellow waxed papers they wrap cheeseburgers in at McDonalds sticking out of his sling, most likely nestling his half chewed lunch up there next to the wound.

I felt completely murderous now. All this and a meat eater, too. I wanted to beat him to death with my strap-on and leave him gurgling, the whole thing shoved down his chicken throat when they found him, but then I got this queasy live-by-the-sword, die-by-the-sword feeling. That and a recuperation problem stayed my hand.

We arrived, finally. I got out of the cab gracefully enough but my rubber pants

stuck to the seat and made a horrible farting noise as I pulled away. He didn't seem to notice. I paid him, tipped him even, and said, "I hope you perish fitfully."

He said "Oh yeah?" and gunned the motor, tore off down the block, over the side walk and into a wall. The front end crumpled noisily. People started off screaming. I ran down the whole block (no small feat in these boots). I peered into the passenger side window. There he was, all crumpled up. Blood and diet pepsi dripped down the steering combine.

My night was ruined. I was a witch. I hear telephones ringing all the time now. ☹





THE REAL AND THE UNREAL: HAYLEY MILLS VS. ANNETTE

Kevin Killian

*

REMEMBER THOSE CHARTS LISTING THE startling similarities between the assassinations of President A. Lincoln and JFK? I've prepared one on the similarities between the careers of Hayley Mills and Annette Funicello. None of the similarities is startling: thrill seekers look elsewhere.

1. Both girls were child stars.
2. Both child stars were employed (some say exploited) by Disney Studios, #8 of Hollywood's "Big Eight." Both left the studio.
3. Each of these two stars went on to marriage and to have children, as much as if to say that, despite everything you hear, normal heterosexual development is still the sine qua non among the spoiled denizens of Tinseltown.

The real question is, What makes up the difference between a woman like Annette, whom everyone pretty much likes, and a woman like Hayley Mills, who has so many fans that a whole industry has been built around a — rather Derridean — "absence as presence"?

Before replying to this point, I better back up a little or people will laugh at me for making unwarranted assumptions. Is it true that everyone "pretty much likes" Annette? Well I think so. I suppose there may be a couple of people who don't respond favorably to Funicello, and when I think about it, I can see why. She seems artificial and "California" especially when contrasted to Hayley, who due to her English accent can seem natural and exotic at the same time. And not everybody likes big chested Italian mothers. I don't go as far as to accuse the anti-Annette camp of ethnic prejudice, but I will say this: if you don't like Annette, then examine your attitudes and raise those consciousness! Others dislike her because of *Babes in Toyland*. These people I don't fault. Walt Disney made plenty of awful pictures (even some Hayley Mills couldn't save) but *Babes in Toyland* has got to be the worst. I think it's plain that Walt Disney, while he made Annette a star on TV, failed miserably to showcase her talents correctly when he decided to upgrade her into a movie idol. He gave her that one lousy picture and, when through no fault of hers it didn't do well, he dropped her like a sack of hot potatoes. It took another studio (not even one of the Big Eight) to

discover the qualities Disney had ignored and to make Annette a great star of motion pictures in the Beach Party movies (AIP). And this in itself is odd. Whatever else can be said against Disney, he was one of the great starmakers of our time, and it'd be difficult to think of a parallel situation to Annette's — i.e., another actor dropped by Disney who went on to stardom elsewhere. It's almost as if he had a grudge against her. Maybe it was her body. Maybe there was just too much of her to assimilate so he abandoned her to the beach, like she was a rusty car or a used condom or something. Even if you don't like her you have to admit she deserved a better break than that.

Meanwhile what of her English counterpart? Hayley received the big buildup from Disney, and rewarded his confidence in her by turning out picture after picture for big Box Office dollars. Hayley was never a TV star like Annette, but that didn't seem to matter much during her peak years (roughly 1960-65), a period contemporaneous to the reign of Doris Day; and isn't Doris in many ways a figure similar to Hayley? — as though they played sisters in a movie) (it seems clear that the producers of *That Darn Cat* used Dorothy Provine as a kind of inferior substitute for DD). So it looks as though in toto Hayley had a career bigger than Annette, one with more implications. She could play different parts, and Annette was typecast. Annette looked healthy, on an American style that can't be downplayed. Hayley has a kind of health (like in *The Parent Trap*, but even in *The Parent Trap* she looks scrawny & might of her own accord have started the anorexia syndrome you hear so much about today). But she could also play "sick," so that widened her range. Think of the mentally unstable girls Hayley



played & try to imagine Annette as any one of them: *Tiger Bay*, *Whistle down the Wind*, *The Chalk Garden*, *A Matter of Innocence*.. What a tragedy! Of course, because they're so bleak, many of us dislike even Hayley in these same parts; we'd rather watch *The Trouble with Angels* any old day.

The marriages made by our 2 stars really fucked up their screen lives, tho, didn't they? Every time I think of that Roy Boulting I want to start screaming. Who did he think he was, anyway? I think he's a pervert. And then Annette's husband, Jack Gilardi, insisted she retire from movies and raise kids. Well after 20 years Annette finally saw the light and dumped him. Trouble is, it's 20 years too late and the parts just aren't coming in the way they used to. Oh well, at least Jack "allowed" Annette to go on with the screen work that ultimately made her most famous — those Skippy peanut butter commercials, by far the best commercials ever seen on TV. By doing them Annette added luster to her already shining star — right up to the present day. Whereas if we ask what happened to Hayley during the

past twenty years, we can easily see that — so far as stardom goes — she hardly exists except as a pleasant memory. This isn't a putdown! Drop your guns! I just want everybody to realize that if it had been Hayley doing those Skippy commercials the whole world would have switched to Peter Pan!!! And why?

Because no one would believe that Skippy has any nutrition! The reason we love Hayley is because she's a being from another planet where nutrition doesn't matter! In her movies she's seen eating from time to time, but does anyone honestly believe she eats those foods? I think she's an angel & angels don't eat — they just fade away and fan clubs form around them because Nature, as is well known, abhors a vacuum. Also in her formative years Hayley didn't have to wear those darn mouse ears either — so that must have altered her personality a little, wouldn't you think? Although I remember one episode of the *Wonderful World of Color* where Hayley and John Mills were given the keys to Disneyland and got to ride on all the rides for free and watch Annette filming a sequence from

Babes in Toyland.. I wonder what was running through their heads then. If they had the gift of prophecy and could foresee the seesaws their respective careers would take. What would they have thought? Or if they liked each other, although both seemed gracious. Annette had been taught manners in a big L.A. children's school for Mouseketeers, while Hayley, like Princess Diana, seemed polite from birth, because she was from England. And this was supposed to be this enormous treat for her, though I did notice that she looked green and sick while on the Pirates of the Caribbean ride, meanwhile John Mills was laughing, grinning and pounding his daughter on the back as if to say, "Isn't this jolly good fun?" So you didn't know which girl to feel sorriest for, and that is why we liked them both I guess. And Annette's father was a big boob, and he wasn't encouraged to appear before any cameras, whereas John Mills even won an Oscar!

Next time, I will discuss the similarities between Hayley and Patty Duke, although clever readers could write that one themselves. ☉



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DEAR WORLD,

Christopher Cochrane

*

HISTORY AGAINST OTHERS, WHICH CULTURE TO CHOOSE as evidence to display, what I know but can also learn from, unlikely anyone knows more than anyone else, I decided not to worry who gets it lately, though I forgot who to lie to, intentionally, though out of memory I've changed. Used to want to teach, this figures still, but my limited view. asking questions more valuable than any other dogma is weak. Construction is social and definable: part of several communities at once, some from choice others from where I'm situated: work/home some polemics fall short on this count of who to address, who that actually is; I see my personal affects often as a contradiction to what is expressed.

Example: when I haven't been safe nor had a desire to. What's that about? To unhinge daily life is an effort and am offered so little possibility to do so. What ever this point of view, it is hidden amidst time, the advent of wiping it off. the economics of sex: I take a walk in the park, instead of verbs, hands. sometimes I pay, mostly I'm the only white person there, unlike the art in town, yet I pay and. the concern of the exchange is really to be taking care of oneself with as little

self mutilation as possible.

red shirt and clothes pin, wash warm and red tin roofs, a pail; grimy and clean used for milking your eyes - I always feel the crippling effect of microscopes/smells of parchment after inside someone - impulse is manufactured - how sometimes shaving reveals someone else. an approaching weather system.

Maybe I should have reviewed a record or something.

a man handed me a bag, it was wrinkled and the size of my palm, he told me to keep it. I began to perceive it as mine though it wasn't as attractive as first imagined, the smell was all it really was and what it contained, though it was never opened. Many years later the memory is the definition for the exchange of words, but it is faulty, since maybe the bag didn't actually fit in my hand, it hung over the edges of my fingers, the detail of the day frozen as an inexact picture.

a list of my favorite foods, film makers or musicians with all my misspelling and disregard for the form of communication is an act of dialectical hatred; without

being cleaner I might change. to pronounce everything correctly would discount local culture/ foliage and mostly speculation of how to walk - a construction of words.

to search for sex is just another preoccupation of biology, like gardening or eating, painting your room.

I put a condom in my mouth because he refuses to use it and I ask for fifty bucks and he's no more the wiser.

Today to relieve myself I went to a receptacle where all the stalls had been torn out. We all stood at the urinals with our hands and I helped him, my envelope fell to the floor, I picked it up, it was damp from people's feet. I followed him out, there seemed no coincidence to talk, just slight smiles. the veins in my arm. we were by a body of water, where along the edges, in sight, cliffs defined. But across, almost but often disturbed by ships whose wake somehow distilled the afternoon, I bounced myself off your ass and dripped on your sweatpants, how you know you dislike something but have a distinct nostalgia for it.

my pockets stuffed with pant legs and pencils, my eyes piss with you, though never in the same room.

my eyes hurt and pull, my saliva mixes with yours as it dribbles down your belly. just bought something in anticipation once outside: the periodic clouds make the sky naked in the distance I could see the construction lights on each floor of a building nearing it's completion, nearby a park with trees with steel spikes embedded into them.

I can only faint once a day, but probably

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more if I really wanted to, to be a recovering alcoholic without believing in the language instructs how I don't want a career but have one because I make things, no matter what I doubt, everyone's smell - cleaner after your finger comes out, your face and legs come out, your taste.

desert color, I wore crinoline for you, do you like how I look? six dollar whores for two dollar junkies - a question about how long it will take. I do it myself, touch him through cloth - he walks away with subway fare and somehow I feel better and climb on my bike, my pant leg gets caught

in the chain and I use scissors to correct it when I get home.

is this high chair too low for the desk where you type? with an attempt to think about the future. ☹



SUSAN SONTAG: *Heterosexuality And Its Metaphors*

Dear World',

We are dennis cooper and MARK EWERT and we are in love, unlike wastrel you. Please please, drop your pencils now your palettes and your brushes your cameras and the heart you extend in your hand - give up all your attempts in any field of endeavor, your struggle is an ugly one. Ours, on the other hand, soars like an eagle. fuck face, lowlife loners. And stop calling us when we are ~~xxxxxx~~... .tastetesting. What is tastetesting? Guess, puta! Number 1: Mark ewert and dennis cooper love now and forever like cats)

We're sorry. We are too. We have even made a vow relevant to our regret: When MARK goes away to France in too short a time to France (BOO_HOO) and comes back to his beloved and his newly established and cleaned home (furnished with utensils stolen from Columbia University, a Tibetan's Sherpa hat, A ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE photograph of the children of the brave new world, Alacer E-mergen-C energizer drink, towels, fort, blue light of Faireland (fairies ***ancient blue star), MARK's Hair in a bag, chocolate covered raisins, Bow Wow Wowm, invitations, written calligraphed, in gold ink on linen rag paper i sent out to you select few no none of you (you are very spiritually advanced NO) no, I meant "you" as in the generic "one" - to people we want to meet, Karen Finlay's (diosa, santa) numero de telefono, stud glasses, X-men, Jim Isermann's multipetaled conversational seating-unit,) anyway, the vow as I was saying: when marky returns to booky at chez booky, they have promised - we mean it, we are going to enforce it- never to make phone-of those people, those droves, whose lives

fñn

are are arehow shall I say it - oh so wastrel and bleah compared to fantastic ours. No more jokes about the illness you are. (At current, we often spend many hours imitating you - this time you=everybody - your speech patterns, transparent mannerisms, sicko fatness, your art often, etc. etc. blech blech. But as this^{is} not promoting our spiritual development, and is not facilitating our conceiving of you everybody as humans, we must stop. On January 14th, 1990 (our decade) (January 14th is almost exactly midway between our birthdays on the 10th and 17th) we stop. We stop with the awful jests. The 1990s our are decade and the decade of our likeminded friends. Our decade. I look forward to it.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX:

Maybe some you remember remotely the PMS § Dennis (pre-Mark sentiment) but he is dead, we have killed him with an iceberg of happiness so no more mutilated boy books, fuck you. Love books from Dennis and Mark forever./ and a few of you knew MARK EWERT from his most famous sixteen year old butoh dancer in Atlanta, but forget you scum because it's over. dead butoh dancer, ya get it? I just kissed to put it mildly MARK's nipples and I feel so fucvking much better and so ecstatic that I'm dead, the old me. learn from this, learn from this. this is ecstasy and enlightenment more than you can think up, artistes. hah! ...in the... SHIT... HOUSE!!!! Eat me. More:my writing c shirt, Threepenny opera, Samuel Delaney, Tolkien of course, Rimbaud you bet, choc.-covered raisins, . Lexicon; words or movement-phrases: fashionable dancestep: wave your hand ~~NY~~ just in range of your peripheral vision as an autistic person, look casual; look - goose-bumps!gesture; bye-bye pinkie; little voice: "...well.."; "I guess that's the only reason." Hey guys, world, world I love though my mind can wander around alot, lighten up. Love is possible. You haven't found it, I'm guessing, but we're first. And our function ~~XXX~~ is that you might take a leaf from our book; that's why we're first. Learn and be rewarded, be rewarded, be rewarded, kiss me.

DENNIS COOPER & MARK EWERT

(Pursuant to the wishes of its authors, this letter is here presented in a facsimile of its original form)

Page Two:

Oh another thing I gotta throw in: Every Wednesdays, that's opposite day. We have to implement Simulated Conflict. Oh my. Its gotten so stylized and abstracted like the Catholic Mass. Like we wear clothes whose colors fight. Anyway, opposite day is so we understand you. Oh. Beautiful. Incense and the trappings. Oh, Lilith, Titivulus, Lucifuge Rofocale the treasurer of Hell, we banish you and the host Of BHAIRAVA with our whatever, we banish't you. Oh that was X so-so ~~XXXX~~.

Love sincerely,

And so, we remain,
Angels to each other and demons to everyone
else,

MARK EWERT denniss cooo perper.



PARADE

David Sedaris

*

I WAS ON "OPRAH" A WHILE AGO, talking about how I used to love too much. Did you see it? The other guests were men who continue to love too much. Those men were in a place I used to be, and I felt sorry for them. I was the guest who went from loving too much to being loved too much. Everybody loves me. I'm the most important person in the lives of almost everyone I know and a good number of people I've never even met. I don't say this casually, I'm just pointing out my qualifications.

Because I know the issue from both sides, I am constantly asked for advice. People want to know how I did it. They want to know if I can recommend a therapist. How much will it cost, how long might it take to recover. When asked, I tell them like I'm telling you, that I have never visited a therapist in my life. I worked things out on my own. I don't see it as any great feat, I just looked at the pattern of my life, decided I didn't like it, and changed it. The only reason I agreed to appear on Oprah's panel was because I thought her show could use a little sprucing up. Oprah is a fun girl, but you'd never know it from watching that show of hers, that parade of drunks and one-armed welfare cheats. And of course I did it to help people. I try and make an effort whenever I can.

Growing up, my parents were so very into themselves that I got little love and attention. As a result, I would squeeze the life out of everyone I came into contact with. I would scare away my dates on the first night by telling them that this was IT, the love experience I'd been waiting for. I would plan our futures together. Everything we did together held meaning for me and would remain bright in my memory. By the second date, I would arrive at the boyfriend's apartment carrying a suitcase and a few small pieces of furniture so that when I moved in completely I wouldn't have to hire a crew of movers. When they became frightened and backed away, I would hire detectives to follow these boyfriends. I needed to know that they weren't cheating on me. I would love my dates so much that I would become obsessed. I would dress like them, think like them, listen to the records they enjoyed. I would forget about me!

To make a long story short, I finally confronted my parents, who told me that they were only into themselves because they were afraid I might reject them if they loved me as intensely as they pretended to love themselves. They were hurting, too, and terribly vulnerable. They always knew how special I was, that I had something extra, that I would eventually become a big celebrity who would

belong to the entire world and not just to them. And they were right. I can't hate them for being right. I turned my life around and got on with it.

Did you see the show? Chuck Connors and Governor Bill Clinton were, in my opinion, just making an appearance in order to bolster their sagging careers, but not Jesse Helms. Man, I used to think that I had it bad! Jesse Helms has chased away every boyfriend he's ever had, and he's still doing it. Jesse is a big crier. He somehow latched on to me, and he's been calling and crying ever since the show. That's his trademark, crying and threatening suicide if you don't listen. That guy is a mess, but the other panel members didn't seem fit to speak on the subject. E. G. Marshall, for example, would talk about driving past his ex-boyfriend's house or calling him in the middle of the night just to hear his voice. Bill Clinton said he used to shower his boyfriends with gifts, he tried to buy their love. He wouldn't recognize love if it were his own hand, and E. G. Marshall if it were both his hands, one down there and the other gently at his throat.

I am in this week's *People* magazine, but not on the cover. Bruce Springsteen is on the cover with what's her name, that flat-faced new girlfriend of his, Patty Scholastica or Scoliosis—something like that. In the article she refers to Bruce as "The Boss" and discusses what she calls his "private side."

If she's calling Bruce "The Boss," then I can tell you she knows absolutely nothing about his private side.

I was the boss when Bruce and I were together. I should give this Patty person a call and tell her how Bruce needs to



have it, give her a few pointers and clear up this "Boss" issue. Tell her how Bruce begged me for a commitment, how he behaved when I turned him down. I'd said, "What's the use of being a rock star if you're going to run around looking like a secondshift welder at U.S. Pipe & Boiler?"

Bruce took it hard and picked up these women on the rebound. I remember running into that last wife of his, the model, at a party. It was she, I, Morley Safer, and Waylon Jennings. We were waiting for the elevator, and she was saying to Waylon that Bruce had just donated seven figures to charity, and I said, "No matter how much money Bruce gives to charity, I still say he's one of the tightest men I've ever known." It went right over her head, but Morley knew what I was talking about and we shared a smile.

I am in this week's *People* magazine celebrating my love with Charlton Heston. There are pictures of me tossing a pillow into his face, pretending to be caught during a playful spat. You know that we can be real with one another because on the next page there I am standing on tiptoe planting a big kiss on his neck while Burgess Meredith, Malcolm Forbes, and some other old queens are standing and applauding in the background. Then I'm in the kitchen flipping pancakes to show I'm capable. I'm walking down the street with Charlton Heston, and then I'm staring out to sea, digging my bare toes deep into the sand, in this week's *People* magazine.

The press is having a field day over the news of my relationship with Mike Tyson. We tried to keep it a secret, but between Mike and me there can be no

privacy. Number one, we're good copy; and number two, we just look so damned good together, so perfect, that everyone wants pictures.

Charlton Heston and I are finished, and he's hurt. I can understand that, but to tell you the truth I can't feel sorry for him. He had started getting on my nerves a long time ago, before the *People* story, before our television special, even before that March of Dimes telethon. Charlton can be manipulative and possessive. It seems to have taken me a long time to realize that all along I was in love with the OLD Charlton Heston, the one who stood before the Primate Court of Justices in "Planet of the Apes." The one who had his loincloth stripped off by Dr. Zaus and who stood there naked but unafraid. What a terrific ass Charlton Heston used to have, but, like everything else about him, it's nothing like it used to be.

In the papers Charlton is whining about our relationship and how I've supposedly hurt him. I'm afraid that unless Charlton learns to keep his mouth shut, he's going to learn the true meaning of the word "hurt." Mike is very angry at Charlton right now, very, very angry.

Let me say for the record that Mike Tyson, although he showers me with gifts, is not paying for my company. I resent the rumors to the contrary. Mike and I are both wealthy, popular men. The public loves us and we love one another. I don't need Mike Tyson's money any more than he needs mine. This is a difficult concept for a lot of people to grasp, people who are perhaps envious of what Mike and I share. This is the case with Charlton Heston, who lost most of his money in a series of bad investments. It's

sad. The man is a big star who makes a fortune delivering the Ten Commandments one day, and then loses it all as a silent partner in a Sambo's restaurant chain the next.

Mike and I would gladly give everything we've got in exchange for a little privacy. We would be happy living in a tent, cooking franks over an open fire on the plot of land we bought just outside Reno. Mike Tyson and I are that much in love. It is unfortunate that our celebrity status does not allow us to celebrate that love in public. Since we were spotted holding hands at a Lakers game, all hell has broken loose, and the "just good friends" line has stopped working. None of this is helping Mike's divorce case or my breakup with Charlton, who, I might add, is demanding some kind of a settlement. For the time being, Mike Tyson and I are lying low. It's killing us, but we've had to put our relationship on the back burner.

I accidentally swallowed Mike Tyson's false teeth. I can't believe it! They were gold, but money isn't the issue. Between the two of us, we could buy gold teeth for every man, woman, and child with the gums to harbor them. It's not the money that bothers me.

It was late, and Mike had taken his teeth out for the evening. He'd put them in a tumbler of water we kept next to our bed. Mike could sleep with his teeth in, but believe me, it was better with them out. We had just finished making very strenuous, very complete love when I reached for that glass of water and drank it down, teeth and all. It was unsettling. The problem was that Mike had planned on having those teeth set into a medallion of commitment for me. He was gracious and forgiving and said that it was no problem,



that he'd just have some others made. But those teeth were special, his first real gold teeth. Those were the teeth that had torn into all of the exotic meals I had introduced him to. Those were the teeth that I polished with my tongue on our first few dates, the teeth that hypnotized me across a candlelit table, the teeth that reflected the lovelight shining in my eyes. I swallowed Mike Tyson's teeth and let him down.

I've been waiting for days, but they still haven't passed. They have to come out sooner or later, don't they? Even if I do find them, I can't expect Mike to put them back in his mouth. That was a big part of our commitment ceremony. I was supposed to reach into my mouth and pull out a rather expensive diamondstudded ID bracelet I'd had made, and Mike was going to reach into his and withdraw the medallion. Mike said what the hell, it wasn't like his teeth hadn't been up my ass before, but it was the principle of the thing and it got me down.

Mike Tyson and I were arguing over what to name the kitten we'd bought. I would have just as soon taken one of the many free kittens that had been offered to us. Everyone wanted to give Mike and me kittens. I thought we might just take one of those, but Mike said no. He wanted the kitten that had captured his heart from a pet shop window the previous week, a white Persian/Himalayan female. I don't care for puffy cats in the first place, and this one, with her flat face, reminded me of what's her name, Bruce's new girlfriend Patty. But I said, "All right, Mike." I said, "If you want this Persian/Himalayan mix, then that's what we'll get." I can love just about anything on all fours, so I said, "Fine, whatever." Let me say that a long-haired cat is one thing, but a white Per-

sian/Himalayan blend named Pitty Ting is something else altogether.

I'd wanted to name the kitten Sabrina 2. I'd had another cat, my Sabrina, for years before she died. I was used to the name and the connotations it carried in my mind. Mike, though, was adamant about the name Pitty Ting, which was unfair seeing as I hadn't wanted a fluffy cat in the first place, especially a white one which would be hard to keep clean. Besides, this was a relationship in which compromise was supposed to be the name of the game. I gave a little, so why couldn't he?

Driving home from the pet store we started to argue. Mike said some pretty rough things, and I responded tit for tat. Well, you know Mike "mister-jab-and-duck-all-over-the-place" Tyson. I thought he was rolling up the window so the kitten wouldn't climb out. I saw his raised fist, and then again, I guess I didn't see it.

After he hit me, I got out of the car and walked. I've had some physical fights with boyfriends before, Norman Mailer and Peter Jennings to name just a couple, so I'm no stranger to a flaring temper. This time, though, I just walked away. Mike followed me. He drove his car up onto the sidewalk, but I kept walking, pretending not to notice. Then Mike got out of the car and started begging, begging on his knees, and whimpering. I put my hand up to my eye, pretending to wipe away some of the blood, and then, boy, did I clip him!

While he was unconscious, I let the kitten out of the car and sort of kicked her on her way, no problem. A puffy cat like that will have no problem finding someone to

love her. When he came to, Mike had forgotten the entire incident. That happens all the time—he forgets. He didn't even ask why we were spattered with blood. He said, "What happened?" and I answered, "Don't you remember? You said you wanted to buy me a pony." So then we had a beautiful Shetland pony named Sabrina 2. We forgot about naming things, about anything but our relationship. We rode round and round the block on our pony, who groaned beneath the collective weight of our rich and overwhelming capacity for love and understanding.

Mike Tyson started acting out and it got on my nerves. I can overlook an incident here and there, but Mike started pushing it. For example, one night we were having dinner with Bill and Pat Buckley. Now, I've known Bill and Pat for years. We used to vacation together (we all adore sailing), and I think we understand one another fairly well. Bill and Pat have one of those convenient marriages, an arrangement that allows them to pursue sexual relationships on the side with no hard feelings. I met Bill Buckley back when he was going with Redd Foxx, which was years ago.

Pat had just recently broken up with Elizabeth Dole, and unfortunately she decided to employ the sordid details of the breakup as our dinner's conversational centerpiece. This is an old habit of hers. Pour a few drinks into Pat Buckley, and she'll tell you everything, whether you want to hear it or not. If forced to take sides in the issue, I'm afraid I'd sympathize with Liz Dole, but Mike felt differently. We were having dinner when Pat started in telling us about a few of Liz's rather arcane sexual practices. When Bill suggested that she change the sub-

Dear

W O R L D



ject, Mike hauled off and punched him, breaking his jaw as a matter of fact. Afterwards, Pat Buckley thanked Mike Tyson for breaking her husband's jaw. She said that she'd spent the last forty years being patronized by men like Bill Buckley. So what does Mike do? He invites Pat to move in with us! Now, I know what Pat Buckley is really like, and I don't want her living in our house, dragging strange girls in and out at all ours of the night. I've seen Pat Buckley in action. I know about the drinking, the drugs, all of it, so I said, "Miiiiikkkkeeee," through my clenched teeth. I kicked him under the table and he kicked back.

Mike Tyson is making an ugly face in the "Newsmakers" section of this week's *Newsweek* magazine, an ugly face directed

towards me. I'm not frightened so much as shamed and concerned. In the picture Mike's skin looks sallow and blotchy. He looks like he's been rolling around in an ashtray. Our breakup was hard on him, but whining to the press won't help.

I left as soon as Pat Buckley moved in. I guess Mike thought I would change my mind and welcome her into our lives. I guess Mike was wrong.

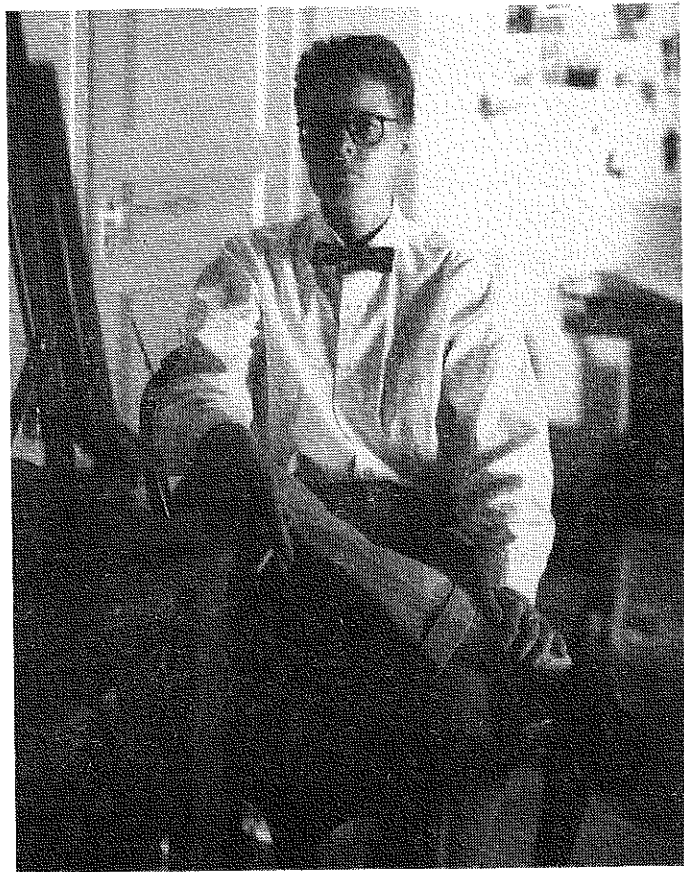
Pat Buckley didn't stay long. She was dating Lauren Bacall at the time and stayed only three weeks before taking off to Cannes or Rio or someplace. Looking back on it, I can't put all the blame on Pat Buckley. Mike and I had problems before she came along, big problems that we would have been forced to deal with

sooner or later. I don't want to go into any of the details of our relationship, but I would like to set the record straight and say that there is no truth to the rumors about me and Morley Safer. I resent Mike's accusation that Morley and I are anything more than friends.

I resent Mike Tyson's self-pitying ploys for attention. I resent his suggestion that I was in any way false or insincere. Unlike him, I don't care to dwell on the unpleasant aspects of our relationship. I prefer to remember a time when Mike and I, having finished a simple game of cards, were sitting side by side in comfortable reclining chairs. Mike took my hand in his and began, very gently, to pet my fingers, kissing each one, and addressing them as individuals. ☉



DAVID BOWIE: *Suck Baby Suck*



MILLIE WILSON

She was a woman. She dressed as a man. She was authoritative and uncompromising. She was romantic and domestic. She was born working class. She was acclaimed in stylish circles. She became famous. She withdrew from the public. She was a mannish renegade. She wanted to marry the love of her life. She was a flawless technician. She neglected to paint for years at a time. She risked everything to be an artist. She gave up her art for love. She flaunted her sexuality. She accepted various inversion theories. She was scornful of art schools. She was generous in support of genuine talent. She was a misfit. She continually sought to be recognized. She was dangerous in her intentions. She was a favorite of the wives of distinguished men. She longed for nature. She could live only in the city. She wanted autonomy. She was haunted by family ties. She generated excitement. She secretly wished for tranquility. She was flagrantly promiscuous. She insisted on integrity in the most mundane transactions. She worked very quickly. She painted with exquisite precision. She had a reckless temper and was arrogant. She was deeply moved by the plight of the unfortunate.

She was a disaffected expatriate. She found that certain neighborhoods allowed for refuge in unconventional salons. She was subject to the anxiety that her alienation from art history instilled. She was engaged by the central debates of the period. She was concerned with invention of a lesbian aesthetic. She was irrelevant to the male avant-garde's nostalgia for the women of antiquity. She endured a loneliness particular to those erased from history. She devised aesthetic strategies grounded in mutuality. She could never match the devastating wit of the intelligentsia. She displayed on occasion the gift of retort. She was described by male critics as the heroine of modernism. She was all but absent from the accounts of the period. She espoused the rhetoric of collectivity. She demanded that each of her lovers be all things to her. She escaped abroad to anonymous adventures. She longed for delight in love and the perfect union. She was the target of sexual speculation. She did not resemble case studies of the consequences of unnatural attachments. She was accused by her male contemporaries of displaying a morbid desire. She found that the courts of law would not acknowledge the existence of a desire like hers.



MARKER

Robert Glück

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IN 1966, WHEN I WAS NINETEEN, in order to compete for acceptance in a student exchange program between UCLA and the University of Edinburgh, I went through a battery of psychological exams which included a long written test. Two of the questions I remember well: Describe a male friend and describe a female friend. This part of the sixties was still connected to the fifties, even though the Beatles arrived in '64. Most of the things I felt were literally nameless to me, because of my age and the age of the decade. Impossible, really, to recapture the unnamed after learning to use words. The child's world is replaced by the language the child acquires.

I wrote that Andrea was short, nice legs, nice body, nice breasts with small nipples that pointed up, dark hair she wore in bangs and pulled back — I avoided the word *barrette*. I wrote that she had full lips and dark brown eyes with dark eyebrows and lashes. That her nose was rather big, but that she was still pretty. That she had a good personality and was fun to be with and made me feel good and also she was bright.

I deprived Larry of a body — he was just

a brain almost in the science fiction sense: his hobbies were astrophysics, Baroque music and calculus. He was given a telescope by Rocketdine to track satellites. I described the telescope which was, like Larry, pointed to the stars.

My test was a lie. I had just finished Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*. In the tidy little testing room I'd had a stroke of inspiration. I realized that if I answered the questions as Franklin, I might create the effect of a normal man. In fact, I was incredibly anxious about Andrea's body. We are necking, the boring lights of the boring Valley *twinkle* below my parents boring station wagon up on Mulholland Drive. It's like boring exercise. I make goofy jokes to keep alert. I'm confused when the car fills up with smell — I don't recognize it and I don't like it *at all* but I am impressed when Andrea says that I'm at least partly responsible for it. I'm always mentally averting my eyes from her vagina even though I have never seen it—have only the vaguest notion of what's down there—even though it's my supposed geographical goal in our romance. Someone told me they like it if you push down on it so I push down and she does like it. She sort

of guards it but with a puzzled expression—why haven't I stormed such a weakly defended fortress?

I was able, had the writing skill and observation, to delineate most of Andrea's body more accurately, let alone her character, a mix of starts and stops, bravery and affectation had the skill to describe Larry's tapering fingers, cornflower eyes, convulsed laughter. The writerly ability to skew these descriptions was bound up with a homosexual's sickening unwanted knowledge of the fiction of gender roles which lead to a knowledge of the difference between a dishonest fiction and an honest one.

I felt no guilt for distorting my relationship with Andrea and Larry—what did I know about undistorted relationships? Like many of the boys and men I knew, Benjamin Franklin seemed incredibly gruesomely soulless, a caricature in his bland unconscious egotism, his endless energy to dominate what may be thought of as fate or at least circumstance, certainly his own body, that proximate example of the world. And for my invented narrator, Benjamin Franklin, myself as a clod I felt contempt and fear. I had a secret I wanted to keep from him above all. The secret did not allow me to live in my group. I was alone. I had no world—just the despicable pink satellite of my body and in outer space there is no moral life or camaraderie, just self preservation. He was the model of daily exertion. I was sluggish and aroused from lack of meaning. There was no darkness or perversity in him because there was no shame. I felt these thoughts rather than thought them. But I had chosen the right model: Personality as a Skinner Box.

It's strange to invoke all this antique fear.



I did feel guilt for not being the oaf I described. Any fiction, any version of the self wants you to become it. That's why a dishonest fiction is immoral. I laughed with vertigo when I was told in confidence by the chatty examiners that I'd received the highest score ever recorded on that test.

I'm describing an inability to make experience with the materials at hand which is to say that I lacked experience because I lacked a language. That year my selection of poems for the UCLA poetry contest was titled "5 Aspects of Death." I really didn't know what to write about. I was without subject matter. At that time I lived in LA and it would be at least a decade before Dennis Cooper started taming LA by making its emptiness a literary subject—by locating LA's emptiness in the ardent life of the flesh and in desire.

Am I exaggerating? I located

Homosexuality — the disease — in psychology texts: grim reading. Was I a case history? Could I be cured? And had stumbled on Petronius's *Satyricon*, amazing, but too late, too late for life in ancient Rome. Still in literature I was on the right track. I did not find Burroughs and Genet, Proust and O'Hara, Spicer and Duncan till later. I kept waiting as a writer for my "voice." What voice? I did not have the grandeur of a great criminal, and the self I knew was a novelty act, a timid small-time manipulator who when perfectly safe in the bosom of his family, became a tyrannosaurus rex. I didn't know who I was but also I didn't know where I was supposed to be.

I am making a big connection here between writing and coming out. It would be sloppy to say I came out and became free, because one can only measure this brand of freedom, which is the freedom of language to make representations, by contrasting it with a state of captivity (the

dishonest fiction) which the present is for anyone. Recently I've been masturbating to the image of myself as a woman, extremely passive, tended and penetrated by two lyrical young men. Sometimes this young woman is in a porn movie and one of the men is Black. I'm a small woman with a rather small cunt and his cock is big, and there's some question about the mechanics of this, but everyone is very patient, they gently brush my nipples and this lovely Black man known for his finesse keeps licking the sides of my clit until my sense of my own twin parts dissolves in sensual turmoil—and in fact it does go in, congratulations all around and I experience more pleasure than I have ever known. I haven't imagined myself a woman since early teen-hood so now I am in a position to wonder: Have I repressed that image for thirty years out of shame first of not living up to normal manhood, later of not living up to feminist womanhood — or finally of not being a normal homosexual? ●



GORE VIDAL: *He could have been the gay Herman Wouk; but something went horribly, horribly wrong*



DEAR COCO,

Gary Indiana

*

SWOLLEN GLANDS ON SATURDAY, SUNDAY, MONDAY: on Tuesday I went to my dermatologist and he said it was nothing, end of paranoia.

C. has had a stroke. Can't talk. For two days many conversations with mutual friends about treatment, rehab. Then, last night, someone said it's multiple brain tumors.

Bloody human sacrifice.

The house like a great clattering pile of slate and wooden beams perched on rocky soil in a hive of other whitewashed places made of fieldstone and stucco. The terrace faces the winedark Aegean, etc., etc. Visible through the fig trees.

The selection of things you can buy in the market is so awful. All the food on this island is bad. But many people who are enamored of the place have learned to enjoy these bad meals.

Incredible heat, like a tenement blaze in the slums. You expect the hills to burst into flames. Sometimes they do, when the dump catches fire. The Greeks will dump their garbage just anywhere and burn it even in a high wind.

Manhattan, the dead heart of the summer, air drenched, immovable, nothing happens, every day just the same, weekends same as weekdays, nothing to tell one thing apart from another.

Anger, disgust, amazement. The island swimming in heat, the amphitheater of houses crowded above the harbor starting to smell like gasoline and dissolve in the haze.

If a landscape doesn't belong to you, your presence in it makes it artificial.

The sadness and nothingness of belonging to nothing and no one. But then again, others, together, make misery out of thin air.

Hot, dull, marooned.
Perfect ass of the waiter.

This year, the dusky groceria at Four Corners puts your items in milky plastic bags instead of the paper ones of last year. So the ocean will fill with more indisposable shit. Last year people came shopping with their own baskets.

September again. I fall asleep to certain movies on the VCR like *The Big Sleep*,

Specter of the Rose, *Gilda*. *Key Largo* is my current favorite. I always drift off just before Edward G. Robinson shows up.

Life should be colorized. Or black-and-whiteted.

"Another day on the damned rock." If you have a life, even if it's a solitary one, there are other problems besides "issues." I know the whole orientation of life is skewed, we should fight for things. I also know that if I'm fortunate, I'll live, at most, another 35 years. So I can't get completely exercised and take all my time screeching about things.

When people are very young, they believe the solution of one or two specific problems will solve everything. Later on you discover that life consists of a single insoluble problem that nobody has ever escaped.

First he drank heavily and held things together well, a year later he'd begun to disintegrate because it was only the drink that gave him pleasant feelings, not the living, only the drinking. His social relations on the island deteriorated when he facilitated, to bail himself out of ruin, a crooked development deal that would ruin the island in the fulness of time. It wasn't that people turned against him for it, mad as they were, since people on the island tended to have a fatalistic bent. His conscience soured on him, and he couldn't bear even the absolutely called-for reproaches and sarcasms of his friends. The wife left for Athens with the kids, then returned and threw him out of the house. His hands shook all the time. The drinking started as soon as he woke up.

A dream about his own hypocrisy: he dreams that X, whom he despises and often bad-mouths, calls him, whereupon he becomes absurdly eager to demon-

Dear

W O R L D



strate his friendliness.

Someone drunk is trying to "charm with song"...whomever; someone with a really awful voice, a girl of the island; on the island, there is no crime, and nothing is urgent.

The thing that seemed to be the cobra had a flat head like a calla lily petal made of black patent leather. The other snakes were green, or mottled, and slithered around aimlessly. The charmers, so-called, went about policing the snakes with drums that doubled as begging boxes. They kept the snakes in one area with perfunctory, bored raps on the drumskins.

Student driver in the desert.

In the high Atlas, Berber farmers playing Madonna on their radios.

Rolling joint in motel room.

Codeine syrup and tetracycline. He fucks me for two minutes, spends ten minutes washing his cock in the bathroom, rinsing out his mouth, etc. Clean as an Arab is no empty phrase.

Rear door on the Fiat jammed. Contact high from Abdul's hash. I look and feel incredibly gross to myself, a vast white marsupial in underpants, sweating horribly in the desert heat, making myself crazy with kidnap/ murder/drug fantasies, didn't talk all day, drove through desert, finally in a rage at his... passivity. All he does is smoke dope. I go to his room in the hotel in Errichidea. Bat flying around in the unlit hall. He looks at me. Suck his dick, he fucks me, end of argument.

Three graduate students from university in Fez. Economics major invites me for a little walk. I should've said yes but had the

bag with the money. This bag causes more bad shit to happen.

I've never seen a diurnal bird on the island, only owls, and, at dusk, dense black pinwheels of gorging sparrows, succeeded by bats.

The island half-people: someone's unkind term for the ones who'd never be able to function for a week off the island.

Thunder and lightning and promise of rain, from an eerie mix of wrinkled clouds, cooling the air. All the more frustrating because the rain never fell. Because the village's so close to the mountains, all the signs of a big storm except the actual rain kept the sky busy for five hours.

There are few places in Morocco, John said, where you won't hear dogs barking at night. La Truite, he assured me, is one of them. Now I'm listening to dogs barking, plus the chanting up in the hills, drums, the festival. If there are no barking dogs, I'm convinced they run out and get some, so you'll know you're still in Morocco.

Insecticides of Immouzzar:

BASF Bevistin (fongicide systemique)
Pelt
Quinolate 400 (fongicide cicatrisant)
Tapas (l'anti-odium puissant)
Nuvan 50
Malagrain
Sumicidin 100
Dithane M-45
Ultricide 40
Killmouse 2000

Language of hands at dinner. The monstrous language of hands. Chicken with rosemary cooked in a copper pot in an unregulated oven. One of six children from the Horror Family.

Curse of dog cruelty on the island.

Kostakis: stupidity of, lips like a cunt.

Maniliis: resemblance to Gauguin's self-portrait, also to Angelo Buono, the Hillside Strangler.

Dogs baying all night. Sougning of north wind.

The hideous villagers.

Curve of the mountain followed by the architecture of the monastery. Two guys fucking in bushes.

Owls, tarantulas, streams of ants like a brown stream pouring down the windows.

September in the city. The day drenched and gray-blue. I am still stalling, nervous when I can't reach friends on the telephone, haunted and angry about C.'s condition, wondering now what further bad things life will throw up, wishing for something to make a difference, lately it's all bad health or fear of bad health or someone else's illness or death or nasty things written in newspapers and magazines and a constant feeling of inadequacy, as if a certain mode of suffering were unprecedented and unendurable (objectively, in comparison with others, our lives are wonderful: but do the others know how awful things are with them?), and at the same time wanting not to whine, complain, succumb to depression (remember, when you were young, when being depressed seemed an arbitrary condition you could change by taking a pill?)...

Anyway, Coco, this is where things are right now with me, this is my letter to you

Love,
Gary





WITTGENSTEIN IN THE PARK

Martin Leger

*

LUDWIG STEALS AWAY FROM HIS STUDY, away from the high gothic windows, away from the austere proto-modernist furniture.

He wants to observe the grounds by daylight.

As he walks down Clark Street in Brooklyn Heights, he encounters Mrs. Stonborough and her children: her young son of six, walking, and her daughter of two, riding in a stroller. Ludwig and Mrs. Stonborough smile at each other and say hello, how are you. Cordial, quick, dispensed with. Mrs. Stonborough lives in one of the brownstone buildings that stands above the grounds. Whenever Ludwig visits the grounds, he rushes past her building, his head averted, hoping that she is not standing by one her windows, looking out at the skyline of Manhattan across the East River, and incidentally at the figures below.

Knowing that Mrs. Stonborough is off and about is a relief to Ludwig. He arrives at the grounds and begins to take hurried notes, like a spy sneaking into an off-limits room at an embassy party. He notes the long line of benches, broken at

only one point, with no arm rests - the better for sliding slyly, tentatively over until at last one meets. The surface between the benches and the sidewalk is cobbled, the uneven surface unpleasant to walk on, so that it means something when someone walks close behind you. The railing is not the pointed, hostile wrought iron spikes of the Promenade, but a long iron bar twisted into a spiral, supported by stone posts rounded at the top. At the north end the railing gives way to a stone wall where one can sit and look at the benches across. And at the very end, one has a view into Squibb Playground below.

The ramp into Squibb Playground descends one direction, turns the other direction, and before landing widens and curves gracefully onto the ground. The rusticated stone face and the spiked wrought iron railing give the ramp the feeling of a fortress fixture. At the bottom, on the grounds, arranged in austere right angles in the manner of Ludwig's own architecture, are teeter-totters, swing sets, and a concrete expanse with two nozzles out of which water spurts to simulate an opened fire hydrant: New York.

Late one night, Ludwig, needing respite from all his philosophical investigations, goes for his walk.

Sidling past Mrs. Stonborough's house, he descends the ramp onto the grounds.

Two men sit together on a bench. One is younger, and conforms to Ludwig's sense of what is considered handsome. The other is older, gruff and imperious - and conforms to Ludwig's sense of what is considered butch.

The Older Man pulls down the bicycling shorts of the Younger Man, exposing his white jockey shorts. The Older Man sniffs and plays with the Younger Man's cock through the jockey shorts. The light from the street lamp is diffuse, so Ludwig knows that the cock is there more by assumption, and by the way the older man's nose seems to bump into an obstacle. The Younger Man leans back and looks around in a way that seems to invite others into looking at him. A circle of men draw around. No one is touching, just looking.

A young boy, about 16 years old, walks by. The Younger Man smiles at the Young Boy. The Young Boy smiles back. The Younger Man invites the Young Boy to sit down next to him. He puts his arm around his shoulders, then kisses him. Then he has the young man lay across his and the Older Man's laps. Like a pieta. The Older Man pulls the Young Boy's shirt off. The Younger Man pulls the Young Boy's pants down but keeps his underwear on. The Younger Man is playing with the Young Boy's cock through his underwear. Tapping it and showing where it is, the Younger Man seems more intent on signifying the cock than giving physical pleasure.



Adoration: two others join the pieta. A bespectacled man sits next to the Older Man. He puts his right arm around his shoulder and, with his left hand, pinches the Older Man's nipples. A man on a bicycle rides up, starts stroking the Young Boy's belly, and then, boldly, sticks his hand under the Young Boy's underwear. The cock is even more concealed, and even though the sex is now perhaps more sensual for the Young Boy, it is less beautiful to watch.

With the addition of the Bicyclist, it becomes a pieta machine, running on the cycle of a looped fist around a cock, the pinch and retraction of thumb and forefinger around a nipple.

The Bicyclist retracts his hand, rides away, symmetry vanishes.

A tall man has been sitting on a bench, watching intently and rubbing his cock through his pants, which, Ludwig guesses, must be lying at its side, judging by the way the Tall Man's hand circles around his upper thigh. The Younger Man needs to complete the scene. With a gesture of his head, he urges the Tall Man to touch the Young Boy. But the Tall Man refrains. Finally, impatient, the Younger Man commands, "Come on, touch him!" The Tall Man moves to the bench beside the Young Boy and begins to stroke the Young Boy's thigh.

The Younger Man looks at Ludwig. His gaze seems hostile. It seems to ask what Ludwig is doing there. But Ludwig can't really tell if the Younger Man wants Ludwig to move closer, or to go away. Ludwig cannot tell.

A man wearing a white linen suit descends. He moves in on Ludwig, but

Ludwig backs off and looks away. This happens a couple more times, with others, until finally, Linen Suit encounters somebody who is willing, who doesn't back off. Linen Suit extracts his cock, and Willing Person goes down on his knees. Willing Person stops fairly soon - does he want more reciprocation? Linen Suit continues his hunt. He goes to the corner teeter-totter wilderness area, where a strange person is lurking. With his weird, greasyish clothes and his wild, greasyish hair, this strange person strikes Ludwig as probably deranged. He seems too eager, open, unconcerned. The Strange Person sucks off Linen Suit and Linen Suit leaves. The Strange Person circles around the Pieta. He pulls the Young Boy's pants down and starts to suck. Ludwig would not want the Deranged Person sucking his cock. It seems irresponsible of the Younger Man to allow it. Shouldn't he shoo him away?

Disturbed, Ludwig leaves.

Ludwig shows this first completed section to his boyfriend Cricket. "I want to resist providing pornographic pleasure. I want the reader to think about the language games used to describe the event, and not lose himself in a masturbatory narrative. Well, what do you think, Cricket?"

Cricket says, "I can't help it. Bicycle pants turn me on."

1 a. Ludwig had spent a hard day at his truth tables. He was lonely and horny. He took his walk. The ground was deserted, Ludwig conjectured, because rain seemed imminent. He sat on a bench for a while, but left soon, exiting up Middagh Street. Just as he was leaving, a bearded guy arrived.

1b. The Guy looked twice at Ludwig, an indication of possible interest.

1c. Ludwig circled back. The Guy sat on the stone wall. Ludwig and he glanced skittishly at each other, but it was hard for Ludwig to walk over to speak to him. In many ways, The Guy was Ludwig's ideal: Silent. Muscular. Chest hairs stick out from the top of his t-shirt. Butch. Working Class. Butch.

1d. Breathe deeply Ludwig.

2a. The guy stands up. He walks away.

2b. Ludwig believes he wants Ludwig to follow.

2c. Ludwig follows.

1e. The guy jumped the stone wall. He walked down a path (well trod) through an area overgrown with Acanthus trees and ivy.

2d. Ludwig continues to follow.

2e. The guy stops. He extracts his cock: his cock is no longer underneath his clothes: his cock is exposed to view.

1g. Ludwig was impressed.

3a. A thick, hooded slab of meat.

2f. Ostensibly to pee, the guy stands there and grasps his cock between his thumb and forefinger of his right hand. His other three fingers of his right hand curl into his palm. These fingers are over the place where Ludwig conjectures The Guy's balls to be.

1h. The Guy had not acknowledged Ludwig presence, but he must have known



Ludwig was there, yet he did not move away.

2g. Ludwig moves closer to the guy. He extracts his cock.

1i. Too.

1j. They stood there, the both of them, neither of them having passed any water.

2h. Ludwig reaches over and touches The Guy's inner thigh. To under where he conjectures The Guy's balls to be.

2i. The Guy turns toward Ludwig. Ludwig moves his hand. To under The Guy's shirt. He pinches a nipple.

1k. The Guy unbuttoned his shirt. It fell open, exposing his chest.

2j. His skin is luminous: it reflects the light of a far off streetlight.

2k. His chest hairs: black lines: merge into a cross-hatched thicket.

2l. A dark patch. Concept of matt.

1l. Ludwig fell into nipple sucking and soft biting.

3b. Salty. meaty. chewy like beef jerkey.

1m. The Guy released the top button of his pants. They did not fall to the ground. He wore a jockstrap. Ludwig's hands clasped The Guy's muscular ass cheeks.

2m. Sensation of hair on palms.

2n. Their cocks sway and collide against each other. Sensing the hardening of the other.

1n. The Guy groped Ludwig.

2o. The Guy lifts Ludwig's chin so that Ludwig and The Guy are mouth to mouth.

1o. Gently.

1p. And The Guy leaned over, across the gap, and began to kiss Ludwig, deeply.

2p. His left hand still holding

1q., caressing,

2q. Ludwig's chin, The Guy unbuttons Ludwig's

1r. simple khaki trousers

2r. with his right hand. He pulls Ludwig's pants down.

1s. The Guy spat into his hand. He began to masturbate Ludwig. With a sensitive responsiveness;

1s. Slowly, the way Ludwig likes it.

1t. Ludwig abandoned himself to The Guy's control.

1u. Ludwig was about to come. He turned to face sideways from The Guy, so as not to splatter him.

3c. Pearly raindrops.

1v. Ludwig turned to reciprocate for The Guy; but it had begun to rain. The Guy buttoned up; he wanted to leave. Ludwig wants to talk a little, but at the start of his utterance, The Guy frowned and then looked vacant.

2t. Ludwig forgets what he was about to say. ☉





ESSAY

Suzette Pardito

*

[Smart women get me hot, especially those with language in their holsters. The following essay came to me in tongues while masturbating after having read Angela Carter's polemic preface in *The Sadian Woman*.]

DICK CLARK. FAG FEAR. 49.25 LBS OF SLINGSHOT PLUTONIUM. NEILSON RATINGS. SAN FRANCISCO POLICE DEPARTMENT. OPERATION RESCUE. CFCs & THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT. THE HELMS AMENDMENT. 'JUST SAY NO'. DAY GLO. BOB HOPE.

THESE ARE ONLY A FEW OF THE REASONS WHY I WANT TO BE A LESBIAN SEXUAL TERRORIST. WHY I WANT TO SINGLE HANDEDLY SUBVERT THE 700 CLUB, SEARS & IMAGE MAGAZINE. WHY I'D LIKE TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT SOME OF THE MANY MYTHS OF PORNOGRAPHY.

PORNOGRAPHY IS NOT THE ANTI-CHRIST. IT IS SIMPLY A LANGUAGE OF REPRESENTATION AND AS SUCH, IS AVAIL-

ABLE TO USE AND ABUSE LIKE ANY OTHER LANGUAGE. CONSIDER STATISTICS. WHAT I REFER TO AS 'EASY LISTENING' OR 'MASS MARKET' PORN IS PORNOGRAPHY IN ITS MOST POPULAR AND SUPERFICIAL FORM. ACCESSIBLE & ACCEPTABLE, THIS PORNOGRAPHY IS PRODUCED FOR A MAIN STREAM HETEROSEXUAL CONSUMER. YES, IT IS MADE BY AND ADDRESSED TO THE DOMINANT MINORITY. ONE REASON IT IS SO CREATED, PROTECTED & PRACTICED IS BECAUSE IT SERVES TO DIFFUSE OTHERWISE EXPLOSIVE POTENTIAL.

UNFORTUNATELY, THIS PORNOGRAPHY DOES NOT STAY WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF ITS CONVENTIONAL DEFINITION, I.E. "THE WRITING OF HARLOTS" OR "THE DEPICTION OF EROTIC BEHAVIOR INTENDED TO CAUSE SEXUAL EXCITEMENT." IN THE HANDS OF MR. PORNOGRAPHER (MANUFACTURER) AND IN THE LAP OF MR. AUDIENCE (CONSUMER), THIS PORN BECOMES

THE ASSUMPTION & PORTRAYAL OF A SINGLE DISTORTION ACHIEVED BY REDUCING THE MANY ASPECTS OF SEXUALITY & GENDER DOWN TO THE ELEMENTAL HOLE & POLE (WHEREIN MISS PERFORMER = PRODUCT). IN OTHER WORDS, PENIS > CUNT. LONG AFTER THE SEXUAL CHOREOGRAPHY & STIMULATIONS HAVE COME AND GONE LINGERS THE RESIDUE OF NON-CONSENSUAL CONTROL. WOMAN SILENCED = MUTE CUNT. NON-THREATENING. GET IT?

PENIS > CUNT PORNOGRAPHY IS THE PRODUCT OF A LIMITED & THEREFORE FALSE & DANGEROUS UNIVERSALITY. ANY NOTION OF A UNIVERSALITY OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE IS A CONFIDENCE TRICK. THIS IS WHAT I CALL PROPAGANDA AT A FUNDAMENTALIST LEVEL. IT LIVES AS TRUTH AND MYTH MUCH LIKE THE FICTIONS OF BOTH MARRIAGE AND ROMANTIC LOVE. SUCH PROPAGANDA PORNOGRAPHY FEEDS ON CENSORSHIP. IT CURRENTLY GROWS WITH ALARMING SPEED. IT IS NETWORKING AND TAKING OVER OUR AIRWAVES. IT IS BOTH SHAMED AND EMBRACED BY THE MORAL MAJORITY. IT IS, OF COURSE, UTTERLY AMERICAN.

MORE TERRIFYING THAN HARDCORE SPLATTER KIDDIE PORN IS THE SOFT SUBLIMATED SUBVERSIVE AND WHOLLY INTEGRATED PORNOGRAPHY OF THE MAIDENFORM WOMAN AND THE MARLBORO MAN.

Dear

W O R L D



SUCH FICTIONS POUR OUT OF HALLMARK CARDS, CHECKOUT STAND DIGESTS, BILLBOARDS AND PRIMETIME NEWSCHAT. IN THIS FASHION, THRU THESE RUDIMENTARY SOURCES OF INFORMATION, SEX MOST VEILED IS PULLED INTO SERVICE MOST BLATENT.

WHEN PORNOGRAPHY REACHES BEYOND THE POPULAR *PLAYBOY* FORM IT THEN FAILS TO REINFORCE THE PREVAILING PATRIARCHY. HERE, IN THE MARGINS DOES THE MOST INTERESTING AND INTOLERABLE WORK BEGIN SUCH AS *ON OUR BACKS*. THIS

PORNOGRAPHY IS NOT SANCTIONED IN THE FRAME OF ELITE AND ECCLECTIC EROTICISM. THIS PORNOGRAPHY IS FILTHY ANGRY HEATED NASTY WILL-FULL HOPEFUL AND SCREAMING HOT. IT IS THE COLLECTIVE VOICE OF CLITS WITH ASSERTIVENESS TRAILING. HERE THE XXX NO LONGER ELICITS FEAR BUT SUGGESTS STORM TROOPING AND TAKE OVER.

THESE ARE BUT A FEW OF THE FACTS WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHEN ATTEMPTING THE SUBJECT OF PORNOGRAPHY. CALLING A CUNT OBSCENE

SHIFTS THE ACCUSATION FROM THE OBSCENE, THE PRACTICING AUTHORITIES; BANKS, POLITICIANS, CORPORATIONS, NETWORKS, CHURCHES, HOSPITALS AND SCHOOLS. YOU SEE, SEX HYSTERIA SUCH AS DRUG HYSTERIA AND FUCKING FLAG HYSTERIA, THESE ARE ALL DIVERSIONS AND ALIBIS IN A HARVEST LAND OF -ISMS. IN A TIME WHEN THE 5TH AMENDMENT HAS BECOME A BUZZWORD ON SHAKEY GROUND, THE LANGUAGE OF PORNOGRAPHY MUST BE SEEN IN ALL ITS PROFILES TO LESSEN CONFUSIONS AND CONFRONT TRUTHS. ☉



Softer, Bigger, Whiter, Breastier



INCARNATION

Dodie Bellamy

*

This essay was presented, in a slightly different form, in December 1988 as part of a series of talks at Small Press Distribution (Berkeley) on "Writing and Everyday Life," curated by Carla Harriman.

Let's face it—the world of media bombards us to the point of dizziness. Swirling like dervishes in the void, we long to plant our feet on the ground like Johnny Appleseed planting his trail of fruit trees from Maine to California. In the contest of "Imagination vs. Reality," I am drawn to "versus." It creates the security of a clearly-defined dichotomy. "Versus," a word nostalgic as mom's apple pie, harkens back to the duality California consciousness was built upon and which, in this postmodern age, has flown away like the train that flies out the fireplace in Magritte's picture.

In an interview in *Yoga Journal* (Nov/Dec '88) Jungian analyst Marion Woodman says, "Addictive behavior begins with a yearning to be a real person in a real situation." Who wouldn't like to be able to look at something and label it as good or bad, mine or yours, inside or outside, to anchor oneself in the positive affirmations performance

artist Margaret Crane has collected in *The New Sobriety*, affirmations such as I STICK TO MY BELIEFS, I STAND UP FOR MY BELIEFS—these statements sound naive because they deny the environmental soup that created the beliefs in the first place, the "Big Who Did That?" I AM IN CHARGE OF MY OWN LIFE, I KNOW WHAT I WANT AND I GET IT. The affirmers become hilarious in their futile attempts to delineate sharply what's inside and what's outside, to keep this big monstrous Outside, this virus, from infecting them, controlling their lives. Reality is kept at bay by the speaker becoming the outside himself or herself—the goal is to be your own programmer: you supply the input and the reactions. I am reminded of the Survivalists' convention I saw on TV where these people spent most of their time preparing self-contained life support systems in case of a catastrophe—total commitment to a bomb shelter mentality. Such vigilance suggests the opposite of its intent: instead of I LOVE, I FEEL COMFORTABLE IN ALL SITUATIONS, the covert message is I'M AFRAID, I HAVE TO KEEP THE WORLD OUT BECAUSE IT'S BAD, I DON'T

KNOW WHERE I END AND THE WORLD STARTS. It is this gray area of confusion between what is inside or outside, imagination or reality which fascinates me as a writer.

As a matter of principle I am opposed to theory. Whenever I read anything theoretical that strikes me I try to forget it before I write in order to avoid contamination. One might say that I'm theoretically opposed to theory, a paradox, perhaps, but fitting since conflicting drives attract me. These areas of confusion and conflict give rise to moments when we are taken with some power beyond ourselves. They're numinous. Recently I reread my high school diaries. In the grandiose style of a sixteen-year-old I wrote, "The three things which interest me most in the world are sex, death, and literature." Things haven't changed that much the past 20 years except that lately I've been drawn to the more subtle aspects of life, the way the numinous peeks through the daily.

This begins to sound like "New Narrative" propaganda. The first person of the New Narrative differs from the first person narrators of *Great Expectations*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *My Antonia*, or *The Great Gatsby*, novels in which some fictitious character, not the author, seems to be telling the story. But I go along with those who contend that, even though the author appears to be speaking directly in the New Narrative, the author as character is no less fictitious or less real than any other character. Especially in lyrical writing, where unless it's obvious that what is happening is some Browning Society dramatic monologue, the audience will assume that "I" is the person holding the pen or plucking away on the word processor. In the fall of



1988 Camille Roy gave a reading with Bob Perelman at Small Press Traffic (San Francisco). "I thought about Monique," Camille read, "her sharp teeth and brown cheeks. The way her greed slid across my hips could be scary but her palms were narrow as slots, that made it ok to have sex with her." During the break Bob Perelman said something to the effect that Camille's work made him think about how he never wrote about his personal experience, from which I assume that he assumed, like most of the other listeners, that Camille does write directly about her personal experience. I think her writing, and New Narrative writing in general, is more sophisticated than that. An illusion of confession is purposely created—it's superfluous whether or not the content is "true." The "autobiographical" first person is now about tone, a technique for creating intimacy, sometimes discomfort, in the reader.

All writing is a Rorschach blot—the writer is revealed through his or her reactions to the smudges around him/her (see box):

Are these two passages are from Bob Perelman's *Captive Audience* less revealing of Bob than Camille's writing is of Camille? I don't think so. Certainly the timbre of Bob's first person passage is more intimate than the (third person) Bambi excerpt, but does it necessarily follow that the section on the left is about Bob's private life in a way that the other isn't? It's been suggested to me that risk rather than person is the issue—if you take enough risks people assume it's autobiography. Or they'll assume, as Frederic Jameson has assumed about Bob Perelman's poetry, that it's schizophrenia. Jameson's pro-

nouncement reminds me of the misty dawn of women's writing when the very act of picking up a pen was daring—budding authoresses risked being labeled insane and, in the worst cases, commitment to a mental institution. The speed and invention of Perelman's poetry does *mimic* a type of mania—without lapsing into it—to critique America's dizzying spin into one homogeneous nightmare of McDonalds, Vegas, Contragate and Operation Rescue.

Risk is certainly a determinant in Kevin Killian's writing. When "Kevin Killian" appears as a character it's often as not a flag that what follows did not happen to Kevin the author in real life. I know this because of my access to classified information—mainly due to incessant prying. Why would anybody attach their name to the shocking, scandalous things that "Kevin Killian" does if not out of a driving need to confess the "real" past? It's because Kevin the author loves theatrics—he is consciously creating an edge,

a tawdry facade to jolt the reader out of complacency.

Rather than God is Dead, the existential cry of the 80's is Reality is Dead. Coleridge's formula for the perception of art which I had to memorize like a jingle as an undergraduate—"the willing suspension of disbelief"—no longer holds true. Now the premise is disbelief, a focus on form instead of content. No wonder writing has become centered on language—it's the one thing everybody can agree is there. Language acts as an anchor in this amorphous mass of shifting perceptions. Text has become the reality: in the ultimate postmodern relic *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, Roger's wife, a film noir sultry dame, says in Kathleen Turner's husky voice, "I'm not bad—I'm just drawn that way." This is a step beyond the familiar predetermined excuse for bad behavior—I can't help it I was born this way. Appearance no longer gives a clue to content.

*History is not a sentence,
but this is. And though history
is a word, what it names
isn't. And though I'm a person
who puts words next to
recognizable scenes where
your entertainment dollar
is hard at work, and I understand
there's only so much anyone
can put up with in any given
sentence, still there can be no
straight lines in this mass
of air representing itself
visually as broken into pieces,
and temporally as a single car ride with
a unified driver, following
the machine's nose.*

*The story ends, but remains attached
to something outside itself:
the need of the industrial plant,
flowering and dying in art deco layers,
filling bodies with the raw material
of desire. The spots on his coat
immaculately unsystematic,
Bambi's legs spread, all four of them,
as he slides helplessly to the rich,
pristine forest carpet, eyes drawn
wide in perplexity.*



Though I enjoy the cleverness of postmodern expression, much of it seems heartless. What do I do when I'm in the mood to be sincere? I often feel nostalgia for 60's feminism and its belief in the stories of women's lives. There's an integrity to that, though two decades later it seems naive. But then, isn't integrity always a bit naive? Isn't that why sophistication, in its endless flight from the naive, is always jaded? One evening Kevin and I were playing with the remote on our TV, flipping through the channels until we came upon a saloon scene in what appeared to be a 50's Western. In the center of the frame was a hideously tacky-looking dancehall girl in a frumpy low cut turquoise ruffled dress, and make-up that made her face look like a mask. I was about to say something like "God, how gross," when Kevin exclaimed, "Isn't she beautiful!" I was touched by his ability to look beyond the surface to the intention of the film, for in the film's "reality" the woman was indeed beautiful.

In the 80's how can one write directly out of one's experience without coming off sappy? (Not to speak of the 90's.) How can one write from a specific philosophical or psychological perspective while avoiding the stiltedness, predictability and general dopiness of much writing launched from preprogrammed ideas or symbols? For instance, while I'm certainly interested in the non-differentiated feminine, I'll be damned if I write about the Goddess. Who these days wants to be Robert Bly? In my own work I have often resorted to pastiche to invoke a feeling of obsession. Kevin has suggested that without cut-ups even Burroughs would be sentimental and banal. In writing *The Letters of Mina Harker* I've invited the environmental soup to rush in. By assuming the persona of Mina Harker I hope to evoke an

approximation of whatever gestalt I'm enmeshed in at the time of writing. This process is basically religious:

... the second reel of *Altered States* runs backwards *personalities do not develop they merely intensify* pale and dewy our bodies entwined are circular a champagne bubble about to be swallowed by Marilyn Monroe *pushing the metaphor to the breaking point in a word: orgasmic* when we fuck we are two great hands shaking *his cock a thumb* the bearded creator in Blake's watercolor is forever pointing—mortal heads bow or stare up in awe and terror the way I do whenever I'm naked...

Altered States, Marilyn Monroe, Blake's God—when Mina is with her lover she is in a state of Grace, bigger than life, a vortex with sacred images whirling through her to the point of explosion. While Mina is fictional—what's more, a vampire—the fact that she exchanges letters with real writers in the community and refers to actual events that occur there, puts her in the same ballpark as the New Narrative first person. Mina lives in a realm in which nothing is absolute. Metaphors are as real as anything else and as unreal. By creating the mythic Mina I am returning to that childhood state of the abject where movies take over your life, where the images they present seem concrete, imbued with a power of their own beyond moralism or analysis, like a waking dream. In *Qui Parle* (Spring '88) Akira Mizuta Lippit touches upon the otherworldliness of movies:

Filmic transformation suspends the metamorphic moment, dividing the moment from itself,

creating a memory of the moment in the instance of its conception. The presence of transformation in photography thus inscribes always only the trace of this presence, the spectres of a subject no longer *there*, not yet *here*. By retaining at once traces of both the fading and emerging subjects, the photograph frames a phantom space *beyond* the stasis and dialectics of being; a space in which the perpetual movements of presence and absence, being and not-being co-exist in nonconverging trajectories.

Since they occur in a realm beyond our ordinary concepts of temporality, movies give off an aura of sacred or mythic time. Removing favorite movie moments from their often vapid and/or tacky surroundings, letting them possess my work or my character, gives them and my work a new charge. Collage is the technical equivalent of incarnation or split personality—like in this book I found on the new arrival shelf of the Mission Public Library. It was about a high school girl who had a zillion alternate personalities. Compared to her, *The Three Faces of Eve* was small change. It's amazingly difficult being in high school with multiple personalities! The girl was always getting into trouble for things she didn't remember doing. For instance, she was addicted to heroin and didn't even know it, didn't realize her recurring illness was really withdrawal. She was simultaneously two different members—a brother and a sister—of the same street gang. The brother acted tough and the sister was the girlfriend of the leader. None of the gang seemed to notice that the two were never seen together. The person with multiple personalities is in a sense overtaken by the divine, the



oracular. This is the modern counterpart to the bygone tradition in which the poet was the seer, feeling deeper than ordinary mortals. When I incorporate movie scenes and characters into my writing I am similarly incarnated. Like Spicer's radio, I become a channel, a transchannel. (Interesting that in this high tech era mediums are called "channels"—the prophet as a kind of spiritual TV.)

The numen is that which has the power to initiate a shifting of boundaries or scale: that which repulses but invades, that which attracts but invades. The state where word = thing. On his mantel my friend James keeps a rock shaped like a mountain. Zen students who come upon these miniature mountains believe they have found remnants of the Bud-

dha—these Buddha rocks are as valued as art. The material I collage into my work is my own piece of the mountain—I am setting up a system of weird irrational correspondences. Beyond this system, there's also a psychological depth charge to one's choice of image. I've been married to Kevin for two years and he never has once suggested that I spray him with gold paint, although that is a central trope in his new novel *Shy*. Just as Bob Perelman was drawn to Bambi as an image of Nature's helplessness and perplexity, the image of the fatal golden girl from Ian Fleming's *Goldfinger* has so touched Kevin that he allows her to rule his luridly beautiful sex passages. Bob writes in the excerpt above, "The story ends, but remains attached to something outside itself..." In *Shy* external immensities overwhelm "Kevin" in

a more concrete way: "Mark then dips the small brush into the open can of gold enamel and sighs...I think of Christ crucified, and I feel holy, sanctified." Whenever you submit and something else takes over it's a religious experience. In this way of seeing, God is the Outside that invades.

My fascination with horror stems from the shifting boundaries inherent to the genre. The protagonist begins the movie with a strong take on what's inside and what's outside, where one ends and the other begins, and how to keep things that way. Then "It" invades the picture, comes Inside in a way that's dangerous to the protagonist. The rest of the movie is the protagonist's attempts either to destroy It or contain It in such a way that It is definitely Outside. All horror is religious in essence. It leads you to your own interiority, like Segovia plucking at your complexes. Take Mina Harker—in the rapidly oscillating borders of her world, intrusion, possession, incarnation are as natural to her as sitting at my Macintosh is to me.

When recounting a story from my past I used to cling to the impossible goal of factual accuracy. Once Kevin pointed out an area of vagueness and I replied, "But I can't remember what her scarf looked like." He answered in exasperation, "Then make it up!" This was such a novel idea to me, it felt dangerous, transgressive. Occasionally I make things up, but am more likely to wait until I see something that appeals to me, and like a bird finding a colorful piece of string for its nest, I'll just weave somebody else's scarf into my story. Plagiarism not only adds texture it is also a way to bridge the divisions between inside and outside. It stems out of a primordial desire to merge: you see something you like and consume it. ☉

HALLUCINATION

I find a remaindered coffee table book of Diane Arbus' magazine work, wonderfully grotesque portraits of Mae West, Jacqueline Susann, tattoo artists, nudists, overweight teenagers, and self-proclaimed lunatics. As Diane herself says, "It's like walking into an hallucination without being quite sure whose it is." Of course I just have to have it. Standing in the checkout line while a Japanese man asks the cashier endless questions about a book he's interested in, a black man in full drag comes up to me: black Marilyn Monroe dress, black feather boa, tart make-up. He says softly and luxuriously, "Do you know the nearest store where I might buy some Wesson oil?" I look down at the book in my arms then back up at him, feel unreal, as if the book were talking to me, as if I weren't on Polk Street, but in a movie, a monumental collaboration between Arbus and Fellini in which they had secretly cast me as the leading lady, the wide-eyed ingenue who bungles her way through a kaleidoscope of abnormalities. The black Marilyn didn't fool me—I knew he knew where to buy the oil—but I was impressed with him nevertheless. Bad drag is always more stimulating than good drag—it forces you to look through the illusion to the tender details: smeared lipstick, one breast higher than the other, a powerful jaw, heavy-handed eye shadow, runs in nylons.



MAJOR

DAD



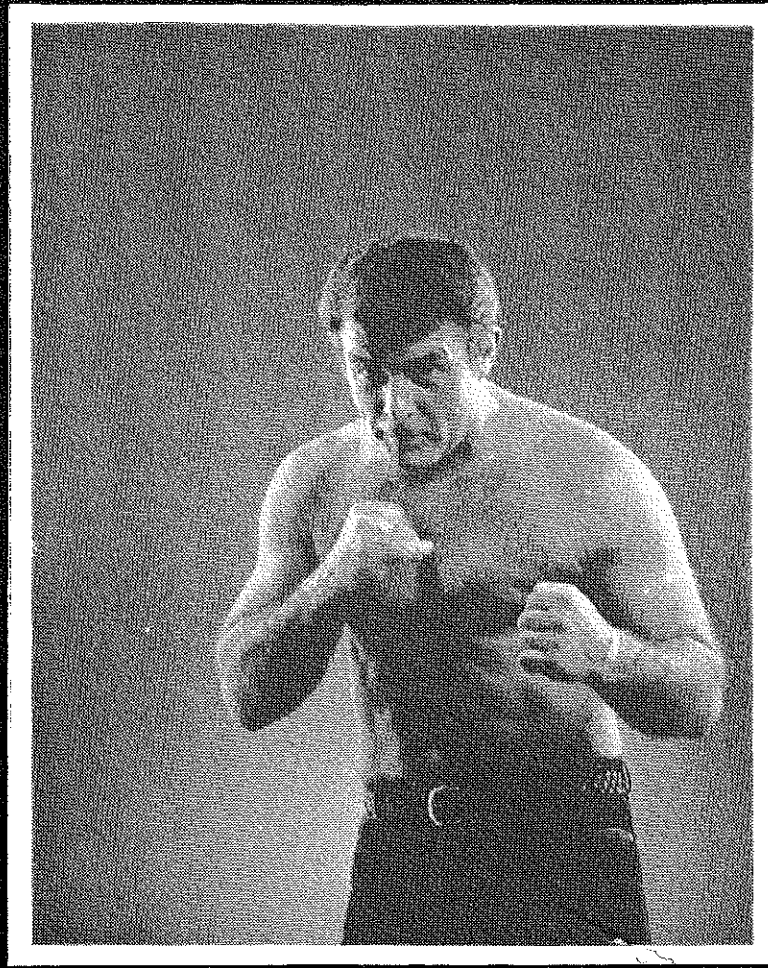
TONY GREENE



DAD

DAD





dad!



JOHN KARR

Interviewed by Steve Abbott

*

JOHN KARR HAS LONG BEEN ACTIVE IN BAY AREA THEATER AND JOURNALISM. His porn reviews for *BAR*, *The New York Native*, *Drummer*, and *The Manifest Reader* have been so influential that Robert Gluck used a pastiche of them in his novel *Jack The Modernist* and dedicated a poem to John in *Reader*. In person, John's perky and enthusiastic. We both laughed a lot as we conducted this interview in December, 1989.

STEVE ABBOTT: Is there an auteur theory of porn?

JOHN KARR: Not only can you tell directors, you can often tell producers. Matt Sterling's product. You know what you're buying when you get something from Colt Studios, Falcon or Christopher Rage. This involves the predictability of it all, being mired in formulae. Christopher Rage tries to break that by bounding into ever weirder, kinkier forms of sex. Colt Studios is just going to give you this month's two prettiest bodybuilders fucking—only the faces change. Artie Bresson likened porn to a candy bar—people want their fix now, then throw it away. Some people don't think porn has a shelf life. I think that's wrong. If it's good, people will go back to it.

SA: Arthur Bresson's films have a gauzy romanticism. Did he aspire to be serious filmmaker?

JK: I think he was always a bit upset he hadn't turned into a serious filmmaker. You mentioned people who pursue their obsessions into the gutter. Bresson was living a sexual life. If he'd been able to disassociate himself from that he could have made Hollywood features. He wasn't a bad filmmaker. But he preferred to pursue young boys and the movies you can make with them are porn, not Hollywood features. He wanted to make something that was more than candy bars. That's why his movies have that melancholy romanticism. Other studios know they're making candy bars.

SA: Bresson's romanticism seems candy bar sweet to me.

JK: It does get in the way. If I want a romantic video, I'll get one. As soon as you mix sexual acts with a story you're on shakey ground. Tom DiSimone, who has made Hollywood films and made *The Idol* (the best example of a romantic story line used to carry sex acts) said "What we're talking about is *A Streetcar Named*

Desire in which the lights don't go out when Blanche gets raped."

Brian DePalma always wanted to bring the sex act into the narrative. Usually in Hollywood films, you get the clinch and then fade out. Porn doesn't fade out. However in porn, sex doesn't exist for the story that's preceded it. That's why I prefer loops. The most successful porn films have been those which recognize that. So you're either going to have a movie that tells a story or a movie that has sex, especially now that we're watching home videos. You put the thing on to be aroused. Sooner or later you want an orgasm—that's the purpose. If you wanted insights into human behavior you'd watch *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

So video has been bad for porn as an art form because it's led porn to be even more a candy bar than it used to be. When porn was being shot on film, directors made them more structured. Jack Deveaux's films have huge story lines and they do bear the weight. You don't feel you're waiting for the sex scene. He set up the atmosphere and character and that amplified and resonated with the sexuality. Others have been unable to do that and when porn video came along, which serves things up so quickly, story lines really took a nose dive. Story lines are hard to sustain unless you're an artist. You don't find many artists working in porn or, if they do, it's as an early part of their career. We don't often know who these people are because they change pseudonyms. Tom DiSimone is the only one I can think of. He made *High School Confidential*. He shot porn films, then moved into serious films which retain some sexuality. Or Brian DePalma. He's moved closer to bringing true adult sexuality to feature films but went off the deep



end-sex and death, abusing women. Some of this is difficult to deal with so that he had to resurrect his own career. He could no longer fund his own projects and had to take jobs he was given like *The Untouchables*. But his early films like *Sister*, and *Obsession*, and *The Fury*, and I'm thinking specifically of *Dressed To Kill* which upset me the most because it struck me as immoral. People say his films are pornographic; they're just very sexual.

SA: What about *Blue Velvet* and its s/m sex scene?

JK: Oh, you're right. That didn't even strike me as a sex scene it was so integrated into the story. It's character revelation without dialogue. But you're right. This question of taste and sensibility—I don't believe *Blue Velvet* was made to sexually titillate us whereas Brian DePalma's movies were. That's why I link them to pornography whereas *Blue Velvet* struck me as a different kind of investigation although it does deal with sexuality.

SA: The original *Blue Velvet* script had Frank rape the boy but that was cut while they were shooting.

JK: Wouldn't the boy have lost his innocence forever had he been sodomized?

SA: He's kissed instead. Frank gets lipstick on his face.

JK: Just another form of sex—American male brutality. Did you see the poster for *Lethal Weapon II*? Danny Glover and Mel Gibson are facing each other very close and one's holding a gun between them, this phallic thing. The primary reason you'd see this movie is that it promises guns, mayhem and murder. It's adver-

tised like *Rambo* but the tag line is "The magic continues." Like Julie Andrews in *Sound of Music*! That's the sort of thing I like to play around with. Americans won't accept real sex because "it's pornographic" whereas the real obscenity is the violence of people getting their brains blown out.

SA: Does porn criticism have a history and, if so, how has it changed, both in your writing and that of others?

JK: First, it had to be created. When I started writing porn criticism in 1970s, all that existed were film studio press releases: "The hottest movie you've seen in years—fifteen guys have endless orgasms!" Gay glossies—*Honcho*, *Playguy*, *Manifest*, *Inches* and so on—didn't exist yet and the gay press was still being born. *The Advocate* didn't handle it. The straight press, *Screw* and so on, had porn reviewers but they didn't review gay porno. But Paul Lorch, who was then the BAR editor, was a sex positive person. When I volunteered to do theater reviews he said he had a theater reviewer and asked if I'd review porn. I laughed and said sure without a moment's hesitation.

In the late 60s and early 70s I was a poor hippie who sometimes lived on mayonnaise sandwiches. But I always had \$5 to get into the Nob Hill when a new porn movie opened. They opened every two to four weeks and ran until people stopped buying tickets. A successful Jack Deveaux film might last six weeks. So I never considered reviewing porn but instantly recognized my credentials. I had an analytical mind and have always enjoyed observing human behavior. So while I was having a lot of sex, I also liked watching it. I always wanted to be everybody. Sex cinema is a way of having fabulous sex

in ways you otherwise couldn't. San Francisco was very open but you can do things on film you just can't in your own life.

So when Paul asked me to review porn I did and it was exhilarating. I quickly realized that if you wrote about something as serious as sex seriously you'd be a fool. The reviews would be pedantic. Who can pontificate about sex anyway when it's in the eye of the beholder? What's sexy to me isn't to the next person. So you have to tell people the movies content so they can tell if they'll get off on it.

Sex comes down to a very few basic things—in and out of this orifice, in and out of that one. So you have to get creative. Yes, your reader needs a scorecard of what different sex acts are in the film and, yes, they want to know if the actors have charisma. But after that I allowed the films to play "straight man" for me and spun off against them. There's an endless stream of things you can spin off on when you watch sex films—like every one of our moral, social, religious and political values. There are head trips galore when you watch other people have sex—the setting, who they are. Are they inveterate straight boys, "Nah, I can't get a blow job. I'm straight" and two seconds later, not only is he getting a blow job, he's taking it up the ass.

Paul Lorch and I agreed one of the things we were doing was legitimizing gay men's sexuality. That's what porn does. And I'm talking only about gay porn here, not straight porn which objectifies women and raises issues feminists are rightly concerned about. When gay men have sex it's almost always consensual. My own porn reviewing started out playfully. I realized it had to take the guise of entertainment writing. It had to be flip,



hip, clever, alliterative and, underneath that, it needed to be treating serious issues. We were dealing with the legitimacy of gay men's sexuality—their right to have sex and to depict it at a time when both were highly in question.

So I would be in bars or on the bus and the day the *BAR* came out, I watched people open the paper. They went right for the porn. Of course there were sexy pictures. I tried my best to print the hottest pictures available under prevailing journalistic standards. So people would open to the *Porn Corner*, to Marcus's column and to the letters. Today they open to the obituaries and to Marcus's column. Yeah, it was very interesting in the 70s. I had no trouble describing pretty boys who I have quite a predilection and affection for.

SA: I find that difficult to do in my fiction.

JK: That's because you had to imagine him. I was describing someone on screen—he's already there. I found the limitations are synonyms for orgasm. How many ways can you say penis? I quickly found there's a socio-political stratification to the uses of those synonyms. If you want to slightly belittle a guy or suggest he's dumb or working class, you'll use the word "dick." If the guy's big, butch and desirable, you'll use the word "cock." And if you really want to put him down you'll use "penis" which is so clinical. How many other words can you think of?

SA: Dong, thing...

JK: Dong's a good one.

SA: Prod.

JK: Bazookas.

SA: Pretty soon you start drawing more attention to the writing than the actual...

JK: Yes. And pretty soon I was dealing with a virtuoso style of writing where I was the star, not the movie. That's porn reviewing. After that you add if the writer has any political or moral consciousness. And as you move into the AIDS era, you have a whole new kettle of fish.

I adore the male body. Porn is how I observe its functioning; writing about it is how I savor it, appreciate it, take part in it. That's why I stop time to analyze its tiny moments and make room to rhapsodize. That's my favorite part—the riffs, the rhythms, the alliteration. To couple these with the sexual drive, that's exciting. And when the sound of the words, the rhythm of their placement and the images tease forth ride on a fillip of ideas...what orgasms I have!

Jack Fritscher's been a role model for me. I admire the way he can describe men. He writes in a very male fashion, very erotic, and it's hard to do that. I'm pleased I was sometimes able to write with some heat and people would say it was arousing. But I also wanted to score a few points consciousness-wise.

I believe gay porno really molds gay men's behavior. A lot more gay men watch porn than will admit to it. And both their sexual behavior and how they relate to other men is affected by what they see in the movies. Chris Rage doesn't buy this. I'll give you the example I gave him. Sex comes from personal experiences, from your upbringing, your environment. So I'm drawing on my fund of experience but, being a reader and someone who always wanted to be someone else and travel to other countries, I'm very open

to other influences to the point, perhaps, of not forming a very strong self-identity.

The first time I saw a cock ring it was on Casey Donovan and George Payne in *The Back Row*. George is a country bumpkin who arrives in New York, sees Casey and pursues him. Casey goes into a porno movie, puts on a cockring in the men's room, and they have sex. George finds this very erotic. So he buys a cockring in a gay bookstore, puts it on, and becomes so aroused he has to have sex with everyone in New York. Well, I went to the baths and I'm sure I saw cockrings but my first awareness of them came from porn movies. And the next thing I knew, everybody was wearing cockrings.

Or fist fucking. In the 60s and early 70s, the leather community was an underground subculture as you can see from Phil Andros's books of that period. Then it became commodified, a kind of costume you wear. Now I've talked to a man who was fisting in the 40s and 50s but the rest of us hadn't heard of it. It was available only to those who pursued it in an underground world. Then along comes Jack Deveaux in the 70s and starts putting it into every film he made. Suddenly it's served up to gay men on a platter along with the drugs that made it easily possible. People who never would have thought of fisting as a potential sexual activity were seeing it in movies and shortly thereafter, it was a major event in many gay men's lives—in the baths and sex clubs. Several floors of men getting fisted all at the same time. Sure, it's still a minor part of the gay community but it's still a large number of people, many more than who would have been doing it if it hadn't been publicized. I don't think I'm being moralistic in saying that.



That's another interesting thing about writing about sex—confronting your own moralism and trying to recognize where you're applying it to other people. I'm not going to deny fisting to anybody but I'm certainly going to go out of my way to point out its hazards. It is an extreme act and is not to be engaged in by everybody.

SA: I have a young friend who made a tape for my daughter's birthday, one of which was a song about fisting by the *Leather Nuns*. I kept telling him to take it off but he said "No, no" and I was surprised he was so open to the idea. I don't think he'd do it himself but he liked the idea of breaking taboos.

JK: That's largely what it's about. In the 30s it was enough for Sally Bowles to paint her fingernails green to think she was breaking a taboo. These days people have to contemplate fisting. Lesbians are into it but their bodies can accommodate it differently.

SA: What would you reply to those who say porn makes sex seem mechanical and valorizes promiscuity?

JK: I see nothing wrong with promiscuity. Gay people aren't getting married and having kids. I have nothing against monogamous relationships either but I have a lot against gays being urged to mimic heterosexual relationships as the prevailing standard. I come from the 70s gay liberation sensibility where we explored our sexuality and had sex with many men.

Now, I like sex with sentiment, even if I have sex with strangers in a back room. I'm talking about an interpersonal chemistry that connects us. If that's not present I'm not interested. But I still think it's

possible today for gay men to have sex with multiple strangers in a humane way. The word "promiscuity" as used by heterosexuals is so pejorative. I wish there were another word for this sort of sex. Gay men can just get their rocks off. I don't think there's any problem with that but it's nice if you're aware you're having sex with another person. That's one of the things I was saying in my porn reviews. Sometimes the backrooms and baths were deadening to the emotions if you didn't stay aware. That's one of my views that comes from my Judeo-Christian romantic background.

I used to write about the New York school of porn versus the California school. It's funny because they weren't schools but there was a chasm between the two coasts. Jack Deveaux in New York—gay men having sex in dark, drizzly garbage-strewn back alleys where they don't take off their dirty jeans. They spit in each others faces, snarl, and as soon as they cum, they zip up and leave. Not nice and no regard for creature comforts (I say that with a lot of irony). Now in California you've got sunshine, the boys naked in the sun, they melt into a cosmic embrace. They look like they love each other even though they may not talk.

When people want to depict visceral sex, they always go towards the callous. They think hard hitting is synonymous with hard. That's not true. Two pretty boys having whitebread sex, if they're really into having sex, can be more thrilling than two s/m numbers whacking each other's brains out. So that's what I wrote about. Are these guys really into what they're doing? Are they reacting to each other? Is there any chemistry between them or are they merely paid professionals going in-out, in-out. J.D. Slater had

very good luck in *Motersexual* and *Guilt*. He's very good not only at finding men who are good performers but in matching partners so that there's this chemistry between them.

SA: How often do lovers come in to make a movie together?

JK: Pretty frequently I think. I can't back this up factually but you hear that a lot. I think the chemistry is more there if people are having sex for the first, second or third time. The first time is getting acquainted with the other person's body. The second or third time they're filmed having sex can be deeper because they've surveyed the territory. That's what some performers have told me. J. W. King was very romantic but also real masculine. He had forceful sex in a romantic fashion. He was the epitome of a porn actor because he could have this forceful hard-hitting sex (which the porn producer thinks will sell the movie) without being inhumane. He could be forceful while being soft. I never talked to him. He was such a fantasy that I declined meeting him. I was told by people that he formed romantic attachments with his co-stars. It showed on screen.

SA: Has AIDS dampened the porn industry?

JK: It certainly dampened it for me though it didn't dampen things for the gay glossies. For them it's been business as usual. What happened to me is a bit confusing. In the Spring of 1984 I was fired as Arts Editor of *BAR*. The polite phrase is "artistic differences." But there were other problems. In the 70s there was always a place for my joyous reviews celebrating casual sex. But in the 80s I began questioning this because of AIDS.



At the time we weren't sure if you could die from kissing somebody. It was pretty scary.

Anyway, after several months I returned to *BAR* and offered them my porn reviews again. The publisher said no, he was cleaning up the paper. I said "What do you mean, you've got all those 976 numbers with full page ads which are as suggestive as possible." He said, "That's different—they pay." I don't know if it was AIDS or what, but there were no more porn reviews or pictures of penises.

About this same time censorship laws were passed that affected all the gay press. Papers transported across state lines couldn't show penises at all. The entire industry was scared. These laws are still in effect. The Supreme Court left censorship to the "standards of the community" so, depending on where you were, you were in hot water. Video companies won't mail porn videos to 7 states. Steve Tushin, the owner of Bijou Video in Chicago, has been fighting this in court and has spent time in jail. Steve is straight but he's a friend of the gay community. He may be making money but he's certainly given a lot back. Falcon makes two versions of their videos. Dildo scenes are only available through mail order; they're excised from videos purchased in stores.

During this time I continued writing for *Drummer*, which is amazing because I'm not into s/m. You have to write for your audience. The *Drummer* audience likes videos other people may not. So the presence of AIDS, in which I questioned the depiction of unsafe sex, and having to watch s/m as well, which I felt squeamish about, brought out the puritan in me.

That's healthy, I'm sure, because I had to deal with it. But I found it difficult to write entertaining articles although, when I did, they really enjoyed it because it was a pretty humorless magazine. This was after Jack Fritscher left around '85 or '86.

But I really enjoyed working for my editor Jim Ed Thompson, a lovely man with a sense of humor. Once I was really daring and used the "G" word—"Girlene." I don't know how readers reacted but the boys in the office screamed. Whether we're gay boys into leather and s/m or not, we still like to have a good time. But overall I felt like an interloper. I didn't feel I could give *Drummer* readers the understanding of their sexuality that they deserved in their own magazine. The new *Drummer* owner was really hardcore s/m and when they started marketing electric cattle prods as sex toys I felt I needed to withdraw.

Fortunately, John Embry founded *The Manifest Reader*. This is an s/m fiction magazine. There's drawings and graphics but it's devised for men who like to read. John gives me lots of space for both book and sex video reviews. That's where I've been since '86 or '87.

But it wasn't just *Drummer* that disconcerted me. It was also glorifying sex when so many men were dying from it because of AIDS. I've always been a very glib writer. Glib is my stock and trade, my tool for conveying educational material. In the early '80s people skipped over the *BAR* news articles on HIV and turned to *The Porn Corner*.

I think pornography has both led and followed the changing mores of our times.

The porn revolution didn't occur because of Stonewall. Wakefield Poole was already making *Boys in the Band* which really changed how we think of and see pornography. He was making that movie as Stonewall was taking place. Something was already in the air. Stonewall was just the eruption.

SA: Before Stonewall it was just muscle guys posing.

JK: Hard porn was being shown but not much. You're right. It was mainly that posing beefcake stuff made largely by heterosexuals and shown in heterosexual owned theaters. The revolution was that gay men not only began making porn but controlling distribution and showings. The movies that followed Stonewall were very free-wheeling in their sexuality.

SA: Can you tell, watching a movie, when actors are drugged?

JK: The signs are obvious. I've seen movies where the guys couldn't even get it up. There's a lot of speed in the industry. I've also been on film sets where I expected to see drug use and saw none. Drugs make performers undependable and then producers stop using them. I'm talking about large production companies. They make films on a regular basis, have schedules, people coming and going. They can't accept drug use because it fucks up schedules and makes things too erratic.

But video allows anyone with a camera to be a filmmaker. In that neck of the woods I think there's a lot of drug abuse going on. You're not dealing with professional performers but some sexy guy you met in a bar who said "Sure I'll fuck in a film."



But those guys are quickly eliminated.

SA: Earlier, you started to say something about AIDS.

JK: As the presence of AIDS became more ominous, my innocent pleasure was despoiled. It became impossible to treat sex as a joyride—I could be touting the act of infection or urging it on readers. To write heedlessly about porn was like accompanying the fox to the henhouse.

So porn writing became my platform for spreading AIDS awareness. In the mid-eighties, when there was still unsafe sex, I insisted on postscripts to my articles like “Activities depicted in this film are dangerous to your health and not meant to be recreated at home.” Fred Bissonnes would count how many times actors

ejaculated into someone’s mouth because he was trying to spread AIDS awareness.

I began hating an industry in which people were called upon to kill themselves for our entertainment. The producers are adults; they knew what they were doing. Some performers were young, driven by their gonads, and would have unsafe sex if urged to. It’s only recently that safe sex precautions have appeared and this, largely at the instigation of performers who’ve seen so many of their co-performers die. Some actors won’t perform unless allowed to use rubbers. It came more from performers trying to protect themselves than from producers, who were only interested in making money. The producers didn’t believe safe sex could be sexy. They were proven wrong. Porno allows the viewer to have

safe sex but I don’t think video watching should replace sex. Direct body to body contact is best.

At times in my life, porn’s been my sole form of expressing my sexuality. But it can make it harder to relate to people. It’s alienating in that no one in porn has dicks the size of yours. They all have huge dicks. But self esteem issues are largely the personal baggage we bring to porn. I think the overall effect of porn has been a positive celebration of our sexuality and of the legitimacy of pleasure as well.

Steve Abbott’s latest books are *Holy Terror*, a novel with lots of hot sex, and *View Askew: Postmodern Investigations*, a collection of critical essays and interviews. ☉





SEX TALK

Abigail Child and Camille Roy

*

1. Sex Talk

From my table in the cafe I watched her walk up the pavement, with a curious stiff-legged stroll. She was wearing a man's suit from the 40's, baggy pants, blue smoke curling from the tip of a thin cigarette. Her round cheek was so soft it reminded me of one of those pictures of Collette in drag.

Among lesbians the story is a form of sex talk - a joint whereby the community and the couple are of the same body. Proximity is difficult but brings us tongue to tongue. "Fetish as disclosure".

My relation to fetish:
bigger here and importantly hugely infantile
I could feel my body proffering a leather
the nipple waiting to plus anemone
Lean identified rubies loosen

Levi Strauss argues tatoos are the sign of a defended tribe. A tribe facing extinction or being threatened. Fetish works in that direction. One might say in a defended world, identification becomes the uniform feature.

I ordered expresso with a piece of lemon peel. When she ordered the same thing, I slapped her face lightly, as a joke. She tilted her head, rubbed her chin thoughtfully as her eyes closed and a smile came onto her lips. "That was interesting," she said, "but you only slapped one side."

Narrative seeps from the broken privacy of the couple. It is a disturbance of intimacy, a betrayal, which accounts for its dramatic affect...

Yes! The dramatic effect lies in the transgression. A matter of identity equaling control, and then pleasure in the diffusion/breaking of the pattern. A pleasure of violation. Broken expectations.

So I slapped the other side of her face, with my whole hand instead of my fingers. "You did it differently that time," she observed, and I watched her soft cheeks flush. "I want to keep you off balance," I said.

Intimacy fastens like barettes--

Intimacy fastens, to be inserted somewhere inside the head.

The other is recognized by means of fantasy, so that intimacy itself is a fiction, dreamy as sky writing, a slogan in white cloud...

or perhaps an architecture? An absence underlined. You speak of skywriting.. Narration in the twentieth century has been permanently formed by cinema and the photograph. Now...how to dislodge their control?

2. Real Charm

Sit on my face
See how wet I am

unmistakeable juice and smell and hair
innocently sweetheart clit scream breath blue
thighs hot swollen fully
Look has abundance
Lying played pulled cooed and fatted
focused
suddenly dry

kiss me
fuck you
returning real charm

IF I WERE ATTIIRED TO RECEIVE THIS WITH ANY
ACCURACY -
MY GARMENTS WOULD FALL STRIDENTLY
INTO ME.



Eroticism in the West proceeds through a strategy of striptease or moral tale.

Fantasy bends it out of shape
twists in my face . not a nice ass
but a great heart-shaped butt
the bottom
what's written out
an unassimilable

Conventional narration must contain her.
His little death does not detain me. Determinism
holds us all down...

The smiling faces of ads are a form of control through resemblance. A community of female sexual perverts resembles nobody, and nobody wants to resemble us.

What I loved in MAYHEM is a notion of backwards. The fact that I could retreat and reorder without feeling sacrificed. The filmic codes are clipped—which has the curious effect of separating the image from its portent of 'accuracy'. Recognition torn...

"Go on and suck. Suck the life outta me. I wanna feel my life in somebody else's mouth."

Following this line of thought, power verbs shape faces on
your own prism
cunt the civilization of the ass
unseals
becomes like you when you come and wear
the kind of smile I want to take home.

SURFACING ON THE BED AMID RIOTS
I LOVE TO BE FILLED WITH TIME/IMPROVISATION
OF YOUR MOUTH BETWEEN MY THIGHS.

3. Story Line

Her hand on my shoulder, that first gesture of invitation, was so characteristic of her. Circular as a huge conscience, something to follow indefinitely. Her fingered goodbyes marked my body, a sort of sexual technique. Even this story, its thin crust, marks her evasions.

INCAPABLE OF BEING USED UP

The progress of tension through a narrative 'line' has parallels

in the maps we make of our lovers bodies and the moments of exposure and vulnerability on the way to orgasm.

IT'S BEYOND SURPLUS

FULL OF HOT and chronic satisfaction
soaked cause i'm stopped between love and a third tongue
girlfriend sexy buttons popping twisted
Im visualling them physically the unreasonableness of the
situation

this world

It is tension more than line that interests me. I see a field—promises—an array of conjugation—the wish you want. Line if you must is a focus perpetrating depth. The line as line exists on the surface, is habit perhaps?

The idea that I'm telling a story is what I'm attached to, not the linearity or anything else. I'm attached to this idea because it establishes contact—which can be appropriated, misused, disrupted, eroticized. Like this one:

Terry was a big-boned whore, a lesbian, and an incest survivor. When she became a fundamentalist Christian, she married a carpenter. Everyone wondered, how much did he really know? One day in a rage, he was heard yelling, "Well at least you were never a prostitute!"

Erotic error kissing my impeccable cunt

Order in time (or the 'linearity' of narrative) doesn't necessitate a patriarchal ordering of consciousness. I prefer an implication/integration of loss: what happened in the beginning (or middle or end) won't return.

Forget repair, even if minimal. If loss is a part of life we are missing nothing.

Then what is pleased in the telling of a story?

The wind in fact an instrument of excess, prone to gorgeous. Or, sex as disclosure—a manifest and metaphorical stripping.

4. Audience

And what about the relation of recognition to desire? As in this quote:

"To desire the Desire of another is to desire that the value



that I am be the value desired by the other: I want her to recognize my value as her value. I want her to recognize me as an autonomous value. In other words, all human, anthropogenetic Desire--the Desire that generates Self-consciousness, the human reality--is finally, a function of the desire for recognition."

What of the desire for another--not to be loved, but to love? Do I want to recognize me in the lover? Do I want love to recognize me? Do I seek to be lost in love? To be its familiar?

I think that stories have all the sneaky pleasure & mutilations of intimacy hidden within what we call narrative structure. Narrative moments are always coupled and involve multiple manipulations of deceit and recognition.

"When I'm having sex, it's like I'm having a story. I hear things like 'She spread her legs as her lovers tongue softly ran across her vagina.' The third person! we exclaimed."

Perhaps what's operating here is distance--the shadowed sex IS taboo, when its appearance is only in books.

Or could this be, 'I story myself so others will witness my sex as desire.' The third person is present only to satisfy my need to be observed..

If the observer is my need to satisfy my desire this is voyeurism as identification. If the observer is my mind, I have fragmented myself and this is separation as identification. And if I borrow your rules of attraction I reintegrate opposite sex identification, try on your power.

AGREED: what is functioning is the NOUN of narration, mirroring the sense of self.

I distrust devices of plot and linear time and character relation. I want both process VERB and person NOUN to be tilted. I ask for more 'takes' on the body, so that reality is approached in excess of enumeration.

softer bigger whiter breastier
remake the elaborate identity of her
or of her him
elaborate your identity

So it was easy to let her carve it, warble wobble. Only by turning on her with all my teeth bared could I recover ground already lost. Of course I did it. Of course yearning made it impossible. Pleasures of the rupture, rack and screw.

5. Close Enough

Perhaps what is happening between us is an opening up of a kind of erotic conversation. Here, at the margin. Because a community of sexual perverts resembles nobody, and nobody desires to resemble us.

As a lesbian the differences are multiplied the possibilities mutate, taking on all kinds of genuinely new procedures. This is not borrowed habit, but a "kind of loving" become in the presence of wit and intelligence (the head screwed *on and on*) genuine alternatives

* * *

The room is either dark or light, or is two rooms. There are implements beyond my consciousness.

Breast high partitions cover the linoleum floor, creating a maze through which workers stroll and softly talk. At either end of the vast warehouse are sealed rooms whose roaring ventilation systems cool the computers. You are allowed in these rooms, because you wear a special identification badge. Between the computer rooms stretch two rows of windows that face twin lines of young olive trees whose leaves are covered with fine greyish hair. Beyond these trees the workers go to sleep and have sex.

Shadows tip the lover onto circumstance.

I want to be touched, or touched continuously.

The sun makes close enough open. Let me drink my bathrobe, skirt a retinue of clings, a sanitized restraint gives way to luster's substrate

Bent over the edge of the body, there's no telling where we are. Lattice handiwork, the roseate palm smacking our tin flesh.

We're getting rosier and rosier.

These large sensations come and go. We want to be a star, we want to be adorable. Instead the larger sensations, so open there is a sense of leveling. What is inside slips out and vanishes.

In any kind of joking, a system that's given as isolate liquifies, falls suddenly into another

There's a tangle of questions all over the floor, stepped on



TREASURE SMITH AND CAROL TORMOLLAN

I recently started teaching at a new school. One day I was grading papers in the teachers' lounge when I heard two of my colleagues discussing the gender of one of their students. Three weeks into the school year and one of the teachers was confused as to whether a particular high school student was male or female. The second teacher confirmed that the student was male. Sounding surprised, the first teacher said she thought she has seen this student wearing a skirt in her classroom the week before. She also made a remark which questioned the student's sexuality. She concluded that the student's feminine appearance meant he was homosexual, and this she found amusing.

This same teacher had earlier been discussing her sexual attraction to burly construction workers. Her college-age son is studying architecture, so together they have visited several high-rise construction sites. Because of these visits, she has met many men whose bodies she finds sexually stimulating. While most of them, she says, are rather boring intellectually, she had met one man whom she found creative and interesting. He was a photographer who climbed the high-rise early in the morning to take pictures of the sunrise from the top.

In debating whether to comment on what I considered to be her insensitive remarks concerning the student, I thought about how she might judge my masculine appearance and personality, and decided to protect myself by remaining quiet.

Actually, I do not feel as though I look or act male, but because my feminine qualities appear outside of the norm, people often make assumptions that could hurt me professionally.

Last year after teaching for several weeks, one of my kindergarten students blurted out, "Are you a boy or a girl?" Another student who was also confused chimed in, "Yea, what are you?"

I recently interviewed for a job that was advertised as follows:

We are a national health management organization seeking several professional registered nurses to perform utilization and quality review in the Chicago area. We require at least 5 years clinical experience in ER, ICU or med/surg areas.

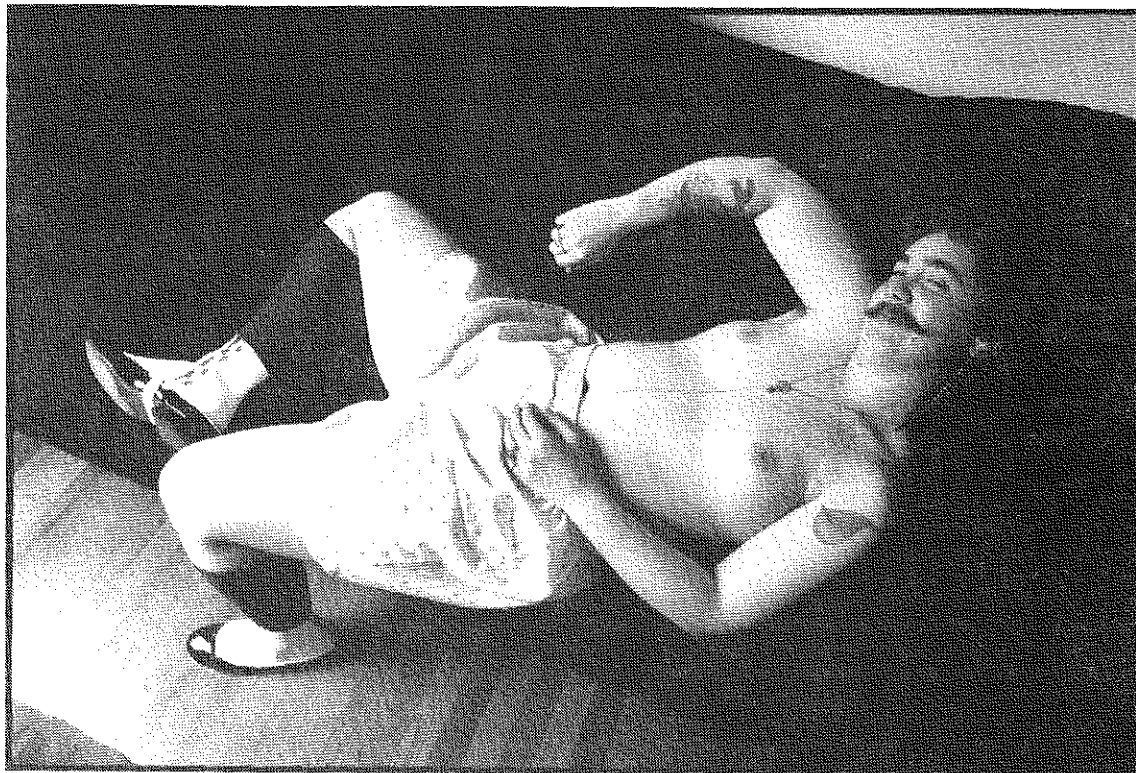
Afterwards, I never heard a word. Then one month later, an ad for the same job appeared in the paper. It read:

Part-time and PRN positions available for nurses to perform medical review. Review is conducted on-site at area hospitals. Part-time position will be guaranteed 20 hours per week, plus mileage. Ideal for those with school-age children. Hours are flexible so work can be completed while the children are in school.

One day at the museum, an elderly woman mistook me for a man in the ladies' bathroom. She called the security department and they came to investigate.

My mother came to me one day and asked me if I was a transvestite. I said no, that I was a lesbian. She then told me that I looked like a man.

Treasure Smith and Carol Tormollan



Centerfold

**ANN HAMERSKY
&
EDMUND O'BRIEN**



Dear

W O R L D



IMPEDIMENTA

Dreamed a woman with large. Breasts heavily rouged came. On to me.
Fucked her. She said there is too much negativity in us. She said I could
move away from her. We sat at the luncheon table with our other friends.
Saying. I think there are too many secrets between us. The intimate cruelty
of mothers and I. Will be one. (Water licks against our yard the one we
share. Quietly with the lesbians downstairs last night returned like one
hallucination into another. Room small with machines information. I have
trouble making. Public) my close friend will not return I wish she would.
Come back like the black. Ducks yearly because she has seen them for
three winters seen the black ducks scrape. Their lives from this bay. And
soon we will all be gone from here.

REMEDY

(CIRCUMNAVIGATION)

Kabuki. White like Sarah's stomach. I kiss her Africa shaped birth. Mark as
women are. Free to walk far out on the tidal. Flats moon asp silica an
elemental. Theater decisive. Like. Where the sea birds nest far from us
perhaps the shape of ones head indicates the way. Of entry perhaps the
color of Sarah's pubes. Daily. Ritual of breaking the sedimentary way of
addiction. Blemish o wheel forgive thysself retrieve the forms of comfort.
Child. Speedball black. Balls he rubbed. Up against her and so. She has
never liked that. Word in any language. Is still. Marked.

Melanie Braverman

Dear

WORLD



STRAP

Abigail Child

*

The first word is robbed
then backassed
a sanitized American
downbeat
washing threat

Instead of CUNT ON COT GUN IN MOM O

I want a hibernator
as well as BAD BAD BAD
staccato

Nothing else is pinning it

On that edge
be done with them.

*

There is a center section as opposed
to the assurance of the other
she has not let in

The milky way hotlines
body of lips
forming a yes yes yes
I wake up. I ream I shock a quest
on kicks in French
and realize I can make a sentence:

The tree leaves of some street species are
going red.

I smell fresh exemption

a clutch of struts
not as full as suppose
unless there is
an affable whole opened up.

But there is never enough.

Fullness become a light
to go around
agreement's control
disagreeing ground.

*

He won't go to the dog

The world hangs up

should
better
but

We won't

tunnels
vault
balloon

wants want



dummies in their hands
with product display

a shot of their balls
summarizing power

What does ugly mean in a city of beggars?

*

Don't cross the line and then she does.

Sublime breasts
as big as baby heads.

All punishment embroiders comparison.

Strap

wants to bite on the world
runs against

Why there is no vessel to hold it?

The under story made up of suppressed individuals
of the same overstory species.

*

I can't respond which makes my body feel attacked by
noise and told to hide.

Exhilarate the vacuum.
Rubberized American genitals perpetuate
her deprived transcendence

I keep an eye out the armpit
watch tents upended quietly
while plaintive pundits ring useless rules

Nearer rotted sun
the women emerge
after the war and out -of-sync
shocked fetuses locked-in-legs

The experiment insults everyone

*

Dead flesh
cut off from argue
crowded with gamma gamma reservation
tugger penis paying swamp

The boy symbol become the poem
subordinating half-light suicides

On top of emotion
what is this difference?
The first realism becomes the other

Clearance with person as starter

*

to be continued



WHY

Bob Flanagan

*

BECAUSE IT FEELS GOOD; because it gives me an erection; because it makes me come; because I'm sick; because there was so much sickness; because I say FUCK THE SICKNESS; because I like the attention; because I was alone a lot; because I was different; because kids beat me up on the way to school; because I was humiliated by nuns; because of Christ and the crucifixion; because of Porky Pig in bondage, force-fed by some sinister creep in a black cape; because of stories about children hung by their wrists, burned on the stove, scalded in tubs; because of *Mutiny on the Bounty*; because of cowboys and Indians; because of Houdini; because of my cousin Cliff; because of the forts we built and the things we did inside them; because of what's inside me; because of my genes; because of my parents; because of doctors and nurses; because they tied me to the crib so I wouldn't hurt myself; because I had time to think; because I had time to hold my penis; because I had awful stomach aches and holding my penis made it feel better; because I felt like I was

going to die; because it makes me feel invincible; because it makes me feel triumphant; because I'm a Catholic; because I still love lent, and I still love my penis, and in spite of it all I have no guilt; because my parents said BE WHAT YOU WANT TO BE, and this is what I want to be; because I'm nothing but a big baby and I want to stay that way, and I want a mommy forever, even a mean one, especially a mean one; because of all the fairy tale witches and the wicked step mother, and the step sisters, and how sexy Cinderella was, smudged with soot, doomed to a life of servitude; because of Hansel, locked in the witch's cage until he was fat enough to eat; because of "O" and how desperately I wanted to be her; because of my dreams; because of the games we played; because I've got an active imagination; because my mother bought me tinker toys; because hardware stores give me hard-ons; because of hammers, nails, clothespins, wood, padlocks, pulleys, eyebolts, thumbtacks, staple-guns, sewing needles, wooden spoons, fishing tackle; chains, metal rulers, rubber tub-

ing, spatulas, rope, twine, C-clamps, S-hooks, razor blades, scissors, tweezers, knives, push pins, two-by-fours, ping-pong paddles, alligator clips, duct tape, broom sticks, bar-b-que skewers, bungie cords, saw horses, soldering irons; because of tool sheds; because of garages; because of the Addams Family playroom; because of Morticia Addams and her black dress with its octopus legs; because of motherhood; because of Amazons; because of the Goddess; because of the moon; because it's in my nature; because it's against nature; because it's nasty; because it's fun; because it flies in the face of all that's normal (whatever that is); because I'm not normal; because I used to think that I was part of some vast experiment and that there was this implant in my penis that made me do these things and allowed THEM (whoever THEY were) to monitor my activities; because I had to take my clothes off and lie inside this giant plastic bag so the doctors could collect my sweat; because once upon a time I had such a high fever my parents had to strip me naked and wrap me in wet sheets to stop the convulsions; because my parents loved me even more when I was suffering; because I was born into a world of suffering; because of The Stations of the Cross, especially #1 where Jesus is condemned, #10 where He's stripped of his garments, and #11 where He's nailed to the cross; because sitting next to my dad at the drive-in, watching Jeffery Hunter in *The King of Kings*, I felt embarrassed at the whipping scenes, and my balls jerked and my penis tingled when they drove in the nails; because my

Dear

WORLD



balls still jerk at the thought of being hurt; because I love the pain; because surrender is sweet; because I'm attracted to it; because I'm addicted to it; because endorphins in the brain are like a natural kind of heroin; because I learned to take my medicine; because I was a big boy for

taking it; because I can take it like a man; because, as somebody once said, HE'S GOT MORE BALLS THAN I DO; because it is an act of courage; because it does take guts; because I'm proud of it; because I can't climb mountains; because I'm terrible at sports; because NO PAIN,

NO GAIN; because SPARE THE ROD AND SPOIL THE CHILD; BECAUSE YOU ALWAYS HURT THE ONE YOU LOVE. ●



You Want To Trade Your Skin For Something You Can Read



DISTANCE SO INTENTIONAL

Lori Lubestki

*

IT IS RAINING AND I FALL INTO A BOY'S ARMS AND ASK HIM TO CARRY ME. He takes me to a store where it is light and I recognize him as someone I disliked throughout my childhood. He buys me juice, asking me if there is something else I want, carrying me again. He takes me back out into the dark rain where we had come from, past the small doorway where I had originally fallen into his arms. He is creating the impression of a savior, although his sincerity is actual. The dream has ended and throughout the day I catch myself imagining his face, trying to bring myself back closer to his body's feeling.

I wander from room to room and the next time I meet him he becomes easily embarrassed, knowing he is only an adjective in my life. I am quick to disregard our earlier relationship of avoidance, but he sulks anyway, aware of the previous hostility. I try to get him to re-create what has passed between us silently, yet he will not comply. The music I am listening to keeps bringing me away and out of itself with a distracting rhythmical structure. The bass line a function of distance so intentional I feel myself leaving not only the song, but the tape player itself. Mov-

ing toward a place with him not afraid, but coming closer.

The fog arrives, smudging borders. Soon I can't tell where the sky ends and the beach begins. He is there, although not readily available. He has begun to walk, circling himself, questioning his position. With him, leaves the dawn, its cold lighting. I have the slightest doubt and he senses it. We breathe awkwardly, close to one another. I try to touch his shoulder how I had my arms wrapped around them in the dream, but such a movement does not correspond to this context. We notice each other in the way one lover would notice the slightest imperfection of another. The sky has truly fallen and there is no room for anyone else.

I begin to gather incidents as if by chance they would become part of the scenery I have gotten used to. I picture him in his life before the dream, the air is red and he has believed in the same ideas for a long time. He would never have considered picking me up and carrying me to the store while it is raining and dark, me holding onto his shoulders covered by his raincoat the way a woman would hold

onto a man detective who has just tortuously uncovered the mystery of her husband's murder. He would not have been able to accommodate this role because he had never been the hero type until the dream. Now we look slowly at each other, yet he is excluded from the memory I hold, having been inside my occurrence and unable to perceive as I do. In this way we are separate.

He has not been able to verbalize his attraction for me, yet walking down the street behind him I notice him constantly looking back over his shoulder, the one I have held, and the next step he takes being an excited one. That I have given up everything to pursue him remains vague, opening itself up only into deeper vagueness. The days change and I have not even begun to achieve what I had hoped for. We get no nearer to the place we have met each other than I had been in the dream. Distances become long, distressing even. His inability to imagine becomes my inability to remember. We merge, myself isolated from the simultaneously existing life I am supposed to have been leading.

As the dream is an involuntary reaction to the landscape it is almost impossible to separate the two once conscious reality surfaces. For this reason, we should be able to find the street or store we had visited. We seem aware of special places, drawn to them, however allusive. It has been weeks, the remainder of the sky is red, solid burning as if he were never about to enter a dream. We have come back purposely, still portraying the images we have created for one another. The words drip away as the music had, unable to contain my description. ●



NIPPLES TO THE WIND: THE TOUR

Interview by Camille Roy

*

(In which 4 strippers and one MC pile into a rental car and tour the dyke bars of the West: from San Francisco to Las Vegas, Bakersfield, Salt Lake City, Phoenix. Nan & Blaise tell the tale.)

Nan: The idea for the tour came from a show we did in San Jose. There was a big crowd and the audience was screaming their heads off.

Blaise: It was the first time I had ever danced for women, so it was kind of an inspirational moment. It taught me a lot about dancing and who I really wanted to dance

for. For the first time it felt like I was getting something back. It was the audience AND me. Dancing for men, at least at the strip joints, it very often feels like just me out there. But this was so inter-

active. I didn't know it could be like that. I'd never experienced it.

N: Some women were aggressive and other women were so flabbergasted by what they were seeing that ...

B: Strange things would come out of their mouths! One woman I was dancing in front of kept turning redder & redder, until finally she leaned towards me and whispered "Can I touch your tattoo?" It was so sweet!

N: Men are much more blasé about it, and reserved.

B: You consider yourself lucky if you get them to smile. I'm not sure why. If they do come in with their friends - fraternity parties or bachelor parties - they're more rowdy. Still, nothing like women.

N: Yeah!

B: Anyway we did this show in San Jose. A whole troupe of us, we had two cars.

N: Plus we made money in San Jose.

B: We did.

N: Hmmh, we thought, maybe we should try this. Maybe go to a few other towns...

B: That's where the idea got started. So I got out the atlas, and *Places of Interest to Women* and I just started calling bars. I got inspired. But it was very difficult to sell the show to a lot of the bar owners. They'd never had a strip show.

N: Their experience was with faggot shows. Drag queens. That's what they related it to, so they didn't quite know what we were going to do.

B: That haunted us. One of the problems with the tour was that since the bar owners didn't know what to expect, they didn't do enough promo.

B: Anyway, back to the beginning. First we called Melissa. I knew I wanted Melissa to go. I'm very fluffy, while Melissa has a harder look.

N: She's a punker, lots of leather and spikes - which audiences love. Six feet tall, hair out to here. But then we thought we needed someone of a totally different type to round us out. So at Ms. International (Leather Contest) I saw Fallon - a blonde in a red dress, looking for something to do. There was our third...

B: Melissa had some worries in the beginning because she's clean and sober, and





she'd only been clean and sober at that point for six months. Of course, being in a bar every night, being with three people who weren't clean and sober, sharing motel rooms & cars... We had a lot of talks together about that, and set up some ground rules to go by. Like no one smoked dope around Melissa, or drank, except in the bars... So we set up the ground rules, got time off work, and then we left! We were supposed to leave at one o'clock for Fresno, and we didn't leave until 5.

N: Rushhour!

B: We had a 9 o'clock show. That was the quickest stop. We got there, we dressed, we did the show, we undressed, we left. We were driving on to Bakersfield after the show.

N: It was a vaudeville kind of show. I watched a Chippendale tape before we left so I could see what the MC did. I wore suspenders & a little bow tie, and introduced the show and each stripper. Every performer had a distinct character: the bombshell in red, the cop, the vampire. They'd come out on stage and then get sexy - playing with their costumes, taking their clothes off. They'd pull out members of the audience to help them get undressed. Melissa was the vampire and Fallon played a cop, in leather. Blaise was a softer, more inviting, more traditional femme fluff - which is a good way to open the show.

B: So I usually opened, and Melissa and Fallon danced after me. When they were done I'd go out - without being introduced - and point to Nan and ask the audience, "Well what about this one?"

They loved this. And Nan would say, "Oh no no, I don't want to!"

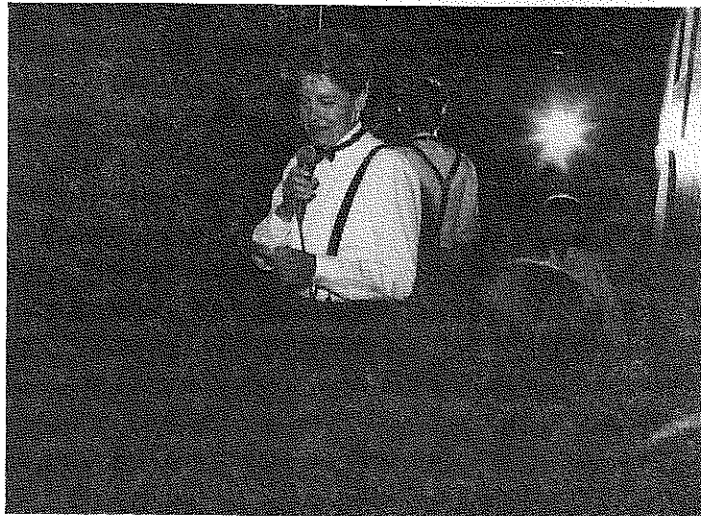
N: Of course people really thought this only happened at their show.

B: Then I'd take her clothes off. We'd do some simulated sex on the floor. That was fun.

N: Yeah.

B: But that didn't last very long, usually less than a song.

N: After that I'd make a remark about



how I "couldn't talk with my clothes off," and I'd put on a shirt. Then the dancers would all come out, wearing torn up 'Burlesque Tour' t-shirts, and heels, and some part of their costume - a cop hat, or a holster. All three of them would dance together, and then go out & work the audience, teasing them some more. At the end of the show the feeling was "We are all teased to death." (laughs) The show had a nice flow, especially by the end.

B: The first show was great, considering we'd never rehearsed. Nan and I had

never done anything like that together.

N: If you're stripping just about anything goes. If you have the guts to take your clothes off, people will respect you. They'll want to watch... Each city had a different character, it was fascinating how that worked. Every audience was different. We left thinking they all would be like San Jose.

B: Which was not the case.

N: Oh boy. The closer we were to San Francisco, the more the audiences were big wild and enthusiastic, like San Jose.

Fresno and Sacramento were a lot like what we expected.

B: They knew what to do, how to tip. There is strip show protocol, believe it or not. Once we got even to Bakersfield, any kind of protocol was shot.

N: Bakersfield was hard.

B: We were beginning to go into shock by the time we got to Bakersfield.

B: By the time we got to Bakersfield, it was two in the morning. We drove up to the gay resort where we were staying, and it turned out to be a fort. A real fort in the middle of downtown Bakersfield, next to the car dealerships. It had thick walls and huge wrought iron gates. So we drove up and I pushed the little buzzer and said into the intercom, "The strippers are here!" And then the huge gates opened.

N: The next day about noon they showed us where we were supposed to do our show - a log cabin, tiny, with wooden



chairs, no tables, no sound system. They were going to bring in a record player and box speakers.

B: And we said, "This is it?!" But the manager came out a few hours later and said they were just getting too many calls, they were going to have to put us in the main bar. This was a big deal, because it was one of the few shows where there were no men allowed. This was their decision, we didn't set up any rules about who could or could not come. They made this decision because so many of the lesbians in Bakersfield are in the closet. They work for the government or universities, and they wanted a very safe secure place. That was how they'd advertised it. So the gig was that the men who were in the bar had to be moved out and into the lodge.

N: They didn't like this too well!

B: Anyway it wasn't too big a crowd - about fifty?

N: At the most. But a really interesting crowd. Middle aged, rich, in the closet. This is the dyke society in Bakersfield. Definately not your typical bar crowd. These women don't go to bars. They just came to this because they were assured it would be private & a one shot thing. You could tell they all knew one another.

B: We talked to alot of them afterwards. Many of them were professors.

N: One of them was a mayoral candidate. A big old gray haired butch. It was so interesting. There was alot of money there. A couple of them had been to shows in Las Vegas & and were relatively worldly. One was sitting with a pile of one dollar bills that she had brought for tips. She knew stripper protocol!

B: So the next day we packed up, put water in the car to go across the desert, and went to Las Vegas.

N: Wonderful Vegas. We were begining realize the toll it would take on us - the driving, the shows. Wasn't it Vegas where we said, "We've only been gone 48 hours? And we have two more weeks of this?"

B: I don't see how we could have stopped. Once we were going it was like a train without brakes... Las Vegas was wild. Of course, there was Shirley.

N: Yes.

B: The first thing we saw of Shirley was her car.

N: We get to this shopping mall in Vegas at two in the afternoon, and we see the car sitting in front of the bar.

B: A customized Cadillac two seater. The front was as long as a Mission Street block. Whitewall tires, a custom license plate that says "SHIRLEG".

N: Blaise walked into the bar in her desert outfit, which was a housedress full of holes. It was pitchblack in there.

B: There was only one person inside, sitting at the bar. So I said, "Are you Shirley?" Well the answer was no, this person was an old gay guy.

N: It could have been the woman who ran for mayor of Bakersfield.

B: So we walked on back and met Shirley. She was wearing a red polyester pantsuit, a beehive blond hairdo up to here, makeup plastered everywhere, false eyelashes. An old showgirl is what she is, one

who bought into a bar. We did find out later she is actually gay.

N: Shirley takes us around. God that was a gorgeous bar, fancy, lots of neon. Like Las Vegas. Big & roomy, and we were there on a good night, Friday night. She showed us the dance floor. Then she asked us "Do you want to rehearse?" And Fallon just about died. She said, "Honey, I've been dropping my pants since I was twelve, I don't need to rehearse!" Do we want to rehearse... We'd only just performed six hours ago!

B: She had placed a full page ad in the local gay and lesbian paper.

N: She was the only one who did good promotion on her own.

B: The ad was great: "WOMEN STRIPPERS!! ONE NIGHT ONLY!! LESBIAN BURLESQUE!!"

N: She probably owns the paper too, who knows.

B: So we went to the hotel, a horrible 40 dollar a night place. And Fallon was not well, she'd been trying to eat healthy food and it turned out it made her ill.

N: You can't eat healthy food at Denny's. It's just raw, it makes you sick. You're better off eating french fries & junk.

B: Anyway Fallon was really sick. She just walked into the room, fell on the bed and passed out. I remember her when she woke up - her head was hanging over the bed so she was looking right at the carpet when she opened her eyes... and what did she say?

N: She screamed.



B: "There is neon blue shag carpet in this room!"

N: Oh god. It was horrible.

B: We put on our show makeup in our rooms and then went to the bar. We were early and already there were people lined up outside to get in. We did the show. It was phenomenal. There were so many people there, we had them sitting on the stage.

N: The Vegas dykes were young, well-dressed, flashy. More like a San Francisco crowd than anywhere else. Not real bright though... Everywhere we went I'd set up a table and sell *On Our Backs* and some of the sex videos. So I was doing that there, doing a nice little business. One of them comes up to me, she's reading the personals, and she said, "What is this word? Androgynous?" And I said "Androgynous." She still didn't know what it meant, so I went on to explain to her what androgynous is: "You. You are androgynous." No wonder these people don't buy our magazine, they can't even understand it! But they were a good crowd in Vegas. Rowdy. When you were taking your clothes off two or three of them jumped out of the audience.

B: With no invitation they just came running up on stage, yelling "Let me help you take your clothes off!" I had to tell them to get outta there.

N: They loved the cop act. Boy, did they love that. We were surprised how popular that act was. No politics about it at all, audiences thought women police were

great. They wanted to get arrested.

B: We hung out at the bar for awhile after the show. Did we get offered drugs there? We got offered drugs alot.

N: It just started happening. Out of the blue people would offer us drugs. Sometimes we'd take it.

B: Nice people in Vegas... So what happened next? We went out to dinner afterwards. We went to Caesar's Palace, just



us two. It was the first time we'd had time alone. We were starting to feel the pressure on the relationship, though it wasn't bad at that point. It never got really horrible.

N: Nah, it was interesting.

B: So then where did we go?

N: Long Beach.

B: We got up the next morning and drove to Long Beach.

N: Back to California. Crossed the desert.

B: Long Beach was the most personal gig

for me. When I was a kid my father dated a woman named Gail, and when he died she and I kept in touch. She was living in L.A. Well at some point when I was feeling very sexually confident, I sent Gail a flyer for the tour, with a note that I hoped that I would see her. Well of course I didn't expect to see her. But she came! and that was so wild. The last time she saw me I was ten. She came with a friend, who might have been a dyke. I'm sure Gail is bisexual. Anyone who was with Dad was bisexual.

N: And you did your sexiest act.. I don't know what to say. It was to a Prince set and she was crawling around fucking herself on the floor, in front of this woman (laughs).

B: Well what else are you supposed to do, to 'Do me Baby'?

N: Doing the shows was like a seduction. We'd go in there and tease and seduce and then we'd be gone. It was like all

these little one night affairs with audiences.

N: So we drove to San Diego that night, and spent the next day on the beach.

B: That was Sunday, Mother's Day, & we all called our moms.

N: Then we went and did the show at the Flame - that was a fancy bar. They have three rooms. Three gorgeous pool tables, couches to sit on, a chemically free place where they have coffee & food right in the bar. Big nice dance floor, great sound system. Fallon and Melissa were really excited. And at this point Fallon was getting desperate to fuck somebody. This

Dear

W O R L D



was Fallon's night. "I want to have sex. This is it, this is it, there are going to be some good girls here." She was out all night and she came dragging her ass in late because we had to leave the next morning.

B: Fallon comes rolling in at 5 am, and we left at 7, our usual time.

N: We'd sleep in the afternoon, a couple hours. And about 4 hours every night. It wasn't too bad.

B: It was just a matter of getting on the schedule. We'd be eating at really funky times, after the shows. Because you can't eat before the shows - you're too nervous. And when you're stripping you don't want to have an after dinner belly... You want a before dinner belly!

N: Oh god.. So where did we go from San Diego? East. We went across the desert.

B: We drove to Phoenix. We had Monday night off in Phoenix. We went to this great resort, a ranch house out in the middle of a subdivision. It looks like any other tract home.

N: It had been owned by a Mormon man who had two wives so it was huge, with lots of bedrooms. They turned it into a gay lodge, mostly older gay men. Phoenix is a retirement center. We were the wildest thing they had ever seen in all their born days. First we're women, then we're lesbians, then we're strippers on tour. There was an old guy from New Jersey there, for instance, in his polyester pants and his brown shoes, talking to Melissa, as she sunbathes nude by the pool. "Well I'm trying to make my arrangements," he says, "I have to fly back

home to Kansas City".

B: They were all wonderful.

N: Okay. At the Phoenix show there were straight men in the audience.

B: This bar apparently has a mixed clientele to start with.

N: "Nasty Habits."

B: That's right, it was called "Nasty Habits." I guess they heard about it through the bar. One straight couple obviously came just to pick up a dyke, and thought we'd be hip for that since we're strippers. I dunno. Perhaps we shouldn't get too personal... Well okay, I guess we will. So this guy showed up with a rather femme little girl, and she of course was attracted to Nan.

N: Blaise wasn't too thrilled about that! Though I thought it was kind of interesting...

B: I had a bad reaction to start with because I dance differently for men than for women.

N: It threw you off.

B: At the time I felt very violated - that they had come in, taken something from me that was not meant for them. It's one thing if I go into their establishment and choose to dance for them. It's another thing if I'm dancing a certain way for women, and there are men there. We didn't say they couldn't come. I didn't know I was going to have this reaction until it happened. And it was a bad show.

N: This dyke was teaching us the ins and outs of gambling at a casino, when the

little straight girl comes over. (laughs)

B: So anyway..

N: It was time to go!

B: As we walk out, there's a woman sitting on the hood of a car outside the bar. By this time I'm a raving maniac. I'm screaming! "What-the-fuck-were-you-doing-with-that..!"

N: This woman on the car is just sitting back, watching us.

B: And she's thinking, Now we know what these strippers are really all about.

N: Oh god. Well we went back to the resort where we watched that ridiculous tape. That was great. You had run into that woman who had that tape of you..

B: Somebody had made a video of me having sex with somebody else. She came to the show in LA and brought that tape to give to me. We didn't get a chance to see it until Phoenix.

N: We had to turn the volume way down because the rooms were right next to each other. It was hot, all the windows were open, it was nice.. Out in the desert. I loved the desert, never having been there. There was so much going on. So much new new new all the time.

B: The shows turned out to be a minor part of the whole experience.

N: The shows were the one thing that was steady. Everything else was constantly changing.

B: We knew what to expect, from the shows.



N: Then we went to Albuquerque.

(In Albuquerque, the tour hits the dead-est crowd in the West. Before the show they're playing country western and doing the two step. After Fallon does her act she bursts into tears because no one noticed her taking her clothes off; and when the dancers are through, it's back to country western and two step. Then on to Colorado Springs, where the show was cancelled because feminists at the local university organized a boycott, then on to Denver, to a bar called Bazooms. Next, down to Grand Junction, Colorado, and a curious meeting with "Mr. Magic"...))

B: After "Bazooms", we went on to Grand Junction. The bar was on Main Street, and it was Farm-to-Market Day when we arrived so Main Street was closed down. There were horses and pigs and cows in little stalls outside the front of the bar!

N: This was really rough on Fallon. Fallon flipped out in a big way.

B: Nan and I got there first so we checked out the bar. It is migrant worker-straight during the day and then at eight o'clock it becomes the bar for any oppressed person...

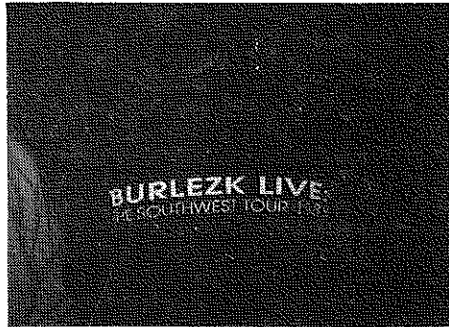
N: Anywhere near or withing 100 miles driving distance!

B: Gay-lesbian-transsexual-bisexual-inter-racial hetero couples... Anything goes. We met the bar manager, and then went back to the motel and connected with Melissa and Fallon. We were actually afraid.

N: It's was so redneck it was scary.

B: Melissa and Fallon walked down to the liquour store and saw the local cowboys who would just as soon run over them as look at them. I wouldn't go out. I got into the room and shut the curtains and wouldn't leave. I called my friend Timber and said, "I can't do this, I have to come home." For dinner, we asked the motel owner what was the best restaurant in town and he points across the street to this place called The Feedlot. It had a big cow on the roof.

N: Fallon and Melissa hadn't seen the bar at that point. They came straight to the motel. Which was good!



B: When they walked into the bar, Fallon had to turn around, walk out and go smoke a joint in the car. It was it was it was ... an old dive.

N: Long narrow bar, one of those. Long and narrow bar in the front and then long and narrow dance hall and pool tables in the back. No sound system.

B: At which time we bring in Mr. Magic. They had hired a mobile dj and his name was Mr. Magic.

N: From *Superfly*, or *Car Wash*, 1975.

B: He's got on bell bottoms and a vest with chains and he's got a big 'fro. He drives this mobile sound system van. See

we were supposed to get dressed in the van there. Which we didn't do. We wound up getting dressed in the women's bathroom - which was fascinating - anyway the van was all carpeted with Christmas lights.

N: Big huge walkin van, with chairs.

B: So he starts spinning records and of course he talks alot, he says "This is Mr. Magic and you just come on down here and visit me in the Sugar Shack!"

N: Melissa at this point is like fallen over the booths. She's laying down, and we're supposed to dance in ten minutes. Oh no! This old horrible disco music is playing.

B: Horrible. What did Fallon say to me at that point? We still had a sense of humor, in fact I think it was getting better.

N: Getting really good, yeah.

B: So Fallon says to me, she said "Now where did you hear about these places?" "Well," I said, "I got them out of *Places of Interest to Women*." And she said "Just because it's a *Place of Interest* dosen't necessarily mean it's a place I want to take off my clothes!"

N: Might be a *Place of Interest* but you don't want to take your clothes off in there! I mean the floor was filthy, everything had grime on it.

N: We did have a table of *On Our Backs* people who had driven two hours to see us. They could not believe we were in Grand Junction. They kept saying, "What are you doing here!?" They had to come to see us to believe that we came there - from San Francisco to Grand Junction. Wow! Thank god they were there though.



B: We high tailed it out of there pretty quickly after the show. We were just too mind warped to stay. And Mr. Magic had a friend there, and his friend and Fallon got into a big fight.

N: He wanted Fallon to fuck him and she said "If I was going to jump the fence it wouldn't be for you!" (laughs) Fallon was great. By now we'd realized what we'd done unconsciously, we'd taken two of the toughest women we could possibly find with us on this trip. They're like your own bodyguards, built into the show. Fallon did bring a stun gun along.

B: Fallon slept that night with the stun gun beside her bed. That's how scared we were. That's the only night she brought it out.

N: In a small town everyone knows what's going on - 'Here are the strippers from San Francisco, they're staying at this motel, lets go and mess them up.'

B: It wasn't even a hotel, it was a motel. There was our door, right on the street. So we left early the next morning, and went to Salt Lake City.

(After the long drive to Salt Lake, the strippers have to find the bar - which turns out to be a luxe establishment carefully hidden behind the boarded-up windows of a burnt out warehouse. Blaise can't get a rum and coke because the state is dry. The crowd is small but hot; everyone in it gets their photo taken with the strippers for five bucks a pop...)

N: Salt Lake City also had the wierd hotel... Oh god. They don't trust anybody in Salt Lake City. It's a different feeling over there. Everything's locked up.

B: They had a pool where all of the ash trays were chained to the shade umbrellas.

N: Plastic ashtrays, plastic chains.

B: Well Melissa wants an ash tray. She goes over and looks at the ashtray on it's little chain, and just rips the ashtray in half. She's holding half of it when she turns to us and says "I think my social skills are deteorating."

N: That was a big moment. It felt like it would soon be over. One way or another!

B: After that we went to Reno. Now in Reno we were supposed to follow the rules. In most of these states there are rules governing what you can and cannot do on stage. The rule in almost every state is that you have to be on a platform that's at least 6 inches high, you have to be at least six feet away from the nearest member of the audience, you can't touch a member of the audience or yourself. Well of course we didn't abide by any of these rules.

N: And most places don't care.

B: Well in Reno, because they have gambling, the bar owner wanted us to wear pasties. I had told all the women on the tour to bring pasties in case we ran into this, so we all had them. We just hadn't worn them yet.

N: (laughing)

B: I'm the first one to go on. And they're so obscene!

N: They're gross! Sequined bright nipple holders!

B: They draw so much attention, it's far

more obscene than nipples. I had on silver blue sequined pasties under my white strapless dress. On my second song, I was ready to take off my dress, I unzipped it, I pulled it down and then pasties came out like - torpedos!

N: They go flying, and the audience went nuts. I loved that. Oh god, nipples on stage. This is when we started calling this the *Nipples to the Wind* tour. Anyway the bar manager flips. She runs back to the dressing room where she encounters Fallon and Melissa, and she says to Fallon, "Get her off the stage!" And Fallon says, "You kidding? One stripper taking another stripper off the stage - no way." So she comes over to me and tells me Blaise has to get her pasties on or come off the stage. Well Blaise's boa was lying nearby so I took it and stood in front of Blaise, trying to get her attention.

B: She was waving my boa at me, and I had no idea what was going on.

N: I said, "Put this on or get off the stage."

B: So I covered myself with the boa. You see I hadn't worn pasties before and I hadn't thought about what would happen when your nipples get hard. They just bounce off.

N: Did everyone else keep their pasties on?

B: Fallon managed to keep hers on. I don't know about Melissa. Oh I remember... Melissa went out into the audience and a woman tried to bite one of her pasties off! Melissa said, "NO! Don't do that!"

N: You just don't know what people are going to do. 🌐



THE ANNUAL AUNT

Matias Viegner

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MY GREAT AUNT STEFFI, TANTE STEFFI AS WE CALLED HER, used to visit us every summer for five weeks. When she first started coming, she had lots of money. She brought ten pounds of Teuscher chocolate, in the shapes of thirty different sea shells. Everywhere she went, she found money on the street: "America is paved with gold!" she told us. "She's *not* that rich," my mother said. "Don't let her buy you things."

The first summer Steffi came, transatlantic flights were still a big event. The whole family went to the airport and got dressed up, no matter how hot it was. Steffi always arrived wearing a thick wool suit, popping with sweat; her little wet handkerchiefs were blotched with rouge. Later when things got more relaxed, she started to wear polyester jogging suits onto the plane. Every year a few pieces of her leather luggage disappeared, until all she had were the blue vinyl tote bags from her travel agency, "Amerika Express." The second year she brought half as much chocolate and every year after that she was poorer and poorer. All of a sudden she had only one pair of shoes, and they were plastic. Finally she wrote that she didn't have enough for the air

fare, and my parents started buying her ticket every summer.

But at the behinnih! Steffi was the first and only person who talked to me and my brother in baby talk. "Do you wallawalla-walla?" she'd ask. When she wanted water she'd say "Wawu." When it rained, she'd look out the window and coo "Sunny play! Sunny play!" My parents were very unhappy with baby talk. We were nine and seven and had never spoken like this before. By the time Steffi left, everything my brother and I said sounded like "wallawalla-walla." My mother had sent us to Montessori schools and wasn't about to see her investment lost.

When Steffi left after her first visit, my brother and I were heartbroken. After sobbing and sobbing, I couldn't sleep. I sat up all night on the toilet reading a Bobbsey Twins mystery about a sealed tomb in Egypt. In the morning I had a purple ring around my buttocks. My mother said this was another sign of the ill effects of baby talk. At first she explained patiently why she and my father didn't believe in baby talk. "It is contrary to our educational philosophy," she told me. Two weeks later my brother and I

were still sounding like "walla-walla-walla." My mother was scared. In *Time* magazine there was a story about two Pennsylvania Dutch twins who were locked in a closet all their lives until they developed their own retarded, Germanic dialect. When my mother saw that reason wouldn't persuade us, she swallowed her principles and offered us money. She made us pay a dime every time she heard baby talk and she offered us a quarter for each day she didn't hear any at all. It was cheaper for her than the Montessori schools.

My mother must have upbraided her aunt, because the next year and every year after that we never heard another baby syllable from her mouth. Steffi's few relatives in Germany were mean, and she didn't have any children. Tante Steffi did not want to lose us. Years later my mother told me that Steffi ran with men when she was young. She married once, got divorced, and lived with a man who sold cigars in the black market. Her only husband liked to fix cars, and he got to sitting inside his old Fords and Daimlers until the sun went down. Steffi would try to call him in, but sometimes he would just sit inside until he fell asleep. Finally he drove away and never came back. The only thing that was left from Steffi's wild years was her weak, frizzy hair, which she got from too many permanent waves.

My father's family was an entirely different story. They were all classical musicians who lived near Lincoln Center. My uncle Samuel was an oboist who collected Audobon prints and once wrote a book on the nesting habits of the Arctic tern. Every time Steffi came, my parents always arranged things so that no one on my father's side met her.



Of course, Steffi was so shy she wouldn't have talked to them if they asked her to. Her biggest fear was when repairmen and salesmen came to the door when my mother wasn't home. Seeing Steffi's little round face peeking through the window, the Fuller Brush man, who was never a favorite of my mother's, decided to take a chance. Steffi let him in because she thought he was a neighbor. He began to throw dirt on the green carpet and tried to vacuum it up. Steffi was paralyzed. When she finally got him to the door, she kept repeating "no, no, I am not interesting."

During the war, Steffi worked in a gas mask factory, inspecting the masks for cracks. Eventually she started jabbing little holes in the masks, so the German soldiers would collapse panting on the battle field. My mother told me Steffi didn't know anything about the Nazis, but that she was tired of the war. She wanted to go on dates again. My father loved the story about the masks and he used to call Steffi Germany's greatest resistance fighter, which made her blush and giggle. It was moments like these when baby talk started to form at her lips and I would drape myself in her lap to provoke the forbidden words. Steffi was a small lady, but the armchair would wobble back and forth. Yet the forbidden syllables never left her lips.

Steffi had a great love for gadgets, perhaps from her days in the factory. She loved miniature appliances, egg timers and clocks— she was one of the first people in Europe or North America to own one of those cat clocks whose eyes flash back and forth. In her third summer with us, what she longed for more than anything was an alarm clock with a dial that lit up. This was before

digital clocks, which won their own place in her heart.

To find the alarm with the lit dial, we had to go to a special store in New Jersey that sold appliances for dual voltage. It was very far and when we got there the store had moved. At the new address, the sign said "closed on Sunday." Steffi wanted to go home, but my father thought of another store, still further away. Steffi was miserable when any of us did anything out of our way for her. The more she protested, the sadder everyone in the car got. Normally she never expressed her wishes, but my father was determined to give her this little extravagance: she was supposed to be happy. Steffi's eyes were red. Like the rest of us, she was exhausted from driving. When we had the clock, she was so sad she couldn't talk anymore. Seeing that my mother was asleep, my brother ventured toward Steffi and began to babble into her ear. Her eyes lit up and she smiled. She grabbed him and pulled him to her chest, probably to muffle his words before they had their way with her.

Before the new digital clocks won her heart, Steffi found a talking clock that projected the time on the ceiling and said the time out loud every quarter hour. Steffi's English never really improved, but the next year when she came back, she had the habit of reciting different times to herself, like "nine fifteen" or "twelve thirty." She just said them out loud, like no one was listening. Her favorite was "eight forty-five," which she always repeated when she was alone. My mother said the lighted part of the clock had broken, so Steffi never learned to correlate the real time with the spoken numbers. Steffi loved the sound of the numbers. Anytime people dropped in and

happened to ask the time, my mother got a panicked look in her eyes and quickly ran to check the clock.

The problem with all the souvenirs and gadgets Steffi took back with her was the evil relatives in Germany. They always asked her for one thing or another, and eventually they got everything she owned, even her mohair sofa. She couldn't say no. If she forgot to hide her most treasured acquisition, they would get it. They were especially greedy about clocks and appliances, which explained why Steffi took so many of them back with her. "What happened to your good luggage?" my mother asked Steffi in her fourth summer.

"Elsie has it," Steffi said. "She went to Italy."

"But it's yours," my mother said.

"Anytime I need it, I can have it back," Steffi said. It was an answer we'd heard before. "Anyway, Hilda wanted it too, but she didn't get it! Did I tell you that she bought a new wool carpet, but then Irma spilled ink on it?"

"No! No more!" my mother said, covering her ears. "Not a word about them." She hated all her cousins and aunts, all except Steffi; they were the relatives that abandoned my mother to be raised by the penniless young Steffi and her grandmother. They all seemed to live in little apartments above the groceries they owned. When my mother wasn't around, Steffi would tell us stories about how strictly my little cousins, who all had names like Axel and Gunter, were being raised. They had to do terrible things like scrub the steps or help their fathers butcher pigs. My father got very uneasy.



The only thing he ever ordered us to do was to help carry books back to the library.

"It wasn't easy," my mother said years later. At the end of Steffi's visits, my mother was so relieved that she would begin an exotic new project, like learning how to make feuilleté pastry or reading all of Balzac. Steffi mailed her butter cookies and crossword puzzles. My mother felt cruel telling her that she didn't use any of them, so Steffi kept sending more.

"You did the best you could," my father said.

My brother and I were not often alone with Steffi, but when we were a guilty look crept across her face. It wasn't the baby talk. She felt guilty not having money for us. She knew it made her less interesting. She spent all her savings on her first two trips, and even though my father paid her tickets, all she could bring for gifts was hard candy.

For years, when my mother left our room at night my brother and I began to babble to each other until we fell asleep. It got so that we forgot the real words for some things. But that was before he began to run with a bad crowd and smoke marijuana.

The last eruption of Steffi's baby talk was

one of the greatest. Only Steffi, my brother and I were home, and my brother who by then was over six feet tall wrapped himself around Steffi's short legs. "I love you!" he said. "You are the moon and the stars. Honi gutti, honi gutti!" Steffi's palms broke out in a sweat. "No, no!" She said, "You're almost twenty!" No one had said baby words in eight years. Steffi lurched toward the door of the room but my brother had her feet pinned. She was very short and she began to wobble like a bowling pin. My brother kept kissing her feet. He segued into "Klingel pitz, klingel pitz." Steffi was palpitating. I got on the floor next to them and gurgled out a periodic "gip." Steffi broke out in tears. She flopped on the sofa and those ancient words began to tumble out of her, whooping wheezing and sputtering.

My mother walked in the door. She put her hands over her ears and began to scream. "No!" she said, "it's starting again!"

Steffi got up and fell. She began to cry for real, thinking my mother would send her back to Germany forever. My mother cried too, because she had made her aunt cry. "Stop, little aunt!" she said. I began to cry. My brother, who had smoked marijuana, broke out laughing, but the rest of us cried more. The Polish neighbors came and rang the bell because they thought something terrible happened.

For the whole next week, we walked

around each other on eggshells. We did everything to forget the outbreak of baby talk. Every word from our lips was in monosyllables.

"Tea?"

"Mmm— yes."

"Hungry?"

"A bit. No meat. Just toast."

Steffi went back to Germany for the winter, and my brother went away to college. Steffi began to fall a lot. She cracked her ankle, ice skating on the canal. The next year, she couldn't come because she had her hip in a cast. She spent a year in a nursing home and wrote every week that she could come in the upcoming spring, or summer, or fall. My mother worked volunteer in a thrift store and sent her a box of clothes, saying they were her own. Send more, Steffi said. After another month, Steffi said "more!" My mother began sending a box every month. When Steffi died, none of the clothes were found in her room, but most of the clocks were back. She must have bartered clothes for clocks, but at least she found a way to keep peace with her greedy relatives. ☉





NOTES FROM A CONFERENCE ON LESBIAN & GAY MEDIA

Liz Kotz

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IN OCTOBER I WENT TO NEW YORK CITY TO ATTEND *HOW DO I LOOK?* a conference on lesbian and gay media held at Anthology Film Archives. Organized by Bad Object Choices (an independent study group*) the two-day conference was one of the first attempts to theorize lesbian and gay film and video-making; the event also included two weeks of screenings put together by Martha Gever and Bill Horrigan. Coming as it did the weekend before the big Lesbian & Gay Studies conference at Yale, and about a month after the third annual New York Lesbian & Gay Experimental Film Festival, *How Do I Look?* in a sense marked an intersection between two growing areas of activity: gay theory in the academy and gay media in the community. The question of how these did and did not come together provoked my own very contradictory ruminations on the event. First the facts:

Six speakers read formal "papers" followed by discussion. On the first day, AIDS activist and writer Cindy Patton discussed "Safe Sex and the Pornographic

Vernacular," a look at sexual micro-cultures and AIDS education; British filmmaker Stuart Marshall problematized contemporary gay uses of Third Reich history, including ACT UP's reclaiming of the pink triangle, in a project growing out of his film *Desire*; and Ohio State professor Judith Mayne looked at the construction of Dorothy Arzner within hetero-feminist film theory.

The next day Chinese-Canadian videomaker Richard Fung questioned racial discourses in "Looking for My Penis: the Eroticized Asian in Gay Video Porn;" Black British critic and academic Kobena Mercer offered a re-reading of Robert Mapplethorpe's photos in "Skin Head Sex Thing: Racial Difference and the Homosexual Imagination;" and UC Santa Cruz professor and theorist Teresa de Lauretis addressed problems of lesbian representation and spectatorship across a reading of Sheila McLaughlin's *She Must Be Seeing Things* in "Film and the Visible." Now the Feelings:

Having gone with high expectations, I

came away from the conference disappointed and frustrated. Part of this was the almost-inevitable sense of letdown that accompanies a ground-breaking event, where the need for discussion and analysis that has finally been tapped into so over runs what any single event can do. Yet, the newfound visibility and legitimacy of "lesbian and gay media studies" brings with it a whole slew of potential problems, some of which the conference ran smack into.

How Do I Look? will mark an important step in the legitimation and viability of research on lesbian and gay media — with an extended impact since the proceedings are to be published in the spring issue of *October* magazine. Yet, situated within the emergence of lesbian and gay studies as an academically-accepted discipline, such an undertaking unavoidably raises a lot of questions — about how issues and problems are conceptualized, in reference to which contexts and which practices, and by whom? How is the field being framed and defined such that some questions, perspectives and areas of activity seem critical, others marginal? While support for new ventures is important, it's vital to ask hard questions now, before things get codified. My own responses are focused on the presentation of issues on lesbian media.

LESBIAN/ GAY MEDIA STUDIES

How Do I Look? was positioned as part of a second wave of lesbian and gay media studies, one which explicitly examines the construction of sexual identities through practices of representation and which gives at least some attention to questions of gender, class, race, and the construction of "lesbian" and "gay" as specific, historically-contingent identi-



ties. Yet these ideas have been central concerns for quite a while now. I expected *How Do I Look?* to explore beyond these borders, to identify fault lines within this territory, to offer some sense of where these critical approaches might take us. I also wanted some sense of how a "lesbian" or "gay" critical position could potentially challenge or reorient the models and practices of cultural theory the conference was situated within.

Despite some breakthroughs, I found the conference troublingly narrow in scope, excluding huge areas of activity from its purview. While it was a pleasure, for instance, to see porn taken seriously as an object of study, and to have questions of race and ethnicity centrally integrated into the gay men's presentations, the conceptualization of problems and issues largely stayed within what are by now pretty well-established and academically-oriented areas of research.

The conference aimed to surmount familiar academy/community divides by inviting speakers from a range of institutional locations. Yet with four university-based theorists and two foreign film/videomakers on the podium, no perspectives were articulated from within U.S. film/video communities. Coming at a time when lesbian and gay makers, exhibitors, and audiences have had very few opportunities to discuss and theorize their own practices and problems, this seemed like a real weakness — and a missed opportunity for lesbian and gay media studies to redefine some of the institutional boundaries that have so greatly constricted cultural studies and film-studies in this country.

This particularly undermined discussions of lesbian media, since the object of study

— a barely emerging practice — is less developed than gay male media, and less distinct from categories of feminist or women's filmmaking. What are we talking about when we talk about "lesbian media"? A handful of producers, a quickly exploding but still very marginal body of work, a small number of very problematic feature films??? What does it mean that discussions of work by lesbians have largely shifted, in the past five years, from the context of "feminist filmmaking" to that of "gay media"?

Clearly, when we use the category "lesbian media," we are not only talking about a body of work but a whole set of practices of exhibition, distribution, and criticism. Yet an understanding of how works are situated in contexts other than that of academic study was missing. It didn't help that of the three female speakers, Cindy Patton focused almost exclusively on gay men's porn; since Judith Mayne's paper was on lesbian film history only Teresa de Lauretis managed to address contemporary work by women. The delivery of papers positioned as interventions within straight academic or institutional contexts to a gay, largely non-university (though by no means anti-theoretical) audience produced an uncomfortable sense of disalignment, in which the audience implicitly addressed was generally not the audience present.

GAY WOMEN / FEMINIST THEORY

Part of this sense of conflicting expectations had to do with the very shaky relationship between community practices and university-based cultural theories. Ironically, it struck me that the gay men, with a less developed body of academic theory to draw upon, generally seemed far more willing to at least try to break

new ground in terms of subject matter and approach, while the lesbians, almost unavoidably situated in relation to an active and academically-entrenched body of feminist film theory, stuck closer to familiar concerns.

While it is crucial for lesbian critical work on film to challenge the heterosexist assumptions and operations of much psychoanalytic and semiotic-based feminist film theory, it's important that we not allow these discourses to continue to frame the terms of debate. I guess I'm always suspicious of a rhetorical strategy among lesbians/gays which continually problematizes the hetero majority, because I think it tends to function the way, say, talking about sexism or male dominance long functioned within the women's community: continually invoking the hegemonic "other" to unify the "minority" in its sense of exclusion, and, more troublingly, to potentially mask divisions and practices of power within it. Not that problems of exclusion and hegemony aren't real, but at the moment perhaps we need to address the complexity of difference and **debate within the minority/marginal community** rather than **in reference to the majority culture**.

Discussions following papers were frustratingly uneven, and rarely challenged the terms in which lesbian and gay media were conceptualized. An interesting eruption occurred at the end of the second day, in which producer and Third World Newsreel distributor Ada Gay Griffin asked de Lauretis why she didn't deal with the question of race in *She Must Be Seeing Things*. De Lauretis answered that she didn't address this level because the film didn't offer itself to be analyzed on this level. This helped me understand



what I found frustrating about her presentation. While a cogent reworking of the terms of feminist film theory, re-opening and re-constructing analyses around the problem of lesbian spectatorship and desire, on some level it failed to depart from these terms — or to read McLaughlin's film against the grain.

I found myself wondering, **must** we continually contest these theoretical models as it were, on their own terms, or can we find ways to get out from under them and explore other territories? How could a differently-situated reading of contemporary films and videos by women suggest some new terms for theory?

For instance, I feel that the time has come to no longer engage in discussions along the lines of whether or not aspects of lesbian desire, such as butch-femme role-playing, reflect or resemble heterosexual models — even to argue that they don't, as de Lauretis does. Instead, I think that we need to step back and critically examine the entire **terms** such debates have been conducted in — to excavate the ways those questions about “heterosexual” and “patriarchal” forms and behaviors have been mobilized in highly exclusionary and moralistic ways, which, even today, perpetuate some of the most crippling aspects of 1970s lesbian-feminism. Why have these critical models dominated discussions of lesbian sexuality? Where do they come from and in whose interest do they serve? How do they construct models of feminist “authority” and lesbian “purity,” “authenticity” or “autonomy” which are themselves quite problematic? To continue participating in such discussions merely perpetuates a set of categories whose relevance and legitimacy need to be seriously called into question.

INSTITUTIONAL POSITIONS

Interestingly enough, not one of the female speakers offered any autobiographical dimension to their presentations, any sense of their own personal relation to what they were talking about, while all three of the male speakers did. Perhaps this has to do with how “autobiography” has functioned as a ghettoizing and degraded genre for women, who are always told they are being “too personal” — while for men, acknowledging a personal dimension constitutes a more (pseudo) “transgressive” and hence valued rhetorical strategy. In any case, none of the female speakers offered any sense of how they were invested in their own discourses and projects — professionally, personally, or politically. Not only did this make their presentations harder to follow — you never knew where they were coming from — but it seemed again to elide their institutional position, to fail to acknowledge it *as* a position, and as the locus of a practice.

Yet those of us outside of such institutions are all too aware of the complete imbalance of resources between the film/video community and the academic community. While endless new university-published journals start up regularly and salaries for tenured faculty skyrocket, our communities (film-video-lesbian-gay-arts-etc) are starving for forums for public discussion, for theoretical activity, for even the most modest grants for writing or criticism or publishing that could sustain a non-university intellectual culture. As a symptom, more and more publications like *Afterimage*, once sites for substantial “community” or “practitioner” criticism, are now filled with articles by people who teach in universities. There's nothing wrong with this per se,

but it does represent a power relationship, and a very “asymmetrical” one at that. And all too often, academic criticism operates to confirm rather than challenge the power relationships and hierarchies within the media community: feature length films over short or experimental work, videos that get shown at AFI over those that don't, the pick of the Whitney over everything else, works by whites over everyone else, etc.

I think that these issues — about how we are institutionally and discursively positioned as speakers/writers and how we invest ourselves in these positions and how these positions in turn position/invest us in relation to vast and conflicting networks of power relations — these are *the* basic questions. We need to find ways to create dialogue, to open up. The problem is that lesbians and gay men working in academia and lesbians and gay men in film, video and the community are often addressing such different contexts that work in one area is not always relevant to or even understandable in the other. In addition, the prescriptive and exclusionary roles academic feminist film theory has played in recent history has generated a good deal of hostility, closing down many once active dialogues between film/videomakers and university-based critics. While discussions of ‘lesbian media’ are helping to re-open this interchange, the fact that maker and critic may both be lesbian doesn't necessarily challenge or shift the institutionally-structured nature of this relationship.

CUTTING ACROSS HIERARCHIES

What continues to intrigue me about the categories “gay” and lesbian” is not that they define any stable or real sense of identity, but instead that they bring such



incredibly disparate and conflicting people and things together under their rubric. They offer points of intersection for academic and popular cultures, for works of art and audiences, that otherwise probably wouldn't happen. One thing I've always loved about les/gay cultures is the tremendous amount of *popular* intellectual activity, debates, discussions and analyses that occur and circulate outside of university institutions. While more theoretically and critically oriented work is greatly needed, I don't think that the end result of all this should be an *October*-magazine sanctioned "high" gay culture, which would relegate the work of people like Joan Nestle or Audre

Lorde to some not-quite-theoretical-enough margin.

Likewise, what I like about the category "gay media" is not that it describes anything out there, some body of work that is "gay media," but that it functions to cut diagonally across existing categories and hierarchies: mainstream, experimental, activist, documentary, art, porno, etc. As a critic, I find it useful because it allows me to see different fault lines, different continuities, different maps of the vast activity of film and video. It is precisely for this reason that I think it is important *not* to recuperate "lesbian and gay media" for other categories, *not* to claim that

marginal sexualities necessarily make individuals more oppositional or decentered on other levels (they don't) or that "radical content requires radical form" (it doesn't). Instead, "lesbian and gay media" offers a field for dialogue and movement and interchange, a field that is very open and very heterogeneous, that both implodes and explodes the term. ☉

**Notes: Members include Terry Cafaro, Douglas Crimp, Martha Gever, Amber Hollibaugh, Tom Kalin and Tim Landers. For a more detailed account of the conference, see Cynthia Chris, "Choice Objects: Gay and Lesbian Film and Video," Afterimage, February, 1990.*



GLEN HELFAND'S TEN EXPLICABLE CRUSHES

(in chronological order: 1966-1988)

- 1) John Davidson (hairless, perky, asexual)
- 2) Robert Wagner (hair-ish, hip dad, sex-ish)
- 3) David Cassidy (hairless {though sprouting}, stridex, teen come)
- 4) Lee Majors (slightly hairy, hunky, TV-sex)
- 5) Arnold Schwarzenegger (shaved, way hunky, plasti-sex)
- 6) David Bowie (hairless, alien, sex fiend)
- 7) Bryan Ferry (clothed, substantial, sophisti-sex)
- 8) Aidan Quinn (hairy{!}, penetrating, sensitive dude sex)
- 9) Morrissey (smooth, veggie, mind-fuck)
- 10) Roland Gift (smooth, multicultural, fashion sex)

tē āch
dub'l-ū
ā är tē

KAY ROSEN

"T-H-W-A-R-T"

liste - about, ballot, bond, bride, but, cane, cap, car, catch, chair, champ, char, chose, coin, colon, comment, court, dire, dot, enter, fade, fat, fin, four, fret, gale, gland, laid, lame, legs, lent, lie, lime, lit, loin, lover, mail, main, manger, mare, mars, mine, miser, on, ours, pain, pays, pin, rid, ripe, rot, sable, sale, singer, store, tire, trait

list - butt end, bundle, leap, bridle, aim, duck (f.), cape, because, wrestling, flesh, field, chariot, thing, corner, colonist, how, short, say, dowry, graft, insipid, conceited, end, oven, cargo, itch, acorn, ugly, knife blade, legacy, slow, dregs, file, bed, far, coil, mall, hand, eat, stagnant pond, March, appearance, bet, one, bear, bread, country, fir tree, wrinkle, scraper, belch, sand, dirty, ape, window shade, pull, arrow.

KAY ROSEN

"Liste/List"



THE SECRET SQUARE

Nayland Blake

*

"WHATEVER HAPPENED, COME FIRE OR flood or I don't know what," Shirley Partridge snapped, with more vehemence than anyone in the family could remember, "I'm going to fire Ruben Kinkaid if its the last thing I do! There's no excuse for his not being on time like this! No excuse at all!"

"Now, mom," Laurie Partridge tried to pacify her, putting her arms around her mother's shoulders. "You're just upset and you're saying things you don't mean."

"Oh no I'm not!", Shirley flared angrily, pushing her away, using a burning anger to blot out the almost paralyzing fear that was beginning to fill her mind and soul. "That silly old plane of his! I knew I shouldn't have given in when Keith asked me. I knew it! I'll just bet they ran out of fuel, made a forced landing, somewhere in all that big country and won't be here for hours!"

She knew she was being extremely silly; knew she was saying outrageous things because she was worried sick and badly frightened as well as being burning mad. But she couldn't help it. The mother in her, the woman who would always see Keith Partridge as a little boy even when

he became a head taller than she, just wouldn't stop crying out. Shirley Partridge, the leader of the Partridge Family, the world renowned Show Biz team, was definitely playing second fiddle now. After all there are limits to a person's patience, even after taking all possibilities into consideration. Especially maternal patience. That was the worst kind. Just ask any Mother!

Furious, she stormed into her room and flung herself on the bed. In the nightstand to her right she found her pen and diary. She wrote as follows:

June 1
Dear You,

I felt as if I had always known him. He did not speak french, but he read it handily. I asked him a question about his relations with the military. "Oh me, I'm an agnostic where the military is concerned," he said offhandedly. "I'm neither for or against on that score."

The conversation quickly took on a bantering tone (and what would my American colleague have thought: "Kissinger is an extraordinarily serious man..." etc.) and I asked him what were his best and worst memories.

"Mrs. Partridge," he replied, "if you come into my life again someday I'll tell you all my memories, but for right now..."

He looked at his watch, asked if I had a few minutes, and called in Tony Lake. Then he said rapidly that he was supposed to speak at the president's news conference, that I could thus see him in action and had Lake take me up to the floor above to the Roosevelt room. And there I was, suddenly facing a made-up President Nixon, in front of six television cameras, some fifty journalists, and many hand cameras. The heat was overwhelming.

Dressed all in blue, in a blue shirt and a blue tie, heavily powdered, with his deep set eyes, ski-jump nose and bulldog jaw, the chin jutting and receding at once, Nixon looked like a *commedia dell'arte* character. His immense right hand, monstrous and deformed by far too much handshaking, looked like the hand of a strangler. The whole scene was at the same time phantasmagorical and improvised - like American society.

That morning the subject was chemical and biological weapons in Vietnam. In front of a velvet drapery (blue, too), Kissinger, who is smaller than the president (though of average stature for a European, Kissinger is smaller than most Americans), with his sloping forehead, aquiline nose, and heavy skeptical chin, looked like a libidinous bird. Yet that rather awkward appearance was lit up by a smile and a tranquility that disturbed me.

Nixon spoke a few words that had been prepared in advance and which had already been passed around in handouts, and then Ron Ziegler, his press spokesman, another young man with blue eyes,



introduced Kissinger. Suddenly, I realized that Kissinger's skin coloring was yellow, a greyish ashen kind of yellow, probably from being shut up indoors too much. Prisoners have that coloring. Up on the platform, facing the cameras as if he had stepped out of a closet, a self effacing, modest, chilly Kissinger seemed to be playing the butler in a comedy in which Nixon was the master.

The journalists fired questions at him. Had China signed or had she not signed the Geneva protocol? Was teargas being used in Vietnam or not? What was the scientific description of the effects of chemical weapons?

His hands behind him, Kissinger replied in a voice that sounded very sincere. "I'm not an expert on chemical warfare, I don't know the names of all these effects." Before coming into the room, he had whispered to me: "I see journalists often. Generally, they annoy me, but I do this for masochistic reasons."

Personally, I found the press conference macabre. The question of whether it was desirable or not to spread epidemics among the Vietnamese population, whether the right was to be reserved to use chemical weapons in reprisal, and so were being discussed as if the subject was distributing powdered milk. None of the newsmen seemed to appreciate the frightening connotations.

When we were back down in Kissinger's office, he asked, expecting a warm reaction, for my impression. I couldn't help saying that it had all seemed rather sinister to me. Astonished, he made no comment. (In his view, the categorical renunciation of chemical and biological weapons, except in cases of reprisal, represented a liberal move intended to satisfy the doves, that is the anti-war section of

American opinion. It was hard for him to understand the lack of unreserved applause for the magnanimity of the decision).

How European Kissinger seemed in the typically American atmosphere such as that press conference! The appearance, the smile, the sensitivity, and the skepticism – and the vulnerability. He told me he abhorred boring things and boring people. He asked me if I thought he resembled the portrait of him painted by the press. I replied that he seemed younger and not so fat. "Journalists annoy me, but you don't," he said and I began to find him more and more sympathetic.

June 10

Dear You,

It is a commonplace that celebrities obtain their niche by embodying certain allegorical or as it has often been said mythic traits. To be a celebrity is to strip away the stuff of individuality to become a conduit for a particular discourse. Liza is perhaps unique in the realm of celebrity because she embodies a discourse that is essentially that of the fan; the discourse of one whose validity is derived from their relation to someone famous. There are famous children, children of famous parents, and children who have finally stepped out from under their parents shadow, but now other celebrity who for so long has been famous only because her mother was famous. Perhaps the closest corollary is Frank Sinatra Jr., who like Liza cannot appear in public without somehow seeming a shabby xerox of someone else. Liza cannot sing without singing with 'momma', and it seems that it will somehow be a terrible, terrible sin if she happens to live longer than her mother did.

There could be a dozen good reasons

why Ruben Kinkaid and Keith were delayed, any one of which would make good sense. But the mother in Shirley couldn't read anything but dreadful happenings into that fact. She was imagining all sorts of awful things.

Things that just wouldn't go away.

Like here it was eight o'clock, and the family was comfortably ensconced in one of the best hotels in Lincoln with nothing but a ten minute limousine ride to the Civic Auditorium necessary to get them onto the stage with all of their musical equipment to do a show. Shirley and the kids were already dressed in their now-famous red-and-black costumes with the shining brass buttons, and a Mister Shane, who was somebody connected with the local Chamber of Commerce, had come and explained to them something about how the evening performance had been planned. Shirley had listened politely, nodding her head, made some excuses about Ruben Kinkaid and Keith being missing, and then Mister Shane had left the suite of rooms, almost bowing his way out. He was a nice old fellow in a Tuxedo and tie with very pleasant manners. Danny Partridge had been very impressed with him, and had even managed to exchange some Wall Street chit-chat with him. Mister Shane had some oil stock. In Danny's journal, he remembered the events of the following days thus:

June 1

Dear You,

I fucked Nicky last night. It excites me to death to write the word fuck concerning Nicky and myself. I've used that word a million times without realizing its meaning. I wish people didn't use it as a swear word. Ahhh, I climbed all over him and on him and under him, I clutched at him and moaned. I get weak and light headed

Dear

W O R L D



at the thought. Its such a huge relief to lose every inhibition and lose my mind to my body. When he fell asleep, I could hardly move without choking or reaching into the air for nothing. On the way out, I stopped to kiss his bass. I'm so in love, I don't even realize what I'm doing.

October 2

Dear You,

I CAME! How do like that? I phoned Noel, (nervous and sweating) and he invited me over "anytime"! I dressed quickly and gala split. We got along fantastic, but he must have thought I wanted to be platonic, because after two hours I had to seduce him and we wound up in his room (fire-place, red lights, etc.). Lovely romance we played around for a while and then he made love to me. AMAZING! I was totally under his control. He put me in a hundred positions and did such stupendous things! Its doubtful that anybody could surpass his proism. It was like being caught in a web, unable to free myself - wanting to get more tangled. What was wrong with Nicky? I don't understand. Noel said, "That, my dear, is what you call a fuck." I smiled and said, "With this historical shift capitalism denies its legitimation to rule any longer the life of men and women to shape nature and society in its own image. Breaking the oppressive rule of material production now shifts the focus from the material to the intellectual sectors of production, from alienated labor to creative work. Or rather, material production, increasingly subjected to technological organization, becomes susceptible to humanization. The weight of dead labor on living labor is reducible through removing progressively living labor from the mechanized and fragmented work process where it is still held by the requirements of capitalist production. The transfer of living labor to "supervisory" func-

tions would open the possibility of changing the direction and goals of material production itself. Human labor, instead of being a commodity producing commodities in accordance with the law of value, could produce for human needs in accordance with the law of freedom - the needs of a liberated human existence; an alternative appears which would involve the subversion of the material and intellectual culture. The consumer society raises the specter not only of an economic but also of a cultural revolution: a new civilization where culture is no longer a privileged branch in the social division of labor but instead a culture which shapes society in its entirety, in all its branches, including those of material production, and which radically changes prevalent values and aspirations.

This change is foreshadowed, in an ideological form, by the counter images and countervalues with which the New Left contradicts the image of the capitalist universe. The exhibition of noncompetitive behavior, the rejection of brutal "virility" the debunking of the capitalist productivity of work, the affirmation of the sensibility, sensuality of the body, the ecological protest, the contempt for the false heroism in outer space and colonial wars, the Woman's Liberation Movement (where it does not envisage the liberated woman as merely having a equal share in the repressive features of male prerogatives), the rejection of the anti-erotic, puritan cult of plastic beauty and cleanliness - all these tendencies contribute to the weakening of the Performance Principle. They articulate the deep malaise prevalent among the people at large.

September 1

Dear You,

The Pet Shop Boys have used their position within the entertainment hegemony

to examine the specific problem of Liza. Self-professed students of Baudrillard, they have created a cultural intervention in the form of a twelve inch entitled "Losing My Mind". Their action attempts to construct an archaeology, through the index, of several important points of interaction between gay culture and the music industry.

The first is the primacy of disco. Disco remains the indigenous folk music of gay men, and has proved to be the most resonant development in popular music in the last twenty years. It marked the passage in popular music from the temporal to the architectonic. It is designed to be consumed in public, but for the fascist spectacle of the concert, it substitutes the communal gathering, the dance hall. Over the individual performer it privileges the organizer, conductor or DJ, as they are called. It promotes a song type that refuses narrative closure, that is not supposed to end, working instead on rhythmic ebb and flow, or as it is often called, tension and release (as they say, "Can't Stop The Music").

The next phenomenon is what was know in the seventies as "going disco". As disco began to dominate the music industry, more and more "old-timers" began to attempt to revive flagging careers with the help of an oompah bassline and imported conga players. It is necessary only to mention the efforts of such music industry flaks as Roxy Music, Barbara Streisand, Rod Stewart, Ethel Merman and misogynist-former-genderbending-windbags the Rolling Stones. Fans of pathetic rock acts angrily received the news that this or that poseur had "gone disco" while gay men refused to be beguiled by such craven bids for their dollar and remained true to valid Divas. With the enormous number of entertainers who "went disco" at this time, it is hard to



believe that Liza had not already done so before now, but such is the case.

The next important characteristic of disco is its insatiable appetite for sonic and conceptual matter. The DJ is encouraged to combine elements of many different songs and identities into one mix. Among other things, this idea foreshadows the trend in the entertainment industry, particularly in movies, that is known as "packaging". Entertainments are devised on the basis of bringing together of a number of different celebrities. One memorable example of this is the duet "Enough is Enough" sung by Barbara Streisand and Donna Summer. The public is increasingly encouraged to envision celebrities as arbitrary elements that can be combined at will. This is in preparation for the future, where celebrities will exist only as information on computer software, along with all scripts, librettos and settings, allowing you to choose to see Debby Harry singing La Bohème in Dresden or Drew Barrymore and Danny Bonaduce opposite Walter Brennan in *To Have and Have Not*. Given this, "Losing My Mind" is a package of Liza + The Pet Shop Boys + Stephen Sondheim.

Finally, classic disco evolved the figure of the diva, or rather transposed that figure from that other well of homosexuality, grand opera. In both forms the diva's function is fundamentally the same, she is to suffer. This suffering must be expressed in sumptuous terms. Disco also borrowed a trope from gospel by allowing for the concept of redemption. What does it mean that gay men consistently choose to support and produce the image of the fantastic, artificially suffering woman? For a people who have no semiological place in the structure of society, this figure may provide one of the few recognizable images of gay male experi-

ence. Sylvester, the only male Diva, sings "When we're out there dancin' on the floor, you make me feel mighty real." This then is the idea of redemption through the possibility of becoming actual. Most of the time we are not real. But what seemed a cherished goal in the seventies, is a pointless pursuit in the eighties, where finally nothing was real.

Since we can only conceive of one character that Liza lives in relation to, it is abundantly clear who she is singing the lyrics of "Losing My Mind" to "The sun comes up, I think about you, The coffee cup, I think about you." This 'you' can only be one person in Liza's world. As such how can we not be moved when she says, "You told me you loved me, or were you just being kind, or am I loosing my mind?" In a certain way Judy Garland is the ultimate diva, and her daughter, the ultimate gay man rapt in his prostration at the clay feet of his goddess.

Shirley had been much too preoccupied and worried to pay much attention to that either. Tracy and Christopher were both playing on the floor with Simone again, and the brown-and-white mascot was barking happily, adding more confusion to the uproar. Shirley began to feel her nerves going very rapidly, something which Laurie Partridge was quick to notice. But nothing really helped. Shirley fidgeted, paced the room, kept casting glances at the door to the suite and at the round gold clock on the wall above the imitation fireplace. But time would not stop. Not even for a mother. It kept getting later and later. Very late.

And soon it was going on eight thirty. Eight-thirty! and still no Keith, no Ruben. Only worry and more worry. As if she didn't have enough already.

"Mom," Laurie Partridge said as softly as

she could.

Shirley Partridge whirled at the sound of her voice.

"What is it, Laurie?" She sounded shrill, almost hysterical.

"Don't you think we ought to start making tracks to the Civic Auditorium? If we don't get a move on, we won't even have time to cough before we go into our songs."

"Huh-what-?" Shirley shook her head. "I'm sorry, honey. What did you say Laurie?" She seemed completely bewildered.

"I said," Laurie declared very firmly, "that its time we left for the civic auditorium. Or we'll be late."

Shirley Partridge blinked and then passed a slender hand across her forehead. "Uh-yes-suppose you're right - get your coats on, kids. I didn't realize it was so late."

"Mom," Laurie said with great tenderness, "you've known exactly what time it is, the hour, the minute the second, since we parked the bus in the hotel garage. Come on, Mom. Stop knocking yourself out. The men will be okay. They're just delayed, that's all. Don't make a federal case out of it. You've got a show to do tonight." Laurie smiled, looking absolutely beautiful. And all-knowing. She rummaged in her purse and pulled out the battered pink note book she had used as her personal diary since she had been eleven. Tossing back her hair she began to read in her lilting voice:

November 10
Dear You,

Led Zeppelin live in 1969 was an event

Dear

W O R L D



unparalleled in musical history. They played longer and harder than any group ever had, totally changing the concept of rock concerts. They flailed around like dervishes, making so much sound that the air was heavy with metal. Two hours after the lights went out, as the band sauntered off stage, the audience was a delirious, parched mass, crawling through the rock and roll desert, thirsting for an encore. Twenty long minutes later, Mighty Zeppelin returned to satiate their famished followers.

The long ride from Santa Barbara was one of those dream experiences that leave you glowing in the dark. From the moment that Jimmy slid his small velvet-clad ass across the seat of the limo, right next to mine, until the door was thrown open in front of The Experience, we cooed and giggled like doves in heat. It was a hundred mile drive, which gave him plenty of time to come out with "all the lines". He told me he had gotten my number the last time he was in town but was too nervous to use it until the last day, and he called and called but the line was constantly busy. Mmm-Hmm. He said he wanted to spend time with me **MORE THAN ANYTHING IN THE WORLD**. Tell me more. I kissed and slobbered all over the inside crease of his slim white arm until he rolled his head against the plush seat gasping, "Oh Laurie, yes, yes, yes." Yeah, yeah, yeah. He warned me that his previous L.A. girlfriend would probably be in the club and that I would have to give him a chance to "explain" to her about me. Uh-oh.

He looked hard at me with a tiny smile on his rosebud lips, making me sweat with suspense about the long night to come. He put something into my hand, and it turned out to be a silver ring with twenty little pieces of turquoise embedded in it, and I wondered if I was going steady with

the best guitar player in the world. He always messed with his black curls, poofing and fluffing them around his flawless face; and he wore emerald velvet and white chiffon, thin little socks and the most perfect brooch on his lapel. I couldn't wait to get back to the Hotel and take it all off. Our bodies were meant to be together and he said, "I hope you'll never get rid of me, please keep me around until you don't want me any more... I'm not like this, what's happening to me? All I can do is look at your face." I held him so close and told him, "I feel like I've been holding you forever," and he said, "You will be, we'll be together for a long, long time if you want it that way. I've known you for a thousand years, don't you feel that way?" Yes yes yes Mr. Page. We tried to sleep, but woke up every few minutes and kissed. Every time he touched me, he would moan and sigh and call to God. Such a face, so gentle and soft, I'm amazed at his sadistic tendencies; they're such a part of him that I doubt if he'll ever stop. It was really frightening, he changed into another person, but all he did was chew me and slap me a little. We talked about our ages and he said five years between couples is perfect. Everything he said drove me nuts. His beautiful grey eyes always there beside me, beneath me, above me. Every time I feel doubtful (which is constantly) I look at his ring and all I can see is his perfect face.

I saw Jimmy's whips curled up in his suitcase like they were taking a nap and pretended I didn't, looking quickly away as if I had seen someone's private peep show. He came up behind me and put his hands gently around my throat and said, "Don't worry, Miss P., I'll never use those on you. I'll never hurt you like that." Then he sucked on my neck and when I could feel the bruise being called up out of my bloodstream, he tossed me

down on the bed and told me he would throw the whips away to show how much I meant to him. After ripping into my antique lace dress and making raging, blinding love to me, he wrapped the whips round and round his forearm and slid the leather coils into the plastic flowered wastebasket, where they remained until he left for Somewhere, U.S.A., a week later.

November 5
Dear You,

I finally bought the Liza and the Pet Shop Boys single and it isn't a disco song at all! I was expecting something along the lines of "It's Raining Men" and instead the orchestration is all synthesizers, and Liza sings the entire song in a stentorian bellow instead of the rapturous disco divaing I had envisioned.

November 8
Dear You,

I listened to the song again, this time it kept changing into Bizarre Love Triangle by New Order. Now I get it. This single isn't about what would happen if Liza made a disco record, it's about what would happen if Liza was the lead singer in New Order. Now I totally understand her monotone delivery, so like the Sisters of Mercy. It makes perfect sense I imagine her thinking "Fuck all of these pouty Brits and their heroin trance music. I've had real pain, real depression, and I've taken more drugs than all of Joy Division put together. Ian Curtis, what a flyweight. I was passing out at Xenon while he was still getting blown dry hairdos and zits. He killed himself, but i stayed around to suffer." Liza the grown up crack baby with the heart of gold. The best part now is when she starts going "losing my mind, losing my mind" over and over again at the end like the librium



is finally starting to kick in.

November 12
Dear You,

What I learned from "Losing My Mind":

1. Disco in it's golden age pitted highly demanding singing, relentless beat and orchestral arrangements against each other in an attempt to decenter the self.

2. The eighties saw gay pop stars in Britain attempting to devise a new aural identity from the fragments of punk. They proposed a model that might best be described as rapturous self pity, and gave voice to a generation.

3. Rather than punk becoming the new disco, disco became the gay punk, as bands like New Order, Human League and Bronski Beat began to acknowledge their real roots.

4. "Losing My Mind" is not an eighties song mimicking the heyday of seventies disco, it is the song that ends the eighties, by placing Liza Minelli, who's entire life has been spent as a type of meta-homosexual, in front of New Order to sing a

song written by the last living composer of Broadway musicals, Stephen Sondheim. In this package, disco, punk, show tunes, psychedelia, emotion, Judy Garland, comebacks, remixes and interpretation all consume each other in a writhing portrait of contemporary gay consciousness.

5. To make a disco diva song in the late eighties is to retell the Judy Garland story: loss, redemption, transcendence. But but for younger gay men this story can only have resonance as a museum piece.

6. This story is Liza's story, Liza's and ours, because the horror isn't in self immolation on the flaming pyre of art, it's in the fact that we got the guy, had the revolution, did the drug, and nothing changed. Liza's horror is the horror of continuation, of being awakened every few years, put together with a band and going on with the show.

December 26
Dear You,

You're in Europe. You shouldn't have gone. I told you you shouldn't have gone.

If you were going to go any way, you shouldn't have asked me.

Does the reader now understand why the ruling classes decidedly want to bring us to where the guns shoot and the sabers slash? Why they accuse us of cowardice, because we do not betake ourselves without more ado into the street, where we are certain of defeat in advance? Why they so earnestly implore us to play for once the part of cannon fodder?

Is the pride of the Partridge's doomed to be "Buzzard Bait?"

Flying to a concert in Lincoln, Nebraska, Keith Partridge and the Partridge's business manager, Ruben Kinkaid, crash in the desert. There they run afoul of two desperate characters named Big Dog Dawson and Puppy Potter, and here of a fabulous gold mine called Walking Fingers Bonanza. Keith and Ruben are really in for it this time, trying to keep one step ahead of the trap Big Dog and Puppy have set for them. And all the while, there's even more trouble afoot in the haunting figure of an Indian named Lonesome Bear, lurking unnoticed in the background, ghostly and dangerous... ☹



WANTED:

Well known Black performance artist 24, 6'6" built, is looking for a monogamous relationship with a man 18-26. Prefer neurotic Jewish types with good bodies, also attracted to Italians, Frenchmen, Scandinavians, Hispanic and extremely handsome dark skinned (Denzel Washington type) black men. Will reply to all written inquiries as well as phone calls.

KAYLE HILLIARD: 7850 Sunset Blvd Suite 110 LA., CA., 90046 (213) 851-7743.

Dear

WORLD



BARBARELLA

David Trinidad

*

Light-years
away from
Earth, my
penis-shaped
spaceship
penetrates
a virginal
black hole.
Inside it's
wild, like
the psyche-
delic art of
my ancestors.
Then turbulence
—CONK!—
knocks me out.
I come to in
a strange room.

A handsome
alien stands
over me. I
notice I'm
naked. He
holds up the
remains of
my silver
spacesuit
and explains
that my rocket
was totaled
in the crash.
He then proceeds
to demonstrate
how his people
make love. We
levitate towards

a glass dome
and reach orgasm
in midair, be-
neath two huge
blue moons.
Afterwards,
we smoke.
"By the way,
where are we?"
"Why, Planet Sex."
"It figures," I
sigh. He grins
and, telepathically,
stimulates all my
erogenous zones.
Then we begin
to levitate
again.



ROBIN

Eileen Myles

*

RIGHTAWAY I'D LIKE TO SEPARATE this Robin from all Robins you or I have ever known. This Robin I am about to tell you about is not someone that any of us know. She is somebody I found and I would like to tell her secret.

I call her Robin because she is red and black and angular and resembles a bird in her speed & in her cruelty. I fell in love with her briefly, last year. I'm just not in love with her anymore but there's this residue.

She was sort of a famous junkie, which I thought was pretty exotic, never having been particularly involved with heroin, having had a taste here & there—I was at some art event a couple of years ago and a friend dragged me to the dinner afterwards & Robin entertained our end of the table with a story about how she had been busted for dealing dope, but instead of going to jail she informed on someone else. She knew that she would die in jail, she knew she couldn't take it. I was appalled & thrilled by her coldness. She spoke carefully, slowly, halting, choosing her words, how is it that junkies talk, very ornate, piercing & hollow, & obviously this girl was a prince. A dead one. She smelled of flowers, she smiled at me when she got up to leave.

I'm so glad you're here she said intensely like I was the only soul in the room, or a soul who had a soul like hers.

I knew Robin had a girlfriend. Historically, they were kind of merged. My friends who used to do heroin said Robin 'n Babe as if it were one word. Babe played in a band, played till all the band members were so strung out that they were no band. By then Robin 'n Babe were an item so they teamed up & Robin sold drugs and Babe did them & they held sort of an elite junkie salon for a few years. Robin knew everyone in New York. Everyone on that trendy glamour junkie circuit. She wanted to write, had been doing so for years. In notebooks, between experiences I guess. I think I had what Robin wanted & vice versa.

One day I was in her apartment and I found myself touching her leg. Her apartment was nice. Actually it was Babe's. It was hard to unravel where one stopped & the other began—It was Babe's bombed-out junkie rock star haven and Robin moved in when Babe kicked Lulu, the old girlfriend, out. Lulu died of AIDS. She wound up hooking on 3rd Avenue after they kicked her out of the band because she was so bad. The lives of drunks and druggies is such a treach-

erous moral landscape with avalanches and peaks & nasty pitfalls. Robin moved in and cleaned house, eventually at some peak of successful drug dealing had extensive carpentry work done, the apartment had modernesque divides, shelves for aeons of rock star clothes & shoes, millions of records and Robin's little dealing room lined with scales and books. There she sat with her extraordinary stark white-face, a weirdly shaped skull, kind of cubist and long, with ravens black hair. I adored her because she was a masque. This, combined with her sensibility, literary and scrupulous, made her so essentially Aquarian to me, an endless revolving door.

Just before I put my hand on her leg I had asked about her and Babe. I was making an honest woman of myself. We're roommates she said in her voice that was of the air, tentative yet treacherous. Actually, she leaned forward stretching her arms down to her pointed toes. "I don't really know. We don't really talk about it. Babe is not disposed to discuss anything so abstract as our relationship. She is not..." She sighed, thinking the better of continuing. "I don't know what she's doing." "Honesty," her face telegraphed. Robin had a deep morality of which she never spoke, but she communicated its breadth and its depth, by her protective pauses. You knew she was a good person because she held back at moments of deepest revelation. She did not spill, and I always felt that to push her a bit would be sloppy and expose my own lack of a system of conduct.

So I put my hand on this woman who smelled so good. Her fragrance was coming my way. When we smell a person's perfume we think that we're smelling their essence, their identity somehow. The body has to be there for the



perfume to stick to, but when they're gone it's the perfume that we know. I've forgotten its name.

I asked her once.

Some kind of sexy thirties jazz was on the stereo. I knew I was in her house now, not Babe's. The design was hers, but the ornaments were Babe's, Babe's paintings and the guitars and record collection. She had made a home for Babe, kind of a mother or a wife. I found that so hot to discover an ex-heroin dealer in the middle of the art world who was really a good woman, once I told her that—I couldn't believe how hokey it sounded & by her silence I knew she was horrified. I bet she wanted to break the silence of our affair just to tell Babe some of the stupid things I said.

Okay well if this is alright I put my hand on her leg, it seemed seductive enough. I'm really attracted to you I said. The feeling is mutual she replied. Soon we were half-dancing half making out in the middle of the room and it was really hot, I mean she had a hard desperate mouth, her hands were up my shirt and I was feeling her ass. All my instincts were on target in the particular way I felt like a bow and arrow knocked, then release.

Soon we were on the bed, ripping our pants off and this was when I began to feel in the middle of their relationship because you knew you were going wild in the precise same place where a couple woke each morning and looked at that painting, Babe's.

I think this is going to be a problem she said. She got up and sat on the chair, lit up a cigarette. A move I regard as "womanning" me—I've felt it before.

It's the gesture of a torn, or badly married man.

Well, are you going to tell Babe. Yes, I'm quite certain we are due to have a conversation about this, among other things. She bit each syllable as she spoke. Robin had to go to work, she was a cook, a neat transformation for a dealer, though actually she was a cook first, that's how she started dealing drugs. Cooking in all of Ricky Mountain's restaurants. Even sold him the drugs he od'd on legend says, though Robin says its not true. And she was the one who told me the legend. Someone else got him those. It was weird she said to have your boss coming in the kitchen to buy from you. They always came to me, she said of her connections. It was never something I decided to do. They knew I could help them, she said.

So she went to work, pretty wonderful, all vulnerable and pink. The pretty Robin. One of many. I guess I went home. I went running down in the park by the East River. I needed to stretch out my feelings that were really making me crazy & all furled and unfurled.

We had a date the next day at 4. I don't know how I tolerated my home, I think I was working or something, some piece of writing, but I stopped at three to let feeling build, and then it was 4:15, 4:30 I was out of my mind. Quarter of 5 she called. Where are you! Well I'm out doing a few errands. It took a little longer than I thought. Are you coming over? Well I had thought I would still do that, but it is pretty late. She was almost needling me off the phone. Yeah, c'mon I said. Up the stairs came this angry woman who I sometimes thought resembled Elizabeth Taylor or Keith Richards and sometimes when she was really nice, Donovan. Frozen and mean

in a white jacket coming up my steps. Hello, I said, holding the door. I was no longer in fun-affair with vulnerable married woman. In one day that was already over. She sat in her white jacket on the small orange couch. Do you want a drink? I had automatically stored exactly what she had served me from her refrigerator the day before. I was glad she said no because I would have been ashamed to reveal what a copy-cat I was. Raspberry Soho Cola. Your furniture is not very comfortable, she said.

I feel nervous I confided nervously teetering over the counter that faced the itchy couch. "Why do you feel nervous, would it make you feel better to tell me?" These quiet utterances thundered like the I Ching. What a jerk I am. I never wanted to go to hell, but I thought I could date the devil. "I feel funny." Do you want to go up on the roof I asked. No I don't. Why would I want to go up on the roof? This is awful. I have invited a wolf into my home. I went over & started knocking into, touching, kissing the wolf. It was the only thing I could think of doing. C'mere get up I huskily growled. Where are we going she whispered. Tamed. Over there. I pointed at the bed. My goal from the day before was to get our clothes completely off, that kind of sex. I was trying to get her shoes off, to be sort of sexy/servile but I was so awkward she pulled her weird green 70s rock star boot back to herself and started untying. Behold the skinny body I loved. I was revolted but addicted.

Momentarily, she acted as if she intended to really ravage me, but it was a phoney growl. She didn't know how. I must fuck Robin. That was my job. She had the largest...cunt, vagina I have ever stuck my finger in. It was big red and needy. I stuck two three fingers in and



fucked her & fucked her. I've always received complaints that I was rough but I felt like I could have been shoving a stick up this woman, a branch. Her ass was up in the air, it was April and the trees were still pretty bare and I looked through the black rusty cross hatched window gates of my East Village apartment and I felt detached and I fucked and fucked her with my hand, and twisting her nipples. She moaned and growled with pleasure. Such a woman, I have never met such a horny animal nor have I ever so distinctly serviced a woman before. Do you want my fist inside you. Anything she shrieked, anything.

So this is my late winter stolen landscape. Robin's hungry butt bobbing in front of my window next to my desk where I write. I felt my home, myself, violated by this animal. I couldn't stop. This must be what faggots do. The inside of her pussy was hot and warm, it did, it did feel like a live animal. I put my finger tip to her butt-hole but there didn't seem to be any magic there. I was getting bored. Wanna come up on me. I wanted to be underneath—her pussy on my mouth. Sure, anything. I had no way of framing her true repertoire with these kind of replies. I suspected she had done everything in the past, or on the other hand maybe she was a liar.

Here it comes, the salty hairy organ, the slippery wet thing with a hard pearly center, jammed in my face. I started licking and sucking like crazy. I am wild for the sensation of having my face covered and dominated, almost smothered by a cunt. She was happy. It all seemed one to her, then a great groan and buckets of wet acrid fluid flooded into my mouth, splashing down my cheeks and onto my pillow. Initially I surmised she had come in some new way, but it was pee and now I had drank it for the first time. I swal-

lowed some, but then no I don't really want to drink piss. I wiped the edges of my mouth and then kissed her. I think she said I'm sorry but grinned at me wiping my face. Do you have any music she said. Take a look—the tapes are on the refrigerator. I lay on the bed, fascinated by the acrid taste of piss, yet horrified at the inadequacies of my tape collection. Da, duh-duh, Da, duh-duh came the opening notes of "Kimberly" and Robin walked naked across the length of my apartment like she was the real Patti Smith.

I think we tried to cram more into her pussy for a while after that and she gave my lips a quick swipe with her mouth, but I really suspected that was not her cup of tea. Because she was not a lesbian, nothing like that.

Do you have a towel? Actually I didn't. Or I didn't have a clean towel and I didn't want to give her mine, out of a desire not to insult one of us. Finally I gave her a face cloth. I guess a towel's a towel. I didn't know what was going on. I've got to meet my girlfriend she explained. Today she had a girlfriend. A blow to the stomach, received in silence of course. I'm going out too I said. Well then come on, come with me to meet her. I did something in the kitchen sink, brushed my teeth, but I was feeling demolished.

Outside I unlocked my bike—"No, you know...I'm just going to ride off." She gave me a giant devil grin. Thanks she jeered. What am I going to do I thought as I rode off. There were millions of other ways to get laid but I chose this one. She called me a couple of days later. I explained how rotten I felt. I would never want to cause you pain she assured me. I felt mildly cauterized but Ouch. Actually what kept running through my

mind was that an alley cat had run in and pissed all over my apartment. I went to see her at work on Saturday. She wore a mustard colored shirt. She was beautiful. She resembled Donovan. She was sulking in the sunlight. She had to start cooking. Come back back later she said as she went in. I bumped into her that night at a party. I ignored her. She looked angry and flipped out. Babe was there. I feel like committing suicide a friend of mine confided to Babe. I feel like committing homicide Babe replied. I left town, stayed with Mary, David's sister, at the beach.

Robin started calling me a few weeks later. I didn't return the calls and then I did. I felt strong. I was over her. She called me from work. Come see me she begged. I'm going to a memorial service I told her. But I haven't eaten yet. Come here she said. She made me the most delicious burritos. Fabulous. I could taste them all through the service, a room full of old friends of a man I hardly knew. I knew his lover. I liked him a lot. I hugged Roberto and left. Outside the church I unlocked my bike thinking about Robin I got home and the phone rang. I must be crazy she said but I'm working a double shift but I can't stop thinking about you. Can I come over. She walked into my arms as she closed the door. It was the most delicious sex, her fingers jabbing inside of me so far up, I just felt I had grown so much larger inside just to accommodate her touch, just to take that woman inside of my stomach. I can't believe I'm going back to work now. I went to an opening and just smirked and felt so well fucked and aching.

It went like that, rattle-trap like a bad machine for many months. I told her I didn't want to see her anymore. I told her I just wanted to see her for coffee.



We fucked, and I regretted it. The sex seemed to get wilder and wilder and in the midst of it she'd say: I hope you've gotten over your desire to call this a relationship, I hope you've gotten over your desire to publicize this.

About a year later I'm watching leaves drop off the branches of some different trees and the leaves landing among the branches themselves. I can't really remember exactly what she said or anything quite like it. I only know in the midst of passion she would always betray me like pleasure was a hook she used to throw me. I was just a poor fish. She didn't want me, she didn't want anyone to know about us, least of all Babe. She would invite me over to sleep in her home when Babe spent weekends on Fire Island and she'd call Babe and ask if she was warm enough, and take her time and chuckle and have her relationship in front of me.

Once I woke up in the middle of the morning, maybe five, after dawn, it was blue and Robin was asleep and I lay there looking at Babe's painting. It got truer and truer to me, I thought it was pretty good. Two little fiery creatures, little crayons of color, one connected to something below the frame of the painting—really anchored and attached and the other, brighter, was floating in space. The anchored one, obviously Robin, was giving the other, Babe, a tongue lashing. Babe danced, immune, and yet it was a child's painting, a defiant work. A slap against her Mom. The reality of lying in their bed in the middle of their life looking at their relationship was more than I could bear. I had to move on—there might have been a little more

but not much.

They lived in Soho. The first time I met Robin for sex we went to Rizzolis. Then we looked at some art. Those Brice Mardens that look like designer sheets. We picked up sandwiches—mine was tuna, and we carried them home. I guess I don't regret not stopping at the sandwich. Once we did just have lunch and she told me a story about going all the way to Thailand to cop. And she snorted all the profits, her and Babe. Then someone passed the window of the restaurant that we both knew and she practically ducked. Later when I accused her of ducking she denied it. She carried drugs on the airplane up that massive pussy.

Once after we stopped fucking we had a small honeymoon. I went to visit her and it was in the late afternoon and it started to rain. It got darker, naturally, and she showed me in great detail, her room. She had an extensive post-card collection, mostly Italy and the Far East. My therapist said she was probably a classic narcissist as she couldn't love, not me anyhow but she collected people too. She was not an artist. This is one way I have of hurting her. She showed me an odd fan, that looked like a globe, she knew where you could get hundreds of these at one time, they were intended for bankers, some place where you couldn't rustle the papers too much. I guess it kept her room cool while she dealt. All the rest of these fans were destroyed and now there were only a few and she had one of them here in her room. The titles of the books in her shelves didn't impress me. You could tell she still had all her college books.

I'm always shocked at what people haven't lost. There were pictures on her bulletin board of her and Babe going to one of Babe's gigs. Babe had weird makeup on and a cape, Robin just looked cool. She was. If I've ever met a cool woman in my life Robin was her.

Later she led me out to a round table in her front room and she told me about her early religious training and she went to Hebrew school. She was showing me her favorite spiritual book in the world something by Martin Buber. She read it very slowly, the smallest bits at a time, sometimes just a sentence. She had her head bent over that book and she looked like the sweetest Jewish boy, head bent in prayer. I fell in love with her again. I like the smell and taste of women's bodies. Sometimes I'm sure that's what I'm living for. But as for Robin I would like to make her drink piss. I know a boy who did it in High School. Somebody offered him twenty bucks to drink it the story goes. Did he drink it? Yes. I was about fifteen when I heard that story. His name was Frosty, he was from Lexington, and was the lead singer from a band that played all the local dances doing covers of the Rolling Stones. His big song was "I'm alright." He would stoop down at the foot of the stage and his lip would curl up and it was heavenly. He was our Rolling Stone. I was amazed when I heard he drank piss. It was a new kind of spirituality I had begun to hear about. Humiliation. But this anger it has brought me makes me think I've done it wrong. She went to California for a week, rented a red car and discovered it was me she loved now. Not Babe. Too late. Now I sit in this incredible silence. I don't know why. ☉



Ask Yourself: Am I Pretty?

Dear

WORLD



"Forgotten Like A Fairy"



DEAR WORLD,

Richard Hawkins

*

ON MY DEATHBED, VIRTUALLY. (LIAR).

I'm always remembering the serial killers' names, but never those of the lottery winners.

A fisherman is a man whose language springs from his profession. All metaphors, turns-of-phrase, colloquialisms are, so to speak, plucked from the sea.

My language, though, was wrought by cesarean and rancorously wheeled into this world through clinically sterile hallways. It is a bloodless language where every adjective is medicinal, every adverb is crippled, every verb lies limp in its infirmity and every noun is pickled in forgotten vats of formaldehyde. My vocabulary has a skin that is mottled and pale and a body whose individual parts are drawn and withered and only work in harmony through entirely artificial means. The rhythm of my speech is punctuated by the jostles of rattling coughs and achieves some amount of guttural articulation through the constant consumption of various medicaments. Through the recitation of medicines, injuries, ruptures, diseases

and afflictions my language has become infectiously Latin in derivation.

When in doubt, knock: Knock knock. Who's there? Boo. Boo Hoo.

If there is a place in this hospital basement of a language for the horrible word that I'm thinking of right now but can hardly even force-feed into my vocabulary (Luv) (much less spell it) then it would be in the stinkiest, grimmest, dingiest corner of that wretched place.

I knew some luv once. (Liar). I was laying down in front of the tv one night and it shimmied up my leg and scribbled its name all over my unmade bed. I was just a lonely kid and, as lonely kids do, made friends with any hang-dog piece of shit that showed up. Luv was my friend and I was luv's friend but when my grades starting going downhill I had to wrap luv up with grocery bags and baling wire and toss it into an abandoned wishing-well. After fishing it out too many times I laid it to rest between two dormant volcanoes in a dried up swamp right to the left of the graves of

two dead pirates and a dead Indian.

But I think I'm probably clean now. (Liar). I can whiff my substitute teacher's breasts, babysit the cutest kid on the block or cram three fingers down almost anybody's throat and feel little more than a mild, physical surge or the hope of financial gain. (Liar).

Some years ago an abject demon was released from the torrential lair of Hell. He drove a police-looking sedan through the suburbs of Chicago and was, inside his car, a fleshy, merely police-looking man.

He had it in his mind that he was spreading luv around. He was indeed. His words were all hearts, flowers, good deeds and come back to my place I got some pot.

A clown with upturned lips is a good clown. A clown with downturned lips is a bad one. Mr Gacy was both clowns with Mr Gacy smooshed flat in between.

This guy tried to keep luv stashed in his basement. His house was him: common, vanilla, fit in, with luv fairly seething undercover. With him inside his house, primed with alcohol, amphetamines and pot, luv could come out to play. Luv bounced across the game room. Luv scampered across the floor. Luv bobbed up and down, was tied to a chair, strangled until it couldn't speak its name, slit open to reveal its essence and dumped in the basement where it belonged.

But we got to be quiet now. Somebody's sleeping now. But just you wait. Soon, very soon, luv's grave will choke and the stench of dead boys will reawaken some

Dear

W O R L D



luv like Miss Gacy's. Perhaps someone quite near to you.

For now Miss Girlie is walking down a long hall or corridor. The hall is bracketed by stuffed animals on either side but silence in all Miss Girl hears. The silence of his own echoing footsteps, footsteps of a bad horror movie, Miss Girl's favorite bad horror movie where this sexy hunk of a boy walks down the same hall or corridor looking for his friends. His friends aren't there but the evil creature that murders him is. Miss Girl likes to look at the bludgeoned, sexy hunk of a boy because Miss Girl knows that the boy was cast in this movie because he was sexy enough and just hunky enough to get killed real good.

Miss Girl is neither sexy or hunky. (Liar).

Sun columns down from clerestory

windows. Dust is stirred by the echoing of Miss Girl's footsteps. Miss Girl narrates all this: hall, footsteps, boy, sun, dust, my lies. Miss girl wants quiet now. No more of this dust and sun shit. "No more me on my own agitating the silence of my own stupid doom". Miss Girl wants salvation and distraction. The glass cage is at his side and within it is an indistinguishable, extinct species - something out of a silly Tarzan movie.

"If I were the Dream King," he says, "if I were the Mad King, if I were Satan's bride (which I am) I would throw up a mansion to house the machine that would animate this animal and snatch him out of the thick-skulled obstinacy that the dead are so known for. Each morning the junky mechanism would falter and sputter urging the animal on to some twitching form of artificial life. Gradually, its ancient muscles gather them-

selves, cluster to form newfound strength and expand under a hide whose luster is beginning to reappear. This is *my* beast, my boyfriend, my lazy, stupid spectacle and it talks back to me. The only friend I truly own.

"And for this he must be die. For this he must be killed. I carry him with me to my sordid, howling grave for he is as beautiful (Liar) and silent (Liar) as me. (Liar, Liar, Liar)."

Back on my deathbed again, virtually. I am so near to silence now, where I want to be, so very near that I can hear the shudder of distant earthquakes, the moans of sailors left to sea, and the flutter of other people's souls, escaping. (Liar).

Luv,

Richard Hawkins



At Least You Were Never A Prostitute



THE REALM OF SHADOWS

Great Moments from the History of Lesbian & Gay Cinema



Playwrite **Guy Marlowe** realizes the relationship's over with his smirking lover (**Denton Pauley**) when he arrives to find Pauley planning his marriage of convenience to ambitious socialite **Vera Ross** in Republic's tear-jerker **Sin of Silence**. Filmgoers easily empathised with Marlowe's pitiful descent into blindness and death, mirrored by Pauley's corrupt climb to the Governor's mansion. The chemistry between Marlowe and Pauley was so strong that Republic paired them later that year in a romantic comedy, *The Farmer's Overalls*. The team's success was cut short however, by Pauley's mysterious death in 1947.

Dear

W O R L D



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