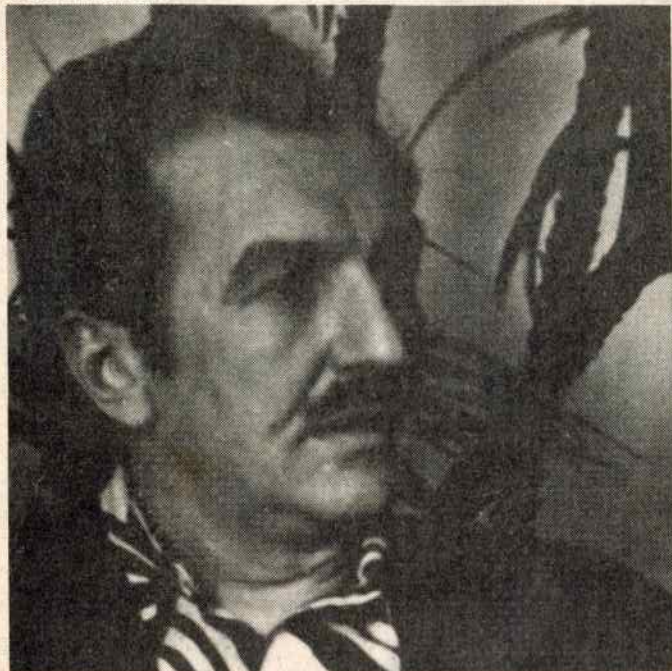


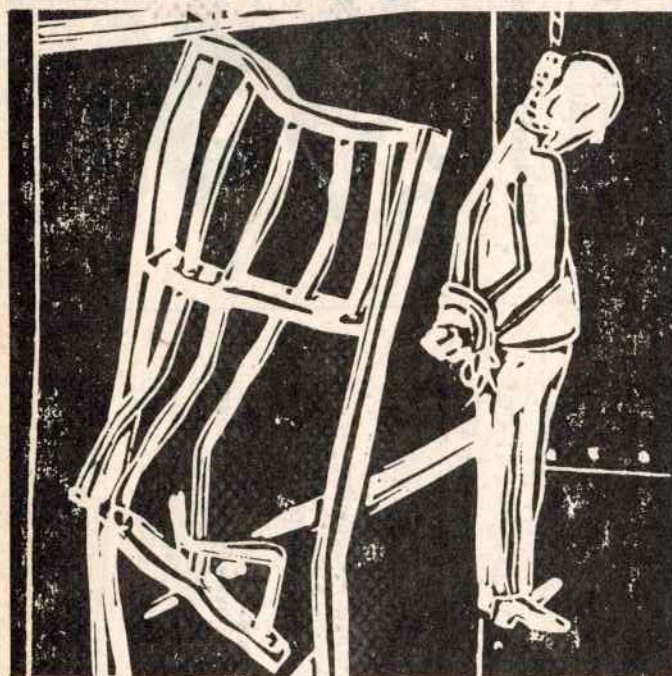
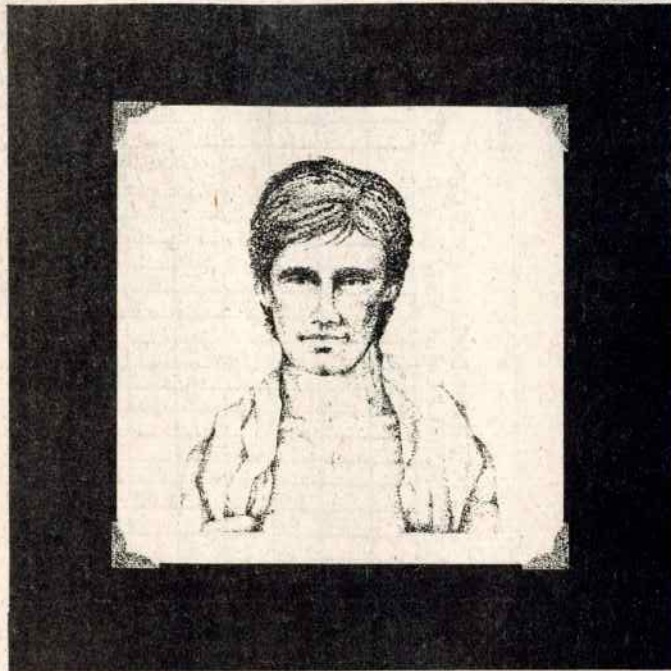
# GAY SUNSHINE

A Newspaper of Gay Liberation

John Wieners



Ned Rorem



Samuel Reese

e. I'd screw him before he'd go  
or his consumers. At night,  
the lights were out. Such a  
marine cut, the "shits" and  
Ten dollars hid in the bible,  
l. Joe walked through rain  
at a green wall and a torn shade  
er, broads, the open road.  
the Greyhound to Fayetteville  
aid \$44.25 for a one way ticket  
ride on his back, dreaming of  
of Appalachia, but he was still

William Barber

March-April 1973 No. 17

.35 Calif. / .50 Elsewhere

The following interview with poet John Wieners took place in Boston, February 8, 1973. Charles Shively who interviewed the poet is a coordinator of the Boston gay liberation paper, Fag Rag.

John Wieners was born in Boston in 1934, attended Black Mountain College under the tutorship of Charles Olson and Robert Duncan and co-founded the magazine, Measure. His Hotel Wentley Poems (1958) brought him acclaim, and selections from his poetry appeared in Donald Allen's 1960 anthology, New American Poetry. His other books of poetry include Ace of Pentacles (1964); Pressed Wafer; Asylum Poems (1969) and Nerves (1970). Wieners most recent book, Selected Poems, was published by Grossman, New York, 1972.

CS: First of all, why don't we explain why we're doing this interview in the nude, without clothing.

JW: Too tired to put on any clothes. [Laughing]

CS: A good answer; William Blake would have liked that.

JW: I thought it would enhance the spirit of trust and achievement.

CS: Yes, it certainly removes a few layers of disguises or armors of protection.

JW: Yes, barriers that you don't have to talk through any longer. You can actually speak to the total person.

CS: Maybe we might talk a little about mental hospitals. We've been to some of the mental patient liberation meetings.

JW: We could get a little more actively involved in this. I would say that the homosexual is repugnant, repelled by others, even in the insane asylums. They're looked on as somewhat apart, more extravagant in gestures and mannerisms. Most of the women are oversized, usually with masculine characteristics. And the men seem to be underdeveloped as to an ideal manhood. I suppose they are in those institutions just because we have created stereotyped roles of what people should look like; what they should wear; how they should converse. Because these individuals fill none of these roles, they're incarcerated.

You definitely notice this with women in the hospital; their appearance would probably imperil the ordinary citizen on the street. They are usually heavy and wear the close cropped hair style imposed on them by the institution. Although they have beauty salons for those who wish to go out of their way, that's only after two or three months of medication.

You have little will to bother with yourself in the hospital — other than to get to breakfast or a few hours of television or avoiding a fight with another patient and avoiding being noticed and therefore chastized by a nurse or orderly.

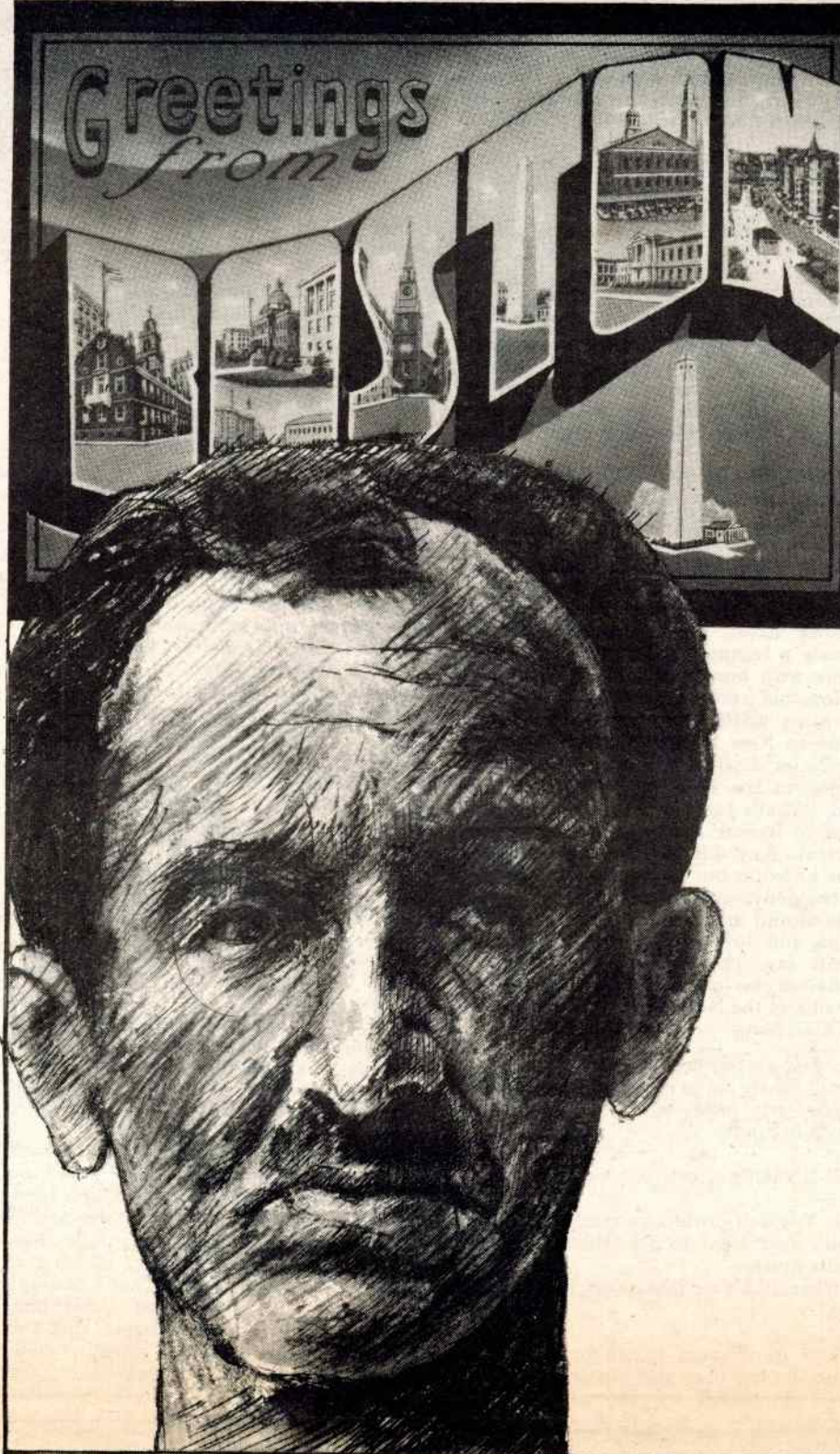
So the individual sense of particularity is sapped within 90 days. Resentment and outrage are chained down — I wouldn't say removed — just repressed through the medication or regimentation, the identical clothing. Your own goods are taken away of if they are returned, they're labelled with your name. If you're lucky, you get a locker or place, but they get mixed up with other patient's clothing; and if you don't want a fight, they're worn by someone on the ward. They just need something different from the standard apparel.

I've been in several state hospitals: Medfield State (January-July, 1960) in Mass.; Metropolitan State (March-August, 1961) in Mass.; Central Islip (June-Sept., 1969) on Long Island; and Taunton State (April Fool's Day-May 31, 1972) in Mass. I've only been in a private sanatorium for a couple of months, and I have no recollection of it.

CS: Because of electric shock?

JW: Yes, that's where I had electric shock. Coming East from San Francisco in 1959 I had stopped off in Washington D.C. and didn't have enough money to go all the way home. So I checked into a hotel there and called Frank O'Hara (I can remember that). I asked for money to get to New York City. He got me in touch with Barbara Guest. I barely recollect that, and receiving funding in advance, money coming from the anthology, New American Poetry by Donald Allen.

In New York City I went to visit Allen Ginsberg. He wasn't home, and I can remember waiting up in his hallway. It was very cold and I was improperly dressed. I had probably taken something in New York that reduced my memory even less because I had been on opium all the way across the country on the train ride. That leaves the mind in a reduced state of perception and observation. You



don't have the same self-protective faculties after you've used narcotics. The senses that the human organism has equipped itself with to take care of itself, to protect itself; diet; companionship. These all dissolve. I'd had two or three years of steady marijuana and peyote daily. In New York I didn't have these things. My senses had become utilized in a new way through the use of marijuana; that exertion probably tired the accepted, everyday cognitions of public appearance and communication. I was living in a visionary state so that eventually the conscious faculties were being used to a minimum.

It was all a hallucinatory trip. I remember being with some young Jewish fellow in New York trying to find Leroi Jones (now Imamu Emir Baraka). I was sort of making these excessive grasps toward his genitalia — really seeking out for somebody to love, somebody to have a relationship with, and he was willing to go along up to a point. We'd been travelling together for a few days on the streets of New York.

Finally we did get to Leroi's apartment. I don't remember too much. Some of it's coming back. They say I just sat in a chair, wouldn't talk to anybody, took some unworthy manuscripts of my own from the past and burned them. This rather shocked people, I think.

I guess I was hosted by Irving Rosen-thal at the time. He called up my mother and told her I was coming home on the bus and she should meet me. I don't know whether I had a beard then or not. I did have longer hair than was accepted

at that time — short hair was still in style except for artists and pacifists.

CS: Your book, Asylum Poems, and the recent poem, "Children of the Working Classes," written at Taunton, are some of my favorite ones. Do you think publishers are uncomfortable are publishing material like that?

JW: No, but I think they have come in vogue. Anne Sexton has popularized poems about mental breakdown, as has Sylvia Plath, and both came out and made public statements of their content at that time. Mostly using Robert Lowell as their example for their efforts. You could also include W.D. Snodgrass, I think, who wrote Heart's Needle — the breakdown of a man and wife. Poems about mental illness were always popular. There was, of course, Tennessee Williams' Streetcar Named Desire — all of his themes have to do with hallucinatory states of unreality.

CS: You were visiting the state psychologist yesterday, weren't you?

JW: Yes, and coming back on the bus from Plymouth was such a deadening influence. It just turned me to murder and rage. As it turned dark you could see on the highway all the way back to Boston about 2300 automobiles streaming in a steady line from Boston proper all the way down to Quincy — going into those marshlands that offer nothing to promote the human spirit. I was so glad to come back to the city proper.

People leave the heart of the state where more things could be offered to them to develop themselves as adults, as citizens, and they go into areas that offer them nothing but isolation and suspicion, and they run for it.

CS: You've usually lived in the city haven't you?

JW: Well, I lived in the same suburban environment where I grew up for twenty years. I was educated in towns. After I was twelve, I had to accept the misery of the South End daily and the slumland. I was exposed to that and found it thrilling.

CS: I've never found that much resonance from the countryside. Do you get any? Like when you lived in Hanover, Mass. you had trees and yards...

JW: I like to be somehow on a hill, on a slope and I don't mind it so much. I don't like flatlands, and the South Shore is nothing but a descent into the coast. If the population or architects were awakened.... Robert Duncan has something about the last fifty years of architecture being dominated by Freud. Just the irritation of having, after a full day's work, to drive on that inhuman expressway, with nothing but machines at breakneck speed, with total strangers — rather than coming into society where you would have so much really up and coming activity around you and possibly a more positive acquaintance with your own desire to be sociable.

CS: Maybe that landscape near Newark on the New Jersey Turnpike? It's just just smoke.

JW: That's what they're creating; that's almost a reflection, a reverse image. But I'm sure all of our capital cities suffer this mass flight, five days a week. No one goes to the theater any more; the concerts are in barren, deserted mausoleums, the cities turn into rot and decay.

CS: What about Black Mountain? Is that really a mountain? a hill?

JW: Yes, a hill slopes, stretched right up from the community to about 250 feet — sheer mountain, forested, with copper-heads and streams and a lake. It was rather flat before the hill coming in. Black Mountain, North Carolina — the town itself — was hilly, not straight as the expressways. There's no pleasure there like human contemplation, just a direct line to — I don't want to say oblivion, but to abeyance. Not to get mixed up in anything, not to get involved in our society, not to become a different person than you are.

CS: You often call yourself a Black Mountain poet. Do you feel you are that rather than a New York poet or a Boston poet or a San Francisco poet?

JW: I am a Boston poet. I was thinking this morning why I get so irritated with some political opportunists. My whole ideation was towards a Robert Lowell type, a sort of Yankee man of leisure, rather than to the radical... they just lack the literary aura. This Brahmin Robert Lowell thing, I think, goes back a couple of hundred years; he wrote about Mt. Vernon Street, just around the corner — that gives me reinforcement. I've heard people speak in disfavor of him, but he's a better writer in his contribution and substance of poetry; he is more intricate. But he treats homosexuals in his poetry in a demeaning and denigrating way — as if they were societal outcasts, irregularities.

CS: You talked about some of the establishment, academic poets who are all being driven into suicide with the collapse of their inspiration or something.

JW: Well, the loss of their audiences is one thing. Since you bring that up, I immediately think of Randall Jarrell. But on the revolutionary side, there would be d.a. levy too. There may be more than just a man of letters who threw in the rag in Randall Jarrell. John Berryman is another, who possibly wasn't equal to the content of what he felt he had to write, to be successful. He had embarked upon a course of, say, psychological disorientation, and yet he was not that kind of person, by vernacular. I don't think he was equal to the revolution of logic that's occurred and that's depicted in his verses.

The establishment loomed greater to me as a youth because there were minor practitioners all over their universe. They've gone under or their modes have become altered. People are probably just as intimidated by the highly accepted writers that we now count ourselves in the company of today. There's the books we buy for our library — those writing in a similar esprit.

Let's get back to that question about

# JOHN WIENERS

## AN INTERVIEW

the academic poets, either by suicide or no longer writing as much as they once did, having reached a nil point. Fortunately, I think the poets who are now involved still stimulate the young enough so that they are capable of writing. The academics haven't been able to, as fully. It was imitating another form that was sterile and artificial. It wasn't classic but it was stuffy, academic — bucking for power in their posts within a salaried environment.

CS: You can get that bucking for power and position in "underground" poetry.

JW: We don't offer them salaries, that's the great thing. If they get a commercial success or salary, they know they've closed their shop for 75% of their readers almost automatically; the young will then distrust them inordinately. America has been so burdened over with success that we're mistrustful of it.

CS: I've heard you talk before about your sources. What were your earliest people that you cared for when you were in college just starting?

JW: I cared for Edna St. Vincent Millay until the man I worked for in the catalogue department at Boston College Library told me Emily Dickinson was a far greater poet; that Edna was a bit too popular, too available, and I found that to be true. By the time I got to be 30 Emily Dickinson had transcended her. But she was my first poet. And then I liked all the women poets: Elinor Wylie, Sara Teasdale and H.D. as well, initially through anthologies.

CS: There are so many pompous men poets who put themselves up as heads of coteries, rulers, sort of politicians. It's interesting that you responded first to women poets.

JW: Yes, and to their observations of nature, to their love feeling and to an abbreviation of expression.

CS: It was interesting when Allen Ginsberg introduced you to Chogyam Trungpa, Rinpoche. He said, "I want to introduce John Wieners, he's a shy poet and that's a contradiction in terms, a 'shy poet'."

JW: I think Robert Creeley is a shy person still and has developed a set of verbal defenses as a means of escape...the needs of his imagination.

CS: When did you first meet Creeley?

JW: In 1955 I drove from Black Mountain College back to Washington D.C. with him and Charles Olson, Joe Dunn, Carolyn Dunn and Dana, my lover, who was driving. Robert had spent an evening there talking to Franz Kline. In Washington we dined and there were government officers there that Charles had spotted. From Washington we went on to New York where they (Robert and Charles) both left, rather rudely. And later I saw Robert in San Francisco, where he visited with his second wife Bobbie — around 1958. He'd met her in New Mexico when she was working for a radio station as a D.J.



John Wieners San Francisco 1958

CS: You have great affection for Creeley. When did that develop?

JW: Not more than for the late Charles Olson. But I always admired Robert in a sexual attraction, and in San Francisco in 1959 I would think of him in a pure, admiring way doing his work in Placitas, New Mexico. He idealized the development of the poem for me; and then later I became enamored with him briefly in Annisquam [in Massachusetts on Cape Anne] when he paid a visit to our house where I was living with a woman in the summer of 1966 and announced himself outside the front door as "Robert Greene." He moved to Buffalo in 1965 after Charles Olson left and drove me back from Canisius College one evening

from a lecture by Samuel Noah Kramer. And I envisioned myself as his wife getting into the car in the darkness. Ever since then I have become infatuated with him.

That night he read me an essay by Cyril Connolly in an English newspaper mentioning my name. Later he arranged for our reading together at the YMHA poetry center in New York City and at Bard College. He taught me in his course at the Harvard Summer School last June (1972). He refuses to write to me and conditionally sleeps without me. There is a poem of Creeley's that ends: no longer to love or be loved which was never the question. One man, only one, and not to be here. This place he finds himself alone.

CS: Perhaps you could talk about Frank O'Hara and your work together in the Poets Theater in 1956.

JW: Yes. [O'Hara] was on a grant and wrote some of his most poignant verses of absence those spring days along the Charles River, Cambridge. He was obviously a campy person; I felt at once at home with him — drawn to his sophistication, his knowledgeability of the New York art world. He offered me a job to come to New York to write reviews for *Art News*. I said I didn't have any experience; on the boat to Provincetown he said, "That's just the point." He had that kind of humor that was just a bit disrespectful. Any kind of freedom that we now know in our lives was taking ground in the conversation and mores of involved writers and artists meeting in bars, museums and lofts — out of bounds one might say. There's an image of professional success in Frank O'Hara that's sadly missing in the New York world of today's cocktail party.

CS: His irreverence is what excites me so much. There are so many pompous people, particularly males in "professional" positions in poetry.

JW: It's self-protective.

CS: Yes, self-protective machinery. They don't ever want to get caught with their pants down.

When did you first meet Robert Duncan?

JW: I don't want to ignore Duncan because he has been put out to sea and has been inundated by the gay liberation movement as if he'd never even existed. There's a lot of material coming out for popular perusal, far too immediate to stir the roots of the really deeply thinking so-called "deviates."

In 1944 Duncan wrote "The Homosexual in Society." It was in Dwight MacDonald's *Politics* and was followed up with a letter, "The Politics of the Unrejected." This is part of a letter I received from Duncan yesterday:

"With the way words have of drawing us into their depths, that term 'liberation' that is so much the jargon of the day (so that while the bosses of the U.S. — which to our sorrow includes us, and to our enduring wrath — move in on Asia burning and exterminating as they go, it is called 'liberating') does draw us deeper into searching out for ourselves true liberation. And the word *gay* will be searched out until it rings painfully true to us."

I first met Duncan in Boston on Charles Street in 1956 after I had become associated with the Poets' Theater. He was with Robin Blaser, a friend of his from early school days; they'd studied the Renaissance together with Ernst Kantorowicz. There's a poem about this, "Among my friends, love is a great sorrow" in *Heavenly City, Earthly City*, from Berkeley of that period, 1946.

So, Duncan was a leader of that undergraduate group. He was on his way to teaching at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, and I was returning from there; so we had that in common. When I met him I thought I had never met such a fabulous creature. He started recounting about Mary Butts. He had all the effeminacies of a bar habitue but it was truly more than that — a rush of language that sprang out of his mouth. His conversation was far from *sotto voce* as well; it was very effeminate and loaded with authority. We had stopped at Sharaf's to eat, and ostentatious is hardly the word.

CS: Was Sharaf's then a gay restaurant?

JW: Yes, it was a place mainly for regulars and underaged persons who couldn't go to bars; it located them in proximity to the Public Gardens, a heavy cruising place, "Queens' Row." They would promenade up and down Charles Street in front of Sharaf's; they wouldn't go much further down to Mt. Vernon, then over to Beacon Street, the Esplanade, over to the Cafeteria — for the under 21. You could also go down towards Boylston St. sort of cruising around. Possibly you could get a beer without anyone paying too much attention to it at Playland. Meet a friend, go to the bar where he'd buy you a bottle of

beer. And you could stand in a dark corner and drink it.

So we would get to know our own kind and we could go out for a ride with some older gentleman to the beach or something that was good enough. Mer waiting in parked cars on Beacon St. and getting out; sitting on the benches in the Gardens. They said those bricks were known around the world!

CS: Yeah, you have some of that in your preface to Steve Jonas's *Transmutations*.

JW: Yes, that was written when the area was still current.

CS: When did you come out?

JW: I think I was a homosexual a lot younger than I was able to remember — when I was able consciously to remember. It was possibly from the dawning of communicative powers, even before that. I mean communicating in more than a few words, but in actual sentences. I would think just before pre-schooling, possibly with the advent of kindergarten. As I said in the Electric Generation interview (Philadelphia *Drummer*, January, 1973). It wasn't when my brother made me touch his cock; then I was about eight. I can remember that as an intellectual thing as well, but this was almost a first new awakening through a known effeminate in our neighborhood, who I somehow received some sensual pleasure from and I realized that this sort of climactic feeling came from such a person. I can remember running up as a little boy to a little grove of trees on top of an abandoned lot and waiting for him to show up; he was a teenager then. I've seen him since on the trolley; he probably lives in the same neighborhood. My brother knew him; he may have dallied with him, I don't know. But I waited trembling, just looking all over because I knew there was something whispered about.

I didn't hang around with kids outside my house too much; they were too rough, too raucous, too noisy, too loud. He was known to them. I had decided to hunt him out in a place in the park where we played. It wasn't until I decided to actively be a homosexual that I had any idea social stigma revolved about him. Then I had to choose between that and organized religion and a possible salvation after death. Even to lose that — my salvation — I decided I would forgo it —



J.W. Buffalo, 1966 Photo: Ron Zimardi

for the sake of being frequently in the company of persons who qualified as professionally competent. Of course, I'm a Capricorn and that means a great deal to me!

Also I had been having numerous sexual experiences with "one of the boys" in the neighborhood down the street — a Harvard graduate who had been struck

with polio at his senior prom. He had a library, taught me to read *Forever Amber*, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*; he showed me my first copy of *Life* magazine. While I was looking at it one day, he said to me, "I think some day you'll break out of this," meaning the neighborhood, a mediocre society. He was then over 50 and had a plastic leg.

CS: What about your first love affair?

JW: With Dana? He was very good looking. Of course, I really had to throw myself down at his feet to make him my lover. He was having a marriage or relationship with somebody else. I just had to abandon all my adolescent feelings toward him to hold him and to bind him through protestations of love. But somehow he fell.

CS: It lasted several years?

JW: From 1952 to 1958. He's married now and has children. He was five years older than I, so he would have been 21 then. He was a strong 21. We went to Provincetown; we wore twin blouses. It was very much a masculine/feminine part-role. He wanted his lover to be his Mrs., sort of, to provide the home. But that was just taken for granted.

CS: Do you think you'll ever have another lover like that?

JW: Well, it lasted long enough so that even now in wished for love, in solitude, I feel that I was gratified through some sort of interrelationship with a god or hero and that I was given the privilege of a passion returned. And it doesn't make me quite so needy toward satisfaction now in my late thirties and beginning my middle years. I don't feel that I must have a new young lover to keep up my image in society or my own ego. I feel that it's something I've submerged myself to knowing that I was doing it for just that purpose so that I would have an affair at the very beginning.

It may be unlucky to speak of it in the present, but I feel in later life too that I will again be blessed with a deep understanding of a sincere relationship in maturity.

CS: Have you ever thought about a living relationship with a whole group of people?

JW: I'm not against that at all. But I'm rather temperamental. I'm very aware of other persons' tensions and feelings, and I always wish to respect that. I wouldn't like to get into circumstances where to protect myself I would have to hurt someone else. I don't know whether or not I'm constructed for community living. If the house were large enough and had at least two exits I think I would be able to do it, and if I had a room apart of my own. I would like to share meals with others. I would like to have a common living room where I could sit in the evening and talk with 3 or 4 lovers; an ideal situation; and also be exposed to the interests of others and to the struggles they make in the world. I look toward other people for what they bring to themselves.

[John had brought out the scrapbook with Dana's picture; we looked at some of the other memorials from the past — giggling over some triumphs and sorrows. Some pages had been smashed with a candlestick — in a fury at one disappointment, John had once tried to destroy the book.]

CS: You've got a lot of pictures of movie stars.

JW: Yes, I grew up with them in my bedroom with my whole wall covered with fan magazine covers; it was like the wallpaper. I had ten feet of page clippings from screen magazines. So it must have been more than my older sister's taste. My mother's too. She never missed a movie; once a week she'd go to the Mattapan theater to get a free dish. She had to call up someone to accompany her; she'd never go alone. Once a week, that was her relaxation, escape.

CS: You're also keen as well on female vocalists. When did you first hear Billie Holiday?

JW: On records in 1946. On a Commodore ten-inch disc with the songs, "I Cover the Waterfront," "Yesterdays," "Strange Fruit," "He's Funny That Way," "Georgia on My Mind," etched thereupon and at the same time a recording of Greta Keller likewise plaintively soulful. I know that was on Atlantic and they had a very painted mannequin figure for the cover, very bold red lips, very tightly coiffured hair on both these performers as possibly long white evening gloves with greens and blues for their costumes.

I think Billie's cover was just her own beige face painted on the jacket, taken

from a photograph with the moon rising behind same. But the reds were very bold on the cover. And at 12 years old I was drawn to that. At the same time I had heard a Judy Garland side called, "Love, Love Is Just a Moment's Madness." [John sings the whole song.] I empathized with that a great deal until I knew I would give over my own future to the act of love — and similarly to a decision not fully realized until years later, in a choice of poetry.

CS: Once you were reading you said that you could hear the words in some of your poems in song.

JW: I once wrote in a notebook that I can see the unknown words written in my brain; since a lot of mental confusion is cleared up, that's less common in my practice than it was then when I was less of a verbal person.

But we were talking about how music stays in the mind involuntarily. Automatic osmosis through one's perceptions to retain what you see and hear. I still like to hear music without having anything played on the phonograph. I want to tell you an anecdote: In Buffalo once, I used to keep the radio near the pillow; being awakened from a nap I reached up to turn off the radio which I thought had been playing for the past fifteen minutes and discovered that the radio hadn't been on at all! My framework was able to incur the actual transcriptions of broadcasting and communication without the devices necessary.

CS: How important are your dreams for your poems?

JW: They seize the waking day, but I've never been able to transpose them into my poems.

CS: Celia Gilbert, a Boston poet, said some poets must now spend their time sleeping, since it's so fashionable to use dreams in poetry.

JW: That's not wholly true in my case. I analyse first, waking and sleeping; sometimes, I analyze my relations to things, persons, to prior events.

[John was still thumbing through his scrapbook and came upon a photo of a friend, Jennifer, a professional "exotic" or "stripper."]

JW: That's Jennifer; we travelled from San Francisco to Boston together. It was with her that I first took heroin. She was arrested right around the corner here on Cambridge Street one night when I went up miraculously to visit Charles Olson. I had decided to leave their place casually. They had received a lot of illicit drugs from a drugstore break. A musician in Boston brought the narcotics over. I just got up off the couch and said I was going to visit Charles. Later on that night there was a knock on the door and a man with a lumber jacket was standing there — a young, good looking fellow. And Jennifer, not knowing who he was, but thinking she knew who he was because he was so familiar with the milieu in which she travelled. I had introduced her to Kerouac a few weeks before. He was of that social qualification or identification. They all had heavy trials and received suspended sentences on probation. The front pages of the *Record American* had headlines: "Stripper Nabbed in Drug Arrest."

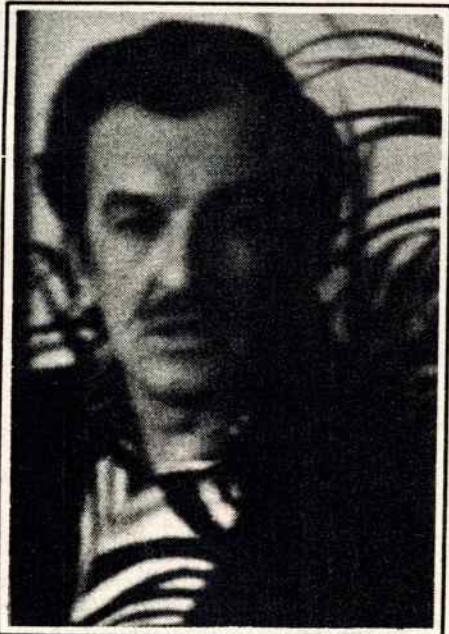
Ed Dorn called me this morning, and I told him I thought X...and Y...were cops to bag us and that shocked him. They have an altogether different physiognomic, physiological response when they become interested in something from when we become interested in something. There's also intellectual lacunae in them that I have wondered about for years. Why these gaps? I've come to the conclusion that it's a different state of the mind, that it's an analytic quality, analytic process of the intellect that is being used to evaluate, record the information there being transmitted. There's nothing wrong with having cops as part of your audience, but they do put other people behind bars and they enforce laws that reduce our liberation and our liberties.

CS: The worst police maybe aren't the people that are just immediately getting money from the police department or the FBI. There's a whole tribe of policemen.

JW: I said to Ed Dorn: they're not the kind of cops that actually go out and arrest people. (Maybe Z...is) And it's usually narcotics they're interested in, or gambling, or organized underworlds. But I think they're the kind of police that turn in records to whatever agencies collect such information; and they in turn learn to train young officers in the government agencies and send them into the field as decoys for us sitting ducks. They not only deal with ourselves but they know others, more important because of this information; and as we get older, they can take more advantage of us, bring

us more pain or more disease. So, I figure their job is to funnel more information in as to what's going on, what characterizes outlaws and us. And maybe get information on basic structural patterns for the future when possibly our course of work is even more radical.

I have this proselytizing aspect to my character that I would imagine too that someone might even give up the police work after awhile if they become a convert to our ideals, our kind of thinking, so I tell them the "truth."



J.W. Boston, 1973 Photo: Judith Walker

One point I know is factual — when Raffael de Gruttola started talking about anarchism the other night at the Stone Soup Gallery. His knowledge of it comes from authentic sources in the Italian community. When he began to talk, there was an altogether different response from those three persons (X,Y,Z) in that room. Z's eyes lit up; X's body became more tense. When Ralph started naming names and unknowingly talking about his uncle, saying there was still smuggling of political prisoners in the U.S., they couldn't have been more happy than they were given the plot. And then of course, afterwards — I know it's just putting them in a position where they could be introduced to insurgent elements of our society.

CS: And also, you can notice that they don't feel themselves but they watch other people feel and manipulate other people's feelings; they don't participate in the circle themselves.

JW: It's a manipulation. And even if they aren't cops, I would think this is a police procedure anyway, a form of police provocation. But even if they are not doing it, one wonders how inside information passes.

Of course, the revolution of the movement hasn't been quelled at all really by police harassment in the United States; excepting perhaps cases like John Sinclair or the obscenity trial of Ed Sanders [magazine] *Fuck You!* I don't actually think they were mass-media set ups; it's just that when you do get into a social situation, the government through its local constabulary seems to crack down on you almost immediately.

CS: I wonder if it's like people who have taken various forms of drugs and those who haven't?

JW: To give them this extra awareness?

CS: Yeah.

JW: Well, I think that at least the Narcotics Bureau through its employees takes as many drugs as the persons who are rounded up by them and imprisoned. That's always been bandied around.

CS: But it just doesn't open them up?

JW: Well, it does. They have a very good time for themselves. It was reported in the *New York Times* that there was a plot by narcotics agents to set up Allen Ginsberg as an innocent target for dealing.

After I talked with Ed Dorn I lay down and thought for three quarters of an hour how and why I would be an object of police persecution? Could they have set up these mental hospitalizations over the years? Could I have been duped into putting myself into a circumstance where my whole mind would be on the books for the psychologists and therefore part of government property?

The only reason I could think of was my homosexuality. I went to Washington in 1954 with my lover. Then, after Atlanta, we went to Provincetown and stayed at Captain Jack's Inn. There was a purge going on at the same time, well publicized in local and Boston newspapers. Even Archbishop Richard Cushing came out with a statement against homosexuality at this time. There was this

church person at the Inn where we stayed who liked Dana very much and who could have been a police person as well as continuing his other "activities."

Just putting my name into whatever offices there are either here in Boston or in Washington, saying "disreputable homosexual," would have been enough to keep files open over the years. Then when you begin publishing homosexual documents or even getting into print at all, they apply pressure. Especially if you are a Catholic in various ways by all kinds of drugs that can be detrimental to you, through the hands of your friends or by even giving you money so that you can do things to involve other people. If they can't actually manipulate arrests and imprisonments for fear of arousing suspicion against themselves at least they can provide the means so that your power among your associates will be questioned and they can retain the power. As in the case of Timothy Leary, where the government wanted to maintain power over the distribution of LSD against its coming from private sources among the counter culture. There are other instances.

Those offices are only staying in operation because there's something they've got to do. They can't waste government money, literally. They have to turn in results. And even if they can't act on what information they're getting, in a series of years they can train men to be at least equal to the efforts that we are trying to push: furthering the rights of poor people, or "unnatural" sexual acts.

CS: Have you ever been arrested?

JW: Yes, twice. Once I stayed two weeks in the Manhattan Tombs awaiting trial on credit cards. I called my mother for bail and she said, "Well, I don't know Jackie." I was really crestfallen. But she stayed on the telephone while I was crying, from the Tombs. She said, "Your father and I haven't been getting on so well lately." This was because they were moving to a new house in Hanover, something that he didn't go for too much at their age.

CS: What about your mother and father?

JW: I have very warm feelings toward my mother. I was duly blessed by her person, her embrace toward the world. She loved a good time, entertainment, people; she loved to socialize, converse. She was very aware of fronts, persons who were a bit intractable; she felt that. She had respect for the town in which she lived for its conventions and proprieties as long as you didn't upset them and draw attention towards yourself. She liked eccentricity up to a point; if it was employed by the person rather than employing the person or if it was out of control, she would become easily frightened. But if a person could harmonize his idiosyncracies and make something out of them — it was all quite a utilitarian stance towards the values of her community. If a person got a bad name, was scandalous, noticed, they were reprimanded — in her mind, and small talk.

I remember my uncle John who came home after World War II with a male companion, and my mother brought it to our attention; she didn't approve. She went into the living room and found the friend combing his hair in front of a mirror, and she had a few remarks on that — her witty Irish tongue.

Nonetheless, she would offer aid in her mind and I would imagine in a real sense of the word to somebody who manifested need. So I likewise feel that what I'm doing is to increase those feelings in others so that they no longer have to regard themselves as tramps, deviates, guttersnipes or aberrations.

My mother lived to be sixty years of age, was born in Maine, worked as a waitress and housecleaner and was a parts worker in a defense factory during the war. She was very good at mathematics. She had a duplicity of more than one role in her own characteristic feelings for both men and women. She also worked in the Walter Baker chocolate factory; that's where she met my father when she was 18.

My father was born in South Boston in 1903 and was a laborer with the highway (what they'd call the WPA during the Depression), was uneducated and spent the last 30 years of his life as a maintenance man in down town Boston.

CS: You dedicated your *Asylum* poems to him.

JW: Yes, because when I was born he was committed to the Taunton State Hospital for assaulting another patient with a chair at the Boston Psychopathic Hospital. He was being treated for alcoholism.

CS: He had quite a temper?

JW: Mostly induced by drink. But he had a charitable nature and was always reliable for an emergency. He'd come through for you if you needed him. He

was rather content to stay set where he was; he had an insecure youth and was the youngest of six children. He was the baby of the family — that's what they used to say of him. All of his brothers and sisters also had large expansive natures. He was never one to inhibit any kind of dissatisfaction, but he was a bit shy, carping towards his family. Later, I think he felt compelled to be our father. As he spoke of it in his last year, he would have liked to have bought a trailer after his wife died and become an itinerant wandering around the whole country.

## JW POEMS

### ACT 2

I took love home with me,  
we fixed in the night to  
sink into a stinging flash.

¼ grain of love  
we had,  
2 men on a cot, silk  
cover and green cloth  
over the lamp,  
the music was just right.  
I blew him like a symphony.  
It floated and  
he took me  
down the street to  
leave me here.  
3 A.M. No sign

only a moving van  
up Van Ness Avenue.

Foster's was never like this.

I'll walk home, up the  
same hills we  
came down.  
He'll never come back.  
there'll be no horse  
tomorrow nor pot  
tonight to smoke till dawn.

He's gone and taken  
my morphine with him  
*Oh Johnny.* Women in  
the night moan yr. name.

6.19.59

from *Selected Poems*.

## A POEM FOR THE OLD MAN

God love you  
Dana my lover  
lost in the horde on  
this Friday night,  
500 men are moving up  
& down from the bath  
room to the bar.  
Remove this desire  
from the man I love.  
Who has opened  
the savagery  
of the sea to me.

See to it  
his wants are filled  
on California Street.  
Bestow on him largesse  
that allows him  
peace in his loins.

Leave him not  
to the moths  
Make him out a lion  
so that all who see him  
hero worship his  
thick chest as I did  
moving my mouth  
over his back bringing  
our hearts to heights  
I never hike over  
anymore.

Let blond hair burn  
on the back of his  
neck, let no ache  
screw his face  
up in pain, his soul  
is so hooked  
Not heroin.  
Rather fix these  
hundred men as his  
lovers & lift him  
with the enormous bale  
of their desire.

6.20.58

from *The Hotel Wentley Poems*

# JOHN WIENERS POEMS

## TO SLEEP ALONE

|                  |                |
|------------------|----------------|
| To sleep alone   | to play alone  |
| to wake alone    | to work alone  |
| to walk alone    | to grow alone  |
| to wash alone    | to mourn alone |
| to write alone   | to climb alone |
| to see alone     | to fall alone  |
| to think alone   | to dress alone |
| to die alone     | to strip alone |
| to make alone    | to lose alone  |
| desire alone     | to find alone  |
| be buried alone  | hunger alone   |
| praise alone     | to hunt alone  |
| to give alone    | to sail alone  |
| to take alone    | to trip alone  |
| to place alone   | to pass alone  |
| 's to live alone | to go alone    |

(1973) previously unpublished

## ON A WHITE CLOTH

Three loves had I; two men and a woman, in my youth  
one loved me madly, desperately as a child. I cannot forget the fire  
of his kisses; but they  
soon cooled, the next, when I left teenage, kept me to herself, in  
taxicabs and smart apts.; oh yes in between  
the third a native from Trinidad, how my heart broke on heroin — there's  
been no one since

Not a look, a glance, a chance, a try or grimace  
to lead me on, perhaps an occasional offer, an older man  
nothing to match the invitation of my heart, what it yearns for  
in adulation from the poets, to lay them low, under that cross

that tribunal. Could one imagine, a book of poems  
to be one's master, imagine I say, or the world to be his lover?  
It has to be this way. There is no other, to have mastered,  
at least the art, one has always sought, of self-expression.

1972 (from *Athanor*)

## JIVE

Tomorrow some motel with a guy  
Who'd have thought my dreams would come to this?  
It's better than junk.  
At least in a clean bed.

Then movies with mother  
The cycle goes on.  
It's two o'clock in the morning  
Rain on street.

After all, this toughness only goes to state  
I'm out for anything  
And will settle for nothing less. A dollar bill  
Blow in the wind.

from *Selected Poems* (1972)

## HOW DARE YOU

These winter clothes  
choke the throat  
between the hands of friends  
on desolate, darkened streets.

Without money,  
what can one do  
but respond to their calls  
& preen fetishly

at the end of bar stools  
in scarlet rooms where Spicer hangs  
still on Wurlitzer nooses.  
Blizzards, sexy moons & an old hand between your legs.

Two on a match, after thoughts of fame & the future  
travelling in streets alone of San Francisco  
15 years ago, Columbus & Stockton, Fillmore nighttime mansions,  
what is this crust after one has refused to recognize calendars?

Meeting the same numbers over & over again  
at the beach, in the bar  
getting one's body together in the head  
for Bob, for Mike...for Dana, for Jack.

1973 (previously unpublished)

## CHILDREN OF THE WORKING CLASS

to Some

gaunt, ugly deformed

broken from the womb, and horribly shriven  
at the labor of their forefathers, if you check back

scout around grey before actual time  
their sordid brains don't work right,  
pinched men emaciated, piling up railroad ties and highway ditches  
blanched women, swollen and crudely numb  
up before the dark of dawn

scuttling by candlelight, one not to touch, that is, a signal panic  
thick peasants after the attitude

at that time of the century, bleak and centrifugal  
they carry about them, tough disciplines of copper Indian heads.

there are worse, whom you may never see, non-crucial around the  
spoke, these you do, seldom  
locked in Taunton State Hospital and other peon work farms  
drudge from morning until night, abandoned within destitute crevices  
odd clothes, intent

on performing some particular task long has been far removed  
there is no hope, they locked-in key's; housed of course  
and there fed, poorly

off sooted, plastic dishes, soiled grimy silver knives and forks,  
stamped Department of Mental Health spoons  
but the unshrinkable duties of any society

produces its ill-kempt, ignorant and sore idiosyncracies.

There has never been a man yet, whom no matter how wise  
can explain how a god, so beautiful he can create

the graces of formal gardens, the exquisite twilight sunsets  
in splendor of elegant toolsmiths, still can yield the horror  
of dwarfs, who cannot stand up straight with crushed  
skulls, diseases on their legs and feet unshaven faces  
and women, worn humped backs, deformed necks, hare lips, obese arms  
distended rumps, there is not a flame shoots out could ex-  
tinguish the torch of any liberty's state infection.

1907, my mother was born, I am witness  
to the exasperation of gallant human beings  
at god, priestly fathers and her Highness, Holy Mother the Church  
persons who felt they were never given a chance,  
had no luck and were flayed at suffering.

They produced children with phobias, manias and depression,  
They cared little for their own metier, and kept watch  
upon others, some chance to get ahead

Yes life was hard for them, much more hard than for any  
bloated millionaire, who still lives on their hard-earned monies.

I feel I shall have to be punished for writing this,

that the omniscient god is the rich one, cared little for looks, less  
for Art,  
still kept weekly films close for the free dishes and scandal hot.  
Some how  
though got cheated

in health and upon hearth. I am one of them. I am witness  
not to Whitman's vision, but instead the poorhouses, the  
mad city asylums and  
relief worklines.

Yes, I am witness not to God's goodness, but his better or less scorn.

The First of May  
May Day 1972

## THE POTATO KING

Why do they turn away from us  
on the streets when we love  
them. Billie Holiday was the story  
of my whole life & still is

on sunlit Sunday afternoon

opposite the elevated railroad

tracks

at Cambridge street & Charles  
when every hope burns to stinking incontinence,

the winter wind blows sand & sea off countless holiday  
extravaganzas, between body & soul.

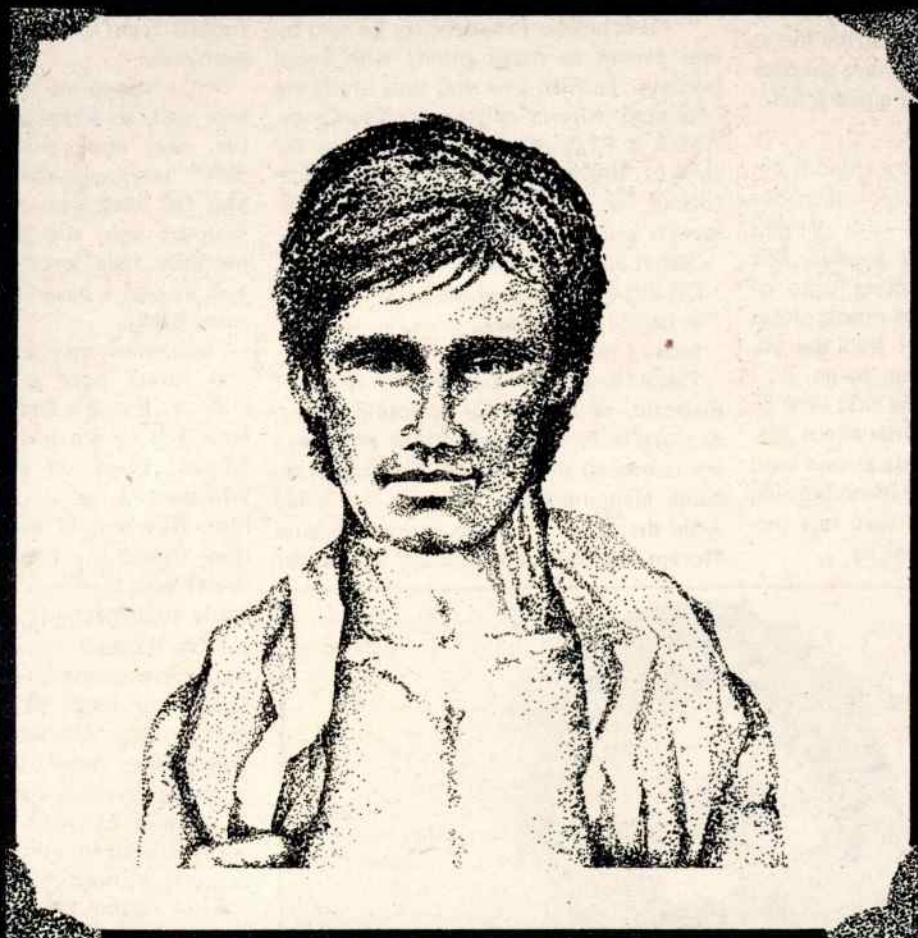
Sultry California boulevards proliferate upon a shredded  
mortality, as the abyss of former promenades wells

to fecundate interiorly  
again at Land's

End.

The pleasures of young escapades envelopes  
smoked glass store-fronts outside the empty Scotch & soda orders.  
Bar.

(1973 (previously unpublished)



## In Search Of Ned Rorem

**THE PARIS AND NEW YORK DIARIES OF NED ROREM.** Discus/Avon Books, New York, 1970 ed. \$2.45, paper.

My first encounter with the journals of Ned Rorem was in 1971, in San Francisco, where I had fled from my parents' home in Texas in search of work and love. I had been aware of the diaries since their initial hardback publication in 1966 and 1967 and had heard Rorem's orchestral tone poem *Eagles* performed by the Los Angeles Philharmonic several years previously. But my discovery of these diaries in San Francisco was especially significant. For the first time in my entire life I felt myself in touch with another gay male revealing his deepest agonies, desires and questionings; someone whose critical and creative sensibilities seemed closer to my own than any person I had ever met or read of. Just three months earlier I had returned from a summer in Paris, haunting the Cinematheque and working on a book. I had just entered my thirtieth year and was seriously concerned with my failure to achieve any of the goals I had set for myself. The two major focal points of both our lives are movies and music; we are both Francophiles; we both have been poverty stricken "exiles" for long periods; we are similarly preoccupied with the unfulfilling quality of our sexual experiences.

On the other hand, I could catalog a list of divergences. While I have always felt alienated from the harsh conditioning of American cultural experience, and have often seriously contemplated suicide, I have never (unlike Rorem) been noted for physical beauty. My constant bouts with anguish have fortunately never driven me to drink (as Rorem was driven); I have never had attention lavished on me, never experienced the phenomenon of "being loved too much," and, for that matter have yet to find anyone willing to accept me as a lover.

To a writer with a particular interest in cinema, and a considerable knowledge of music, these chronicles do not appear as ordinary diary entries. In its typically laconic mode, *The New Yorker's* review of Rorem's *New York Diary* correctly identifies the themes of the book: "it is

remarkable for its lapidary expression, its boldness in revealing thoughts and acts most people would not own up to, its cheerful snobbery and prejudice, and its wit. Mr. Rorem's concerns are with the satisfactions, dangers and ultimate griefs of lust and alcohol; the fear of artistic impotence; the fear of growing old..."

What *New Yorker's* review does not suggest at all is that this scintillating, indeed cinematic, kaleidoscopic portrait is not only a painful record of auto-criticism, but also a selective index to the gay elite of literary and music circles in Paris and New York.

The publication of Rorem's diaries in the mid 60's, regarded as an act of pretentious narcissism by many literary and music critics, can in fact be seen through present hindsight as a significant document leading to the advent of Gay Liberation. Though there are very few examples of liberationist politics (Rorem is the product of a profoundly conservative background, from which he never succeeded in freeing himself and which is the source of many personal conflicts) this artistic temperament expresses with more poignancy and searing accuracy what oppressive burdens were being borne by gays in America and abroad during the pre-liberation years than any work I know of. While most of us are busy erecting theories, trying to rediscover the social relevance of Marx and Marcuse, the writings of Ned Rorem offer us a very instructive, emotive, gut-level response of a man in search of a self-identity, in which each of us can catch a glimpse of ourselves.

Before passing any kind of judgement on these diaries, perhaps we should inquire into Rorem's presumed motives for exposing himself in public. First, there is hardly any question about this that is not answered by Rorem himself. As an artist he is naturally preoccupied with his own special unique intellectual and emotional reflections. These are initially directed to himself in a kind of prism through which he can finally order and give perspective to the cross-currents of his social and private images. Probably because he is so critical of himself, Rorem is particularly sensitive to criticism. He prefaces the *New York Diary* with a cryptic quote

from Gertrude Stein: "No artist needs criticism, he only needs appreciation. If he needs criticism, he is no artist." There are occasional indications that Rorem is considering publication. Like many modern writers he anticipates our dubiousness. Toward the end of the *New York Diary* he muses: "...if this book, these books, are ever published in hard print, how much will be even myself of the past? ...What if I were to say (to confess!) that this whole diary's been a hoax, a red herring, a fiction to make myself interesting? Would (could) it, for that, be a hoax? Are my lies lies, and therefore the truth? Could even I know the answer? Do I? You'll never know!"

No, we'll never know, perhaps. But certainly there has been some elaboration, polishing and editing to eliminate intimacies others might wish to remain private. Even when most revealing, Rorem is discreet. A close friend notes that he never discusses his family or his love affairs, for instance. These are admittedly difficult areas for him. It is only in the *New York Diary* that he begins to open up on the frustrating complexities of love in his life.

In describing the human personality that emerges from these pages, I think the most apt phrase to sum up Ned Rorem is one often applied to his music. He is essentially a "modern romantic," with emphasis on romantic. At the same time the diaries were written, Rorem was struggling to maintain a sensitive gift for lyricism in a sea of modernist experimentation. His scornful words on twelve-tone and serialist composition, are not so much meant to discredit innovative work as to affirm the spirit of the *chanson*, the directness of emotional expression which had largely disappeared from the arid texts of serious contemporary composers.

The pungent wit, the effusive rhetoric, especially in the frequent lapses into the French language, are centered in the *Paris Diary* on the glittering, intoxicating, charmed existence that Rorem enjoyed from 1951 to 1955. Under the patronage of the famed Marie Laure, la Vicomtesse de Noailles, Rorem became acquainted with *tout Paris*, the intellectual and cultural elite of Paris society, along with a shifting band of American writers and artists. Rorem's primary dedication is,

however, to the creation of music. His forays into society, drinking, and cruising are made to seem rich diversions from the central preoccupations: producing music, a romantic sense of impending doom, death and oblivion. At times, these negative responses overwhelm the positive, creative and lucidly intelligent facets; but one also constantly feels that the author is determined to seek out the truth about himself and live according to it.

Whereas the *Paris Diary* provides a fascinating expose of most of the important French poets, composers and artists of the mid twentieth century — and Rorem is an assiduous name dropper at times — the *New York Diary* gets down to the nitty-gritty problems of neurotic conflict that beset many gay males approaching middle age. In his youth, which Rorem sees constantly vanishing, eroding before his eyes, he was blessed by an extraordinary physical beauty, notably rare in creative personalities. He recalls his mentor Virgil Thompson once saying: "Leave Ned alone! Ned doesn't have to work. Ned's a beauty." Since birth I have lived by this slogan, I'll always be a spoiled child, but will never lose track of to what extent." He constantly reminds us that he acts often like an irresponsible, alcoholic adolescent, but at the same time he wins our admiration and love by his unrelenting honesty.

Rorem returns again and again to the problem of aging, of physical beauty, and the constant search for love whenever not occupied with composing or teaching. At the same time, he seems to be finally turning away from external to inner experience and reevaluation. He realizes that he has yet much to learn about himself and about the value of his work. "...*Self-Portrait* implies a certain objective knowledge I no longer have: today I understand less about me than ever: I may know what I am, but not who. *Artist* once implied a man of superior or at least special, qualities set apart either by himself or by society; in that sense the word is now completely out of fashion. And *middle aged* suggests precisely that, and is a state which, though I may be facing it, I don't wish to focus on."

Reading about Ned Rorem's diaries is never as informative as dipping into the aphoristic musings, the beautifully etched memories of meetings, conversations, or extended moments of reflection on ideas and events that have lodged in his consciousness. I have selected some striking, representative pieces under several broad themes that reflect the most urgent concerns in the diaries, and underlying each, a distinctive homosexual sensibility.

### ON MUSIC

Rorem generally laments the fact that serious music has lost contact with a large public. At one point he suggests that movies are, in fact, the healthiest art of our time. But he never alludes to a retreat from his chosen muse:

"I know I can compose and I know *how*; but I don't know *why* I came to this instead of to sculpture or poetry, or perhaps even dance... After ten years of chattering every known musical speech, of imitating now one and then another school, of wanting to become famous by writing like the famous, I've decided not to write again the way I did age eleven when I knew no one; *my* music from *my* heart with *my* own influences.

"What is music? Why it's what musicians do! It's whatever a given listener feels it to be. It's any series of sounds and silences capable of moving at least one heart. It may move us, but won't change us. The experience of exposure to music may change us (though one may be exposed for years with immunity) but not the music itself; it can only awaken and make us more what we already are. Art has no ethical purpose and does not instruct..."

"What is *good* music? The music that is good for you, that disturbs involuntarily like an erection. Longevity is no prerequisite since "good" is not an artistic but a moral ingredient..."

Naturally, the author's commentaries on music are very personal and highly debatable, but then they are ultimately

always subjective observations of a unique character. Creating music is the principal passion in his life, yet there is a tension between work and living, a guilt syndrome over wasted time, that only occasionally merges in playful comparisons between music and love-making.

"Elliott Stein and I are writing a new libretto... It's about Oedipus' father the legend, Laius was banished from his native Thebes for kidnapping a boy. He fled to Athens, and thereby introduced pederasty to that country for the first time..."

"I want an aria on sexuality (description of touch) sufficient to 'erect' the audience, an aria on cruelty (description of blood) sufficient to make the audience cry."

"Write a poem on the ruses of cruising, fears in the street, long strolls seeking those who run away, 'looking for love where it can't be found and waiting for love where it will not come,' how to evade with the happy foreknowledge of being caught, how to reject gracefully and ungraciously, etc. And call it: The Art of the Fugue."

But Rorem also exhibits a marked taste for popular music. His love for the artistry of Piaf or Billie Holiday is sincere, and at the same time a reaction against sterile academicism:

"...It's not facetiously that I esteem jazz (or folk, or rock, or whatever it's called) more highly than I do most of my so-called serious colleagues. These new young performers at their best make tunes equal to Schubert — better, so far as I'm concerned — harmonies more satisfying than the most ingenious Frenchman, and perform with the nuance of our greatest vocalists against orchestrations that have at once more ingenuity and simplicity than anyone else's. Their real power for the young though, of course comes through their words, their poems."

In a moment of supreme happiness, the author captures perfectly the irony of his profession today:

"...Lenny Bernstein conducted gorgeously the world premiere of the Third Symphony with his Philharmonic in April. It was the best performance of anything I've ever had anywhere: from that score of two million flytracks Lenny brought forth sounds I'd not known I'd placed there. Jay Harrison later wrote that the piece was all about being young and loving it; actually it was composed as a five-movement lament for Claude. The juxtaposition of interpretations is less ironic than the fact that the first rehearsal (which for a performance of such importance is a composer's most precious moment) coincided precisely with my appointment for an interview with Unemployment Insurance."

#### ON FAMOUS PEOPLE

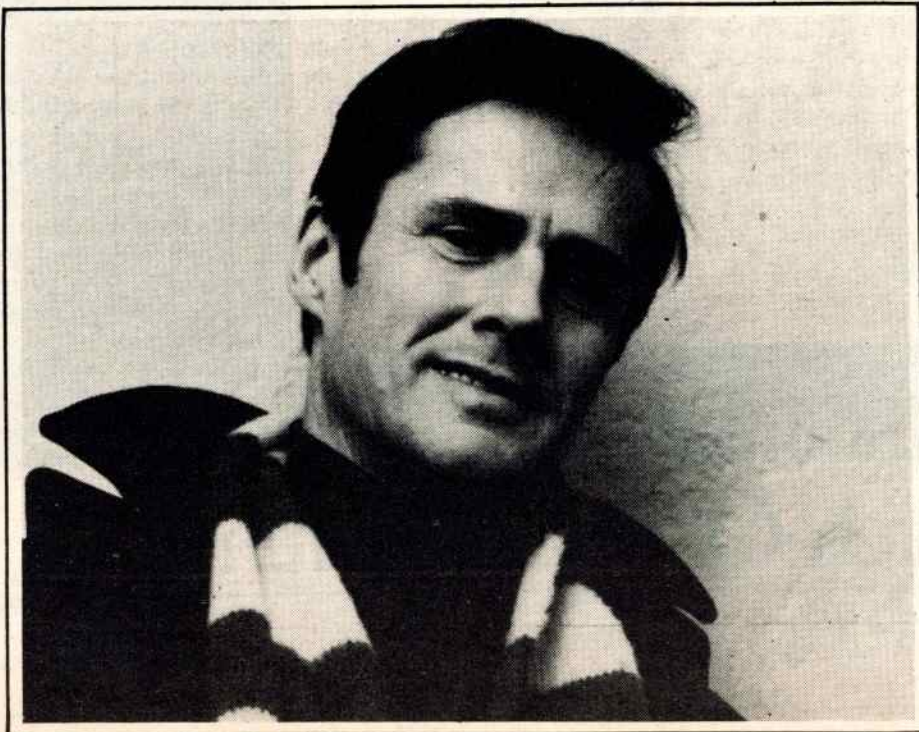
##### On Visiting Jean Cocteau:

"He opened the door himself, and immediately showed me into a tiny room at the right where he followed, locking the door after telling the maid not to bother us for two hours. This tiny room had a tiny bed with a scarlet spread piled high with books, prints, current art and literary magazines, none of the pages of which was cut, a desk and a drafting table (each also piled high with books), a telegraph set (out of order), and a blackboard reaching to the ceiling, on which was a chalk drawing by Jean of a boy's profile, a Siamese cat (female)... Cocteau himself wore a floor-length sky-blue dressing gown cut like a medieval priest's; the sleeves completely covered his hands, though his gestures were so violent that I caught frequent glimpses of the longest fingers I have ever seen. His voice had no relation to the one we've heard at the movies: it sounded rather higher; he talked incessantly. He didn't sit down once, but continually paced the room, occasionally petting the cat in passing. His favorite words are *con* and *emmerder*, and he scarcely makes a sentence without one or the other. Yet everything about the congested atmosphere was elegance itself: none of those crumbling corners one finds in even the grandest French homes."

"At no time did I feel the hot, lazy, demoralizing magic which proved so fatal for Maurice Sachs during his friendship with Cocteau twenty years ago. Nor did I find him beautiful. He did strike me as more 'sincere' than I would have guessed and *au fond* has the tone of a real artist."

##### Alice B. Toklas:

"...she is small and old as a unicorn flying through the sad old-fashioned smoke of other autumns; deaf, with Virgil's style and accent, quick as a whip. She seemed lonely in the endless suite of rooms filled with unframed masterpieces and electric heaters; and I had the impression she didn't want me to go. As I was leaving I noticed for the first time by the door three small and marvelous Picassos. Miss Toklas: 'Gertrude always used to say that if the house were burning down and she could only take one picture, it would be those three!'"



##### Paul Eluard:

"For Eluard is all ease and quiet beauty. He is deeply suntanned...has white hair, a black sweater, and an elegant voice. To him the Word is All — only the human voice has real meaning. Therefore, Poulenc's rendering of his poetry into song leaves him cold, as he does not recognize the music he had heard when writing the verses... But a musician must never speak too long with a poet since they are both making the same thing (all art is the singing of old songs with new words) in unrelated ways..."

"Eluard feels that all creators are women in men's bodies, that he himself has a woman's instincts: 'Je me sens femme penetre; that it is therefore natural that they seek to sleep with men or with the various substitutions of men found in real women. Artists like himself or like Picasso who prefer women, he considers abnormal... He thinks it better to be drunk than sober; maybe he's right. I have always felt it unimaginative to want the head clear in order 'to see things as they are'."

#### ON SEX AND LOVE

In spite of his exceptional physical beauty when he was younger (to which he attributes his shyness) and an increasing preoccupation with sex and love, mixed inevitably with long discussions of alcoholic stupors and a significant mescaline experiment, the author remains unhappy, unsatisfied in love..

"...In Europe I've been twice in love, three or four times almost in love, five or six additional times (additional people that is) not quite almost in love; one, or two (or three) hundred one-night stands (does one count such things anymore? if we were accurate we'd find ourselves far shy of the mark) which is inferior to the American score, if it matters; one or two hundred people in love with me, and this is the most important: it is greater to be loved than to love, it implies far more..."

Rorem rationalizes, as we all do at times, and manages to transmute fleeting experiences into poetic reveries:

"On the Boulevard des Batignolles last Sunday night was a bicyclist who (walk-

ing) turned three times to look at me, then vanished. For my part, this was a love I will never forget. Unhad love is sweeter."

"'I'll love you forever' may be said by one person to many others with equal honesty. Time in love and time in life are unrelated: forever exists more than once. Where is P? Alive. But no longer in the time of forever. Expose yourself to hurt to love, or why live? Do we then have to love? Is working living? No."

"What am I choosing!  
On this same road where hand  
in hand I fell in love,  
today I'm cruising."

There is always a profound sense of dialectic, of constantly opposing forces, at work in Rorem's reflections on love. I am reminded of Stendahl, Proust or Rimbaud. Happiness can never be reconciled with the state of being in love because Rorem maintains an idealized conception

of love just as he does of art.

A major section of the *New York Diary* contains a lengthy letter (never sent) to Claude, a Frenchman, who was the Great Love of the composer's life. They broke up shortly before he wrote this letter. Here, in great stretches of prose — frequently of a purple cast — Rorem achieves a romantic catharsis, pouring out the total spectrum of feelings encompassed in this event; it was recorded from March to May 1957.

"...You said you'd loved me in secret four years before we met, for my indifference, but wasn't the result more conquest than affection? It's harder to investigate the shadows of one's own soul than those of someone else's, but we've got to try or we'll never know each other (though must people know each other?) You criticized me too much for me not to suspect a lack also *chez toi*..."

"Once you wrote that I belonged to you. That meant ownership, not affection. To be jilted unexpectedly is rough. It's crazy what two people will do bad to each other, as though the world weren't going to anyway. Flay each other without anesthetic. I've never been left before... I'm sad by what will have been errors of judgement, in having selected someone unable to get over the shock of clay feet, the vague conception of what virility is supposed to be in anyone...."

"What's clear is that I love you and could die of it — maybe all the stronger in that I'm no longer anything to you."

"The spineless man (I say it rationally) is one who refuses the responsibility of a relationship, who accepts the dessert without the spinach (to coin a phrase); the most deranged dragqueen is more valid because more honest...."

"How can we keep from being invaded by a sort of hazy sorrow at the futility of any try at loving? Finally love becomes only a frail scabrous game; and if, proudly, you show your tactics too much, you're lost before you've started. I don't know why you suggest that out of bed I show no interest in you, but you're not the first to say this..."

"Love is mutual respect; I'd forgotten that you existed too. And love is always a

game. And an invention. And what we learned in the last affair trains us what to unlearn in the next; yet when the next's over we realize that what we now refrained from was just what should have been done."

"You helped me look into myself, so I love you, to know how to live this little life, and also, curiously because you didn't encourage me to love you. I love you for what you are not, with a constructive ego, the best way: one can't healthily love without faith in oneself; and though I haven't it anymore, it will come back..."

"Happiness may exist only in sharing and lovers have a marvelous solitude *a deux*. But it's also selfishness *a deux*. How boring are loving couples to their friends! bereft of elegance or dignity! Whenever a friend gets married we lose him. How stupid the happy lover! and how stupid the rejected one. Fickle as fairies who break each other's hearts more easily than peasants' twist geese necks..."

"You'll never be at ease in love for the simple reason that you seek an ideal. Now your ideal, being unique, by definition can't be found in another. All dies and passes: plans, youth, genius, love, combats, worries, works and simple hearts. ... A ship can sink at daybreak. What we've waited for all our life can come and go away without our recognition."

After Rorem has exorcised this bitter-sweet passion, like all else it passes away, into the museum of memory, and the artist takes up his task once again. There is much turmoil recorded in the *New York Diary*. Out of this comes a new love (anonymously recorded as PQ), a startlingly and beautifully recorded mescaline trip, along with reflections on drinking, aging, and suicide. Gradually, the author achieves, for the first time, a mature perspective on his life and work. Specific entries on the gay sub-culture are rare but strong:

"The most feminine of the masculine is still infinitely more masculine than the most masculine of the feminine. (Or: queens in drag are still butcher than bulldikes.) Ah! the humorless camp, the campless humor of it all! 'Oh, he's a real she-devil! She was such a man: much muscles, much hair! (much feathers!)"

And Rorem's remarks on steam-baths deserves to be anthologized for posterity:

"A Turkish bath, like the Quaker service, is a place of silent meeting. The silence is shared solely by men, men who come uniquely together not to speak but to act... There are as many varieties of bath as of motel, from the scorpion-ridden hammams of Marrakech, where like Rimbaud in a boxcar you'll be systematically violated by a regiment, to the carpeted saunas of Frisco, where like a corpse in a glossy morgue you'll be a slab of flab on marble with Musak. There is no variety, however, in the purpose served: anonymous carnality. As in a whorehouse, you check interpersonal responsibility at the door; but unlike the whorehouse, here a *ménage* might accidentally meet in mutual infidelity. The ethical value too is like prostitution's: the consolation that no one can prove you are not more fulfilled by a stranger (precisely because there's no responsibility to deflect your fantasies — fantasies which now are real) than by the mate you dearly love, and the realization that Good Sex is not in performing as the other person wants but as you want. You will reconfirm this as you retreat into time through every bath of history..."

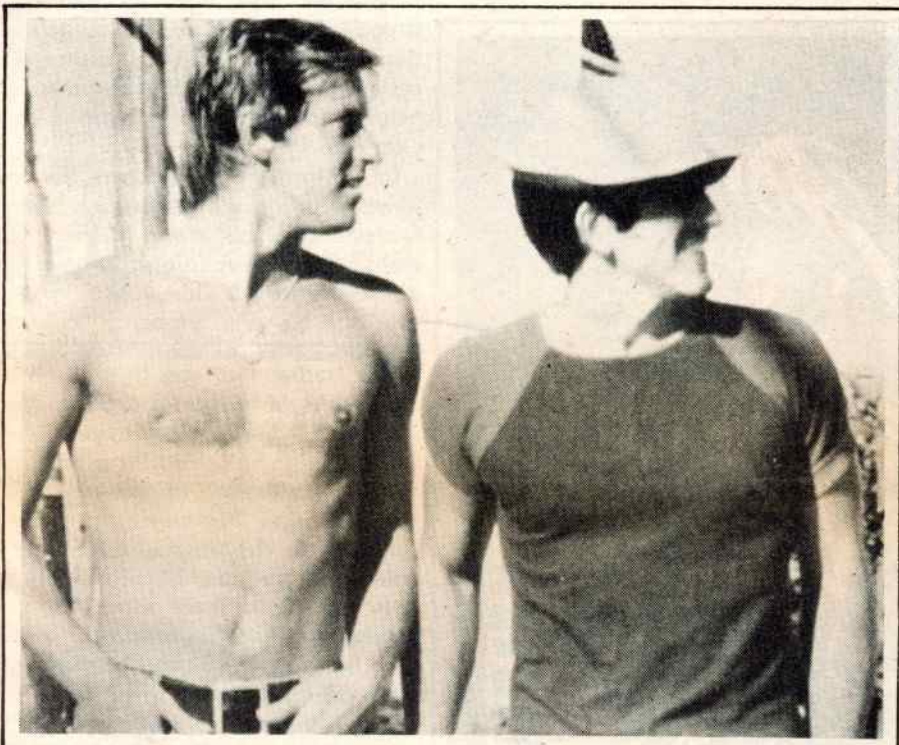
Since the publication of these diaries and subsequent collections of essays, Rorem has increasingly entered the limelight, and his music is becoming better known. This year, Rorem will attain the age of 50, a point he earlier indicated a dread in reaching. It would be interesting to hear from him, as to how he has weathered the storm. As he notes, "The beautiful have a more drastic challenge than the ugly in aging, for only they must habituate to a change." Hopefully, he has discovered another level of beauty and inner strength to meet the challenge.

—Lee Atwell

# The Fantasy World of Wakefield Poole

Ever since Wakefield Poole's *The Boys in the Sand* was hailed by reviewers and aficionados of the gay porno circuit, I remained skeptical, though admittedly curious. Having seen a few of these features in private screenings, I concluded they must be marginally instructive for some and provide vicarious fantasy for those unable to compete in the sexual marketplaces. I am not opposed to sex in movies *per se*, but the aesthetic of these films and the consciousness they represent is very low: generally at the groin level. Even if I had been inclined to investigate, the steep admission would be entirely prohibitive for my strained finances.

On the other hand, I recently began to feel guilty about having taken a stand, somewhat theoretical, against this genre on the basis of such a limited first-hand exposure. Then, an opportunity presented itself. Poole's latest and most acclaimed film, *Bijou*, was joined by his earlier film, *The Boys in the Sand*, for a run at Los Angeles' Paris Theater, and I caught a weekday performance.



*The Boys in the Sand* remains in many ways typical of the gay porno feature. There is no attempt to develop character or narrative even though a central actor is used as a reference point for the succession of erotic fantasies that are the movie's *pièce de résistance*. Technical execution is still largely on the level of second rate home movies: poor lighting and over-exposure (no pun) in exterior scenes, a casual, unreflected editing scheme, and rather carelessly done camera effects. These, however, can be seen as minor irritations; after all, Poole's film didn't have to achieve much here to prove superior to its predecessors.

The primary focus in *Boys in the Sand* is Cal Culver, or more accurately, an appraisal of Culver's nude body, with special concentration on his form and sexual prowess. Obviously intending to produce a commercial hit, Poole serves up all the expected ingredients that induce the fans to part with \$5. Superstar Cal Culver is, of course, a trim, golden, blond Apollo, and a pleasure to behold. He is made to appear perpetually horny, and when not, is persuaded to masturbate to get erect, even in the absence of sex partners to arouse him. His idealized, classic, awe inspiring physique, without the slightest trace of fagotry or gayness, guaranteed the film's success, whatever its flaws.

Set in and around Fire Island, where Culver haunts the beaches and piers, he first appears as a vision, a prototypic "bull from the sea," to another bearded masculine young man sunning on the beach. Later, in his rather plush, middle-class house, Culver masturbates while scanning ads in *Gay* and proceeds to

answer one by mail. Days of waiting, sunning, swimming; then a box containing a large tablet arrives. When cast into the pool, it materializes into a dark, swarthy youth with whom Culver enjoys a protracted sexual encounter. The final fantasy is more complex and visually interesting. Culver spies a telephone repairman near the house, and his intense cruising inspires a series of imaginary sex acts with the lithe, black repairman whose tool belt is significantly left suspended from his hips, when other clothes are removed.

The film's depiction of sexuality — for the most part conventional — I found especially interesting. Poole is very careful to match the partners and yet provide considerable variety in the experiences and types to which his hero is attracted. None of the partners is remotely as facially appealing as Donovan, yet their bodies, and especially their penises, are almost exactly matched. The point is clearly made in the first encounter in which one of the partners matches the two cocks, both precisely the same shape and size.

from *Boys in the Sand*.

In each case, there is a marked emphasis on equality in the sex acts, of reciprocity, an almost total absence of exclusive sexual role playing. The first encounter is solemn, ritualistic and romantic; the second is boisterous, energetic, and very joyous; the third, with the black repairman, is more intense, sinister, tinged with the flavor of S&M, and the fantasy element is made prominent by showing Culver fucking himself with a black dildo. (Something for everyone) Thus, through the exclusively sexual metaphor of the film, Poole interjects a very free and diverse kind of eroticism that provides visual and emotional diversity, even if of a very restricted variety.

The merits of *Boys in the Sand* do not, however, raise it to the level even of popular art. But it hardly prepares us for the totally unexpected poetry and beauty of *Bijou*, which as we all know by now, Al Goldstein of *Screw* has rated as "Best [Porno] Picture of the Year, Gay or Straight." Like *Boys*, Poole's latest film deals in gay erotic fantasy, but here it is situated in a relatively realistic context that makes, what I take to be, an implicitly radical statement about human sexuality. One of the interesting aspects of the porno circuits is that gay films are still rigidly segregated from straight; they are always labelled "All-Male Entertainment" (whereas Lesbian films are always shown in simply "Adult Entertainment" theatres) and are almost exclusively viewed by gay males with sufficient income to afford them. *Bijou* is a landmark film in breaking down this rigid classification, yet, ironically, it is playing (and breaking records) only in the gay theatres.

The first quarter hour of *Bijou* is so poorly photographed (and the print is so badly worn) that I almost surrendered hope. But my patience was amply rewarded. The central character (Bill Harrison) is a young construction worker, who, as we are quickly made aware, is heterosexually oriented.

Returning home from work one evening in Manhattan, he unexpectedly encounters a woman just struck down by an automobile near a crosswalk. In an unexplained, yet very revealing gesture, he snatches her purse from the street and retreats down the street, while the man who struck the woman attends to her. Repairing to his stark, uninviting bed-sitter, he casually disrobes and begins investigating the contents of the purse, among which is an invitation to "Bijou" that same evening.

Harrison finally unbuttons his jeans, displays his considerable equipment for our edification and masturbates in the shower to fantasy images of female breasts and sex organs. In search of adventure, he decides to investigate the enigmatic "Bijou" invitation.

*Bijou* is, of course, an old, common name for a film theatre (notably retained by a prominent gay theater in Chicago), and is the French word for "jewel." What our hero finds in the recesses of a Manhattan tenement, seems at first to be a strident vulgar movie house, with the chromatic face of a madam at the boxoffice. *Bijou*, however, turns out to be a variety of sensorium. The sensuous atmospheres and environments through which the hero progresses are baroque fantasies of the artist — Wakefield Poole's imagination.

At first the reflections of a mirror maze bring the young man into contact with the vision of his own nude body. Then he passes through a series of darkened rooms with enormous sculptural shapes and surfaces appealing to the tactile sense. A lengthy corridor bombards him with a shimmering galaxy of lights; similarly, he encounters a filmed program of multiple images, depicting men and women, then only men, in various stages of nudity and auto-erotic fantasy. In the next stage, he finds a reclining body with long hair and ambiguous sexual identity with which he promptly indulges in anal intercourse. The body awakens and is clearly identified as a young man, and the hero falls into a post-coital slumber.

The final sensual awakening of the nominally heterosexual man is accomplished through the device of a homosexual orgy, a well worn cliché of the porno reel. But Poole gives the entire event a balletic grace and sensual purity entirely missing in the hard core genre. Very slowly and with care and gentleness, a variety of men, young and older, massage and caress his body, individually and collectively. Although all the men in the sequence are well endowed physically, none of them are idealized types as in *Boys in the Sand*; the introduction of long hair suggests a more counter-cultural influence; and the central character is not physically exceptional, discounting his cock.

The entire event has a choreographed intensity with a mounting level of multiple relationships, leading to orgasm, including an S&M touch suggested on a symbolic level. What distinguishes this sequence, as well as the entire film, is a care and nuance to visual detail; the kaleidoscopic music track (there is only one perfunctory line of dialog) is more sensitively integrated with image, which has an ambitious design that is more controlled and expressive than in any erotic film I have seen. Poole is not apparently interested in telling stories but in creating an authentic sense of erotic poetry; and the marvel is that it casts a genuine spell.

If *Bijou* is as great a financial success as *Boys in the Sand*, perhaps Mr. Poole will be able to break further outside the commercial boundaries of the porno genre, out of the *Bijou*, out of the realm of pure fantasy, into the streets. He suggests with *Bijou* that any man who is not totally cut off from his feelings can have his repressed desires brought out by the proper

mental and physical stimulation; expanding rather than decreasing our sexual potential (like aversion therapy reversed). *Bijou* is ultimately a joyous, liberating, erotic poem and should be seen by as many straights as gays. Unfortunately, it will probably not be until it is as accessible to \$1 movie houses as to the higher priced ghetto variety.

## CONFERENCES

The Southwest Regional Lesbian Working Committee is coordinating a major lesbian Conference, April 13-15 1973. Hosted by the Women's Resource Center of the University of California at Los Angeles, Conference organizers expect to draw 400-500 women from across the country.

Robin Morgan, feminist poet and author of *Monster* will be speaking on "Lesbianism and Feminism: Synonyms or Contradictions." Numerous other lesbian feminist singers and artists will be present: Judy Grahn San Francisco poet; Linda Shear and the Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band; Sacramento's Gay Women's Theater Group; Sisterhood, a lesbian folk-blues band; Beth Elliott, San Francisco singer, author of *The Oakie Women's Liberation Front*; Bee Ottinger, Lesbian photography show; and many others will be bringing lesbian song, music and culture to the weekend.

For more information, write to Ms. Barb McLean, 508 N. Alta Vista Blvd., Los Angeles, Cal. 90036 (213)934-6593; 656-1049

The Rutgers University Homophile League will hold its third annual conference on Gay Liberation and Culture from April 26 through April 29, 1973.

As in the past, the 1973 conference will again bring together movement activists, scholars from many parts of the U.S. and Canada to exchange views and information, as well as to celebrate the many facets of gay life. The conference will include lectures, seminars, group discussions, exhibits and various social events.

For further information, write: Student Homophile League, R.P.O. 2901, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903. (201) 247-1766, x. 6886.

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If you are gay you have something beautiful to say. Submit an article, a poem, a letter, a drawing, a photograph. Add your energy to the community by letting the community in on your creativity. Deadline for the next issue (no. 18) is April 15. Address all mail to GAY SUNSHINE, P.O. Box 40397, San Francisco, Ca. 94140. Please double space all MSS. We need creative gays to work with us on the paper. Call 824-3184.

# REVIEWS

Len Richmond & Gary Noguera, eds. *The Gay Liberation Book: Writings and Photographs on Gay Liberation*. Ramparts Press, Berkeley, Cal. 1973. 208 pp. \$7.95 hardcover & \$3.95 paper.

Karla Jay & Allen Young, eds. *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation*. Douglas Books, N.Y. 1973. 403 pp. \$7.95 hardcover & \$3.95 paper.

Reviewed by Charles Shively.

When these anthologies were planned — almost two years ago — we all believed gay liberation would soon explode across the country into a mighty circle of beauty and love; our hour in the sun had come: no more dark bars, suicides, smelly tearooms, shrinks, cheap baths, meat-racks, movies, arrests, greyhound stations, guilt, trucks, fear, parks and other back-sides. We were coming out.

In Boston we had an ear-piercing pagoda, several gay commune-collectives, a prison-mental hospital group, *Fag Rag*, a twenty four hour gay phone, guerilla theater, a gay work collective, the good gay poets, consciousness raising groups, gay songs, frequent meetings, contingents in all the anti-war efforts and a lot of hard loving. The same was happening in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Austin, Chicago, Madison, New York, Washington, Baltimore, Ann Arbor, Detroit, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Lawrence, Seattle and elsewhere. *The Gay Liberation Book* and *Out of the Closets* come out of this experience (particularly in New York and San Francisco), record it and in a sense preserve it, because too much of the movement is now more history than reality.

*Out of the Closets: The Sociology of Homosexual Liberation* by Laud Humphreys 176 pp. \$5.95 hardback, \$2.75 paperback.

Reviewed by Allen Young

Inside the world of academia a sometimes quiet, sometimes noisy battle has been raging among social scientists (as well as pure scientists and engineers). Basically, it's a conflict between those (the majority) who accept the values of American society and those who challenge those values in alliance with oppressed peoples.

Laud Humphreys is one of the first academicians to direct his studies so that they are of assistance to the gay liberation movement. An earlier book written by him (*Tearoom Trade*) is a study of men who sneak away from their straight lives to seek anonymous sex in public restrooms; it strikingly documents a connection between sexual repression and right-wing political behavior.

Humphreys' book uses the tools of social science to describe the development of the gay movement and the nature of gay oppression. It provides, for example, significant data and analysis of how gay oppression is accompanied by economic oppression — how gay people are channeled into certain kinds of jobs (many of them low-paying) and how closetry is essential for any gay person who wants to function in certain professions.

There is something that disturbs me, however, about Humphreys' relationship to gay liberation — and perhaps it is the problem of the "trained observer" studying a "sociological phenomenon." As far as can be determined from reading his works, Humphreys is a straight sympathizer. He doesn't reveal anything of his own involvement in gay consciousness beyond a kind of humanitarian, Christian concern for the welfare of others. He doesn't even answer the obvious question: how much hassle and/or wierd vibes has he gotten within the sociological profession because of his interest in homosexuality.

So, along with gratitude for his work, I feel a certain mistrust for Humphreys, perhaps not unlike the mistrust that a radical

The publication of these two anthologies shows not only how far we have come but also how far we still have to go to be taken seriously. Both publishers are small, little known concerns, who have not put top priority on getting these books out quickly; nor will they probably take great pains in distribution. By contrast, Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin and Ed Sanders (all rather sexist, anti-gay) received a \$30,000 advance to write a "book" on last summer's conventions. Within weeks after it had been written, Warner Paperbacks had *Vote* (the name of the book) on almost every newsstand in the country (in Boston *Vote* was advertised on billboards). Fortunately, gay liberation has yet to be coopted so blatantly as the "counter-culture." Unfortunately, we still lack the means of getting our message to the people.

The Gay Liberation Fronts had at least two sides: (1) the counter culture, interested in closeness, authenticity, poetry, beauty and love; and (2) the socialist/communist, concerned with organization, power, contradictions, oppression and armed revolution. Although both anthologies have a broad selection from the many sides of gay men's liberation (four articles appear in both anthologies), *The*

*Gay Liberation Book* swings closer to the counter-culture and *Out of the Closets* more toward the socialists.

Len Richmond and Gary Noguera's *The Gay Liberation Book* makes easy reading; lots of open space, cartoons, plays and poetry. Their layout and presentation in some ways conveys the gay message as much as their text (relatively short with 208 pages). Their approach to Cuba is representative. They print "Out, Out, Damn Faggot, a very dramatic letter, in five acts of gross indignity." Here Patrick Wiggleknife ("A Lowly Faggot Who Fortunately Knows How to Type") exposes the contradictions of Red Bird McThane, "Great Red Bird of Right-on Revolutionary Rhetoric." By contrast, *Out of the Closets* devotes over forty pages to Cuba and reprints lots of documents, including the offensive parts of the Cuban "Declaration by the First National Congress on Education and Culture."

*The Gay Liberation Book* is a lot of fun, but it includes some dubious selections by "straight" authors. John Lennon in a "cute" sketch-poem equates gayness to playing with oneself. Alan Watts says, "Although some of my best friends are men, and homosexual men at that," [my] sexual preference is "with women." Paul Jacobs proves how liberal he is while carefully mentioning "my wife." An anonymous "brother" says, "Maybe homosexuality is good for some people. But I'm

pretty sure it's destructive, really damaging, for me." And he talks about how tiring he found *getting* his cock sucked. Even "Dear Abby" has a page. Why should space in a "gay liberation book" be devoted to these people? They can be published almost anywhere. We have few places to publish our work, to present our ideas and to reach each other or the world.

Karla Jay and Allen Young's *Out of the Closets* is by far the heaviest work, both in tone and size: over fifty authors in 403 pages with a bibliography and international listing of gay groups (a listing which is now out of date, due to the publisher's long delay in getting the book out). Karla Jay's forward gives a taste of their viewpoint: "We perceive our oppression as a class struggle and our oppressor as white, middle-class, male-dominated heterosexual society, which has relentlessly persecuted and murdered homosexuals and lesbians since the oppressor has had power."

A socialist/communist perspective clearly distinguishes whatever gay liberation was (and is) from other gay groups. After all, in taking the title "Liberation Front" we meant to ally ourselves with the NLF: "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh; Ho, Ho, Homosexual, the Ruling Class is Ineffectual!" In *Out of the Closets* Sandy Blixton lists our revolutionary teachers: "The Black Panthers have taught me, Al Fatah has taught me, and Mao and Che have taught me that only by joining the struggle against sexism and capitalism — the root causes of racism, fascism and imperialism — do I have a greater chance for helping to build a truly egalitarian society."

In following these teachers, we have, however, made one disastrous mistake in misreading Mao's essay "Combat Liberalism." Gay revolutionaries have taken it on themselves individually to attack almost every one for being "opportun-

grand tradition of spy novels. An ordinary American citizen is urgently drafted by an intelligence agency to do a job that he, and only he, can do. He subsequently performs brilliantly throughout 250 suspenseful pages. The twist here is that the hero is gay. His amorous adventures (all spies have amorous adventures) are with men, or to be more exact, boys. His foreign prowlings (in this case, Honolulu) take him to gay bars and beaches instead of to opium dens.

This adherence to spy novel tradition, with a twist, is what damns the book from a political point of view. It isn't quite possible these days for people to be stirred by a patriotic citizen who abandons his secure life to go out into the cold and stop The Enemy. Xenophobia toward Russians is no longer what it once was; preoccupation with missiles has paled from paranoia to serious political concern; spies can be thought fools instead of heroes.

I am not stirred when Dexter, the hero, (whose name means 'right') muses, "What would they think of me in Des Moines if they knew what I was up to!" or when he begins to froth in anticipation, "For the first time he recognized that he actually wanted to do this thing. Because it was exciting, it was dangerous, it was significant. Something he could hold in his hand and look on with personal pride — years from now....For once, he, Dexter Hill, all by himself, was going to do something sensational." Later Dexter confides to us that his true reason for becoming a spy was that he wanted for once to be more than just average.

Radical gay politics would have other complaints about Dexter: he is sexist in his treatment and conception of his tricks; he is a self-loather; he has never begun, apparently, to think about personal liberation or to wonder if all those politics-happy street faggots are really on to something. This book was written last year and the action is recent. I wonder why the cultural and political impact of the late sixties has passed Robert Bentley by. I can only assume that Bentley chose his hero's character as most likely to be plausible given the genre and plot of the book; but I wonder if that was at all a thoughtful choice.



Sisters in Arms

Linoleum Cut by Glenda Jones

ical Native American might feel for "sympathetic" white social scientists. I hope in any case that Humphreys' work inspires gay people interested in sociology and political science to openly help their brothers and sisters. In this time of job shortages, however, it can be unrealistic and unfair to chant "Out of the closets!" at working people, including teachers.

Another shortcoming of this book is Humphreys' expression of rather definite sympathies for the activist but reformist political tendency within gay liberation, exemplified by the New York Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) and by gay people who work within the Democratic Party. The author seems to misunderstand, misinterpret and even mislabel (with the strange term "gayrev") the revolutionary kind of gay consciousness that emerged out of the original Gay Liberation Front — a consciousness which now lacks organizational form but which has by no means died.

The author also ignores or underestimates the fact that whereas many lesbians link their notion of gay liberation to feminist and anti-authoritarian concepts, the male-oriented GAA wing of the gay movement has not done so. It is one thing for Humphreys to direct his research primarily toward male homosexuals; that is just a matter of practicality for a man.

But he understands little or nothing about lesbians, and it is my opinion that someone so concerned with gay liberation must learn better how it relates to lesbians and all women. Gay liberation, strengthened by the ideas of effeminism, is ultimately not a mere civil rights movement but rather it is a revolutionary movement in which men overcome "masculinity" and try to ally with women.

Whatever the political failures of the book, the gathering together of facts is valuable and impressive. It may help to convince some people, gay and straight, of the validity of our movement. Still, it seems strange to say that we need "facts" and "arguments" to justify a movement which is based so much on experience and feelings.

Humphreys, after all, does not and cannot write from the perspective of gay rage.

*Here There Be Dragons* by Robert Bentley. Ontario Press, Chicago, 1972. hardcover; \$7.95.

Reviewed by Beau Riley

Two things need to be said about *Here There Be Dragons*: it is a good book and it is a bad book. It is a spy novel in the

istic" and "liberal." But unless we have organization among ourselves we cannot combat liberalism. *Individuals* alone cannot combat liberalism.

Because we lack an organization, because we have rhetoric and theory without social substance, we cannot speak dogmatically of what is reformist, counter revolutionary, opportunistic or liberal. Juliet Mitchell has written that "Only when a revolutionary theory and strategy of women's oppression is developed...can we decide which issues are reforms and subordinate them to the struggle for freedom and socialism. In the absence of such a strategy, these 'reforms' may well turn out to be its first stepping stones" *Women's Estate* (1971). 73.

Even more than the women's movement, the gay movement lacks a solid social substratum (class structure) with its ancillary "strategy." I believe "sexism is the primary contradiction" — that it underlies all the other inequalities faggots, lesbians and other women face and that it is the root of capitalism, fascism, racism, imperialism and male supremacy. But believing this means nothing unless I can unite meaningfully with others. In the past, women have at least had organization (if only the Daughters of the American Revolution, Ladies' Auxiliaries, Women's Christian Temperance Union, etc.). Except for the last few years, gay people haven't been allowed to meet together at all — not even to support the ruling class. Our few meeting places have been furtive, secret and usually illegal; conversations have been either superficial or forbidden. (In tearooms sometimes not a single word is exchanged.) We still need to build gay living-being space.

Just who should or can join with whom has, however, never been altogether clear. Lesbians have often tried to work with faggots but have again and again been oppressed. In their book Richmond-Noguera largely bypass this issue by excluding

lesbian writings. Originally they advertised that the profits from *The Gay Liberation Book* would go toward publishing a similar gay women's book. Then they advertised part of the money would go to lesbian groups to use as they wanted. Now they simply say, "We will be returning one half of any royalties received from this book to the gay community." *Gay Sunshine* simply requested that its address be printed somewhere in the book in return for the reprinting of several articles from its pages, but this request was ignored.

Allen Young and Karla Jay as co-editors attempt to sew lesbians and faggots into one book. Yet they hardly balance the two; selections run about three to two toward faggot material. And the latter often seems self-sufficient with gay women appearing as appendages (six lesbian articles are collected into a single section, "Lesbians and the Women's Movement.") Moreover, the very words "gay" and "homosexual" have been coopted by men. This is something — a social reality and oppression — which no book can change.

Nor is it entirely clear among faggots whether transvestites and the effeminate can join with the more socially acceptable (masculine) faggots. *The Gay Liberation Book* sidesteps any discussion of transvestites but notes that "with their role playing of stereotyped femininity," transvestites "can be considered anti-woman." In *Out of the Closets* Allen Young interviews Marcia Johnson of Street Transvestites Action Revolutionaries (STAR), but the broader question of effeminacy and masculinity remains obscure and unresolved in the section "Sex and Roles."

The joining of faggots, lesbians and other women (perhaps even other men) together in an anti-sexist coalition is in all ways problematical. Richmond-Noguera evidently have some hope for an alliance of faggots and straight men such as those

in *Brother*. Personally, I feel this is a great betrayal unless straight men change a lot more. But the question of whether men of any kind can contribute or participate in the struggle for women's liberation is unclear; the question is closely related to whether straight men can be a part of gay liberation.

Certainly one of the problems for faggots relating to women's liberation is the pervasive anti-woman sentiment among us. Evidence of this can be found in both anthologies. *The Gay Liberation Book* quotes the Berkeley guerrilla theater: "If Ladybird had been a better lay, we might not be fucking Vietnam." And twice in *Out of the Closets*, faggots use "bitchy" the way white people often use "black" to denote evil. (p. 65, 266) Faggots can easily enough pay lip service to the women's movement — as though it were a fixed object and not a whole lot of organizations and people — but few common projects have been developed. Day care in a few places is about it. Too often faggot support for women's liberation has been rhetorical and simply a cover for our failure to work with lesbians and transvestites.

Gay liberation has tended more and more to gravitate toward the strongest and sluff off the weakest and most oppressed. (Those needing organization most get least!) Starting out with token lesbians, third world gays, radical femms, some working class and uneducated constituents — gay liberation has gravitated more and more toward being exclusively male, white, masculine, young, middle-class and college educated. More often than not third world caucuses, radical femms or radicalesbians dispersed as organized political units even before the collapse of the liberation fronts. In fact, aggressive white men have often used anti-sexist rhetoric to give themselves personal power and prominence within the movement. Liberation has too seldom

been a struggle for the people and too often a way of putting down other brothers and sisters. One selection in *Out of the Closets*, for example, talks of an older faggot: "I know of one old queen whose life has been devoted to collecting Wedgewood china..." The "liberationist" author of this article uses his liberation as a way of putting down those less together than himself: "Those aging princesses will simply linger on unto death as past relics of a bygone era in their fantasy world of poodle dogs and Wedgewood teacups and chandeliers and all the fancy clothes and home furnishings any queen could ever desire...."

Few of the selections in either anthology are so bitterly anti-gay and ageist, but all share the privileged position of educated, articulate people who are good at expressing themselves. We need self-expression but even more we need to learn how to serve the people, often in humble non-dramatic ways. Rita Mae Brown concludes her essay in *Out of the Closets*, "So we have a lot to learn from a visit to Hanoi, we learn we have to come home to Hoboken. Let's take ourselves seriously and seriously support our sisters in Vietnam who do believe in us. Let's begin the slow and tedious labor here in our own backyards that will eventually change the world." Gay support groups and organizations of prisoners and mental "patients" (hardly touched on in either anthology); day care; coffee houses; dances; newspapers; welfare rights; communes; rap sessions; even legal reforms. Out of such mundane activities (call them "struggles" if you will) a gay consciousness is still being born.

[Both of these anthologies are available by mail from Gay Lib Book Service; see listing elsewhere in this issue.]

Wouldn't a spy novel with a really free-wheeling faggot be more likely and more interesting than one who's a compulsive closet case? But such a question begins to tinker with an author's freedom to be what he wants and to write what he wants, and such tinkering is out of place when a reader is faced, as in this book, with clear intention.

Bentley wanted to write a spy-novel, presumably for gay or straight people who like spy novels; and I do. Granted that the particular action upon which this book hinges is a little implausible (aren't they all), it is still an absorbing and exciting book. There is romantic suspense interwoven with the usual plot suspense; there is someone to root for and someone to hiss; there are faggot haters who stay that way and others who grow to comprehension; there are the usual things a spy-novel reader hopes to find when he or she lets down the guard and flows with the action.

Ron Schreiber. *Living Space*. A Red Dot Book, 301 Hicks St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201. \$2 paper.

Salvatore Farinella, *Hunger, First Poems*. Road Runner Press, c/o Brian Salchert, 334 Linden St., Fond du Lac, Wis. 54935. 75 cents. paper

Reviewed by Charles Shively

Here are two "first books" of two Boston poets, both active in gay liberation. Ron and Sal have been able to find jobs, a home and a life with their lovers in Boston. Starting from this foundation, they have been able to build their poetry. Both dedicate their works to their lovers, and Roger Stearns designed the cover for *Hunger*. Almost without a second thought, they have found "living space" enough to be poets and to be gay — no weeping, no sorrow, no remorse, no screens, no hiding about their lives.

In *Living Space*, Ron Schreiber forms his network of poems out of everyday, "commonplace" events and pieces of his life. The food on the table, maps, travel, cats, flowers, hospital — all figure clearly delineated in the poems. Travel by RR,

auto, plane or, more imaginary, by bat, starlings, Monarch butterfly, bluejay, pigeon and auklet figure in map-like web throughout the poems; a very different and very gay *On the Road*.

There are darker parts in Ron's "living space" (beside the cheerful crocus plants). For instance, in "trisection" we get something of a self-portrait (whether meant that way or not, that's how it comes through to me):

she is the queen of wands  
she wears a crimson gown  
she sits on a throne  
lions are embroidered on the arras  
behind her

symbols of royal power  
she holds a sunflower in her left hand  
in her right a budding stave  
a black cat sits at her feet  
she looks into the distance  
her eyes are calm

(page 48)

Ron's eyes are always calm, fresh and subtle; in weaving his vision (and Black Elk's and others) of America together with his own loving space, he creates a many sectioned map-carpet-weave. Through it all the message of love pounds hard as in "no where else":

this place  
these  
two bodies  
one when we  
make it that way

sufficient  
to each other

tiger lilies grow here  
if we can  
smell them.  
four nostrils  
on in-  
halation is  
enough.

In *Hunger*, Salvatore Farinella presents eighteen jewels. His poems in simple, direct, concrete detail rest on a sharp, pragmatic sense of reality. Like precious stones, they are hard, clear and almost unapproachable.

In "Words," Sal writes, "Stuck/ in Anglo-Saxon/ sound/ I sing...." His lines (like these four) are always terse and tight. Often acidic, acerbic; as in the title poem, "Hunger": "Bay you bastard, and try/ to eat me/ and see/ what's left/ of you!" They are also poignant as in "Critical List": "Are you my mother/ my sister my lover...." One of the most agonizing aspects of hospitalization for gay people, of course, is that we are never listed or considered in the "immediate family" of those closest to us — only a "friend," a "visitor."

Amid his dourness, Salvatore Farinella remains shy, tender and slightly frightened. As in "The Leave Taking,"

My lover has gone  
into the body  
of the hungry car.  
From behind  
the tinted glass  
a pink hand  
waves:  
an exotic fish  
marveling  
in its flesh.  
Round  
on ice  
the wheels spin,  
catch the road

in their teeth  
and spit  
its bones  
in my face.

"The Leave Taking" makes a classic love poem: all the ambiguity of feeling close, warm, affectionate is twined with the horror of loss, departure and in some senses rejection. These themes appear even more succinctly in "Cooling Off,"

The pile  
in the bed  
I think  
I know is you.  
The wool's warmth  
your witness.  
Your hair heats  
my heart like a coat;  
you slam sleep  
in my face like a door.

Ron Schreiber's *Living Space* and Salvatore Farinella's *Hunger* provide new affirmations of the gay life and can be put in the library of contemporary gay sensibility now forming. These first books are promises of much more from Ron, from Sal and from the whole gay world itself.



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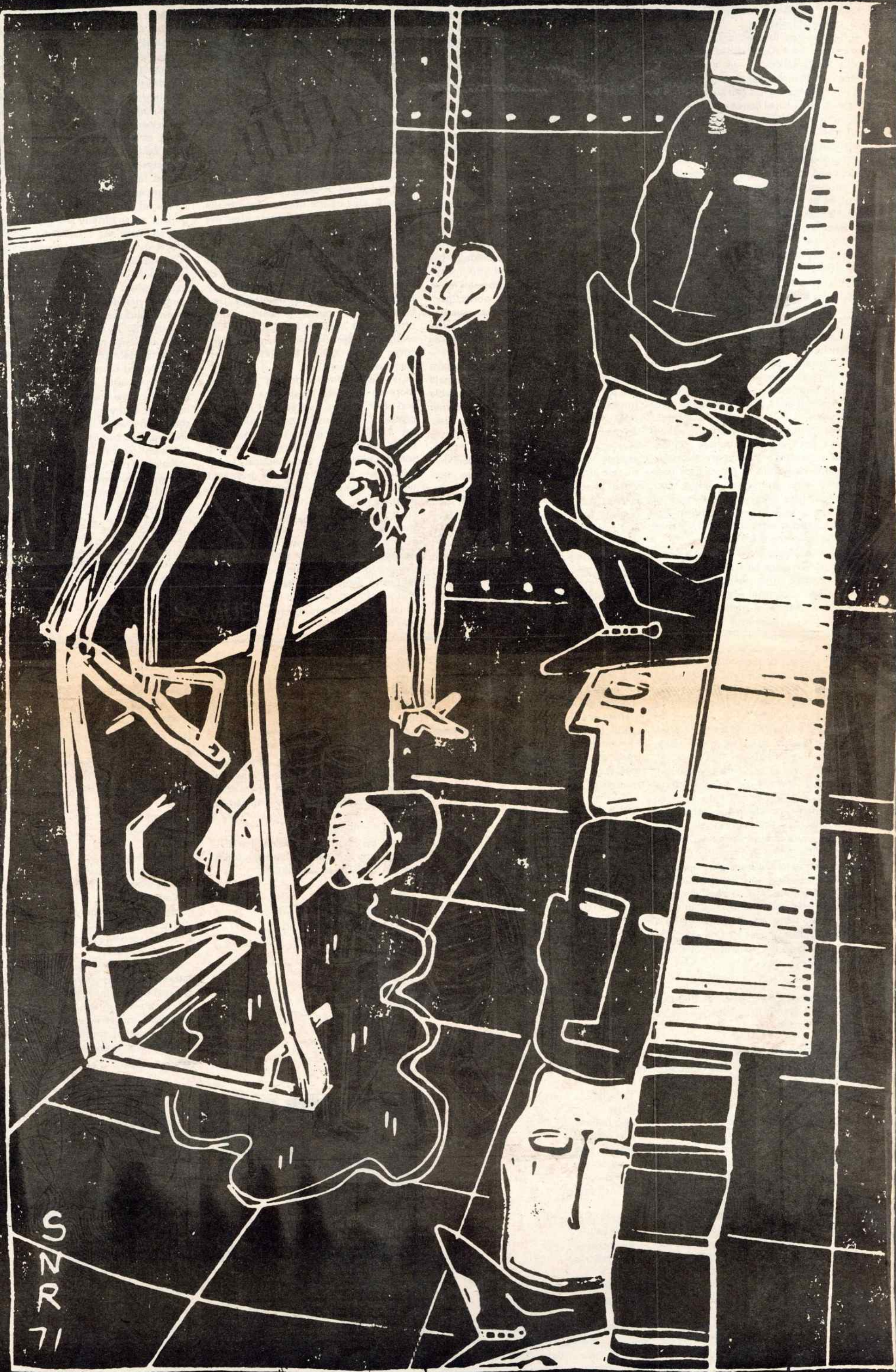
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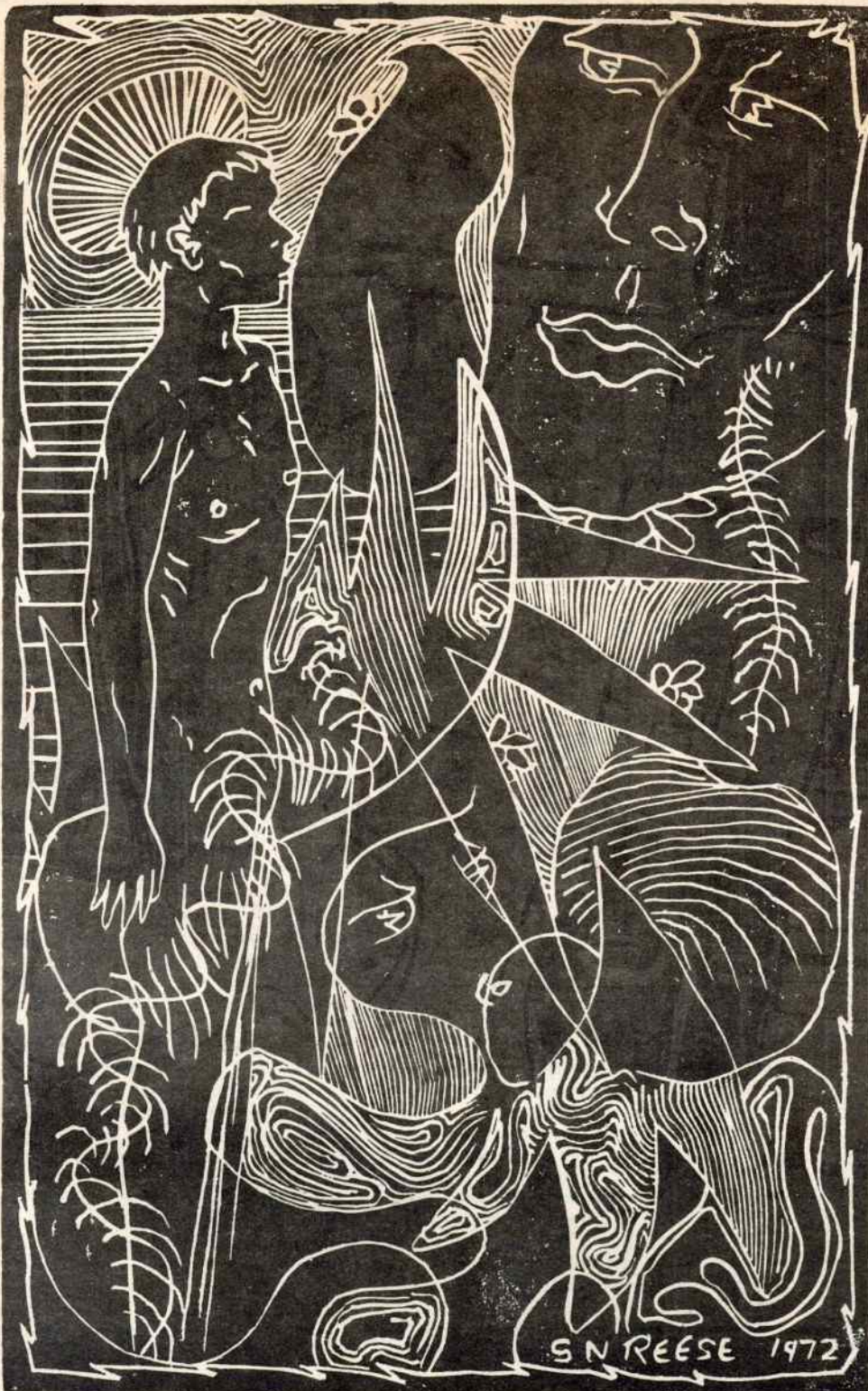


7-22-51



THE DEVILS OF WAUPAN

## THE PRINTS OF SAMUEL REESE



THE FRIEND



THE CODE ("The Ethic of Force")

The artist, Samuel Reese, has spent 21 of his 40 years on Death Row in Missouri State Penitentiary. His two life and seventy five year sentences (for armed robbery and murder) were reversed by the Missouri Supreme Court in 1972, and a retrial has been demanded. Brother Reese has had his work exhibited in Gallery 79 in Paris and in several universities in this country, most recently in the Art Gallery at Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.

The artist has agreed to make copies of his lino-block prints available to readers of *Gay Sunshine*. They can be ordered directly from us (cash with order, please) and profits will be returned to him. The artist is unable to handle such transactions directly from prison. We believe this brother is a very talented, creative graphic artist and are privileged to print some of his work in our paper.

The following prints are available (please add 50 cents per order for mailing costs and allow 2-5 weeks for delivery):

The Stranger Was in a Hurry: \$3  
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 Fall Partners: \$4  
 Figures and Bars I: \$3  
 Rock Star ("Darliss Monfried Takes a Chance"): \$3.50  
 The Code ("The Ethic of Force"): \$3  
 The Revolution and Joe Bingo: \$4  
 Prison Design With Figures: \$3.50  
 The Devils of Waupan: \$4  
 Portrait With Bars: \$3.50  
 The Friend: \$4  
 The Return of the Mandrake: \$4  
 Hadley Doesn't Live Here Any More: \$3.50

# INTERVIEW

The following conversation with Don Kilhefner took place in Los Angeles, January, 1973. Don was one of the core people in the old Los Angeles GLF. He is currently Director of the Gay Community Services Center in L.A. Winston Leyland, who taped and transcribed the conversation, has been involved in the Gay Liberation Movement since 1970 — first in San Francisco/Berkeley GLF and, since 1971, as coordinator-editor of Gay Sunshine.

Throughout this conversation the Gay Community Services Center, Los Angeles will be referred to as GCSC.

WINSTON: For the past three years, Don, you've been involved in the gay movement — first in Los Angeles GLF and, for the past two years in the Gay Community Services Center, which sprang directly out of the old GLF. Perhaps you could rap a little about your involvement in the Movement.

DON: One of the major characteristics of the gay liberation movement in Los Angeles, distinguishing it from GLFs in other places, has been the fact that service to other gay people was always an integral part of the whole process. Part of it was due to Morris Kight's role in this community for a long time. Part of it was due to some of the other newer people who came into the group. At the time we were going through consciousness raising, defining our oppressor, demonstrating in the streets — we were also operating on the level of service to the gay community. We saw that it was important that we did not set ourselves apart from this community. Even as early as Spring, 1970, shortly after the birth of the gay liberation movement, Los Angeles GLF rented an office for our gay survival committee: there was a 24 hour phone, counseling, consciousness raising and similar things. The present G.C.S.C. is an outgrowth of the spirit which has always been a part of gay liberation in Southern California.

WINSTON: Do you think that's perhaps the main reason why the L.A. gay lib movement didn't fold, as it did in other cities; the reason why it didn't get into constant, incestuous fights?

DON: Our movement is very young; we don't have the historical prototypes that the black and feminist movements have for working out some of these problems. Virtually everything we're getting into, we're doing so for the first time. There will be disagreements; a lot of pent up gay rage has to come out. There are also a lot of positive feelings. The Gay Liberation Fronts served their purpose: they got things out into the open with gay people defining their own lives and the sources of their oppression, relating and talking to one another. Then we moved on to other things.

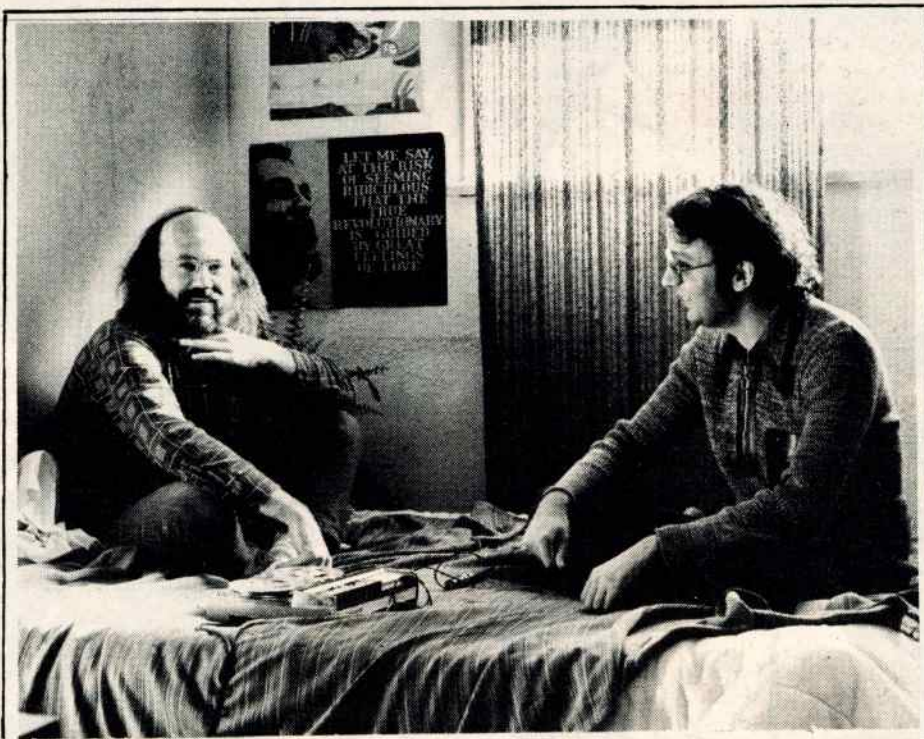
WINSTON: I would disagree in part with your analysis. During those first two years of the Movement there was a good political consciousness evolving in the GLFs, but there was too little communication at the personal level. There were also a lot of internal hassles and a dogmatic political purism on the part of many. I know that Los Angeles GLF had problems of that kind also.

DON: But in Los Angeles GLF we never mistook gay people for the enemy. My enemy is the Chief of Police, the Mental Health Industry, the Church. We disagreed with each other in some areas, but we tried to move in the areas in which we did agree. I think that's an important factor in the gay liberation spirit surviving and continuing to grow here.

WINSTON: The radical gay movement started, as you know, with Stonewall in 1969, went through a GLF stage, and then splintered into two approaches: the Gay Activists Alliance reformist approach; and secondly, projects which sprang in some areas out of the old GLFs (or out of a GLF consciousness), such as the GCSC in L.A., Milwaukee and other cities; Emmaus and Gay Sunshine in San Francisco; the Gay Liberator group in Detroit; and other groups throughout the country.

Unfortunately, I see too few examples of this second type of approach.

DON: I have had a movement background for the last ten years or so of my life: SNCC in Mississippi, Peace Corps, Peace and Freedom Party. But I have never found a level of commitment to match that of my gay brothers and sisters at the G.C.S.C. But I agree with you: we need hundreds more.



Don Kilhefner (left) and Winston Leyland

Photo by Walt Blumoff

WINSTON: Yes, I share your views on the deep commitment of my brothers and sisters at the G.C.S.C. But looking at the Movement as a whole I see too much gay radical dilettantism: people getting involved in a project for a few months and then moving on for insufficient reasons. Radical dilettantism is something you find throughout the radical movement, gay and straight. Jonathan Kozol, the radical educator, talks about this in a recent issue of *Saturday Review*. Kozol wonders what kind of involvement it is when people are constantly moving on to something new, to the newest radical fad, instead of trying to develop some project in a deep way. But it's also true, of course, that deep personal needs impel some brothers and sisters to leave a particular project.

DON: In terms of social change in this country it has always been a small number of people who have played a catalytic role. In the genesis of GLF and GCSC in Los Angeles there were two or three people who provided initially that creative energy to get things moving. I can remember two of us sitting in a room three years ago talking about the GCSC and what it would do when in existence. Now we have a staff of around 120 people. To get that entire process started you don't need numbers.

What we are doing here at the GCSC I see increasingly as a prototype. Hardly a week goes by at the Center that we don't get correspondence or a visit from a gay activist from somewhere in the country. And we share time and love with each other. The reality of the Center shows what is possible if gay people just focus their energy and don't look on other gay people as the enemy.

WINSTON: Yes, I agree. Projects such as the GCSC can be catalytic for many gay people. The Center here in L.A. is a prophetic sign in the true sense: you are showing what gay people can do when they harness their energies together in a loving way.

Could you rap a little on some of the projects which are going on at the Center currently?

DON: The first major program started at the Center was a self-development program. Most gay people live in a psychic ghetto, and that's what we have to deal with first. A major part of our program at the Center is one to one raps with people. There is also some "professional" counseling going on by gay brothers and sisters.

One of the innovative things we've done is gay growth groups: encounter groups designed specifically for gay men and women and facilitated by gay people. Virtually every night of the week there are gay growth groups at the Center; they give gay people a chance to open up, to share with others, to deal with some of their emotions, concerns. These groups meet over a 8 to 10 week period. We also have consciousness raising groups and gay awareness raps. There are about 30 people at the Center working on this self-development program.

Another innovative approach is our medical program. We have a gay VD clinic open at the Center staffed by gay physicians, nurses, lab techs, intake work-

ers. The VD clinic is open three days a week, and we have a women's clinic open two days a week. We felt we needed a program where gay people could feel comfortable about coming to share with their gay brothers and sisters and finding out about their own bodies.

The Los Angeles County Health Department for a long time said at least 50% of venereal disease in L.A. County is found among gay people. Yet not a single program has been designed and oriented toward the gay community. Through our V.D. Clinic we are providing that outreach.

The same thing is happening with the Women's Clinic. A self-help concept has been built into it. Women help in the examination of their own bodies. They use the speculum and do part of the examination themselves.

Future plans for the medical program is to expand into a general, all purpose clinic where a gay person can be treated.

The prisoner probation and parole program at the Center is also important. We are now working with about 135 gay prisoners — trying to get them released from prison as soon as possible and finding housing, jobs. We are also developing a program for juvenile prisoners. A staff member goes out to juvenile prison and conducts a growth group about one morning a week for gay juveniles. We also have an arraignment intervention program. Several law students go down each morning to the arraignment court in Los Angeles. They interview gay men and women accused of a crime to see if it might be possible to get them released on their own recognizance to the Center, to get their sentence reduced or eliminated completely. We also have programs operating within the courts getting gay brothers and sisters out and into our own supportive living environment.

We are also doing a housing program. Our liberation houses are self-sustaining collectives where gay men and women live at very low cost. We have several of them operating right now. A person pays \$2.25 per day to live there and receives in return a room and an evening meal. People living there help in collective maintenance of the house. We try to provide a warm, supportive living environment. Also all the other services of the Center are available to them: welfare rights, counseling, personal, medical aid etc. There are very few rules laid on people. We are basically trying to provide room and shelter at a minimal cost. During the last year and half over 2500 gay men and women have made use of the liberation houses. Some people have stayed for a few days; other people for longer periods. A brother or sister coming to L.A. can find temporary shelter in a non-exploitative environment.

The draft and military affairs program of the Center, directed by Walt Blumoff, is also important. Anyone who receives counseling at the Center isn't having problems at the induction center. We also have a system set up for helping gay people already in the military to get out with a minimum of hassle and a honorable discharge.

There is also a legal service program in operation at the Center. Several gay law students come into the Center. A representative of the A.C.L.U. does legal counseling several hours a week. We also have close cooperation with the Los Angeles Legal Aid Foundation, and they are

handling all our civil cases for us. People with a wide range of legal needs can come in for counseling and referrals.

Our youth program for brothers and sisters under 21 is a peer operated program. They get together to discuss their needs and how to provide alternatives.

We also have alternative social activities taking place. The Friday night Gay Funky Dance attracts around three or four hundred people each week. The dances are primarily attended by younger gay people for whom the oppressive gay bar syndrome hasn't become a part of their lives yet.

A Gaywill Funky Shoppe is also in operation. This is a thrift store where poorer gay people can buy clothes, household items and funky things cheaply. I buy all my clothes there.

On another level the Center operates for people who want to do things. It is a place where gay people can initiate projects. For instance, we have yoga and T'ai Chi Chu'an classes in operation. Some evenings the Center is turned over to people who do a macramé and knitting class. There is a gay alcoholics-together meeting there. Another group meeting at the Center is dealing with the issue of the blind and sexuality. One person comes in to do welfare rights counseling once a week.

The energy level at the Center is extremely high. Just the fact of gay people getting together; beginning to provide services, learning something about themselves, about other gay people, is a very growth-producing process. Gay people have never had the opportunity to do this before. Out of this comes a great amount of joy, happiness, sharing, loving. At this point in my life I couldn't think of working anywhere else. My needs are being satisfied. I am learning a lot about myself, a lot of beautiful things about other gay people.

Last evening at the Center I had the opportunity to sit with a tramp, who happens to be gay; a man who has spent the last 30 years of his life out on the road in this country. We rapped about the Center, about his experiences on the road as a gay person. Where else could I find an opportunity to do something like that with my life right now? To hear those stories, to share those experiences!

One level the Center is a human service agency; on another level it is a grass roots community center; on another level it is one of the most revolutionary social change groups operating here in Los Angeles.

The Center itself is located on Wilshire Boulevard in a funky old Victorian house that dates back to the 1870's. Throughout the day there is a steady flow of people through the Center from early morning to late at night. A couple of months ago we did a study to see who is using the Center. We found that on an average from one to three hundred people per day pass through the Center. We estimate that about 5,000 gay people per month are receiving direct services through the Center.

When we started the Center a year and half ago, we had about \$19 in the bank and no prospect of funds. During the past year the staff has been totally volunteer. We have been involved in fund raising activities: our dances each week bring in some money, as well as the Gay Funky Shoppe and donations from gay people. The G.C.S.C. exists today because of gay men and women who have recognized what we are doing and have made contributions of time or money to it.

In 1972 we operated on a budget of \$36,000. We are extremely frugal in spending money. Our first approach is how we can liberate something by persuasion or otherwise. All our furniture at the Center, for example, has been donated. Recently the Center received a \$15,000 grant from the National Free Clinic Council to establish a drug abuse counseling program. For the first time since we started we are now able to pay a survival stipend (\$100 per month) to core staff members.

One of the levels that the Center operates on is a very powerful political level. According to our State of California charter we cannot be involved in "politics." This mainly means straight man's politics, such as lobbying for legislative change. Most of the people at the Center are not involved in conventional straight politics. But an extremely political process is taking place at the Center: gay people are taking control of their own lives, manifesting the idea of self determination at a real not a rhetorical level. It happens in all our groups: gay people for the first time in their lives are encouraged to center on themselves as gay people; to deal with their gay reality and to use that as a center point from which their lives radiate out.

The outreach that we do toward different agencies: parole, probation is also a political act. We are, in effect, saying to straights: these programs were not being provided by you; we are providing them. They come out of our consciousness as gay people, out of our reality

as we see the needs and as we have lived the needs as gay people in this society. Up to this point we have not had to compromise with these agencies. This has been a very important political leverage for us. We can say, for example, to a city councilman: "Look, councilman, you haven't done a damn thing for us. This Center is here because of what we have done. You as a councilman are pretty powerless. Now if there is something you want, let us know." So, we are operating on a very sophisticated political level.

Another level we are operating on is that of the emergence of a gay consciousness. I know from my own life that until my involvement in GLF and the Center I had never been encouraged to grow as a gay person, to think about the question of whether there is a qualitative difference between gay people and non gay people. The Center is providing that focus in which gay people can begin to deal with themselves as gay people. I see a very powerful gay consciousness beginning to emerge out of that. When I look around at the gay liberation movement throughout the country, I don't see too many opportunities being provided where gay people are encouraged to take control of their own lives. For me the Center has been one of the most powerful things I've gone through in my last two or three years with the gay liberation movement.

At this point in my life I do consider myself qualitatively different from most non-gay men around me. This emergence of a gay consciousness is non-linear. What it means for you or me is going to be different. As gay people we must get to the point where we say, "No longer will I accept the oppressor's definition of myself as a gay person and act out those roles, spending all my time defending myself." This is what the old homophile movement has done for the past twenty years — and now some of the gay civil rights groups. They are explaining, defending themselves, justifying their existence to the straight world. In my life I see myself as a much more complete human being than those one dimensional straight men in the world around me. At the Center gay people are increasingly getting involved in the process of gay consciousness.

WINSTON: I think the G.C.S.C. has gone far beyond a reformist position. Many of the Gay Activists Alliances throughout the country have got bogged down in a reformist gay civil rights approach — working within the Democratic Party, for instance. One reason for the failure of gay people to meet the basic, personal needs of other gay brothers and sisters is that energy has been drained off by a basically dead-end reformist approach. But here at the Center you have evolved a radical, grass roots approach which should be a prophetic sign to gay people in other parts of the country.

DON: I think this deals with our current concept of politics. The whole reformist group is into the straight man's definition of politics. Although I encourage those who work for law reform, I am not going to divert my energy there. My reading of history is that no significant social change has come through the legislative, electoral system. I can find nothing more boring than to sit down with a group of troglodyte het politicians to discuss gay issues.

You change gay society by changing the way gay people think about themselves. I think that's one of the basic differences between the gay liberation movement and the homophile civil rights movement. The latter goes into a "please accept us, we have to educate those hets out there" approach, while the gay liberation movement is dealing with the fact that we have to reach other gay brothers and sisters, to rid them of the negative self concepts which straight society has instilled in them.

WINSTON: Some of the older homophile groups are now using the term "gay liberation, gay brothers and sisters" with too little commitment to the reality behind those words. It's fashionable, it's radical gay chic to use gay liberation terminology. Only one or two years ago this same terminology was anathema to them. What has been your relationship with other gay groups in the Los Angeles area?

DON: There have been ideological and political differences. My position has been to air and discuss these differences in the open. At the beginning of the gay liberation movement in Los Angeles there was an unbelievable amount of hostility toward us. But we were right in not giving in to the paranoia. Our approach at the G.C.S.C. has not been outreach to gay organizations as such but outreach to gay men and women unaffiliated with any gay group.

WINSTON: I've known the core people at the Center for the past couple of years and I've been deeply impressed and gratified by what's been happening. I'm curious as to the kind of reactions you've received from gay activists who are into a reformist gay civil rights approach.

DON: There are two different concepts of politics. There's a more conventional concept and ours is a more radical, revolutionary concept. I feel too there is a great difference between the gay movement on the East Coast and the gay movement on the West Coast. They're still into dealing with the old forms. I hear very little talk about gay consciousness. I sense a certain disquiet among some of the East Coast activists who visit us that the models they now have are no longer viable; that the one issue, civil rights approach isn't getting anywhere; that the zaps have fulfilled their usefulness and it's time to move on to something else. I would prefer that this "other thing" be dealing directly with gay people instead of using all that energy in dealing with het politicians. On a certain level it's even more difficult for us to deal with gay people, because we haven't had experience in organizing within our own community. That takes a lot more energy because we're talking about outreach, follow through, continuity — all things that take more than a PR demonstration.

WINSTON: I am totally convinced that the kind of approach you are talking about is needed throughout the country: gay people relating to other gay people on a multi-faceted, many level approach. I hope that gays in other parts of the country will learn from what has been done here in Los Angeles and will adapt to their own area some of the approaches that you have found successful.

gay prisoners through out prisoner program, providing services for them, is a political act in this society. Continuous assault on the mental health industry is also part of that political change. We're developing our own counseling approaches and have no need of straight psychiatrists. The fact that we're dealing with juveniles openly is an extremely political act. The Man soon picked up on all this. We are organized, doing something together and he has to react to us. We're no longer entirely reacting to the Man as we were three years ago. We're now, in effect, saying: "You react to us." So, in effect, the Center is very political but not in the conventional, straight man's concept of politics.

Self determination in this society is a political statement. We're not in front of the Democratic convention, saying, in effect, "Please accept us." What we are doing is saying to gay people: "You have control over your own life; you determine for yourself what you want to do, to be." Once you start that process of self-determination, you have a gay person taking her/his own life in his/her own hands.

One of the most political things that gay people have to deal with in this society is isolation. We haven't had a place to go where there are gay brothers and sisters who will help us when we need it. Now we do have that. A sense of belonging to a community: that's an extremely powerful political act, one that the Man doesn't have any control over.

WINSTON: Over the past couple of years you've come into contact with liberal psychologists, such as Evelyn Hooker of U.C.L.A. who has written a lot about homosexuals. She had been thought to be simpatico to gay liberationists. What experiences did you have with her and with other mental health people?



I have heard some gay radicals put down the Center here in L.A. as not being political; as being just a gay Salvation Army. But they are wrong. I believe that what you are doing here at the Center is radical and political in the true sense: gay people are organizing on a grass roots level, changing their own lives and the lives of other gay people in deep ways. What is more radical, more political than that?

DON: In the juvenile prison at Whittier there's now a gay growth group of around 10 people coordinated by gays from the Center. This is extremely political, because we're reaching gay brothers and breaking down that sense of isolation they have. We're also changing that prison, because those bulls who come in contact with our people are dealing with something new: an assertive, non-apologetic gay person. This is manifesting gay liberation consciousness. It's changing the way gay people live on a day to day basis in our society.

The fact that we're dealing with 130

DON: My experience with Dr. Evelyn Hooker is a good example of the type of liberal industrialist in the mental health industry that we have had to deal with. Dr. Hooker is a clinical psychologist at U.C.L.A. who has established a reputation nationally as an "expert" on homosexuality. Among many homophiles she has a reputation of someone who is a friend of the gay community. I went on that basic premise also for a long time. In the early stages of organizing the G.C.S.C. I tried to get her involved. I figured that we could benefit from her insights, experiences with the gay community. It was very soon obvious to us that she looked on herself as a colonial administrator; we were "her boys" who were supposed to sit at her feet and listen to her olympian words. For instance, she was shocked at the idea that there would be "children" — 16 year old gay men and women — involved at the Center. That's part of the old straight hang up: that a gay adult shouldn't be allowed around children for fear of molestation. I can also recall Dr. Hooker bristling at the suggestion that she might have a gay component to her

life also. This is a woman who has a reputation for being a friend of the gay community, but instead I see a 1952 consciousness.

There are lots of these colonial administrators around. They include most of the mental health industry. At the Center we have stepped beyond all this. No longer will we accept their nonsense, their lack of information, their cultural biases. We are providing the necessary services ourselves. I don't think a person can "come out" in the mental health industry because of the conditioning a professional person goes through in this society.

I consider the mental health industry to be one of the major sources of oppression in this society, and I don't see much hope for it. We've moved them a little, but the same basic anti-gay prejudices are still there; they're simply in a more subtle form at present. They're still having behavior modification conferences in L.A. like the one we zapped a couple of years ago, and still talking about "curing" homosexuality. The Student Health Service at U.C.L.A. is still making referrals to psychiatrists who are into aversion therapy. The big difference is that now they're not talking about it publicly. But the same kind of oppression is still going on. That's part of the whole intellectual fraud in the mental health industry. They've gotten to the point where they will no longer even engage us in dialogue. Dr. Hooker, for instance, said she would not appear on the same platform where I was speaking. The reason is simply because I challenge her; I don't accept a lot of her premises. I talk of myself as a gay male and not as a homosexual. I think gay people should put a stop to straight identified "professionals" like Hooker, Bieber, Socarides who talk about the lives of gay people with seeming authority. It's gay people who should be talking about gay people.

We are no longer dealing with homosexuality; it's an artificial category that those people created and laid on us with a whole lot of negative ascribed roles. We're now talking about gayness, and that's completely different. Gayness is dealing with a broad range of emotions, a lot more than these psychologists have ever been aware of. We are at a point right now where we can teach them; whereas they have very little to teach us.

WINSTON: If we get these kinds of reactions from someone like Dr. Hooker, who is noted among psychologists as a person simpatico to gays, what can we expect from the mental health profession as a whole? Very little I am afraid. Many gay people do make use of the mental health profession at some time in their life. Perhaps we could discuss further how these gay brothers and sisters are being exploited.

DON: It costs money to see a psychologist or psychiatrist. The first question they usually ask themselves is: "Can this person pay?" And many gay persons in this society cannot afford their services. Sure, they give you the liberal line: "It's your life, you must do whatever you want to do." But how can they really help someone, if there hasn't been an experiential component so that they can begin to offer alternatives. I've talked to psychologists in L.A. who deal primarily with gay clients but who haven't any concept of what social alternatives are available for a gay person. They're still suggesting things like gay bars, cruising in parks — still perpetuating those old oppressive patterns. Many of them are also still perpetuating the old master-slave relationship, where they want you to come in, sit at their feet and "adjust" to society.

At the Center we have gay people who genuinely care what happens to other gay people. Those are the people that I want to see gays talking with. We need to provide positive models that gay people can relate to. A psychologist isn't going to provide that positive model for a gay person.

The mental health industry is unfortunately going to become an increasingly powerful agent in this society; it's currently replacing the church in its control over the behavior and minds of people. It's increasingly becoming one of the major sources of the oppression of gay people. Technocrats in the mental health industry need to be reached and changed. Over the last four years of community organizing in the gay community I've made an outreach to hundreds of people in the mental health field. At this point there is no psychiatrist, perhaps with one exception, to whom I could comfortably refer gay people. There are only one or two psychologists to whom I could comfortably refer gay people; they are gay themselves and do volunteer work themselves. We have to break that pattern of thinking that mental health professionals have something to offer us.

Many gay groups throughout the country provide referral services to psychologists or psychiatrists. But our approach at the Center is political. We are developing

community so that we can provide counseling, consciousness raising, growth experience for gay men and women. We are training our own people to provide these services. We have fifteen or so growth group facilitators at the Center, the finest gay people that I have met. We are providing quality service free, an alternative for gay people so that they don't have to go through the mental health industry.

**WINSTON:** What suggestions would you offer to gay people in smaller cities and towns about trying to meet the needs of their brothers and sisters?

**DON:** First, you need a meeting place, whether it's a room in an apartment or a storefront; some place where energy can be focussed and gay people can come together. A telephone is necessary with a number that's well publicized, so that gay people don't have to spend two weeks tracking down the group. There should be a great deal of accessibility to other gay people. You shouldn't fall into the trap of money: that before you can get started you need \$500 in the bank. All you need is a group of people with some sense of commitment to other gay people before you can get started.

It is also important that you be honest about who you are. There are too many organizations in the gay community which have little to do with gay people. I think the times are right for gay people to reach out to other gay people. But patience and perseverance are necessary. We haven't had historical prototypes to deal with these things; twenty or thirty years from now it will be easier. On another level each person can be their own community center, relating to other gay people as a brother or sister, reaching out to them. It isn't just a location; part of it is a state of mind.

**WINSTON:** Perhaps we could talk a little about gay terminology: about the difference between the words "homosexual, faggot, homophile, gay."

**DON:** It's sometimes very important to deal with semantics. For instance, I picked up on Allen Ginsberg's remark in the last issue of *Gay Sunshine* that he used the

word "gay" increasingly in a positive, personalized sense and that you are changing a culture when you force it to use its words differently.

As you know, Winston, those of us in the Movement make a clear distinction between the words "homosexual, homophile and gay." The word "homosexual" is equivalent to the word "nigger" in the black context. It's other people defining us, telling us who we are. And the word "homosexual" has usually been used in a very limited sexual connotation. That's what we are reacting to; we are more than just a sexual being. When we use the word "gay" we are using it as something that is coming out of our own experience, our own life as gay men and women in this society. It deals on one level with our sexuality but also with much more. We do not use the word "homophile" because to us it denotes what has been, up till 1969, the gay scene in this country: the emphasis that we're no different from anyone else, an emphasis on conformity, on acceptance, on educating straights, on emancipation ("please give us our freedom; please treat us correctly"). We use the word "faggot" among ourselves in a very positive, affectionate way.

**WINSTON:** The word "faggot" is also used in every political way — affection for each other and also gay anger — by effeminists in Boston, New York and elsewhere.

**DON:** To be gay in this society is a non-linear thing. Dealing with the issue of gayness is new to all of us. To take a doctrinaire line about what it means to be gay is nonsense. Part of the process we're involved in right now is to say to gay people: "I don't know what it means to be gay; you're the person who's going to tell us." You tell me what it means to be gay for you and I'll tell you what it means to be gay for me! But let's begin that process of self-definition, exploration.

About 2½ years ago I asked myself the question: "What does it mean to be gay? Is there a qualitative difference between gay and non-gay people?" I worked on that for a couple of years: really experimenting, watching, looking, listening, talking to people. And I think

there is a qualitative difference. A gay male is someone who is really dealing with a much broader range of human emotions than a non-gay male. At many of the Free Clinic meetings that I go to it's obvious to me which people are gay and which people are not gay. I see many men around me acting in very narrow, one dimensional roles, very predictable behavior patterns.

One of the important things for me at present in terms of defining "gay" is the question of exchange of energy. I find that non-gay males are able to send off energy only, being very dynamic, forceful, but having great difficulty in receiving energy, in being receptive. Gay men can send off energy and also receive energy. A person who can both send off and receive energy is a person who is gay. That can operate on many different levels. For instance, I see men around me who are very receptive to their environment, who really listen well and pick up what's happening around them. And, at the same time, they can take that absorbed energy, internalize it and send it back again. To me that's a gay person. On a sexual level, it's a person who can send off sexual energy and also receive it, who can fuck and also be fucked. Gay men and women at this point in time are much more complete human beings than non-gay people because they have the ability to send off and receive energy.

**WINSTON:** I think that even among gay people this exchange of energy is not as extensive as it could be. Many gay males in our society have been conditioned to act as straight males act toward women. I see this all the time in the put-down remarks that some gay males make about women.

**DON:** That's why it's helpful to talk about homosexuals and gay people. A gay person is someone who is no longer straight identified, no longer reacting to conditioning. It involves that whole process of self-determination, taking control of one's own life. I see the beginning of that process in myself: a whole new person emerging, a whole new way of relating to people which doesn't focus on a person's sexuality per se. And I see that same process happening to thousands of brothers and sisters around

me. No longer are we dealing with the sin and sickness syndrome.

As gay people we can say to straights: we feel that we are more complete human beings and that we have something to teach you to help you grow. We are not building walls; it's not a gay supremacist line; we're not saying that we are superior to you. We have taken our lives into our own hands. We are no longer allowing this society to tell us who we're supposed to be, how we're supposed to relate to people. In that process we discover something about ourselves and are willing to share it with straight people.

When I go out on speaking engagements and talk about the politics of what we're doing, I start by explaining the difference between a homosexual and a gay person. The audience usually expects me to talk about the "plight of the homosexual" in society. But instead I talk about the ecstasy and joy of being gay, the growth that I'm experiencing, the alternatives that are being opened up to gay people. We are making people react to us, and that's a very political act. We are altering the level of political power.

**WINSTON:** What do you think about the effectiveness of gay movement publications?

**DON:** I think *Gay Sunshine* is crucial to the movement at this point. Over the last three years *Sunshine* has provided that continuity of publication, that source of information, new ideas, inspiration that is needed. It's also happened with the other movement papers: *Body Politic*, *Gay Liberator*, *Fag Rag*. They are important for finding out what other gay brothers and sisters are thinking and doing throughout the country. Several people at the Community Center got involved with us because of *Gay Sunshine*. Dr. Ben Teller, formerly of New York, heard about the G.C.S.C. through *Gay Sunshine* and decided to come to Los Angeles. He stayed with us and has made a significant contribution to the Center through the V.D. Clinic and the new general medical clinic which is planned. Basically, *Gay Sunshine* acted as a catalyst in that process.

## Gay Lib Book Service

### Box 40397, San Francisco, Cal. 94140

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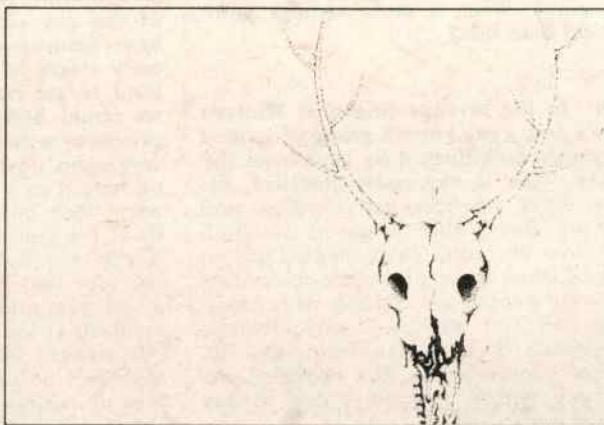
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GRAPHIC DESIGN AND VISUAL IDENTITY

## J. RICHARD REED/DESIGN



#### GAY PRISON CONFERENCE

Anger, frustration, determination and hope were powerfully expressed by various speakers at an all-Gay prison conference in San Francisco, January 29.

The conference, sponsored by Join Hands, was attended by over a hundred concerned gays, a high percentage of them ex cons. Conspicuous by their absence were representatives of S.I.R. and the Gay Alliance.

The event marks the increased separation of the gay prison movement from the general prison movement. The reasons for the separation are unconcern on the part of heterosexual prison groups and the fact that gays feel they are able to deal better with the special problems of gay prisoners.

The key speakers at the conference were Paul Mariah and Jim Fouratt. Mariah is a well known local poet and activist. Fouratt is a nationally known gay activist from New York.

Mariah read from his powerful prison poems. Fouratt, who was just released from a Texas "rehabilitation" facility told of the oppression of gays in prison. He had received a two year sentence for possession of marijuana.

When he was first taken to the Dallas Jail, Fouratt said, "They announced over the loudspeaker that I was a faggot. Then, I was paraded up and down before 800 prisoners... I was put in an all-black tank and didn't see another guard until the next morning." Fouratt said he was verbally and physically abused by both black and white prisoners.

Other gay ex-cons verified that Fouratt's experience was typical of the abuse gay prisoners receive from guards and fellow prisoners.

The general conclusion drawn from the testimonials is that sexual repression and often sexual exploitation are used by prison authorities as a means of control. There is the stick: gay prisoners are kept under control by the threat of breaking up lovers, or by throwing them in a block of horny heterosexuals. The carrot: heterosexual prisoners are often rewarded for good behavior by giving them a faggot to beat, rape and abuse.

—Don Jackson

*Reflections on the Death of Mishima*, by Henry Miller. 5½ x 7½ illustrated paper wrappers. 47 pp. Capra Press, Santa Barbara, 1972. \$2.75

Reviewed by Kirby Congdon

Henry Miller has come out with a back handed encomium entitled *Reflections on the Death of Mishima* (a paperback with a dark portrait of Yukio Mishima dressed up in a black jock and military cap, proudly draped in studied casualness against a heavy-weight Honda)

In this book Miller discusses Mishima's "demise" as he prudishly terms Mishima's violent and compulsive suicide. His message seems to be that, aside from his fascination about it, he doesn't understand it. I get the feeling that Miller is sort of bothered that his fascination for the younger man is not philosophical and high toned but is, like anyone else's, just a plain old morbid one. Miller goes on and on with much bright talk—mostly intuitive rather than really enlightening since his ideas are not very organized. I think the whole problem is that Miller does not understand Mishima sexually and should drop the subject. Nor do I understand Miller. He writes the following paragraph (page 21-22):

"...To what end this stunning musculature, this Herculean strength, this god-like perfection? Is it to regard themselves in the mirror with pride and satisfaction? Is there not something feminine, something ridiculous about this cult of the body? As a boy I remember reading about the little band of Spartans who held the pass at Thermopylae until the

last man died. There were illustrations in my story book of the Spartans before battle, combing and braiding their long hair. They looked beautiful and effeminate, heroes though they might be. The book spoke of the feeling of brotherhood which existed among men. I didn't know at the time the full implications of that word brotherhood. This kind of brotherhood nevertheless was of another order from the homosexuality practised by the modern athlete and his ilk. It was a much wider, deeper form of love between man and man; it was practiced openly and communally, as was often the case with sister-and-brother religious groups that flourished at a much later date in Europe and even in America. With the Samurai of old it was doubtless the same. The buggery that goes on in modern armies, it goes without saying, is of another order. There is not even a hint of 'melancholy splendor' about it."

Miller could answer his own questions. The end and purposes of having stunning musculature, Herculean strength and god like perfection is simply that: to be stunning, strong and god-like! This doesn't pay the rent or taxes and muscle-builders deteriorate with age. But so does death destroy the rest of us. Should we then give up our ideals. Abandon the arts? Give up physical vanity? While physical beauty may be a more narrow view of beauty than that of the artist, the rest of us certainly enjoy looking at it. And was it Rodin, who said that if an artist's rendition of a nude is not sexy then it really isn't a nude. Most of us will go to bed with physical beauty whether it is art or

not. But of course if the two people in bed aren't an all-American girl married to an all-American boy, Miller would be upset, I think.

Let me poke a finger at some other phrases in this one quotation. The idealistic non-sexual brotherhood of the Spartans was, Miller says, "of another order from the homosexuality practiced by the modern athlete and his ilk" (my italics.) For Miller, it seems, sex can be arbitrarily screened out and separated from social behavior. The Spartans didn't have sex and Miller "doubtless" knows because he was there! This is the same idea on which all Victorian prudishness was based. It is interesting that Miller, who in the popular mind is the literary sex-fiend of the thirties, is still knee-deep in the prejudices of his fathers, a hundred years ago, against the "modern athlete and his ilk." How often the term "modern" is used by fuddy-duddies as a pejorative, and an unoriginal criticism at that! That battle for the right to be contemporary or modern is as old as civilization, but it still hurts and disappoints when the ideological cliches are marched out once more—especially by people who should know better and in whom one had expected to put trust rather than doubt.

Miller's old-fashioned, old-world and ideal brotherhood, he says, was practiced "openly and communally." Isn't it the common norm attitude of the Henry Millers who inhibit more original people from behaving openly and communally? Miller, whose experience does not seem to include anything experimental, is condemning nonconformists for not behaving as the socially acceptable behave. What is socially acceptable

is, of course, Mr. Miller's majority—the conformist kind of behavior.

He cites religious groups as exemplary of truly proper and decent sister-and-brother relationships among men. But show me any religion that includes sex as a tenet in its doctrine. In the religions sex is always subordinate and sublimated and, in effect, brushed under the rug. Religious behavior is not a guide to sexually happy relations except by some coincidence. Miller wants to make his "acceptable sex" interchangeable with acceptable society and acceptable manners. Manners, whether they are organized and ritualized or not, are not substitutes for the emotional purity Miller yearns for.

And in the phrase, "buggery in modern armies," does Miller mean that buggery in old fashioned, old world and ideal armies was not really buggery? How does he know so much about the purity of the past and the impurity of the moderns and all their ilk! He's been listening! Oh so shocked, but not missing a word! The sex fiend has dwindled into a mere voyeur!

Mr. Miller is kidding himself about a lot of things about which he has wanted to be oracle. I think the oracle is so hung up on middle class mores it doesn't know what it's talking about. And when an oracle starts blabbing about things it doesn't know anything about, it really should have the good grace to shut up, and let the moderns speak for themselves. Yukio Mishima spoke quite eloquently for himself, but the Henry Miller's pretend they are not listening and can not hear simply because a larger view always tends to diminish a smaller one.

*Otoko*. Photo Studies of the Young Japanese Male by Tamotsu Yato. Rho Delta Press, Box 69540, Los Angeles, Calif. 90069. \$15.95 postpaid.

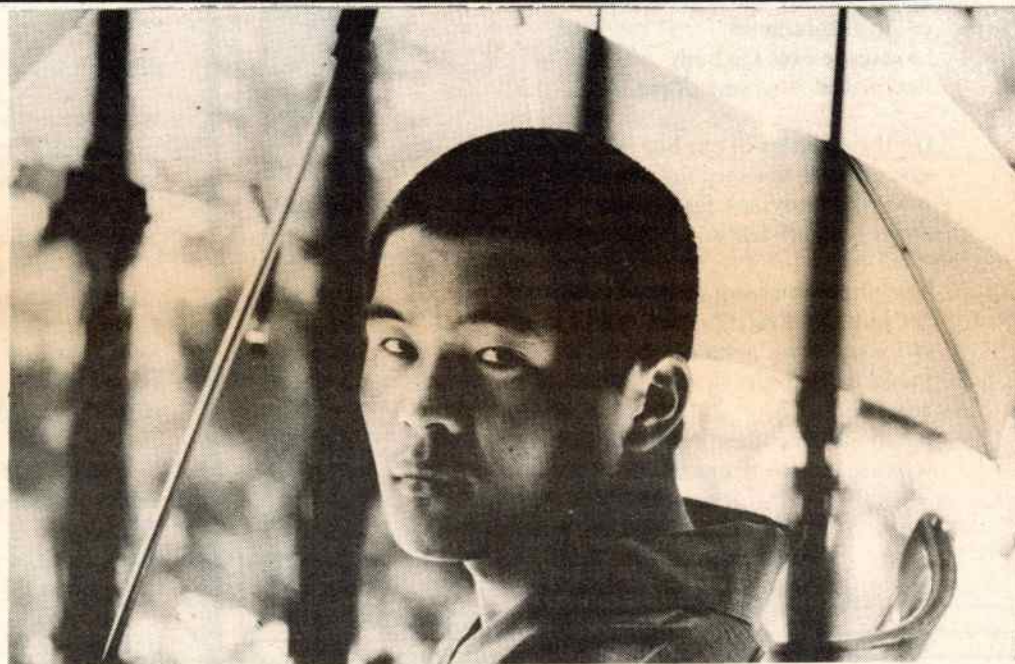
Reviewed by Winston Leyland

Over the last few years there have been innumerable publications (mainly pulp magazines) in the United States which present nude male photographic studies. Most of them have little artistic merit. Here is one of the exceptions: a book which presents photos of deep sensuality and, in the case of a handful, of spiritual insight also.

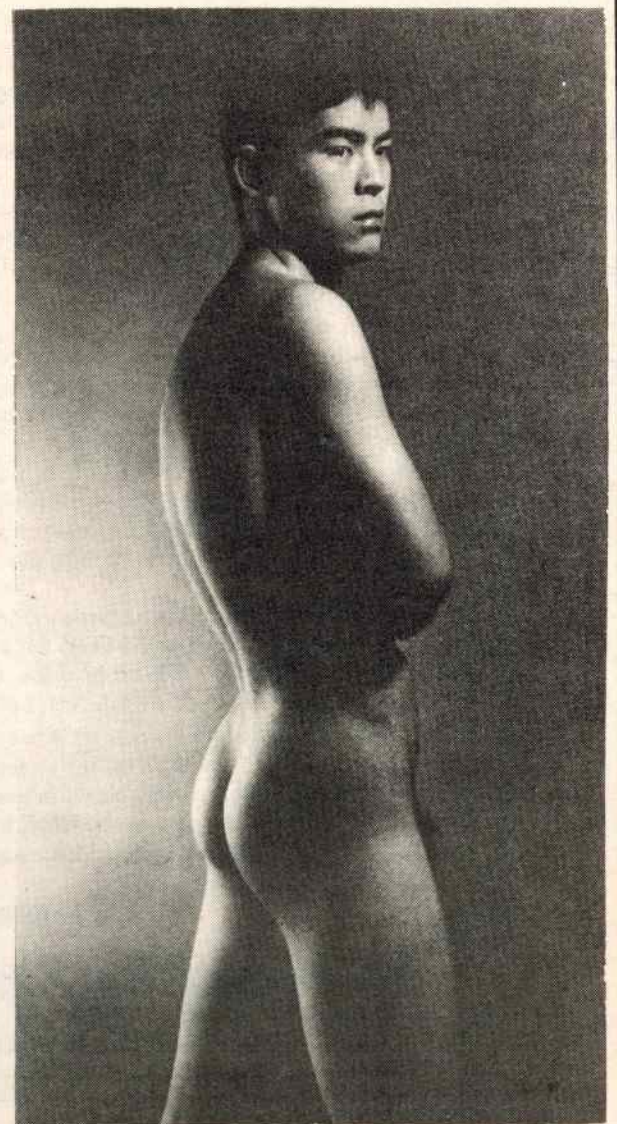
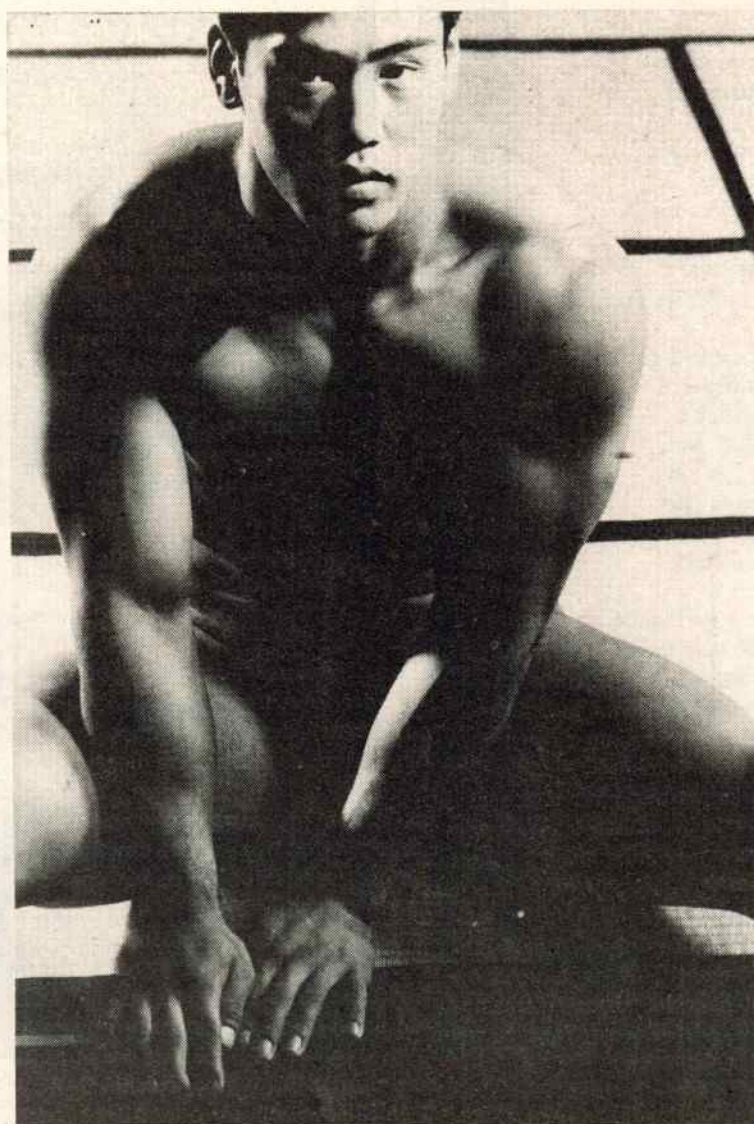
Tamotsu Yato's book *Otoko* (the Japanese word for a man, a male) presents eighty-five black and white photo studies of fifty one young Japanese males. Yato has already gained international recognition as a photographer of the nude male in his two earlier books, *Naked Festival* and *Young Samurai* (two photos from the former book were reproduced in *Gay Sunshine* No. 10).

In his forward to the book Yato says, "I should like to compare the young men who appear here to perfectly wrought balls of jade because of their own unique perfection...At least in the Japanese, the sexual attractiveness of the male is more a matter of spirit than of body. In the final analysis, the sexual charm of the Japanese male consists of a harmonious blending and unifying of all those separate qualities that have been esteemed in Japan through the ages and that, with differing degrees of success, each Japanese male seeks to cultivate and bring to flower within himself. These include sincerity, cleanliness, generosity, nobleness, courage, thoughtfulness, alertness, decisiveness, patience, cleverness, compassion, the fulfilling of one's obligations, human sympathy, trust, friendship, chivalry. To the extent that a Japanese is able to develop this male sexuality....by just that much does his very existence become a miracle and a thing of awe."

Yato was a friend of the late Japanese novelist, Yukio Mishima (1925-1970), whose ritual suicide made international headlines. *Otoko* is dedicated to the memory of Mishima, who helped in the early planning of the book. Two superb nude photo portraits of the novelist (in his forties) are included. The book would have been even better had the photographer included more photo studies of mature Japanese males.



Photos from *Otoko* by Tamotsu Yato



## JILALA

What happens when you cross  
Jean Cocteau with a Miami housewife?

Jilala lounges with the funny papers  
in green-face with an opium pipe.

Jilala serves hot blintzes from behind  
a delicate belladonna spider's veil.

Jilala only in America Jilala  
you ask me as you board the plane

what could ever lure you back  
to California again.

Come now. Hybrids have no choice  
but mid-air.

What do you think I'm doing here?

-James Nolan

## Manly Expectations

What if you had an organ  
That had to stand up  
In order to make  
Music, love, sex.

It has a head of its own.  
It is these kinds of  
Manly expectations  
That set off alarms.

But by knowing this,  
A growing may occur  
That will angle  
Upwards and up

Manly.

-Paul Mariah

## NOW

Wanting to be Humphrey Bogart for 30 years  
finding out you're more like Lauren Bacall.

but

imitation, assimilation, alchemy  
hermaphrodites were strong symbols of  
alchemist "magic" not symbols: were

wings held close to the bone  
left foot on the block  
right foot in the atmosphere  
hand held

I come out with myself & find

everyone

Michael Lally

## DEAD END ORGY

Floating at the end of the blow job  
anonymous suck in the dark, tangled labyrinth  
my fingers anchored in hair,  
I sight you my white ghost lover  
sail across darkness  
to cascade over the body  
next to me unaware of me.

(In the darkness of our bed  
you gave me the deep fall  
into your body, my fascination  
rivets your infidelity.)

You phosphorescent satellite  
can not pull away. Turning  
(do you know I'm here?)  
you slide onto the stranger's sex  
and I glide off  
luminous in artificial night  
looking for two strong hands.

-Salvatore Farinella

## A Guest

You look at his mind  
and what-the-hell  
is going on.  
You look at his hands  
and choke on his life.

He says I would like to be hair  
all over,  
up to my eyes down to my eyes.  
(bobbles his head  
mutters and laughs to himself.)

He says When I was in jail this cat  
took someone into the bathroom  
and slit open his lip held a cup and  
filled it with blood.  
He gave it to me.  
I drank it. He asked me  
What do you like and I said Blood.

His eyes peer at you  
yellow and black.  
Will he  
murder you in your sleep, will he steal your  
silver moon your magic robe?

He says These are the shaky limits  
of your own sanity. I am  
what you desired; what your desire is.

-Aaron Shurin

## HUSTLER JOE

Joe is going back to Arkansas, says it's "on account" his  
Dad's sick, and his brother has a job building boats and  
drives a Cougar. At the hotel, Joe paid his bill by sell-  
ing sections of his pink flesh to San Francisco on the wide  
meat highway. Said it was a pain in the ass. "Course,  
so's the war" he said, preferring women. Yet old Joe really  
gave a man his money's worth; he'd roll either way, fag  
fucking, nothing to it but a little hurting, nothing to a  
mouthful of hot jizz, even an old man's jizz, so long's he's paying.

We was buddies, me and Joe. I'd screw him before he'd go  
out, just to get him loose, for his consumers. At night,  
sometimes, he'd blow me if the lights were out. Such a  
pretty face, real blond hair, marine cut, the "shits" and  
"jesuses" completely natural. Ten dollars hid in the bible,  
six in his pocket, on the prowl. Joe walked through rain  
like it wasn't raining, looked at a green wall and a torn shade  
and saw only his thoughts, beer, broads, the open road.

Tomorrow morning he'll take the Greyhound to Fayetteville,  
the Ozark mountains. They said \$44.25 for a one way ticket.  
I gave him ten dollars for a ride on his back, dreaming of  
horses on the green slopes of Appalachia, but he was still  
\$25.00 short. He pulled up his pants and we said goodbye  
forever I guess, and he was back on the street in his blue  
snugs with his big smile, so available. If interested,  
please write to this poem, care of the wind, because by now  
Joe's been gone so long he's fathered his own kids in Arkansas.

-William Barber

## SILVER BUCKLE

speed nails tack  
me a trail  
strapped  
to your belt  
a stone flower  
blooms granite  
from your silver  
buckled body  
in my bones  
cords on harps  
break me symphonies  
from your still  
welled eyes  
I feel melting  
my spine  
a soul moth  
molting crystals  
on your lips.

Charley Shively  
3/17/70

## from Space Poem

The woman bends back to drink  
Ed bends his head back in a dream  
he arches his neck as if x touched his nipple  
and then x touches his nipple  
and his heart skims up a flight of stairs,  
the myth of ascension  
the burningness of sex of loneliness  
don't touch it touch it it's hot

I concentrate

I start small

a small piece of his skin

and I expand

piece by piece

and when I come

I've created the universe

Fate climbs up my brain and then down.  
I want to be alone with my complexity  
she murmurs,  
and with a moody interest in textures and clouds  
we watch our desires  
yellow into problems and fall from the branch

—Robert Gluck

A simple projection  
(for D.H.)

when you walk in  
at midnight  
the front door bangs.  
soon you will  
join me, nothing  
blunted, nothing  
decayed. you smile,  
your body  
removes its white  
coat and the ther-  
mometer, your hands....  
I've been waiting  
half asleep, warm  
timorous since  
I don't yet believe:  
the old pain belongs  
to other hands and  
faces, that what you  
bring is without  
wrappings, without  
deceit or plan.  
you aren't here now,  
but I hear you  
laughing. the door  
keeps banging.

—Robert Peters

## sex is precious

Sex is precious; do not waste it,  
nor try to explain it and explain it,  
to write it off the way critics  
write off poetry  
with none of the commitment, nor compulsion  
to practice it like poets.

It  
has a magic quality that we need,  
it has a memory of its own  
that is deeper than any single act.  
It is a bond stronger than steel  
forged in fire. A dragon guarded  
by fear and hate, blinding in  
its ferocious beauty,  
soft and cunning, incredibly knowledgeable  
of the inner depths of all creatures.

this is a force that we cannot leave to walk  
alone in the evening, like a ghost  
that we often disavow but who touches us  
entering in the most disarming way.  
And he tells me: your foolish season  
has just begun,  
for we are only fantasy and chemical things  
bouncing back and forth creating explosions,  
planting and tearing when we meet.

Perry Brass  
August, 1972

## PLAN FOR THE TRAVELING

I sell my body at half-price on Monday and Thursday.  
Just like the corner organ-grinder and his two-fisted  
crazyarm monkey. I am eager.  
On Tuesday and Wednesday I come free for the  
taking and the price of a song. I am fair.  
By my superiors I am instructed to charge exorbitant prices  
for all services performed each Friday and Saturday.  
I give nothing and receive nothing. I am greedy.  
Sunday I lay crumpled like scattered newspapers between  
the bedroom sheets. Cigarette tastes are my friends.  
(The week's calendar jumps out in headlines and rave reviews.)  
Across the hall a broken toilet runs and speaks all day  
in strange foreign dialects. I am alone.

—William Torphy  
(from Sebastian Quill No. 3)

## On Seeing Old Faggots at Lincoln Center

the past hundred years speak in his heart  
when Walt Whitman wandered in the New England  
wilderness and met Thoreau and they kissed  
each other and tried so hard to be  
simple men, simple and unafraid  
to not be afraid, to turn the corner  
but not to be afraid, oh, not to be afraid

and it is not that I have conquered fear  
it is that fear is my constant companion  
and we make jokes of each other  
and pain is our silent partner  
whom we don't speak with, but  
who really calls the shots, so

I can see in his face a hundred years  
when he too met Whitman in the wilderness  
of New England and kissed him in the darkness  
only seeking to become, and remain, simple men.

—Perry Brass

## SILVER SONG

heaven sunshine  
cutting holes  
awakens a thrush  
a throat green  
with leaves  
of golden songs  
spread, faded, filtered  
and shaded  
across window walls  
and fire escaping carpets  
napped with plush purple veins  
melodies float  
gentle lines  
from their notes  
strings wound  
in a midday wind  
stirring  
harp, piano, drum  
guitar, wash-tub bass  
and flute  
singing silver  
in harmony.

—Charley Shively  
7/6/70 for Bill Grant

## keep the mind out of this

not the marketplace standing in a line  
beside barstools or along the promenade  
in Brooklyn Heights not wearing  
just a towel in the bathhouse a body  
for perusal & use not that auction  
of clothing hairstyle crotchpadding cocksize

not the merging of spirits or contorted psyches  
into a single butterfly acts of  
consolidation of separate conglomerates  
not the ecstasy the ascension  
after 10 months of Fridays

only this physical act our bodies stripped  
our souls off wandering somewhere else  
bodies wet from lips & sweat  
commitment to the animal in rutting time  
the act gratuitous what there is to give  
given without contract two imperfect physical selves  
fleshy fronds brushed together in the night

—Ron Schreiber

## Ginsberg / Russia

[Ed. Note: The following short section was not included in the Allen Ginsberg interview in Gay Sunshine No. 16 because of space limitations. The interviewer is gay liberationist, Allen Young.]

**GINSBERG:** The commonly accepted figure around Moscow, among people who are in the Writers Union, as well as writers who are not members of the Union but are on the outs, but have been in bug houses or in Siberia, is that between 1935 and 1953 under Stalin 20 million Russians were arrested and sent to Siberia and 15 million didn't come back. And then outside the Writers Union, Yessenin-Volpina said the number was 14-15 million, give or take a million. It's the commonly accepted figure around Moscow.

The explanation for the present heaviness in the Russian mentality, compared, say with Prague in 1965, or even Cuba, is that "all the bureaucrats who did that are still holding on to their chairs and you have to wait for them to die off." The younger poets think that they'll create a cultural revolution with the young scientists, engineers, physiologists, doctors and athletes who all listen to poetry, and that they'll be more liberal. One poet in the Writers Union told me that under Stalin almost every family in Moscow had somebody taken away who didn't come back. For instance, Yev-tuchenko had people in his family who were taken to Siberia and never returned. One thing I heard was that everybody got it in the neck until there was nobody left, and then the police got it in the neck. Stalin created a whole new sub-bureaucracy of police who arrested the old police, who were compromised by killing everybody. There was a twist in the Party line, so there were perhaps several waves of police who found themselves in the same situation as the people they arrested: themselves under arrest, exiled, with no coming back. The police who are in now, after Krushchev, know that, so they don't want it to go too far any more. The police don't want that kind of absolute, poisonous police state any more with mass secret arrests. So that is a kind of safety brake in Russia — the police realize that they can't go too far or else they'll be swept up in the terror. I've never seen this explained in the West.

**YOUNG:** Do you think this is an actual reason for the liberalization?

**GINSBERG:** It's not so much for the liberalization, as a reason why things are not likely to go back to horrific Stalinism.

The people that would have to carry out the worst police state orders realize that those orders would finally be carried out against them. Stalin was so strange, so weirdly humored, with such a sinister sense of humor, that no one wants to get into that box again. The police got smart finally, realizing that it was their karma that got trapped.

**YOUNG:** Did you ever go through a period where you idolized the Soviet Union before you went there?

**GINSBERG:** No. My mother did. My mother was a Communist in Paterson, New Jersey, and she took me to Communist Party meetings, right off River Street, when I was seven years old, back in 1933. I remember them selling garbanzos. And I heard Israel Amter speak, and Scott Nearing, in those days. In my family, among my aunts in New York and the Bronx, there was an idolization of Stalin, the Party line. My father was against it, as a Socialist. On the other hand, my father went all the way to the other extreme; between 1961 and 1965 he was still backing the war in Vietnam. So between the Scylla of Stalinism and the Charybdis of anti-Stalinism, there was not much of a left in America, really, until the independent hippies came along, with the beatnik really, and introduced a whole new anarchism, which was the old American anarchism like the Wobblies, up to San Francisco and Kenneth Rexroth. That was always a viable tradition of intellectual anarchism, communalism, free love.

**YOUNG:** Did the 1950's hipsters all think of yourselves as anarchists?

**GINSBERG:** Oh, yeah. Kenneth Rexroth and Robert Duncan back in 1948-49, in San Francisco (I wasn't there); and in 1943, 45 Brother Antoninus and Philip Lamantia, both poets, had an anarchist circle in San Francisco. They were reading Kropotkin, and gay lib was accepted among them. That was the traditional bohemian-Anarchist-West Coast-Wobbly-Chicago-American Populist [tradition].

**YOUNG:** What do you mean when you say that gay lib was accepted among them?

**GINSBERG:** I mean there were all sorts of gay cats around. Robert Duncan was gay and he was a sturdy member of the anarchist circle, I think. The panoply of tolerances and understandings and gnostic (mystic, psychedelic) awarenesses, as well as social hopes and humors, were already fully developed in the 1940's and that continued right on through in San Francisco, and in some circles in New York.

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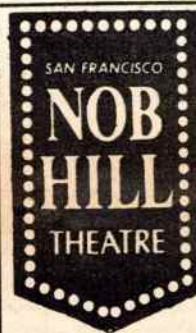
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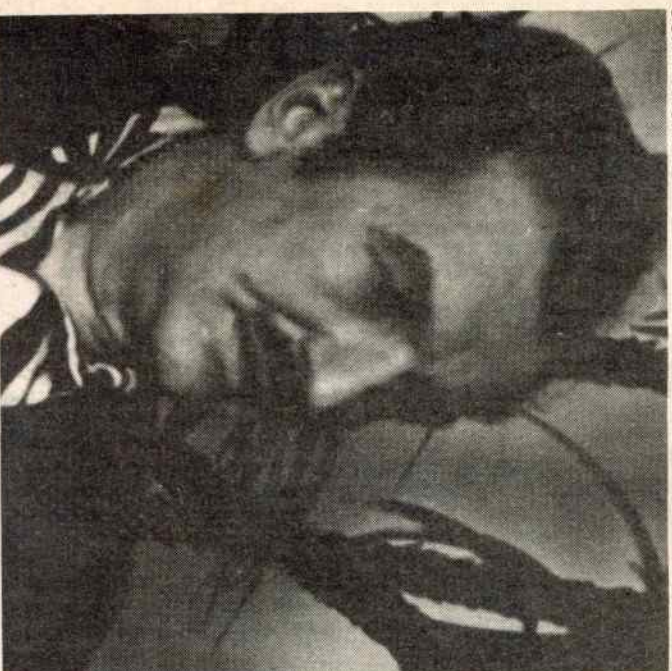
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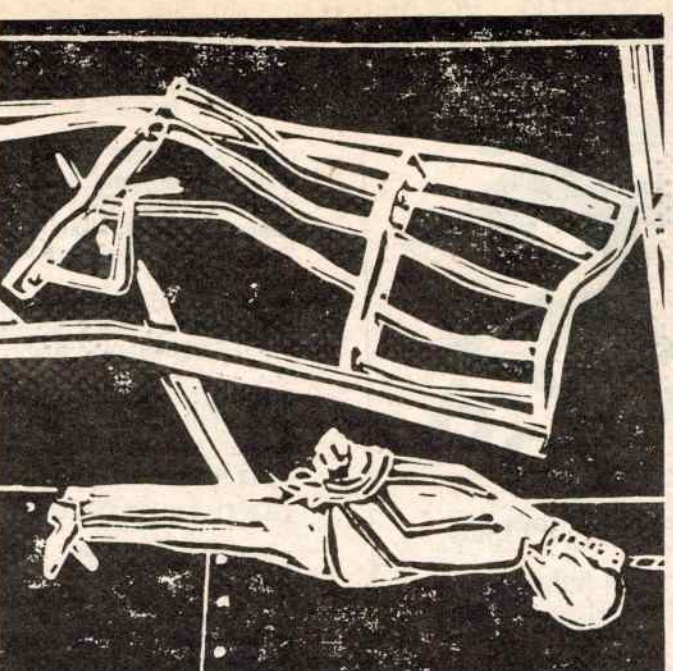
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A Newspaper of Gay Liberation

John Wieners



Ned Rorem



Samuel Reese

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William Barber

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.35 Calif. / .50 Elsewhere