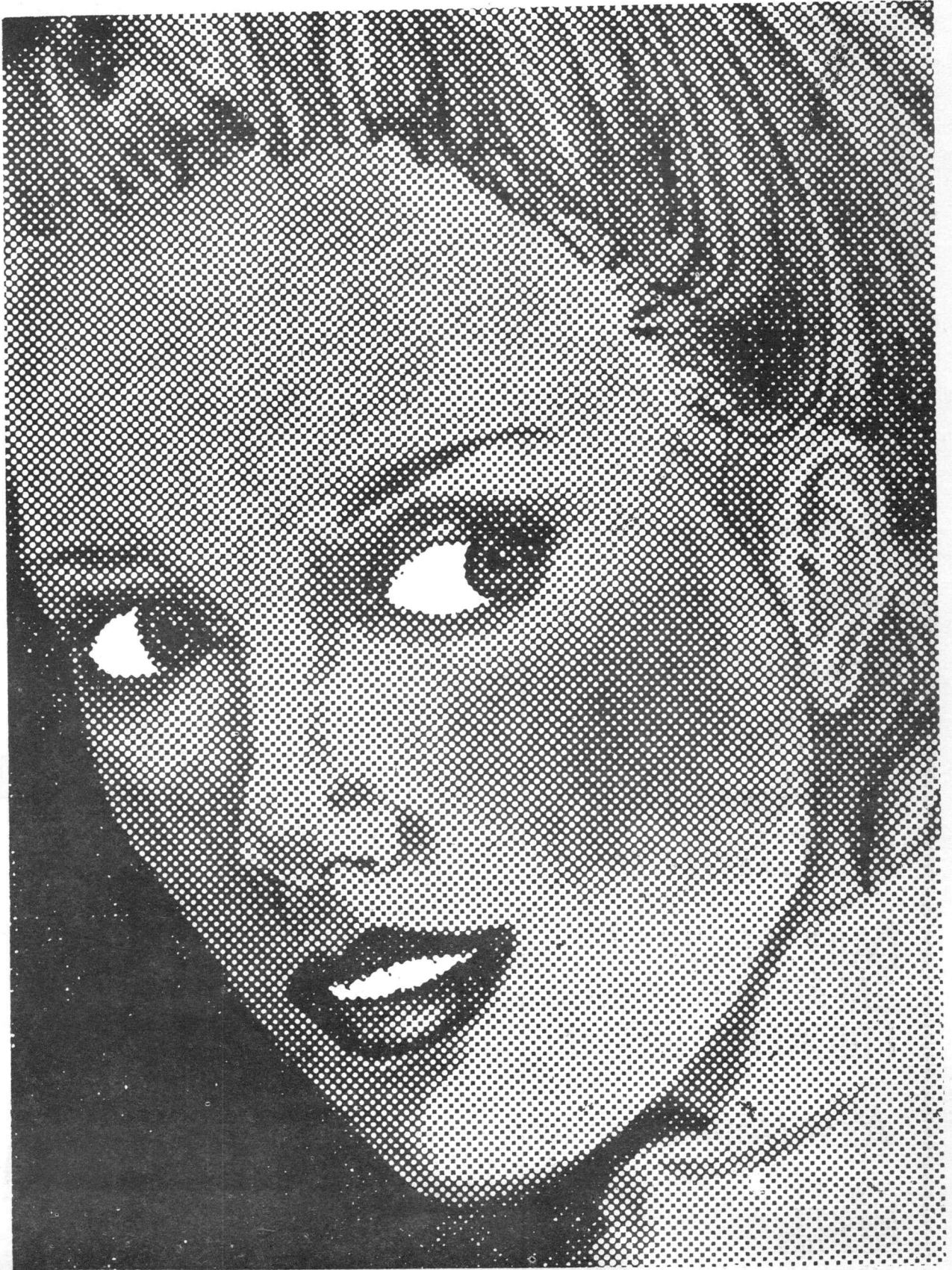




Renaissance

February 1978

COMING OUT FEMALE



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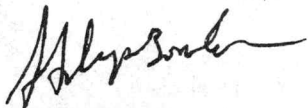
FROM A WOMAN EDITOR

Arlys Bowler is a (just now) 21 yr. old female philosopher-poet and funny person (who happens to be frightfully and fervidly fond of F sounds). She has two guinea pigs, a bicycle, a console sewing machine, a quasar TV, a receiver, turntable and speakers that'll pass for a stereo and a collection of trains, all of which she plays with while she thinks of things like this. Next tuesday she is going to go insane: her typewriter will be out of the shop and she will be able to compose prose to her heart's content. Arlys is very into small magazine publication. Arlys is into Renaissance Newsletter. Arlys has, though, a limited amount of time and energy and a finite number of ideas. Arlys needs coworkers, female coworkers to work on the Renaissance Newsletter.

That is a poet's portrait of my dilemma. I am Arlys. I am currently the only female editor on the Newsletter staff. We have a second woman who is contributing and may join us, but need more women. There is so much that I don't know about or have not become involved in or don't have time to get involved with now. I think lesbian women could have a voice in print if we got together on having one.

I have found the men on the staff of Renaissance Newsletter and the male contributors I've met very pleasant to work with. And pleasant as friends. They really are open to our contribution. They have not at any time that I've worked with them referred to the publication as their newsletter and have been very sensitive and responsive to feedback from other women and me about the Newsletter. But we'd like more. And we'd like FEMALE contributors and we'd like the editorial policy affected by other women's views than just my own.

If you are interested in assigned work, or have ideas of your own or any feedback at all, I would appreciate hearing from you. I am reachable through the Newsletter or at 251-1262 late evenings.



FROM A MALE EDITOR

Recently, since we increased the distribution and changed layout, style, etc. of the Renaissance Newsletter, several women have been reading the publication. As a result, we now have two women on the editorial staff. Without debating or relating the history of the lesbian movement in Madison with respect to the gay male movement, it is a fact that Lesbians and gay men have not been entirely in agreement on the "best" way to find solutions to problems involving homosexual persons, nor on the "best" way to enlighten the Madison community on the subject of gayness. This is not to say that there has not been cooperation. On the contrary, there have been some remarkable presentations on being a Lesbian or a gay man, given to civic, educational, or religious groups, where men and women have worked together to ensure a successful program.

There is no question that there will always be differences of opinion within and between the lesbian and gay male communities in Madison, if for no other reason than there are probably as many approaches, solutions, opinions and lifestyles as there are people in the gay community. We recognize these differences and believe that some differences will serve to strengthen subsequent issues of the Renaissance Newsletter (slated, by the way, for a name change and a major change in format--newsletter to magazine--editorial policy, and distribution as early as the March 1978 issue). We want to invite more women to become involved in editing, writing, graphics, etc.

To the best of our knowledge, the lesbian community has no regular publication with mass distribution. The Renaissance Newsletter would like to become that outlet for women as well as men. We realize that not all women as Lesbians/feminists/separatists will be in favor of printing their views in a publication which is "seen as" entirely dominated by the gay male community.

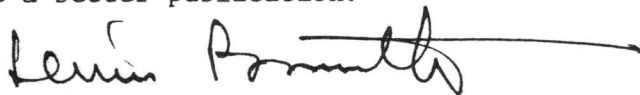
It is true that until recently, the Newsletter has been staffed by men since the time it grew from humble beginnings at the

FROM A MALE EDITOR

Gay Center. But that has changed, and we hope it will change even more over the coming months and years.

Speaking for the Newsletter as one of its editors, and for the Gay Center as Treasurer, I want to make the following distinction clear: Editors, authors, artists, and other contributors--women and men alike--decide what is printed in the Newsletter. As in the larger world of publications, theatre, etc., the Gay Center--Renaissance of Madison, Inc.--publishes (or underwrites) the Newsletter. This is a financial arrangement. In no way does the Gay Center "control" the content or editorial policy of the publication. The editors--who do change from month to month, issue to issue--and the contributors and authors--likewise--are the heart of the Newsletter. Without them, there would be none. We solicit manuscripts--sometimes controversial and even self-critical--from men and women, gay or straight, in the Madison community at large.

We believe that if there is to be a collective Lesbian/Gay publication which can serve all gay people in Madison, we have to have women on the editorial staff. We already publish and will continue to publish articles, poetry, etc. submitted by women. But, only when we can cooperate in a genuinely effective way, will there ever be a publication for all gay people. We can't do it without women and we don't want to. We hope that you--women readers--will understand that we are serious and will lend your support and your ideas to make a better publication.



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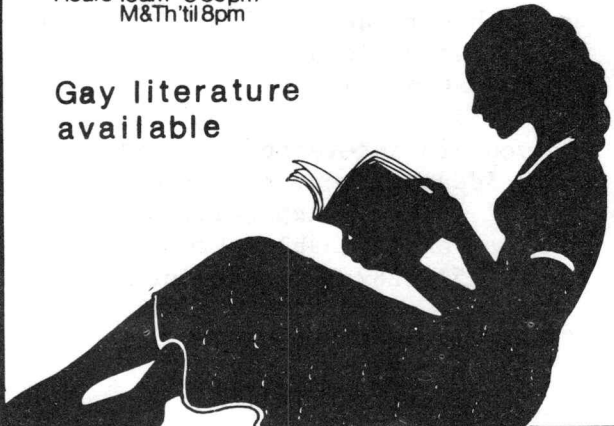
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PERSONS / PLEDGES / POSTAGE

We are proud to announce the addition of three new people to the Renaissance staff. Every new member of our effort means a new direction for our publication. We may even change our name for the next issue.

Arlys Bowler is the first woman to work in any capacity for Renaissance, marking a significant change from our previous policies. She has accepted the very difficult position of advertising manager and will need considerable support from the business community. She will also be a regular contributor of poetry and prose.

Another equally important newcomer is the professional graphic artist, David Elrod, who has agreed to serve as our art director for one year. Many people are familiar with his distinctive style which should bring drastic changes in all aspects of our publication.

Carl Insoft, a counselor at the Gay Center and an employee of the Cardinal Bar, will be replacing Clark Williams as the distribution manager.

Bruce Wright, one of the founders of the new and improved Renaissance, will be retiring with this issue to resume his personal studies. As already mentioned, the invaluable Clark Williams (if only we could use your real name) is leaving. He is off to Space City (Houston) with his loved one.

We still need you! If you can't come to meetings and all that, you can send us an article, photograph or graphic design which can be reproduced in black & white. Don't wait to be asked!

There was a time, in the early stages of the Newsletter, when we used to include a self-addressed envelope for pledges and donations. Even when the publication of the Newsletter was less reliable than it now is, the Gay Center survived almost exclusively as a result of unpaid labor/services and donations or regular pledges. Now, as the Gay Center has increased its services--see articles in this and the January 1978 issues--it seems that the concept of pledges and donations has lost its acceptance among the gay men.

Just because we're visible in the form of a newsletter, does not mean that we're thriving! We can't afford to remind you every so often that you once agreed to send the Gay Center a modest sum each month. We can only rely on your conscience for that. And, if you can't afford to make a regular monthly pledge, please try to make a donation, however modest, by mailing it to the Gay Center (PO Box 687, Madison, 53701), or by dropping a donation in the boxes located near the Newsletter pile in your favorite bar or place of business. In this issue we have enclosed, perhaps for the last time, an envelope for that purpose.

Women: If you wish to make a donation to the Lesbian Switchboard or to any other women's group in Madison, you can send it to us and we will see that it is promptly forwarded. Please make checks payable to Renaissance of Madison, or to the women's group of your choice.

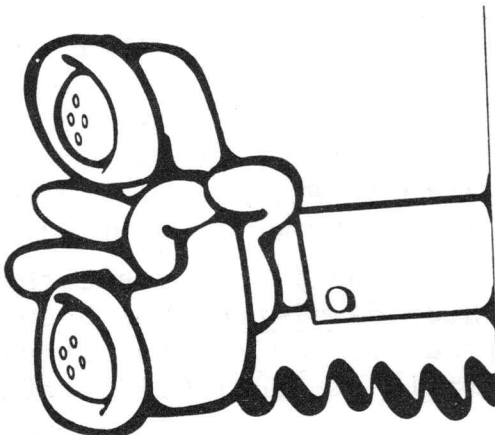
Until this issue the Renaissance Newsletter has been coming to you--if you receive it via U.S. mail--at FIRST CLASS rates. With

Continued on Page 4

PERSONS/PLEDGES/POSTAGE

the current format, the costs of mailing out approximately 300 copies have become almost impossible to bear. There are two things that we can do collectively to help keep postage costs down. First, we ask you--we "beg" you--to let us know immediately if your address has changed, if you have had to pay postage due, or if you receive more than one copy per household.

Second, we are trying a new mailing procedure with this issue. We can save approximately 30% on postage if we mail the Newsletter **THIRD CLASS**. In most instances you will notice no difference whatsoever. This issue is being mailed in the same brown envelope (closed, but not sealed) as the last 4 issues. We believe that this has caused no one any difficulty with respect to privacy or confidentiality. There have been no complaints, in any case. When we change the format of the Newsletter to a magazine style, it will still come in an envelope to ensure confidentiality. However, if you have any reservations about receiving the Newsletter **THIRD CLASS** this time or in the future, notify us promptly by calling the Gay Center (257-7575) or 238-3648 (evenings). This is an experiment to cut costs, and we hope you will let us know how you feel about it.



EDITORS

Lewis Bosworth
Arlys Bowler
David Elrod
Carl Insoft
David D. Smith
Lenny Tropp
Bruce Wright

GRAPHICS

Steve Applequist
David Elrod
Kevin Sullivan

February 1978



COMING OUT FEMALE: Part I

AUTHOR'S NOTE: The following letter was written in reply to a series of questions from my mother, a summary of which would read, "When is Mr. Right coming along?" Four copies were sent between October 13th and November 21st. To date, no verbal or written response has been received.

13 October 1977

Dear Old Lady Mother--

I received your letter a few minutes ago. After reading it, I attempted to return to reading a book, but to no avail: my mind was on writing all of you; on writing you the truth about me, about my happiness, about how I feel about all of you...It will probably be quite difficult. I don't know how you'll take it.

Over the summer I changed a great deal. Roger says I have changed at a velocity faster than the speed of light. I have become extremely happy and, in the words of my psychiatrist, Normal. I have been writing so much (poetry and fiction) that some nights I can't stop the flow and go to German in the a.m. without having slept. I have an extremely active social life: it is not a rare day when I have a breakfast date and two to three lunch dates to boot (seldom have supper engagements: like to sit alone and think at that hour). I am on two student government committees, but have mixed feelings about those. I have quite a few friends and get on excellently with my teachers. In Russian Literature I was chosen the professor's assistant (go-for) and she refers to me as dearest. My psychiatrist treats me wonderfully and after many (lately almost all) sessions, we go riding in his Mercedes Benz (with one exception: it was in the shop, so we took his wife's truck) (She is also a psychiatrist). I have lost quite a bit of weight--31 pounds (that's 4-5" smaller Levi's size)--but I must get well because lying home with the flu has already put two pounds back on me. In Madison I seem to have become a well-respected person, if not an on-the-verge-of-becoming-famous one (I don't mean to relate the two. One can be respected without being famous and vice versa).

People have stopped me in the street several times and asked me, "Aren't you Arlys Bowler, the poet?" I reply that I am Arlys. Sometimes they hug me or kiss my hands. "I'm so glad I've met you." I am respected enough by my teachers, trusted enough, that many of them have sent my exams home to me while I've been sick--which means they assumed I would not consult texts or other people or go overtime. As a philosopher it has been my goal in life to become virtuous, i.e., a very good person, literally one who achieves a level of excellence in the art of being a human being. I am told by many that I have achieved some of this. It is not a once-and-for-all thing, though, like becoming 5'6" tall; it's a constant--but I believe worthwhile--struggle. People tell me I have sugar coated my virtue in a sense of humor which takes me much closer to the crowds than some people who attain goodness can go. That's a nice compliment.

All of the above is, as you can see, very positive, a wonderful way to live. Those things I was not afraid of telling you. And what I am about to tell you-- I guess I don't fear the consequences for myself. I have a strong ego and do not feel threatened by very many things in my life. I am afraid for all of you, for how you will feel about this. I promise never to intentionally embarrass or threaten you with this in any way. If you have privately grounded discomforts, though, I will probably not be able to solve them for you. That will be a dialogue within the realm of your own soul, which I cannot enter and which you cannot fairly (to any of us) hold me responsible for. To get on with it then: Several years ago, Mother, I told you that I preferred women to men in love. You shrugged and replied that that was most likely a passing fancy that many people pass through. Which may have been wise enough at the time, but there are also many people who don't pass through it and I am one of them: I do not believe my preference will pass and I don't believe I hope for its passing at all. I believe I was in such a troubled state between winter '75 and early summer '77 partly because I would not admit this to myself. I had felt like a walking lie.

Continued on Page 6

Last summer, after I realized this, and admitted it to myself, I felt a tremendous relief. I don't consider my feelings abnormal. I thought it would be a very difficult life to lead, but haven't found that the case. All my friends accept (I don't like that word--they LOVE) me, are in most cases closer to me than before. Many of them have said I only managed to keep the secret to myself, that it was only a secret to me. Roger stressed that I am almost incapable of masking my feelings, that when I'd been in love it was so clear (obvious) that no one could miss the fact. I want to say that I am not like M. She was a very angry homosexual. She blamed many things in her life on other people's attitudes toward homosexuality, when in many cases real conflicts based on other issues honestly existed. I consider myself a very happy homosexual. The word is Gay. M. also got herself into trouble that was probably avoidable, by forcing issues with the objective of threatening straight people with who she was and herself with their thoughts on that. It was/is masochistic. I don't believe I behave that way either. I never lie, but I don't believe in force either. And I don't go to what have been called "down and out bottom of the barrel" bars. (I don't know that Madison has any). I do go to a place where I am a member, but it is very classy. They might even be called selective. (I heard the door person going off duty tell the door person coming on duty: "No gawkers. No leather types.") And I don't go all that often--on weekends with friends and on rarer occasions alone.

Being Gay, because of society's many and varied attitudes toward Gay people, is unavoidably also a political move. I am an activist, but a quiet one. And not at all an angry one. Being a philosopher I can give ethical arguments of my own and spot flaws in other people's. But, being a good philosopher, I use the method of counter example and question. And I don't engage in that all that often. I guess I carry on such discussions when I and the other person agree to, with either one initiating. I guess I'd say I don't believe that being Gay is an ethical or moral question in and of itself. How one behaves as a gay person can become an ethical issue. How one behaves toward gay people can become an issue. For example, if you lie to your lover, I don't know I'd

say that is real ethical. But it's the lying that I am addressing and not the person's Gayness.

History has had some outstanding people on its pages who were Gay. Walt Whitman, Michaelangelo, Chaikowsky. There was a famous economist, too, but I can't remember his name right now. Radclyffe Hall (a woman) was Gay. As was Gertrude Stein. Freud, unfortunately, was not. There are people alive today, making history, who are Gay--some of whom I've met and have earned the respect of, to my delight.

I will finish by saying that I trust you with all of this. I do not think, like Sheila did, that all of you are ignorant and foolish and incapable of understanding such things. I haven't seen you act prejudiced toward anyone yet. I respect you all. I love you all. If you suffer grief over the contents of this letter, I will respect your grief, and only ask that in return you respect my happiness.

If you would like to visit me in Madison, that is fine--if you tell me ahead of time and if I do not have too much work to be able to be attentive to you. And if you come for constructive reasons. I am strong and extremely faithful to myself, so I am quite honest in this invitation and its stipulations.

I'll be hoping to hear from you soon.

Love

ARLYS



MCCREA REPLIES

"To employ personalities, neither labor nor intellect is required."

--Jeremy Bentham, The Book of Fallacies

Lenny Tropp's attack on me in the January Renaissance Newsletter is not only remarkable for its overkill but for its dishonesty. He makes the case that my criticisms of the institution of the disco bar are merely reflections of my own supposed personal hangups and failings. Yet Lenny and I are virtual strangers. We have never shared as much as a single conversation.

Lenny proposes that the only reason I, or presumably anyone, would criticize the disco scene is because of personal inadequacy. "The trouble is not disco, honey; it's you," he says. I reject this sort of emotional fascism whether it comes from a straight psychiatrist or a disco devotee.

The evidence of gay dissatisfaction with the bar scene as our major social outlet is everywhere. Polls taken by the Gay Center and formal needs-assessment workshops conducted within the last year--which included a broad spectrum of gay men--came up with the same answer consistently: We want better social alternatives.

Even within the newsletter in which Lenny was dismissing my criticisms as imaginary, there were two items which supported my perception. The review of "Looking for Mr. Goodbar" described singles bars as "exploitative, unreal places offering unhappy pleasure... reminiscent of scenes many of us have been through" in gay bars. And there was an item announcing the formation of a gay men's social group. It began: "Tired of the bars, or don't like going? Would like to meet other people without smoke, swirling lights, and loud music? Would like some gay friends you can talk with?"

Lenny would probably call the people who wrote these remarks losers too. In fact, the most repulsive thing about his essay is his vivid hatred of gay men who are not a part of what he calls "the regular dance crowd." Just listen to him:

"Frequently they just glare reproachfully at the dancers, as if the movement and the music disturbed their concentration. At the Back Door the strict cruisers used to stand in formation, encroaching upon the dance floor, all facing straight ahead, speechless, arranged like frozen corpses in a morgue elevator. Countless times I wished for a 'Down' button to send them plummeting."

Lenny and I have seen the same people. They were the people I described as "awkward" and "intimidated." I make the assumption that these men are not "corpses" but usually likeable gay brothers who are immobilized by the setting. When you see them on the street or at gay picnics they are much different people.

Lenny, however, sees them as the living dead and fantasizes about a Final Solution. After that dehumanizing statement, no one should have further illusions about Lenny as a gay liberationist.

As for the "politics of disco," I will only say that I never made any criticism of disco music or dancing or of people's right to enjoy it. (Unlike arrogant Lenny, I do not say "shame, shame, shame if you do dance to it.") I like some disco music quite a lot, although most of it seems plastic and monotonous to me. But that is a side issue.

The point I wanted to make was that while the commercial institution of the disco has become a magnet for gay energies, it is not a substitute for a gay politics or a gay culture, and it obviously does not serve the many needs that people look to it to serve. In a way, Lenny and I are agreed on this last point, but our responses are quite different. I say, build gay community. He says, love the disco or leave it.

--Ron McCrea

MAD CITY BOOKSTORES

Have you ever tried to find a gay book in the University Bookstore? Let's face it, those people are afraid of homosexuals. Many people have spent hours looking through the vast collection of greeting cards trying in vain to find an adequate message for their loved one. Forget it, they don't need you so don't give them a goddamn dime. However, there are other places (owned and operated by real life human beings) which are better able to meet your needs.

Going My Way? recently attempted to open a non-pornographic bookstore which would have been modeled after the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookstore in Greenwich Village. Much to everyone's dismay, two weeks before the scheduled opening it was discovered that a city ordinance prohibits having any business other than a restaurant in a tavern. But all is not lost. Ruth and Michael of Gilman St. Books (recently moved a block away to University Ave.) were the chief advisers for the aborted bookstore and they decided to expand their politically oriented gay section into a full-scale operation complete with every gay publication you could ever hope to read. Michael tells me that he will start ordering toward the end of January and would appreciate any input from interested members of the gay community.

The first bookstore to devote considerable space to gay literature was the Madison Book Coop. The collection of lesbian literature is astounding and the gay men's section is slowly catching up. Their poetry section is outstanding and they have the honor of being the poorest bookstore in town. They need your money and they deserve it. For four dollars plus tax you can get a lifetime membership which entitles you to a 10% discount on new books and also allows you to sell your unwanted books on consignment. I've probably sold at least \$50 worth of books there, and it helps them, too, since they get 25% of whatever was paid for them (you set your own prices).

A Room of One's Own is Madison's feminist bookstore with a very good collection of lesbian literature and a small but well selected men's section which is devoted primarily to gay men. The store itself is very pleasant to be in and usually has an art display courtesy of the Wisconsin Women in the Arts. They also have numerous posters, records and T-shirts (as do the Book Coop and Gilman St.). It may be the best source of non-sexist children's literature.

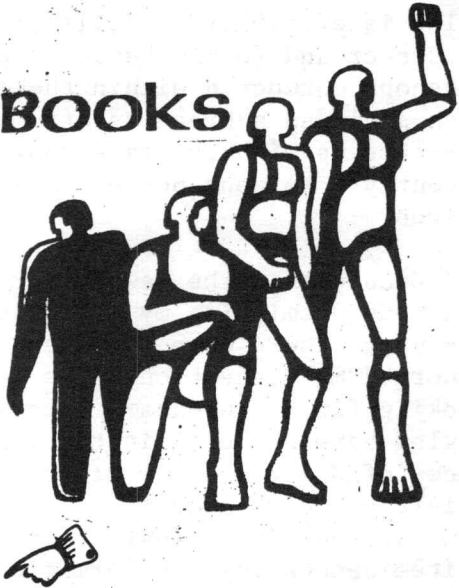
Pure Pleasure is the place to go for over-priced hardcore pornography. You'd think that with all those gay dollars they rake in that they would feel obliged to advertise in the Renaissance Newsletter.

The Madison Book Coop, A Room of One's Own, and Gilman Street Books all advertise frequently (not every issue; unlike Pure Pleasure, they cannot afford to) and I hope you will give them all of your business. They all rely on volunteer support so don't hesitate to approach them if you're a bookworm.

--David D. Smith

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LESBIANS ARE MOTHERS, TOO

Eleven year-old Jillian Anne Miller needs your help. Now living with her lesbian mother in Ann Arbor, Michigan, she wants to remain living with her mother. But last June, Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Frederick Ziem, after citing a press account describing President Carter's disapproval of homosexuality, denied 38-year-old Margareth Miller custody of her child. In so doing, Ziem sent against Jillian's wishes, a court-appointed psychologist's recommendation, as well as the report of the friend of the court. Instead, Ziem ruled in favor of Margareth Miller's divorced husband, Paul Miller, of Sterling Heights, Michigan.

On Monday, January 9, 1978, Margareth Miller's attorney, Shirley Burgoyne, of Ann Arbor, appeared before a three-judge panel on the Michigan Court of Appeals. She argued that Ziem's ruling be reversed, on the ground that the lower-court judge had ignored criteria provided in the state's Child Custody Act, in making his decision. Instead, anti-gay prejudice was the determining factor, with Ziem wondering aloud about the alleged "threat" of a lesbian environment to Jillian.

THE REAL THREAT TO JILLIAN IS NOT HER MOTHER, BUT A HOMOPHOBIC JUDICIAL SYSTEM!

As Jillian recently wrote to the Washtenaw County chapter of the National Organization for Women:

"I want to be with my mother... I feel so much safer with my mother and we do things that we really enjoy together. I am scared when I go to bed some nights because I

have terrible dreams. It hurts me to be taken away from my mother. I really do love my mother and she is special to me. I hope people will help me and my mother fight the court so we can win the case, so I can stay with my mother--and I do love my mother."

You can support Jillian and her mother by discussing this injustice with your friends and acquaintances. You can write to your local newspaper demanding that justice be done! And you can help defray some of the high cost of defense (already totalling some \$3000) by sending a check to the Margareth and Jillian Defense Fund, 111 N. Main, Ann Arbor, MI 48107. Checks should be made out to Shirley Burgoyne.

Jillian and Margareth need your support to win this case! They are happy that the University of Michigan's Michigan Dailey editorialized January 11, 1978, in their support, under the heading "Lesbians are mothers, too." Noting that the outcome could set an "important precedent" in Michigan, the newspaper demanded that the Oakland County Circuit Court ruling be struck down: "It's time for some real justice to be dispensed." More community support is needed if justice is to prevail!

--From a flyer put out by the Margareth and Jillian defense committee, Gay Academic Union, 3405 Michigan Union, Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109. (313) 763-4186. Labor donated.

SOME THOUGHTS ON GAY HISTORIOGRAPHY

by Jon Hall

(Note: This is the final part of a three-part series of articles on the destruction of gay history and its relation to gay identity.)

The invisibility of gay contributions to human history and to our contemporary culture is likely to continue. By itself, that would be no great cause for concern. There is no reason, if sexual orientation is not a defining or a very relevant characteristic, why gay people should have a special interest in "gay history"--or for that matter, why there should even be such a thing. And it's not obvious, if gayness is a non-issue, why gay people have a special claim to the heritage of accomplishment by other gay people.

There remain, however, several good reasons for lamenting the nearly complete invisibility of the gay contributions to our civilization--and for trying to do something about it, even if it's only creating a "Gay T-shirt," as some of us did last summer.

The first is to save the gay adolescent struggling with his/her first crisis of sexual self-awareness some of the agony and self-loathing that still frequently accompany these crises. Second, even gay people who have accepted their sexuality do not always have enough gay friends and acquaintances to see that there is no pattern of character or ability inherent in gayness. These people, too, can only profit from knowing of others who have taken charge of their lives and made lasting contributions to humanity in all forms of endeavor.

Finally, though, it must be admitted that the chances of gay people fulfilling their highest potential depends greatly upon the attitudes of the non-gay majority. And there remains, even today, a nearly total ignorance among non-gay people of the contributions of, and the variety among, gay people.

This forces them to operate upon invalid stereotypes, even if they want to be enlightened and tolerant. I wonder, for instance, if the outrageous article in a recent Isthmus magazine (characterizing the Madison gay movement, and by extension Madison gay people generally, as obsessed with bar rivalries) made it into print in part because the Madison gay community is not perceived as being part of any larger, more diversified and more worthy tradition. An even better example is the Capital Times editorial of last summer opposing Anita Bryant. The editors' hearts were clearly in the right place, but the most noteworthy (and almost the only) example of gay greatness they could cite was Walt Whitman. Probably as a result, the editors referred to gay people as a merely "harmless" minority.

As long as nongay people are ignorant of the quality and variety (not to mention the sheer quantity) of gay cultural and historical accomplishment, there is little hope of convincing them that gay is as good as straight, that it is not abnormal in anything but a statistical sense, and that like heterosexuality it is not inherently a limit on human potential.

For these reasons, I think we need a more aggressive display of gay history. This means, among other things, that we need to stop quibbling about "absolute proof." For every person whom we wrongly label gay, there are thousands--millions, really--who are wrongly labeled straight. If that imbalance doesn't bother you, you probably should ask yourself if you really believe that gay is as good as straight. In any case, why should we accept the burden of showing greater proof on the question of gayness than we require on any other historical question? Again, to do so is to tacitly acknowledge that gayness is something shameful, like guilt itself: not to be concluded except upon proof beyond a reasonable doubt. Finally, the people who most object to labelling a great person as gay are likely to be either nongays who are

homophobic or gays suffering from the effects of it; and, remember that it's because of homophobia, really, that we lack better proof than we have.

We need to be more confident about who's a part of our particular heritage, and we need to be more aggressive in insisting upon it. Not because it's a uniformly positive heritage--Hermann Goering, too, was some sort of a homosexual--but because its very diversity proves that gayness by itself is morally and psychologically neutral. Irrelevant. Wholly nondefining. That's what nongay and gay people alike have the most trouble believing.

Mary Renault has one of her characters inform another that whereas nongay society and nongay history are "horizontal," gay society and gay history are "vertical." That is, crudely speaking, straights are mostly unremarkable--neither brilliantly evil nor brilliantly accomplished in things admirable--but gays are disproportionately represented at both ends of the scales. We have the luminaries like Plato, Leonardo and Michaelangelo, but we also have the dregs of each culture--the psychopaths and the truly malevolent, les vrais miserables.

No living writer, I think, has done more to provide gay people with morally and spiritually uplifting patterns for their lives than Renault, but I think even she underestimates how many unremarkable gay people have passed through history invisibly. With the heart of the continuum cut out--the masses under the bell of the bell-shaped curve--it's no wonder that gay history looks skewed toward the ends. But I suspect that it isn't. As a group, we are remarkable. And that's the source of our truest liberation: We can be anything we want to be--godly (divine?) in our greatness and goodness...supremely fucked-up...or nothing special.

But our freedom to choose is increased as knowledge of "gay history" increases. If you don't know it, learn it. You might begin by reading A.W. Rowse's Homosexuals in History and by buying one or both of the T-shirts sold by the Counseling Center. If you already know it, stand up for it--refute the assumptions of heterosexuality when it's appropriate to do so, and wear your T-shirts, which are

at least ninety-five percent accurate. And--the real point to all of this--be worthy of the best on it.



MIDWEST PROVINCE

From midwest provinces
linked to frisco
through electric toaster wires
and television tubes

i wait

for chances
from boredom
to
become a moviestar
to eat red snappers
on silver plates

To tip champagne
out of high heels

To dance forever
with you,

past neon vegas lights
I zoom
on intercontinental
trolleys

electricized

synthesized

automized.

we dream of white poplars and robert frost
poems
of greens and browns and one-eyed susans
in sticky summers on old porches
with grandpa

pow!

zap!

batman and robin steal life
with exclamation points
rubbed out
and to excess

between flashbacks

and adjusting the set,
touchtone
and you.

--David Garcia

POETRY

Two Evolutionary Poems

I

We turned one night, my lover and I, from in front to behind
and felt the reversal of ancient events
the old but once still sudden span untense
that first began when monkey-men
turned front to front
and reached higher, with hairy paws,
for surrogate buttocks, the dangling simian breasts.
Those great-great-uncles must have been perplexed
at nude savannah-like expanses stretched
between smooth portals and puckery ports.
They opened their moist and rubbery mouths
to nourish their noses en route;
their faces met, and tongues and open eyes and minds:
So began the age of our sublime distress,
of troubles sweetly rocked to rest
when I feel my lover in front behind
his heart pounding against my back, shouting
let me in! hold me in! I'm
catching up, jumping
inside coming within
from behind.

II

He never thought he would end
like this, supine on the snow.
The blue baboon is cold,
his head tilted back
and something red about his face,
the nipples slack on his massive chest,
his thick, hairy skin loose
like a costume discarded.

It is sad to find you here.
Was it a violent death?
There is no blood--
that puckered chinese red
is only the worn-out leather flag
of your desire, the bright, weathered
genitals you wore like jewels
above punctured nostrils, quivering black,
beneath lowering eyes.
The pale snow
drifts across your fur
dark and wet.
Your sky-blue skin is bluer,
father,
now that you are dead.

--Bruce Wright



Six Exceptions

- 1962: While on an expedition through a puddle, my foot becomes entrapped. Certain it's the Creature From the Black Lagoon, I proceed to scream bloody murder. Only to be rescued by a less adventuresome father who remarks all too realistically that it's only a piece of pipe.
- 1970: After several requests for it, I model my feet on the center table of the Camp Sidney Cohen dining hall to the hoots and hollers of an audience of assorted counselors and outing staff.
- 1971: My left foot is impaled by a (later) suspicious-looking stick on a sand bar while on a canoe trip down the Mississippi. Duffing out the remainder of the voyage, my vanity as a sportswoman crushed, I attempt to cure myself with humor: "Isn't this just the most DIVINE wound you've ever seen? A holy foot. Ha ha. Oink."
- 1974: An old woman in Amsterdam who's into feet spies the terminal organs of my legs. We go to a store and have them measured. 34½ and 35 , left and right respectively. Her eyes brighten and she escorts me aside, remarking, "Isn't small beautiful?"
- 1975: Playing footsie with a friend after midnight, I soon discover the beginning of the end of myself.
- 1977: I shock the medicine men when, independent of other symptoms, my right foot displays a positive Babinski.

These are six exceptions. During the other 14 years of my life, my feet have led a rather quiet existence, inconspicuous beneath an assortment of brown shoes and socks.

--Arlys Bowler

VISITOR FROM THE CLOSET

Sticky gauze underpants aren't fun
for you
or for me
so why do you wear them?

there's a lull in the conversation
there's a lull
 in the conversation
in the conversation there is a lull

let's review
you rang the bell
you walked into the house
you entered the room
you sat on the bed
my bell my house my room my bed
(not to get possessive
just to get particular)
my bell my house my room my bed your problem
horny if you go
homo if you stay

sudden cramps?
a touch of mortal fear?
relax
salivate
take your shoes off
don't clutch your cowlick
don't squeeze your toes together
it's your foot not a hoof
inhale
exhale
wiggle your small parts
(the digits are the midgets of the self)
spread out
discover muscles you don't use in football

now how about some eye contact
did Lot's wife get hard for your sins?
then don't look back
look forward
look for me
but you're so frantic
blurred
K-Y on the windshield
downhill
no brakes

maybe you should be a stockbroker
keep your mind off these trivial things
who you are who you love who loves you
LIFE
you make me feel like a cat
purring
blindfolded
up against an aquarium
either swallow your secret or shout it

there's a lull in the conversation
a lull
funny how time stands still
when nobody's having
anybody

--Lenny Tropp



Steak

Your eyes are blue as
ahh
the sky when it's cloudy
and threatens to rain
and I have to carry a dark umbrella
wherever I go
to the Post Office
or the Meat Market
where the butcher will greet me with,
"I like the sky when it's blue like today!"
and he will pat the two pieces of steak
with a special fondness
as he wraps them in white paper
the blood staining the edges
and I will come home to you
as the sky is clearing
and the clouds have moved westward
and the blood in the steak has fully
stained the wrapper,
then I will look into your blue eyes
stranger.

--Credo Enriquez

Fat Lady in the Snow

Who envies
a fat lady in the snow?

That fat lady
wearing layers of food-stained
non-resort outfit,
who carries a bagful of bananas
in the freshly falling snow?
Look at her
Look at her
traverse the slush
with a grace worthy
of Imperial Russia,
the polar light brushing the image
so that the lady becomes simply
a dark corpuscular blur
in the constantly collapsing white
universe -
Look how the wind whips her scarf
into something festive
her pink fingers sweeping the space
in the spare choreography
of survival.

--Credo Enriquez

HARRY HOUDINI

You old queens whose eyes and heads work like
Rose-tinted glasses

Watching me turn tricks nightly you
thought perhaps

that I was a real
MAGICIAN

But

I escaped from your chains-- all those words and foul
Promises.

I escaped from closets any of you would have
suffocated in.

From Streets you were afraid of
HONESTLY viewing

I am no
Magician

There are no rabbits, floating ladies, or
Doves in my world

There is no
Sparkle

Did it honestly escape you that I never really
Cared?

No, not a magician at all. I am an
ILLUSIONIST.

--Arlys Bowler

UP FRONT BOOKS



Sanders, Dennis. Gay Source: a catalog for men. Coward, McCann & Geohegan/Berkley Windhover. Paperback, 288 pages, \$6.95, 1977.

Brown, Howard. Familiar Faces Hidden Lives: the story of homosexual men in America today. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Paperback, 246 pages, \$2.95, 1977.

Two important but very different books have received considerable attention from reviewers of major gay papers. This article will recommend them both. Gay Source is far the weaker of the two due to its erratic quality. The Gay Task Force of the American Library Association gave their "Best Book of the Year Award" to Familiar Faces. If you are acquainted with their Gay Bibliography (6th edition due this spring) you will have noticed their impressive list of annual best book awards. I knew Familiar Faces was excellent before I even started it.

Howard Brown "came out" after having served as the Health Services Administrator and Commissioner of Health for New York City. He was the first physician of that stature to do so anywhere in the country. He worked as a professor at New York University Medical School up until his recent death. A big VD clinic in Chicago has been named after him.

Familiar Faces is one of those rare books that should be recommended to everyone. It is entertaining, informative, fast reading and maybe even consciousness raising. He provides an overview of the gay population which is both cinemascopic

and from the perspective of a mature gentleman. His experience cuts through age and class like light through glass. He discusses the implications of being gay, either in or out of the closet, and how that impacts on every aspect of any person's life in our society. Don't let my mumbo jumbo scare you away; the book is good.

Gay Source is not so good. It is certainly no classic. The information contained in it is considerable and useful, but next year and especially the next year, it will be dated. It is expensive but worth it if you are a "gay culture nut" and want to be on top of everything. It contains useful tips like "what does a red kerchief in the right pocket mean?" or "how do you get to Fire Island?" or you name it. Perhaps I should be more generous in my appraisal since there are some excellent articles by famous writers. If only all the articles were worth reading.

I do recommend Gay Source for what it is, but don't think you are getting a great piece of literature. It has about as much literary value as a road map, with a few exceptions. Vito Russo and Ian Young wrote interesting pieces. Browse through it before you buy it.

--David D. Smith



OPINION: GET YOUR PRIORITIES GAY

Renaissance of Madison, most commonly called the Gay Center, is one of the oldest gay service centers in existence in this country. Founded in the days when the "counter-culture" was at its peak, Renaissance has assisted thousands of men to come out, to respect themselves, to overcome obstacles. With the assistance of the Gay Center, UW--Madison was one of the first universities to recognize a gay student association, to permit gay dances on campus, to issue a statement to the faculty calling attention to the treatment of homosexuality. The City of Madison was one of the pioneers by including sexual orientation in its Affirmative Action Program. The Gay Center provided dances and coffeehouses long before there was a Back Door or a Going My Way. (Remember Crossroads?) Gays developed a VD testing and treatment program especially for gay men long before most cities ten times our size.

But as our visible oppressors became less hostile, so did support for the Gay Center. Financial support vanished; it became increasingly difficult to get volunteers for the counseling staff, the VD clinic, and the newsletter. The part-time director could no longer be paid. After all, we had it made! Legally, we couldn't be fired, we couldn't be denied housing, credit, or insurance. And, above all, we had our "boogie palaces." Oh, we are so fortunate not to live in Dade County, Florida.

But our visible enemies have not had a change of heart. In a recent article in Isthmus, Rev. Dillabaugh indicated "that they are working on the issue of homosexuality" and have been for quite a while. We're on the same list as massage parlors, nude dancing and escort services. In a recent survey of fundamental Christians, 94% were strongly opposed to legal rights for homosexuals. This is stronger opposition than to prostitution or pornography. Madison is not that different from the rest of the world; most Lutherans and Catholics are fundamentally opposed to us also. Are you aware that an openly gay person cannot speak to classes in Madison public schools? Gay teachers are still dismissed by the City of Madison, although we are included in the City of

Madison Affirmative Action Program. When is the last time you met an openly gay police or fire person in Madison?

But the most destructive oppression is not from concerned citizens, it is from within. Even though we announce our gayness, and we go openly to the bars, most of us have yet to learn to respect ourselves, to accept ourselves. We still prefer to think of ourselves as sex objects rather than as human beings. We still openly practice sexism, ageism and racism. We avoid putting ourselves in situations where people can really get to know us and we them. We read skin books rather than the Advocate or Christopher Street. We don't respect our bodies enough to go regularly (once every 6 months) for a VD checkup.

I have a button which reads, "Nobody Can Make You Feel Inferior Without Your Permission." Lack of action is one form of permission. Until we respect ourselves, get our act together, we can expect continued harassment from the "right." If we don't take care of ourselves, who will protect us? Fool yourself and think the "liberals" will. Remember the last referendum on massage parlors.

When you are ready to respect yourself, when you are ready to take care of yourself and plot your own destiny, to find out about yourself, to share yourself; when you learn that there is more to life than having your hair done by Mr. Fifi, or having new cha-cha heels or a hot trick or no wrinkles, the Gay Center will be there. We are getting stronger and developing new programs. We still offer counseling, support groups, a library, VD testing, and a newsletter offering views and services by and for the gay community. A gay men's social group is forming where you can meet people. Hopefully, later this year, we can start a group for men over 35 who can learn to respect their abilities and experiences and learn to interact with other men their age. We must learn to remain proud as we pass 30.

If anything in this article has struck a nerve and makes you want to take

Continued on Page 19

**OPINION:
GET YOUR PRIORITIES GAY**

a closer look at you, I strongly recommend reading Loving Someone Gay by Don Clark. It will cost only as much as you spend at the bar on a weekend night, but it could change your life.

I have used the pronoun "we" most places in this article. I include myself, as I still have a lot of growing up to do, and I need your support. As the director of counseling for the Gay Center, I appreciate any feedback, suggestions, criticism, or energy you can offer to help us improve the service which the Center offers.

--Chuck Rhodes

Roy has offered to contribute 20% of any commission his company receives in response to this ad to the Gay Center!

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THE COLLECTED RAGE OF ARLYS BOWLER

Item: June 7, 1977. Anita sweeps to victory in Dade County, Fla.

Item: July 12, 1977. Denis Lemon, editor of the London Gay News, charged with "blasphemous libel" for publication of James Kirkup's poem "The Love That Dares to Speak Its Name," receives an \$870 fine and a nine-month suspended prison sentence. (Advocate #224)

Item: October 23, 1977. Thousands take to Montreal streets to protest raids on the Truax and the Mystique (gay men's bars on Stanley Street in Montreal) in which 146 were arrested and charged as found-ins in a "common bawdy house." The owner was charged with keeping a "bawdy house." (The Body Politic #39)

Item: October 25, 1977. Diana Press, a California-based feminist publishing house is vandalized. Five thousand copies of Rita Mae Brown's A Plain Brown Wrapper were soaked with solvent and ruined. Presses, typeset, and material for future publications were damaged and/or destroyed. (Colette Reid for Diana Press)

Item: January 5, 1978. After 3½ hours of search and seizure by officers of the Toronto Morality Squad on December 30th, The Body Politic, a Toronto Gay Lib Journal, was charged under section 164 of the Criminal Code ("use of the mails for transmitting or delivering anything that is obscene, indecent, immoral, or scurrilous"). (Letter from Gerald Hannon of the BP collective, January 5, 1978)

THERE ARE AN ALMOST INFINITE NUMBER OF THINGS THAT I HAVE NEVER UNDERSTOOD. In my head I have a whole collection of things that I've saved up but have never understood. I collect lines from films that I have never understood (e.g., just about any one you choose from Antonioni's THE PASSENGER) and things that people tell me it is absolutely imperative that I understand (but which I have never understood) and news headlines ("Congress Getting Bold and Balky") and funny little bits of music (which I suppose I call funny because I don't understand; they are almost never comical) and time (I have never understood the sixties) and old war stories

(I have heard more WWII stories from more old ladies in more living rooms, kitchens, bedrooms, bathrooms, attics, and parlors than I can count. I think I have understood, if people ever do, the statistics, the facts: that this lover, spouse, sibling, son, or daughter dies, was killed, tortured, or otherwise lost. I think I have collected that correctly and I think I have understood what people have meant when they've asked me if I know what they mean by all those names, numbers and facts. I think I have understood that. Sort of. But in the old ladies' old stories, I have not understood what is meant by--I have not understood their anger. They are angry in a different sort of way. And I think Lysenko would have been very excited to have understood: It seems to be an acquired characteristic which they can pass on to their children: their children are also angry in this different sort of way. Maybe their children have understood. I am certain that I have not understood). And I have never understood why I collect all these things that I have never understood.

Except that, and I think I understand this well, things change. And I do. Things happen to me and I change.

Today I picked up my mail. Some of it was the regular shit (which I don't understand why I receive, but I don't collect thoughts about receiving because I don't really care). And some of it was shitty but not so regular to me. I heard from the Body Politic Collective. I heard they'd been searched. I heard they'd been confiscated and that in the end they were charged under the Toronto Obscenity Statutes.

I felt angry. And I was not angry in the regular way. I haven't understood it to be the same feeling a bit. I have not celebrated it in the usual way I celebrate anger. I have not cheated on my diet, bitched with friends or enemies over the phone, sought out or kicked out my lover, gotten drunk, or gone to bed early under the influence of Chlorohydrate cocktails. I am angry in a different sort of way.

Continued on Page 21

THE COLLECTED RAGE OF ARLYS BOWLER

I had been such a happy faggot. Out of a stifling closet and into a wonderful life of uninterrupted dressing and dining and drinking and dancing and doing delightful things in the nighttime and the daytime and during the wee hours in between that don't fit into either category of description. Being disturbed was a rarity when I felt like not feeling it. I had decided to be the happiest faggot in the world. I was going to write myself a autobiographical novel and call it THE GAYNESS BOOK OF WORLD RECORDS and inside give myself a little award for being the happiest homosexual on earth. I would not talk about Anita. My presses would refuse to be silent and succeed at talking. There would be no bar raids, bombings or billy-clubbings in my book.

There would be no repression in my book and I would get an award for it. I had not seen (because I hadn't looked at) that since the sixties (when I visited my sister in a hospital after a demonstration, after she had been banged up by a billy club). In the pictures of Montreal there are men with billy clubs (cops) and men without billy clubs (gays) (Some of the cops could be gay, too, for that matter). In one picture a man is on his back on the street. Two other men in policemen costume (complete with billy clubs and guns) are standing over him. The picture is a still, but he looks to be squirming. (My sister was not, and I have collected this vividly because I had not understood, a still. She was live and in black and blue, squirming and groaning. I'd been overcome by a very sick feeling when I saw her. I wondered why she'd gone out there when she knew what would happen.) Time is not the way I had been trying to see it. I think I see rather well what is happening this time and why people are taking to the streets and I do not wonder at why they are or why I bang these keys and would go out there with them if I were there.

I remember sixties words with a gut-level clear perception now that I did not have before: "What gives you the right/Hey you/To stand there and tell me/What to do?/Who gave you the power/To stop me from living/Like I do?" I punch out my laundry bag and holler this. But in the

sixties, they were a little more defensive than in the seventies. Punk (punch) is offensive: "Get off your ass and go down town and dance again and it just might happen again. I don't want no more excuses I just wanna see you on the street tonight..." The Village People Are (punch) hopeful: "Village People/Now is the time FOR LIBERATION..."

I remember (punch, punch) the cover of the last month's issue of Ms., the headline: "Jimmy Carter discovers Life is Unfair" and I wonder (punch) how long (punch) the list of people (punch), including me, who could fit the subject slot for that sentence is.

I remember (punch, punch) last summer (punch) before I went to trial, how Ed Elson told me I would have to learn to say Fuck You (punch!) to people I needed to say that to in a most effective way.

I write letters to my many siblings (10) and friends and people who've said they love me and explain the above and request that this year's birthday presents be sent to LYNN KING IN TRUST FOR THE BODY POLITIC FREE THE PRESS FUND and mailed to CORNISH, KING, SACHS AND WALDMAN, BARRISTER AND SOLICITORS, 111 RICHMOND ST. WEST, SUITE 320, TORONTO, ONT., CANADA M5H 3N6, or to Diana Press, 4400 Market St., Oakland, CA 94608, USA.

And I bang the hell out of these keys and I think I know now, I think I understand now. Lines start coming. I think: I'M MAD AS HELL AND I'M NOT GONNA TAKE IT ANYMORE.

--ARLYS BOWLER
January 12, 1978

