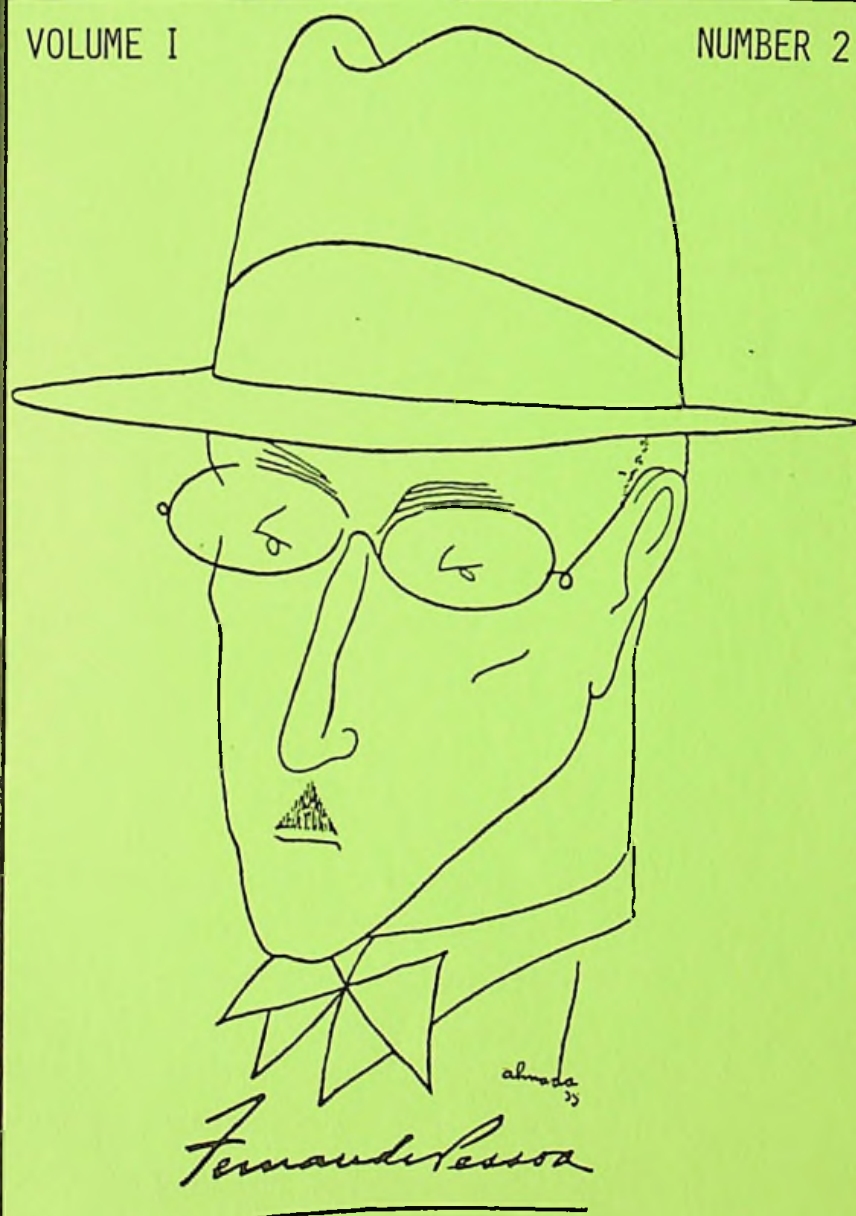


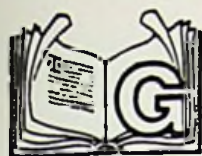
GBB

VOLUME I

NUMBER 2



SUMMER 1979



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REPORT ON RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

About two years ago the members of the Scholarship Committee of the New York Chapter of the Gay Academic Union undertook a group project to isolate and chart the historical development of major myths and fabrications regarding homosexuality. The value of this research lies in part in the recovery of neglected aspects of our past, including the all-too-prominent motifs of persecution and defamation. Such research also has a contemporary application since it can aid--and is, indeed, we believe an essential resource--in combatting bigotry and generally in eroding the foundations of homophobia.

The documentation of our findings may have particular value if seen in tandem with the growing efforts for legal reform. Advances in our legal status are achieved by two means: litigation to secure the benefits of existing laws and constitutional safeguards; and passage of new, positive legislation. In this forward legal movement we are faced with a double backlash. First, there are the obstacles to actualization often thrown up by prejudiced or ignorant members of the judiciary, as well as by the everyday actions of that ordinary arm of the law, the cop on the beat. Secondly, there is genuine legal regression, a recurrent tendency to undo our legal advances and even to pass new and more restrictive legislation (the Briggs Initiative in California and State Senator Maressa's now-withdrawn bill in New Jersey are recent examples). All of these backlash efforts are nourished by a vast reservoir of ignorance and prejudice, which can be analyzed into various component parts. There are about twenty-five of these elements which we have tentatively termed myths and fabrications about homosexuality.

It must be admitted that the double term "myths and fabrications" is not altogether satisfactory. Since the first appearance of Ernst Cassirer's great work on *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* in Germany some fifty years ago, the term myth has been partially rehabilitated, and it no longer suffices flatly to label a piece of nonsense as such. We even find some who purvey "myths to live by." Unfortunately, all too often myths here dealt with have been myths for us to die by. We need to make clear that we are not referring to myth in the current vogue sense, "a belief or concept that embodies a visionary ideal," as one dictionary puts it. We are concerned instead with ideas which once had a certain claim to respectability but which now belong in history's refuse bin. The second term, fabrication, serves to bring out that these ideas are not eternal truths, what everyone has "always known," but were manufactured at recognizable historical moments. If such ideas came into being at a given point in time, they, therefore, can be extinguished at another point in time. Yet the term fabrication is not unlike the word "construct," referring to a necessary process of hypothesis formation in science. Here again there might be some misunderstanding. We need a term that will expose more forthrightly the falsity of the beliefs we are analyzing.

Two alternatives have been proposed. The first is to revive the venerable seventeenth-century concept of "vulgar errors." By ascribing these false beliefs exclusively to the populace (the *vulgus*), however, this term obscures the lofty aristocratic lineage that all too many of the noxious motifs we are tracing may regrettably boast of. Perhaps the better term is one that is currently being put into circulation by the psycho-historians: *group fantasy*. (See several recent issues of *The Journal of Psychohistory*, edited by Lloyd DeMause, 2315 Broadway, New York, NY 10024.) This expression empha-

sizes the mass and collective character of the motifs, in contradistinction to some purely learned and limited coinages. The term fantasy suggests that the bigoted beliefs are ultimately groundless, but that they derive a specious plausibility from unmet needs and lingering fears. Unfortunately, since Freud's time, "fantasy" has conveyed psychoanalytic overtones about which we should be cautious. Suggestions for an alternative umbrella term will be welcomed from readers. In the meantime, we will keep "myth" for convenience.

It will clarify matters if we now turn to concrete examples. Thus far we have isolated about twenty-five individual myths, of which only four can be briefly examined here. The four are taken from the repertory of Anita Bryant, and are especially prevalent today. While the orange juice spokesperson has probably received far more attention than is deserved (to the advantage of other bigots who need to have their own foolishness more fully exhibited), Bryant's *ideas* have not been taken seriously enough. Her mind has a kind of junkshop quality and appears to be furnished with an enormous collection of mythical bric-a-brac of all kinds, which makes her an ideal subject for the examination of the various stands of popular homophobia that flourish in America today. The four following myths are taken from her published opinions.

I. Bryant says that gay men commit the horrible practice of eating sperm, which is a concentrated form of blood. Therefore we are blood suckers--creatures allied to vampires. At first sight it might appear that Bryant made this up herself through a confusion of sound between "sperm" and "plasma," for both words contain the letters s, p and m. But the idea that sperm is concentrated blood comes from once-respected nineteenth-century medical opinion. Augustus Gardner (1821-76), for example, hailed sperm as "the concentrated powers of {man's} perfected being" and the "purest extract of the blood." As the blood traveled throughout the male body it collected data on the various organs and parts; it then deposited the results of its investigations in the testicles. (See G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Horrors of the Half-Known Life*, New York, Harper and Row, 1976, p. 180ff.) Although one can detect here a residue of the venerable homunculus theory, in that the sperm is thought to embody in some sense a complete model of the new creature, the idea is basically a nineteenth-century one. One should recall the allied notions of "spermatic economy" and the ubiquitous fear, vigorously spread by the "anxiety makers" of the establishment, that masturbation would lead to madness.

II. One of Bryant's best-known claims is that homosexuals cannot reproduce; they must recruit in order to assure the continuation of their group. This absurdity represents the prolongation of medieval lore concerning various species of fairies and little people, who are sterile. As Katherine M. Briggs, perhaps the greatest authority on the subject, points out, "The thing that everyone knows about the fairies is that they covet human children and steal them whenever they can." (*The Fairies in Tradition and Literature*, London, Routledge, 1967, p. 115). On sober reflection, this analogy with homosexuals founders on the fact that we can and do reproduce. It is to be hoped that the increasing publicity about lesbian mothers will serve to scotch the hidden premise that we are sterile. (But as the recent outcry against the artificial insemination of lesbians in England shows, this stratagem may evoke other fears. It is necessary to attack the myths both individually and on a broad front.) In any event, Bryant's claim is simply a fairy story. It is important to air this nonsense fully though, since it is tributary to one of the most invidious myths, the child molesting claim.

III. Two years ago when Northern California was experiencing an unusually severe drought, Bryant proclaimed that this disaster had come in retribution for San Francisco's tolerance of gay people. Sexual permis-

siveness leads to disturbance of the cosmic order. This view goes back to the Emperor Justinian, the patron of the final codification of Roman law on which much Continental law practice today is based. In a new law of 535 (Novella 77) the Emperor commanded: ". . .because of such {unnatural} crimes famines, earthquakes and pestilences occur, wherefore we admonish men to abstain from the aforesaid unwonted acts, that they may not lose their souls." In the course of time this roster of misfortunes caused by sodomy was extended, even to naming plagues of unusually large field mice. Of course such ideas rest on a general notion that human sins call down divine punishment. As a theory of geological and climatic change such an idea enjoys no respectability today, yet the popular superstition that homosexuality perverts the cosmic order of things persists.

IV. Perhaps the most familiar claim advanced by Bryant and her ilk to account for their hatred is the stigma of the unnatural. For Christians the *locus classicus* is Paul's Epistle to the Romans (1:26-27): "...for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another. . . ." It is seldom realized that this charge of going against nature does not begin in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, but instead starts with the Greeks, who are supposed to be our friends. The concept of the unnatural was adumbrated by Plato in the *Phaedrus* and explicitly set forth in *The Laws*: ". . .when males unite with males or females with females, {this is} contrary to nature" (636C; see also 836B-839A). Since this charge did not originate in the Judaeo-Christian sphere, but outside it, it is useless to hope that it will be eliminated by simply disposing of Judaism and Christianity, as some gay atheists seem to believe.

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As is often the case with sexual bigots, Bryant's strictures are rarely aimed directly at lesbians. This reflects a long historical development in which gay men have borne the brunt of society's disapproval of same-sex relations. In recent times, however, myths about homosexual women have become more prominent. Many of them, such as the claim that lesbians regularly resort to dildos, or that they resign themselves to same-sex activity as second best because they are too plain to get a man, seem to reflect male myths about women in general: that they are all ardent worshippers of the phallic principle, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, and that they are universally eager to secure the protection of a dominant male. Myths about lesbianism need to be investigated not only for themselves, but in the larger context of society's myths about all women.

Let us now attempt to sum up the results of our four test cases. The pedigrees of these myths are diverse, and to understand their origins each needs to be situated in its own historical stratum. The first, the conflation of sperm and blood, comes essentially from the nineteenth century. The child stealing myth, the second, is medieval superstition. The disaster theory stems from late antiquity, the sixth century of our era, though its ultimate warrant is Biblical, including the Sodom story of Genesis 19. Finally, the claim of the unnatural is originally Greek, from the fourth century B.C. These dates point to two conclusions. On the one hand, myths have an extraordinary capacity for survival, outliving the civilizations that gave them birth, and lingering on to poison countless succeeding generations. On the other hand, one is struck by the ability of each historical epoch to create new myths and to ring in new variations on old themes. We are confronted with a complex process of cultural invention and replication.

It will be noted that some of the myths boast very distinguished parentage. Plato and Justinian are only two of the revered culture heroes of Western civiliza-

tion that, as it happens, could be cited for their fabrication. Many other distinguished names are implicated. It has been said that we should be prudent in exposing these enemies of ours lest we begin to sap at the very foundations of Western civilization. But some of these foundations are rotten and have caused unmeasured harm to millions of human beings; they should be demolished. One is reminded of the story of the journalist who asked Mohandas Gandhi to give his opinion of Western civilization. After pausing a moment to reflect, the Indian thinker replied: "I think it would be a good idea."

In any event some of the myths demonstrate a trickle-down effect, or *descending* process, whereby high culture themes are appropriated from prestigious authors and then gradually diffused among the masses. Others, however, such as the child-stealing charge, seem really to have started among the masses and then to show an *ascending* pattern. We are confronted here with a complex dual process of social descent and ascent. The myths, moreover, derive from theological, philosophical, medical, legal and folkloristic sources, and only an interdisciplinary method can expose them fully.

Clearly, then, the antihomosexual myths are complex and manifold. They show no unique affinity with any particular religious system or ideology. Some myths have found a safe haven in Judaeo-Christianity, but others, surprisingly, are Greek. Some, such as the notion of spermatocapitalism, have a special relationship to developing capitalism. Friedrich Engels, however, denounced "the abominable practice of sodomy" and all marxist governments have given state sanction to the disapproval of homosexuality. Here we see once again the astonishing power of myth to vault across centuries, peoples and whole civilizations, deriving ghoulish sustenance from its inherent capacity to rationalize hatred.

More importantly, the multicultural citizenship of many of the myths demonstrates that their disappearance will in no way be guaranteed by discarding any particular system of revealed religion or by embracing a new economic order. It is as if each myth constituted a deep cesspool of malignancy in its own right. We must drain each of these twenty-five fetid swamps individually and burn away their sepsis. Otherwise these cultural pathogens will persist, whatever social, economic or ideological dispensation happens to prevail.

The task that has been assigned us, which at first sight may have seemed a purely scholarly operation to uncover neglected chapters of history, turns out to be a vastly subversive enterprise--more so probably than many of the vaunted "revolutionary" undertakings of recent years. For we must attack some of the most hallowed thinkers and systems of thought in Western civilization. Put in these terms, such a project may seem unrealistic, even chimaerical. In the case of other odious practices such as infanticide or slavery, however, our civilization has shown a genuine capacity over the long run to rid itself of at least some types of irrationality and injustice. The task is of course a challenging one. But it lies in our path and it simply must be attempted. What is needed now is to place our preliminary findings in printed form so that a cumulative and accessible record will be available to everyone. Such publications will take various guises, from popular broadsides to learned philological articles. We of the GAU-NY Scholarship Committee have dedicated ourselves to making available our own results in this vital and necessary work.



BOOK REVIEWS

Sir Kenneth Dover. GREEK HOMOSEXUALITY.
Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press,
1978. \$22.50. 244pp. 56 plates.

This new, comprehensive study of the key period in the earlier history of homosexuality in Western Civilization has been long awaited. Dover has attempted the first scholarly synthesis since the original German edition of Hans Licht (alias Paul Brandt)'s *Sexual Life in Ancient Greece*, over fifty years ago. The appetite for the new monograph has been whetted by several preparatory studies, notably an article--largely incorporated into the present book--in which Dover brilliantly exorcized the ghost of the special Dorian character of Greek homosexuality, a favorite myth of German scholarship since Erich Bethe's theme article of 1907.

I

Sir Kenneth Dover, a senior British scholar, is now president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. In a productive career he has published a survey of Aristophanes, as well as an edition of *The Clouds*; a study of the orator Lysias; and, most closely paralleling the present book, a general work on *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1974), in which he tries to detail the stratum of values and beliefs out of which the famous classics of refined speculation arose, and which they sometimes contradict.

Speaking in very general terms, classical scholars are of two types. The pure philologists, such as Karl Lachmann and A. E. Housman, toil for years perfecting their edition of a primary work, sometimes permitting themselves the liberty of attaching a restrained textual commentary. Then there are the historians, such as Theodor Mommsen and Arnaldo Momigliano, who strive to synthesize the material collected and edited by the others. Dover belongs more to the first type than to the second, and this preference for anchoring himself securely in a particular text accounts for the surprisingly large place accorded to one fairly short Greek work, Aeschines' speech against Timarchus (*Contra Timarchum*; 346 B.C.), which takes up almost half the book. Using this text as base, Dover seeks to stretch his scope so that an overall account of the central Greek period, the sixth through the fourth centuries, is achieved. (It is disappointing to find that Sir Kenneth excludes the Hellenistic and Roman eras as a rule, though he sometimes cheats with a selective citation. This practice evokes the not altogether unfounded suspicion that he might find things there he does not really want to deal with.) Behind the whole enterprise there hovers a gray eminence, in the person of George Devereux, the psychoanalytically oriented historian best known to scholars of homosexuality for his pioneering article on the Mohave Indians. Dover originally planned to write the book jointly with Devereux, he says, and the latter seems to have influenced the formulation of some of his key methodological assumptions.

That these assumptions have not been entirely thought through, despite the book's long gestation period, transpires from a strange remark in the preface: "Established linguistic usage compels me to treat 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual' as antithetical, but if I followed my inclination I would replace 'heterosexual' by 'sexual' and treat what is called 'homosexuality' as a subdivision of the 'quasi-sexual' (or 'pseudo-sexual'; not 'parasexual

al')." To be sure, Dover is entitled to challenge the postulate of absolute symmetry of the categories homosexual and heterosexual, for this contrast is, after all, a conceptual artefact which has been with us for only a hundred years or so. Nonetheless, his relegation of same-sex relations to the periphery of sexuality is simply an unwarranted value judgment. It may be that such a claim is intended as a kind of *captatio benevolentiae*, seeking to disarm criticism from establishment circles in Britain, where despite legislative changes the notion persists that somehow homosexual persons are not fully human beings. Fortunately this peripheralization of homosexuality is not much in evidence in the main part of Dover's text. The preface also harbors a remark redolent of currently fashionable (and shallow) liberalism in these matters: "I am fortunate in not experiencing moral shock or disgust at any genital act whatsoever, provided that it is welcome and agreeable to all the participants (whether they number one, two or more than two)." Nowhere in the book--not surprisingly--does Sir Kenneth reveal what his own sexual orientation is.

II

As indicated, the largest section of the book is taken up with a close reading of the *Contra Timarchum*, a source which contributes not only to our understanding of legislative repression in Athens, but also to the limiting influence of popular moral sentiment and ridicule. Such material needs to be considered, for it undermines the optimistic conclusion of one recent gay scholar: "To a Greek citizen of the fifth century B.C., legal repression of homosexuality and emotional repression of homosexual feelings would have been a sure sign of a sick society and an unhealthy mind." If only this were so.

The circumstances of Aeschines' speech are as follows: In 346 B.C. Athenian envoys, including Aeschines, made a peace treaty with Philip II of Macedon, the terms of which were held to be highly prejudicial to the city's interests. Timarchus led the prosecution against the unpopular envoys, while Aeschines sought to defend them by disqualifying Timarchus. He did this by invoking a current law that stipulated (among other things) that any Athenian male citizen who had been involved in male prostitution as a youth (hustling) was to be forever barred from exercising certain civil rights, including the privilege of speaking in the Assembly and, in effect, of conducting a prosecution such as this. Indeed, the penalty for illegal attempts to assume such civil rights was death. Invoking both the law and innuendo to fire popular prejudice, Aeschines succeeded in blocking the prosecution of himself and his friends.

[Philologists have raised questions about later additions and changes that may have come to disfigure the received text of the speech, and a recently studied papyrus fragment in Cologne has reinforced earlier doubts. It has long been recognized that Aeschines did not quote legal documents with the precision that we would like; verbatim citation was not customary among Greek writers, who interwove reported material with their own comments. But however extensive the author's tendentious asides and inaccuracies, and however corrupting later interventions may have been (some students have exaggerated them), no amount of purgation of the text can change the crucial fact that the *Contra Timarchum* has a purpose *only* if it is the case that the law did penalize conduct of the sort that Timarchus was accused of. Otherwise Aeschines could not have used the stratagem that he did.]

It is clear then that the Athenians maintained legal sanctions against some types of same-sex behavior. The following were penalized: (1) ex-hustlers who sought to exercise civic privileges in later life; (2) fathers or guardians who hired out boys in their charge for prostitution; (3) pimps of women and boys; (4) those who committed sexual assault (p. 27). Such legal restrictions were supplemented by popular prejudice--the ancient equivalent of fag jokes--as we know from Aristophanes' plays (treated briefly in a later section of Dover's book). Going beyond the letter of the law, Aeschines knew how to exploit such bigoted sentiments in order to advance his friends' cause. He insists that Timarchus "sinned against his own body," committing acts so vile that it would not be decent to describe them. The analogy with the political fag-baiting of our own times is only too clear.

III

How can these disagreeable findings be squared with the abundant evidence from art--especially from the painted vases, which present an extraordinary panorama of male same-sex relations in a very matter-of-fact way--and the extensive collections of graffiti of the "Bill loves George" variety? On a more rarified plane, there is the famous encomium of idealized male love in Plato's *Symposium*. In any society, however, the widespread cultivation of certain modes of behavior is not incompatible with restraints and stigmas that may be placed on them. Compare the prevalence of marijuana use today. And even in the vases the semi-caricatural depiction of sex on the part of satyrs and "dirty old men" suggests that the attitude was not simply one of anything goes. To turn to Plato again, in the *Phaedrus* and especially in *The Laws* he advances the idea that all same-sex relations are unnatural, since they do not lead to procreation. In a proper society, he suggests, homosexuality would be discouraged by a powerful taboo, just as incest is. It seems that the Greeks were deeply ambivalent about same-sex relations. Dover seeks to explain some of the resultant inconsistency by instancing the modern concept of the double standard in heterosexual customs, whereby the male is supposed to be ardent in pursuit while the female preserves, for a time at least, her virtue. Lust and chastity are in constant tension. In summary, same-sex relations among men in ancient Athens were restricted by some legal penalties which were fairly narrowly defined; by a broad penumbra of popular prejudice; and by philosophical theories of sublimation, which in their final form constituted a blanket prohibition.

In all this, of course, we need to preserve a proper sense of proportion. At no time did the Greeks invest homosexual relations with a taint of diabolical transgression, worthy of a painful death, as was the case in later Christian centuries. On the other hand, they did believe strongly in society's "right" to promote sanctioned types of behavior while discouraging others. Among the types of behavior to be discouraged were some categories of same-sex behavior, though many defied these sanctions with impunity, just as they do today. But the notion of Greece as a Golden Age of sexual freedom, untrammelled by prejudice or restriction, is simply wishful thinking. Regrettably, a Greek component must figure in any genealogy of modern homophobia.

All this being said, some readers--this reviewer among them--will feel that Dover restricts unduly the arena of approved homoerotic behavior to a noble man (*erastes*) pursuing a beloved boy of good family (*eromenos*), who stoutly resists, in the end yielding only to intercrural contact (the so-called Princeton rub). Yet literary evidence indicates that anal intercourse did occur, even in the model relationships of the noble kind that were exempt from the stigma attaching to base, "unbridled" sex.



Illustration from *Greek Homosexuality*: R520 A man and a boy get into position for intercrural copulation. (Attic red-figure, 5th century B.C.)



Illustration from *Greek Homosexuality*: B48b A man and a youth copulate intercrurally. (Attic black-figure, 6th century B.C.)

The chief evidence suggesting the intercrural restriction comes from art, and here some major problems arise. Dover admits that the visual evidence is incomplete (p. 8), but later disregards his own caveat. Black-figure painting, from which most of the better known homoerotic scenes come, is essentially an art of silhouette and does not lend itself to complex scenes of penetration. Conversely, the reliefs of the Hellenistic period--an era that Dover draws on only very selectively--do admit and even invite complex intertwinings, or symplegmata. (For an overview treating some of this material see Otto J. Brendel, "The Scope

and Treatment of Erotic Art in the Greco-Roman World," in T. Bowie and C. V. Christenson, eds., *Studies in Erotic Art*, New York, Basic Books, 1970, pp. 3-107.)

A major disappointment for the art historian is the method of reference to the vase paintings. Everyone who has tried to collect illustrations of these scenes knows how time-consuming and frustrating the chase can prove. Dover's catalogue at the end includes non-homosexual material, and is maddeningly incomplete, apparently only selected excerpts from a much larger handlist in the author's possession. Many of the source books cited are themselves unillustrated. While the author's attempt to include art in his study is commendable, he lacks the training in the interpretation of images typically acquired by archaeologists. Still, he makes one suggestion that ought to be followed up: the use of images for a longitudinal study of preferred somatic types. To put it in the vernacular, the groovy guys of the fifth century are slimmer than those of the sixth, and those of the fourth yet more so.

IV

Of course the book treats other matters besides the many interesting questions raised by Aeschines and by art. The prevalence of age asymmetry (mature men pursuing teenagers) is rightly stressed, as is the deprecation of effeminacy in the overall pattern of a dominance-subordination hierarchy. There are two short sections on comedy and philosophy, and a chapter on lesbians, about whom disappointingly little is known. In general, the author is to be praised for his concise use of language and his effort to achieve precision. His adherence to the Greek texts and his stratagems for explaining them to the Greekless reader are exemplary. There are valuable lexicographical notes (and some lacunae) on Greek terms, of which there is a specialized index.

Ultimately, however, this book is uneven in coverage and unconvincing in some major areas of methodology. Although the "moral space" in which Greek homosexuality flourished was more circumscribed than one would ideally prefer, Dover overstates the exiguity of the zones of licitness. He seeks to set forth an ideal type of behavior characterized by the following:

1. age asymmetry;
2. citizenship for both parties; if possible, high birth;
3. double standard, with the boy offering real resistance;
4. the older is required to train the younger, especially in athletics and military exercises;
5. copulation is limited to intercrural contact;
6. homosexual relations are temporally circumscribed, being always preceded, or followed by major phases of heterosexual procreation.

It is clear from many types of evidence, however, that practice diverged widely from this schema, however much it may have been cherished by some influential Athenians. Nonetheless, the ideal schema was powerful enough to command some sanctions. Because of its elements of special pleading and telescoped coverage of some areas--the surviving corpora of medical and astrological literature are scarcely touched--Dover's monograph cannot be termed *the* book on its subject, but a book on Greek homosexuality, to be consulted alongside other sources, which we must hope will increase in number.

WD

Martin Green, *CHILDREN OF THE SUN: A NARRATIVE OF DECADENCE IN ENGLAND AFTER 1918*. New York, Basic Books, 1976. \$15.00. 470pp.

In this bulky study of the British cultural establishment, Green presents an essentially conservative thesis, reflecting the tutelage of F. R. Leavis, that the dominant temperament of the 1919-57 period was dandyism. He describes all the leaders of British arts as dandies, naïfs, or rogues. Although at first glance the three types may seem unrelated, he claims that each defied the "mature" models of seriousness of their Victorian and Edwardian forebearers as exemplified by Kipling and King George V. According to Green, the simple psychological root of the behavior of these "children of the sun," those *Sonnenkinder*, was worship of adolescent male beauty. Some of the dandies were passionate connoisseurs of a luxurious, insolent style of (male) beauty while the aesthetes worshipped art as fantasy triumphant over reality, and thought personal beauty more important than individual responsibility. The naïf became the thirties Marxist, eager to build a young man's utopia on the ruin of his father's world. The rogues desired to affront everything conventional and settled; although often brutal and careless, they shared with the other *Sonnenkinder* a narcissism and a disrespect of "mature" values. All three groups refused to become husbands and fathers.

Green's work is centered particularly on Harold Acton and Brian Howard whom he views as leaders of the group. He also describes about forty of their friends who became figures of importance in British life, mostly in the arts, but also in science, diplomacy and politics. Some of the more prominent men who are studied here are Evelyn Waugh, Randolph Churchill, W. H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, Stephen Spender, Cecil Beaton, Cyril Connolly, John Strachey, Kim Philby, Guy Burgess, and Donald MacLean. Green starts his narrative when most of the men were at Eton and follows them through their years at Oxford and in London. Their lives diverged in the thirties and during World War II, but ended in a common decay of hope and an often unpleasant old age. Green also details the rise of the "opposition," headed by F. R. Leavis, George Orwell, and Kingsley Amis. Green's tone is one of raging disapproval; he finds almost godlike justice in the unhappy old age and suicide of Brian Howard.

In some ways this is an impressive book. Any work which can encompass a forty-year period with some degree of verisimilitude deserves consideration, and there is quite a bit of convincing detail in the sections of the book dealing with the school years of these men and their lives during the twenties. The exegesis of the *commedia dell'arte* iconography in paintings, literary forms and stage performances in the twenties is especially valuable. In the end, however, the weaknesses of the book overcome its strengths.

The most general problem is one of selectivity. Green is so concerned with proving his thesis, more properly his indictment, that he is forced to leave aside too many authors and events of importance. Not only are the major authors, Joyce, Richardson, Ford, and Forster missing from the twenties, but so are Gerhardt, Hudson, and Myers who were also important at the time. In the thirties writers such as Huxley and Hughes are missing, and the works of Henry Green are skipped over too quickly.

Naturally it would be impossible to cover everything and everybody, but Green's selectivity distorts the picture by highlighting the events and works that fit his thesis and by completely omitting mention of any others. Furthermore, the thesis best fits the twenties when dandyism pervaded British culture. When the ensuing depression caused many to reconsider their youthful ideas, Green's exposition falters. The naïf may have been gullible in accepting Communism as a panacea, but he

respected politics as much as any Tory, and clearly had turned his back on aestheticism.

In addition to the general problems of the work, Green's attack on many of the dandies who were gay will probably annoy readers specifically concerned about homosexuality. Green assumes that their orientation was merely another attempt to avoid their "maturity," and the responsibility of marrying and raising a family. Their behavior was especially perverse to him because it was an "arrested development" freely, consciously chosen. He treats their homosexuality not as a sin or a sickness, but as a willful, childish refusal to accept adult responsibility. He dwells on the most childish aspects of the dandy's behavior, and there is much stress on "drag" parties in school years. A photograph of Brian Howard with long hair, a dress and strands of pearls is subtitled "Brian while still at Eton bursting the bonds of English boyhood." He completely rejects any worth in their aesthetic sensitivity and finds their creations significant only when they satirized themselves. Furthermore, the range and variety of their ideas are trimmed to fit his thesis. Finally, he credits them with considerably more influence over British culture than they in fact had. It was Winston Churchill, not his "roguish" nephew Randolph who clearly dominated British society in this period.

If one views this book as another attack on the British upper classes, then it is interesting to note that one of the specific charges in the indictment is homosexuality. This places the book among those which stigmatize homosexual behavior as a sign of the decadence of the rich and leisurely, a theme that was more prominent at the turn of the century than it is today. Green's perspective on homosexual behavior seems quite dated, and his book will likely be received as an interesting, if rather aberrant, fossil.

JL



Alfred Leslie Rowse, *HOMOSEXUALS IN HISTORY: A STUDY OF AMBIVALENCE IN SOCIETY, LITERATURE AND THE ARTS*. New York, Macmillan, 1977. \$12.95. 346pp.

In the course of the past fifteen years the reading public has been treated to a small flood of lively, but superficial historical works by A. L. Rowse, a retired Oxford don. Unfortunately, the driving force behind this one-man industry seems to be not so much scholarly urgency as the need to maintain his sumptuous Georgian mansion in Cornwall in the face of stiff British taxes. Moreover, Rowse has apparently become so addicted to being lionized by the book club audiences that his critical faculties have become addled. His much trumpeted "solutions" to the biographical problems in Shakespeare's Sonnets were greeted with derision by the scholarly establishment, which views Rowse as incompetent in literary criticism, whatever his earlier credentials as a political historian may have been. (Incidentally, he continues to insist that Shakespeare was "joyously heterosexual.") Now, at the age of 73, Rowse has decided to risk "coming out," after a fashion, with *Homosexuals in History*.

The book breaks down into a series of potted biographies, from William Rufus and Edward II to Montherlant and Mishima, loosely grouped in such chapters as "Renaissance Figures," "Russia and Some Russians," "Cambridge Apostles," and "A Handful of Americans." Rowse sweeps a wide field, but his male homosexuals (there are no lesbians) are chosen exclusively from the ranks of the rich and famous. He makes little attempt to depict the sociological background of the

various periods and societies so that we are left with a series of individual sketches amounting to no more than gossip. In general his ideas are antiquated and rudimentary. He patronizes Freud, but swallows whole the vulgar Freudian aetiology of the close-binding mother. ("With no wish to generalize [sic] I cannot but point to the frequency of the dominant mother in this history.") The term "ambivalence," used in the subtitle of the book, is never defined, although it would seem to be synonymous with homosexuality. In a recent interview the author has stated "I have sympathy with homos because I like to think of myself as ambi, but I can see that they are funny too." At other points Rowse seems to subscribe to the exploded third-sex theory, as shown by his remark that Roger Casement had "a female soul in a male body." In addition to these psychological confusions Rowse parades a trail of prejudices about national character: Germans are brutal and power mad, Russians volatile and emotional, Americans decadent. Not infrequently he invokes the virtues of a mythical Cornish character type. Nostalgia for the vanished glories of the British Empire is rife. All this reveals a mentality which has advanced little since its formation some fifty years ago.

The book is poorly documented. There is no bibliography, and the only footnotes are self-serving references to his own works. In the later chapters of the book there is much name-dropping to little purpose. The lack of documentation or discussion of the homosexuality of such disputed cases as D. H. Lawrence and Ludwig Wittgenstein is particularly crippling. The reader deserves some indication that reputable scholars continue to deny the homosexuality in these men. An adequate discussion of Lawrence and Wittgenstein would lead, of course, into deep waters--the relationship between creativity and sexuality--that Rowse is not equipped to explore.

The most valuable biographical sketch--perhaps the only one which this sclerotic dilettante could write with any real authority--is missing: that of A. L. Rowse himself. As it is *Homosexuals in History* fails to validate his opening claim that the book is a "serious study . . . in history and society, literature and the arts." Rowse's method must instead be described as a tramp through history following the Rex Reed approach.

WD



Margaret Walters, *THE NUDE MALE: A NEW PERSPECTIVE*. New York and London, Paddington Press, 1978. \$12.95. 352pp. incl. plates.

Margaret Walters is an Anglo-Australian feminist, journalist, broadcaster, and university lecturer. Although, strictly speaking, *The Nude Male* is not about homosexuality, only two of the chapters dealing at any length with the topic, at least one previous reviewer has correctly pinpointed the book's homosexual appeal. Despite the inclusion of a few photographs of beefcake, it is not pornographic. The subject is the artistic representation of the nude male throughout western civilization, and most of the illustrations (more than 150) are not sexually exciting. In fact, there are a number of illustrations which would hardly appeal to most readers, pictures of flayed bodies and of babies. The interest of the other pictures might be described as "erotic-aesthetic," showing the beauty of the male form without a blatant appeal to lust. Some of these paintings, no doubt, were originally intended as soft-core pornography, such as Caravaggio's portrait of a pubescent Cupid, but these are tame by the standards of today's photographic pornography.

The only other book on this subject is Brandt Aymar's *The Young Male Figure* (New York, Crown, 1970), which made almost no mention of homosexuality, but which was also of primary appeal to male homosexuals. Walters' text is longer and more complex than Aymar's, but neither succeeds in producing a definitive discussion of the subject. Walters does not even mention some of the most important artistic users of male models, artists such as Guido Reni, Alexander Ivanov, and Robert Tait McKenzie. To discuss the male nude in art without mentioning such artists is rather like discussing the female nude in art without mentioning Rubens and Renoir. (Speaking of Renoir, Walters does not even mention his early painting, *Young Boy With Cat*, a portrait of a boy on the verge of puberty, which was supposedly commissioned by the boy's father, although I find it hard to believe that a nude portrait with pederastic overtones was quite what the father intended.) Although there are other omissions in Walters' book, it will have to suffice until someone produces a book with twice the amount of text and illustrations, the minimum needed for a definitive study. Aymar's book included many illustrations omitted by Walters, so the older work has not been superceded.

In both books, all of the illustrations are in black and white. Lest the reader object that paintings can only be appreciated in color, the cost of printing color pictures is now so great that the only way for a book of this sort to be priced within the reach of the average buyer is for all illustrations to be in black and white. It would have been better if some of the illustrations had been given full-page treatment instead of half-page, especially two heavily-detailed paintings by David.

There is a whole chapter on Greek art, but none on the Romans, which means the serious omission of the statues of Antinous which were a supreme landmark of the male nude in art. The chapter on Medieval Europe consists mostly of ghoulish works of art which Walters uses to support her theory of the morbidity and puritanism of Christianity. There are several chapters on the Renaissance, including one chapter devoted entirely to Michelangelo, the only artist thus honored. The historical survey continues up to the present, with two final chapters on photographs and on female painters of male nudes.

The dust jacket is worded in such a way as to suggest that the book is about female heterosexual appreciation of male nudity, but, except for the final chapter, this is certainly not the case; in spite of the author's sex, most of the artists discussed are male. Walters mentions the homosexuality of some of these artists: Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Della Quercia, Leighton, Solomon, and others. Many of the other artists were obviously gay, judging by their art: Eric Robertson, for instance. Henry Tuke is mentioned, but not illustrated. There were a number of openly gay paintings produced in France during the Romantic period, pictures of Greek mythological figures, which were apparently for the homosexual courtiers of Napoleon and Louis XVIII, who would naturally buy such works at academic exhibitions. Except for David, Walters does not discuss this group of painters, another serious omission. Basically, Walters keeps to the standard painters and sculptors who are also to be found in "regular" art books. It would have been a great service if she had gone into the by-ways and discussed the homosexual subculture of art, the openly gay work which never appears in "regular" books because of the homophobia of the authors. Of course, even these authors cannot omit Caravaggio and Michelangelo, but such artists are merely the tip of the iceberg, and the lesser gay artists cry out for discussion, not as artists but as a part of gay history. Walters hints at a gay artistic tradition, but does not do it justice.

There are a few factual errors. Walters says that



Illustration from *The Nude Male: The Death of Barra*, 1793, David (p. 224).



Illustration from *The Nude Male: Naked Self-Portrait*, c. 1503, Dürer (p. 19).

the boy in David's *Death of Joseph Barra* has no penis, and speculates that this tells us something about the artist. This work is illustrated, and the boy's pre-pubescent penis is there for all to see if they look closely enough, as Walters did not. She also did not mention--and probably did not know--that Barra, a hero of the French Revolution, was a favorite subject for French artists in the nineteenth century, a pederastic pin-up disguised as patriotic emblem, just as Saint

Sebastian may sometimes have served as a masochistic pin-up disguised as devotional image. A similar ploy has been used in the Soviet Union, where paintings of patriotic male nudes--even two boys whose only political gesture lies in their gazing at a Soviet fighter flying over them while skinny-dipping--have been surprisingly able to win official approval. There are also those sentimental artists of the United States who skinny-dipped their way into the *Saturday Evening Post*. Walters discusses Saint Sebastian, but not the other examples of gay camouflage just mentioned.

The book is a pleasure to read and look at, and is recommended as an introductory study in spite of its various omissions and shortcomings. It is still to be wished that some up-front gay man would write a book from a strictly homosexual point-of-view, a book about sex rather than nudity in art, a slice of gay history. J. Z. Eglinton, author of *Greek Love*, had planned such a book with a pederastic emphasis, but this project was limited in its scope and had to be shelved. It is hoped that someone else will have better luck.

Stephen W. Foster

Do women see the naked male body differently from the way men do? Margaret Walters believes they do (she's probably right) and attempts to demonstrate this by analyzing art works in which the male nude is the primary subject. But her "new perspective" seems to be more opinionated than enlightened, a string of highly subjective interpretations superimposed on the clichés of art history, psychology, sociology, and anthropology, that ends up as confusing as it is confused.

For example: because "the ideal of male beauty has been far less subject to the vagaries of fashion than the female," she claims, all male nudes conform to the archetypes formulated by the Greeks (*which* Greeks--archaic, classical, Hellenistic--isn't clear, to her or to the reader). Women's bodies, on the other hand, "have suffered drastic and varying deformations." Had the author limited her study to those works in which ideal male beauty was the artist's primary concern, the first of these assertions could have had some meaning. Walters sets no such limits, however--her examples include something from nearly every major period or style from an archaic Greek *kouros* to a recent drawing by David Hockney--so the point comes to nothing. As for women's bodies having been more "deformed" in art than men's (presumably because the artists were all men), one only has to look at the crucified Christs to see the fallacy here. Satan, although not actually human, was always depicted as male, usually nude, usually deformed or distorted even more than the agonized Christ. Twentieth century modernism distorts male and female figure alike, but in earlier art there is no equivalent to the Christs on the cross or the demoniacal Satans.

Most of Walters' other assertions are similarly untenable, which may have something to do with the fact that most of her book deals with male nudes created by men in periods from which no male nudes by women exist to compare them with. Without such a comparison, any "differences" in how women conceived the naked male body are bound to be speculative. The last section of the book, however, deals with male nudes done by contemporary women artists, but no comparison between those and others done by men of the same time and in the same style is made. This is one of the book's most serious flaws because the reader, looking at the plates alone, will see less difference than might be expected between the women's and the men's works. Stylistic sameness is as misleading as stylistic difference, but instead of pointing out how the women's viewpoints vary from the men's, Walters simply chats about the artists and their works in much the way she does earlier about the men and their works. The last section differs from

(Continued on Page 29)

Malcolm Boyd, *TAKE OFF THE MASKS*. New York, Doubleday, 1978. \$7.95. 178pp.

Boyd, an Episcopal priest famous for his participation in various social justice causes through the 1960s and 1970s, adds his own story to the growing body of what might be called the literature of gay personal experience. It is a mediocre work, adequate yet not totally satisfying.

On the positive side, the book is honest; it shows the difficulties of a gay man who reached adulthood in the 1940s struggling for self-acceptance and social approval of his homosexual orientation. On the negative side, the book lacks any special emotional appeal or intellectual insight. Boyd has been criticized for being too "trendy"--gravitating to momentarily popular causes like a moth to the flame. This criticism may have a grain of truth; for in this book, as in his life, a certain superficial quality is evident.

Boyd tells his story chronologically from early childhood, but recounts relatively little of his youth until his college years. He becomes aware of his orientation in college, but suppresses it. Later he succeeds in Hollywood as a public relations specialist, but decides in his late twenties to study for the Episcopal ministry. In Hollywood he restrained his sexual activities, and in the seminary berated himself for his homosexual desires as he tried to "burn away the dross" in prayer. But desire would not disappear, and as a graduate seminarian in New York, he "succumbed" to his physical desires, and had a few random sexual experiences as well as a long affair with another seminary student. The affair seems to have been largely a love-hate relationship; unsurprising, given Boyd's own unresolved feelings about his homosexuality.

After graduation, he became a parish priest. (His first affair ended as the lover was required to return to Germany and his church duties there.) Boyd never devoted himself to any particular parish for very long, and it was not very much later that he became famous as a leader in the civil rights movement for American Blacks. He also authored several pastoral books: among them, *Are You Running With Me, Jesus?*, a book of "contemporary" prayers that became a best-seller. After an unsuccessful attempt to try to fit some kind of clandestine sexual life in with his pastoral duties, Boyd returned to asexual sublimation. He forced himself through a torturous schedule of constructive work during which he was too tired to concern himself with personal needs. Eventually his body rebelled, and he became physically ill.

Only then did Boyd decide to accept and fully express his homosexual desires. He began developing the side of his nature that he had so long suppressed and finally began to enjoy his sexuality. Within the last few years he slowly began "coming out" to his friends and to the general public. This book is the biggest step so far in the process of publicly declaring his sexual orientation.

Given Boyd's past importance, his status as a priest, and his ability as a writer, one expects something more from him. His religious "adjustment" is far too simplistic. He does not deal with the Biblical passages that troubled him so much in earlier years, but merely states that he rejects a fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible and substitutes a vague kind of situation ethics. It is hard to imagine that this will satisfy homosexual readers of deep religious conviction who look for guidance to Boyd's life story. The entire book also leaves one with the nagging suspicion that Boyd is more concerned with fame and power than with a satisfying interpersonal relationship. Many have seen his love of great causes to be motivated more by a desire for celebrity than a passion for justice; the "little way" of St. Theresa of Lisieux is obviously not Malcolm Boyd's!

An obvious work for comparison is Troy Perry's *The Lord Is My Shepherd and He Knows I'm Gay*. Perry comes

from a far different protestant tradition, an evangelical one, and his book may seem histrionic to some readers, but in the end it covers the same ground that Boyd has with what seems to be far greater personal insight and sincerity. Some readers will clearly find some value in Boyd's book, but nevertheless, it falls considerably short of the best works in the literature of personal experience.

JL

P. N. Furbank, *E. M. FORSTER: A LIFE*. New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978. \$19.95. 619pp.

This is a very comprehensive biography of Edward Morgan Forster (1879-1970), major British novelist and critic. Although it has the status of official biography because Furbank was authorized to write it under the conditions of Forster's will, it is candid and fair, especially in the treatment of Forster's homosexuality.

For a man who wrote relatively little, Forster's reputation has remained consistently at a high level and this biography should receive a great deal of attention in literary circles. It does not, however, attempt to evaluate Forster's work, although it does indicate how some of his experiences influenced his fiction. Nor does the biography present an overall thesis purporting to explain either Forster's life or the cause of his creativity. Its few judgments can be labeled either "careful" or "unadventurous," depending on one's point of view.

The book is arranged chronologically, and begins with Forster's childhood in the twilight of the Victorian era. Forster was a bright, shy child of a middle-class family. His early life was basically uneventful, but some valuable pictures of ordinary attitudes to sexuality are presented. His university education was at Cambridge, and it was a significant experience for him. It was also the period which he became clearly aware of his homosexual orientation although he was unable to act on his desires or even to identify others who would be likely to be responsive to him. Instead he developed a series of "platonic" crushes on classmates.

After leaving the university, Forster settled into a career as a novelist. In a little over a decade he published four novels and finished a fifth, *Maurice*, which because of its homosexual theme was unpublishable at the time. He was to finish only a single other novel in the remaining fifty five years of his life. Even in the early period, writing did not come easily to him, and he often found himself blocked.

Not until after World War I, when he was thirty-eight years old, did Forster have his first full physical, sexual experience in a brief, anonymous encounter with a soldier in Egypt. Shortly thereafter, he began an affair with an Egyptian streetcar conductor that continued for several years. A few years later Forster served as personal secretary to a maharajah in India, and Furbank describes his rather pathetic yet comic attempts to find sexual gratification at court with the maharajah's aid and connivance. Yet, in general, sex did not play a great role in Forster's life, and Furbank has done an excellent job of keeping sexuality in perspective, not suppressing, but not exaggerating it.

Forster published *A Passage To India* in the mid-nineteen twenties, and suddenly found himself considered one of the great writers of the day, a view which has persisted since that time. However, he found himself



Paul Cadmus's portrait of E. M. Forster.

"blocked" from further creation and turned to literary criticism and politics. He became a spokesman for leftist causes and served as President of the National Council for Civil Liberties. He was one of the leaders in the defense of Radcliffe Hall during the censorship trial of *Weil of Loneliness*. In old age he returned to Cambridge to teach and experienced renewed creativity. He wrote three non-fiction books and a libretto for an opera by Benjamin Britten. He also became a close friend of Isherwood and Ackerley, and the book includes some of his correspondence with other leading homosexual writers of the middle third of the century.

Because the biography makes few attempts at evaluation, there is no special consideration of the interaction between Forster's sexual orientation and experiences and his creative process, but the facts are presented so that readers can draw their own conclusions. (Several reviewers have already done so with divergent results.) Furbank does say that Forster wrote *Maurice* in the hope that it would free him from his writing block, but that he was so distressed with his inability to publish it that it only added to his problems. It does seem remarkable that Forster wrote an entire novel about homosexual love and relationships without having had a single homosexual (or heterosexual) experience. Some obvious questions arise as to why he did this and how he achieved it. None is even posed much less answered here. There is also no information about Forster's erotic stories which he burned during his life but which some of his friends had read, nor is there much about the few stories on homosexual themes which he did publish. Those who are interested in his relations with the Bloomsbury group of writers will find only minimal information despite the length of this book.

Overall the work is an impressive achievement, however, and its treatment of Forster's homosexuality is certainly admirable. There is no attempt to disguise either his orientation or his activities. There is not even a hint of a negative value judgment about his orientation. Furbank manages to be as neutral on this subject as he is on so many others that invite some indication of bias. In this sense the biography is a model one. Readers concerned with learning about Forster's sexuality should be pleased with its tone even if they might have preferred somewhat more information and less indirection.

JL



Louis Hyde, ed., *RAT AND DEVIL: JOURNAL LETTERS OF F. O. MATTHIESSEN AND RUSSELL CHENEY*.

Hamden, Conn., Archon Books, 1978. \$17.50. 408pp.

Erskine Lane, *GAME TEXTS: A GUATEMALAN JOURNAL*. San Francisco, Gay Sunshine Press (P. O. Box 40379, SF, CA 94140), 1978. Paperback \$4.95. 156pp.

Scholars should be elated with these two excellent journals, each intrinsically valuable, which read together provide a striking documentary on the changes in the lives of American homosexuals in this century.

The Matthiessen and Cheney letters date from 1924, the year the two men met aboard ship on their way to Europe. Matthiessen was a twenty-two year old Yale graduate student and Cheney a forty-three year old painter from a wealthy Connecticut family. The two men fell in love and began a relationship that lasted until Cheney's death twenty years later. During their years together their work often kept them apart, and consequently they wrote voluminous letters to each other. In the beginning their correspondence was a daily matter, but even towards the end their letters were never less than weekly. Instructions in Matthiessen's will, and the fact that all the letters were preserved, indicate that some time early in their relationship these lovers thought of their correspondence as a kind of journal of their love, one which might be published. Therefore, although technically this is a correspondence, it reads more like a personal journal or diary.

Great credit is due both publisher and editor for a book of superior quality, one worth every bit of its considerable price. Nothing has been spared in the way of paper quality, binding, or illustrations. There are numerous photographs to help readers visualize the subjects. The content of the printed letters is only a small part of the total, representing only about 6% of the entire correspondence. Hyde wisely uses complete letters almost always, editing a few of them occasionally. Yet he manages to retain the basic thread of the two men's life together. Notes to other letters are carefully documented; and biographies of most of the people mentioned appear in a separate section at the end. The letters occur in four episodes or sections. The first covers the beginnings of the relationship (1924-25); the second, the years 1929-30, when Matthiessen started his career as a Harvard professor and Cheney was painting in the American southwest; the third, the years 1938-39, a period of depression for Matthiessen and illness for Cheney; and the final letters cover the last years of their relationship (1944-45). Each section has a clear introduction and the intervening years are described with an excellent narrative. All of this is faultlessly done.

In the end, however, this stunning achievement serves to illuminate an uncommon if unfortunate fact: rarely have we had a primary source tell so explicitly what it was like to be gay in the United States in 1924. A full correspondence, it is informative, articulate, intelligent. For all these reasons it is also valuable, and its publication praiseworthy. The work should be of interest to almost any one, but particularly to scholars.

The instant infatuation which Matthiessen and Cheney felt quickly grew into a very supportive love, yet both had serious doubts about whether, and how to continue the relationship. At times during the first year, Cheney felt that the physical side of their love should be ended. Both doubted whether their relationship was truly healthy, though both found it extremely supportive. Both occasionally struggled with their feelings of attraction for other men in ways that seem quaintly Victorian today. During long periods apart, they remained without sexual outlet because they felt masturbation was unhealthy (both refer to it habitually as "self-abuse").

Both Cheney and Matthiessen seemed to accept a genetic basis for their homosexual desires. The early letters, perhaps the most valuable, not only illustrate most of the attitudes of the time toward homosexual behavior and sexuality in general, but also show the first intense years of a deeply warm, loving, and supportive relationship between two special individuals.

The first sets of letters have numerous discussions of how they should reveal their relationship to friends --whether they should do so at all. In some ways these discussions are similar to those gay men have today about "coming out" to friends and relatives, but it is obvious that these men felt a far greater risk. Naturally the letters also detail the work of a painter and a young scholar. While Cheney's career prospered at about the same level as before, Matthiessen went on to become one of the noted scholars of his time and one of the most famous professors at Harvard. His *American Renaissance* remains a classic.

The later sections deal with less happy times. Matthiessen considered suicide in 1938, and only a timely institutionalization seemed to relieve his severe depression. Cheney fought continually with bouts of alcoholism, asthma and other illnesses. Work provided both men with a sense of usefulness but also added pressure to their lives. From the standpoint of a gay relationship, however, the letters show how even the most intense infatuation retreats into domesticity. The correspondents begin to reveal less of their feelings for each other and more concern for the everyday details in opening and closing houses and other daily matters. The later correspondence reveals almost nothing of their views on sexuality, as if any doubts or problems about the matter had long since become a closed issue for them. This section, therefore, may be of less interest to the scholar dealing with homosexual behavior. Overall, however, it would be difficult to overestimate the value of this book to our rediscovery of the past.

Erskine Lane's *Game Texts* is a very different kind of journal but also valuable and readable. Like Matthiessen, Lane was an English professor, but his life story reflects a later period. Feeling discontented with traditional academic life, Lane left the United States to live in Guatemala in 1973. While there, he kept a journal for several years, a small part of which was published in *Gay Sunshine* 26/27, and received the Fells Award for the best non-fiction writing published during 1975.

Just as the style of the earlier letters reflected the personalities and concerns of Cheney and Matthiessen, so also do Lane's writings here. The journal is not a daily account, but rather an impressionistic col-

lage. The shortest entries are a single sentence, the longest little over a page, and most a few paragraphs long. The subjects are totally random. In a blending of the sensual and spiritual, the reader is treated to passages describing the landscape of various parts of Guatemala, nostalgic remembrances of a childhood in rural Alabama in the 1940s, insights into the evocative mysteries of ancient Mayan culture, thoughts on Japanese haiku, and descriptive passages about the author's sexual experiences.

The influences on Lane's personality are clear. He has studied Zen Buddhism and Japanese and Chinese literature. He has an uncanny ability not only to internalize insights of these traditions but to make them meaningful to the reader. The very organization of the work, of course, proceeding from one little moment of existence to another without the usual rational connecting transition is reflective of the spontaneity and artful artlessness which Zen prizes. Lane's knowledge of literature gives him a clarity of expression as well as an insight into his own deviations from the ordinary bourgeois pattern. Just as in *Rat and Devil*, the homosexual passages of Lane's Journal could be read as just another aspect of a complex and valuable life. They will, however, be of special interest to gay readers and scholars.

Lane is most attracted sexually to men in their late teens. It is curious that the publicity for the book refers to sex with "boys." While these men would be in their late adolescence in North American culture, in Guatemala they are clearly adults. As far as one can see from the text, they felt quite free to express their sexuality in many ways, but were quite aware of the social consequences of being labeled homosexual in their culture. Lane has done a fine job of portraying the young Latin "machismo" personality in action, of detailing all the psychic compromises many men must endure in order to find a channel for sexual expression. Lane is best, however, in explaining his own feelings about his sexuality. His sexual pattern is quite promiscuous, consisting of much impersonal sex, yet one cannot find a single thought or word of guilt or shame. By contrast, the meaning of his sexuality for him is quite personal, and Lane is able to convey this special feeling more to his readers than to his partners. One finishes the Journal with a fairly complete portrait of a special and meaningful sex life.

What begins at random ends in pattern, with the lucid picture of an unusual human being, one very much a child of his time. A more organized account would have obscured such a unique personality. A good book, deftly crafted by an interesting, articulate man of his time.

JL



Andrew Sinclair, *JACK: A BIOGRAPHY OF JACK LONDON*. New York, Pocket Books, 1979 (orig. 1977). \$2.50. 318pp.

At first glance Jack London's life (1876-1916) was a real Horatio Alger story. Born into illegitimacy and raised in the slums of Oakland, through Herculean efforts he achieved the status of a famous, well-paid writer at twenty-four. In the preceding decade of his adolescence and early manhood, he garnered enough experience to last a lifetime: a hobo on the open road, a brief spell in jail in Buffalo, at sea and in a series of backbreaking jobs at home, and finally a year's rough-and-tumble in the Klondike gold rush. Anticipat-

ing Ernest Hemingway, Henry Miller and Jack Kerouac, he combined, as Sinclair says, a "self-dramatizing style of existence" with a "short, jerky, bald method of writing." He also evolved a personal political philosophy that mixed a purported revolutionary socialism with a chauvinistic Social Darwinism and eugenics. Such a hybrid may seem paradoxical in the perspective of the lingering sentimentality of our 1960s New Left, but it was widely shared at the time, contributing enormously to London's controversial popularity, which is still apparently at its peak in the Soviet Union.

His later years were plagued with disasters. His two daughters from his first marriage became estranged, while his second wife's two offspring died almost immediately after birth. London's self-designed ketch the *Senzak* proved virtually unseaworthy, and Wolf House, his mansion intended to last a thousand years, was burned down in a night. He was fleeced and harassed by unscrupulous relatives and friends, who helped to saddle him with never-ending debt. Having driven himself to write fifty books, Jack London died at the age of forty, worn out through physical overexertion, drugs, and alcohol.

As has already been suggested, in many ways he recalls the other Jack--Kerouac, who also was seemingly destined by his working-class origins and bodily endowment to be consigned to a purely physical life, but who overcame his fate only to be struck down in middle life through character defects. Like Kerouac, London had problems in his relations with men. At sea, on the rails and in jail, he was confronted with what we now call "situational homosexuality" though, not surprisingly in view of the times in which he lived, he was shy in writing about it. Although vastly interested in sex--he corresponded with Edward Carpenter and read Jung and Freud--London knew that the magazines he wrote for would not tolerate anything explicit.

One of the deepest experiences in London's life was his great love for the poet George Sterling, which was probably never consummated. Instead, the two writers shared bohemian good times in an unbreakable buddy pairing--much as Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady were to do later. London did go so far as to take photographs of his friend nude on the beach at Carmel. They both gloried in their "splendid bodies." Several years after London's early death Sterling committed suicide in San Francisco. (For an account of Sterling and his milieu, see Kevin Starr, *Americans of the California Dream: 1850-1915*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1973.) The relationship is reflected in part in London's *The Sea Wolf*, which revolves in part around the love-hate relationship between the sissy Van Weyden and the brawling sailor Larsen. That Jack may not have been quite as innocent as an adult as Sinclair believes is shown by the novelist's obsession with a painfully persistent rectal sore which he took (falsely, as it turned out) to be a symptom of syphilis. A venereal infection in that region could only have developed through anal penetration.

Jack London's literary explorations of male bonding, cautious and half-formed as they are, together with his cult of machismo and the vigorous life, merit careful reconsideration in today's climate of questioning the "male myth." Andrew Sinclair's sympathetic but generally honest biography, though sometimes overwritten, provides the basic materials.



WD

John Lahr, **PRICK UP YOUR EARS: THE BIOGRAPHY OF JOE ORTON**. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1978. \$15.00. 303pp.

Joe Orton, **THE COMPLETE PLAYS**. New York, Grove Press, 1977. Paperback \$4.95. 448pp.

Joe Orton was a British playwright on the verge of wide critical acclaim when he was brutally murdered by his lover of many years, Kenneth Halliwell, in August, 1967, when he was thirty-four. Orton was born in Leicester into a struggling, working-class family. He received only a poor, commercial education, but in his teens decided to become an actor. To everyone's surprise he won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts where he met Halliwell. His lover had a small income, a legacy from his dead parents, and when acting seemed unlikely, the two survived on it while struggling to become writers. They wrote novels together, but none were ever published. At the same time they engaged in practical jokes, defacing library books for which they were both eventually sent to prison for six months.

After their release they returned to writing, and Orton's work particularly began to mature into his distinctive brutal humor directed at the foibles of the British establishment. Orton's humor, however, clearly addressed topics which previous writers had considered taboo. Even when his works began to receive serious critical notices, audiences were offended by his treatments of sex and death.

His reputation rests upon three full-length and two short plays, all produced within the last few years of his life. The plays were commercial failures in the United States except for *What The Butler Saw*, which had a mediocre Off-Broadway run after Orton's death. Orton was thus considerably less well known in the United States than he was in Britain where many critics considered him the most promising playwright of his generation.

Lahr's biography combines a narrative account of Orton's life with a critical explication of his works. Lahr, who is both the son and biographer of Bert Lahr, claims his work is also an inquiry into the nature of comedy. The emphasis of the book shifts from Orton's life to his work, depending on the availability of information. Not very much is known of Orton's childhood, and Lahr relies mainly on family reminiscences. During the years before he was famous, Orton and Halliwell had little or no social life, and little emerges concerning this period. Orton did keep an adolescent diary, and another during the last six months of his life, and there are a good many letters to friends for the periods in between. Nevertheless, not much is known of his brief life.

Lahr begins the biography with the last few months of Orton's life, showing how Orton's success had changed his relationship with Halliwell. Orton realized that the relationship of fifteen years had turned sour but did not know how to help his lover out of his severe depression. Then the biography jumps backward to Orton's birth and continues chronologically.

Lahr is lavish in his praise of Orton's work: "The most formidably talented comic playwright in recent English literary history." Many people may find his evaluation of Orton's talent a bit excessive. By the same token, they will find that the biography reflects a recent refreshing trend toward writing about homosexual achievers without making negative judgments about their orientation.

Orton's life is a particularly good example of this new tolerance. His sexual behavior consisted largely of anonymous sex in public places. His encounters are described vividly in his diary, which Lahr has often used

verbatim. Many people will find Orton's sexual behavior distasteful, but he at least obviously enjoyed himself greatly. Lahr goes no further than to refer to Orton's "compulsive promiscuity" and to comment that Orton was very much in touch with his own sexuality. Lahr infers that Orton's sexual wandering was due to his dissatisfaction with Halliwell, but one can also interpret his activities simply as a celebration of his healthy sexuality. Orton seemed quite capable of integrating his sexual behavior with the rest of his life, and it seems not to have interfered with his work. Certainly his diary records not the faintest feelings of guilt.

Readers interested in the subject of homosexual behavior will find here both information on how one man regulated his sexual desires, and how one particular gay relationship operated. The story of how a relationship of fifteen years failed to adjust to the great change in circumstances of one of its partners is thought provoking.

Lahr's book also includes a section of pictures. Among these are the damaged library books for which Halliwell and Orton went to jail, and which are still amusing. Overall, this book is an impressive biography and its treatment of Orton's homosexuality surprisingly balanced.

The new edition of Orton's *Complete Plays*, which includes both the stage and television work (*The Ruffian on the Stair*, *Entertaining Mr. Sloan*, *The Good and Faithful Servant*, *Loot*, *The Erpingham Camp*, *Funeral Games*, *What the Butler Saw*), allows one to check Lahr's judgments. (The introduction to the paperback is in fact an essay summarizing Lahr's big book.) On the whole they hold up well. There is, however, no substitute for Orton in performance.

JL



Pete Fisher and Marc Rubin, **SPECIAL TEACHERS/SPECIAL BOYS**. New York, St. Martin's Press, 1979. Paperback \$4.95; hardcover \$10.00. 341pp.

This powerful novel takes place over a period of three months in a small high school for problem boys on New York's Upper West Side. The Lennox School is a contemporary version of Blackboard Jungle, with drugs, alcohol, threatening graffiti, and smoldering ethnic tensions posing an unending series of challenges for the dedicated staff. Fisher and Rubin vividly depict the language and life styles of the students and faculty and also capture the local flavor of this part of Manhattan. The authors are to be congratulated for stoutly resisting the temptation to exploit once again New York's "fast" gay scene in the manner of Kramer (see elsewhere in this issue), Holleran (*GBB* I, 1), and their ilk. Remarkably, this book contains not one scene set in a backroom bar, steam bath or Fire Island Shangri-la.

The novel's central figure is Bob Davidson, a science teacher who has become a gay activist, but who is not yet "out" at work. At the beginning of the story he has already appeared on a taped talk show for television, which has been rescheduled for airing some time during the fall semester. In the opening chapters of the fast-moving narrative we observe Bob and the other teachers coping with the normal high level of tensions. These chapters serve to introduce a large, but carefully differentiated cast of characters, while providing a foil for the escalation of strain that comes with Bob's public decloseting after the television show is aired. Bob's perseverance under very trying provocation is shown to owe much to the strong, positive support of his lover, Tom. The book's other main figure is a cocky young hood, Jim O'Brien, supreme warlord of the Deadly

Ghouls gang, who after much resistance finally comes to the inescapable conclusion that he himself is gay. The youth culture of his peers, much of which centers on proving oneself as a man, is monumentally homophobic. But Jim wins through to acknowledge his gayness to himself, to come out publicly and proudly, and to win the love of a handsome Puerto Rican boy. (Yes, it's a little like *Westside Story*, but not too much so.) In this way Jim indeed "proves himself" as an autonomous person in strong contrast to his conforming peers.

To anyone, who, like this reviewer, has been both a gay student and a gay teacher, the travail these two wonderful characters undergo is deeply moving. *Special Teachers/Special Boys* makes an important statement about gay people in our society. Rubin and Fisher go further, for they have succeeded in capturing a crucial antinomy of all human life: the intersections of choice and fate. Jim O'Brien's fateful passion for Pete Santos impels him to the choice of coming out; Bob Davidson's choice of coming out requires him to submit to the fate of testing. With its naturalistic and colorful detail and effective plotting this book is sure to obtain a large audience for its important message. It may prove to be the most important homosexual novel of 1979.

Pete Fisher and Marc Rubin have earned our gratitude for their numerous services to the gay movement beginning with the heroic early days of the Gay Activists' Alliance. Our obligation is greatly increased by this marvelous book, which at the same time is a celebration of their happy years of living together. Long may they prosper!



WD

Larry Kramer, *FAGGOTS*. New York, Random House, 1978. \$10.95. 304pp.

The similarities of *Faggots* and *Dancer From The Dance* (reviewed in the previous issue of *GBB*) are so evident as to suggest a trend in the evolution of the gay male novel. Both books view the homosexual community as a retreat from social responsibility and personal maturity, a hedonistic indulgence in fashion, insipid partying, and most of all promiscuous, impersonal sex. Consider this half-assed comment in *Faggots* as typical: "Of the 2,639,857 faggots in the New York City area, 2,639,857 think primarily with their cocks." This is the only view of New York gay life presented in the novel. It seems the flagellants, like the poor, will be with us always. Liberation, alas, does not remove the oppression, it merely changes its agent.

The protagonist of *Faggots* is Fred Lemish, a New York screenwriter three days short of his 40th birthday. He seeks a loving relationship and hopes, irrationally, to achieve one before his birthday. The reader follows him through a weekend "passion" of frenetic activity hardly calculated to bring about the end he desires. The novel also depicts about two dozen gay men and a few heterosexuals (no gay is an island, presumably) whose lives crisscross during The weekend. The reader is treated to relatively detailed descriptions of these "cases." While most are successful in their careers, they all have distinctly miserable social lives; almost all are single, and desperately searching for an ideal lover. The few who have lovers have wretched relationships and are sexually promiscuous. Some, so desperately troubled by their homosexual orientation, allow themselves only a few impersonal sexual contacts. And, following the classical script, these tortured

souls find physical release followed by severe psychological guilt. All of them attempt during the weekend to drown their misery in a maelstrom of parties, sex, and drugs.

In order to create interaction between men whose social lives would ordinarily be highly divergent, the plot is quite contrived. On the first night many of the men appear at an orgy in a private apartment which adjourns to the Everard baths. On the second night, they attend the opening of a new disco, "The Toilet," and on the third night a huge party is given in the meat rack on Fire Island (ah, that peripatetic band of brothers). The story, if we can call it that, is subordinated to Kramer's prevailing bias and is used to show how everyone is searching for impersonal sex and cheap thrills, has no true concern for individual worth and is unconcerned with altruistic contributions to society.

Unfortunately, it must be noted, some of the characters and places here are modeled closely on real people, places and events. (One wonders whether Kramer wasn't worried about libel; one knows he wasn't worried about bias.) While this "vérité" may make fun reading for the "in" crowd, it will be lost on the large majority of readers. (John Paul Hudson used the same technique to greater effect in *Superstar Murder*, but with a considerable lighter, more humorous hand.) Most of Kramer's sexual fantasies arise in a leather bar context with heavy emphasis on scatological sports, fist fucking, bondage and other activities generally associated with gay S&M sex.

Kramer's book seems another example of an author's writing about his own previously-loved lifestyle now turned sour. Looking back from middle age and finding a lack of personal fulfillment in fashionable Fire Island and the New York disco scene, Kramer attacks the entire gay world with his less than literate pen. To make his criticism more powerful, he omits any aspect of gay life unfavorable to his perspective. His gay men are supposed to be a representative sample of the gay community, but in fact there is no picture of a single man living outside the glittering gay ghetto of the New York social scene. Kramer does not show one gay male with a satisfying personal life. Most even seem unconcerned about their careers except for a few who use them as means to power or money. And always these impulses are secondary to sexual satisfaction or partying. The protagonist and everyone else, of course, are as unsatisfied at the end of the novel as they are at the beginning (and considerably more tired!). Furthermore, events occurring over an extended period of time are condensed to increase the impression of jadedness and emptiness.

There are people like those depicted here, but their lives are not untouched by others left out of this account, and certainly they represent a tiny minority of the New York gay community. To depict them otherwise is to do violence to the real world.

JL

The sloppy and crass literary style of *Faggots*, as well as its unnecessary sensationalism, must be conceded as major defects. Nonetheless, three points may be made by way of partial defense of this much lambasted novel. First, Larry Kramer is passionately concerned with the predicament in which many gay men who have flocked to Manhattan (and some other large gay meccas) find themselves. The socialization process--the initiation into the giddy rituals of bars, baths and beaches--seems at first to offer a realm of almost limitless freedom. Yet those whose goal is to select somehow from the kaleidoscopic succession of sexual partners a single person to love find themselves frustrated: the imperatives of change and variation are too strong. Before long the initial vision of freedom has turned into a mirage. Kramer is speaking, I believe, for a substantial number

of people who do seek a stable two-person relationship, whatever it be called. It is unfortunate, to be sure, that he takes a judgmental attitude towards those who genuinely prefer some form of the "promiscuous" lifestyle. They are not to blame for the disappointments of the Kramers of this world, who are not exactly babes in the woods. But the writer does nonetheless articulate, however awkwardly, a real concern of many gay men.

The second point is that Kramer does seek to introduce a strain of humor into a discourse that, since the decline of camp, has become altogether too solemn. Of course, his comparison of his own work with the deft craftsmanship of Evelyn Waugh is wide of the mark. Such character names as Randy Dildough and Hans Zoroaster are juvenile, and the One Touch of Penis Modeling Agency is scarcely a belly laugh. But a start has been made.

Finally, and most positively, the central character of Fred Lemish is truly believable. He is neither a romantic idol nor a doomed decadent, but a complex personality who is seeking to square his own perhaps muddled ideals with the fascinating but illusory world of sensuality in which he lives. Despite *Faggots'* flaws, this character is worth meeting.



Edmund White, *NOCTURNES FOR THE KING OF NAPLES*. New York, St. Martins Press, 1978. \$7.95. 148pp.

White's second novel is brief and unconventional, and clearly superior to almost all of the gay fiction published in the last several years. The author is a prize-winning poet, and the novel has many of the qualities of poetry rather than fiction or narrative. It deserves to be read slowly and carefully. While the mood it evokes reminds one of the romantic sensitivity of Chopin's musical works with the same name, the textures are very different from Chopin's simple melodic line. One is reminded more of Anton von Webern who compressed many ideas into very brief musical works.

The emphasis of the novel is on mood and beautiful descriptive imagery. There is no chronological ordering: chapters or nocturnes skip at random about the narrator's life. Nor is there a precise sense of place. The reader is never told where the action is occurring, nor is this necessary. The novel is unified by mood and by a very general theme. What "story" there is lies in the narrator's memories of an early lover whom he left. It also concerns memories of his childhood and adolescence and how all of this influenced his affair. In retrospect he sees the relationship in a very different light.

Looking backwards from the present, the narrator has a sense of enormous loss of this early love, and feels his own responsibility for that loss. He was too young to have appreciated the value of being loved so intensely. The gentle thoughtfulness of his older, extremely successful, and wealthy lover was too stifling. Yet his adventures and affairs since that time have proved less satisfactory.

One should not, however, assume that this simple story is the strength of the novel. It is the extreme precision with which it is told which makes the book so rewarding. The narrator's memories are truly haunting. These are not the kinds of memories of Proust's narrator in *The Remembrance of Things Past* which are far more intellectualized. Here the accurate description of emotion is central; analysis is minimal. The purpose is to evoke what was felt, not why. Nor do the memories serve any "purpose"; the narrator has no present reason or

goal for searching through his past, and the book does not end with any special insight. The reader is expected to accept the past for its internal beauty only.

The nocturne which recounts the childhood of the narrator is truly extraordinary. The loneliness of a boy in a wealthy but loveless home is portrayed simply, yet it manages to capture the feelings of childhood perfectly. Each of the chapters has something special for the reader. Overall this is an exceptional novel, one to be read for its exquisite style and mood rather than for its intellectual content.

JL



Karla Jay and Allen Young, eds., *LAVENDER CULTURE*. New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch (Jove paperback), 1978. \$2.50. 491pp.

This new anthology produced by the experienced Jay-Young team is truly excellent value for the money. While the assiduous reader of the gay and straight press will recall encountering some of the proffered 43 pieces before, as the years go by they become harder to locate. And these selections are well worth rereading, a testimony to the editors' good sense. Other pieces, including Young and Jay's thoughtful introductory essays, are essentially new. The hectoring dogmatism so often found in the radical writings of the early seventies is generally avoided. Even when one disagrees with some points, as this writer does, the ideas are generally presented as arguments, rather than arbitrary assertions. The exception that proves the rule is provided by the egregious John Stoltenberg, who once more indicts gay men for their ostensible betrayal of his restrictive interpretation of feminism; his monotonous judgmentalism seems to flow from an almost boundless reservoir of self-contempt.

The main part of the book begins forthrightly with a section entitled "Sex and the Pursuit of Pleasure," highlighted by Rita Mae Brown's perceptive and generally positive account of her infiltration of a gay-male bathhouse. This group of four pieces is complemented by another quartet on bars of today and yesterday. Then come sections that move into the area of culture with a capital C: "Dance and Music," "The Visual Arts and Theatre," and "Purple Prose and Violet Verse." Atypically, the following offering on linguistics is too short and superficial. Next are three sections concerned broadly with life styles and life experiences: "Young and Gay," "Challenging Macho Norms," "Rites of Passage." The volume concludes with a series of more overtly political statements entitled "Changes and Visions."

Three general criticisms may be offered of this hefty paperback. First, the concept of lavender culture is, as the editors admit, a composite one, partly sociological and partly cultural (and popular cultural). Bars and baths and dress styles belong to one sphere; lesbian novelists and gay-male painters to another. To be sure the confused umbrella idea of culture bequeathed to us by anthropologists and historians is largely to blame. But it would have been better if the editors had sought to grapple with the iconoclastic objection that there is not now, and cannot be a special lavender or gay culture. The truth may well lie more on their side than on that of the sceptics, but we need to have the issue argued properly.

The second complaint is that for all the wide-ranging diversity of point of view, the overall coverage remains somewhat parochial. The time focus scarcely goes back more than two or three decades--though Jim Saslow on art and Ian Young on literature are honorable exceptions--

and geographically our attention is pretty much limited to the urban complexes in the United States. Thus Greece, China and Islam, not to mention Europe in recent centuries, are scarcely touched on. Is this the difference between lavender culture, on the one hand, and homosexual or gay culture on the other? If so, the difference should be made explicit. What might be termed an unconscious chauvinism and presentism is admittedly pervasive in the gay movement in this country today. With these limitations there hangs together a now somewhat nostalgic flavor of incantatory radicalism. In this respect it is perhaps unfortunate that the book concludes with some unrealistic calls for massive change. In 1976, for example, the Fag Rag Collective was tempted to assert "Like the fabulous phoenix, we are arising out of the ashes of a dying civilization." (The writers forget that the phoenix arose out of its *own* ashes.) The millennium is no longer in sight. As mentioned above, however, we are largely spared the judgmental prescriptivism and shrill exhortations that marred so many statements of this perhaps necessary stage of our evolution.

Finally, in a book so generously conceived, no one could expect that the editing would be flawless. Even so, however, it is surprising to find a paragraph on Susan Sontag printed on p. 31 as part of Young's introduction reproduced entire as the opening paragraph of Michael Bronski's essay (p. 201). This male academic reviewer has not yet (and probably never will) come to feel comfortable with the neologisms "herstory" and "wimmin." The first enshrines a mistake about the etymology of the word history, the second an unrealistic refusal to accept the fact that the words "woman, women" incorporate the nuclear elements "man, men." Both of these grating forms, whatever their popularity in some circles, are needless proclamations of antiintellectualism.

But enough caviling. The book is simply a terrific buy, and any reader is certain to find enough of value in it to more than justify its purchase. The very abundance of the material attests to the endurance of our movement against great odds. *Lavender Culture* should also prove useful for the classroom and for permanent reference.

WD



Seymour Kleinberg, *THE OTHER PERSUASION: SHORT FICTION ABOUT GAY MEN AND WOMEN*. New York, Random House (Vintage), 1977. Paperback \$3.95. 349pp.

Stephen Wright, *DIFFERENT: AN ANTHOLOGY OF HOMOSEXUAL SHORT STORIES*. New York, Bantam, 1974. Paperback \$1.95. 395pp.

Before the publication of these two anthologies, the reader with a preference for the short story, or the instructor who wished to use short fiction in a classroom would have had to search in a variety of obscure places to find material with a homosexual theme. For purposes of convenience, therefore, these two paperbound books are extremely welcome. However, the Kleinberg anthology is far superior in several ways.

First, *The Other Persuasion* opens with a 14-page introduction containing some quite serious literary criticism, and putting the selections into sound chronological perspective. Moreover, it is also valuable for understanding some of the themes of the gay liberation movement. Second, Kleinberg organizes his selections chronologically from the first choice, an 1893 work of

Proust, to stories dating from the mid-1970s. Most importantly, the choice of stories is superior.

Kleinberg's anthology begins with a new translation by Pulitzer Prize winner Richard Howard of a Proust story that is not readily available in English. "Mable Neath" by Gertrude Stein is excellent literature, but is really just a section of her novel, *Q.E.D.* The third selection, the original Prologue to D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*, is a remarkable gem and a special discovery. Readers will, of course, recognize the names of Radclyffe Hall, E. M. Forster, Faulkner, James Farrell, William Carlos Williams, John Horne Burns, Paul Bowles, Christopher Isherwood, Gore Vidal, Tennessee Williams, John O'Hara, Ernest Hemingway, and James Purdy, but they will not have seen more than a very few of these stories at most. The "Mamma" chapter of John Horne Burns' novel of wartime Italy, *The Gallery*, may be one of the most familiar of these. The stories of Farrell and Faulkner are quite striking, and E. M. Forster's 1928 tale, "Arthur Snatchfold" is surprisingly contemporary in its depiction of casual sexuality. Several of the early stories display a surprisingly non-judgmental attitude towards homosexual behavior.

Kleinberg, however, does not limit himself to well known writers. As the volume moves into the 1950s, there are several stories by authors who are certainly not well known. Some of these are women writing about women, but anyone who fears that uncritical selection of work by female authors was made to achieve a "proper political balance" between male and female artists will be pleasantly surprised, for none of the stories is less than very fine. Marris Murray's "My Brother Writes Poetry For an Englishman" (1953) is very moving, and Ingeborg Bachmann's "A Step Toward Gomorrah" (1961) is also very welcome, especially since it would otherwise be available only to a few readers in the original German. The book ends with two mid-seventies stories by Doris Betts and Jane Rule. Kleinberg believes that these stories may foreshadow the future of gay fiction wherein it is possible to write about homosexuality without making it the central issue of the story. Such a development may mark the natural endpoint of gay fiction. If and when gay people are accepted simply as people it would seem that the tragic possibilities, the unique joy, indeed the dramatic relevance of being gay would all vanish. Homosexuality might then be no more intrinsic to a character's story than the color of his eyes or hair. But is insignificance really the end of liberation?

At any rate, the book manages to be a collection of little known works by both famous and obscure writers without any sacrifice in overall quality. There are an almost equal number of stories by and about women as there are by and about men. There is a good balance between "oppressive" and "liberationist" views of homosexual behavior, and yet the work manages to evoke the times in which the fiction was published. It is an exceptional editing job.

By contrast, Wright's anthology is mediocre and undistinguished. It begins with generalities, nothing which serves to put selections in context, and nothing of any value of its own. There seems to be no particular order in the placing of the stories in the book, and the selection is not nearly as good as Kleinberg's. The one superior feature is a four-page appendix in which biographical data for each author are supplied in a short paragraph.

Like Kleinberg, Wright has mixed famous authors with those less well known, but in both categories his choices are clearly inferior. Well known authors include Maupassant, Wilde(?), James, Sherwood Anderson, Lawrence, Isherwood and Vidal. However, Maupassant's "Paul's Mistress," Lawrence's "The Prussian Officer," James' "The Pupil" have all been published many times before. Some might ask whether James' famous story has anything at all to do with homosexual behavior. At best the homosexual

element, if there is one, is unconscious. Lawrence's story is also about repressed feelings and is nowhere near as valuable as his descriptions of conscious homosexual desires. Anderson's story is more about homophobia than homosexuality. The two stories attributed to Oscar Wilde are unfamiliar and quite interesting historically if really written by him; otherwise, they survive only as examples of an older pornography. The Vidal and Isherwood stories, although different from those chosen by Kleinberg, are just as good and show the extreme professionalism of these two gay writers as well as their intimate knowledge of the subjects they have chosen.

Wright is also less successful in his choices of stories by less well known authors. The choice of four stories by Phil Andros is a case in point: they are taken from Andros' book, *Studs*, a "segmented novel" about a gay hustler that is a gay version of ladies' magazine fiction--sentimental and trivial. Lonnie Coleman's "The Theban Warrior" is as close to classic status as any story about gay men in this collection, but it is really just wish-fulfillment, little better than the fare Andros proffers. Joseph Hansen's "Snowfall" is considerably better, and foreshadows the success Hansen now has with his mystery series featuring a gay detective. The general level of the other stories ranges from fair to poor.

There are other problems with Wright's choices; most of them are highly negative in their picture of homosexuality, and the popular gay fiction is of generally low quality. Women authors appear twice in the book, but after the Maupassant story, lesbianism is ignored. Homosexual seems typically to mean "male" for Wright. Those who are looking for stories about women will, quite properly, be annoyed. For all these reasons Wright's anthology compares very unfavorably to Kleinberg's. For those who wish to have some of the stories not included in Kleinberg, *Different* may make a satisfactory companion, but *The Other Persuasion* is clearly the first choice.

JL



Arthur Bell, *KINGS DON'T MEAN A THING: THE JOHN KNIGHT MURDER CASE*. New York, William Morrow, 1978. \$8.95. 228pp.

On December 7, 1975, John Knight, a deeply closeted heir to a major newspaper chain, was murdered in Philadelphia in a bizarre attack that received wide press attention. With almost obsessive industry Arthur Bell, a staff writer for *The Village Voice*, has sought to obtain the facts of the case.

Early in the book (p. 23) Bell says "Knight's death is shocking, the circumstances behind the killing macabre, and the underlying social implications horrifying." Evidently the last phrase is meant to point to the inference that Knight's demise was precipitated by his extreme fear of detection and his consequent furtive encounters with street hustlers and con artists. Come out and you'll live longer, suggests Bell, but his book is otherwise rather short on analysis. Instead the writer follows the Tom Wolfe method of cross-cutting his own experiences with the somewhat meagre deposit of facts he gradually builds up. We have several extended scenes of an affair Bell conducted in Philadelphia while pursuing leads. The affair establishes--could there be any doubt?--that our reporter himself is gay, but it also unwittingly reveals that he is not as liberated as he pretends. For Bell constantly chafes at the provincialism and lack of sophistication of his partner, who does not have sufficient access to the latest fashions of the Big Apple. Another tedious fea-

ture is the repeated comparisons with the protagonists of old Hollywood turkeys: the world seen through the eyes of a jaded Garland cultist. We are subjected to vacuous accounts of Bell's interviews for his gossip column. This florid material suggests a difficulty in distinguishing the world of commercial images (glamorous or tacky, according to taste) from the real world of action. What all of us, and the potential John Knights in our midst, need is to confront the world as it is, not to retire behind a screen of tinsel. Knight's illusions led to his death; Bell offers more illusions.

Beneath these layers of trivia lies a disturbing absence of critical sense about the framework of the events. Bell concludes that Felix Melendez, the youthful killer (who was himself slain by his two partners) was deeply enmeshed in a real love affair with John Knight. Bell is so wrapped up in his own obsessive identification fantasy with the two men that he never stops to consider that the hustler Melendez may have simply regarded the heir as gold mine. In the end we are left still waiting for that analysis of underlying social implications that page 23 seems to promise. This book is superficial and disappointing; it may be profitably skipped.

Rick Boabdil



David Loovis, *STRAIGHT ANSWERS ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY FOR STRAIGHT READERS*. New York, Harper and Row, 1978. Paperback \$2.95. 190pp.

Loovis, the author of two novels and a guidebook for gay males, has prepared an introductory book about homosexuality which is supposed to banish myths about homosexual men and create greater tolerance in heterosexuals. The format is that of David Reuben's sex guides: a series of questions with answers. The book ranges over a wide set of topics from ordinary questions about homosexual activities in bed, the process of coming out, and theories about the origins of homosexual behavior, to more specialized topics such as sado-masochism, gays in Palm Beach and camp humor. It is based primarily on personal experience and relies little on previously published scholarly writings. Thus, while the book has some excellent insights, it also contains a great deal of speculation passed off as fact. Because a large number of the answers are dubious, it cannot be recommended as a book for heterosexuals seeking to understand homosexuality.

Unsurprisingly, Loovis succeeds best when he describes what every gay knows, namely, those aspects of homosexuality which one learns best by doing. By contrast, he is weakest where personal experiences are so individual that only an investigation of homosexual research can reveal how, and to what extent, such experiences are generalizable. Loovis' previous gay guide, *Gay Spirit: A Guide To Becoming A Sensuous Homosexual* (Grove Press, 1975) was the best of the guidebooks for those who needed some help in developing their own gay lifestyle. Some of the same ideas that Loovis proffered there are the best parts of his work here. His light humor is just the right touch in explaining homosexual acts. His ideas about what makes for satisfying sex between gay men based on the notion that everyone has a "more-than-not dominant or submissive" framework which gravitates to the opposite partner. Loovis believes that such schemata can and do change for each individual at different times, but that one predominates and the individual should be aware of it. Sex between "equals", says Loovis, quickly becomes unsatisfying to both partners. This proposition, though argued persuasively, is not proven. His theories about successful relationship between lovers, based on the intriguing concept of "mana" is worth consideration. His firm statement that S&M is played as a game for most gays

is obviously correct. His descriptions of cruising in bars or other gay meeting places are quite sound, and those of male prostitutes are exceptional. He has removed the moralizing and horror stories and given a balanced picture.

However, the book does not stop at these points but goes on to pontificate on an enormous number of subjects which would be likely to tax the very finest scholars on homosexual behavior. The chapter on relations with families is just too cute. It is one of several places in the book where Loovis' humor is maddening. Gays may enjoy this sort of satire, but I don't think that it would help much for straight relatives to whom the matter is quite serious. His ideas on fidelity and infidelity in gay relationships may be accurate for many relationships, perhaps even a majority of them, but there can be many other successful adjustments to the decision on how to arrange one's sexual activities. Loovis' answers seem far too conventional to me. Also "coming out" or one's self-awareness of one's homosexual orientation is a very varied experience for different men and Loovis has oversimplified it greatly. The same is true of S&M sex. Loovis emphasizes humiliation, but some people like bondage and/or pain; others are simply costume fetishists. The chapter on the super-rich gay scene in Palm Beach hardly seems useful at all, especially when he has not even considered transvestism among homosexuals.

The section on psychological theories of causation is poor. Although it reaches the conclusion that the theories are inaccurate, it does little to inform the reader as to what they are or how they developed, and it fails to mention recent work. The chapter on gay liberation is really only a statement of Loovis' personal preferences for certain gay organizations and styles in the fight for liberation. As he prefers the "gentlemanly" approach of the NGTF and dismisses many others, he can lay claim neither to objectivity nor completeness.

Finally there are difficulties with the format of the book. The question-and-answer technique is often egregious and artificial. In the first chapter, "The Dirty, Tough Questions," Loovis tries to present a dialogue between a very hostile individual and himself. It just doesn't work, and the chapter wanders as much as any conversation. One can hardly imagine anyone with these questions being convinced by Loovis' answers and, more than that, continuing the conversation. When this style is resorted to in other chapters it is just as annoying. In some chapters, Loovis is well organized and the questions are used merely as topic headings. Overall, though, the technique generally limits the usefulness of the book.

There are just too many flaws in this book to make it a good choice for straight readers wishing an introduction to homosexuals and their lives. The best choice for this kind of book still seems to be Peter Fisher's *The Gay Mystique* (Stein and Day, 1972). Although bits and pieces of Fisher's work are dated, it remains a sound and gracefully styled exposition.

JL

Dennis Sanders, *GAY SOURCE: A CATALOG FOR MEN*. New York, Coward, McCann & Geohagan, 1977. \$6.95. 287pp.

A book with this format was almost predestined. Ever since *The Whole Earth Catalog* appeared source books for all sorts of markets from joggers to ethnic groups have been published: a resource book for gay men was clearly in the cards. Sanders' catalog includes thirty-five feature articles and a very large number of lists of all sorts of aids for gay men; from magazines and bookstores to organizations and counseling centers, to VD clinics,

clothing stores, and resort hotels. Feature articles and related lists are interspersed throughout the text. Overall, the book is divided into five sections with headings such as "Getting Into It" or "Getting It Together" (not the same "it"). Understanding the organization of any of these sections isn't easy except, perhaps, "Getting Away From It All" (yet another "it"), which deals with resorts and travel. Overall the book is a strange melange of topics, and many of the feature articles lack any special expertise. Well known authors included are Arthur Bell (on the baths), David Kopay (gays in sports), Bruce Voeller (on NGTF), C. A. Tripp (choosing a therapist), Ian Young (gay publishing) and Vito Russo (gays in film). There seems to have been no reason for not using less well known authors, and failure to use them was a significant oversight as many of the articles deal with fairly specialized subjects and some of the authors lack sufficient knowledge to cover them well. And some authors are simply poor writers.

It would be impossible to comment on all of the materials included here. For those who wish to "get it together," the catalog includes articles on body building, plastic surgery, tattooing, body piercing, and three articles on clothing, a look at drugs, an article on poppers and one on VD. (Whatever "it" is is obviously not mind.) If such lopsided priority seems to present a stereotypical view of gay interests, other sections offer some redeeming social value with articles on legal resources, estate planning, gays in the military, access to public funding, gay presence in the arts and media, gay studies and work and careers. Finally just to be "up to date" (or is it "au courant?"), there are sections on astrology, communes, and transvestite resources.

Where an author knows his subject the work is good. Vito Russo's comment on film is fine as always. Conversely, Marion Ziegler's "The Great Gay Composers" is atrocious. Ziegler's list of gay composers includes Handel, Beethoven, W. F. Bach, Lully, both Scarlattis, Telemann, Schubert, Bellini, Wagner, Tchaikovsky, Musorgsky, Sullivan, Saint-Saëns, Poulenc, Stephen Foster, Ravel, Grieg, Gershwin, and several others. This does not include a list of "possible" candidates given an "honorable mention" in this eight-page article. One is not surprised to find that Ziegler has had no professional training in music history.

There is an article by Tim Denesha about the gay movement before Stonewall. Several dissertations have now been completed on this subject and the work here is best described as "creative history." Denesha has worked as a gardener, baker, and registered nurse and this article reads like it. B. R. Burg is a professional historian of merit, but this work on gay pirates is completely speculative and lacks any references. Many scholars who heard his paper at a conference of professional historians had great doubts about its validity. The article about drugs is written by a free-lance magazine editor with no background at all in medicine, and this seems far too serious a topic for a rank amateur, whatever his experience in the practical order. Kopay's article on sports reinforces his autobiography (reviewed in the previous issue of *GGB*) by showing that he is still uncertain about his own self-image, and it tells little or nothing about gays in sports.

Many people, however, might be tempted to buy the book for its resource lists alone. Here again, the book is unsatisfactory. I can only comment about areas of some personal knowledge, but the list of professional organizations is incomplete. The gay studies roster does not include any specific courses and lists merely two books and one bibliography. Some items on the list of gay periodicals and organizations were out-of-date even at press time. Given the fast pace of changes within the gay community, some of this is inevitable, but one has the feeling, nevertheless, that several lists were put together by people insufficiently in-

formed about their subjects. Finally, the book is studied (no pun intended) with second-rate drawings of idealized gay men. Given the general level of the book, they are not inappropriate companions to the text. The gay community deserves better than this. Save your money.

JL



NOTES ON PERIODICALS

The quarterly *SexualLaw Reporter* is completing its fifth highly successful year of monitoring legal cases and issues that have a significant impact on sexual civil liberties in the United States. With the collaboration of members of the National Committee for Sexual Liberties, *SLR* is seeking to expand its coverage of cases even further, while giving increased attention to such matters as prostitution and pornography, heterosexual as well as homosexual. *SLR* may be obtained for \$30 (one year) from 1800 N. Highland Avenue, Suite 106, Los Angeles, CA 90028.

For those who read German, the monthly *Gay News Germany* provides many news items not obtainable elsewhere about events in European countries, as well as short position papers. Write the editor, Johannes Werres, GNG, D-6242 Kronberg/TS.1, Mainblick 15, West German.

From England comes the first number of the *Gay Research Group Bulletin*, coordinated by well-known scholars Ken Plummer, Jeffrey Weeks and Tony Coxon. Although the first issue is essentially a newsletter, it is hoped that the *Bulletin* will grow into a record of the important research work now proceeding in the British Isles. Contact The Sociological Research Unit, University College, Cardiff, Wales.

A recent issue of *The Journal of Social Issues* (Volume 34, Number 3, Summer 1978) is devoted to "Psychology and the Gay Community." Treating both lesbians and gay men, the authors discuss such topics as fantasy, role models, coming out, labeling and aging. Available for \$5 from P. O. Box 1248, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies announces a forthcoming issue on lesbian history. The deadline for copy is August 31, 1979. Write *Frontiers*, Women Studies Program, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309.

Conditions is a magazine of writing by women, with an emphasis on work by lesbians. A black women's issue will appear in August 1979. Available for \$8 (three issues per year) from P. O. Box 56, Van Brunt Station, Brooklyn, NY 11215.

Albatross describes itself as a lesbian feminist satire magazine, demolishing the myth that lesbians do not have a sense of humor. A one-year subscription may be obtained for \$7 from P. O. Box 2046, Central Station, East Orange, NJ.

Gay Insurgent has just appeared, as an outgrowth of *Midwest Gay Academic Journal*. This metamorphosis may cause some confusion, as there are plans to continue *MGAJ* in Chicago. At any rate, editor Daniel Tsang rightly points out that there is a need for a journal of research, reviews and news from a gay socialist viewpoint. The next two issues will deal respectively with government and corporate surveillance, and repression of the gay and lesbian movements; and with Asians and Asian Americans. Available for \$5 (three times per year) from P. O. Box 2337, Philadelphia, PA 19103.

LEFT The illustrations for *Gay Source* are by artist George Stavrinos. The one at the top accompanies the section "Getting In Touch;" that below is with the section "Equality, Liberty, Fraternity."

THE MASKS OF CONSCIOUSNESS OF FERNANDO PESSOA (1888-1935):

AN ESSAY-REVIEW

by Wayne Dynes

In late 1978 the windows of Lisbon's bookshops began to sprout brightly colored copies of Fernando Pessoa's *Cartas de Amor*, a just-released posthumous collection of letters by Portugal's greatest modern poet addressed to Ophélia Queiroz, a woman he met in an office in 1920. Their relationship was never consummated, and the letters in fact throw little light on Pessoa's affectional sensibility, which is generally and correctly conceded to be homoerotic. Despite the existence of no less than four selections of his work in English translation, the strong advocacy of Edouard Roditi and Roman Jakobson, and an international conference devoted to him at Brown University two years ago, Pessoa remains obstinately unknown in English-speaking countries. This neglect is sadly ironic, for Pessoa loved the English language--not wisely, but too well perhaps--and he left behind copious manuscripts in it. Three of the four slender volumes of verse he published in his lifetime were in English. Even his daring linguistic innovations in Portuguese are said to be the result of his constant shuttling back and forth between the two languages; his verbal deviations are in fact disguised or overt Anglicisms. His last written words on his deathbed were in English: "I know not what tomorrow will bring."

The word *peessoa* is a common noun meaning "person" in Portuguese, stemming from the Latin *persona*, "mask." Who then lay behind the mask? Roman Jakobson has acutely situated Pessoa in an international roster of modernism's most gifted generation, comparing him to such giants of formal innovation as Stravinsky, Picasso, Braque, Khlebnikov and Le Corbusier, all of whom, like Pessoa, burst into the world they were to astonish in the 1880s. (Incidentally, Jakobson's "class of the 1880s" can easily be extended with the names of Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Guillaume Apollinaire and Mies van der Rohe.) But Pessoa, in the event, knew none of these people. Courageous isolation is perhaps the most salient keynote of his lifework, and his truest companions were the creations of his own mind, the three "heteronyms" or counterselves, about which more presently.

The remarkable innovations of Pessoa's Portuguese work are hard to illustrate clearly in English. Nonetheless, the line "E cantou a cantiga do Infinito numa capoeira," "And he sang the song of Infinity in a hen-coop" ("Tabacaria," 1928) offers something of a microcosm. The grave rhythms of the first six Portuguese words, with their biblical echo, drop suddenly to the humble and quotidian setting of the hen-coop. Pessoa's method of juxtaposition achieves a striking perspective in incongruity through the shift from the general to the specific, from the timeless and traditional to the crassly plebeian. The line also incorporates a stoic realism that is perhaps the dominant emotional tone of his work. His reluctance to commit himself to any single strong emotion has been stigmatized as insincerity by some critics, but in fact reflects his conviction that "o poeta é um fingidor," poets *feign*. His adoption of

successive masks is then acknowledgement of the modern stress on the poem as a conscious artefact, rather than the naive and direct transcription of some woodnotes wild. In addition, readers of this journal will not need to be reminded of the place of safekeeping of some "faces to meet the people that you meet": the closet.

Fernando António Nogueira Pessoa was born in Lisbon on June 13, 1888. His father having died when he was five, his mother married a consular official and the family settled in Durban, British South Africa. In due course Fernando entered the Durban High School, where he proved a brilliant student, topping his career by winning the Queen Victoria Prize for an English essay. Just before his thirteenth birthday Fernando composed his first real surviving poem, "Separated from thee...":

.....
In a dim vision, from school hailing
Myself a boyish form, I see.

.....
Since first thy form divine I saw,
While from school I came with glee,
Winds have quavered and men's hearts wavered,
But I've not forgotten thee.

Since a simple boyish passion
I entertained for thee,
Though winds have quavered and men's hearts
wavered,

I've not forgotten thee.

Pessoa has cast a typical crush on a schoolmate in late Victorian dress deriving from his voracious reading. For the rest of his life he was to shift incessantly from English to Portuguese and back again. Broadly generalizing, his second language, which he acquired in South Africa, was used for working out his ideas and personal reflections--essentially for content--while Portuguese became the vehicle for his daring innovations, which united form and content. It is significant, that although he produced many translations of the work of others, he never translated the English Pessoa into Portuguese or vice versa. They were two separate, but parallel tracks.

From 1903 to 1909 his poetry, a large body of juvenilia that remains mainly unpublished, was in English. In somewhat awkward and archaizing language he began to block out some of his major themes, characterized by Georg Rudolf Lind as follows: his poetic mission, the search for self, the poet as outcast, thought as a burden, the world's mystery, revolt against God, fear of madness, and dream and reality. Toward the end of this period, his reading of Max Nordau's then famous attack *Degeneration* convinced him that his expression of these themes had been too morbid and self-indulgent, and he fell silent for a time.

The poet's period of study at the University of Cape Town had been interrupted by his decision to resettle in Lisbon for good in 1906. He then undertook one of his typically unlucky business ventures, the setting up of a small print shop. He was to spend much of his irregular professional life in often abortive publishing efforts, commercial correspondence work and translations. Portraits of Pessoa at this time bear a remarkable likeness to those of James Joyce, who lived a similarly precarious clerkly existence. Unlike Joyce, however, Pessoa was never to enjoy the luxury of an annual stipend from a wealthy patron.

In 1912 he began his real literary career with a series of articles on "The New Portuguese Poetry." The following year he wrote his poem "Pauis" (Quagmires), which sparked an ephemeral literary fashion. Just after this his true major phase began, marked by his friendship with another brilliant writer Mário de Sa Carneiro (who committed suicide in 1916); marked also by the catalytic influence of Walt Whitman combined with that of the new Italian and French futurism; and his collaboration on the two numbers of the journal *Orfeu*. The circle of friends who chose the work and title for *Orfeu* wrought

better than they knew. It is now regarded as the essential landmark of Portuguese modernism. Orpheus, of course, is not only the generic patron of literature and music, but also known for his bisexuality, and therefore a symbol of duality. Orfeu had both Portuguese and Brazilian contributors, and it was both verbal and visual. Finally, the Orfeu circle included homosexuals (Pessoa and his emanation Álvaro de Campos, together with the allied writers António Botto and Raul Leal) as well as the heterosexual majority.

In 1914, Pessoa, who was never afterwards to doubt the genuineness of his gifts, announced that he had reached his full literary maturity. At this point he created a trio of literary alter egos that were to accompany him until his death. Pessoa's three Portuguese pseudonyms--or heteronyms as he insisted they be called--had been preceded by two English ones: "Alexander Search" and "Charles Robert Anon." The new heteronyms were first glimpsed apparently in 1912, but only in the intensely productive days starting in 1914 did an oeuvre begin to spring up for them. Each was endowed with a birthdate (Pessoa even cast horoscopes for them), a curriculum vitae, and a distinctive personality. "Alberto Caero" was the most traditional of the group and was therefore appropriately regarded as the master of the others. At first he seems a mere innocent, a simple recorder of the sensations he derives from nature, but in fact he records (with an intellectualism that is typical of all Pessoa's creations) the idea of direct reception of sensations. "Ricardo Reis" was strongly influenced by Horace and classical poetry in general, but he speaks from a neo-paganism that is also tough-mindedly sceptical. "Álvaro de Campos," a trained engineer, is perhaps the most interesting of the three. Strongly influenced by Whitman, he pioneered an expansive and aggressive modernism in the great "Odes." He also seems to have borne most clearly the homosexual traits of his creator, for Campos is supposed to have stepped in during the Cphélia courtship, discouraging Pessoa from going any further with his heterosexual dalliance. Campos' poetic record of his strolls through Lisbon's port undoubtedly reflects Pessoa's own discreet cruising.

The use of pseudonyms may serve several ends: playful (as when H. L. Mencken created "Owen Hatteras" to tease Ezra Pound); practical (to avoid revealing that the same person has written too many contributions to a single issue of a periodical, a practice not unknown to 233); protective (Miss Lonelyhearts and other newspaper columnists; the countless gay writers who took new names in print to protect closet rights); and finally pathological (the Scottish writer William Sharp, who felt the compulsion to split into Fiona McCleod and Sharp; the Three Faces of Eve syndrome). [For a partial listing of literary examples, see Frank Atkinson, *Dictionary of Pseudonyms and Pennames*.] Pessoa's heteronyms function on several levels. He developed a theory of "fictions" or deliberate fabrications of attitudes, not unlike the contemporary theories of poetic impersonality of T. S. Eliot. Such notions accorded well with his personal reclusiveness, and this in turn is linked to his concern to protect his homosexual identity in a country that, despite a century of political experiment, remained narrowly restrictive in the sphere of morals. Finally, a pathological element is not altogether to be excluded. On several occasions Pessoa felt himself to be teetering on the edge of madness, and the heteronyms may have served to concretize the drift towards personality dissolution, while acting at the same time as barriers to further erosion.

In 1915 Pessoa's latent hermetic and theosophical tendencies increased, and he translated the *Compendium of Theosophy* of C. W. Leadbeater, the famous homosexual comrade-in-arms of Annie Besant. (Leadbeater, who has a claim to have invented abstract art, urgently needs a full-scale study.) Pessoa's link with theosophy (and homosexuality) was later to surface again prominently in his friendship with the extraordinary

English mountebank Alistair Crowley. One of the original Uranian poets, Crowley in later life was to create a series of scandals as a bisexual magus. Pessoa chose to translate his clamorously gay "Ode to Pan" into Portuguese.

In 1915 also he created his major homosexual poem, "Antinous," a highly charged English composition of 361 lines. The poet imagines that the Bithynian youth has just died, and Hadrian contemplates his still persuasive charms in an almost necrophiliac torment:

O fingers skilled in things not to be told!
O tongue which, counter tongued, made
the blood run bold!

Although Pessoa issued the work in a brochure in 1918 and in a revised edition in 1921, he did not attempt the subject in Portuguese: it would have been unpublishable. The sources of this tour de force are mainly English: J. A. Symonds' *Sketches and Studies in Italy and Greece* (1898); several passages in the works of Oscar Wilde; and perhaps Charles Kains-Jackson's Uranian sonnet "Antinous." The parallels with the English Uranian poets are fascinating, but there is no indication that Pessoa was acquainted with their work at any length; his English reading was largely confined to mainstream periodicals, and books of historical and occult interest.

As has been indicated, Pessoa showed throughout his life a considerable degree of caution about avowing his homosexual interests. His friend António Botto (1900-59) was more forthright, publishing a collection of exquisite, frankly paederastic lyrics in 1920. Pessoa had to defend Botto in print, and was attacked in turn in an inflammatory article, "Sodom Deified." For a time the booksellers of Lisbon were harassed by the Comstockery of a band of bullies from the University, who took it upon themselves to seize "perverted literature."

In the 1920s Pessoa's productivity began to decline, reflecting the heavy drinking that was to kill him of cirrhosis of the liver in 1935. Towards the end he dealt with this frequent scourge of writers in one of his whimsical poems:

D.T.

The other day indeed
With my shoe, on the wall,
I killed a centipede
Which was not there at all.
How can that be?
It's very simple, you see --
Just the beginning of D. T.

When the pink alligator
And the tiger without a head
Begin to take stature
And demand to be fed,
As I have no snocs
Fit to kill those,
I think I'll start thinking:
Should I stop drinking?

But it really doesn't matter . . .
Am I thinner or fatter
Because this is this?
Would I be wiser or better
If life were other than this is?

No, nothing is right.
Your love might
Make me better than I
Can be or can try.
But we never know.

Darling, I don't know
If the sugar of your heart
Would not turn out candy . . .
So I let my heart smart
And I drink Brandy.

Then the centipedes come
Without trouble.
I can see them well.
Or even double.
I'll see them home
With my shoe,
And, when they all go to hell,
I'll go too.

Then, on the whole,
I shall be happy indeed,
Because, with a shoe
Real and true,
I shall kill the true centipede --
My lost soul . . .

Interestingly enough, this vein of whimsy and nonsense --here with a very serious purpose--is not paralleled in the Portuguese verse, perhaps the only sphere in which the English muse is superior. Needless to say, the identity of the person whose love might save the poet from the D.T.'s remains unknown; there does, however, exist a letter that if printed in full might clarify the problem. Unfortunately, Pessoa's closet has been all too tightly shut by his heirs and editors.

Pessoa's greatest achievement as an artist, his far-reaching renovation of modern Portuguese poetic language (which could only be hinted at in this essay) ranks him with Pound and Eliot in English, Apollinaire in French, and Khlebnikov and Mayakovsky in Russian. As a closeted gay man, he shows affinities with his older English contemporaries, the aesthetes and Uranian writers. As an Iberian, it is tempting to compare him with García Lorca, who died the year after Pessoa.

The most fitting parallel, however, probably lies with a man who remained unknown to him at the other end of the Mediterranean, the modern Greek poet, C. P. Cavafy. Both men were effectively bilingual, using English as a window to a wider world, and then casting their new visions in a recharged version of their first language. Both men led obscure, clerkly lives, releasing their work slowly in limited issues. Both combined an interest in historical themes, especially classical and national ones, with an intense commitment to transcribing *la vie moderne*. Finally both represent an affirmation of the dignity and productivity of homosexual sensibility in an era marred by pervasive jingoism, public machismo, and diplomatic and economic crisis. Pessoa and Cavafy were the ones who quintessentially were alone, but their light has continued, and it will endure.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Recently Yvette K. Centeno expressed the wistful hope that the hundredth anniversary of his birth in 1988 would at last see all of Fernando Pessoa's works available in published form. Before his death in 1935 he carefully sorted his papers, classifying them in a series of envelopes. These literary remains, comprising no less than 25,426 items, are still in private hands; they were not catalogued until 1972. Much of the material is, as has been indicated, in English. Only selections from this horde have been published, and the suspicion persists that this delay at best, suppression, at worst, reflects in part a desire to control the character of the poet's public image. Certainly there are substantial clusters of theosophical, astrological and other occult material; there may also be unreleased homoerotic poems and essays. In the meantime, some sheets written in pencil have become so smudged as to be virtually undecipherable.

The standard edition of Pessoa's poetry, the *Obras Completas*, began to appear under the imprint of Editorial Ática in Lisbon in 1942. The eleventh and latest volume of this series is the bilingual *Poemas Ingleses* (1974), containing the homoerotic "Antinous," and prefaced by a long essay with new scholarship by the insightful critic Jorge de Sena. Unfortunately, this book

presents only those English poems that were already published elsewhere, postponing once again the revelation of the literary remains. A selection of juvenilia is provided by Georg Rudolf Lind, "Die Englische Jug-
enddichtung Fernando Pessoa's," *Portugiesischen Forschungen der Görresgesellschaft: Aufsätze zur Portugiesischen Kulturgeschichte*, Erste Reihe, VI (1966), pp. 130-63. A handy alternative to the Ática edition is the one-volume *Obra Poética* (Rio de Janeiro, Aguilar, 4th ed., 1972), with useful notes by Maria Alhete Galhoz. (Because of the Brazilian spellings in this book, the texts of the Ática one are to be preferred for citation, though it fails to capture the writer's sometimes expressive quirks of orthography.) Various selections from the published and unpublished prose appear in the following (all Lisbon, Ática): *Páginas Íntimas e de Auto-Interpretação* (G. R. Lind and J. do Prado Coelho, eds., 1968; 2 vols.); and *Cartas de Amor* (D. Mourão-Ferreira, ed., 1978). A start has been made on a new edition of Botto's work in the same format as Pessoa's: *As Canções de António Botto*, Lisbon, Ática, 1975. A new edition of *Orfeu* (2 vols), with introduction by Maria Alhete Galhoz, appeared under the Ática imprint in 1958 (?) and 1976.

The following volumes of English translation provide some access to FP's Portuguese verse: FP, *Selected Poems*, trans. Peter Rickard (Edinburgh Bilingual Library, 4), Austin, University of Texas Press, 1971; *Selected Poems by FP*, trans. by Edwin Honig, Chicago, Swallow Press, 1971; FP, *Sixty Portuguese Poems*, trans. F. E. G. Quintanilha, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1971; and FP, *Selected Poems*, trans. Jonathan Griffin, London, Penguin, 1974. In addition, Pessoa has enjoyed notable translations into Spanish (Octavio Paz), Italian (Luigi Panarese), French (Armand Guibert), and German (G. R. Lind; Paul Celan).

The standard biography by Pessoa's younger colleague João Gaspar Simões, *Vida e Obra de FP*, Lisbon, Livraria Bertrand, 3d ed., 1973, is unfortunately marred by selective presentation of documentary evidence and the imposition of vulgar Freudian schemas. A comprehensive bibliography up to 1967 is Carlos Alberto Iannone, *Bibliografia de FP*, Coimbra, University, 1969.

From the copious Portuguese criticism one may perhaps single out (in addition to the introductions to the various Ática volumes): Jacinto do Prado Coelho, *Diversidade e Unidade em FP*, 4th ed., Lisboa, Verbo, 1973 (best introduction; bibliog.); António Pina Coelho, *Os Fundamentos Filosóficos da Obra de FP*, 2 vols., Lisbon, Verbo, 1971; and Y. K. Centeno and Stephen Reckert, *FP: Tempo, Solidação, Hermetismo*, 1978 (has several unpublished English poems). Roman Jakobson's essay (with L. Stegagno Picchio), "Les oxymores dialectiques de FP," has been reprinted in his *Questions de poétique*, Paris, Seuil, 1973, pp. 463-83.



On October 4, 1918 Amy Lowell wrote to D. H. Lawrence, who had been having difficulty finding a publisher for his novels since *The Rainbow* had been suppressed as "obscene" three years earlier:

I know there is no use in counselling you to make any concessions to public opinions in your books and, although I regret sincerely that you cut yourself off from being published by an outspokenness which the English public does not understand, I regret it not in itself...but simply because it keeps the world from knowing what a great novelist you are. I think that you could top them all if you would be a little more reticent on this one subject.¹ You need not change your attitude a particle, you can simply use an India rubber in certain places, and then you can come into your own as it ought to be...When one is surrounded by prejudice and blindness, it seems to me that the only thing to do is to get over in spite of it and not constantly run foul of these same prejudices which, after all, hurts oneself and the spreading of one's work, and does not do a thing to right the prejudice.²

While Lowell actively fought against literary censorship--she demanded that *Sons and Lovers* and Compton Mackenzie's *Sylvia Scarlett* be available for circulation in the Boston Athenaeum, she supported Theodore Dreiser's fight against suppression of *The Genius*, and she argued that "no country can hope to develop itself, unless its authors are permitted to educate it"³--in her own work she took care not to "run foul" of the public's prejudices. But a good many of the poems in *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed* (1914), *Pictures of the Floating World* (1919),

Poppy Seed (1914), *Pictures of the Floating World* (1919), and two posthumously published volumes, *What's O'Clock* (1925) and *Ballads for Sale* (1927), concern a subject that was particularly taboo during her day: her lesbian involvement with Ada Russell, with whom she lived for the last 11 years of her life.⁴ Lowell herself did not use the India rubber which she suggested that D. H. Lawrence employ. She did, however, disguise her subject matter so well that only a careful examination of recurrent images and voice in these poems, supplemented by the biographical data that has only recently become widely available,⁵ can fully reveal the nature of Lowell's personal poetry. In this paper I examine one set of such poems from *Pictures of the Floating World*, the section entitled "Two Speak Together." I attempt to show how Lowell, to paraphrase Emily Dickinson, told all the truth, but told it slant.

Amy Lowell first met Ada Russell in 1909 when the actress was traveling on a New England tour of *Dawn of a Tomorrow*.⁶ The two met again in Boston, in 1912 when Russell, playing the lead in *The Deep Purple*, appeared as the guest of honor at the Lunch Club, to which Lowell, then half-heartedly living the life of a Boston society woman, belonged. They spent part of the summer of 1912 together, and for the next two years the poet tried to convince the actress to live with her. This courtship is reflected in approximately 20 poems of *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed*. Ada finally yielded to Amy's pursuit in the spring of 1914. She quit the stage and went to live with the poet in her Brookline mansion, Sevenels, ostensibly as her paid companion, but in fact as her mate. The two lived together until Amy's death in 1925.

The usual critical observation that Lowell was overweight and unmarried, and that her work is a "knell of personal frustration...an effort to hide the bare walls of the empty chambers of her heart..."⁷ the

WARDING OFF THE WATCH AND WARD SOCIETY: AMY LOWELL'S TREATMENT OF THE LESBIAN THEME

by Lillian Faderman

exposure of the heart of "a girlish, pathetic, and lonely woman, underneath {whose}...sumptuous manner lies disappointment,"⁸ is not borne out by the body of Lowell's poetry. Starting with her second volume, when her relationship with Ada began, the preponderance of her poems suggests a life and a relationship that were extremely happy and productive. Typically, in "Thorn Piece" Lowell talks about the world being dark and glazed, but another woman gives to her "fire,/And love to comfort, and speech to bind,/And the common things of morning and evening,/And the light of your lantern." In "Christmas Eve" she tells the other woman, "You have lifted my eyes, and made me whole,/And given me purpose, and held me faced/Toward the horizon you once had placed/As my aim's grand measure." "A Decade," the poem that celebrates the first ten years of their acquaintance, concludes "I am completely nourished."

It is necessary in a study of Lowell's poetry to distinguish between experiential and "persona" poems. Several volumes--*Men, Women and Ghosts* (1916), *Can Gracie's Castle* (1918), *Legends* (1921), and the posthumously published *East Wind* (1926)--contain virtually no poetry that directly reflects experience, and when a first person speaker is presented, context makes it clear that it is not the poet speaking to us. These compositions may be compared after Browning's "dramatis personae" and Pound's *personae*. In "Appuldurcombe Park," the speaker is an eighteenth-century married woman; in "Sancta Maria, Succure Miseris," it is a poor young orphan boy; in "After Hearing a Waltz by Bartók," it is a madman who kills his supposed rival. Much of the misassessment of Lowell's life as reflected in her poetry is due to a failure to distinguish between persona and poet. One critic sees a confession of her (alleged) life-long sexual frustration in the opening lines of "Appuldurcombe Park": "I am a woman, sick for passion."⁹ Another asserts that her "discomfort with herself as a woman" is proven by a poem in which Lowell "pictures herself as the Dean of Rochester."¹⁰ Such works, of course, do not "picture" the poet at all. They depict a persona adopted for dramatic purposes. On the other hand, many of Lowell's poems, particularly her shorter lyrics, contain neither characterized persona nor extended dramatic action. These poems are generally experiential, and often reveal the writer's life. "Two Speak Together" contains just such lyrics.

II

"Two Speak Together" consists of 43 short poems which trace a love relationship. The opening poems, "Vernal Equinox" and "The Letter," lament the temporary absence of the beloved. These are followed by approximately 20 poems which celebrate the beauty of the beloved, and the joy of their love. "Orange of Midsummer" introduces a note of anxiety and is followed by a series of nightmare poems, most having to do with fear of the loss of the beloved through death or desertion. Two of these, "The Country House" and "Haunted," present nightmare images without reference to the other woman, but in the context of the series it is apparent that they have been triggered by her. The quality of nightmare grotesqueness slowly fades into melancholy and nostalgia. "A Decade" celebrates their ten years together. "Penumbra," the

penultimate composition of the series, is again melancholy: the beloved is envisioned living on after the death of the speaker. Despite its somber subject the poem is an affirmation of their love; the beloved will remain in the home they shared together:

You will sit here, some quiet summer night,
Listening to the puffing trains,
But you will not be lonely,
For these things are a part of me.
And my love will go on speaking to you
Through the chairs, and the tables, and the
the pictures,
As it does now through my voice,
And the quick, necessary touch of my hand.

The last poem, "Frimaire," compares the lovers to two flowers in late autumn, "Blooming last in a yellowing garden." They endure, though the many who were once with them have faded. This too is a work of anxiety and fear. The speaker realizes that soon one or the other of them must die, and hopes that she, "the crimson flower," will not outlive the other, the beloved "purple flower." "Frimaire" ends with the lines "Many mornings there cannot be now/For us both. Ah, Dear, I love you."

The autobiographical nature of these poems is evident both from the details of Lowell's life and an admission she made to John Livingston Lowes. Lowes, who had several times been a guest at Sevenels, discerned, when he read one of the love poems of "Two Speak Together," "Madonna of the Evening Flower," that the beloved was Ada Russell. He wrote to Amy on February 9, 1918, praising the poem and its depiction of Ada. Amy responded on February 13th, "I am very glad indeed that you liked the 'Madonna of the Evening Flowers.' How could so exact a portrait remain unrecognized?"¹¹ I will demonstrate shortly that the beloved in this poem is the same woman who appears throughout "Two Speak Together," and in most of Amy Lowell's love poetry.

In addition to the letter to Lowes, there are recurrent autobiographical references in "Two Speak Together" which support the theory that these are personal poems. In "After a Storm," for example, the speaker refers to her dogs (Amy owned eight English sheep dogs) leaping about the beloved in the garden. In "Autumnal Equinox" she refers to her well-publicized habit of working late at night while the rest of the household is asleep. In "November" she describes her home, Sevenels, with pine trees and lilacs in the garden, vine leaves against the wall, her cat (which she kept during the war, after having had to sacrifice the dogs because of the food shortage), and herself sitting alone under a lamp, trying to write. In "Penumbra" she confirms that the site of their life together is Sevenels, "the old house which has known me since the beginning."

Despite the title, in "Two Speak Together" there is only one literal speaker in the poems. The beloved "speaks" simply by being, by "communing with" the lover and "Penumbra" evokes the same sense of "presence" that the dead poet's voice will go on "speaking" to her beloved after death. Yet while it is apparent through biographical evidence that poet and speaker are one, several references may mislead the reader as to the autobiographical nature of these poems. "Preparation" is the only poem in which gender is specifically stated. The speaker, purchasing smoke-colored spectacles in preparation for meeting the too-dazzling beloved, is called "Sir" by a shopman. I mean to suggest here, and I believe the evidence will confirm it, that this misleading gender identification of the speaker is part of the poet's inconsistent attempt to disguise her lesbian subject matter so as not to "run foul" of those popular prejudices about which she warned D. H. Lawrence.

Although gender is never again specified, images occur throughout the poems which may confuse the reader as to the gender of the speaker. In "Venus Transiens"

for example, the beloved is compared to Botticelli's Venus, and by implication the speaker is compared to the masculine Botticelli: "...were the painted rosebuds/He tossed his lady,/Of better worth/Than the words I blow about you/To cover your too great loveliness...?" In "Madonna of the Evening Flowers" the beloved's feminine pattering about their home contrasts to the speaker's "masculine" self-depiction, "All day long I have been working." In "Wheat-in-the-Ear" and "The Weather-Cock Points South" the speaker is the sexual aggressor and the beloved plays a passive role. In "Bullion," "A Shower," and "The Charm" the speaker either is or would like to be protector and giver. Whenever traditionally masculine pursuits are mentioned (e.g., driving in "Nerves") it is the speaker and not the beloved who engages in them.

Despite this masculine characterization, it may be seen that the speaker is in fact a woman. In "The Garden by Moonlight" the speaker suggests her gender by lamenting her childless state and thinking back through the female line of her family:

Ah, Beloved, do you see those orange lillies?
They knew my mother,
But who belonging to me will they know
When I am gone.

In "Autumn" too she calls herself "[I] who am barren." However, in "April" she employs the language of childbirth to describe creating a poem in Happiness:

I will lie among the little squills
And be delivered of this overcharge of beauty,
And that which is born shall be a joy to you
Who love me.¹²

There are other hints as well that the speaker is really female. For example, "Strain" refers to long fingers being passed "through my drifting hair" at a time when men wore their hair short. In "Interlude" the speaker describes herself figuratively as being engaged in traditionally female tasks such as baking cakes and "smoothing the seam of the linen I have been working" (these are apparently metaphors for writing decorative poetry). It is important to note that the beloved in this poem is compared to the moon, which is always feminine and a frequent metaphor for Ada in Lowell's poetry. "Interlude" is thus the only poem of "Two Speak Together" in which the lover and the beloved are genderized together.

It is thus clear that the first person of these poems is a woman and a writer who lived in her family mansion, which she knew from the time of her birth. The speaker, the lover, is clearly Lowell herself, despite perfunctory attempts to disguise her gender. The beloved's gender is even more readily apparent. With the exception of "Vernal Equinox" and its use of language generally employed to describe the masculine ("Why are you not here to overpower me with your tense and urgent love?") the other poems depict the beloved in traditionally feminine guise and behavior whenever gender is suggested. In "Mise en Scène" and "Madonna of the Evening Flowers" she is compared to a Madonna. In "Venus Transiens" she is compared to the Goddess of Love. Her garments are always feminine in "Bright Sunlight" there is a reference to her shawl; in "The Artist" and "The Wheel of the Sun" she wears feminine silks. In "Grotesque" the speaker weaves a garland for her hair. Her occupations are similarly traditionally feminine: in both "Madonna of the Evening Flowers" and "A Sprig of Rosemary," for example, she sews.

We know that "Madonna of the Evening Flowers" is about Ada from Amy Lowell's 1918 letter to John Livingston Lowes. A comparison of the images which describe her in this poem with those images of the loved woman in other poems will show that Ada is consistently the beloved of "Two Speak Together."

to "going down," a term denoting a homosexual act which, according to Eric Partridge, came into our language about 1905¹⁶. The weather-cock, with its masculine sexual connotations, operates as a misleading gender hint much as the address "Sir" in "Preparation."

The usual Ada images and colors appear in this poem: she is associated with the garden, moonlight, the colors white, silver, and purple. As in "Song for a Viola D'Amore" (from *What's O'Clock*) which declares, "The lady of my choice is bright/As a clematis at the touch of night,/As a white clematis with a purple heart," here too the flower is all the person of the beloved. However, the flower image also operates in this poem as an evocative and descriptive symbol for the female genitalia: phrases in the poem suggest the labia majora ("broad outer leaves"), the labia minora ("the smaller ones...veined with purple"), pubic hair ("stiff"), sexual secretions ("glazed inner leaves"), female tumescence ("you stood up like a white flower"), and the clitoris ("the bud"). Phrases also suggest knowledge of female sexual sensitivity ("The bud is more than the calyx") and an oral-genital act, the softly-swinging wind being the lover's breath ("Thrust upon by a softly-swinging wind.") Deciphered, the poem is more frankly and joyously sexual than any of the works of Lowell's contemporaries who came under the strictures of the Watch and Ward Society.¹⁷

III

D. H. Lawrence's major criticism of Lowell's poems has since been echoed by almost every Lowell critic. "Why don't you always be yourself?" he asked with regard to her writing. "Why do you take a pose? It causes you always to shirk your issues, and find a banal resolution at the end. So your romances are spoiled."¹⁸ Several years later, he admonishes her, "Do write from your *real* self, Amy, don't make up things from the outside, it is so saddening."¹⁹

Lawrence's criticism was directed primarily at Lowell's long persona compositions which comprised the bulk of her work. Lowell had considerable encouragement in writing such poems, since she read them well and dramatically, and they were the most popular of her work at her always packed public lecture-readings. Perhaps she felt herself that her persona lyrics constituted her best work because she learned from Pound at the beginning of the imagist movement to value "impersonal art," to accept the aesthetic, which was later articulated by Eliot, that poetry was "not an expression of personality, but an escape from personality." Perhaps she really believed her own pronouncement on Edna St. Vincent Millay, who: "attempted nothing beyond the personal, which is the hallmark of minor poetry."²⁰ It is at least as likely that Lowell avoided the experiential because of the taboos of her day. These surrounded the subject matter that was most personal to her, lesbian love, and forced her to disguise her theme, often awkwardly and absurdly, as in the "Sir" of "Preparation."

In any case, while her experiential poetry is often bad, it is seldom as bad as most of her persona poems, and a good deal of it is excellent. I would agree with John Livingston Lowes regarding the concluding lines of "Venus Transiens":

For me,
You stand poised
In the blue and buoyant air,
Cinctured by bright winds,
Treading the sunlight.
And the waves which precede you
Ripple and stir
The sands at my feet.

"If those eight lines," Lowes observed, "were the only fragment left of an unknown poet, we should recognize that the craftsmanship which wrought their cool, controlled, and shining beauty was unique."²¹

Amy Lowell did write too much, and her mediocre verse has overshadowed her real poetry, most of which was highly personal and often mystifying, since a taboo subject was in various ways "told slant." It is finally time to decode, to reexamine, and to reevaluate these experiential poems.

NOTES

- ¹The *Rainbow* was suppressed because of two erotic passages in particular: a heterosexual love scene between Ursula and Anton Skrebensky and a lesbian love scene between Ursula and Winifred Inger. While the heterosexual scene was unchanged in later editions, the lesbian passage was modified. Harry T. Moore, *D. H. Lawrence: His Life and Works* (New York, Twayne Publishers, 1964), p. 120.
- ²S. Foster Damon, *Amy Lowell: A Chronicle, With Extracts From Her Correspondence* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1935), pp. 482-83.
- ³Letter to H. L. Mencken, September 18, 1916, in S. Foster Damon, p. 372. Although Lowell was publicly opposed to censorship, in her letters to personal acquaintances she expressed her distaste for the unbridled works of Ezra Pound, James Joyce, Richard Aldington, and even Lawrence, whom she always championed in print and in her lectures.
- ⁴Lowell's first volume, *A Dome of Many Coloured Glass* (1912) also contains a number of seemingly homoerotic poems, addressed apparently to two other women.
- ⁵Jean Gould's *Amy: The World of Amy Lowell and the Imagist Movement* (New York, Dodd, Mead, 1975), is the first to deal in depth with the specific nature of the relationship between Lowell and Ada Russell. In a scurrilous study published one year after Amy Lowell's death, Clement Wood argued that Lowell was not a good poet because many of her poems were homosexual; therefore, they did not "word a common cry of many hearts." Lowell, he concluded, may qualify "as an impassioned singer of her own desires; and she may well be laureate also of as many as stand beside her," but non-lesbian readers will find nothing in her verse, *Amy Lowell* (New York, Harold Vinal, 1926), pp. 13, 173. Perhaps because Ada Russell was still alive when Wood published his study, he uses almost no biography to support his thesis. G. R. Ruihley, in his introduction to *A Shard of Silence: Selected Poems of Amy Lowell* (New York, Twayne Publishers, 1957) and in his critical study *The Thorn of a Rose: Amy Lowell Reconsidered* (Hamden, Conn., Archon Books, 1975), discusses the "powerful attachment" between Amy Lowell and Ada Russell, but he characterizes the relationship as being on "a rare and platonic plane." Other biographers have referred to Ada Russell as Lowell's "companion" or "dear friend" and have ignored the intensity that inspired the poet to write hundreds of love poems to the other woman.
- ⁷Hervey Allen, "Amy Lowell as a Poet," *Saturday Review of Literature*, 3, No. 28 (February 5, 1927), pp. 557-58, 568.
- ⁸Winfield Townley Scott, "Amy Lowell Ten Years After," *New England Quarterly*, 8 (June 1935), pp. 320-30.
- ⁹C. R. Ruihley, *A Shard of Silence*, p. xvii.
- ¹⁰Clement Wood, p. 151.
- ¹¹S. Foster Damon, p. 441.
- ¹²In "The Sisters," a poem about the literary sisterhood of Sappho, Dickinson, E. B. Browning, and herself, Lowell again compares writing poetry and bearing children when she asks, "Why are we/Already mother-creatures, double-bearing,/With matrices in body and in brain?"
- ¹³These Ada images appear not just in the volume under consideration, but in earlier and later volumes as well. For example, in "In a Garden" (*Sword Blades and Poppy Seed*) the speaker would love to watch the other woman bathing, "white and shining in the silver-flecked water/While the moon rode over the garden," surrounded by cool-colored lilacs. In "The Giver of Stars" from the same volume, the beloved is associated with both cool-

NOTES FROM AUSTRALIA

by Dennis Altman
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University of Sidney
N.S.W. 2006
Australia

I have been asked to cover in a thousand words or so the development of gay studies, and related aspects, in Australia. The task is practically impossible, not because there is so much to discuss (there isn't), but because of the difficulty of getting information. There is, for example, no decent bibliography of relevant material, though this request has at least made me aware of the need to develop one. What follows is therefore a rather random string of notes and addresses—all written, it should be noted, by a male homosexual, living in Sydney, and with more knowledge of sociology and politics than law, medicine or psychology.

The gay movement in Australia has had since its foundation in 1970 very close connections with tertiary (university) students and teachers, which has had the effect, ironically, of delaying the appearance of specifically academic homosexual groups until this year. Most of the early spokespeople tended to have university connections, the Australian Union of Students helped fund the first national conference in 1975, and some of the best documented cases of discrimination have occurred at universities (in two cases in reference to trainee teachers, one of whom, Greg Weir, is presently suing the Queensland state government to be accepted as a teacher).

At the same time the volume of publications of an academic nature in Australia has been very restricted; there exist no books on either the gay community in Australia nor on the gay movement. (My own *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation* is largely American in scope.) This contrasts with the situation of women, where there has been a quite substantial amount of material published in recent years.

The first Australian conference on teaching and research into homosexuality was a student-organised one in Melbourne in 1976. This year the Gay Union of Tertiary Staff (GUTS) was founded in Sydney, as part of a general upsurge of gay activism that occurred during the year. (Most spectacular were a series of street marches in Sydney, which lead to numerous arrests, and a clear indication that the New South Wales State Labor government has no intention of decriminalizing homosexuality, although advised to do so by its own Anti-Discrimination Board. In this it is following a fine Australian tradition: similar recommendations were rejected in Western Australia, and the Federal Government's Commission on Human Relations has seen most of its findings, including those on homosexuality, ignored, although the Australian Capital Territory, like South Australia, has seen the decriminalization of homosexuality.)

GUTS organised a one-day seminar on homosexuality in tertiary institutions in October, which was useful for a pooling of some of the work that is going on. As in the United States the size of the country, and the federal nature of our politics, tend to make for considerable isolation; I know that there are several people interested in the area in Perth, but I have no specific information.

19 Letter to Lowell from D. H. Lawrence, March 23, 1917,
S. Foster Damon, p. 405.

²¹John Livingston Lowes, "The Poetry of Amy Lowell," *Saturday Review of Literature*, 2, No. 10 (October 3, 1925), pp. 169-70, 174-75.



The larger problem in dealing with this topic is that most of the work is so far in its early stages (including at least three Ph.D. theses in the Sydney area alone) and therefore not easily accessible. People with specific interests are best advised to write to GUTS, c/o Department of Government, Sydney University, NSW, 2006, and we shall try to put you in contact with appropriate persons. At the moment there is research underway on gay oral history, the development of sexual liberation movements, gay popular culture, gay lifestyles and aging, legal aspects of discrimination, etc. Several anthologies are allegedly in preparation--both a lesbian and a gay male literary collection and a collection of movement documents.

There are several university departments where courses that include considerable discussion of homosexuality are given, e.g., General Philosophy and Government (Sydney), Sociology (Macquarie), Sociology (Flinders University, Adelaide). More common is the gradual infiltration of pro-gay material into some professional schools, sometimes by the direct use of gay movement speakers. A pressing need of the gay movement is to undertake a systematic study of just how homosexuality is presented in the various medical, law, social work, etc., faculties.

In terms of both teaching and research there is a clear difference in emphasis between those interested in general theoretical problems of sexuality and the way in which homosexuality is related to these, and those with a more empirical interest. The first trend is represented by the Working Papers Collective in Sydney, who have published a series of collections heavily influenced by radical French philosophy (Box 83, Wentworth Building, 174 City Road Darlington, 2008). The latter are most commonly associated with psychology departments (e.g., Dr. Norman Thompson and his colleagues at Macquarie University, Sydney) or with research into specific areas (e.g. Lex Watson, Government Department, University of Sydney, on legal questions).

At a secondary level the most significant group is the Gay Teachers and Students Group (P. O. Box 35, Fitzroy, 3065), who this year published a booklet for schools called *Young, Gay and Proud*. This has attracted considerable media coverage, so far surprisingly restrained. They have also persuaded the Victorian Teachers' Union to adopt positive pro-gay policies.

Those who are interested in the Australian gay movement would find useful material as well in movement publications and from groups, most of which are listed in the national gay paper *Campaign* (Box j41, Brickfield Hill, Sydney 2000). This is a monthly, commercial and male-oriented, but with some useful material. Note also *Gay Changes* (Box 301 Norwood, S.A. 50067) which has a certain cultural emphasis. Women's movement literature often contains discussion of gay issues; one of several academic oriented journals is *Refractory Girl* (62 Regent Street, Sydney 2000). A gay archives has recently been established in Melbourne (write Graham Carbery, 22 Marwick Street, Flemington, 3031).

I know of no gay literary criticism of Australian writings, and precious little overt gay literature here. [There are gay themes in several plays--e.g. Peter Kennedy's *Mates* and Steve Spears' *The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin*, published together in a book called *Drag Show* (Currency Press, 1977)--and a lesbian novel, Elizabeth Riley's *All That False Instruction* (Angus and Robertson, 1975), appeared several years ago.]

Publications: a very select bibliography of some relevant articles in Australian journals*

Dennis Altman: *Coming Out in the Seventies*. Sidney, Wild and Woolley, 1979 (a collection of articles, many on homosexual themes).

-- "Deviance, Society and Sociology," in Anne Edwards and Paul Wilson (eds.): *Social Deviance in Australia*, Melbourne, Cheshire, 1975.

Ron Barr et al: "Homosexuality and Psychological Adjustment," *Medical Journal of Australia*, vol. 1, 9, February 1974.

D. Chappell and P. Wilson: "Changing Attitudes Towards Homosexual Law Reform," *Australian Law Journal*, vol. 46, January 1972.

Graham Carbery: "Conditioned Responses to Homosexuality and the Law," *Summons* (Melbourne University Law School), 1977.

Craig Johnston: "A Many Splendoured Thing?" *Hecate* (Brisbane) vol. 3, no. 2, July 1977.

-- "Life as a Lesbian," in Jan Mercer (ed.): *The Other Half*, Melbourne, Penguin Books, 1975.

Mike Ross: "Relationship Between Sex Role and Sex Orientation in Homosexual Men," *New Zealand Psychologist*, 4 (1), 1977, pp. 25-29.

-- "Paradigm Lost or Paradigm Regained? Behavior modification and Homosexuality," *New Zealand Psychologist*, 6 (1), 1977, pp. 42-51.

-- "Heterosexual Marriage of Homosexual Males: A Consideration of Some Associated Factors," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* (in press).

-- "Societal Reaction Theory: A Phenomenological Approach," *Melbourne Psychology Reports*, 42, 1977, pp. 1-17.

A. Veraa: "Sexual Deviance and Homosexuality: A Social Work Appraisal," *Australian Social Work*, vol. 28, September 1975, pp. 23-25.

Emilio C. Viano: "Maintaining Respectability; Lifestyles of Gay Women in an Urban Environment," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, vol. 8, September/December 1975, pp. 275-87.

Lex Watson: "The Anti-gay Laws: Irrationality and Public Policy-making," in *Victimless Crimes Seminar Papers*, N.S.W. Attorney General's Department, Sydney, 1978.

-- "Professional Poofster-Bashing--A Study of Medicine, Homosexuality and the Politics of Authority, Experimentation and the Law," in E. Bates and P. Wilson (eds.): *Mad, Bad and Sad*, Brisbane, Queensland University Press, 1979.

Sue Wills: "The Lesbian and the Psychologist," *Refractory Girl*, no. 5, Summer 1974.

Robin Winkler: "New Directions for Behavior Modification in Homosexuality," *Australian Psychologist*, vol. 11, 1976 (Monograph Supplement no. 3: Behavior Modification in Australia).

See also:

Lesbian issue of *Refractory Girl*, Summer 1974.

Report of Honorary Royal Commission Enquiring into Matters Relating to Homosexuality in Western Australia, Perth, 1974.

Report of Royal Commission on Human Relationships, A.G. P.S., Canberra, 1977 (especially vol. 5).

N.S.W. Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research: *Homosexual Offences* (Research Report), Sydney, 1978.

*Note: For the sake of brevity I have omitted a number of articles in medical journals, articles by Australians published in overseas journals (with one exception), and most movement publications.

Walters, THE MALE NUDE

(Continued)

the rest of the book only in that the sulky and simplistic complaints about all the woes of women being all the makings of men is somewhat less apparent.

As this reviewer *thinks* he understands her, Walters feels that homosexuality (the subject comes up often, rarely without a trace of contempt) involves the struggle between two men for dominance, each desiring but fearing the passive role. Male nudes created for gay men are all either of two types: (1) the "passive" adolescent, vulnerable and passive but with the reassurance of having a penis prominently displayed; and (2) the superstud macho with his props--boots, leather jackets, tattoos etc. The first is merely a parody of the female (which gay men really want if they could just find the right one?) and the second fetishistic. Camp enters into it, but she seems unsure just how. Gay males are fixated on dirt, she observes, and since photography can't express dirt vividly enough for gay male tastes, only drawings like those of the much-imitated Tom of Finland will do. "The fascist associations are quite explicit; the model--the ideal man--lurking behind all these leather boys is a Nazi storm trooper." Ho-hum.

A lot of nonsense has been written about art over the years. That this book is feminist nonsense hardly makes it more valid than its predecessors. Androphobes, queer-haters and misogynists may find in it grist for their mills, but scholars are certain to be disappointed.

JW



GAY BOOKS BULLETIN

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