

# GAY NEWS

№ 511

15p  
FORTNIGHTLY

# BELFAST

## Peter Katin — Shock decision

— page three

## Government black-list:

Minister speaks  
see page six

## You can teach and be gay — Official

— page three

## The dancing boys of Afghanistan

Derek James travels on  
see page seven

## The man the US government banned:

Exclusive interview  
— page eleven

## All steamed up

Iain Finlayson sweats it out in  
British saunas  
see page fifteen

## Madigan's log

— page nine



# The quiet battle

Belfast gays pictured at Stormont shortly after handing in a protest letter demanding changes in Northern Ireland's barbaric sex laws. Pushed into the background is the statue of Sir Edward Carson, the man who led the prosecution against Oscar Wilde. The delegation consisted of (from left to right) Edwin Henshaw, Jeff Dudgeon, Brian Gilmore, Gerry McGrillen, Kevin Merrett and Pierre.

In this issue, *Gay News* is publishing the first of a two-part special report on Ireland. Michael Mason and Denis Lemon have recently returned from a four-day trip to Belfast where they accompanied the delegation to Stormont and spoke to gays involved in the movement. Michael's report appears on pages 4 and 5. Jeff Grace will be visiting Dublin with Denis, and reporting on the situation in the Republic in a later issue.

Photograph: Michael Mason

# GAY NEWS

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## And the Lord said Yah Boo Sucks

Mr MacGuffog says that Mr Peter Katin can't play the nice piano in Tunbridge Wells (see news story, page 3). A document recently brought to our attention sheds light on the matter:

And the Lord God MacGuffog created the Assembly Hall, Tunbridge Wells. And he saw that it was good.

And he made hard wooden folding chairs to stand upon the floors. And he thought that they were pretty good too.

And he did his creating bit with a piano, and a stage, and a ticket office, and so on. And by this time he reckoned that the whole thing was fantastic.

Then, as a final fling, created he Peter Katin to play upon the piano, and Peter Katin came to Tunbridge Wells in Kent, 'The Garden of England', and played upon the piano. And the sound he made was not only good, but thoroughly enjoyed by the residents of Tunbridge Wells.

But there was in the Garden of England a serpent that called itself the Campaign for Homosexual Equality. And CHE tempted Peter Katin, and said to him, "Please will you play the piano for us?" And Peter Katin said he would. And a benefit concert was arranged.

But the Lord God MacGuffog heard about the plans. And he spoke angrily to the CHE serpent, and muttered something about the members rolling over on their stomachs and crawling on their bellies.

And he accused Peter Katin of having yielded to the temptations of the serpent, and he cast him out of the Garden of England.

And he set at the entrance to the Garden a fiery monument to bigotry and blindness. And all who saw it were amazed.

(The rest of this revealing document is lost, we hear. Which in the circumstances is just as well. MacGuffog's action in refusing to allow Peter Katin to play in the Assembly Hall, simply because CHE was to benefit from the recital, is both arrogant and insulting. It is arrogant for a local Town Hall clerk to take it upon himself to take action against a group of people whose activities are sanctioned by law. And it is an insult to Peter Katin, who has not only shown magnificent generosity in the time and energy he has devoted to CHE, but is a first class pianist whose playing has been enjoyed by audiences throughout the world.

The council must, of course, reverse this decision. But they must also ensure that MacGuffog apologises to Mr Katin, if he wishes to keep his job. Mr Katin has already written to the council expressing his "disgust" at the ruling. But he is a generous man, and he may therefore be prepared to accept an apology).

## Green light for teachers

Whenever the conversation turns to the question of 'coming out', school-teachers have always claimed with some degree of justification that their jobs would be in danger if their employers discovered they were gay.

But the report in this issue of the meeting between David Bell and Ian Harvey, both of CHE, and Mr Ashley-Bramall, Leader of the Inner London Education Authority, makes it quite clear that such fears are groundless as far as London teachers are concerned.

If Mr Ashley-Bramall was prepared to risk public criticism by making the remarks that he did, it only strengthens the evidence of his complete sincerity.

The news will no doubt be greeted by the teachers concerned with mixed feelings. They will, of course, be relieved that their jobs are not in danger. But they will also have to face a completely personal decision whether or not they are bold enough to 'come out'. There is no longer the comforting justification for silence, "Ah, but I'm a teacher, and my job, you know."

Bearing in mind the courage of a number of teachers who have been prepared to say "I am gay, and I am a good teacher," and who have obtained these assurances from Mr Ashley-Bramall, let us hope that their courage was not entirely in vain. They have prepared the ground for their gay colleagues. So let us hope those colleagues will come out themselves, and help to change the lot of gay teachers in other parts of this country.

# Editorial & Letters

## Your Letters

Gay News welcomes letters from its readers on any subject of special interest to homosexuals, including comment on items published in GN. Owing to space limitations, please keep your letter as short as possible (200 words maximum). Letters must be signed, but the writer's name and address will be withheld if the writer requests it. Send to: Your Letters, Gay News, 62a Chiswick High Road, London W4 1SY

### Rueful reading

Sappho Publications  
BCM/PETREL London WC1

Dear Gay News,

The parrying of pens between Phillip Hodson, Executive Editor of *Forum* and Roger Baker about those best qualified to write about gaydom is rueful reading (Your Letters GN49). The subject matter is not gaydom. It is solely about homosexuals. I read Dr Pittenger's article in *Forum* because it was sent to *Sappho* also to be reviewed. The article was entitled 'The Art of Homosexual Love'. *Sappho* ignored it with the scorn it deserved. It completely excluded the female homosexual. The article should have been entitled 'The Art of Male Homosexual Love'. To add aggro to arseholes—a lesbian article is to follow in a July or August edition of *Forum* by Chad Varah—as if there aren't any highly professional articulate NUJ card-carrying lesbian writers about. The Executive Editor of *Forum* is catering to ignorant hets about homosexuality he says. How much more ignorant they are going to be about female homosexuality with its exclusion from one article and its interpretation by a male heterosexual in another. Phillip Hodson, dearie, you're doing a fine job.

I am sure we can look forward to a spate of heterosexual articles by homosexuals in *Forum* so that the "right" line can be got when interpreting the essence of straightdom for gays"—yet. Raging.

Jackie Forster

### Ancient fallacies

Abingdon, Oxon

Dear Gay News,

Has anyone suggested that the coming campaign for homosexual equality would be best fought with the object of simply removing all mention of homosexuality from the statute book? Arguments about the age of consent will be endless and wherever the line is drawn it will be arbitrary but surely the only offences which the law is justified in proceeding against—violence, coercion, public indecency, etc.—are already in existence with regard to heterosexuality. If homosexuality were regarded as not a matter of which the law needed to take cognisance it would not only make everything much simpler for all concerned but would be much better justice, so much so that I am surprised not to have seen it suggested before. If there are snags involved in this approach perhaps some of your readers can point them out. The usual obstacle in such debates is the old-fashioned notion that children can be 'perverted' and be turned homosexual when they would not otherwise have been so and there is still a widespread desire on the part of many parents to 'protect' their children from the facts of life in the widest sense. The main ammunition needed by those debating will be arguments, and where possible statistics, from this and other countries, which disprove these ancient fallacies.

A Bryson Gerrard

### Label Babel

Intergroup Golders Green,  
Unitarian Hall,  
Hoop Lane,  
London NW11

Dear Gay News,

Membership of Intergroup is more or less equally divided between those who are predominantly homosexual and those predominantly heterosexual, with a pleasant minority of real ambisexuals.

We don't mind what we call each other, but notice that members of some organisations are very touchy. 'Gay' is a better label than 'Queer' and appears acceptable to most. Ambisexuals with their slogan "Bi is Best" have no label problems. The word 'normal' suggests that the others are subnormal or abnormal in some way. 'Straight' sounds like a two-dimension square and implies that the others are bent or crooked. 'Het' seems the obvious choice: it's a short, neutral word and in regular use in GN.

And, if we are to use 'het', why not 'hom', or is that perhaps just a little too chic and French sounding?

Dudley Cave  
Secretary

### Be a friend to Friend

9 Leicester Road,  
Shephard,  
Loughborough,  
Leics LE12 9DF

Dear Gay News,

A Friend group in the East Midlands is in the process of formation. It is hoped, initially, to cover the Derby-Nottingham-Leicester triangle plus adjacent rural areas. If any GN readers would like to help in this venture either as befrienders or helpers I would be very glad to hear from them.

Bernard Ratigan

### Chuckling from start to finish

Dudley, Wores

Dear Gay News,

I do want to take this opportunity of thanking you all for your magnificent GN which arrives by post regularly each Friday. It is the highlight of the week, and I have nothing but praise for the varied articles which you publish, and also the fact that your subscription department is really first-rate, as the mag always arrives without fail on a Friday. Perhaps we should also thank the Post Office.

I always read the News from page to page—the letters are most interesting, in fact everything is both newsy and informative, but in the current issue No 50, I really was knocked-out (if that's the word) with 'Madigan's Log'. This was so beautifully amusing and funny and well-written that it had me chuckling from start to finish, and to me, was the highlight of the present issue. Would you please thank Leo for me, and at the same time accept my sincere thanks for continued excellence. Carry on the good work.

Victor Watson

### Throw caution to the wind

London W12

Dear Gay News,

After living for a year in California, I returned to dear old London to find your paper. You deserve much praise for putting so many good articles together in one paper.

I must single out 'Madigan's Log', it is rare such intelligent and articulate writing appears in a gay paper.

Regarding your recent article about Turkey, if any of your readers has any doubts about going, I say throw caution to the wind and go. I've been many times and am going again—need I say more?

Nicky Athendrin

### Prissy and deep pink

London W5

Dear Gay News,

Recently I find you have had a tendency to skirt round the direct word and use a prissy synonym. This prissiness extends to many items in GN and I find it detracting from the straightforward approach you started with. The ordinary (not grand) gay guy just does NOT talk about penises and bums... it's just ordinary cocks and arses, so as both are dictionary words why not use them? This is all part of a bit of preciousness in GN which is making it more and more like a school mag... St Trinian's?

While I'm having a beef, I really must refute some of the 'cloud nine' ideas expressed in the article in GN49 on Turkey.

The writer thought Turkey had a touch of Alice in Wonderland about it, but I think the problem was that he viewed the country not through rose tinted glasses, but deep pink. It certainly is not as gay as Morocco or Amsterdam and I challenge him to justify this. The Sultan Ahmet area hotels, if you can call many of them that, are filled for a great part of the year with hippies or more unsavoury types... I've encountered them. The food is good, and cheap, but the Turkish Bath he mentions is the Cagaloglu Hamamli, very impressive with its pillars and vaulted roof, but many London saunas see more far more gay life than is available at this one. The Turkish guy on the desk is gay and I spent an evening with him and he told me how many gay guys visit the bath, hopeful of Turkish delights that are not allowed to develop. For this one must visit the small baths in the country villages.

A H

(Full name and address withheld on request)

### The Albany Trust

Albany Trust  
18 Corsica Street  
London NE1 1JN  
Tel: 01-359 7019

Dear Gay News,

I am sorry that Richard Creed wrote to us but got no answer (see Letters GN50). The Post Office has been paid to send on mail, but we don't appear to have had Richard's letter. As you have published a critical comment from him, may I have space to reply?

Firstly, my letter to *The Guardian* was about the shared plight of many smaller charities, including ourselves, in the present inflationary situation when costs rise and income doesn't. One outcome of that correspondence is that the National Council of Social Service is convening an emergency conference later this month at which these common problems will be discussed and (I hope) acted upon.

Secondly, Richard Creed asks what we are doing and complains that we "are not supporting anything worthwhile in the gay community." (I assume he means that we are not giving out money.) This reveals a misconception about the nature of the Albany Trust. We do not exist to support the gay community financially, but to promote psychological health, and this is interpreted by the Trustees as a concern with the whole range of psychosexual education and social action—not just with homosexuality. Because we originated in close association with the Homosexual Law Reform Society, we have always spent a lot of time and effort in helping gay men and women: although personal counselling is not our major task, Michael Butler (who is a Trustee) is counselling people for us every week. The main thrust of our endeavour now is directed to improving the amount and quality of informed professional and social work help available—a slow and necessarily patient task.



Illustration: Garry Cobb

involving a lot of discussion and behind-the-scenes preparation before visible results begin to show, or headline-hitting stories can be written.

While I agree with Richard Creed that charities should do more with their money than just pay staff, I am sure he will recognise that charities, like other people, have mounting bills to meet these days, and I hope he will agree that social workers should be paid a living wage.

Because of its inadequate income (and it has no capital), the Albany Trust is not able to make large or frequent money grants to gay community activities. We did, however, give Leeds GLF a donation recently to help them go on producing their admirable *Broadsheet*.

The Albany Society Ltd, which is a separate charity from the Albany Trust and has people who are or once were active in several homophile groups on its Council of Management, gives nearly all its income to gay community work and is about to announce 1974 grants totalling several hundred pounds. One of these is to Gay Switchboard.

If Richard Creed or anyone else who reads this gets in touch with me, I shall be glad to tell him more about the present stage of our planning for what I hope will be a vigorously active and useful 1975.

Antony Grey  
Managing Trustee

### Surrounded by heterosexuals

London N11

Dear Gay News,

Page 10 of the CHE West End Group's report on elderly homosexuals begins: "Any elderly person starting to live in a local authority home must find difficulties in adjusting to the new conditions. How much more difficult then for the elderly homosexual whose life style is at all basically gay, to adjust in his old age to an exclusively heterosexual environment? It should be remembered that when living on his own a homosexual, no matter how he may conform when in public can at least be himself at home, this is not possible in the more communal atmosphere of a public establishment. The homosexual must now put on an act of being heterosexual for twenty-four hours a day. We are not necessarily referring here to the physical aspects of homosexuality, but also to the desire of the homosexual to be able to relax in the company of his own kind."

The prospect of spending possibly the last 15 or so years of one's life surrounded by heterosexuals is both depressing and terrifying—and one which faces the majority of us. We are a small group of gays looking into the possibility of setting up some sort of trust fund to establish an old people's home for homosexuals. This is only in the preliminary stages and we would like to hear from anyone interested in joining us. Please write to me at the box number given in the Mixed Personal Ads this issue (page 17).

Judith

(Full name and address withheld on request)

### Grounds for criticism

Hedon

Hull

Dear Gay News,

I have only been aware of the paper's existence for a short time, and have been sufficiently impressed and pleased with it to want to send you my congratulations on a very good job, and to wish you luck for the future.

I was just about to do so when the latest issue (GN50) gave me some unexpected grounds for unfavourable criticism. You ask for comments in this issue, so here they are. The news item about Mrs Whitehouse being prevented from speaking was unpleasant to me, as I am strongly in favour of freedom of speech for all, not just those I agree with. The use of the expressions "Ms" and "cottage" seems unfortunate—each has a little in its favour, but I think you would be better to avoid them.

That said, again congratulations, and good luck!

H H Atkin

### Helpful and courteous

Dartford, Kent

Dear Gay News,

For a week now I have wanted information about a special clinic near to Charing Cross, and I plucked up courage and rang the Gay Switchboard. Not only were there no sniggers, but a helpful and courteous reply. Indeed, the voice that answered was friendly and sincere, and I wish I could have thought of something to talk about!

Anyway, please thank Gay Switchboard in general, and the person in particular for the reassurance and the tonic the conversation provided. Dartford doesn't seem such an isolated place after all!

Ken Williams

# Shock ban—Katin won't play

TUNBRIDGE WELLS: When Peter Katin, the internationally renowned concert pianist, offered to perform a Chopin recital for the Campaign for Homosexual Equality groups in Kent, everyone in the area was delighted.



So, CHE Medway contacted halls in Kent to assess their suitability and availability at the suggested date for the concert.

Jeff Day, the chairperson of the group, found that the one suitable venue available on September 13 was the Assembly Hall at Tunbridge Wells. Mr Gibbs of the amenities department of the District Council there, agreed to hold that night free until Jeff confirmed the booking.

This he did, giving details of the CHE organisation. The letter arrived at Mr Gibbs's office on June 24, and as Jeff had not received a reply on June 28, he telephoned the department and was told that the application was being dealt with by the amenities officer, Mr MacGuffog.

Mr MacGuffog informed Jeff that a letter in reply had been sent on June 25, the last paragraph of which stated that in the circumstances, the council would not hire out the Assembly Hall to him.

Jeff asked for a reason and was told: "We do not want to allow the Assembly Hall to be used for a concert of this nature."

Jeff informed the amenities officer that this was to be a recital of the music of Chopin by Peter Katin, a vice-chairman of CHE, who had previously played in Tunbridge Wells.

Mr MacGuffog's reply: "As this is to be promoted by CHE and in view of the nature of your organisation, this is not the type of concert we want to hold in the Assembly Hall."

Jeff informs us that at no time did any person from the amenity department ask to discuss the recital with him or any other CHE member.

The CHE group considers this act by the amenities department of Tunbridge Wells District Council as an insult to such an artist as Peter Katin.

On a brighter note, Peter is giving a recital at his studio on August 31, the proceeds of which will be given to Croydon Friend.

## Bisexual encounter

LONDON: Community, which describes itself as a "growth centre for everyone" started a series of encounter group meetings for bisexuals on June 17.

The meetings, which take place on Monday nights at Community's new house in Highbury Grange, N5, are being led by John Horder, who says he is "a poet more than anything."

John told GN that the first encounter went extremely well, with 8 or 9 people participating. Basically, it's for people who have just come out or for those who are in the coming-out process. He is using bioenergetics, massage and deep-breathing techniques.

Community can be contacted on 485-2136.

# Sex drug—a positive contribution to humanity?

LONDON: There seems to be some confusion within the ranks of the pharmaceutical division of Schering Chemicals Limited, as to what the purpose of their new drug, Androcur, actually is.

The company, whose British factory is at Burgess Hill in Sussex, recently called a press conference to announce the new drug.

Conference literature stated that Androcur had been introduced to meet the problems of male patients suffering from hypersexuality and sexual deviations.

After a little trouble getting in to the conference (I saw three different people before being allowed to stay), I was approached by E J Cruickshank-Robb, the company's marketing director, who assured me that the drug was not for the treatment or cure of homosexuals. It was to be used, he added, for the treatment of sexual deviations, and it was not for his company to decide where sexual deviation started and ended.

He asked me therefore to confine my questions to those that were strictly relevant.

However, Dr T S Davies MRCS, LRCP, FRCPsych, DPM, mentioned in his address that one area where the drug had been particularly disappointing had been in relation to homosexuals, and further stated that sexual drive in gays had been successfully reduced but the direction of this libido had

remained unchanged.

Dr Davies, who is physician superintendent and consultant psychiatrist to the Llanfrecha Grange Hospital, Owmbran, and consultant psychiatrist to St Woolas General, Newport and Pontypool hospitals, said that only two out of a great number of gays had "reverted to heterosexuality" (our italics)—and this had been the reason for his disappointment.

I waited until question time, and giving my name and newspaper super-audibly, I directed a question at Dr Davies.

I asked if he had been trying to effect a cure on homosexuals when he started his initial research on the drug.

Mr Cruickshank-Robb, who chaired the panel, did not allow Dr Davies to answer the question. The marketing director stated: "We are not prepared to get into this emotive subject. We are not commenting on the homosexual as accepted in society—but homosexuality in relation to minors."

However, after question time, I was able to put my question to Dr Davies, thanks to Paul Tilsley, of Radio London.

Paul was taping an interview with Dr Davies and asked me to put a couple of questions.

To my enquiry as to when the drug would be used on homosexuals, Dr Davies replied:

"Only if the patient comes requesting it—we've made this rule that it is useless to try and force any therapy on a patient."

I next asked the doctor if he had been trying to change the sexual orientation of homosexuals when he first started his research (my original question). To this he replied: "I suppose we were, yes."

Many questions about the side effects of the drug were put to the panel, which was made up of Dr Davies; Dr LH Field, consultant psychiatrist to the St Leonard's and Bethnal Green hospitals, London and visiting psychotherapist to Wormwood Scrubbs; and Dr A W Marcus, head of clinical research at Schering.

One journalist was disturbed about the introduction of the drug, especially as the panel and the reports had omitted long-term effects. He asked about stories of the drug causing cancer and blood clotting in early trials.

This was denied by panel members, who pointed out that the drug had been passed by the Committee on Safety of Medicines.

The company says its policy is "to operate a successful business that, through research into new products, makes a positive contribution to humanity" (our italics).

Jeff Grace

## ILEA boss guarantees no prejudice

LONDON: Gay teachers in London have nothing to fear from coming out. That was the important message which emerged from a recent meeting between representatives of Campaign for Homosexual Equality and the Leader of the Inner London Education Authority, Mr Ashley-Bramall.

David Bell, a gay teacher working in London, and Ian Harvey arranged the meeting in order to discuss two main issues. The first was the victimisation of gay teachers, the second was the teaching of children about homosexuality in the course of sex education lessons.

Mr Ashley-Bramall, former MP for Bexley, told his two visitors that the ILEA did not discriminate against gay teachers. It was not ILEA policy to take any action against a gay teacher, even if he came out and made it

quite clear that he was gay. And backing his words with deeds, Mr Ashley-Bramall said that anyone who was victimised should apply to him, and he would take up the matter.

These remarks were made in all seriousness, and they represent backing for the rights of gay teachers from a very influential source. They will set the minds of a lot of London teachers at rest.

On the question of homosex education, Mr Ashley-Bramall expressed his approval of the idea, and recommended a number of officials within ILEA whom David and Ian could approach. Inspectors and teachers were the best bet. Headmasters were probably not worth contacting as they were largely concerned with the 'public relations' side of running schools, and might not care to risk letters from angry parents' associations.

## Peers back YL gay campaign

LONDON: As reported in our last issue, the Young Liberals have been putting pressure on Liberal MPs and peers to enlist their help in amending the present legislation relating to homosexuality.

At a recent press conference Steve Atack, the newly-appointed organiser of the YL's gay rights campaign, explained what reaction had thus far been received from members of the Liberal party.

Strong support has come from Lord Beaumont, who regards this as a straight civil rights issue. He replied to Steve: "I do not believe that the law has any right to interfere with people's sexual activity above the age of 16. I believe that because this is a civil rights issue, it should apply throughout the whole of the UK. I therefore heavily support the Young Liberals' campaign in this matter."

Lord Amersham associated himself with this statement, supporting the campaign.

Support has also been promised by two MPs—Cyril Smith and Michael Winstanley, while rather non-committal replies have been received from Jeremy Thorpe and Jo Grimond.

Steve considers the response to have been promising, especially as the campaign has only been in operation for a few weeks.

In fact, after only a few days, Steve had received replies from 45 of the 240 Young Liberals branches, extending support to the fight for law reform in their constituencies.

The campaign hopes to float an emergency motion at the Liberal conference at Brighton later this year, enlisting support from the party. Steve said that he believed this would be the first time a party had discussed this issue at a national level.



Steve Atack and Ruth Addison

Public libraries are also to be approached by the campaign to make sure that they openly display gay books.

Ruth Addison, chairperson of the YLs, who was also present at the press conference, felt there was a very great need for a non-gay organisation to come out and support gay rights. "Because the economy is in such a state, it is vitally important that we maintain as much civil liberty as we can."

"Lots of other civil liberty items must be pushed for at this time, otherwise we run a serious danger of the whole democratic system dissolving for the sake of economic survival."

## Gay reception splits council

EDINBURGH: The proposed International Congress on Gay Rights, to be held in Edinburgh this Christmas if details can be settled, has run into trouble with the local council.

At a private meeting of the Lord Provost's Committee, the Labour group of councillors supported a plan to hold a civic reception for the congress in December.

This brought strong opposition from right wing councillors, in particular the Lord Provost Designate, Councillor John Millar (of Millar Homes, the instant housing building kit company), and former City Treasurer Malcolm Knox.

The matter was put to a vote, which resulted in the plan being turned down—by a single vote. A new attempt, however, was to be made on July 10, the date of the next meeting of the Lord Provost's Committee. Ian Dunn of SMG and Derek Ogg of Edinburgh University, who is organising the conference, will be attending the meeting and they hope to speak.

But their attempts to speak will be bitterly opposed by people like Cllr Millar. "I don't think this organisation is a suitable one for the city to extend civic hospitality towards. There are a good many more deserving organisations than this one. I just hope that any move to push for a civic reception will be defeated and common sense will prevail."

Tory group leader Bailie Brian Meek (ED: 'Bailie' is a Scots term for a magistrate) waxed indignant at the idea: "I would just like to say that if the reception does go ahead there will be great difficulty finding a magistrate to host it. It certainly won't be me." You're right there, son. You may not even get invited.

Ian Dunn

## CHE group for Rotherham

ROTHERHAM: Campaign for Homosexual Equality are to set up a local group in Rotherham.

Robin Grazeley (CHE Sheffield) said that his group had been approached by many people in the Rotherham area who wanted to take advantage of their social facilities, but were unable to do so because of the transport difficulties.

"As the number of people in this area who are interested in CHE continues to increase, we have decided to set up a local group in Rotherham," he added.

He pointed out that the town had no facilities for gays whatsoever.

The group can be contacted through PO Box 107, Sheffield, S1 1FJ.

## Irish gays spell out their demands

**IRELAND:** On Saturday June 29, the last day of Gay Pride Week, a six-man delegation delivered a letter of protest to Stormont Castle—the official residence of Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Merlyn Rees. The letter demanded an end to the vicious anti-homosexual laws which exist in the province.



Photographs: Michael Mason

Two days earlier, gays from both Northern Ireland and Eire had picketed the British Embassy and the Republic's Department of Justice in Dublin. Similar protests were held in other parts of the world on the same day which had been designated as an international day of protest against the treatment of Irish homosexuals, at the suggestion of Kim Friele of Det Norske Forbundet, Norway's gay organisation.

At the same time as the gays from Belfast were presenting their letter at Stormont Castle, a similar letter was handed in at Number 10, Downing Street.

The six who drove to Stormont (which is situated just outside Belfast) were members

of the Belfast Gay Liberation Society. As the cars were admitted through the heavy gates, guarded by armed police, into the grounds surrounding the Assembly Building, all the passengers and vehicles were carefully searched. The *Gay News* camera excited some suspicion, but it was eventually returned (after the sergeant had nearly dropped it).

### Two fingers

The cars were allowed in, and the delegation drove past the statue of Sir Edward Carson, the man who appeared for the prosecution in Oscar Wilde's trial. Appropriately enough, he stood watching the motorcade drive past with two bronze fingers raised at the delegation. The seats surrounding the monument are supported by pairs of bronze male nudes, kneeling with bended backs. The sculptor appears to have had a wry sense of humour.

At the castle the visitors were met and taken to the front door. Merlyn Rees was not in Belfast at the time, and the letter (addressed to Harold Wilson, with a copy for Merlyn Rees) was handed to a member of the Secretary's staff, nattily attired in a leather jacket and pink slacks ("I'd rather not have my name used. I am a civil servant you know."). It took a minute or two to get someone to come out and accept it because no one could find a key to the locked front door. When Rees' staff man did finally turn up, he had to leave the building by its back door and walk round to the steps at the front.

### The letter

The text of the letter reads as follows:

"As a result of getting no satisfaction in our just attempts to obtain even the most meagre betterment of the situation for gays in Northern Ireland, homosexual organisations throughout the world have designated

Northern Ireland for special protest in this annual Gay Rights Week. Today, 27 June, British Embassies throughout Europe are being picketed.

"The Belfast Gay Liberation Society asks you as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to have the Northern Ireland law relating to homosexuality brought into parity with that of England and Wales. In the meantime we ask that you instruct the Director of Public Prosecutions in Northern Ireland to issue a ruling similar to the Scottish Lord Advocate's of 5 February 1974 to the effect that 'it is not today the policy of the Crown Office to take proceedings when cases are brought to its notice of homosexual acts between consenting adults in private.'

"For the past year Belfast Gay Liberation Society has peacefully requested every relevant agency of the Northern Ireland and British governments to right this social injustice. Our experience has been that apart from two Assembly persons every other body or individual approached has shirked the issue, notably Mr Napier the former Minister of Law Reform, The Northern Ireland Secretaries of State Mr Pym and Mr Rees and the Director of Public Prosecutions (N Ireland) Mr Barry Cowan. We also note that Mr Whitelaw, though he favoured an age of consent of 16 for gays in England, was unwilling to pursue reform here.

"Mr Rees, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, informed us (before the suspension of the Assembly) that law reform would be a matter for Stormont. Considering the present lack of a legislative body here it is imperative that the British government finally discharges its responsibilities to so many of its citizens.

"Mr Cowan told us that 'it was not his practice to issue statements with regard to prosecution policy.' Despite the Scottish precedent the DPP has avoided the issue,

thus making it difficult for homosexuals to inform the police of crimes against them as their sexuality makes them liable to prosecution. In blackmail and assault cases we have found it necessary to advise several individuals of this possibility in the absence of guarantees similar to those made public in Scotland.

"The law in Britain has been reformed by legislative or administrative decisions; here in Northern Ireland homosexuals are given no protection in law. We demand that since responsibility in this matter has totally devolved upon the United Kingdom government that you quickly terminate this absurd and vicious legal anomaly.

Sincerely, Peter Hughes  
Secretary

### Church hostility

In addition to this letter, telegrams were sent to church and state leaders. The Queen received a telegram asking her "Please intercede for homosexuals in Northern Ireland. 1967 legislation does not apply here." It was signed "Belfast Gay Liberation Society, Queens University."

Leaders of the three main churches also received telegrams which said "Please support law reform to allow Ireland's 200,000 homosexuals to express their love for one another. Belfast GLS, QUB." These were sent to the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Catholic leader Cardinal Conway in Armagh, and Dr Simms, Primate of the Church of Ireland.

It is worth remembering that the real struggle for gay rights and dignity was not fought by homosexuals in England and Wales until after the passing of the 1967 act, which legalised gay relationships in some circumstances. Irish gays are coming out knowing that any sexual relationships they enjoy are totally illegal, in a province where the churches are both powerful, and medieval in their attitudes towards homosexuality.

## Norway takes up Irish cause

**OSLO:** Kim Friele, General Secretary of the Norwegian gay organisation Det Norske Forbundet, reports that she has been overwhelmed by requests for interviews from the Norwegian press and broadcasting, following DNF's much-publicised demonstration against the oppression of gays in Ireland.

Kim announced at Malvern conference that her organisation would be dedicating June 27, Gay Liberation Day, to the people of Ireland in their struggle against Church and State.

DNF was as good as its word. With placards carrying slogans such as "Stop the oppression of Irish homosexuals", "Stop the confusion of crime and sin in Ireland", and "No to discrimination on the grounds of being different", Norwegian gays held a demonstration outside the British Embassy in Oslo.

On behalf of DNF, Kim Friele handed in a letter of protest to the embassy which read as follows:

Your Excellency,

In Northern Ireland the criminal law concerning what have traditionally been termed "unnatural offences" is mainly contained in the provisions of two nineteenth century statutes. These are The Offences Against the Person Act 1861 and the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885. The Sexual Offences Act 1967 provides that it shall not be an offence for a man to have sexual intercourse with another man provided that:

1. the act is done in private
2. the parties consent, and
3. the parties have attained the age of 21

This relaxation of the criminal law applies only



Norwegian gays from DNF picket British Embassy in Oslo

to England and Wales. The criminal law in Northern Ireland remains severe in its scope and penalties.

The offence of so-called "buggery" is punishable by virtue of section 62 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, with life imprisonment, or any term of years not less than 10, at the discretion of the court.

Consent is no defence. The consenting party is also guilty of the offence as a principal offender.

The Norwegian Organization of Homosexuals—DET NORSKE FORBUNDET AV 1948—finds it necessary to underline some obvious facts in this matter:

- a) As the purpose of any criminal law is to

protect the individual and the society against obvious detrimental and harmful acts, and as consenting homosexual acts have no such damaging effect, either on those involved or on others, the criminal law of Northern Ireland concerning homosexual offences discriminates the homosexuals EXCLUSIVELY ON THE GROUNDS OF BEING DIFFERENT

b) Making homosexuality a crime, the law thus place on equal footing private sexual acts and those vicious and harmful acts which are made the subject of punishment according to the criminal law generally

- c) By making homosexuality a crime, the law

thus force upon the public of Northern Ireland—through threat of punishment—one particular moral philosophy. To make homosexuality the subject of severe punishment is in fact to mix together the concept of SIN and CRIME

d) The criminal law concerning homosexual offences does not include sexual acts between women. Thus the law not only contribute to maintaining sex-prejudices, but also expresses an outlook on women which is totally out of step with reality. The law not only suggest that women do not have sexual feelings but worse, it maintains the superstition that homosexuality only applies to men.

The Norwegian Organization of Homosexuals strongly oppose the inhuman treatment of Irish homosexuals. Due to the present day criminal law they are totally prevented from leading a normal life, which by most people is looked upon as an obvious human right, but they are also without legal rights and thus victims of great oppression.

We urge the British Government to abolish the criminal law concerning homosexuality, and bring Irish criminal law in tune with the times. Freedom is also the right to be master over one's own body.

Respectfully yours  
DET NORSKE FORBUNDET AV 1948  
(Signed) Karen-Christine Friele  
General Secretary

Later in the day parts of the letter were read out in a programme broadcast by Norwegian radio and this, together with good press coverage, has in Kim's words "ensured that all intelligent Norwegians now know about the situation for homosexuals in Ireland."

People we spoke to in Belfast were deeply touched by the support they had received from DNF.

Howard Llewellyn and Michael Mason

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## Early days for gay movement

**NORTHERN IRELAND:** The Irish gay movement is young. The original Gay Liberation Front splintered and no longer exists in its original form. This was partly due to internal division, and partly to some of the external pressures under which it operated during periods of fierce sectarian fighting.



A mother flees from a Belfast store with her child as a bomb is found

At present there are three 'groups' operating more or less loosely in Belfast, and one in Coleraine.

The Belfast women's group includes amongst its members some of the most radical activists. Many of them are still committed to the revolutionary position taken by GLF in its Manifesto, and have developed their ideas on sexism in step with their brothers and sisters in English GLF groups.

Belfast Gay Liberation Society is a gay activist organisation more along the civil rights line. The group is run by a collective, and they were responsible for the Stormont protest. They are based at Queens University Belfast.

Finally, in Belfast, there is the All Friends Social Committee—a new, purely social group as the name implies which started up this year and has so far put on three gay dances.

In Coleraine, the Sexual Reform Movement based at the New University of Ulster is working for wider changes in sexual behaviour. Homosexuality is an important part of their fight, but they also work with southern branches on abortion, contraception, and other areas of particular interest to the Irish women's cause.

The straight commercial gay scene in Belfast is very quiet. There are no clubs, but there are three pubs/bars which are used by gay men and women. The Club Bar, close to the university, attracts mainly students (both straight and gay). It is at its gayest on Thursday nights after the GLS meetings. None of the frantic cruisiness of London gay pubs here.

The Whip and Saddle Bar in the Europa Hotel is very mixed (het/gay), very discreet, very waitress service, with lounge suits and 'high fashion'—and a sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach that nothing has changed, is changing, or will change this side of Judgment Day.

Finally there is The Royal Avenue, a pub in the enclosed 'pedestrian only' zone of Belfast. This is the nearest to the typical London gay pub, almost entirely male, almost entirely gay.

One thing you get used to quite quickly is being searched every time you go in. At the Club Bar, bags and cameras are carefully checked. At the Europa there is a security hut at the entrance where you get a body search as well. To reach the Royal Avenue, you have to pass through check points set up by the British Army (body and bags), so the bar itself doesn't both to check you again.

One slightly worrying part of our visit, in retrospect, was how easy it was to get used to the manifestations of war. It all

became a game. Soldiers will flag you down at random to search your car. Fire engines and armed vehicles flash past you on their way to a bomb alert. When we arrived in Belfast, we drove almost straight to the Club Bar to meet the GLS members after their meeting. Twenty minutes before we arrived, the doorman had been shot in the shoulder by two men who wanted his gun. The same evening a bomb went off in the street next to the one in which we were staying. Both incidents became topics of conversation, but nobody seemed unduly worried, and very soon you find yourself picking up the same attitude.

From most press reports you get the impression that Belfast lives under a constant shadow of fear. But it just didn't seem to be true. A couple of little incidents might happen near you or your friends over a weekend. But they were forgotten five minutes after they had happened.

As for the neat Fleet Street Divisions into Catholic/Protestant, or Loyalist/Republican, they fall down everywhere you look. There are no sides, only groups. There is a feeling of rebellion. For some it is a rebellion against Britain, for some, against the rule of Stormont, and for some, against the social order and morality of Northern Ireland in general.

It seems that whatever group has obtained whatever kind of power in the province, it has abused it, or has wielded it in the implicit belief that everything it says is The Truth. Nowhere is this clearer than in the particular fight that Irish homosexuals are taking on. The churches have taken a hard line on homosexuality—and they still have a remarkably strong influence on social attitudes, even amongst non-believers.

It would be fair to say that the gay movement is at present very 'closety', but it is also fair to point out at once that they have everything and everyone against them, the students (see separate story this page), the church, the Assembly (the law has never made any concessions to homosexuals so that any gay relationship is illegal), the Republican movement ("there has never been a homosexual Republican" said a Sinn Fein spokesman), the Protestants (who are disgusted by the British government giving

way to pressure to legalise homosexual acts between consenting adults), and even the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (equivalent to the NCCL) which let through a gay rights motion at one of its conferences, but has since done nothing beyond expressing "sincere interest" in the problem, and threatens to kiss the whole thing to death through apathy. Given the strength of the opposition they are taking on, it is remarkable that gays have dared to do as much as they have done so far.

But dare they have. They are demanding as a first step parity with the English law, legalising consenting homosexual acts (or as one newspaper over there had it, "legalising homosexual cats"). They have won support from gay movements in other countries, and it is important for them that that support continues. No one fights alone for long, and if even the Irish student movement refuses to ally itself with their cause, it is vital that gays—particularly other gays in the United Kingdom—should give them the full-hearted backing they are denied at home.

Michael Mason



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## Gays 'an embarrassment' say Irish students

**BELFAST:** Student leaders at Queens University Belfast think that the campus-based Gay Liberation Society is just an 'embarrassment', according to Student Union President Alistair McDowell.

Gay movements in most countries have started with the positive support of the student population, but Belfast GLS are having to fight students as well as the state. Students don't show open hostility, explained Alistair McDowell, but only because "it's not trendy to be anti-gay." When we mentioned the National Union of Students Gay Rights Campaign, he waved his hand. "If the NUS wants a national campaign, then the NUS should finance it and pass down instructions to us."

Trouble between Belfast GLS and the Students Union started when GLS were allowed to use Union phones for CARA, a counselling and befriending service, thanks largely to Alistair's support in the face of opposition from other members of the student council. The desperate need for such a service was proved quickly, and the phones were jammed with calls from lonely gays

with problems. Then came the bombshell. There were too many calls, said the Union. Their switchboard could not cope. GLS would have to stop its phone service. The move brought protests from homosexual organisations both in Ireland and in England and Scotland. So the Union said it would look for alternative accommodation for GLS.

Alistair said he had tried to find a house, but he had had no success. "When I get a house, you'll get a room," he told GLS again recently, one week before his term of office as President was due to expire.

He also confirmed GLS fears about the executive committee which takes over the student body next term. They are likely to be even more hostile, he said. "You haven't a hope in hell of getting either an office or a telephone."

There is even a risk of GLS being denied the basic facilities enjoyed by other student groups. Paddy Murphy, the sports secretary, claims that GLS is a political organisation and therefore shouldn't receive even the basic Union grant, let alone a grant for their phone service. "What equipment do you lot need?"

he objected in an argument over the amount of money given to the rugby club compared with the amount given to GLS. "The rugby club needs balls," he said.

Jonathan Stevenson will be next year's Vice-President. He also runs the student Nightline service (a number which students can ring if they have problems). Approached by GLS to include a gay person in the service to deal with homosexual callers, he told them they weren't qualified. "I know how to counsel homosexuals," he said.

Official Student Counsellor Ms Deane Cromie, who is paid a salary, half of it from university funds, half of it from students union funds, finds the situation even easier than Jonathan Stevenson. "There aren't any homosexuals in Queens University Belfast," she says.

Another incident which rankles with GLS members is the occasion when union door-keeper Williams insulted a GLS member, making cheap cracks about him as he left a union disco. After several strong complaints to the Students Representative Council, the council eventually asked Williams to apologise. He didn't. But he was sacked by the council shortly afterwards—for being rude to a friend of the Executive Committee.

### Bar bans gays

**BELFAST:** The famous Europa Hotel in Belfast (oft-bombed, and headquarters of the foreign press corps) was the scene of yet another unpleasant incident the other night.

On the ground floor of the hotel is a gay bar, called The Whip and Saddle bar. It was late, and there were very few customers left when Don Gill of Coleraine and Gerry McGrillen of Belfast GLS kissed. But the reaction was instantaneous. The head waitress rushed over and yelled at them, "I know this sort of thing went on in private but . . . get out, get out. Don't let me see your faces in here again," and hustled them out. "That's what I call double standards," retorted Don.

Outside, they spoke to one or two GLS people who had been around. Don asked them if they were going to protest to the management at what had happened. The reply was simply "we want to get back in there. Sorry."

Meanwhile Gerry is trying to get the affair taken further, hopefully with the assistance of the rest of GLS.



From left to right: Don Gill from Coleraine, Joseph Leckey, Gerry McGrillen, Brian Gilmore and Edwin Henshaw, all from Belfast

# List 99—Minister replies

LONDON: There are 1300 names on the Department of Education and Science's List 99. This was revealed by Reg Prentice, Secretary of State, in reply to a letter from the president of the National Union of Students, John Randall. Mr Randall's enquiry about the list came out of the NUS gay rights campaign.

The Secretary says that List 99 is a confidential document with a limited circulation among local authorities, other employers of teachers and certain teachers' and employers' associations.

"It does not contain anything other than the relevant statutory regulations, the minimum information required by an employer to identify people who have been determined by me and my predecessors to be

unsuitable for employment as teachers, and the extent of exclusion."

Speaking of the term "misconduct," Mr Prentice says that this is not defined in the regulations governing exclusion from teaching. In general terms, "misconduct" is any behaviour which suggests that the person concerned is an unworthy member, or potential member, of the profession.

He concludes: "It is, I am afraid, not possible to ascertain, without a detailed examination of the confidential files of the 1300 people named in List 99 [a little under 0.2% of all teachers], how many of them are known to be homosexual—a fact, of course, which may or may not have any relevance to the conviction for a criminal offence or other form of misconduct which led to their exclusion."

## 'No change' at Hampstead pub

LONDON: The King William IV pub in Hampstead High Street, a well-known gay venue, has a new landlord.

Brian Andrews, who takes over from Leslie Cull as manager, has told regulars they need have no fear of any sudden changes. "The pub will stay the way it is."



..... Leslie Cull (left) and Brian Andrews .....  
Brian further told a reporter from the Hampstead & Highgate News: "Nor is there any question of discrimination against any-

one. I believe many of our customers are homosexual, but we would not consider a vendetta against them. Being homosexual isn't a crime, and someone would only be ejected if they were interfering with other people's pleasure."

The retirement of Leslie Cull marks the end of 89 years of family service in refreshing parched throats. His father was landlord of the Prince of Wales in Kentish Town for a record 46 years, and Leslie has been at the 'William' for 20 years.

Speaking of the time he came to the pub in 1954, he says that it used to be a quiet house with a few regulars. He further recalls: "But business has grown and grown. We get far more passing trade now, and our customers are younger, more bohemian."

"We've had a host of famous actors and actresses in our time. Ian Carmichael, Peter O'Toole, Richard Burton, Vera Lynn, Frankie Vaughan, Tessie O'Shea—they've all come here."

Leslie is now heading for a peaceful retirement in Bournemouth. "I haven't had a holiday for 12 or 13 years, so I'll enjoy the rest."

Incidentally, *Gay News* is sold regularly at the 'William'.

## CHE picks new Chairman

MANCHESTER: Barrie Kenyon has been chosen as the new Chairman of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality, a post which became vacant after Michael Steed announced his resignation shortly before Malvern.

The choice of the new Chairman was taken at the first meeting of the newly-elected Executive Committee of CHE.

34-year-old Barrie works in further education, a career he chose after "dreadful jobs" with the Inland Revenue and the social services. He joined CHE in 1970 and was the founder chairman of the local Manchester Group. More recently, he became an organiser of Friend.

At the same meeting of the EC, committee members were allocated their new 'portfolios'. Responsibilities are as follows:

John Bennett—armed forces and merchant navy (a new brief), and homophile group liaison

Ted Clapham—Friend

Ike Cowan—law reform group, CHE legal adviser

Bernard Greaves—press and publicity

Wallace Grevatt—local CHE groups

Barry Jackson—conference organiser

Trevor Locke—young gays, and appointed to new research panel

Dennis Nadin—church affairs and social services

Peter Naughton—treasurer

Angela Needham—education, outside speakers, research panel

Glenys Parry—medical affairs, research panel

Liz Stanley—women, elderly gays

Paul Temperton—(did not attend meeting, but believed to be taking on international liaison)

Richard Webster—employment, trade unions, employers' associations, professional groups

David Dancer—(not yet an EC member) becomes student liaison officer

## NCCL unveils plans

LONDON: The recently-convened gay rights committee of the National Council for Civil Liberties held its first meeting on June 23.

Guy Thornton, committee chairperson, told *Gay News* what problems he would be concentrating on.



..... NCCL committee chairperson Guy Thornton .....

Committee members are to make a study of police activity in regard to homosexuals. A comparison is to be made around the country of the different punishments dealt out to gay offenders. This will also be tied in with a comparison of punishments given to hets for the same types of offence.

Members also hope to get some concrete evidence on the question of police agents provocateurs. They are appealing to all gay groups and organisations for information on these subjects and Nettie Pollard, at the NCCL office, will be pleased to receive anything that is relevant.

On law reform, the committee intends to support the work of Campaign for Homosexual Equality, and by using the NCCL's parliamentary group hopes to obtain support in the House.

The group also plans to draw up a paper on medical and psychological affairs, particularly in regard to compulsory treatment of gays.

Another area which it intends to cover is the question of discrimination, both in housing and employment. Here the gay rights committee will be collaborating with the women's rights committee and other relevant groups.

Although nothing definite has been formulated as yet, the group also hopes to take up the rights of gay prisoners.

In conclusion, Guy stated that the committee hoped it would cover areas which had not been taken up by other groups already.

## Gay teachers get together

LONDON: Gay teachers in and around London are to hold regular meetings in the future. A group is being formed to fight for gay rights in the education field.

The decision to start the group was taken at a meeting at the University of London Union, called by David Bell. This meeting was designed to be the 'wind-up' of the CHE Education Campaign—though many local groups will be carrying on the campaign with the assistance of Angela Needham of the Executive Committee.

The new teachers' group recognises that the CHE campaign hardly scratched the surface of the problems in schools and colleges, and it will be trying to carry on much of the work already started. One of the early projects is to whip up trade union backing. The main teaching unions will be asked to give support to gay teachers in their demands for an end to victimisation, and for comprehensive sex education in schools.

CHE's Jackdaw study kit containing teaching materials on homosexuality is still in preparation. David Bell promised that it would be published in time for the beginning of the next academic year—and he hoped to see it ready by September 1. The article in *The Guardian* had created a great deal of interest, and CHE had received many requests for copies when published.

The kit will contain several items of interest. Starting with an introductory leaflet, containing useful contact addresses and information about the gay movement, it will include fact-sheets on various topics including gender roles, love relationships, women, social attitudes, the law, transvestism, transsexuality, bisexuality . . . and heterosexuality. There will also be a collection of press cuttings, cartoons to start off classroom discussion, prose and poetry, and a number of publications and pamphlets dealing with the gay situation.



..... Chairman Barrie Kenyon .....

The recent critical understaffing of Manchester office has been of great concern to CHE members, and the organisation has just announced the appointment of an assistant to General Secretary Howarth Penny. The new man is Christopher Bowden-Smith, chairman of the Birmingham Group, and he started work on July 16. GN sends its best wishes to him in his new job.

## GLU forms liaison committee

LONDON: Because of the apparent lack of coordination between gay groups in London, Pauline Hamilton (of Pauline and Sally, in Finchley, North London) called a meeting at CHELIC, on July 3, to which representatives of all major gay groups had been invited.

Although the response was rather poor, members of CHE, Gay Switchboard, PNL Gaysoc, Sappho, University of London Gaysoc and LSE Gay Culture attended.

Out of the meeting came the decision that a liaison committee be formed, which will operate under the name of 'Gay London United'. The initials—GLU—were considered particularly appropriate, and slogans such as "stick together with GLU" were banded about.

GLU hopes to arrange a disco on August 24, if the Porchester Hall is available as the venue, in order to launch the operation of the committee. This will be confirmed later.

At the moment, the committee is enlisting members—there will be a total of five. They hope that all gay groups will want to take part in any social activities organised.

Pauline assured our reporter that she and her committee will be willing to work with anyone in gay organisations. "Let's forget our differences and come together," she said.

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KABUL,  
Saturday

Hallo!

We sped through Iran in three days. I dislike Iran—in the surge towards mechanisation, industrialisation and Americanisation, it seems to have forfeited so much of its own traditions and heritages. Besides, there was another reason for the haste: Chris' birthday was coming up, and Afghanistan, we felt, would create the ideal atmosphere for a birthday celebration.

At school, one is taught a little about Afghanistan: the invasions by Darius, Alexander, Genghis Khan and the British, and as a Muslim country one knows, of course, that it will be more tolerant of homosexuality. But, apart from this, very little is known about the country. I can say almost certainly you have never entertained the idea of spending a holiday here.

Yet it is one of the most exciting and stimulating countries I have visited. It is difficult to find words that will do justice to the raw, unspoilt countryside—the magnificent Hindu Kush, the vast expanse of the Turkestan plains, the seclusion of the southern deserts. And, above all, the inhabitants: people who, I believe, are (physically and otherwise) the most beautiful in the world. The men dress in multi-coloured robes, sometimes richly embroidered, and their heads are turbaned. They are proud and virile, their complexions seem to mirror the ochre hues of the desert and their eyes are as deep and blue as the northern lakes of Bande Amir. The people from the rural areas, especially, are so open, so carefree and casual about time. (Alas, the watches that the men in the cities display so proudly are changing that.) Whiling away the hours in a Chai Khana (Tea Shop) is a favourite pastime. Often exotically decorated, these Chai Khanas are the central gathering places for every town. A pot of green or black tea, enough for 3-4 cups, costs 3 Afs—less than ½ pence!

We crossed the Irani-Afghan border on the eve of Chris' birthday. The bus journey from the border to Herat, the first town, should take 2½ hours. (The two of us were, incidentally, the only Westerners on the bus. The other passengers were mostly Hajjis. A Muslim becomes a Hajji—a greatly venerated title—after he has completed the pilgrimage to Mecca.) But it was one of those bus journeys, and after six hours of stopping, starting and pushing—and the ground was still covered with thick snow—the bus finally ceased completely. One accepts this. When you pass through the gate that separate West from East, you leave behind the logic and efficiency of Western mechanisation. You can no longer rely on your plans or schedules: these become subject to the forces of chance and change. Allah's will, it is said, is stronger than that of man. (Allah o-Akbar) And, as it happens, with the breakdown, Allah, with all His blessings, bestowed on Chris a birthday gift, the memory of which he will cherish for many years: a living, exciting, bewitching experience of an Arabian tale.

The bus driver explained that there was an inn nearby, where we would have to spend the night, until another bus could be brought from Herat the next day.

Two boys, aged about 12 and 14, greeted us at the inn door: "Salaam Aleikum" (Peace be with you), and then ushered us inside. Later, in the early hours of the morning, when they ordered us to bed, the boys armed themselves with rifles and bandoliers, to guard the inn from attack by hostile bandit tribes! I don't know how real this threat was, but the sight of these two armed boys was very romantic and impressive. I also found out that they alone man and run the inn. No ageism here—older men, many of whom are rough and sturdy Bedoin types stopping over for the night, accept and respect the rules that the boys lay down.

We entered a large room. Men were seated on the floor, against the walls—Bedoins, Hajjis and those on their way to Mecca. "Salaam Aleikum," they murmured as they made room for us to sit down. The boys brought in food—omelettes and unleavened Afghan bread, dates and pots and pots of tea. The men were passing hookahs around the room and in one corner a small group was making music. No, it would be wrong to paint a picture of musicians, divorced from an audience. Everyone here was involved with the music. They were the music. Like one man, they would start clapping and chanting to the music, adding to it, changing the rhythm and tempo even. And then, at the appropriate time, like one man, they would fall into silent obeisance



## A LETTER FROM AFGHANISTAN



and the sounds of the tabla and flute would behest their presence.

Then a boy stood up and danced. My preconceived image of a dancing boy was (*God forbid!* I thought) some Eastern equivalent of Danny La Rue. But this image was totally misconceived. The boy was about 15, and contrary to my expectation, not slim or girlish-looking, but muscular and well-proportioned. This art doesn't attempt to create an illusion of the boy being a woman, with the conventional connotations of being "a substitute." Rather, he embodied both the qualities of masculinity and femininity. And again, I must impress on you not to confuse this with the crude tricks of dillettantish English drag artistes, who shatter the illusion they have attempted to create by suddenly speaking in an obviously 'male voice'—fear, I wonder, that the illusion will be too real and they may be mistaken for 'real women'? No, here was a delicate and intricate synthesis—a symbolic reminder that each one of us contains within our make-up a combination of male and female qualities.

His body was immensely expressive and he exercised complete mastery over each muscle. His feet flitted across the floor like a butterfly's wings against the air. Suddenly his body would freeze, except for a single quivering, beckoning hand: at this moment the only movement in an enthralled room. The hand slowly unfolded, like a flower at dawn. His eyes glittered brightly, mischievously and seductively, aware of his own sexuality. The pace of the music accelerated and the butterfly danced once more, faster and faster, his body twisting sensually until, after a frenzied crescendo, the music stopped and the boy fell breathless to the floor.

The men shouted that one of us should dance, but, alas, our educational system is one that inhibits and represses such spontaneous movement. (How we cripple



our bodies!) we protested bashfully, but they were insistent. So Chris got up and self-consciously did a few pirouettes across the floor. And they loved it. The music continued and more pots of tea were brought in.

Sitting across from me was a rugged-looking Bedoin and throughout the evening he silently observed me with keen and piercing eyes. I was puffing at a hookah when I again caught his eye. I realised that I was hardly adept at handling this smoking instrument and I smiled apologetically. A broad grin broke over his face and as this was his cue, he produced from the many folds of his robe little bottles for us to sample. Some of these contained perfumes, another a green liquid which is placed inside the nostrils, like snuff, and which, he explained in sign language, invigorates the body! Yet another contained a herb which is chewed and spat out. Again our lack of expertise caused much good-natured laughter.

In my previous letter I mentioned that homosexuality is much more naturally accepted in Muslim countries. Afghanistan is another example of this penchant. I find it refreshing and they, in their turn, are delighted when we respond to embraces and kisses. The majority of Western males that pass through are only too chauvinistically heterosexual and shy away from such intimate contact. This physical contact between men doesn't necessarily contain homosexual overtones. It is just that the society tolerates it in the same way that Western societies tolerate such contact between opposite sexes and, to a lesser extent, between women, without always attaching sexual overtones to it.

But it also does mean that homosexuality is much more prevalent. (This surely must invalidate Kinsey's statistics? His figures were come by, without investigating any of these more overt 'homosexual countries'. In fact, I understand he didn't bother to inter-

view any black Americans!) Sitting in a Chai Khana or bar (there is no need for gay clubs, per se), it is very likely that someone will make a sexual advance, often with the stubborn insistence common to Western homosexual men when making advanced to women. I must also add that this attitude and homosexual promiscuity probably evolved from the oppression of women and the taboo of pre-marital intercourse. I smiled indulgently and understandingly at the complaints of a couple of straight friends. They couldn't even hold hands in the streets of Pakistan, without attracting shocked stares, yet men were walking around hand in hand!

Women are oppressed. Most of them remain hidden behind a chowdri (veil). In fact, they are enveloped in a huge smock which covers every inch of the body, from head to feet. Their eyes view the world from behind thick dark blue or black gauze. I have had very little contact with Muslim women and cannot really comment. In the inn I described, I accidentally opened the wrong door. The room was full of women, the wives and daughters of the men next door. As if their veils were not strong enough protection, they immediately fell silent and huddled closer together, their heads bowed low so as not to meet my gaze. I shut the door quickly. Who knows, possibly in these segregated situations gay female encounters do occur. I don't know.

My views on the westernisation of these countries ("the taming of the East" I call it) are schizophrenic. After experiencing the unspoilt beauty and innocence of rural Afghanistan, I am appalled to observe Kabul, the capitol, littered with discotheques, Western-style restaurants and supermarkets, and not one Afghani to be found in any of these. Not a true one, anyway. Everywhere capitalism and Western materialism manifest themselves, crudely and insidiously. Everything is geared towards the spoilt Western demands—row upon row of curio stalls, etc. A new generation of waiters is being educated in the English language and Western habits. One shudders at the thought of another Costa del Sol. Yet it has to be in Kabul (thanks also to the presence of Hippie women in their "provocative" barb), that Afghani women are now discarding the chowdri. How courageous these women are: true, fighting pioneers of the women's revolution.

As a final point on the matter I can only echo the words of the prophet: "Let him that is without sin . . ." Whilst we live in a society where the oppression of women (and indeed of gay and other minority groups) continues, we have no right to point any finger. Any perusal of lonely hearts columns in both gay and straight periodicals shows an overwhelming discrepancy between female and male advertisers. This cannot be because women are less lonely or in lesser need of companionship. It is an inveterate oppression and, first of all, we must extricate ourselves from our own social taboos.

Winter and Summer temperatures in Afghanistan are extreme, but the other two seasons are lovely. The return air fare (Ariana Afghan Airlines, Aeroflot and Iran Air fly London-Kabul direct) is £398. But, of course, the cheapest and most interesting way—if you have the necessary sense of adventure and the time—is by various local transports. This costs as little as £35 from London to Kabul. Get a 30-day visa (easily extended) from the Afghan Embassy in London.

There are some super deluxe hotels in Kabul (about £1 a night), though the cheaper ones, complete with clean sheets and pleasant, homely room service, charge a mere 10 pence a night. Hotels have proved to be big business in Afghanistan and there is much competition. It is the only country where on a return visit I have found the prices have dropped. When you have had your fill of the Kabul night-life (I notice that some 'nightclubs' offer dancing boys as cabaret, but I haven't been to any of these and cannot make a comparison: my precious memory forbids me from going to something more 'professional'), you may want to explore the archeological and other treasures of the country. The Afghan Tourist Board arranges coach tours for the more comfort-orientated tourists to places like Bamyán, renowned for gigantic Buddhas, carved into the mountains. But those blue lakes of Bande Amir can only be reached by jeep; charming tucked-away places are remoter still—some only accessible by camel! It all depends how far-out you wish to venture.

Salaam Aleikum.

Derek James

## The John Riley column Circumstances beyond our control

Now, as you know, I cannot abide all this nonsense of sexist roles in gay Apres-Foreplay. And the numerous ads I place in *Gay News* ALL begin, 'versatile'. Suddenly, everyone wants to be fucked. I'm sorry if that made you spill your coffee, but there *is* no other way of putting it.

At first I just sat there, with my slide rule, noting the trend. After all, I reasoned; Arthur-Martha, what does it matter, as long as he loves no other? But keeping up with this increased demand began to play havoc with my foreskin, which was palpably too tight for the vessel therein contained (rather nice nautical image, what?). Yes, yes, I know. I should have had it seen to yonks ago, but what with Bridge twice a week and the Sunday papers to get through...

Once appraised of the situation, my doctor organised things quickly, which is why I found myself this morning, in Ward E2, discussing with Sister Pearson exactly who was my next-of-kin. We plumbed for Cousin Frank, whose phone number was miraculously there in my little black book. Sister closed my file and leaned forward solicitously: "You'll have to find yourself a wife, dear."

"I'm homosexual."  
"Well, then, a friend." One had to admire the way she said this, without the least hesitation, so steadfast is her championing of connubiality. "It's all right for you," I thundered silently, "you haven't been saddled with a redundant foreskin all of your adult life." Then I brightened as I contemplated the whole new life-style which lies ahead. Once I've perfected the 100%-Butch stance and figured out what to do with my hands...

My reverie was interrupted by a little man at the foot of my bed. "Surgical shave, Sir?" There could be no doubt what he had in mind, the basin and razor lending substance to his intent. I lowered my trousers and he set to work, not without his own version of barber-shop banter. When he had finished, he paused, staring hard at what had been my thatch. "A crab," he announced. "Impossible," I countered. He called for Sister, who confirmed his diagnosis. I could tell from Sister Pearson's expression that she thought I had let her down—why I had to choose that particular lavatory seat! One thing was certain: I couldn't go down to theatre in that condition. Ours is a nice ward,

ours is; and she'd never be able to look the Theatre Sister in the face-mask again. All my protests were to no avail; she was adamant and said I must report to the 'Special' clinic, where "that sort of thing" was dealt with.

"It's down the corridor and turn..."  
"I know where it is!" I screamed and stormed off the ward.

Down at the 'Special' clinic, the doctor was in Pixie mood, but could not be diverted from the set questions.

"When did you last have sex?"

"Last night."

"Anyone you know?"

I rumbled distractedly for my little black book: "I have a phone number here, somewhere."

"Phone number?! I don't know that I'm interested in your phone numbers, young man. Gracious me, no. I'll put down, 'casual-unknown'—that's what I usually put."

He then went through the Active/Passive routine, giving me the chance to tell somebody why the op was so necessary. He listened carefully, obviously pleased that one was showing such initiative.

"Splendid, splendid. Now then," his tone darkened, "there's an awful lot of syphilis about," his hands encircled an epidemic of Bubonic proportions, "Why not have a blood-test now that you're here?"

"And what about seeing to what I come here for?" I fumed, grammar and patience both being exhausted.

He gazed intently at my bald pubes:

"Can't see anything; understandable really, they like something to cling onto, you know. Ahem. I have some stuff... ah... somewhere."

So there you have it. Right now I should be in a post-operative haze, smug in the knowledge that all was accomplished. Instead, I must wait a fortnight and endure the discomfort of a stubbly crutch. Worse; I must disappoint your editor, who had expected an authoritative article on the pros and cons of circumcision. One thought cheers me: at this moment a collage of queens is descending upon ward E2, replete with chocs and ribaldry; eager to appraise the new me. I wonder how Sister Pearson will explain me away?



## Star gays with Merlin

LEO  
July 21 - August 21



With something approaching trepidation, awe, and with a distinct sense of self-preservation, "STAR-GAYS" looks at the king of the Zodiac, LEO himself. Quite often in the past, this column has made far from flattering remarks about intrepid LEO. Occasionally, they have been a little bitter, sometimes downright rude. LEONIANs don't take kindly to such treatment, but so far no furious Lion has threatened to bite off Merlin's head; although there is a distinct anticipatory feeling that all around the country LEOS are disdainfully waiting for this column to reach their sign, and waiting to spring if what they read isn't placatory and kind. (As the Editor of *Gay News* is also a LEO, the feeling is even stronger!)

LEOS can relax, purr and stretch their limbs in sensual pleasure: NO harsh words, unkind remarks, or insulting character destruction this time. All is repentance certainly, but it is time for LEO subjects to recognise a little truth about themselves, objectively of course, and to allow just a little discussion about both their arrogance and need to be loved, without waving tails and roaring wildly that they are not being understood. They are, fortunately, able to bask graciously in most kinds of attention; and to forestall any objections, just look at the whole column as an amusement which needn't be taken too seriously—by LEOS anyway.

Like nature's Lion, LEOS should never be under-rated—but then, who would dare? Flatter, defer, love, agree with, never contradict, never ignore, are the best maxims, where LEOS are concerned. LEO is proud, often boastful, occasionally neurotic, always loveable, usually kind, can be quite magnanimous, and is the absolute centre of the Zodiac with all other signs bowing gracefully before him. The Sun, LEO's ruling planet, shines out of every pore. Even at their arrogant worst, LEOS never quite lose their gift of leadership that has the rest of the Zodiac panting along doing the craziest things to pacify the latest whim. And the LEONIAN rages? Of course, they aren't *really* serious, we all know that. But somehow, it's wise to treat them seriously just in case the Lion hasn't been fed lately and fancies someone's head, just for starters. Those rages are more often than not a need to bring attention smartly round to LEO again, when anyone strays from their side. Not jealousy, more like insecurity. How could *anyone*, LEO argues to himself, even think of ignoring the one presence in the room with absolute personality. Of course, LEO is right, the effrontery alone is enough to give this king of the Zodiac beasts a neurosis. LEO does tend to forget, though, that his very personality can sometimes be off-putting and that one is occasionally quite apprehensive to even say 'hello'.

Life to LEO is a gamble; business is a lottery. Love being the reason for living is also a gamble too, which may account for LEOS making unsubtle decisions in matters of the heart. Well, it would be nice, just occasionally, to think that loving a LEO wasn't a divine right expected and demanded. Such fine feelings are swept aside with a hefty swipe from the LEONIAN paw, along with other ridiculous notions—like disloyalty, arguments, and any kind of contradiction. Effrontery indeed! So it might be, but under that regal exterior, LEOS do tend to worry about their prestige. Defiance is out, rulership is in—but *from* a LEO only—and they need to be accepted as they are without question. Otherwise tensions appear, and that old neurotic feeling comes flooding back.

On their own ground, LEOS are stunning hosts. The works—sherry before the meal, three courses, Brandy, After Eights, the best silver, candel (probably purloined from CANCER minions!), just for the most simple, informal occasions. Nothing is too much trouble to give the sincere impression that the LEONIAN heart is open wide with love and humanity. (Just be careful, guests, that you are not the main dish about to be so magnanimously served!) Never complain, just accept. Never argue, just agree. Never belittle, just praise. And *always*, without fail, somehow pass off the most brilliant remark of suggestion made by anyone, as coming from LEO and not you, and LEO will purr happily, basking in the warmth of their own personality, sure of being loved and surrounded by loving friends.

One hour with a LEO is like a month in a high-speed lift. No wonder Royalty can only be taken in small doses and are prepared-for-hours before their arrival, and deferred-to every second of the visit. LEO is the Royal sign of the Zodiac, ruled by the life-giving Sun, itself another sign of Royalty, and filled with the majesty of LEONIAN personality. No wonder all the other Zodiac signs bow the knee. Not fealty—just old-fashioned respect, which somehow even the worst of us can't help feeling and giving. Or is it that none of us can quite resist a touch of regality, even at second-hand? Whichever it is, don't tell LEO—just let him graciously accept any sort of flattery, and, like royalty, lay on the flattery with a trowel!

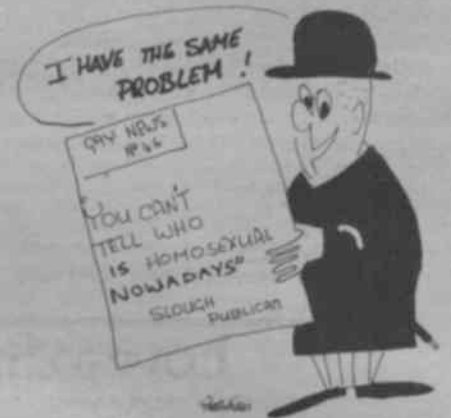
## Troubled Water

This column is devised as a means of offering help, advice or information on problems relating to homosexuality. The letters are handled by Icebreakers, a team set up to handle a telephone service, whereby isolated or unhappy gays can ring up any evening and discuss their difficulties, directly, with other gay people. The main characteristics of Icebreakers are that all its members are openly gay, have come to terms with their gayness, take no sort of authoritarian approach and the outfit is not related to any gay organisation—the entire range of gay groups, services and outlets is used. Strict confidence for letters and telephone calls is assured. The number of 01-274 9590, every evening between 7.30 and 10.30. All sexes are welcome to use this service.

The letters published in this column are selected from the many received each week. Every correspondent receives a personal reply as soon as possible; both letters and replies published may have been edited slightly. Unless specifically mentioned in the column, we cannot forward letters from readers to the writers who present their problems.

Send your letters to Dept TW, *Gay News*, 62a Chiswick High Road, London W4 1SY.

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Illustration: David Eastman



A sunny day's cruising



Photograph: Courtesy Phil Johnson (Liverpool CHE)

**BRIDGEWATER CANAL:** Pictured here are members of Liverpool and Wirral Campaign for Homosexual Equality groups, who enjoyed a sunny, six-hour cruise on the Bridgewater Canal, Cheshire, on June 30.

This trip, which took the cruisers from Runcorn to Lymm, is the third which has been organised by the groups on this famous converted barge, called the *Lapwing*.

The barge was full of happy sun-seekers who enjoyed the well-stocked bar and picnic teas of chicken and champagne.

Only one gallant member stripped and swam after the barge—apparently the water wasn't that inviting!

Love to Spare Rib



Photograph: Valerie Wilmer

*Spare Rib* Editorial Collective (from left to right): Rosie Parker, Rose Ades, Marsha Rowe, Marion Fudger, Ann Scott.

**LONDON:** To celebrate its second birthday, *Spare Rib*, this country's women's liberation magazine, held a benefit evening at the Marquee, Wardour Street, on Sunday June 30, which proved to be a resounding success.

Their birthday coincided, almost to the day, with GN's second anniversary and that of the Stonewall uprising in the States.

Taking part at the benefit were Jaki Whitren, Doris Henderson, Jo Ann Kelly's Tramp, Goldie Zelkowitz and Joan Armatrading, all of whom obviously enjoyed themselves as much as the audience. The evening culminated in a jam session with all the artists who appeared taking part.

A total of 580 people attended (540 of them having paid for admittance) and a clear profit of £344.45 was made. This included £50 for the sale of *Spare Rib* badges and magazines, and a generous donation by the bar staff of their tips. One woman actually handed over her wages!

Compere for the evening, which was organised by Marion Fudger (of the magazine), was Sarah Ward, of Capital Radio.

Maggie Donovan

Madigan's log



Was quite bowled over by Lindsay Kemp's *Flowers*. Expected it to be good—such an affirmative consensus as I heard could hardly mean anything else—but I wasn't prepared for a presentation of genius. Don't let the off-putting photographs in the theatre foyer mislead you into thinking it's a load of decadent camp. It's a work of consummate artistry which will live, in my mind at any rate, for a very long time.

A while back I received a letter from a Scottish Catholic priest who said he'd found my book abandoned in a railway compartment and thought it was yet another piece of pornography, which, he added, didn't deter him from reading it anyway. He had flattering things to say about the book. The most flattering, to me, was that it gave him added insight on his side of the confessional. It was the only place he encountered homosexuals, he said, and there very often. But he was naive on the subject. He would like to discuss it.

Yesterday he was passing through London and we met. He expressed surprise that I wasn't a limp-wristed fairy. Don't know what I'd expected—an ecclesiastical voyeur perhaps, or an inquisitive celibate stirred by passions he was ill-equipped to handle. But not a bit of it! Here was a sound, handsome twenty-nine year old who knew where he was going and why. He took me to dinner and we talked for a long, long time, I of the incredibly ostrich-headed church, he of love and selfishness, of the need to shed the old concepts of taboos and sin. He said that when adolescents came to him tormented between the compulsion to masturbate and an inculcated notion of mortal sin he would tell them masturbation was no mortal sin, that it was simply loving in a selfish way and that only continual exposure to selfless love through prayer and the eucharist would resolve the matter.

He maintained that there was no question of there not being enough love in the world but that so much of it was self-interested love. Sexual love particularly, while still love, was often no more than self-love. He could see no sin in a permanent homosexual relationship, he said, any more than a heterosexual relationship as long as it was founded on mutual selflessness, not merely sexual and material sharing.

But don't imagine that he was preaching. Had I got that impression I'd have told him to shut up. If it sounds like that here it's because I'm translating something that sounded so sensible to me badly onto paper.

Later I, Virgil, led him to several gay bars and studied his reaction, almost cynically. At first he confessed he was frightened, then that he was pleasantly surprised. Eventually he said "I'd expected a lot of painted people; they're really just like any bar only without women."

"Don't you think some look a little sad?" I asked.

"Aye, but there again don't they in any bar?"

Leo Madigan

Forgot to give myself a plug last month with regards to the Arts Council's annual Poetry International of the ICA. The programme I was concerned with was called 'Poetry of the Sea'. I got the poems together and presented them; Spike Milligan and Sir Bernard Miles did the readings. It all went off pretty well though I was bloody nervous, I can tell you, standing up there in front of all those people trying to look salty.

I was sufficiently vain to include half a dozen verses of my own which didn't go down too badly (in fact someone's translating them into Rumanian for that country's radio) and was toying with the idea of including one called *The Kie-Ties Are Coming* though eventually left it out because it's a song anyway, with a tune of its own, and was designed to be sung by drunken voices in a ship's mess or a NAAFI bar. Anyone who knows Singapore can tell you about Bugis (pronounced Boogie, as in French, and is in fact the name of one of the Malay tribes) and the Kie-Ties (drag queens) who parade up and down it at night.

THE KIE-TIES ARE COMING

*She lay in a monsoon ditch in the town of Singapore,  
She hadn't on a stitch and I thought she was a whore,  
So I kissed her knees and nipples and I kissed her inbetweens  
And I kissed her on her fore and aft and on her flanks and beams  
And after all these frolics I began to feel around  
But a great big pair of bollocks and a prick was all I found.*

Chorus:

*The Kie-Ties are coming, hurrah, hurrah,  
The Kie-Ties are coming, hurrah, hurrah,  
The Kie-Ties are coming and scrumming and bumming,  
Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!*

*A Yank along in Bugis Street sitting round the stalls,  
Stopping everyone he meets boasting 'bout his balls;  
Pulls a bird onto his lap, whips it out and hollars:  
"If you've ever seen a length like that I'll give you fifty dollars!"*

*"That's an easy fifty bucks," she cries, and before the Yank can stop her  
She's whipped her lacey skiddles off and flashed a two-foot chopper.*

Chorus:

*A matelot he did a flip for a girl called May  
Who wouldn't let him have a bit until their wedding day;  
And when at last that day befell and all the guests had gone  
He took her to a small hotel where they could be alone.*

*He kissed her winsome little cheek and praised its girlish hue;*

*He kissed her alabaster neck and promised he'd be true;*

*He gently lay her on the bed and his hand beneath her slip*

*Clutched the sweaty cobbles of the bosun off his ship.*

Chorus:

No, I don't think I could have got away with that at the Institute of Contemporary Arts.

Someone said to me the other day "You didn't actually tell people at sea you were queer, did you?" Well of course I didn't tell people I was queer because I wasn't. You know, after an initial struggle with my own nature I accepted it and I thought: What the fuck!—if there's any problem it's not with me, it's with ignorance and prejudice. If I think of myself as *queer* then queer I'll be; if I reckon I'm a misfit I'll have no faith in myself. Thereafter I spoke of my proclivities as freely as the more heterosexually inclined fellas spoke of theirs in messrooms or shoreside bars. I don't believe I advertised it unduly but I was never ashamed of it either. And this was long before I knew such bodies as CHE and GLF existed.

I must admit though that there were some pretty odd and benighted reactions. Sometimes fellas would back away, even run away, as if I'd suddenly sprouted horns and cloven hooves. Then there were fellas who'd refuse point blank to believe it or, worse, the tiresome variety who'd persist in treating me like I was some dizzy faggot—as if I'd bared the inmost secret of my soul in an unwary moment and given them a sense of ascendancy which they felt required to remind me of with endless fatuous allusions.

These disturbed reactions to something I considered within the bounds of normality were sometimes hurtful but mostly amusing. I guess I developed something akin to a professional approach, and, you know, after a while felt I could sum a fella's character up pretty accurately by his response. From the most stable, adjusted men there is no response at all; they don't even bother to wonder why you mention it.

That was at sea and it's pretty much the same ashore except that the round of parties and dinners makes me acutely aware that I'm lacking in social grace. I'm unsmooth and blunt and drink far too much. The explicitness would be OK if I moved in exclusively homosexual circles but no one ever asks me to such gatherings. No, I expound to pretty female students who wear no bras or housewives from Surbiton or elderly literary ladies. Last week one of the housewife variety rather took the wind out of my sails. She'd been rabbiting on about how I should get married now that I was ashore, and how lonely a big city could be, and what bliss the connubial state was, etc. So I told her I didn't want to get married, that I didn't feel in the least lonely, that I preferred my own sex and, in fact, lived with my psychiatrist (cheers John!). Then this gorgeous, liberated mother beamed. "Oh, I'm so glad," she gushed. "You really must meet my three-year-old. He's so sweet and so gentle and so affectionate that I'm sure he's a poof!"

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## The future of gay counselling

The mushrooming of homosexual befriending and counselling facilities is the most recent aspect of gay liberation. This growth in interest should not be divorced from the spread of counselling into many walks of life, notably marriage guidance, careers advice and student welfare. Although the Albany Trust pioneered gay counselling in Britain more than twenty years ago, the advent of organisations such as ICEBREAKERS, CENTRE and FRIEND has marked the real birth of enthusiasm.

What next? The immediate task is to get a lot clearer in practice what we mean by the terms 'befriending' and 'counselling'. They are best seen as continuous and overlapping spectra, not firmly opposed concepts. The essence of befriending, I would suggest, involves being on hand when no one else is; that means, quite simply, friendship. The Americans, jargon-conscious as ever, usually term it 'peer support', a relationship which is informal, unstructured, spontaneous, accepts both partners as equals and aims to reduce the depression or anxiety in the troubled man or woman.

Grass-roots befriending can take three forms. Telephone contact is very much in vogue at present and can certainly be most valuable. But we should not totally ignore a growing body of research which has indicated (*vis a vis* the Samaritans, for instance) that a sizeable number of first-time enquirers feel a strong anti-climax after the conversation has taken place. Certainly, there are some golden rules for telephone befriending: a friendly voice, an assurance that the person on the line is respected and valued, an ability to keep the conversation going and a firm invitation to phone again or arrange a visit. These are not nearly so easy as they appear, particularly in these days of ever-shortening periods between 'pips'. It may be useful to offer to phone the enquirer back at his or her number.

The second type of befriending involves a once-only face-to-face chat. The aim here is often to convey information, for example about a local gay group, coupled with a reassurance that a person's loneliness need not be permanent. However well-meaning, one can tread dangerous paths here. It is woefully easy to raise unrealistic hopes about the future. And it is notoriously easy to oblige the lonely. "Here is the address of a gay pub and here is a map to help you find it" will doubtless draw a polite thank you. But it is usually without any value.

The third type is long-term and can take many forms: meeting for a drink once a week, introducing someone (over a period of time) to a local gay group—above all keeping in touch. This is, of course, a delicate operation. It assumes that befriender and befriended have enough in common, and that the need for termination of the relationship can be recognised. And the best befrienders, there can be little doubt, are those who accept their own sexuality openly and frankly.

Counselling is rather a different matter. It has been defined, rather inadequately, as a skilled and dynamic exchange between individuals, each with his or her own personality. The counsellor, no amateur at that, uses his own experience to help a person to enlarge his own understanding of his problems and so make better decisions. The old notion that counselling is a diplomatic and directive technique, which involves analysing and interpreting a client's behaviour for him, is very dangerous and had best be buried once and for all. The real role of a counsellor, I would suggest, is to concern himself with what a person in distress is able or unable to do to adjust to a given set of problems. The posh name for this is 'relationship therapy'.

In practice, gay counselling often involves problems whose handling requires a degree of specialised knowledge. The most common areas are religious difficulties (it is hardly sufficient to advise troubled Christians to stop worrying about Leviticus), family problems and breakdown (PARENTS' ENQUIRY has made an excellent start here), and a crop of ill-fortune relating to employment and accommodation. Gay counselling may also concern itself with the victims of aversion (or more correctly 'behaviour') therapy. I recall on unfortunate young man who had been given by the clinic a battery-operated electric shock instrument for self-inflicted pain whenever he felt 'the urge'.

Most of the above are the traditional areas of gay counselling. But I have the feeling that we must start to explore seriously hitherto-unchartered areas, at any rate if befriending and counselling are not to be swallowed up by the general campaigning of the homophile world. Firstly, there is the matter of sexual counselling. One has only to compare the abundant sources of help now available to people with heterosexual sex problems with the obvious dearth in a homosexual context to realise that all is not

well. Sexual self-consciousness, incompatibility—even gross ignorance of sex techniques—are responsible for a lot more distress in the gay world than most of us imagine.

At present, gay befriending and counselling organisations are trying to fill a gap in the social services provided by other voluntary or statutory bodies. The contact which has already been established, eg with local Samaritan groups and local councils for social service, must be strengthened and widened. Much campaigning remains to be done with the social welfare services, probation and prison agencies—not only to bring help to homosexuals in need but to convince these various bodies that the ultimate aim must be government grants to finance work best undertaken by specialist agencies. In this way, too, gay befriending and counselling organisations may draw to a greater extent on the skills and expertise of heterosexuals who have a sincere and objective interest. It would be a pity of gay befriending and counselling became just another manifestation of the gay ghetto.

In particular, there are many unanswered questions about gays in conflict with the law. A review of police statistics suggests that in



Illustration: Garry Cobb

the region of two thousand cases are prosecuted each year involving homosexual activity, almost all cottaging offences and breaches of the age of consent. This figure may be an underestimate, and there is certainly great regional variation in the numbers prosecuted and in the punishments inflicted. Some provisional research, for instance, suggests that teachers and social workers are more likely to be sent to prison than members of any other occupation. What specialised sources of help are available at present (before, during and after sentence) for gays in conflict with the law? What indeed *are* their special needs? All too often, we simply do not know. And we must, of course, be very wary of promising a degree of support which we cannot meet. Nevertheless, the question of assistance for those in trouble with the law will be of increasing concern, I trust, to those involved in gay counselling over the next few years.

It remains to consider some of the dangers inherent in befriending and counselling gays in trouble or in distress. There is, for instance, the ever-present threat of categorisation posed by the question "how do we deal with this sort of case?" which is bound to lose sight of the individuality and special needs of the person needing help. Alternatively, some may expect immediate solutions in the goodwill and the inspiration of the moment, only to find that sincerity is not enough and that 'solutions' do not work. Any person who turns to another for help will attribute to the latter a symbolic importance far beyond his actual significance. This danger needs careful handling. It needs continual reappraisal, for it is very easy to raise false hopes in those in need. Goodwill is not enough. We must be honest enough to admit our limitations of resources and ability. Who can deny, for instance, that there is a chronic shortage of women involved in gay befriending and counselling? And yet, in my experience, women make as many calls on befriending and counselling resources as do men. A new campaign for women's liberation?

Barrie Kenyon

Contacts for the organisations mentioned in this article are listed on page 19 under the heading 'Counselling/Befriending'.

# TOWARDS A GAY RENAISSANCE

Daniel Curzon talks to Gay News

**Gay News:** Has your novel, *Something You Do In The Dark*, been published in the United Kingdom or only in the United States?

**Daniel Curzon:** In the States, France and Holland. Three years ago the novel seemed too intimidating to British publishers. I was living here in London at that time, and had a British agent, but he was not gay and found the subject distasteful. He told me that British publishers felt that my novel was for a 'minority' audience. The truth is quite the contrary. I wrote for all readers, especially those who cover their eyes to the persecution of homosexuals as heretics.

**GN:** Would you say that the attitude toward homosexuals is better in the United States than it is in England?

**DC:** "Better" is probably not the right word. I find the contradictions in both cultures very strange. On the one hand, homosexual acts are legal in the United Kingdom, but I do think there is more shame about the subject, more fear about coming out. On the other hand, in the United States, although homosexual acts are illegal generally, gay bars and gay steam-baths exist in abundance—and even a gay television programme. And more and more people are refusing to hide their full personalities in the name of some mindless taboo. Unfortunately in both countries, the police, established religion, and 'decent' citizens remain the enemies of gays.

**GN:** How would you describe your novel?

**DC:** Oh, it's about nine inches long and seven inches wide.

**GN:** We meant the contents.

**DC:** Excuse me, I forget sometimes that readers may really care about contents. Publishers care very little about contents. They are interested in selling a product. They would sell books with heroin on the pages if they thought they could hook readers that way.

**GN:** Do you object to the commercialism involved in book-selling?

**DC:** Not *per se*. I just object to the fanatical attention given by both publishers and general readers to BESTSELLERS. Best-sellers are almost always junk. Still I was willing to play the game for Putnam and try to make my book pay. But it did not sell enough to please Putnam, or Lancer, the paperback people, either. God knows I offered to promote my novel beyond the call of duty. I would have given an autograph and a blow-job with every copy sold. But the publisher did not promote the book—that way or any way.

**GN:** Do we spy in you a bitterness about publishing?

**DC:** A tinge. I've discovered that publishers do not honour their contracts. But because most authors are so happy to have a book published, they put up with anything.

**GN:** What reaction has *Something You Do In The Dark* received?

**DC:** About 137 different ones. Some reviewers called it a masterpiece; I even have gotten fan letters. At the same time some cretinous gay activist in New York denounced the book because he said it was written "at the expense of homosexuals." Literature should be kept out of the hands of fools! I can only conclude that this gay activist can't read. I am a gay activist myself, for god's sake! If someone cannot tell that my novel is a protest about police entrapment and the psychic oppression of gays, then he needs a remedial reading course!

**GN:** Do you yourself think your novel is a masterpiece?

**DC:** That's a loaded question, isn't it? If I say yes, then I seem arrogant. If I say no, then I seem dubious about my book. Let me say that I hope my novel is literature. I tried to make it honest and artistic, but I believe, too, that the mainstream of Western literature has had a large helping of social criticism in it, from Richardson's *Pamela* to Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* up through modern-day works. I wanted to put the homosexual into the mainstream—whether society wanted him there or not! But I didn't want to write a book overly influenced by the New Criticism—that is, all ponderous symbolism and vapory indirection—and without significance whatsoever. Nor did I want to write a polemic, and so I complicated my protagonist, who is a man arrested by a cruel Vice Squad policeman, to show him as a fully dimension human being, both strong and weak, good and bad, not a mere puppet in a plea for gay rights.

**GN:** Why did you say your novel has had 137 different reactions?

**DC:** I've discovered that some readers like certain parts of the book for the very reason that other readers don't like them. I've learned that people read into my book—because of the taboo subject matter, which I present head-on in an uncompromising



The American novelist Daniel Curzon first appeared in *Gay News* by way of a news item reporting his being banned from teaching in Okinawa (GN43), an incident discussed later in the interview. His novel *Something You Do In The Dark* has been described as "the first gay liberation novel"—although it was written while Curzon was in Asia and unaware of the gay liberation movement—because it unflinchingly indicts the homophobia of society. He is presently visiting London, where he used to live, and will be teaching in California later this year.

there. Perhaps the same thing happens with all novels, but I have the feeling that such extreme differences are more likely to occur with a book about homosexuality. For instance, a women's liberationist told me that the female character in my novel seems to be a male's portrait of the way women ought to be—that is, goody-goodies. One reviewer said that the female character was obnoxious. Joyce Carol Oates, on whom the character is based most emphatically, denied that she was the model of the character. All I can conclude is that readers are so wrapped up in their own concerns and visions of reality, they emphasise or distort according to their own needs. So I don't really know any longer what "I like your book" or "I didn't like your book" means. For all I know, the reader liked the texture of the paper. Somebody from Berkeley, who proposed to use my book in a Lavender University class, actually told me that he thought I was saying that everybody is homosexual—and would continue to think so even though I denied this.

**GN:** What has been the reaction of your friends and colleagues to your coming out publicly?

**DC:** Well, so far nobody has spat in my face. Generally people are too courteous—or too cowardly—to be downright rude face to face. Yet some 'friends' have not written back to me after I 'confessed the horrible truth'. Some people have even said, "So what?" I'd say it is this latter reaction that's hardest for gays to take. After a lifetime of deception and concealment, we hear, "So what?" If other gay men and women are thinking of coming out in the open, I'd advise them to assume that they are fine, decent human

beings (until proven otherwise), and the chances are good that the people who know you, providing they are somewhat educated, will accept you on your own terms. Never apologise for being gay! Never 'explain' how you got that way—unless heterosexuals are prepared to explain how they got that way!

**GN:** Do you believe that the fears about harassment for being homosexual are largely illusory then?

**DC:** Not completely illusory. No doubt

granted their own superiority, the essential inferiority of homosexual relations. Be prepared for denigrating remarks, along the lines of, "Of course if you could help it, you wouldn't be gay, would you?" The next stage of gay liberation, now that we are making ourselves public, is convincing straights that their fucking isn't any better than ours.

**GN:** Do you perhaps believe that homosexuality is a state superior to heterosexuality?

**DC:** It is when it comes to controlling the population explosion! But I don't really believe homosexuals are any better than anybody else. I'd put it this way—homosexuals are no worse than anybody else. There do seem to be a great many artists and other talented people who are gay. I don't know if this is because of their gayness or because they have had to express themselves through the arts because they were not permitted the usual channels that straights have. I'd hate to think that gay liberation will mean that homosexuals can feel as comfortable and justified in the universe as any old boresome, complacent heterosexual, and do nothing but exist.

**GN:** Do you think there is such a thing as a homosexual imagination?

**DC:** I don't know what that term means really. I don't think there is one such creature as the homosexual imagination. I have met homosexuals with wondrous imaginations—and some with no imagination at all.

**GN:** Is there a distinctly homosexual view of reality?

**DC:** Probably the great and horrible secret of our 'perversion' is that deep down inside we are as banal as everybody else! No—I take that back a little. I have met a vast array of gay types, from rightwing to radical, from monogamous to poly-perverse. We are as divergent as heterosexuals. In fact, all that unites us at the moment is a legitimate sense that we must fight together to get the Inquisition off our necks. But many homosexuals have nothing in common with each other except anger about oppression. Oppression makes stranger bedfellows than

**GN:** So you think there are no essential differences in homosexuals?

**DC:** Well, maybe homosexuality helps provide the necessary 'outside' perspective that writers and artists need in order to examine what most people take for granted. But I think it's just propaganda if we claim that homosexuals are more imaginative or creative than others. Perhaps such overstatements are necessary in the prevailing atmosphere that "Homos are shit," but we mustn't lie to ourselves too much. I do firmly believe that the subject of homosexuality—in all its ramifications—has only barely been depleted in literature and art. I anticipate a great Gay Renaissance, where the subject matter becomes thoroughly explored.

**GN:** What forms will this Gay Renaissance take?

**DC:** We are in it now. Of course usually we don't notice what's happening till long after—until some historian or sociologist tells us we were part of a movement. I think an enormous amount of material, of high quality and low, is emerging and will continue to emerge. I have little patience with those who dismiss everything contemporary because it isn't 'a classic.' In two hundred years what is being done now will become the classics. Despite the strictures of commercial publishers against gay books (because they do not sell well generally, since straights wouldn't dream of touching them), a body of work is surfacing. Already in some American universities Gay Studies classes are being taught. In fact, I attended one in San Francisco not long ago. What a remarkable change from even three years ago, when my novel was published! I myself may teach a Gay Studies class at Fresno State University next year. I am suffering from severe cultural shock because I just came from the US military environment, which is still retarded on the subject of homosexuality.

**GN:** What is your connection with the US military?

**DC:** I have been teaching for an extension university in Asia. Recently I tried to have xeroxed a chapter of *The Y*, my most recent novel—as yet unpublished—and was refused by the military-linked education center in Okinawa. Indeed, I was threatened with being fired, was harassed, and eventually banned from teaching at that education center again.

**GN:** What caused this strong reaction?

**DC:** The subject matter of *The Y*—god forbid!—homosexuals in a YMCA. The people in charge of the education center all dropped their chastity belts and screamed for my head. I might add that these people have about as much to do with 'education' as cleaning women who erase blackboards. Because I chose to be realistic in my portrayal of this taboo subject—and use it in a college classroom!—I got into a great deal of hot water—scalding in fact. But I decided that I would not accept the intimidation that was thrown my way. Instead I wrote to various civil rights organisations in the States, and now the American Civil Liberties Union has agreed to take on my case. What happened to me is a clear violation of academic freedom, but the benighted boobs in that military-linked education center and the university I work for have no conception of what the role of a university is or what academic freedom means. A university indeed—they run a fourth-rate junior college! All you need to have is 84 dollars and a pencil. And if you don't have the pencil, that's okay!

**GN:** Do you think the US military will ever reverse its stand on homosexuality?

**DC:** Yes—but only if gay people and other sane people scream and complain and yell and never give up until they win. Nobody should have to put up with this savagery one second longer! How can I be planning a Gay Studies class at Fresno State and be censored and banned by the US military in Okinawa? It's crazy. But then the whole military is positively INSANE on the subject of homosexuality. And the only way it will change is if it is pushed—and pushed hard, legally and endlessly. By its very nature the military is reactionary. But it has no right whatsoever to go on ruining lives and making people live in fear and frustration because of their sex lives, and if I can, through this ACLU case, alter things, by god I will! But the military fights dirty.

**GN:** How does the military fight dirty?

**DC:** Bizarrely, the military supposedly fights to protect freedom of speech and other such liberties, but it allows almost none within its own ranks. It is an undemocratic organisation ostensibly protecting democracy; it is a socialistic organisation ostensibly protecting capitalism. The military fights

Continued on page 12

Continued from page 11

dirty because I'm sure my mail has been tampered with since this case surfaced. I have been warned by lawyers to watch who I sleep with!

GN: How can they get away with this sort of harassment?

DC: Because they are way over in the Far East—and civil rights are way over elsewhere! My bosses' main *raison d'être* is to keep that money-making fake-college programme running along—without of course letting any 'education' interfere with the military's worthy business of killing people.

GN: Are you afraid what you say in this interview will be used against you?

DC: Yes, but I'm saying it anyhow. The military will change—it will have to. It will take at least ten years. It will fight with all its massive ignorance to maintain the status quo, just as it once fought against women doctors and integrated troops. But basically I am an optimist—because I think homosexuals will win, but somebody has to do the sweaty, legal work now. A major problem is that no member of the military itself can speak out about the hideous discrimination against gays—because he stands condemned by the very act of speaking out. So somebody else has to stop the military, just as the Nazis had to be stopped from putting people in gas ovens.

GN: Do you have any plans for further publications?

DC: I definitely do. I have written a wild, extravagant, gay *Candide*-like comic novel—I wrote it while living in London actually. I feel there is a need for a homosexual comedy. The topic has its amusing aspects—just as it has grim ones, the ones I dramatise in *Something You Do In The Dark*. I want to write about the gay experience in all its versatility.

GN: What's the title of this comedy?

DC: *The Misadventures of Tim McPick*—as in picaro. I'm not sure how 'commercial' a satirical novel about a 17-year-old vegetarian homosexual is, but maybe I'll find out. I wanted to call the book 'The Story of Tim and His Zipper,' but that may be too racy. Zipper is the dog in the story.

GN: Concerning your more 'grim' published novel, do you think the book is depressing or may upset gay readers?

DC: Only bad art is depressing. Art is a cauterising agent—it burns but it purifies.

GN: Have you written any other fiction?

DC: About a dozen short stories in recent months. I have no trouble writing, even under the inhospitable conditions of Asia, but there are precious few markets for short

stories and fewer still for gay short stories.

GN: Why is this so?

DC: The few places that use fiction want very short pieces. I myself can't do justice to human truth in a hurried short piece. So I propose to start *The Journal of Gay Literature* for quality fiction and notable essays, to provide a market.

GN: What are the drawbacks to starting a periodical like that?

DC: One is that I have no money. I need a literary 'sugar daddy' to fund the magazine.

I'd also have to learn the intricacies of publishing and distributing a journal. But I'm willing to learn.

GN: Who or what would you publish—more specifically?

DC: Well, my own stories of course. I won't



pretend otherwise. But I want to publish other things too. I don't want to use poetry, but I do want to provide a showplace for first-rate gay prose. If I have a predisposition, it is toward stories with plots, with well-drawn characters, with themes. I am a traditionalist, I guess, and most experimental fiction leaves me cold.

GN: Would you welcome British contributions?

DC: Certainly. But, as I say, I need to find that literary sugar daddy or some organisation to fund this journal. I'll look into grants.

We live in a schizoid age. Some people are getting government grants to study homosexuality and other people are going to jail as 'queers'. Bizarre!

GN: Well, we wish you much luck with your literary projects.

DC: I'll need it. Thanks.

## Reflections

The sheep were scattered over the hillside and in the fields all around the cottage. They chewed the coarse grass and bleated. Their strangely individual voices measured the open spaces of the glen and reminded Moon that London was far away.

The day was bright and warm and the river, which meandered through the glen, invited him to swim and dive in its cold, clear water.

He walked across the fields down to the river, closely watched by suspicious cows and nervous sheep. He crossed the swing bridge and walked along the high bank until he came to his favourite pool: the place where he had first learned to swim eleven long years ago. The pool was deep with craggy rocks sloping down into its stillness and it was sheltered by the delicate parasols of Rowan trees.

Below the opposite bank the mainstream of the river gushed by, in the sunlight, over smooth grey and pink boulders. The sound of the river seemed to cascade through his head, but his eyes were fixed on the clear reflection of his nakedness in the pool below.

Moon was eighteen, beautiful and strong. He was alone and lonely; intense and confused.

He dived into the pool to meet his reflection and as the water exploded around him he thought he heard a voice calling him by the special name only he knew: Moon. And the sun dazzled him as he came up for air.

The day grew warmer, the sheep and cows quieter, and Moon left the river to climb up to the cairn at the top of the Culain Hills behind the cottage. He strode confidently over the heather, raising clouds of pollen dust, disturbing some grouse and a couple of hares. As he climbed the breeze refreshed him, though flies buzzed busily around him. For a moment, however, when he had almost reached the top, he lost himself completely. He had turned to look down upon the glen but he felt like a bird of prey hovering over his own flesh. The wide open spaces grew even wider.

At the top Moon rested by the cairn. It was windy; chilly even. He took the shirt which was wrapped around his waist and was about to put it on when he seemed to hear the voice calling him again. The shirt blew away down into a rocky gully and Moon shivered.

"Hello, Moon," a man said: a young man with long, dark, wavy hair and a short beard. He was slim, but muscular, and was about twenty-two years old. Moon was sure he recognised him at first, but when the man smiled at him he was no longer so certain. However, the man clearly knew Moon: knew him and loved him.

Moon shed his jeans and plimsolls but he could not feel the cold wind around him. The man, now also naked, was a little taller, a little stronger and a little less confused than the boy he held in his arms. He kissed Moon and Moon learned slowly and gently how love was made.

The holiday at the cottage passed quickly and,



Illustration: Luca Signorelli's 'Baptism'

although Moon did not see him again, he dreamed about the man often. Moon never returned to the cottage, for his parents sold it some months later when he was at university. He missed it terribly, but three years later, after he had graduated, he had an opportunity of staying at a farmhouse on the other side of the Culain Hills: an opportunity he seized readily.

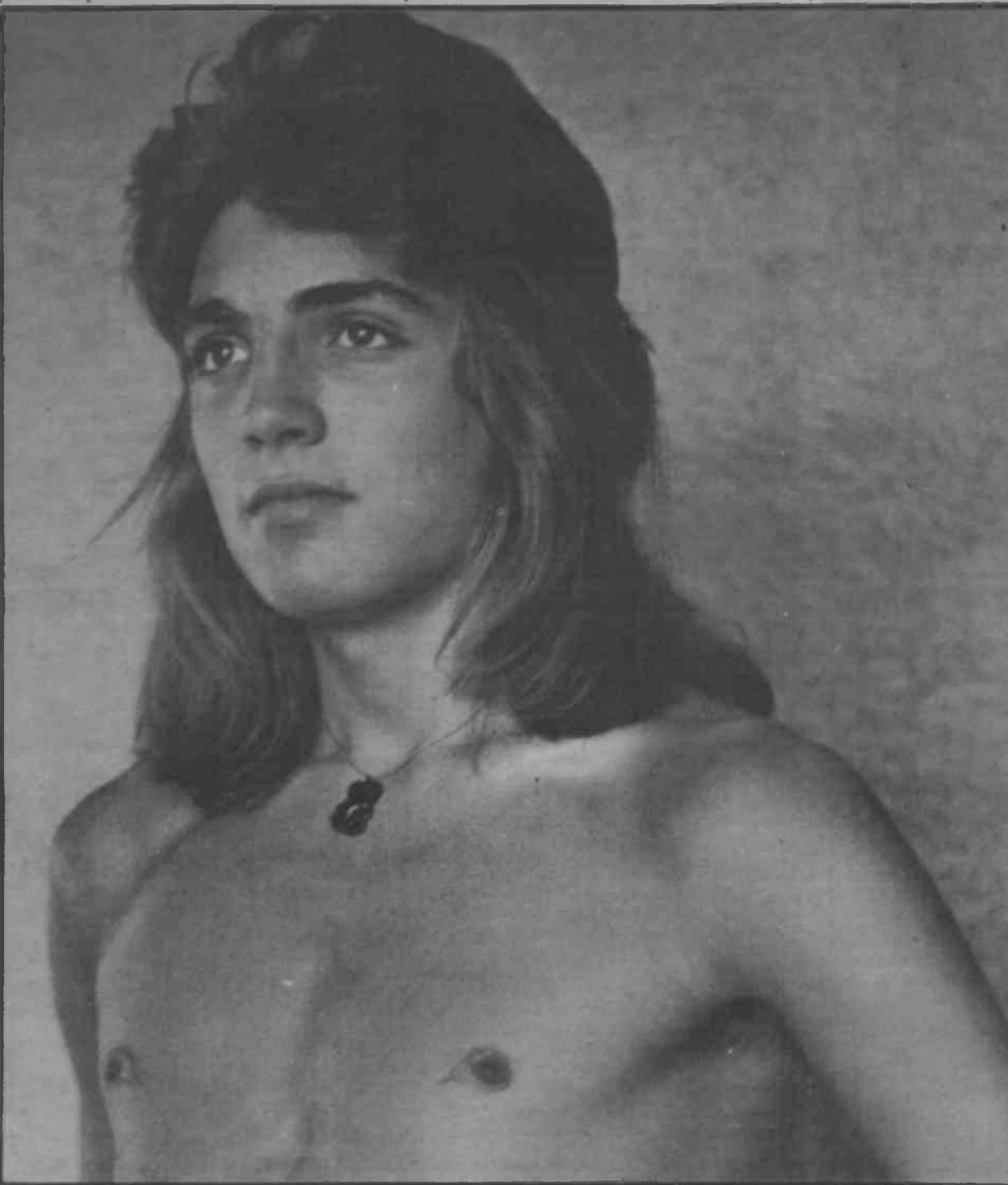
It was only when he reached the cairn on that inevitable climb to the highest point of the Hills that he realised what would happen there. He stroked his beard and shook his long, dark hair. On the other side of the cairn sat a boy of about eighteen with the strangest look in his eyes. The boy seemed awkward, as if his fine athletic body belonged to someone else. He knew the boy well and he loved him. And he knew the boy's name too.

"Hello, Moon," he said, smiling. And he dived into those eyes and met his reflection there and time grew even stranger.

Howard Wakeling

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## Thom Gunn: poet

"In gleaming jackets trophied with the dust"

When Peter Finch played Oscar Wilde in a film (the one, remember, in which he departs for continental exile from Marylebone Station), he set the establishment's eyebrows a-rise but pointed out that one did not have to be a homosexual in order to play one, any more than one needed to be a murderer to play Richard III. Peculiar company, that, Oscar and Richard, gay man of fashion and megalomaniac, but, consider: an accomplishment of the establishment was to have heard of Richard the third.

Similarly one does not need to be a gay poet in order to write gay poetry. Thom Gunn may not be a gay poet but he has written first class gay poetry—if, on the other hand, he is a gay poet: splendid! He has been anthologised in *The Male Muse* by Ian Young (reviewed in GN40), but the gay poetry does not form the bulk of his work and I suspect, judging from selections he has made for a collected edition, a record and a recital, that he does not consider it all that important.

His own personal image was as the wearer of leather and his milieu was the leather bar—"drinkers bent together / Concocting selves for their impervious kit." Leather as the "doubtful uniform" was a theme that recurs in those early poems and for all its glamour its essential nature as a disguise is never for a moment lost on him—"In gleaming jackets trophied with the dust, / They strap in doubt—by hiding it, robust." Unsentimentally he sees in one bar the progress of the promiscuous male in a pair of poems titled 'Modes of Pleasure'—"The Fallen Rake, being fallen from / The heights of twenty to middle age . . . having used each hour of leisure / To learn by rote the modes of pleasure, / The sensual skills as skills alone." At the same time the young man of twenty, the fallen rake to be, in the act of sizing up (and being sized up by) tonight's potential, is secure in the knowledge that "When I've had you once or twice / I may not want you any more; / A single night is plenty for / Every magnanimous device. / Why should that matter? Why pretend / Love must accompany erection? / This is a momentary affection, / A curiosity bound to end." In the very early 'Carnal Knowledge' he sees "that lack of love contaminates."

Thom Gunn's more recent poetry has left such specific gay themes behind—obviously there is a limit to what a clear mind, having abjured repetition or romanticism (not to speak of wallow or cant) has to say on the subject. In June 1974 he gave a reading at the Mermaid which included a good deal of new and unpublished material—a new volume must be on the way. There is a sequence called 'Geysers'—the Geysers, he told us, being ruined hot-baths some hundred miles north of San Francisco, somewhat orgasmic. There are new poems on the iron landscape theme that has fascinated him for some time. Another, "The Idea of Trust," he introduced by telling us that it arose from an incident in the flat above his in Frisco, where there seemed to be "a perpetual party, a house of strangers." A boy, nicknamed 'Pretty Jim', notably inarticulate, unexpectedly made the articulate observation that "Trust is an intimate conspiracy" and then quietly robbed the friends who trusted him.

Meanwhile I must report to his fans that Thom Gunn has grown a beard. It is a good beard as beards go but it will take some getting used to. I've been using a newspaper photo of him as a bookmark for so long that it has become an image of his poetry—a shy man with a shrewd smile above an intricate torso of leather. A beard. And long hair. Well, well, I'll forgive him. After all, somewhere on my own road to Damascus I read and learned the heroic valediction of 'My Sad Captains' and owe to it some measure of my liberation. He always concludes his readings with it, persuading me that he thinks as highly of it as I do myself, but I won't quote it, masterpiece that it is, because I suspect that even poets domiciled in Watergate Land make only a pittance from the sale of their poems and I do not want to frustrate the sale of a single copy of *My Sad Captains*, published by Faber and Faber. Thom Gunn's other volumes to date are *Fighting Terms*, *A Sense of Movement*, *Touch, Moly* and (with photographs by his brother Ander Gunn) *Positives*. *Moly* is in hardback only. It contains a very fine poem indeed: 'Sunlight'.

Peter Forster



Gustave Courbet's oil painting *Le Sommeil*, 1866. The upper model is 'Jo' (Joanna Hillfernan), one of Whistler's first mistresses.

## Whistler's mother?

**WHISTLER: A BIOGRAPHY** — Stanley Weintraub, Collins, £4.95

While in Paris, James Abbott McNeill Whistler mentioned his mother to T R Lamont, who exclaimed, "Your mother? Who would have thought of you having a mother, Jimmy?" "Yes, indeed, I have a mother. And a very pretty bit of colour she is, I can tell you." And some years later Whistler's mother became the famous painting more correctly titled *Arrangement in Grey and Black, No 1*.

Whistler's habit of painting works with such titles as *Symphony in Flesh Colour and Pink*, *Harmony in Yellow and Gold*, and *Nocturne in Blue and Gold*, brought upon his head much scorn and parodies of his 'Nocturnes in Silver and Bile' from the staid Academy who weren't yet ready for Impressionism, or even for Art, for that matter.

Stanley Weintraub's 'authoritative' study is a biography of the man (rather than a critical analysis of the artist) who was an expert in the gentle art of making enemies. We find herein the numerous battles in the press between Whistler and all the leading artists and 'figures' of late nineteenth-century London and Europe, particularly the Pre-Raphaelite school. The wit of Oscar Wilde's seminal essay "The Decay of Lying", as well as the aesthete's belief that Nature imitates Art, were flagrantly plagiarised from Whistler's dinner-table *bon-mots*, a borrowing which offended Whistler and prompted him to destroy their friendship by means of indecent invective. Weintraub's abundant

citation of anecdotal information sometimes obscures Whistler's real personality, though we are left with the impression that it was decidedly unpleasant.

One would conclude from reading Weintraub's study that homosexuals did not exist in the 1890's. Like most traditional scholars, Weintraub tells the truth and nothing but the truth, but politely refrains from telling the whole truth in matters homosexual. Whistler himself certainly had mistresses and one wife and child, and no doubt we would 'read too much into' the fact that he often lived with men for extended periods of time. But his circle of friends, many of them intimate, included a goodly number of homosexuals, such as Wilde, WE Henley, Solomon, Montesquieu (model of Prout's Baron Charlus), and on the principle of equality (not only because I have an interest in such things) it would have been well to mention people's boyfriends as well as their mistresses. It is by such omissions of casually relevant information—typical of the academic press—that homosexuals are excommunicated from the general social consciousness. This is not to malign the scholarly integrity of the book, but when Weintraub refers to Simeon Solomon as merely an "amiable and gentle young artist" one suspects him of being deliberately oblique. The book will not be a useful addition to your Victorian Gay Studies shelf.

Rictor Norton



When I first read his earliest volume *Fighting Terms* years ago I admired at once the discipline of form and statement (and understatement) and his healthy Byronic loathing of cant—for, in those far off days of the Labouchere Amendment (some of you children do not even know what that means, do you?) cant was the special province of much gay verse and a great deal more gay free-verse. They were the days of imprecise wallowing in self-doubt and painful rejections and the love-everlasting of the sort of doe-eyed beauties who never had and never will have anything interesting to talk about in bed afterwards. How different things are now. Aren't they? Thom Gunn's work ran counter to all this. With cool and sardonic detachment he saw through himself and his own mask as ruthlessly as he saw through other men and recognised his and their "love of chance."

## Uncompromising document

**RELIGIOUS ROOTS OF THE TABOO ON HOMOSEXUALITY** — John Lauritsen

It has become something of a cliché to talk glibly about the Judeo-Christian oppression of sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular without perhaps going into it very deeply. In this pamphlet John Lauritsen performs a useful service in itemizing and documenting the source and growth of what he calls homoerotophobia. "The history of the taboo is essentially a history of religion. The taboo, as we shall see, is a theological conception of Judeo-Christianity." He takes what he calls a materialistic view believing, briefly, that God did not create man but rather the other way around, and that there are no "eternal moral truths" and no principles of "unchanging human nature." A materialist views, he writes, "any particular moral code as representing a society's state of development."

Lauritsen has assembled potent facts and put them together in a potent way as he shows how the growth of post-Judaic Christianity spread grim repressions following the pontifications of Saul of Tarsus, Aquinas and Justinian. While homosexuals were being persecuted for heresy and burned as

witches, outside the sphere of Judeo-Christian influence homosexuality continued to flourish naturally and without taboos—in, for example, China, Japan, India, the Arab countries, Africa and pre-Columbian America. "The fact is," he concludes, "that historically the Christian church has been an egregious practitioner of hatred, intolerance and violence."

It is an uncompromising document, and this is a good thing. Wishy-washy concessions, and admissions that there may be some good things somewhere, have no place in argument of this kind. The essay is well backed-up with sources, notes for further reading and some stimulating asides. I have always felt that the sight of homosexuals trying to come to terms with our dominating religions is about the most dismal spectacle of the new gay scene. Have they, I wonder, the integrity to provide a convincing reply to this attack?

The essay is an expanded version of a presentation Lauritsen made in New York City in February this year, to the Scholarship Committee of the Gay Academic Union. It is available from the author at 26 St Mark's Place, New York City, New York, 10003, USA. He charges 75 cents.

Roger Baker

## 'Double-damned'

**SHADOW GAME** — Laurence Eben, Panther, 40p

The front cover blurb on the recently published paperback edition of Laurence Eben's *Shadow Game* proclaims that it is "a story of human passion, double-damned by the society it defied." And for a change, the blurb does more or less describe the novel, which tells of the doomed love affair between Ray and Victor. The relationship takes place in South Africa, and as Ray is a young, prosperous, white PR executive and Victor a handsome, black radio announcer, the meaning of "double-damned" is all too painfully obvious.

Whilst *Shadow Game* is no masterpiece or likely to be acclaimed as a gay classic in the tradi-

tion of James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* or Gore Vidal's *The City and the Pillar*, it nevertheless is a simple but effective tale of oppression and a further condemnation of the racist attitudes that prevail in South Africa. Eben's style is sometimes too similar to those found in 'women's magazine' romantic tear-jerkers and his predominantly fatalistic approach leaves the reader in no doubt to what the final outcome will be, as the final chapters confirm the pessimism and despair that runs throughout the book. But the reality of the situation and setting hold their own against the author's curiously old-fashioned brand of clichéd emotionalism and makes the novel a little more than all-the-sad-young-men revisited.

Denis Lemon

## Celluloid in print

**STARDOM** — Alexander Walker (Penguin, 55p)

**UNDERGROUND FILM** — Parker Tyler (Pelican, 75p)

Alexander Walker sets out to "show the star as both a live person and a prepared image and to suggest how the two interact on the screen and off it." A fascinating thesis, and one interestingly brought off. No gossip, and no bland paeans of praise for special favourites, but rational assessments and a

great deal of insight. Lillian Gish, Gloria Swanson, Valentino, Bette Davis, Joan Crawford and John Wayne are some of the greats whose careers are examined. Tyler's book was heavily criticised in some areas when it first appeared five years ago, largely because in an underwritten field it failed to be encyclopaedic. It is a personal approach and usefully points up the cross-breeding that goes on between categories of fringe movies: Tyler has an eye for the past too.

Roger Baker

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## Moody tantrums

**BIRD ON A WIRE** — World Premiere, Rainbow Theatre, London, July 5

This documentary of Leonard Cohen's European tour is an embarrassing movie about an embarrassed man. A documentary film is seldom more interesting than what it documents, and unfortunately Leonard Cohen is revealed as a pouting boy who has little to say, and says that in an inarticulate fashion. The film as such is technically adequate: the camera focusses on Cohen's head as he sings, and when Cohen sways back and forth, the camera sways back and forth. Hypnotic perhaps, but hardly a tour de force.



The most enlightening part of the film is when Cohen gets pissed and tells us that he's now 37

years old, that his books and songs were written twenty years ago, and that he's simply repeating them like a parrot. I'm not sure that is the particular bird on the wire, though the particular freedom he is seeking may have something to do with an escape from parasitical audiences who demand him to be a public performer rather than a private poet. Especially embarrassing is Cohen's lack of professional skills as a performer: he knows little about sound systems, he occasionally forgets the words to his songs, and he doesn't finish a concert if he's not in the right mood. The professionals around him cater to his moody tantrums by uttering sentimental clichés about "the wild magic" of an audience who happens to recognise his songs and can sing the lyrics themselves when he breaks down and leaves the microphone.

There is no doubt but that Cohen has a certain charisma, which suggests that he is both honest and profound, but I think the movie will undermine that charisma for even his most devoted admirers. As for profundity, he has very little to offer to the realm of either imaginative or intelligible discourse, and tends to give boring interviews. As for honesty and openness, he's an extremely self-conscious person, and the movie seldom breaks through the facade of his genial smile or his lonely tears, and we were always aware that he was always aware that a camera was focussed on him. He is honest (perhaps) only when he closes his eyes and sings, but even then we suspect him of being merely sentimental. Apparently Cohen's success is due to his ability to portray the archetype of The Loser, and in this respect the movie achieves a certain pathos. Here he has bared his soul, and it isn't as fascinating as our neighbour's dirty underwear.

Rictor Norton

## Now showing

An onslaught of negative criticism by my colleagues in Fleet Street has resulted in belated cutting of most of Lucille Ball's songs in **MAME** (Columbia Warner, director Gene Saks). *Mame* is now 113 minutes long, compared to the 131 minute version shown to magazine critics some time ago. It's true that Miss Ball's vocal chords haven't the elasticity of Judy Garland's, but she's wizened yet, over-made-up enough, grandiose enough in appearance and a capable enough comedienne, to do justice to Patrick Dennis' original concept of a freewheeling, eccentric and immoral (in the nicest sense) society dame. Paul Zindel's screenplay, moreover, is more satiric than those usually written for traditional style musicals, and there are some beautifully mocking lines.

Mr Saks has gone to enormous trouble to recreate the stylish high camp of the better MGM musicals, *George Cukor's Philadelphia Story* and *A Star Is Born*, and succeeds admirably. One is far too busy laughing at bitchy witticisms or admiring yet another of Theodora Van Runkle's exquisite costumes to quibble over Miss Ball's singing voice. The sets are gaudy, glittery and expensive. The film cost eight million dollars to make, and emanates the appropriate appearance, an orgy of soft satin, purples, yellows and chande-

liers. Much of the film is photographed in diamond-like soft focus, particularly the close ups of Miss Ball's magnificently over-powdered, wrinkle-obscured face; pure camp of course.

The plot moves at a pleasing pace, yet the musical/dance numbers are choreographed by Onna White with a deliberate leisurely precision. The supporting cast is impeccable. The ever-regal Robert Preston as Mame's beau; the majestic Beatrice Arthur as a deep-voiced amiably bitchy actress, and a delightful pastiche of a youthful Bette Davis by Joyce Van Patten. An exquisite experience for all who love traditional escapist cinematic styles.

**MR MAJESTYK** (United Artists, director Richard Fleisher) is yet another mafia caper with Charles Bronson, this time set in the Colorado melon plantations. The plot is totally irrelevant. Suffice to say, the film doesn't stray from the successful formula of car chases and shoot-outs, spattered with Italian hit men and cynical cops, whose sole delight is the wholesale destruction of cars and buildings. Mr Bronson is now capable of walking through such films in his sleep, or so it appears as he conducts the most vicious escapades with his eyes three-quarters closed. Mr Fleisher, one of America's most experienced commercial directors, ensures it all moves along at a cracking pace, and the whole farago makes for some highly entertaining escapism.

David Seligman

## Instant nostalgia



Members of the cast in 'The Electric Blues' from Hair.

**HAIR** — Queens Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1

A wave of nostalgia crept over me while watching *Hair*. Strange to feel nostalgic for the sixties. For one thing it would seem too recent to get sentimental about, and for another, that particular decade lacked charm. Flower power, pot smoking, casual dress and nudity were all considered daring at the time *Hair* began. Nowadays they are all taken for granted. Even the Viet Nam war, mentioned in the show, has ended. But for all that the show manages to get across its various messages.

Two American tourists halt the proceedings at one point, to tell the tribe "Kids be free. Be whatever you want to be, just so long as you don't hurt anybody." I'll drink to that! It's a nice thought for today. Elsewhere, there is a compelling glance at the futility of war, a somewhat overlong drug trip, and a love-in. This last sequence features the nude scene which got all the publicity when the show opened. Considering what's happened on stage since then, it seems rather tame stuff.

In an effort to update things, there are more nudes now, but they still stand still, and only a moving searchlight lights up the darkened stage. The effect is artistic rather than sexual. I'm well aware of the lyrics to "Sodomy", the innuendoes implied in the song "Black Boys, White Boys", and the jocular sexual positions acted out on stage, but for all that, the show has an air of naivety about it, especially in its approach to sex, which gives it an aura of innocence, and yes, even charm.

Galt McDermot's score contains several songs that have had success on record: "Ain't Got No" and "I Got Life" (Nina Simone), "Good Morning Starshine" (Oliver), as well as numerous versions of "Aquarius" and "Let the Sun Shine In". Those apart, there are other good tunes, like "Frank Mills", "Easy To Be Hard" and "Where Can I Go".

Several members of the original London cast found their roles a springboard to further success. Oliver Tobias has made films and a television series. Peter Straker, Marsha Hunt and Linda Kendrick have made their mark in the musical world. Annabel Levenson and Sheila Wilkinson have both done well in the acting field. More than likely some members of this current cast will be as lucky.

Certainly one artist, Miquel Brown, is worthy of attention from the recording companies. Were it not for the fact that the music is continuous, so that the audience is not given time to applaud, her rendering of "Easy To Be Hard" would automatically stop the show. Gary Hamilton gives an aggressive performance as Berger, in excellent contrast to Demetrius Christopholus' dreamy hero Claude, and both have good singing voices. Patricia Hodge is particularly powerful singing "Air", as is Gary Aflalo doing "Coloured Spade". I enjoyed too Derek James' appealing performance as Woof, with his sexual hang-ups on both Claude and Mick Jagger.

The London production opened in September 1968, just after stage censorship ended, and would probably have still been running at the Shaftesbury, if the roof of that theatre had not mysteriously fallen in about a year ago. It's now back for a three-month run at the Queens Theatre and, providing another home can be found for it, I daresay it will continue indefinitely. There have been numerous imitators since this original musical, ranging from good to mediocre, but none have rivalled its world-wide success. Even with a revamped lyric to the song "Initials", to include reference to Nixon, the show somehow remains firmly in the mid-60's. But no matter, as there's still a lot going for it. This new production seems even sharper than I recall the original to have been, and what may look like improvised behaviour on stage is in fact well-rehearsed playing by a disciplined young company of able performers.

Barry Conley

## The delightful Mr Kemp

**LINDSAY KEMP'S TURQUOISE PANTOMIME** — Tram Shed, Woolwich

Here in the office they've been continually ribbing me because I haven't seen Flowers and urging me to go along to the show immediately.

So, with a very high expectancy, I travelled along to Woolwich Arsenal station, on June 30, to see, not the aforementioned, but Lindsay Kemp's *Turquoise Pantomime* at the Tram Shed.

And, was I ever so delighted! All I have been told about the said Mr Kemp was certainly no exaggeration—he is truly amazing!

I took along my better half, who is studying to be an actor at the Royal Academy. So, from a professional viewpoint, perhaps his reflections of the evening are relevant.

He enjoyed it immensely (judging by the way he kept squeezing my arm with delight) and said afterwards: "A nice theatrical show. Lights, colour, music and undoubted skill. Very simple, often subtle—very good!"

Lindsay was so well complemented by the rest of his troupe and I just flipped over the Incredible (truly incredible) Orlando's version of the song "Ten Cents a Dance". With a voice such as his, I doubt he'll be asked to sing at Sadlers Wells, but who cares? He's a true master of his art.

I can't communicate fully on paper the atmosphere of the evening—part of the Greenwich Festival '74—the bitchy, camp humour and incredible pathos of Lindsay's caricatures just defy description.

And the Tram Shed—such an apt venue for the pantomime—informatively itself, allowing all



present to see every beautiful, well-defined facial expression.

I know one thing—I'll be in the audience of *Flowers* as soon as I can. This Kempanology is certainly for me!

Jeff Grace

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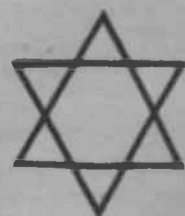
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The current popularity of the sauna bath probably owes more to Gay Lib than to any good it has ever done for open pores and other weaknesses to which the flesh is heir. The only weakness to which my flesh has ever fallen heir is the gentleman on the next couch in the rest room, but then I don't go to the sauna for the good of my health. Although lots of people do, or at least that's their excuse and they're sticking to it: the last thing one expects to find at a sauna bath is a convention of health nuts and dermatology freaks.

Apparently, the sauna is indigenous to and endemic among the Finns. The Chinese invented the water torture and bamboo sticks beneath the nails, the Russians and Americans vie for the credit of having established subtle psychological agonies, and the French can boast the imaginative pursuits of the Marquis de Sade. But for sheer genius in this field the Finns must win hands down. To while away the long, dark winter evenings, they congregate in happy masses, take off all their clothes, and pack themselves into dimly lit wooden cells which have been heated to the boiling point of water and sit there for periods of up to one hour. Sometimes they scald the brazier in the corner of these hell holes with buckets of water and scarcely flinch as the boiling steam creates the sensation that red hot needles have been pushed through their skin. At intervals they may dash suddenly from the cell and roll about in the snow outside or jump through ice into a freezing pond. Considering what they have already gone through, this is understandable. They require to be cooled down and drastic effects require drastic action. Or a sudden access of religious mania may strike, and, presumably for the good of his immortal soul, the bather will lash himself with pine twigs to further mortify the flesh. Then he will get back into the hell hole and begin all over again.

Why do they do it? They are after all a lugubrious, solid, largely unimaginative lot and no doubt they think they are enjoying themselves. They surely cannot have the wit to conclude that they are a race of raving sadomasochists. They maintain it does them good. Well, I dare say it does, if they happen to be direct descendants of John Calvin or those saints who felt uncomfortable without their hair shirts and daily flagellation with a bunch of nettles. And nice things, as is well known, are either illegal, immoral or make you fat. The sauna is none of these things. It is, in theory, a healthful pursuit, and so, clearly, if it is to do one good it must also be fairly nasty and certainly uncomfortable. That's how you know anything is good for you. Like lettuce leaves and ten-mile hikes and cold baths.

Mercifully, the Americans and the English have imported the sauna to their shores without much of the accompanying ritual. The American success of the sauna is understandable in a continent that has passed directly in 150 years from barbarism to decadence without any intervening period of civilisation; but the English attitude is that such things as saunas are simply a refinement on the purgatory already suffered



## All steamed up

by public schoolboys and that cold baths and boiling baths are much the same thing—damned uncomfortable, and therefore unlikely to lead to an excess of libido or a relaxation of moral standards. By the time the heat has drained one of energy in a sauna, there's precious little left for such pernicious mischief as led to the Fall of the Roman Empire. But they are a simple-minded lot, those chaps who think that chaps don't think about other chaps in That Way when the temperature is torrid, and the owners of sauna baths who like to keep their customers happy have reached a satisfactory solution—They Turn Down The Heat!

The English sauna bath is a (literally) lukewarm imitation of the real and Finnish thing. It's like sitting in a rain forest in the aftermath of a monsoon—steamy, dripping, warm, and so thoroughly miserable that the only thing to do is to start eyeing up the other sweaty bodies in oppressive silence. There they sit—the long and short and the tall, and the fat and the stringy, and the occasional (very) Greek God who is in fact an American tourist quite bewildered at the church-like solemnity of the proceedings. They order these things different in Boise, Idaho, you bet.

Or, at least, they order these things differently at the Continental Baths, New York City. Boiling and refrigeration of the flesh is a family thing in Finland. Like incest, it's a game the whole family can play. The

family that bathes together stays together. The English, to be fair, have never boiled their children but they do refrigerate them during public school days. In America, the sauna is a social occasion; it is a shrine to decadence. In America, they import camp lady chanteuses to sing to an audience of naked men none of whom have the faintest sexual interest in anything except each other and certainly not in the Divine Miss M (Bette Midler) belting out her songs like a sub-Ethel Merman. They have stimulating whirling baths of high speed water jets, private rooms to be hired out by the hour and usually a liquor licence. They may also have teams of male go-go dancers, a discotheque, gymnasium, masseurs and a discreet file of, or private line to, available partners. In short, a good time is had by all—and, if you feel like a good time, you may be the lucky one to be had by all. (I think I've used that joke before—never mind, it bears repetition.)

When thinking about this article, I telephoned one or two of the more discreet private sauna clubs in London. I merely required details of prices, facilities, and a quick inspection of the premises. After a good deal of anxious consultation, they reported back that they did not require publicity, they were doing quite nicely thank you, and really they did not think they could help me. This attitude must be reassuring to their clientele—and certainly discretion is desirable, all things being what

they are—but this furtive, closet attitude is a little sad. To make matters more ironic, I have recently joined a gymnasium which sports a private sauna where the clientele is relatively straight. I have had more easy, cheerful conversations with members in one week than I have had in a year with habitues of predominantly gay saunas. The camaraderie, the unselfconscious good nature of the gentlemen sweating and puffing beside me on the parallel bars, the rowing machine and that devilish bolted-down bicycle is in such marked contrast to the paranoia to be met with any evening in almost any gay milieu that I begin to despair of any simply, casual contact with gays in a gay situation. What about a bit of sauna lib? A bit of relaxation and less of that tense eye-shifting and silent inspection? Or are we all going to just sit there, in a Sartrean Huis Clos, getting all steamed up?

To be fair, there is often enough to be paranoid about. Recently, there have been more plain clothes (well, plain skin) police at a famous Turkish Bath in London than there have been innocent bathers. Why can't they wear chequered bands round their cocks? And where do they keep their identification? But in its heyday there was more fun to be had there than anywhere after lights out. For a cheap, cheerful, and knockabout night there was nowhere better. Indulgent attendants turned blind eyes, and the atmosphere was so reminiscent of a sixth form dormitory that St James' clubmen flocked there in droves. Fortunately, any heterosexual who found his unsteady way down to the steam was more likely than not pissed out of his mind and in no mood to argue or take umbrage at the activity going on around him, even if he was in a fit state to notice it. In short, it used to be a very jolly group therapy session for closet gays.

The dry heat of a sauna bath, and the claustrophobic dimensions of the box-like cells, is a poor replacement for the vaporous steam and long, wide, marbled halls of the Turkish Bath. The only advantage is that at least you know what the other fellow looks like in the hot, clear atmosphere, but even that can be less exciting than catching brief glances at flesh through swirling, opalescent mists of vapour. And the masseur's leatherette couch at modern saunas is no substitute for being battered about on a cool, marble slab.

The point about Turkish baths is their Byzantine grandeur and faint air of decadence which is the antithesis of that cool, dry approach of the Northern Finns. The sauna is, in essence, a serious and po-faced affair whereas the Turkish Bath lends itself to a luxurious, slow abandonment of the body to sensuality. There is a relaxed slothfulness to a Turkish Bath which contrasts with the Spartan, brisk approach of a sauna. It would be possible, in a Turkish Bath, to conduct a long and languorous affair. In the sauna, a quick and impersonal wham, bang. Thank you Man seems more appropriate. It is the triumph of Puritan ethics over relaxed Latin morality. The opiate of the Turkish Bath has given way to the clear-headed functionalism of the sauna. You can't be Socratic in a sauna, more's the pity.

Iain Finlayson



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Police threat closes discos

EDINBURGH: Forty-eight hours before their regular fortnightly disco scheduled for 14 June, the Scottish Minorities Group were informed by the Zetland Halls Committee (the gay discos were held in premises belonging to the Shetland Association) that the Leith Police had contacted them and threatened to withdraw the Functions Licence if there were any further disturbances reported at an SMG Disco.

Earlier this year, teething troubles plus lack of proper at-the-door surveillance, resulted in one or two scuffles. At that time the Gayfield Square Police Station was asked two or three times to keep a friendly eye open in order that trouble could be nipped in the bud. It turned out that the responsible Police Division was the Leith Division, and they didn't see fit to "protect the likes of you" (ie homosexuals).

Interviewed by Gay News, Graham Hamilton, a member of the disco committee, said: "They probably felt that one Queen in town was enough at this time of year." He was referring to Her Majesty's Official Visit this month when she made a point of praising the Edinburgh Police. Chairman of SMG Danny Mullen has written to Sir John Inch, Chief Constable, asking if he will consent to receiving a three-man delegation from SMG. There has been no response so far, but it is worth pointing out that proper and cordial relations were maintained between SMG and the Central Division when the gay discos were temporarily held in the High Street. Meanwhile all gay discos in Edinburgh have been suspended.

Ian Dunn

Dateline replies to misrepresentation charges

LONDON: David Butler, General Manager of the computer dating service Dateline, has replied to allegations that his company's advertisements are misleading.

Peter Hughes from Belfast answered such an advertisement, and in response to an invitation to select faces he found most attractive he circled three males. Unperturbed by his choice, the computer picked Paula for him, a twenty year old woman.

David Butler told GN that circling same-sex pics was not an indication that an applicant was gay. He claimed that heterosexual males sometimes would include one or two male photos in their choice. Dateline had operated for eight years, he said, and it had established itself as an opposite-sex service. They did not exclude homosexuals specifically in their advertisements because they might one day want to set up a gay operation in addition to their het business.

There was no charge for the first sample read-out. If a person wanted to join Dateline, he or she would have to fill out a six-page questionnaire and pay £11. If it was apparent from the answers to this full questionnaire that the applicant was gay, both the form and the money would be returned.

OU gaysoc rambles

NOTTINGHAM: The Open University Gay Soc are holding a ramble around the Nottingham countryside on July 21, this being the first national event organised by them.

Ramblers are asked to congregate at the Clock Tower, Nottingham, at midday, and the event will be followed by a meal at La Chic club in the evening.

If you'd like more details, ring Chris on 0602 (Nottingham) 260913.

Of mice and men

NEW YORK: The rejection of the gay anti-discrimination bill, Intro 2, by the city council recently, brought a rather bizarre protest from one man.

He let loose 24 live mice at a meeting of the council. Not exactly a shriek of protest—more a squeak, squeak!

US gay liberber tours Britain

LONDON: Len Richmond, compiler of The Gay Liberation Book, is over here for a short tour of Britain.

Len has made quite a name for himself in the States writing for newspapers and magazines, but he is perhaps best known for his weekly half-hour Gay Liberation Show on San Francisco's rock radio station KSAN (see review of The Gay Liberation Follies in GN49). Tapes of the show were played to Malvern delegates at the media workshop meetings.

The tour is being arranged by Jason Pollock, and groups who would like a visit from Len should write to Jason at London Broadcasting, Communications House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, London EC4, or phone him on 01-353 1010 to fix up a date. Len will be illustrating his talks about the US gay scene and gay sexuality with recorded extracts from The Gay Liberation Show.

CHE in Labour

LONDON: Three members of CHE spoke to members of Town Hall ward, Brent Labour party, at their June meeting. Their address concerned the pressures on gays from society and the law.

Norway Metropol opens

OSLO: 'Metropol', the Restaurant and Headquarters of Det Norske Forbundet, opened officially on Friday 5 July 1974. Kim Friele's own words (in a letter to Ian Dunn) capture the excitement and spirit of the past few weeks in Oslo:

"This is in rather a hurry I have just moved into my new office. We have just finished the washing, the painting, the buying of new furniture, the rebuilding of our restaurant. We are all very tired but very happy. Now we can get down to some good work again, as all the preparing for the opening is over... after 10 years of work we finally made it—and I think we will have more money to do more information-work."

Our love and good wishes to Kim and to DNF.

Ian Dunn

Do's & Don'ts for paranoid hets

LONDON: Rather a nasty piece of journalism appeared in a recent edition of Weekend, under the general title of 'How to survive in the city'. It had been adapted from the book 'Survival in the City' by Anthony Greenbank.

The piece about homosexuals is the one that interests us, and this author advises:

"Avoid the eyes of anyone of the same sex who keeps looking at you. Don't brush loose hair from your forehead. In some towns it's a sign of willingness."

"Learn to recognise the homosexual's body language so that you do not unwittingly give him the signal to make advances."

"His smile, he hopes, will make you respond with a gay yawn."

"He might suddenly leave his seat and strap-hang in front of you, allowing his knee to bump against yours. If you then say 'it's okay' to his apology, he may think it is a signal to begin rubbing knees in earnest."

Yeuch!

Drama at Centre

LONDON: Centre Charitable Trust, which operates as a community centre for gay men and women from its premises at Broadley Terrace, in North London, has a new drama group.

This band of thespians, known as the Centre Theatre Workshop, are currently working on a production of 'Charley's Aunt' under the direction of Rex Bunnett, and are also preparing for a 'Gay Nineties' evening.

The group meets on Thursdays at 7.30, and new members are always welcome.

Arson attempt on MCC

LOS ANGELES: The new home of the Metropolitan Community Church in Los Angeles, which cost £130,000, has been put under tight security, following a recent attempt to burn it down.

MCC's former church was razed by an arsonist a year and a half ago, but luckily the three small fires started this time were quickly put out without significant damage.

The fire-raiser, described as over six feet tall and well-groomed, made his escape through a side door. One member of the church gave up chasing the arsonist when he saw that the altar was on fire. Other fires were started under a piano and beneath platform chairs.

Fresh as a pansy

LONDON: You can bet your life there were some red faces at the Beeb on July 4.

For, during the Wimbledon match between Jimmy Connors and Jan Kodes, the BBC commentator complimented Kodes on "looking fresh as a pansy."

There was a pause, and then he added hastily: "I beg your pardon, I meant daisy." Freudian slip?

Big brother is watching...

PERTH: Men using a cottage in Perth recently got quite a shock—they found themselves on television!

Focussed on them from strategic points were two closed circuit cameras, with a notice explaining: "These premises are protected by anti-vandalism devices in the public interest."

This screening got a mixed reception from cottagers—some smiled, some made rude signs and others were so shocked that they left to look for a loo which wasn't quite so public.

One user felt that it was unfair sex discrimination—he had been told that there were no peeping-tom cameras in the women's toilet next door.

A council spokesman explained that the cameras were an experiment. "Any embarrassment they cause is naturally regretted but this has to be balanced against their value as a deterrent to vandals." He would not say if the cameras were always switched on and who monitored them.

Any of you extroverts who fancy a quick flash on a television screen—you now know where to go! But, it's all a bit much... and we wonder whether vandalism is the real reason for this particular media presentation.

Welsh murder—man held

GLAMORGAN: As a sequel to the story which appeared in GN44, in which we reported the brutal murder of Graham Branston, of 21, Vale Street, Barry, Glamorgan, we now learn from Barry police that a man has been charged with the crime.

Detective Chief Inspector Trigg informs us that David Southwell, aged 29, of no fixed address, appeared before Barry Magistrates, on Friday June 5, and was remanded in custody to appear at the Crown Court at a later date.

Southwell, apparently, hails from the Barry area but has spent some considerable time living in London.

Chief Inspector Trigg thanked Gay News for its help in the case—we made an appeal to anyone knowing anything about the murder to contact the police—and assured us that all interviews with people who had information had been made in the strictest confidence.

We will keep you informed as to developments.

Russians oust 'gay' journalists

MOSCOW: Soviet authorities have forced out two British journalists, working in Moscow, "accusing" them of homosexuality with a Russian citizen, as well as misreporting the Soviet scene.

The action against Julian Nundy, 27, and Richard Wallis, 25, of the four-man Reuter news agency bureau in Moscow, was taken on June 17. Reuters and both reporters deny the Soviet allegations.

It is a familiar pattern of Soviet harassment of western correspondents working in Russia to link complaints of misreporting with damaging personal innuendo. In official Soviet terms, "misreporting" means revealing aspects of Russian society which the government would prefer to remain uncovered.

Persistent offenders are often warned or reprimanded about their behaviour and subjected to an officially-inspired whispering campaign suggesting that they are guilty of "sexual misconduct," black marketeering or both.

Reuters said the news agency rejected the criticism of its reporting by its Moscow office, and also fully accepted the denial of gay activities by the two journalists. They seemed to be as worried about what the men did in bed as what they did out on their jobs. Surprise, surprise.

Records stolen from GLF centre

LONDON: About 100 single records were stolen from the South London GLF Centre recently, none of which have been recovered.

Derek Brands of the Centre told GN that the theft was not discovered until he went to the premises at 78 Railton Road, SE24, on June 26 in the evening to sort through the records in preparation for a disco. He also discovered that the record playing deck had been put out of action.

The police weren't called in over the incident, but members have a good idea who was responsible.

The records all belonged to GLF—some had been donated, but most had been bought over a period of time.

The theft has not stopped the Centre's popular discos—and the deck has been repaired and members' own discs are being used.

Watching and waiting... in the broom cupboard

NEWCASTLE: As the result of the vigil two vice-squad detectives kept in the broom cupboard of a Newcastle cottage, the Rev B Dodds, of Wallsend, appeared before Newcastle Magistrates recently.

He was fined £50 for committing an act of "gross indecency."

Gay film for students

MANCHESTER: Two students at Manchester University are making a film about the problems which face gay students. The 25-minute film will be shown to new students at the start of next term.

Co-directors Andy Boyd and Tony Zalewski, members of the University union film unit, also hope that the film will eventually be shown to sixth-formers with their headmasters' permission.

Andy, a drama student, stated: "We want gay students to feel they ought to be accepted."

The film will include discussions with gay students, random interviews in the street and around the university and short acted-out scenes.

"People don't like to stop and look at posters," Andy continued. "We thought a more personal form of advertising was needed for such a delicate subject."

The film has the financial backing of the student unions at the University, UMIST and Manchester Polytechnic. It is hoped that the film, so far untitled, will be circulated to other universities and teacher-training colleges.

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