



QQ MAGAZINE

For Gay Guys



AUGUST '73
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Gray is Good

By Craig Rodwell



IN the past couple of years, since passing my thirtieth birthday, I've become more conscious of how oppressive to all of our psyches is the fetish of Youth Cultism which permeates American culture—not to mention our Gay culture. The problem of ageism (like heterosexism and racism) is one that affects all of us—Gay and non-Gay, black and white, male and female, et al.

How many of us, in our before-thirty existence, dreaded the onset of "middle-age" signaled by our thirtieth birthdays? I think it's safe to say that the vast majority of us (myself included) regarded that thirtieth year as the crest in our lives; and that from then on, it was all downhill. I remember thinking, when I became twenty-five, that I only had five years left—almost as if my life would be over when I reached thirty—that no one would "want" me; that if I didn't have a lover by then, I never would; and that, in general, my value as a human being would be lessened.

Well, I've found out that was all a lot of B.S. I'm more at peace now with myself than I ever was; I have perspective on relationships and ideas which gives me a degree of "calm"; I don't have the constant need anymore to "make out" all the time to prove to myself how desirable I am; I no longer have a need to "impress" others—they can either accept me as I am or not at all; and, most importantly, I no longer dread the coming of age. On the contrary, I actually welcome it, honestly.

Recently I received a phone call from a 24 year-old Gay male who was feeling "anxiety" because he had gone to a party over the weekend and hadn't met anyone; and he had to talk to someone in the hopes of relieving his anxiety feelings. We talked about how—as Gay people—we're psychologically conditioned by society to think of ourselves almost entirely in a sexual vein with the emphasis on youth being the key to desirability.

All of us want to be desirable to other people, both sexually and emotionally. But our culture places too much emphasis on youthfulness, which results in youth cultism. There is nothing innately better about being under-thirty than over-thirty, and vice versa. The needs, thoughts, ideas and feelings of every human being are of equal importance; but through societal conditioning, we give more importance to the under-thirties.

For example, in a recent Sunday edition of *The New York Times*, there was an article on Homosexual teachers. It told of a number of Gay teachers around the country who are fighting to end discrimination against Gay people in the teaching profession. At the end of the article, the author wrote, "There is concern that homosexual teachers are not appropriate models for children. And the ridicule with which such teachers are liable to be confronted, particularly from older boys, often makes for disciplinary problems. It is this difficulty that is the basis for the dismissals of homosexuals for 'unprofessional conduct'."

Rather than disciplining the students (younger people) for their misbehavior vis-à-vis a Homosexual teacher, we find that the teachers (older people) are being fired or not hired for "unprofessional conduct." Think about it; this kind of pampering and catering to the prejudices of young people in our society is epidemic.

In terms of our Gay culture, look at the Gay bars with their emphasis on youth—go-go-boys, "Groovy Guy" contests in which all the contestants are usually under twenty-five. Look at the Gay publications—where the vast majority of pictures are of under-thirty

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"He dropped right in front of me, man, out at the *Millstone* last night—right between me and my—me and Ebanykus. You know Ebanykus?"

"Okay. Yeah. I heard of him."

"You *know* him," I insisted. "Don't give me no shit."

"Why you so uptight?" he asked trying to cover again. "Come on, man. Lie down. I wanna get blowed."

"Sorry. Not into it. You didn't know about Jimmy, did you?"

"No, I didn't know. He must've—" He caught himself.

"Must've what?"

"I mean, must've given himself an overdose."

"Yeah, well, Ebanykus told me Jimmy was cool and never would've gone o.d."

"Ebanykus don't know nothin', man."

"Let's just pretend, Carlos. Pretend Ebanykus guessed right and someone did kill Jimmy. Now why should somebody wanna do that to Jimmy?"

I hit the target. He paled and his eyes widened. He was scared. He huddled into himself like he was cold, then looked up at me slowly.

"How much you know about YOCK?" he asked.

"YOCK?" I held back, trying to out-guess him. "YOCK? Not much. I suppose you're gonna tell me Jimmy was killed by Rip Zonderling last night because 'the king must die'. Yeah, Ebanykus tried to feed me that shit, too, but I ain't digging it."

"No? Well, it's possible. Diana gets pretty crazy, you know. Might've been an accident—"

"Or it might've been Jimmy was messed up in some kind of dope burn—else why're you actin' so scared? Maybe you're next."

"Whaddya mean?"

"Shit, I don't know what I mean. I'll be honest, Carlos. I know from nothing about dope. But if Jimmy was killed it had to be because of dope—and probably something to do with the raid on Brick Kiln."

He jumped onto the floor like a jack-in-the-box. "What raid?"

Ah so. Now I had him going. "Brick Kiln was raided Friday night. We think the cops were looking for heroin. We *know* they were looking for Ariadne and David. But I don't suppose you know them either, do you?"

He dropped down to the bed again and was silent.

My head was buzzing. I must've been nuts. Like, here I was talking off the top of my head blurting out whatever came to me, yet as confused as I'd ever been. I wanted to get away—to run away—to find Ebanykus.

Carlos doubled over as if he had a stomach cramp and reached under the bed for his shoes. Before I knew what was happening, he flicked his hand out like the whiplash of a rattlesnake and came at me with a long stiletto pointed right at my throat.

He was breathing hard, his white teeth bared like the fangs of a wolf. He spoke quietly, grinding his words out carefully.

"You and your friend better stay the fuck away from YOCK, man. Just stay the fuck out of it, or you're gonna get it just like Jimmy did."

I finally managed to say something. "You ain't gonna use that on me, Carlos. Not July/August 1973

here."

"Don't be too sure, man. You better remember what I said. Now get the fuck outa my room."

I fumbled behind my back for the door-knob.

"Thanks for the screw," I said.

He pricked my throat with the knife, drawing blood.

"Remember, Diana don't like nobody messing around."

"Yeah, I'll remember," I said, glancing down at his crotch. "YOCK—COCK."

I eased out of the room, shutting the door behind me. As soon as I got downstairs, I phoned Ebanykus at his mother's house. As I suspected, she hadn't seen him in weeks, and I thought, wonder which tubs palace you're at?

Shit, I'd tried to run away and I was right back into it again. Man, how could I not be involved? I was in love with Ebanykus, goddamn it! And now I didn't even know how to find him. The only thing to do now was get back to Southampton and hope he might call. Maybe David could help me find him, or Ariadne if she was out of jail. Or maybe even Hippolyta.

I was halfway across Nassau County before I had it sorted out, and the more certain I was Ebanykus was in real danger.

And I'd let him go. I hadn't even tried to hang in. Because I was too uptight to get into freaks and dope. Because of my fucking pride. No wonder I'd been wasting away before I met Ebanykus. Scared of life. Scared of my own shadow.

Ebanykus had to be right about one thing. Jimmy was killed all right. Carlos convinced me of that. And why had Carlos tried to make me think Diana had done it—that the real menace was in YOCK and the King Must Die ceremony? Ebanykus had believed in the YOCK menace too, at first. But now he no longer believed it. He knew and I knew—and Carlos knew. YOCK was a password, and the connection was an answer to a riddle. And Jimmy was killed because he'd tried to muscle in on somebody. Dope, man. Heroin.

Ebanykus had split into New York to find out who that somebody was.

Next month—Chapter IV. A corpse in the rain . . . an enlightened fuck in the afternoon. Don't miss this exciting installment of "The Ebanykus Journal!"

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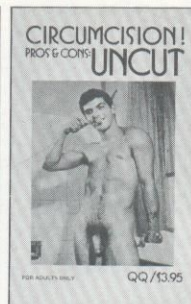
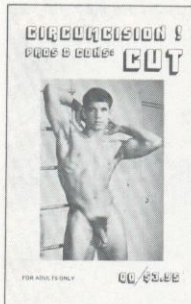
GRAY IS GOOD

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types subliminally telling us that youth and sexual desirability are synonymous. Look at the general news media reports that usually emphasize the activities and problems of young Gay people. And last if not least, look at the Gay Lib organizations themselves (with the exceptions of West Side Discussion Group in New York and SIR in San Francisco) whose social and political direction is geared to young people.

All of us have a great deal to learn from our older Gay brothers; it was an older Gay brother, Walt Whitman, who wrote some of the most beautiful Gay poetry in which he saw the future of democracy in "the love of

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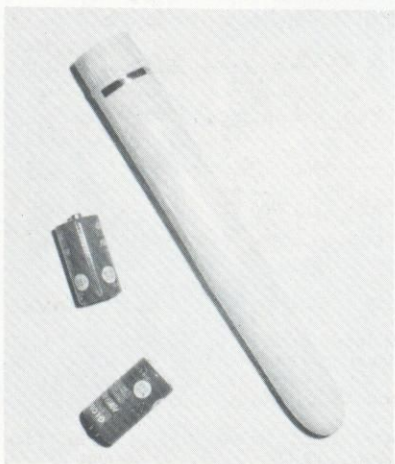


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comrades" and it was an older Gay brother, Oscar Wilde, who first stood up and predicted the emergence of "the love that dare not speak its name." It was an older Gay brother—Edward Carpenter—who first wrote of the political, economic and social implications of Gay Liberation.

And, in my own personal experience, let me give tribute to the older Gay brothers who have enriched my life with their friendship:

- Joe, 74, former college president, recently retired. Joe refuses to go along with the stereotype of Retired People. He takes gym class at the "Y" twice a week; he was actively involved as a volunteer worker in the McGovern campaign; he has an active and creative social life; his genuine warmth and enthusiasm is contagious; and he is enthusiastic and supportive of the emerging Gay Liberation movement.

- Bernard, in his 60s, head of a major university library. Bernard refuses to give in to the idea that working people over 60 should be thinking of retiring soon and collecting Social Security. He puts in long hours and brings heartfelt devotion to his work. He helped pass out leaflets headed "Get The Mafia and the Cops out of Gay Bars" during the Christopher Street/Stone-wall Riots; and he was active in the Gay Liberation Front.

- Warren, in his 40s, a leader and worker in New York's West Side Discussion Group for over a decade. Warren's dedication over the years to the Gay movement is one of the keys to the continued growth of WSDG which resulted recently in the opening of their Gay Community Center.

It is in our own self-interest, whatever our age, to work for an end to youth cultism. And, as Gay people, we have a particular self-interest because most of us do not create our own families with the attendant securities of having children and grandchildren.

If our Gay Liberation movement is to become a realistic and meaningful one, it must begin to consider the needs and problems of older Gay people. Like, is there discrimination against older Gay single people in the administration of Social Security? Do the various government-funded Senior Citizen programs discriminate against Gay people? Do we take into consideration the social and economic needs of our older brothers and sisters? And, in our own thinking, do we give more importance to the concerns of younger Gay people at the expense of older Gay people?

The past is prologue.

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GAY VILLAINS (Continued from page 17)

the once-over and announces, "You're a very pretty man." (He may be a villain, but he does have good taste.) Mitchum then turns his victim over to his men, who do something to the poor boy off camera that elicits a loud scream as the scene is ending.

The recent popular film DELIVERANCE gave us another band of lustful faggot rapists in another unlikely setting. This time sexy young Jon Voight (of MIDNIGHT COWBOY) and his chubby companion, played

by Ned Beatty, are attacked by a couple of disreputable-looking mountaineers who tie Voight up to a tree and force Beatty to strip for them. (Either these guys have awfully poor taste, or they are very near-sighted, or maybe both.) Beatty is then sodomized by the baddies, and Voight is about to be forced to go down on one of them when help arrives in the person of Burt Reynolds, his phallic bow and arrow in hand, who gives the rapists the shaft.

Not all of the movies' gay villains have been quite so unrelentingly black-hearted, however. The late '60's gave us two remarkably similar gay characters who were more to be pitied than hated—not much of an improvement, when you think of it. Both were career military men who were in the closet and just discovering it themselves. In REFLECTIONS IN A GOLDEN EYE Marlon Brando was the closet case, miserably married to a bitchy Elizabeth Taylor and not able to understand his interest in Robert Forster, playing a young private who liked taking nude sunbaths in the woods. Next came Rod Steiger, playing a pugnacious NCO in THE SERGEANT, who was similarly attracted to Private John Philip Law, and almost neurotically jealous of Law's relationship with his girl friend. In the end, Brando murdered the young man and Steiger killed himself—neither character was exactly what one would call an admirable model for a young viewer beginning to recognize homosexual leanings in himself.

We have included Brando and Steiger among the villains because, by virtue of their badgering of the innocent young men, they do not qualify as heroes, but in truth, it is extremely hard to make such simplistic distinctions in today's morally complex films. It is simply not as easy to define a villain as it used to be. During the sixties, as police corruption and brutality and establishment contempt for once hallowed ideals ran rampant, the traditional movie heroes—representatives of those very establishment institutions—fell into disrepute and were replaced by a new breed of "anti-hero" whose disdain of dogmatic "law-and-order" mirrored that of the audiences. The new heroes were tough, cynical, lawless characters who, although often killed in the end, had the full sympathy of the viewer. The police and all that they represented became the new villains.

An example of the new kind of hero is the film THE ANDERSON TAPES, in which a band of ex-cons, gangsters, and petty crooks plot and carry out a massive robbery of an entire apartment complex. When they are eventually gunned down by an army of police, the outrageous overreaction of the act is clearly underlined.

Considering the climate of the times, it was of course foreordained that one of the heroes of THE ANDERSON TAPES would be gay, but since he was one of the heroes, and therefore sympathetic, he couldn't be the stereotyped sadistic faggot, so the writers turned to the only other gay stereotype the movies have available, and he became a prissy, mincing "fairy" played by the usually fine actor, Martin Balsam. The character was—you guessed it—an interior decorator, in which guise he cased the building before the robbery, and during the actual job, his effeminate cowardice provided the comic relief. A second gay character in the film—