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Cover Graphic by: L. Wiens

All of the articles in Processed World reflect the views and fantasies of the author and not necessarily those of other contributors. ISSN 0735-9381. Processed World is indexed in the Alternative Press Index.

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Welcome to Processed World #18, an issue devoted to the always-popular subject of sex. We begin with Ana Logue’s account of some of our collective ruminations, and Primitivo Morales provides a few of his own. Then Maxine Holz offers an analysis of today’s moral climate and its relation to the sexual revolution of the past decades. Chaz Buje talks candidly about working in a porn theater in his Tale of Toil POLES ’N HOLES…, while Linda Thomas contributes another glimpse of the dark side of the sex industry in YOUR KNIFE IN MY LIFE. Clitota E. Cummings condemns the hypocrisy surrounding the sale of sex in FANTASY’S LEGAL, REALITY’S NOT, and Paza Lourde takes us inside the AIDS hotline in 863-AIDS.

In BIG BANG, Jeff Goldthorpe portrays the lingering anxiety AIDS has caused among bisexual men. Our friend Med-o, traveling in Africa, sent an excerpt from Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiongo’s novel DEVIL ON THE CROSS about routine sexual harassment in the offices of Nairobi. MY DATE WITH HOLLY NEAR is an hilarious send-up of Nears style of feminist sexuality, gratefully reprinted from Brooklyn’s SHOE POLISH WEEK. KELLY GIRL PLAYS POSTMISTRESS marks the return of Kelly Call Girl (last seen in PW #13) with her first pornographic tale. The issue’s remaining fiction piece is WENDA, which provoked our severest difference of editorial opinion in some time. A bare majority found it good satire, while many others felt it was flat or even offensive. Read it and let us know what you think.

MY INTERVIEW AT PISSTEX describes a real-life hostile encounter at a Silicon Valley pharmaceutical firm. PISSTEX, together with poetry about work, HOT UNDER THE COLLAR’s accounts of bank-worker resistance and our letters, provides a dose of the kind of material PW is best known for.

Enjoy, and please send us your comments, disagreements, etc.

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Giving

SEX

The Never Ending Story

Are women capable of being as sexually aggressive as men? Why do 13-year-old girls get pregnant? Are men or women who use their position of power to get sex interested in sex or power, or both? How much of our sexual behavior is instinctual, how much the product of our mental life? These are some the questions raised by members of the Processed World collective and their friends, when we first proposed doing another issue on sex (the first was PW #7).

Some of us thought we had answers to some of the questions. We were, I think, rather surprised to discover how divergent these answers were. What I learned from this discussion is that people’s ideas about sex are as unique as their own sexuality, which is, in turn, related to their own experience. As one woman put it, “After three aboritions how can I speak about women being sexually aggressive? I can never be as aggressive as most men because the experience of these abortions never leaves me. When a man has sex, he does not consider this consequence.”

A month later, we had gotten down to the real nitty gritty: who has it better, men or women? One PWer argued persuasively that women were not interested in having sex with men who had no money. “If you work at a low-paying job, you are invisible. Women, especially with women with higher paying jobs, look right through you as if you didn’t exist.” It is much easier for a woman to have sex than a man, even in San Francisco, if she does not care who her partner is. But, it was pointed out, it’s much less likely that a woman will have an orgasm as a result of having sex, especially casual sex, than it is for a man. In other words, the greater availability of sex for women does not entail greater access to sexual fulfillment.

The discussion then turned, in my mind, to the millennial debate over the differences between women’s and men’s sexuality. The pendulum swings from...
enced vaginal orgasms, and even multiple orgasms, have had to go into the closet or risk having their feminist credentials revoked. (At a certain time during the 70s, a feminist male remarked, "it was difficult to remain politically erect.")

Today, although we are just one step away from our children looking through the keyhole and calling the police, the party line on sex is whatever gets you off is OK (as long as it doesn’t hurt you or anyone else and you don’t exchange bodily fluids with a stranger). Most women do not have orgasms during intercourse, according to Dr. June Reinisch of the Kinsey Institute, and there is no reason they should, she says, unless they wish to “broaden [their] range of sexual activity.” To do that, she advises seeing a sex therapist.

The news that most women do not have orgasms during intercourse should come as a great relief to men suffering from performance anxiety. Not only

they make love less frequently, Gay men, on the other hand, are more likely to have more sexual encounters and engage in less foreplay than heterosexuals or Lesbians. Heterosexual sex, it appears, is a meeting and merging of male and female sexuality. It is different from gay or lesbian sex in that it requires more effort and imagination to understand the needs of the other. A gay man, presumably, does not have to ask his partner if he has come yet.

Expert opinion will continue to change. The law of the marketplace demands it. And sex will continue to be exciting and frustrating, as easy as riding a bicycle, and as difficult as getting a taxi in the rain, no matter what the experts say.

Which brings us to the next topic: censorship. All of us at PW agree that censorship, even of violent material, like Rambo, is never acceptable. The Meese commission’s report on pornography has already had its effect. It has been reported that a rapist is using the Commission’s recommendations (which were not its findings) as his defense. Pornography, he argues, made him do it. When I gouge out my opponent’s eyes, I will blame it on Shakespeare, or better yet, every theatre company whose production of King Lear I have seen and the university where I studied English Literature. My son, who plays with a toy Uzi and GI Joes, finds real wars are ‘stupid’ because people get killed in them. He knows the difference between fantasy and reality.

by Ana Logue

 doesn’t size matter, duration and technique may not count either. At least this is the impression I get from my reading of sex and relationship columns in the newspapers. Apparently, we have reached the ultimate expression of the credo that states every person is responsible for his or her own feelings, pleasure, karma, life, etc. Sex between two people is no longer a sexual relationship, it is merely two people having sex together.

Reading Masters and Johnson’s latest book, I was treated to a different insight into heterosexual relationships. Lesbian couples, I learned, typically spend more time than heterosexual couples, sometimes hours, in their love-making, but

MYOB

The current war on drugs & sexuality doesn’t really surprise me. If the fear of syphilis helped usher in Victorianism, what should one expect of AIDS? The hatred of the “underclass” has fueled previous drug hysteries, and today’s society has more hatred and almost as much moral smugness. I may not be surprised at the current prohibitions, but I am puzzled. I can understand a person not wishing to use drugs, or whatever. I am, however, baffled as to the thinking of those people who get so worked up about somebody else’s life. Most of the offending people are quite innocuous. OK, you don’t want your pilot to be zonked out of his/her gourd (pot, booze or stress)—you want them clear-headed. Most jobs don’t require that level of alertness—if I can do my job stoned, so much the better for me. If I can’t hack it, getting fired seems like apt treatment. Who suffers—American productivity? Give me a break. Of course, some jobs are only endurable with some form of escapist behavior.

Sure, people hurt/kill themselves with drugs (and with sex), which may be sad, but it is still their own business. This great hoopla over drugs (which will last longer than that over sex), so filled with ignorant rage, citing symptoms as causes, must ignore the crucial question: “Why do these people (the ‘druggies’ and ‘sex-wardos’) do these things?”

The answers that are given vary from the incomplete to the stupid. Why do people need dozens of sex partners, or to be stoned or drunk all the time? At the risk of being both incomplete and stupid, I would quote an old saying (borrowed from a friend’s grandmother) “Oh, you mean ‘Feeling no pain.’” What an irrational thing—to seek relief from the grim pain of life.

But you see, there are these people—some who would love someone of the wrong type (whether of the wrong race, religion, or gender), others who would smoke pot, or do coke, or chase the dragon. Let us arrest them, stone them, exile them, kill them. They are not one of us good people, with our devices and vultures and booze and affairs. We who are preparing a war, to sacrifice unknown numbers for some insane purpose, understand morality as no other people could. We who pollute the world will keep all bodies free from contamination.

As for me—your stuff or mine, your place or mine?

by Primitivo Morales

VOLUNTEER LIBRARIAN NEEDED

To organize and maintain the enormous number of periodicals Processed World receives regularly. Interested? It’s probably possible to arrange college credit if you are in school...call 495-6823 to talk about it.
What would a future anthropologist make of the bizarre and seemingly contradictory assortment of information on sexuality available today? Place side by side: the Meese Report, with its sordid account of the social effects of pornography; an article in Self, a respectable women's magazine, by a professional journalist about the unexpected pleasures of moonlighting in a phone sex company; and On Our Backs, "Entertainment for the Adventurous Lesbian" which promotes sexual experimentation and sex education from a decidedly feminist point of view. How does one reconcile the fact that in our society, which places such a high premium on sexual pleasure, sexuality is also the object of intense public scrutiny and official censure?

A popular interpretation of this paradoxical evidence is that we are in a period of transition. According to the pendulum theory of historical change, sexual attitudes periodically shift from one extreme to the other. Thus the 40s and 50s were characterized by upright, moralistic attitudes toward sex. In the 60s and 70s a cycle of sexual permissiveness followed, while now in the mid-80s, the pendulum appears to be in full swing back to the repressive extreme. Presumably, by the late 90s we can expect yet another reversal.

Such cavalier explanations of social/sexual "trends" ignore the diffuse, but profound effects that changes in the moral climate have on everyone's daily lives (not just on those who become the immediate victims of moral panics). These explanations don't account for people's susceptibility to these shifts, then ignore the moral crusaders' political motives, and trivialize the legacy of sexual freedom resulting from the social movements of the 60s, 70s and early 80s. The pendulum theory promotes a fatalistic passivity in response to the current moral crusade ("Don't worry, it'll just pass in time"). But I, for one, am not prepared to sit out 20 years of sexual repression.

A history of attitudes on sexuality reveals that society has not always been so obsessed with it. Moral standards and definitions of what is sexually desirable vary immensely throughout history and between cultures, as do the manner in which sexual mores get encoded and enforced. It is only in the past century, for example, that medical and psychiatric institutions have played a significant role in setting standards for sexual normalcy and health, and in defining appropriate sexual behavior. Much more recently—since the 50s—sexuality has become a key component of our self-esteem. We feel like failures if we don't have a good sex life.

What has remained constant in our culture for centuries is a puritanical view of sex as a dark force, the wild side of human nature that society must tame. According to this view, which Gayle Rubin has termed the "domino theory of sexual peril," unchecked sexuality will devour everything in its path, leading to the demise of civilization as we know it (see bibliography at the end of this article).

It is this view that keeps resurfacing in morality campaigns and that becomes the outlet of many fears and anxieties. It was this sex-negative attitude that the sexual revolution of the 60s and 70s challenged. The result was new opportunities for personal freedom and sexual pleasure and experimentation which for the first time touched the lives of millions, and not just small groups of avant-gardists in bohemian quarters. For if sex is a vector of oppression, as Gayle Rubin puts it, it has also been a vector of freedom. The liberation of sex from its procreative function cleared the way for a complete reevaluation of women's place in the world and furthered the public emergence of a homosexual rights movement.

The conviction that men and women could enjoy sex outside the nuclear family contradicted the ideal of Woman as guardian of sexual morality. The excitement and openness about sexuality allowed many women to explore their sexual passion. These developments helped break down double standards based on "natural" differences between the sexes.

Even those of us who were too young or apolitical to be directly involved in the social movements of the 60s and 70s benefited from the change in the moral landscape that followed. I never expected to marry and have kids with the first man I had sex with—at fifteen, marriage was the furthest thought from my mind. What I sought was pleasure, adventure, experience, and, yes, romance. In a contrast to my mother's generation that should not be underestimated, I entered my first sexual relationship expecting to enjoy it, and without fearing pregnancy. This experience was momentous and scarcely free from anxiety, but it wasn't laden with immense burdens of guilt and fear either. Later, at sixteen, I discovered the pleasures of
casual sexual relationships.

This historically unprecedented sexual freedom was intimately connected with my idea of myself as an individual with my own life to lead, with my own goals and desires. Twenty years earlier I would have been preoccupied mainly with seeking a man to append myself to, and hoping for children to devote my life to. When I did decide to have a child, I discussed the division of labor at length with my partner. There was an unquestioned assumption that life and work outside the domestic realm was equally important to both of us. A serious commitment to a life-partner and a child has not ended the process of sexual discovery and experimentation. I can hardly claim to have found the key to sexual happiness. My own experience has led to painful bouts of jealousy, sexual insecurity, and time-management nightmares, and I am still contending with the traditional gender division in many ways. I hope that my daughter will benefit from our continuing attempts to challenge these limitations.

Millions have enjoyed the opportunities for greater fulfillment that freedom from the traditional confines of conjugal heterosexuality has provided. For many of us, these private opportunities would have been unthinkable without a widespread conscious challenge to our traditional sexual heritage.

ROOTS OF REACTION

The initial wave of freedom and excitement that redefined sexual roles left in its wake a whole new set of problems and anxieties, especially for women. Sexual freedom came to mean too much and too little at the same time. I am still contending with their radical social implications, the new sexual attitudes were narrowly reinterpreted as "the more sex the better." The idea of sexual revolution became associated with a promiscuous "lifestyle"; this fit in nicely with the hedonistic ideology that has marked the 80s.*

Once sexual freedom and promiscuity had been equated, those who didn't get off on promiscuity—who felt pressured into it or who tired of it when the novelty wore off—began to question the importance of sexual freedom itself. For many women, in particular, the freedom to have more sex doesn't do the trick. The route to sexual pleasure tends to be easier for men, who are often more comfortable with and aware of their sexual desires. Women are confronted with the double problem of freeing themselves from subordination to male desire while discovering their own. And it doesn't help that the discourse of sexual desire has, until very recently, been primarily a male domain. Our attempts to define our sexuality are complicated by efforts to counter what we have experienced as oppressive sexual objectification. For example, we want to free ourselves from our conditioned obsessiveness with our bodies, while discovering new ways to feel at home in them. For some feminists the solution has been to reject the whole concept of sexiness, which they consider to be inextricably associated with oppressive male standards. In its extreme form, the attitude holds that sexual objectification is the keystone to misogyny and is therefore central to the widespread violence against women in our society. This is the position of the feminist antipornography movement. Other feminists have attempted to broaden the notion of sexiness to encompass qualities that are more in tune with their own tastes.

Another ideology popularly associated with sexual liberation is sexual naturalism, the notion that all we have to do is recover our "natural" sexuality in order to transform society into a loving community. But what constitutes natural sexuality? One major problem with the idea that sexuality can be extricated from social and historical contexts is that it leads to new standards of "naturalness" that exclude acceptance of benign forms of sexual variation. There is nothing particularly natural about a vibrator, for example, yet many women have found their path to orgasm using one. Homosexuality has often been condemned on the grounds that it is a crime against nature.

The new opportunities opened up by sexual freedom were thus riddled with confusion and ambiguity. Over the past few years, a new body of research and literature has attempted to explore and clarify these issues. (See the bibliography at the end of the article). Meanwhile, other social changes have exacerbated the confusion that became the breeding ground for reaction. The counterculture, which had provided a context for experimentation and discussion, collapsed. The disintegration of family and community networks accelerated, one example being the dramatic increase in single-mother families. Women, particularly those in rural areas where the traditional mores continued to hold sway, were afraid of the license the new sexual freedom gave their husbands. They feared that their husbands' ties to them would be weakened, leaving them in the lurch with little possibility of financial independence.

The sexual revolution (or, rather, a vague constellation of ideologies and images that the term has come to evoke) became a scapegoat for many problems that had little to do with sexuality per se. It also became a focus of disillusionment because of inflated expectations about the degree to which it could change people's lives.

* Ironically, the divorce of sexual freedom from social implications has made it possible to put sexual passion in the service of traditional conjugal heterosexuality. In The Remaking of Sex (see bibliography) Ehrenreich et al describe the fundamentalist sexual revival, which encourages women to be sexy but only with their husbands and in their own bedrooms.
SEX FOR THE MARKET

Controversy over the meaning of the sexual revolution has led to contentious debate over the vast growth of the commercial sex world. The sex industry accounts for expenditures of billions of dollars every year. In 1985 alone, $375 million was spent on porn videos in the U.S. For some people this is an alarming indication that the sexual revolution has gone too far. Opposition to the sex industry has brought together feminists like Andrea Dworkin and Catherine McKinnon and right-wing zealots like Edwin Meese in an unlikely coalition. These people have targeted the sex industry as a primary locus of social decay and female oppression.

Certainly many entrepreneurs (pornographers, advertisers, media moguls), few of them concerned with feminist ideas, have capitalized on the popularity of sexual diversity and experimentation. Yet amidst the controversy over the sex industry’s effects on women, there is a remarkable lack of analysis of what the industry means to the women who work in it, and how sexual liberalization affects them.

What is really going on in the sex business? Why do women work in the industry? How is the campaign against pornography and prostitution affecting the women in it? Does the freedom of sexual expression contribute to the oppression of women in the industry?

It’s difficult to talk about the sex industry as a monolithic whole. The kinds of people who work in it and their reasons for doing so, vary as much as the services the sex industry provides.

For many female sexworkers, working in The Life is fraught with danger and violence. See, for example, Linda Thomas’s “Your Knife in My Life” in this issue. But the stereotypical idea of how women enter into prostitution and why they are vulnerable to violence is badly skewed. Except for a small minority (accurate figures about the sex industry are impossible to obtain for obvious reasons) people don’t get dragged into prostitution when some porn-addicted pervert forces them to sell their bodies. Violence and degradation often begin in a family life marked by poverty, desperation, and, in many cases, physical and sexual abuse. Whereas for some women prostitution continues the pattern, for others it provides a tangible escape to economic independence. In any case, the decision to market one’s sexuality is often based on a perception of limited opportunities for economic survival in the straight world.

Much of the violence associated with this work stems from the stigma and repression. Clients who feel guiltiest about their sexual needs and the most disdainful of prostitutes are the most likely to treat them badly. The fact that prostitution is ghettoized in areas of high crime is also a major cause of danger. Other significant sources of danger are the police and the jails.

Unrecting moral campaigns toward the suppression of the sex industry, instead of addressing the underlying economic issues for the women in it, makes things harder for those women, especially the ones at the bottom. Prosecution of prostitution makes it difficult for them to get out of The Life. They need money while looking for new work, and the bail for routine arrests makes it difficult to accumulate funds. Prosecution’s illegality also reinforces subordination of prostitutes to their pimps, who provide protection of sorts. One woman was robbed and threatened with rape by hotel security guards who accused her of soliciting. The fear of being turned in makes it hard to sustain a community—every bust leads to suspicion of betrayal. Many women in the industry say that escort services routinely turn in women in exchange for not being busted.

Greater restriction on prostitution will not put an end to it. To the contrary, intensified repression of the sex industry will most damage the women who are the most vulnerable to abuse. At the end of the industry, demand is created by society with limited opportunities for sexual fulfillment, while the supply of women is assured by poverty.

Some women believe that the changes of the past decades have affected prostitution. It may be, for example, that a stronger sense of independence has somehow lessened women’s reliance on pimps for protection and emotional support. Feminist organizations like the U.S. Prostitutes Collective and C.O.Y.O.T.E. (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics), by defending the rights and dignity of women in the sex business, take away some of the stigma associated with it. Women like Linda Thomas benefit from a sexually open-minded community that let them “come out” about their experiences, and put them in perspective. Their willingness to open up, in turn, is a valuable contribution to our own understanding.

Moral campaigns, on the other hand, force women sex workers deeper into the closet, and increase the stress of leading a double life. The stigma makes it harder to organize or demand better working conditions, and also to seek help or get legal protection. One woman, for example, who had a serious occupational accident on a porn set could not prosecute because the publicity would ruin her reputation. She also got fired from a “straight” job when her coworkers discovered she worked as a porn actress.

The stigma associated with sex work has led to a gross underestimation of a second category of sex workers, the “temps.” Many women occasionally trade sex for some quick cash, or maybe in a good dis-
count on a new car. Such trade can involve anything from a quick blowjob to a one-time session for a nude magazine or an orgy scene in a porn movie. We may wonder why our society creates a demand for such temp jobs, but it’s hard to portray many women who do them as especially oppressed. The sex temps I know of come from all kinds of backgrounds and they look on these jobs as a way to make a fast buck—not something they’d want to do all the time but not particularly problematic either.

Many women, particularly dancers, models, and escort agency call-girls, choose the work because it pays better than most other jobs they could get, and they have a fair measure of control over it. This says more about the paucity of women’s economic opportunities than it does about the degradation of female sex workers. “Dancing has meant I could spend time with my daughter for the first time in her life.” claims one working mother, a former university teaching assistant who now makes far more money doing three 5-hour shifts weekly in a strip club. Another woman who works in a booth, talking sex over the phone to men behind a glass wall, got the job after she found she couldn’t make ends meet working for an insurance company.

Some women like erotic dancing and acting in porn movies because they enjoy performing or frankly admit to being exhibitionists and loving the attention they get. In any performing career there is the hazard of getting too caught up in an “ego-trip.” One woman commented that some performers begin to think of themselves solely in terms of their sexuality and appearance, leading to competitive attitudes towards coworkers. On the other hand dancing allowed another woman to overcome feelings of inadequacy about her appearance. “I was never a hot number with guys, I always felt like an ugly duckling. When I started dancing I fell in love with my body. Now I am more sexually self-assertive.”

Working conditions in erotic dance clubs vary enormously. Some are cleaner and more well-kept than others. Some managers harass the women, demanding sexual favors in return for job security, while others leave the women pretty much alone as long as they show up on time. Sometimes women have completely different experiences working at the same place. These differences seem partly related to a woman’s level of self-esteem and her ability to stand up for herself. A woman who appears vulnerable is more likely to be harassed.

Wages also vary. In some of the clubs, women get paid a straight salary for their shifts, and any stars make more than the regulars. In others, the salary is negligible; the money comes from tips. Some women prefer this because they make much more money, and some like the contact with customers. Others, however, hate having to talk to customers and sit on their laps.

Another category of women involved in the sex industry is the “activists.” Many have had careers in social work or sex education. One dominatrix working in the East Bay, for instance, rejects the classification of “sex worker.” She believes that her occupation can teach men how to respect women. One woman, who has worked as a call girl in Marin, sees herself as a “sexual healer,” providing a service that men need, but can’t get because of repressive social attitudes. More recently, however, this woman has begun to question her own altruism, wondering whether identifying her job with social work isn’t becoming a rationalization of problems she is becoming aware of. She admits to feeling degraded at times (though she has never been coerced in her work) but at times her work is a revenge against degradation. When she gets depressed or feels taken advantage of, turning a trick makes her feel in control and restores her self-esteem. The experience, which is not uncommon among sex workers at all levels, points to the complexity of the power relations in the work. Moreover, it shows that the male clients, too, are victimized by contemporary sexual morality. Women in the sex industry often feel that what drives men to pay for sexual services is more degrading than providing them.

One part of the sex industry really is a direct product of the feminist ideals of sexual revolution—a very small, but growing area of the industry that could be called the alternative sex industry. Many people who work in this area do so not primarily for the money, but as sex educators.

The philosophy of Good Vibrations, a San Francisco vibrator store that sells many varieties of women’s sex toys, is to help women discover and enjoy their sexuality. “We’re 100 years behind men,” asserts Suzie Bright, editor of On Our Backs, whose circulation, she claims, has jumped to 12,000 in a few years, making it the best-selling lesbian periodical. She believes women need to become more knowledgeable about fantasies and sexuality. They need to learn how to enjoy porn, which includes finding sexy images that are not male-identified. The alternative sex industry is trying to address many questions that the sexual revolution of the 60s and 70s left unanswered.

**ACCEPTABLE KINKY SEX PRACTICES**

**#91**

This beautiful toy is the Best Thing that ever happened to my sex life

---

**Public Poetry #1**

**Gee Spot**

**See Dick Jump!**

by Linda Thomas

PENISES FOR THE PEOPLE!
SEX: A SCAPEGOAT FOR ALL REASONS

The sex industry has been held responsible for the proliferation of sexist images and ideas throughout society, for women's victimization and exploitation, for the destruction of families, and for encouraging rape and child-molesting. The growth of pornography and prostitution is held up as one of the nefarious consequences of the sexual revolution, an example of how dangerous loose sexual attitudes really are.

So appealing has porn been as a target that it has united feminists like Andrea Dworkin (for whom the Meese Report was "a turning point in women's rights" [Time 7/21/86] with right-wing fundamentalists who want to put women back in the home. Scapegoating the sex industry distracts the public from deeper social problems. What is really going on in the morality campaigns is an attempt to relegate traditional values. The mission of restoring the nuclear family as a haven of warmth and safety is appealing for many reasons. It offers a hope that we can extract ourselves from the complicated horrors of the world, it allows us to close our eyes to the endemic sources of violence and degradation in our society. Singling out the figure of the sex-crazed child molester, for example, is easier than acknowledging the far more pervasive routine emotional and physical abuse that abounds in the American family. For the media, stories of psychotic sex criminals make good copy, for politicians, sexual fear is a political goldmine. The politicians behind the resurgent interest in sex-busting are at least appearing to do something about the anxieties created by social decay.

By deflecting fears from the real causes, moral panics exacerbate the anxieties they pretend to address. Even the most trivial social interactions become charged with fear: mothers react with panic when a stranger stops to pat their child on the head, childcare workers refrain from affectionate physical contact with the children in their care. Children themselves are taught to associate sex with fear and danger, reinforcing sex-negative attitudes.

Sexual license is a primary target of today's moral panic, and in response we assert our right to sexual freedom—not just on the grounds of free speech or privacy, but in affirmation of the positive side of sexual pleasure. At the same time it is important to go beyond the sexual to understand the anxiety that is being tapped by the sex-busters. We need to focus our fear and anger on underlying economic and social problems and not on false targets.

—by Maxine Holz

ACCEPTABLE KINKY SEX PRACTICES #91

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


OR CONTACT:
U.S. Prostitutes Collective
P.O. Box 14512
San Francisco, CA 94114
C.O.Y.O.T.E.
P.O. Box 26345
San Francisco, CA
ANXIOUS PLEASURES


For the Mehinaku Indians of the Amazon, fish is the main source of animal protein. While Mehinaku women grow and prepare manioc root, the staple of the Mehinaku diet, only the men go on long fishing trips. When a Mehinaku man returns from a successful trip, he is "proclaimed by a tremendous whoop from all the men." His wife then makes a special fish stew and sends part of it to her in-laws and relatives in other houses.

Prior to entering the village, the returning fisherman selects the best fish from the catch and arranges for a boy to bring it to his lover's hut. He cautions the child to give the woman the fish when her husband is not around. "A sexually active woman is therefore a recognized economic asset in her family."

"There is little shame about sexual desire, and children will tick off the names of their parents' many extramarital lovers." There were 20 men and 17 women in the village when Gregor visited, and he counted approximately 88 extramarital affairs during this time, with the average man engaging in 4.4 affairs. (The range for men was from 1 to 10 affairs, with most men having close to the average number.) For women the average was almost the same, but the range was much greater. Three women had no extramarital affairs while one woman had 11 and another 14. The village's "taste for extramarital liaisons" is only limited by social barriers such as the incest taboo. However, the frequency of sexual contact within such liaisons is relatively low due to taboos on having sex at certain times, the lack of privacy, "competition from jealous husbands and more attractive rivals, and especially by the difficulty of finding a willing female partner."

Sex is everywhere a seller's market with women doing the selling. It is always easier for a woman to find a sexual partner (provided she is not old, ugly, or sick) than it is for a man. Males have "a higher level of sexual interest than females." This is the result of three conditions: the higher level of androgens in males, the fact that some women do not have orgasms, and possibly, that men require a lower level of sexual stimulation to become aroused.

Mehinaku males initiate sexual encounters by "importuning, gifts, and verbal coercion." This may be because they are poor lovers. With few exceptions, they do not engage in foreplay, and there is no word in their language for female orgasm. In fact, it is not certain that Mehinaku women have orgasms.

Mehinaku men spend most of their time with other men, especially in the men's house, which no woman can ever enter. The penalty for a woman's entering or looking into the men's house, or viewing the sacred flutes kept there, is gang rape. Although the last reported gang rape took place around 1940 and most men said they would not report on their closest female kin if they discovered them in a violation of the taboo, women live with the very real threat of rape.

If Mehinaku women are afraid of male violence, Mehinaku men are even more afraid of women. According to their myths, women in ancient times were the keepers of the sacred flutes, the founders of what is now the men's house, and the inventors of architecture, clothes, and religion; while men lived like wild animals in a separate village. Eventually, the men attacked the women's village, raped them, stole their artifacts, and took control of the men's house. Thus the Mehinaku do not justify their patriarchal situation in terms of religious revelation or natural male superiority. For them, male power is based on brute force. Nonetheless, the legend reveals that "the men's house as a symbol of male identity is a citadel of papier-mache." The price men pay for maintaining it, he says, is "anxiety: fear of their own sexual impulses and fear of women."
Heart pounding, I walked up the steps to Holly's apartment and rang her doorbell. Even as I stood outside the door, despite my nervousness, I could feel that special warmth that is Holly's own. The door opened and there was Holly, smiling of course, looking just like her pictures: gentle, strong, tender, sensitive, committed. I'm so glad you're here, she smiled, hugging me warmly. I smiled back. She smiled even more warmly. We stood in the foyer, smiling at each other. Doesn't it feel good to smile? smiled Holly. There is strength in women's laughter, I smiled back.

Could it really be true? Could I really be here, on a date with Holly Near? I pinched myself to make sure it was all really happening. Already I felt so calm and comfortable, it must be true. I could hardly tell exactly what it was that Holly was wearing, each earth tone blended so imperceptibly into the next. I stepped forward and bumped right into Holly (against the earth tone décor of her apartment she was almost invisible). We laughed happily, two women together, yes, together, in spite of everything.

Come in, come in, laughed Holly, and we walked into her living room together. Would you like some tea? she smiled. Of course, Holly, if it's not too much trouble, I blushed. Trouble? Holly's laugh wafted out from the kitchen like muted guitar notes. She walked in carrying two earth tone mugs. Our sisters are struggling against injustice and oppression throughout the world and you think making tea is trouble? Ah, how we North American white feminists are blinded by our privilege. I felt my face grow hot, my blush grow deeper. How could I have been so insensitive? As tears welled up in my eyes, I felt two strong gentle arms surround me. Have some tea, Holly murmured. I took the cup from her hands and drank. The tea was sweet, strong, gentle, warm, just like Holly. There is strength in women's
Kareendi's Story

Excerpt from Devil On The Cross by Kenyan author Ngugi Wa Thiong'o.

Thiong'o was jailed by the Kenyan government in the 70s for his radical plays and stories. This novel was written in prison and published when he was released.

'Take a girl like me,' Wariinga said, gazing down at one spot as if she were talking to herself. 'Or take any other girl in Nairobi. Let's call her Mahua Kareendi. Let's assume that she was born in a village or in the heart of the countryside. Her education is limited. Or let's say, perhaps, that she has passed CPE and has gone to a high school. Let's even assume that it is a good school and not like those Haraambe schools where the poor pay good money even when the classrooms boast no teachers.

'Before she reaches Form Two, Kareendi has had it. She is pregnant.'

'Who is responsible?'

A student, say. The student doesn't have a cent to his name. Their friendship has been a matter of lending each other novels by James Hadley Chase, Charles Mangua or David Mailu. It has been a question of singing songs from the records of Jim Reeves or of D.K. or of Lawrence Nduru. Kareendi, where can you turn now?

On the other hand, we could imagine that the man responsible for the pregnancy is a loafer from the village. The loafer is jobless. He hasn't even a place to lay his head. Their love affair has been sustained by guitar playing and evening dances in the village. It has been conducted in borrowed huts or in the open fields after dark. Little Kareendi, where will you turn? The baby will need food and clothes.

Perhaps the loafer has a job in the city, but his salary is five shillings a month. Their love has been nourished by Bruce Lee and James Bond films—by five minutes in a cheap hotel on their way home by matatu. Who will wipe away Kareendi's tears now?

Or let's say that a rich man is the father of the child. Isn't that kind of affair the fashion these days? The rich man has a wife. The affair has been a question of a rendezvous in a Mercedes-Benz on a Sunday. It has been fuelled by small amounts of cash that Kareendi has received as pocket money before returning to school. It has been lubricated by hard liquor drunk in hotels far away from the village.

Student, loafer, rich man—their response is the same when Kareendi tells them about her condition: 'What! Kareendi, who are you claiming is responsible for the pregnancy? Me? How have you worked that out? Go on and pester someone else with your delusions, Kareendi of the easy thighs, ten-cent Kareendi. You can cry until your tears have filled oil drums—it will make no difference... Kareendi, you can't collect pregnancies wherever you may and then lay them at my door just because one day I happened to tease you!'

Say Kareendi needs no borrowed tongue. She stands there, arms akimbo, and lashes out at yesterday's sweetheart. 'You think you are sugar itself? I'd rather drink tea without sugar. You imagine that you're a bus? I'd rather walk. You think you are a house? I'd prefer to sleep in the open air. Or the bed itself, perhaps? I choose the floor. I've lost my faith in silken-tongued gigolos.' But Kareendi is only trying to put a brave face on things. Inside, her heart is dancing with rage.

Let's say Kareendi refuses to take drugs. It is appalling that babies should emerge from their mothers' wombs as corpses. Kareendi has the baby. And she doesn't throw it into a latrine pit, nor does she abandon it at the roadside or in a bus. Nor does she leave it in the forest or on a rubbish tip. Kareendi places on the shoulders of her mother or her grandmother the burden of bringing up this baby, who has come into this world in spite of the fact that her parents have neither welcomed nor prepared for her arrival. But Kareendi's mother and grandmother warn the girl not to make a habit of this: 'Be on your guard from now on, Kareendi. Do not forget that men have stings, vicious and corrosive, the poison of which never leaves the flesh of their victims.'

And Kareendi now knows only too well that no one repents on account of another's sins. There is no one who regrets the going as much as the returning. To be smiled at is not to be loved. So Kareendi bites her lips decisively and goes back to school. She makes steady progress and reaches Form Four. She sits the Cambridge or School Certificate and she gets her EACE, a certificate to indicate that she has passed in English, Swahili and Religion.

So far so good.

But problems don't have wings to bear them away. Once again Kareendi's parents have to dig into their pockets. They pull out the cents that they have been saving, the stick put by in reserve in case they should meet a rat unexpectedly—and now just such a rat has appeared. They speedily
enroll Kareendi at the Nairobi Secretarial College so that she can learn typing and shorthand. At the end of nine months Kareendi can pound a typewriter, thirty-five words a minute, and she is now an expert at shorthand—she has reached the speed of eighty words a minute. The language of the eye is not the language of the ear. Typing and shorthand: Pitman's certificates for the two skills are in Kareendi's pocket.

Kareendi now tramps all over Nairobi looking for a job. Armed with her Pitman's skills, she enters one office after another. In one she finds Mr. Boss, who leans back in his chair for greater comfort. He eyes Kareendi from top to toe. "What do you want? A job? I see. I'm very busy right now. Let's meet at five." Kareendi waits impatiently for the hour to come. She rushes back to the office, panting. Now Mr. Boss smiles at her, and he offers her a chair, and he asks her what her names are, the one she was given at birth and her acquired English one, and he inquires into the things that are troubling her, and he listens with attentive patience. Then Mr. Boss taps the desk top with his finger or with a pen, saying, "Ah, Kareendi, jobs are very hard to come by these days. But a girl like you... it shouldn't be too difficult to find something for you to do. But, Kareendi, a matter like this can't be finalized in the office. Let's go across to the Modern Love Bar and Lodging to discuss the question more fully." But Kareendi recalls the venomous stings of her early years: he who has seen once knows thereafter, and he who has drunk from a calabash can gauge its size. So Kareendi declines all invitations to meetings at hotels designed for love, old-fashioned or modern. The next day she is still combing the city for a job.

She enters another office. She finds there another Mr. Boss. The smiles are the same, the questions are the same, the rendezvous is the same, and the target is still Kareendi's thighs. The Modern Love Bar and Lodging has become the main employment bureau for girls, and women's thighs are the tables on which contracts are signed. A maiden once drowned in a sea of sweetness. Our new Kenya, however, sings only one song to Kareendi: Sister Kareendi, the case of a tool takes a long time to settle. Sister Kareendi, every court session opens with feasting. Sister Kareendi, no man licks an empty hand. Take care of me, and I will take care of you. Modern problems are resolved with the aid of thighs. He who wishes to sleep is the one who is anxious to make the bed.

Kareendi is determined to make no beds: she would rather leave her case unsettled. And because God is truly no ugali eater, one morning Kareendi lands a job without having to visit any hotel for modern love. Mr. Boss Kihara is the managing director of the firm. He is middle-aged. He has a wife and several children. On top of that, he is a member of the committee that runs the Church of Heaven. Kareendi carries out her office duties meticulously.

Before a month is up, Kareendi finds herself a Kamoongonye. The young man is a university student. He holds modern, progressive views. When Kareendi confesses to him that she has a child at home, Kamoongonye silences her with kisses of love. He tells Kareendi: "A child is not a leopard, capable of winding people. Besides, giving birth is proof that you're not a mule!" Hearing this, Kareendi weeps tears of happiness. Then and there, she swears loyalty, with all her heart: "Because I am very lucky, and I have looked for and found a Kamoongonye, a young man with modern views, I, Kareendi, will never anger him or argue with him over any issue. If he shouts at me, I will remain silent. I will simply look down like the shy leopard or like a lamb cropping grass. I will help him with his keep so that he can finish his education without trouble or delay and so that together we can make a home that has solid roots. I will never look at another."

The other girls, Kareendi's friends, envy her, and they offer her bits and pieces of advice: "Kareendi, you'd better change your ways: the seeds in the gourd are not all of the same type," they tell her. Kareendi replies: "A restless child leaves home in search of meat just as a goat is about to be slaughtered." But the girls tell her: "Friend, this is a new Kenya. Everyone should set something aside to meet tomorrow's needs. He who saves a little food will never suffer from hunger." She replies: "Too much eating ruins the stomach." They taunt her: "A restricted diet is monotonous," Kareendi rejects this and tells them: "A borrowed necklace may lead to the loss of one's own."

Now, just as Kareendi is thinking that her life is running very smoothly, Mr. Boss Kihara begins to sound her out with carefully chosen words. One day he comes into her office. He stands by her typewriter, and he pretends to examine the sheets of paper that Kareendi has typed. He says: "By the way, Miss Kareendi, what are your plans for this weekend?" I would like you to accompany me on a small safari—what do you say to that?" Kareendi declines politely. Rejection wrapped in civility arouses no ill feelings. Too much haste splits the yam. One month later, he again accosts Kareendi in the office. "Miss Kareendi, this evening there's a cocktail party at the Paradise Club." Once again Kareendi disguises her refusal with polite phrases.

The day comes when Boss Kihara reasons with himself in this way: The hunter who stalks his prey too stealthily may frighten it off in the end. Begging calls for constantly changing tactics. Bathing involves removing all one's clothes. So he confronts Kareendi boldly, "By the way, Miss Kareendi, I've got a lot of work to do today. There is a pile of letters to be answered, all very important and very urgent. I would like you to stay behind in the office after five o'clock. The firm will pay you overtime."

Kareendi waits. Five o'clock. Boss Kihara is in his office, drafting the letters, perhaps. Six o'clock. Everyone else has gone home. Boss Kihara calls for Kareendi. He asks her to take a seat so that they can talk. After a minute or two, Boss Kihara stands up and sits on the edge of his desk. He smiles shyly. Kareendi now finds her tongue. 'Please, Mr. Boss,' do dictate the letters to me now. I was planning to go out this evening, and it's getting dark.'"
"Don't worry, Kareendi. If it gets late, I will give you a lift home in my car."

"Thank you, but I really don't want to inconvenience you," Kareendi answers levelly, to hide her irritation.

"Oh, it will be no trouble at all. I could even ring home to instruct my personal chauffeur to collect you and drive you to your place."

"I enjoy travelling by bus. Please—where are the letters?"

Boss Kihara leans slightly towards Kareendi. A certain light is shining in his eyes. He drops his voice.

"Kareendi, darling, mine are letters dictated by the heart."

"By the heart, did you say?" Kareendi asks quickly, pretending not to understand the implication of his words. "Is it wise for you to dictate such letters to an employee? Wouldn't it be better for you to type them yourself, so that the secrets of your heart will not be read by someone for whom they are not intended?"

"Beautiful Kareendi, flower of my heart. No one but you can type them. For I want to send them care of the address of your heart, by the post of your heart, to be read by the eyes of your heart, thereafter to be kept within your heart, sealed there forever and ever. And you when you receive the letters, I beg you, don't write Return to sender. Darling, flower of my heart, see how my love for you has weakened me?"

"Mr. Boss, sir, please!..." Kareendi tries to slip in a word. One part of her is scared as she sees how Boss Kihara is panting. But another part of her feels like laughing when she contrasts the words that are tumbling from the Boss's mouth with the bright, shining bald patch on his head. Kareendi is searching for words that will put this old man to shame: "Suppose your wife heard you saying such things! What would you do?"

"She doesn't count. One does not use scentless perfume when going to a dance. Please, Kareendi, little fruit of my heart, listen to me carefully so that I may tell you beautiful things. I will rent a house for you on Furaha Leo Estate, or in the city centre, Kenyatta Avenue, or any other part of the city. Choose any flat or house you like. I will have the place decorated with furniture, carpets, mattresses, curtains from Paris, London, Berlin, Rome, New York, Tokyo, Stockholm or Hong Kong. Imported furniture and household goods. I will buy you clothes, for I want you in the latest fashions from Oxford Street, London, or from the haute couture houses of Paris. High heels and platform shoes will come from Rome, Italy. When you step out in those shoes which you people have nicknamed 'no-destination-why-should-I-hurry?' I want everyone in Nairobi to turn around and whistle with envy, saying: That is Boss Kihara's sugar girl. If these pleasures last, if you keep me happy with all earthly delights, I will buy you a small basket for the market, for shopping, or for jaunts on a Sunday—I think an Alfa Romeo is the kind of car that would be fitting for a bride. Kareendi, my little fruit, my little orange, flower of my heart, come to me and say bye-bye to poverty..."

Kareendi is now holding back her laughter with great difficulty. She says to him: "Mr. Boss, please may I ask you one question?"

"Ask a thousand and one!"

"Are you saying that you want to marry me?"

"Ah! Why are you pretending not to understand the way things are? Can't you see that... My little fruit, be mine now, be my girl."

"No. I have never wanted affairs with my bosses!"

"My little fruit, what are you afraid of?"

"Besides, I wouldn't want to break up your home. A borrowed necklace may make a person lose his own."

"Didn't I tell you that one doesn't go to a dance wearing old, scentless perfume? Kareendi, my new necklace, my tomato plant growing on the rich soil of an abandoned homestead! What are you afraid of? What is the problem?"

"I have a Kamoongonye, a young lover."

"Ha! Kareendi, don't make me laugh. Are you really so old-fashioned? Are you talking about one of those boys who pretend to be men? Those boys, are they even circumcised?"

"The yam that one has dug up for oneself has no muddy patches. The sugar cane that one has picked out has no unripe edges. Those whom one loves do not squint. The young man who you claim is uncircumcised is my chosen one."

"
"Kareendi, listen. I'll tell you something," Boss Kihara says to her, panting. He gets off the table. He comes closer to Kareendi. "These days the question of a choice between Waigoko, the man with the hairy chest, and Kamoongonye, the young lover, is no longer valid. Waigoko's hairy chest has been shaved by money—But because it is true that the heart is hungry only for what it has chosen, I won't press the matter of your becoming my mistress. You have refused a nice house. You have refused expensive clothes. And you have refused a shopping basket. All right. As you like. But allow me this one request. Don't refuse me."

"Aren't you a member of the Church of Heaven? Do you ever read the Bible? When you go home, read Romans, Chapter XIII, line fourteen: 'Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof...'"

"But in the same book it is also written: Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened..." My little fruit, my love, we need not even bother with accommodation. This office floor is adequate. If these offices could talk, they would tell many tales. A smooth cement floor makes a fantastic bed. It straightens the back and all the bones of the spinal cord right up the neck."

"I don't want my back straightened!" Kareendi snaps back, concealing her anger no longer.

Boss Kihara now tries to embrace Kareendi. The two nearly trip over the chair. Kareendi gets up, hangs her handbag over one shoulder and begins to walk backwards. Boss Kihara reaches for her. They circle one another in the office as if they were dancing the dance of the hun-

ter and the hunted. Boss Kihara has abandoned all pretense at dignity.

And suddenly Boss Kihara pounces on Kareendi. One hand holds Kareendi by the waist. The other tries to feel for her body. Kareendi attempts to free herself from the man's grip, at the same time beating her fists on his chest and also trying vainly to open her handbag to take out the folding knife she normally carries. The sound of their heavy breathing fills the office. Kareendi senses that she is about to be overcome. Suddenly she forgets that this is her Boss and cries out: "If you don't let me go, I will shout for help!"

Boss Kihara pauses. He remembers his wife and children. He recalls that often on Sundays he is the one who reads the Bible at the altar in the Church of Heaven, and that from time to time he gives talks at weddings, advising newlyweds about the need for parents and children to live together in love and harmony. He recalls all these things simultaneously. He imagines the scorn of the whole country if he were charged with raping his secretary. The fire suddenly dies. Ardour retreats. He releases Kareendi. He takes a handkerchief from his pocket and wipes away the sweat. He looks at Kareendi. He tries to say something, then he stops. He is trying to find words to save his face. He tries to laugh, but the laughter fades. For the sake of saying something he asks: "Does this mean, Kareendi, that at home nobody teases you? Anyway, don't jump to hasty conclusions. This was only a joke between father and daughter. Go home now. You'd better do the letters early tomorrow morning."

Kareendi goes home, still thinking about the joke between father and daughter. How well she knows that joke. It's a joke between a leopard and a goat...

In the morning Kareendi comes to work as usual. She is five minutes late. She finds that Boss Kihara has already arrived. Boss Kihara summons her to his office. Kareendi goes in. She feels a little awkward as she recalls their struggle last night. But Boss Kihara does not even raise his eyes from his newspaper.

"Miss Kareendi, it looks as though you're your own boss these days."

"I am sorry, sir. The bus was late."

Now Boss Kihara looks up from the newspaper. He leans back in his chair. He fixes Kareendi with a look full of bitterness.

"Why can't you admit that the trouble is the rides you are offered by young men? Miss Kareendi, it seems as though you don't much care for work. I feel I should let you follow the promptings of your heart. It would be better for you to go home for a while. If ever you feel that you need work, as other girls do, I haven't closed the door. Take this month's salary and next month's too in lieu of notice."

Our Kareendi now has no job. Once again she roams the streets in search of work. She goes home to sorrow in silence. She sits in her room until evening, waiting for her young man. Her heart pulses to the rhythm of happiness as she recalls the sound of her young lover's voice. Everyone cares about those whom he loves. Her Kamoongonye will give her strength to endure this sorrow through words of love. At long last Kamoongonye comes home. Kareendi pours out the whole story of Waigoko, whose bearded chest has been shaved by money. There is no greater love than this, that a modern girl should reject Waigoko's money because of Kamoongonye! Kareendi finishes her story. She waits for a sympathetic sigh. She anticipates kisses that will brush away her tears.

**Toby the Atheist**

**LATER...**

**I didn't think you'd be so verbal.**

**I'm not, usually.**

**Melissa...**

**...who's God?**

*Graphic by Matthew Finch*
Heterosexism is alive and well as it glares upon forms of sexuality which are not the romantic, monogamous, heterosexual idea. In spite of this "ideal," and legal and cultural sanctions against "deviancy," women throughout our country continue to offer sexual services for cash. Countless men flock to women who'll give them emotional validation through erotic release, and as a relief from themselves, in exchange for money.

Two of the most empowering things to a majority of men in our society are sex and money. Sex is a commodity to the male psyche. For many, paying cash for erotic attention is part of the ritual in receiving such pleasure.

Why are men compelled, as well as encouraged, to go to sex workers? Many men don't know how to relate to women with their clothes on. They fear the ego-smashing episodes of rejection. Males desire and want women to take responsibility for giving and receiving pleasure. They feel more free to explore sexual fantasies with willing, anonymous women. They don't want sex to be "too serious," and they don't have the time, energy or emotion for a relationship.

One might consider prostitutes, in generations before and after the industrial revolution, as unproclaimed, undeclared feminists. They didn't leap into marriage or find reproduction their highest calling; they didn't become or want to be pure-and-holy; they didn't join convents. They remained emotionally independent of men. They still do.

To say that all sex workers/prostitutes have a feminist awareness is, of course, as flawed as stating that all women lawyers work in feminist terms. To say that all or most prostitutes were victims of incest, child abuse, or male brutality is also as much a mistake as saying that most female nurses choose their profession out of suffering the loss of their parents at an early age, and because of this trauma some of them developed a fetish for giving enemas.

Some people formed careers in "prostitution" in the various ways which are legal. This includes audio-erotic tape recordings, skin-flicks or sex-movies, modeling for private, nude photography sessions, entertaining for stag parties, or dancing and undulating in the now popular male strip shows.

They work in "peep shows"—nude in cubicles on the other side of the one-way mirror for the anonymous men speaking to them on the telephone. They pose their bodies to titilate the readers of Playgirl and Playboy type magazines. They talk "dirty" to the men and women who "Dial-a-Hunk."

Society shuts its eyes to the fact that more than likely, the man or woman who works as this kind of 'telephone solicitor' may occasionally make personal and sexual contact with persons who call. They may have sex with a caller out of mutual desire and curiosity, or simply for money.

Another misconception is in men and women's delusion that female sex workers are constantly wanting and exciting erotic passion. But prostitutes do not "have to" have orgasms nor are they especially expected to. This is like demanding that a bartender get drunk with you! A sex worker's passion is infrequently requested. Many sex workers may put on an "act" and "fake it" in order that a "customer's" request be satisfied. Most often, however, a woman will pretend rapture-orgasm to get him excited and "off," and out the door, just as thousands of wives do all the time!

The strange paradox is that doing sex for money or gifts or trade is not in itself illegal. Wives and partners of men do it all the time! It's been going on forever! It is the soliciting and selling, the verbal mention and offerings of sex for money, which is illegal. Thanks to Puritanism and religious dogma barking for centuries, this is a (victimless) "crime."

Women who prostitute sex—sell it, rent it, use it to make money on their own behalf and without pimps or agents—do so for many reasons. Throughout the world women have worked outside male controlled, legally sanctioned, socially acceptable ways.

To make and have money—ready cash—is the top-line reason for doing prostitution work. For some, being a sex worker is empowering; for another it is simply a means to an end—survival.

To another it may be contempt for this economic system and certainly a quick, if not easy, way to make money. For many women it is their manifested disgust towards the kinds of employment and wages extended to women. Many women hang up a useless college degree and go into prostitution work.

Whatever the reasons—all valid—prostitution work is an opportunity for women to take a dominant role working on their terms, on their territory, under their conditions, and within their direction. They most assuredly relish the comfort of not having to contend with abusive employers or male bosses propositioning them for sex—for "free," of course.

Sex workers across the spectrum do not so much exploit their bodies and gender as they exploit the double standard, sexual repression, hypocrisy, homophobia, men's sexual fears, and men's awe of female sexuality. "Whores" and "madonnas" don't really exist. "Wicked" women are created out of society and the human mind.

—by Clitora E. Cummings

**BACKWORDS LOGIC** by Ace Backwords

**HOW TO READ LINE'S SUBTLE SIGNALS:**

**Wrong:**

1. I don't look you in the eye.
2. I don't nod you your head.
3. I don't shake your hand.
4. I don't even say "thank you."

**Correct:**

1. I look you in the eye.
2. I nod you your head.
3. I shake your hand.
4. I say "thank you."

• Don't be a fool and read the "wrong" signals. You might lose a client. If you have any questions, ask. If you are unsure, you should ask. If you are sure, you should ask. If you are sure and you are right, you should ask. If you are sure and you are wrong, you should ask. If you are sure and you are sure, you should ask. If you are not sure, you should ask.

**EXTRA TIP:**

When reading line's signals, don't be afraid to ask. If you're unsure, ask. If you're sure, ask. If you're sure, ask. If you're sure and you're wrong, ask. If you're sure and you're right, ask. If you're sure and you're sure, ask. If you're not sure, ask. If you're not sure, ask. If you're not sure, ask.
I was broke. Dead busted. I needed a job—fast. And the first that came along was at the Back Door Theater, "Parking and Entrance in the Rear— for Your Privacy." My friend Russell was working there, and he got me a job after one of his fellow employees passed out on the pool table at the bar next to the theater during a shift.

Calling the Back Door (BD) a "theater" was something of a misnomer. It consisted of a restroom, lobby, projection platform/cashier booth, and a seating area which the staff referred to as "the pit." It was all crammed into a 16 foot by 60 foot storefront.

My turf was the projection/cashier booth. It contained a couple of broken-down chairs, a cash register, two dilapidated 16mm projectors, "Little Roscoe" (a .38 caliber revolver so dirty it would probably have blown up had it been fired), and a TV set which was used heavily, as the entire staff—all three of us—found watching it less boring than watching the BD's films.

The films were pretty crude. My first glimpse of them came the day I was hired. I stepped up to the projection platform, peered through the viewing port between projectors, and saw a "cum shot"—a man coming all over a woman's face. I was dumfounded. I couldn't believe that anyone would actually pay to see such things.

But pay they did—five bucks a pop. The Back Door's patrons came in all shapes and sizes: young men, old men, chicanos, white men, black men, and above all, greasy white-shoed businessmen. Well over 90% of the Back Door's customers were male, and, of those, at least half were into the $13-haircut level of awareness.

The female customers were of two types. One consisted of denim-clad, leather-booted dykes and their ultra-femme girlfriends; the other, more common, type consisted of bored housewives with hubbies in tow—people apparently willing to try anything to spice up humdrum sex lives.

My friend Ralph the butcher (he was an actual butcher—he hadn't "served" in Vietnam) would drop by the theater from time to time, and when such couples walked in, he made it a point to sit behind them and listen to their conversations. Ralph reported that the most typical comment was: 'He can last for ten minutes. How come you can't even last two?'

I couldn't see how the customers managed to last two minutes in the theater. It was a pit. The restroom was, arguably, the most disgusting portion of the premises. It was covered with gross, sexist graffiti such as, "Please don't jack off in this toilet, it's already had three abortions," and "The difference between toilets and women is that toilets don't follow you around after you've used them." On a couple of occasions some (literal) jerk jackdawed off against the wall, drew an arrow toward the gooey mess, and added the half-witticism, "Eat me." And on one occasion, my friend Joe Blues walked into the lobby and observed a crewcut, 300-
pound redneck flogging his dolphin in the
door blissfully unaware that the restroom
was wide open.

The lobby was another gem. Its floor
was covered with cheap red shag carpet,
it walls with red fake-velvet wallpaper,
and its ceiling with black glitter paint. Its
contents consisted of a coke machine, a
cigarette machine, and a sand-filled toilet
subtly labelled "asstray."

But the heart of the Back Door was the
pit, the seating area. It was a 16 by 45 foot
room with a screen made of two pieces of
painted sheet rock at one end with seats
extending from the other to about eight
feet from the screen. The seats were
described as "reclining airplane seats" in the
theater's advertising. Sounds really comfy,
doesn't it? Well, the seats probably were
cosy when they were new. By the
time I started working at the Back Door
day they could well have been the breeding
ground of black plague. They obviously
hadn't been cleaned since the Back Door
opened, and at least two-thirds of them
had gaping holes in their upholstery. The
asstrays in their armrests were continually
overflowing as we employees felt it
be neath ourselves to clean them out. And
the BD's customers found the cracks
between the cushions and the holes in the
upholstery convenient receptacles for their
soggy kleenex and handkerchiefs. The
floor of the pit made one's shoes go
"shmuck, schlack, shhup"; it was coated
with a mixture composed of spilled coke,
cigarette butts, the remnants of used kleen-
ex, and god knows what else.

Shortly after I started working at the
theater, I walked into the pit in the middle
of a film. While there, I was surprised to
hear a long hisssss...After closing up
that night, I went back into the seating
area and found the source. The owner of
the Back Door had installed timing
devices coupled to aerosol cans; the cans
sprayed a combination deodorant/disinfect-
ant over the seats for a few seconds
every hour. It was a token gesture. True
disinfection would have required use of a
flamethrower.

I had another surprise the first time I
walked into the pit during the noon rush
and observed the midday crowd. There
they sat, white shoes gleaming in the dark-
ess, eyes riveted to the screen, hands riv-
eted to their pants. I was expecting that.
What I wasn't expecting was that they
would all be sitting neatly, row upon row,
an empty seat on either side of every one
of them—viewer, empty seat, viewer,
empty seat, etc.—totally absorbed in the
spectacle on the screen. It was one of the
loneliest, most pathetic scenes I've ever
witnessed.

Another feature of customer behavior
which initially surprised me was the fre-
quent visit to the restroom before leaving
the theater. After I figured that one out—
it took me about two hours—I began to
dread my nightly janitorial duties. (Judg-
ing from customer behavior at the Back
Door, the slogan "Porn is the theory, rape
is the practice" is dead wrong. A more
realistic slogan would be "Porn is the theory,
poor pool is the practice.")

The films which provoked such behavior
were sick jokes. They were low-budget,
Los Angeles-based productions of the
"pole'n'hole" variety with an occasional
bit of lesbian action thrown in for diversi-
ity. The plots (when they existed at all),
acting, direction, lighting, photography,
sound, and editing were of a quality which
made the average episode of The Dukes
Hazard look like Citizen Kane in compari-
son. As for violence, there was very little
in the films shown by the Back Door; my
guess is that no more than about one in
twenty showed any explicit violence.

An example of the Back Door's offerings
was a film titled Aberrations† which con-
tained a scene depicting a gorilla fucking
a woman in a vacant lot. In the middle of

For 50 years I have surreptitiously slithe
dened naked across my linoleum floors

the scene, someone's pet German Shepherd
wandered into the field of view, approach-
ed the guy in the gorilla suit, sniffed him
for several seconds, and exited as casually
as he had entered the scene.

While atypical, this film certainly seemed
to degrade women. It's true, as critics of
pornography delight in pointing out, that
male dominance is a common feature in
pornography. Where these critics err,
however, is in ascribing male dominance
to pornography. This is a clear reversal
of cause and effect. Pornography is a fairly
recent phenomenon, having become wide-
ly available only during the last quarter
century, while male dominance has its
roots in antiquity, as virtually any ancient
history text will show. St. Paul displayed
a typical attitude when he commanded,
"Wives, submit yourselves unto your hus-
bands, as unto the Lord."

Violence against women is nothing new
either. In fact it was at its worst during the
Middle Ages and Renaissance. During
those periods hundreds of thousands,
perhaps millions, of women were brutally
tortured and murdered under the biblical
injunction, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch
to live."

As for the contention that pornography
somehow causes violence against women,
at all the evidence points at it. After
Denmark eliminated all restrictions on
pornography 20 years ago, the number of
reported sex crimes there dropped. The
1970 Presidential Commission on Por-
nography concluded that there was no link
between pornography and sexual violence.
And Henry Hudson, chairman of Reagan's
stacked anti-pornography commission,
had even admitted, "If we relied exclusive-
ly on scientific data for every one of our
findings, I'm afraid all our work would be
inconclusive."

Given the total lack of evidence linking
pornography and violence against women,
and the long history of misogynistic teach-
ing and coercion and violence against
women—most visible at present in the
forwards of various religions to use the
andy to deprive women of their rights
to birth control and abortion—one can
only ask why "feminist" censorship advoca-
tes are focusing their attacks on pornog-
raphy and not on misogynistic religious
authoritarians.

A plausible answer to that question is
that they quite understandably feel frus-
trated by sexism and violence against
women—and they're seeking easy answers
and easy targets upon which to vent their
frustration. Freedom of speech, civil liber-
tarians, and smut merchants provide much
easier targets than religious figures. And
those figures are only too eager to help
"feminist" censors attack their scapegoat—
pornography.

One also wonders why anti-porn femi-
nists, in addition to ignoring or, at times,
leaving credibility to reactionary religion-
ists, ignore depictions of violence against women in the mass media far more horrible than those occasionally encountered in pornography. For example, "splatter" flicks such as Friday the 13th and Halloween consist largely of horrifying, extremely brutal scenes of the killing of young women, and are routinely viewed by millions of young people. Yet anti-porn crusaders ignore these disgusting films and concentrate their fire on the run-of-the-mill pole's'n'holes flicks shown to small audiences in porn theaters.*

**"OBJECTIFICATION"**

An interesting charge of the anti-pornography movement is that pornography "objectifies" women, that is, that it presents them as things to be "consumed" rather than as people. Neglecting the rather metaphorical, and thus vague, nature of this charge, one can only ask why "objectification" in sexually explicit materials is more objectionable than that, for example, in advertising. We live in a society where "objectification" is pervasive, where people are commonly referred to and thought of as "personal," "human resources," and, even more grotesquely, "liveware." While the "bottom line" remains the fundamental value in society and people are considered first and foremost as productive and consumptive units, "objectification" will inevitably continue.†

It could easily be argued that women "objectify" men every bit as much, if not more, than men "objectify" women. If men look for appearance in women, women look for money in men. Another way of saying this is that if men regard women as "sex objects," women regard men as "money objects." Check it out. Look through the "personals" sections of tabloids such as The Village Voice or The Bay Guardian. What do women running ads want? More than anything else, money. (Their code words are "solvent," "secure," "successful," and 'professional'.)

The "objectification" of men by women brings up an interesting consideration: the class background of porn customers. If the customers of the Back Door were typical, as I believe they were, it's safe to say that men who consume pornography are predominantly working class men—blue collar workers, salesmen, and low-paid white collar workers. It's not difficult to figure out why. A man's ability to get laid in the present society is highly dependent upon his income. Middle and upper class men can afford to "entertain a woman in style" (vacations, weekends at country inns, etc.) or shell out $100 for a hooker if they get the urge. Working class men, on the other hand, can only afford to spend a few bucks occasionally for admission to a porn palace or for a copy of Hustler.

Even in "normal" romantic liaisons, things are bad. Most women seem drawn to money and power like buzzards are drawn to carrion. A great number—including many who bride at the way men "objectify" women—won't even look at low-paid men because of class prejudice, because low-paid men are not desirable "money objects." Thus we have the grotesque spectacle of women complaining about a "man shortage" while they're surrounded by working class men they don't even see.

Working around such prejudiced women can be maddening for men in service industries or retail. You become a non-person. You simply don't exist. It makes you feel about as respected as a slave in the antebellum South.

Such prejudice can be largely explained by the economic discrimination women face. But the prejudice persists even when its underlying cause vanishes. As an example, you'll seldom find female executives flirting with male secretaries, nor female physicians with male nurses or orderlies. Even though this class prejudice can be explained, that doesn't make it any easier to bear.

SEX FOR ITS OWN SAKE

Behind much criticism of pornography lurks the traditional Judeo-Christian idea that there is something inherently wrong with sex, that it's somehow dirty and evil. That it's necessary "to excuse it" through marriage, or, more commonly nowadays, through "love." But I don't buy that. I don't believe that sex needs to be justified; I believe that sex is its own justification. Why? Because it feels good. Because it produces pleasure and human happiness. For me that's enough—I believe that sex is inherently a good thing simply because it leads to human pleasure and harms no one. I'd agree that sex is generally better when there is an emotional attachment between partners: but I've also had many very enjoyable sexual experiences with partners with whom I've had little or no emotional attachment. I prefer sex with love—but I'll take sex without love over no sex at all any day.

Attitudes similar to mine seem to be much more common in men than in women, which helps to explain why the vast majority of pornography consumers are male. In American society men are conditioned to believe that attempting to satisfy their sexual needs is perfectly acceptable—even in so alienated a manner as paying to sit in a room with a bunch of strangers watching images of other strangers engaging in sex acts—while women are conditioned not even to express sexual needs. A second explanatory factor is that the male dominance and occasional
violence in pornography are quite probably turnoffs for most women.

A third is that it's easier in some ways for women to satisfy their sexual needs under present circumstances than it is for most men. Virtually any "decent-looking" woman, if she wants to, can go out and get laid within a few hours, any time, anywhere. The fact that relatively few women take advantage of that opportunity because of their repressive conditioning, the risks of pregnancy and VD, and the chauvinist attitudes and obnoxious behavior of many men, does not alter the fact that they do have the opportunity.

A further consideration, however, is the quality of that opportunity. Several women who read an earlier draft of this piece told me that most men are inconsiderate and, at best, mediocre lovers; and a woman's chances of getting off well, or really enjoying herself, in a sexual encounter, especially a one-night-stand, are fairly low. If that's the case, the sexual prospects of most women are as bleak as they are for most men. It's a paradoxical situation in which both parties come out losers: women can, but generally don't want to, while men generally want to, but can't. So, you end up with millions of frustrated women sitting at home, and millions of frustrated men sitting in porn theaters.

The retail porn industry, as I experienced it, is a sleazy and grotesque* business, but highly profitable, business! But that's all it is—a money-making monument to sexual repression. Only by the wildest stretch of the imagination could one imagine roomfuls of pathetic geeks pounding their plungers while watching suck flics as a threat to women. It's equally farfetched to consider that a form of sexual liberation. (I find it difficult to imagine anyone with a satisfactory sex life plunging down five bucks for the privilege of jack off in a disease pit

* At times, the sleaziness or the porn biz borders on the surreal. I vividly recall a visit I made one evening around Thanksgiving to my pal Russell, who was then working at Zorba's Adult Bookstore. When I walked through the door I was floored. The dildos, autosucks, and fist fucking magazines were still in their racks and the inflatable "love" dolls were still hanging from the ceiling—but there was a difference: the entire place was covered with Christmas decorations. The Crown King touch was a red ornament dangling from the tip of "The Destroyer," a two-foot-long, two-inch-thick dildo.

* The blimped-out, cigar-sucking, white-shoed grossero who owned the Back Door was netting at least $1000 a week from it.

like the Back Door.)

On the other hand, lonely guys, such as I encountered at the Back Door, are not the only adults who use pornography. I recently worked at a large record store with a video counter, and at least half of the customers renting X-rated films were either women or couples, persons obviously not using pornography as a substitute for sex, but as an addition to it. That being the case, one is inescapably led to the conclusion that, at least in some instances, pornography is a good thing because it harms no one and increases human pleasure.

At worst, pornography functions as a harmless, and perhaps necessary, escape valve for the sexually frustrated. At best, it serves as a means for many people to increase the pleasures of their sex lives.

Censorship of pornography would only increase the power and serve the ends of the misogynistic puritans who hate all forms of sexual expression. It must be opposed. And sex must be proposed. A hard-driving pro-sex position is an absolute necessity. It's our best and most persuasive means of protecting the freedoms we now have and of erecting others.

—by Chaz Bufe
Kelly Girl Plays Postmistress

It was Kelly's first day working at VentureTech, Inc., and she hoped it would be her last. The place had a funny feel about it. There were a lot of Enlightened Management amenities, like good coffee, abstract floral prints on the walls, and comfort rooms with futons. But there was something creepy about how all that enlightened male niceness came across. It was better when the bosses were out-and-out pigs—you knew what you were dealing with.

In this office, you couldn't tell if the boss-guy was putting his arm around you when he was telling you how to do the fucking word processing because he believed Touching Is Good, and promotes Staff Well-being, or if he was just being a lech like every boss who ever tried to cop a feel. Kelly suspected the latter, although who knows? Maybe these young enlightened executive types had been in the spanky-clean office numbness for so long, recharging their energies at lunchtime in the corporate ExerCenter downstairs, that they had even lost all lust.

Sean, Kelly's boss for the day, slipped her a stack of papers with imperative-sounding post'em notes, grabbed his Adidas bag and headed for the elevator. "Time for the work-out," he said, smiling. "I need those letters out by two o'clock, but you be sure to try to get some fresh air yourself."

Right, Kelly thought, turning off the word processor. She figured she could fuck off for about an hour, then take lunch when the guy got back. It makes no difference if letters get mailed by two or five, he just likes to give orders. She started looking around her cubicle, then got up and peeked into Sean's office. It was done in New Age blues and salmons, with cushy round chairs and lacquered wicker bookshelves. He had his own fresh water dispenser in there, and rows of vita-mins and weird green powders, which explained the stale seaweed smell. Kelly went over to the blond oak desk and tentatively opened a couple of drawers. The top ones were full of colored pens and personalized stationery and trail mix. She opened the bottom drawer a little and saw some glossy magazines. She opened it all the way and got the full view: Crotch Shots, Suck, Hustler, Bondage Babes, the works.

The creepy thing about the magazines, at least seeing them here in the office, is that there aren't any nude men anywhere. The sacred dicks are behind-the-scenes, running the show. Hiring their temporary cuties to do their work and give them a cheap thrill on display in the outer office.

Kelly wondered if Sean was really into kinky sex, whether he'd be fun in bed. Nah. He probably got the same kind of pleasure in bed as in the office—the pleasure of being in control and getting as much as he can for the least he can do.

Someone opened the door. Kelly slammed the drawer shut and turned around like she'd just been admiring the view.

"Hey, you know where Sean is?" Kelly turned around. The guy was tall with a few beaded braids in his dark tangled hair. He had on a turquoise T-shirt and orange high-top tennies. Kelly was relieved; it must be a messenger or the mailroom guy.

"Lunch," she said, edging back towards the door. The guy was staring in the vicinity of her chest with a funny smile. She looked down and realized she was still clutching a copy of Hot Licks. She got a flushed hot feeling all over.

"I was just..." She couldn't decide whether it was worse to be caught snooping or reading porn magazines in the inner-office. Fuck it, let him figure it out.

"... getting his mail," she said, scooting over to his out box and scooping up the stack of papers, hiding the cover of the magazine. She quickly walked past the guy back to her own desk. Another wave of hot tingly came over Kelly, but this time, she noticed uncomfortably, it had to do with the closeness of the guy's loose, expressive body in this charged atmosphere. She followed her out.

She was safe behind her desk. She picked up a couple of pieces of mail from her desk and handed the whole stack to him. "So here you go," she said, turning toward her Wang.

He took the papers, but he didn't leave. Kelly turned around toward him. He handed her the magazine from the bottom of the stack, trying to control a smirk. "Better not forget this," he said.

"Oh yes. Thanks," she said absenty, slipping it into her purse.

"Bored?" he asked.

"Huh?" What was he offering?

The office work. Typing. Bet it gets boring.

"Oh." She smiled. "You bet. It sucks." She looked up at his T-shirt and wanted to nuzzle her face in it.

"Yeah. At least I don't have to work out here where they can watch over everyone."

"So what's your name?" she asked him.

"Clutch."

She paused and extended her hand. "Kelly." He had a soft, firm handshake, lightly slid his fingers off her palm. He motioned toward his cart. "Mailman." She
She pointed at her Wang. "Temporary."
He nodded. "Well, I gotta go."

Sean came back in from his work-out, and all Kelly could do was picture him chained to an examination table in his spiffy suit with some dominatrix poking at his dick through his zipper with a sharp steel rod, making him beg her to stop. Sean stood in front of her looking through his mail. His bluish fingers on the manila seemed tense and uptight. No, she couldn't picture him in bed—ick.

"Any calls?" he said, smiling at her just enough to make her sick. He probably paid people to smile like that. "No," said Kelly, folding her arms. He looked at her long hair and slithered down to her fingers on the keyboard.

"I had a great work-out," he said, as if Kelly'd asked. "We've got a wonderful exercise center downstairs—really gets everyone in tip-top tone." He lifted his pecs a little bit, most likely for approval, and ran his hands through his moussed hair. "Would you like to try it out after work? We don't usually let temporary help in the club, but I bet I can sneak you in as my guest."

"No," said Kelly, and then thought she'd better add, "Thanks."

"So did you finish the reports?" he asked, drooping again. He said it in a tone like he probably always said "did you come?" "No," she said. He frowned and lost his slimy, friendly demeanor. "I want them immediately." He went into his office. Probably to beat off.

Kelly finished word processing the letters, and started printing them out. Halfway through, the ribbon died. She beeped Sean on the intercom and asked him where the new ones were. "In the mailroom," he said. "You have to requisition them from the mailboy."

An intercom light went on in her undies. She put it on hold and went out to look for the mailroom, down the hall past the kitchenette. He was in there, slipping letters in and out of the mail slots. She walked in real business-like.

"Excuse me," she said, curtly, "but do you know where I can find a new ribbon for the printer?"

She looked in the supply cabinet, picked up a bottle of white out, and rolled it between her fingers.

He looked up. "Oh, hi."

She wondered whether he could see her nipples sticking up through her Temporary Blouse. "Hi." She leaned against the mail shelves and stayed there for a few moments, noticing the little red lines around his intense blue irises.

"Ribbons," he said.

"What?" She blinked, spaced out. "Yeah, ribbons."

He reached across her up to a top shelf, just brushing her chest with his. She got a good whiff of his yummy/stinky smell. "You may have to move," he said. "They're way up here." She slid underneath his arm as he stretched way up for the ribbons. The whole box spilled down on the floor, startling Kelly. They both got down on the floor to pick them up: her hair in his face, arms touching and crossing. He leaned back on haunches. "I'm a klutz," he said matter-of-factly, smiling. "No big deal," she said, putting her hand on his back for support, slowly standing up. Then she offered him his hand. He took it and pulled her back down on top of him.

They had 80% body contact for a couple of squishy moments, but stopped just before they started squirming all over each other. He laughed at himself. "I told you I was a klutz."

He pulled her up, both aware of the energy charge between them, but both unwilling to make another move. Kelly thought about knocking something else over, but figured by now it was pretty cliche.

She straightened her box of ribbons, and started looking around the room. "You've got all the office supplies you and your friends'll ever need."

"Yeah. They comes in handy." He patted the Xerox machine. "Especially this."

"You do a lot of leaflets or what?"

"Yeah, flyers, xerox collages."

"Do you have any?"

"I've got a bunch, but they're put away in the other room." He pointed to a door at the end of the room. "The comfort station." He walked into the other room, which had futons, lamps, and easy chairs.

"This is a trip," said Kelly. She plopped down on a futon and set her water-based White-out and ribbons next to her.

"Well, they figure people need to recover from VDT rays or the Exercycle or whatever. It keeps em going."

Kelly eyed the door. "Do people come here very often?"

Clutch laughed. "I wouldn't say that."

Kelly blushed. "You know what I mean." She hit him playfully.

Clutch closed the door. "There. It's locked."

"That's supposed to make me feel more comfortable?"

"Sure," he said, then opened a cabinet and pulled out a box full of xerox collages. "Then no one will find out what subversives we are."

"I'm just getting printer ribbons."

Clutch brought the box over to the futon. He brought out a couple of collages of media-twisting advertisements and words. Kelly held one of the papers and their hands touched. She slid her hand up his arm a little way.
Clutch let the papers drop to the floor. He lightly pushed her all the way back on the futon. "Maybe I can see them later," said Kelly. She was wondering whether to make a break for it. He probably thought she was some kind of a Hot Licks sleeze, and he was just going for whatever he could get, typical male opportunist.

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She pulled his shirt up over his warm body against her. He bit her little bites on his neck and his earlobes until she shivered.

He pulled her skirt up over her through her stockings," she said, kicking Pumps off. "Fucking until him peel them off and just this was going to go. He picked up the bottle of V.

"What are you doing?" "Relax," he said. "You opened the bottle and bide around her nipple. Me do whatever I want," she said. "I don't know." "I'll stop if you don't will." "If I get to do whatever," she said. "Deal."

He put both of her head. "You have to pretend he said, and kissed her, her tongue flicking the

Sean came back in from his workout, and all Kelly could do was picture him chained to an examination table in his spiffy suit with some dominatrix poking at his dick through the zipper with a sharp steel rod, making him beg her to stop.

From Life In Hell, PO Box 36E64, LA, CA 90036

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HOMO VS. HETERO

Which Is Better?

ADVANTAGES

EUSTAS
HAPPINESS
FULFILLMENT
SOCIETAL APPROVAL
SHARE CLOTHING

DISADVANTAGES

HEARTBREAK
SHAME
GUILT
HERPES
AIDS
PERSECUTION
BREED LIKE RABBITS
LOOKS RIDICULOUS

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PROCESSED WORLD 18
of his pants, pulled it down, and felt his cock. He gave him little licks of his ears, licking a little.

He then and rubbed his back. "I hate stockings. Temporary is easier." She helped him remove his socks and wondered how far she could go without him asking. "Did you like it?" He asked, "I like it." He asked, "Is it worth it?" He nodded. She gave him a white circle of plaster on his back, "What's that for?" He asked. She gave it. But you must ask next.

She started putting his pants above her face. "They're tied," he said. She nodded with the end in her mouth.

He brushed the White-out from her elbow to her armpit, and down to her breast. "That tickles." "Yep." His other hand started working some fingers into her vagina, just barely touching her clitoris now and then. She started to squirm. He painted little designs on her tummy and outlined her pubic hair. Then he drew a line down the inside of a thigh to the back of her knee. Kelly moved her hands to touch him.

"No," he said.

He dropped the bottle. He traced the white line down from her breast with kisses, and buried his face in her pubic hair. His tongue started at the top of the crack and slithered its curious way down, slowly, round and round, to the tip of her clitoris. She jerked a little nervously. "I don't know about this."

He continued. And continued. Kelly gave her doubts up to a strand of deliciousness that had taken hold. She followed it deep inside, swelling until it burst, until it collected itself again and went ever deeper, ever sweeter, ever more intense until she buzzed all over.

He slapped her ass hard, and she caught her breath sharply; her body awoke to another sensation. She slipped three fingers inside her pussy then came up and kissed her on her mouth, and she tasted herself. With his thumb on her clit she came again, this time deeper, higher-pitched, shaking.

She opened her eyes, took a deep breath and fixed her eyes on his Levi's. She stroked his hair and bent down to kiss his earlobes. Then she rolled herself on her side and kissed him all the way down to his tummy, alternately unbuttoning his jeans and stroking him from his thighs to his bulging underwear. She bent over to untie his hi-tops, pulled them off, then pulled his jeans and his underwear down.

"My turn," she said.

"Looks that way." She pinched his feet a little, then lightly stroked his legs. She leaned over him, her white-rimmed breast in his face, and picked up a printer ribbon. She pulled some of the ribbon out and started wrapping it around one of his wrists.

"No way," he said, squirming. "Yes."
back down to his penis. She put her lips over the top, over a little more, then slid all the way down, and up and down again, sliding her hands along his sides, tickling his balls. She sucked him until he shuddered and came. She slid her body all the way up his and wiped the leftover cum off onto the comfort station pillow. He kissed her.

"Will you take these things off now? I want to hold you." She started untying the ribbon, and turned at a sound in the mailroom.

"Shit," said Clutch. He ripped his hands and feet away from the printer ribbon. He put his hands over his face and groaned. "No, no, Work."

Someone knocked on the door. "Clutch?" It was a woman. "I need some more second sheet stationery."

"Hang on, Sallie," he called. "I want to finish this burrito." He jumped up and put on his jeans and T-shirt. "How 'bout if I bring you some in a few minutes?"

"Okay," she answered. "But this letter has to get out before 4:30."

Kelly picked up her camisole from the floor. He pulled her towards him for another kiss. "I want to stay here with you all night long."

She looked at the employee notices on the walls. "Think we could find somewhere else?" She laughed. She pulled her clothes on and straightened her hair in the mirror. All of a sudden they looked like they did before. She put on her pumps and stood up.

"I liked you better with your clothes off."

She grabbed her box of ribbons and put her hand on the doorknob. "Back to the zone."

"Don't forget your White-out." She smiled.

She went back to her desk, put in the ribbon and finished printing her stuff out, glad it was almost time to go. She felt a little funny in her skirt, blouse and stockings. The White-out was caking off inside her camisole.

She didn't even know the guy. She probably wouldn't see him again. Being back at her desk, typing up letters she couldn't give a shit about, made her feel somehow like she was being taken advantage of by everyone.

Sean came out of the office. "So you're back," he said. He looked at his watch.

"I took a late break." Kelly pictured herself as a photo in one of his magazines, pictured herself spread out, centerfold glossy, painted in white with Sean setting up the shot, hot lights making her sticky and unhappy, sweating White-out. Kelly thought about Clutch and felt a little like her most vulnerable self was spread-eagled in Hot Licks magazine.

"Well, look. Finish printing that stuff out, leave it for me to sign in the morning, and then watch the phones until five. I've got to take off a little early."

"Okay." She put her Temporary Time Card in front of him. He signed it and nodded good-bye. She watched his briefcase get smaller and smaller and wondered what was repressed inside it. He stooped for a drink of water before leaving, stiff. What a jerk. She shook her head. Like she's going to make herself feel like a Bad Kelly Girl for having a little fun at work. A lot of fun. She waited until he was gone long enough for it to be safe, then she put on her jacket to leave and walked out, avoiding the mailroom.

In the elevator, she pictured Clutch's orange hi-tops strewn on the comfort station floor and tried to remember what his hair smelled like. She looked around at the three neatly-suited men in the elevator, each with an identical briefcase, each numbly staring at the walls as they descended to the lobby, and she laughed out loud.

by Kelly Girl
Currently the Reagan administration is trying to whip up national hysteria over drug consumption. Part of this hysteria is the effort to implement mandatory drug testing for all American workers. The administration's war on drug consumption presumes that drug abuse can be stopped by police and military repression. Drug abuse is treated as a social problem that can be eliminated through state-backed sanctions, rather than as a medical problem that requires medical treatment. Moreover, this war on drug consumption ignores the underlying causes of drug abuse and fails to distinguish between recreational drug use and serious drug addiction. Accordingly, children are being encouraged by Big Brother to turn their parents in for the heinous crime of smoking a joint. The government solution to drug abuse is firing workers who test positive on frequently inaccurate drug tests. Having already eliminated most health care services for workers, the Reagan administration patronizingly claims to be concerned with health. To quote Nancy Reagan, "just say no" to external control of your life.

Several large corporations are making a lot of money through mandatory drug testing at the worksite. One of these corporations is SYNTX (U.S.A.).

When I sent my resume to them, I had no idea what the corporation did. After talking with a headhunter in Palo Alto, I discovered that SYNTX was a transnational pharmaceutical corporation. A few days before my interview, I talked with a friend who happened to work for a law firm that represents SYNTX. My friend mentioned that SYNTX was facing a large lawsuit in the United States as a result of the rather nasty side effects of its product ORAFLEX. Two days before my interview, I read an article in the San Francisco Chronicle that mentioned SYNTX(U.S.A.) and PHARMCHEM as major urine analysis companies with corporate testing contracts. Before my interview, I had decided that I was not going to be part of a corporation promoting mandatory drug tests and thereby promoting greater corporate control over all our lives.

As I drive over the Bay Bridge, I wonder why well-educated people would piss in a bottle for a job. My radio is tuned to KALX, which is blaring out a classic from the Avengers:

You're nothing but a white nigger
Working for the corporation
Selling your soul for the company
So young so ambitious
You're nothing but a white nigger

The thought of thousands of Stanford graduates' pissing in bottles makes me break into uncontrollable laughter.

I arrive in Palo Alto thirty minutes ahead of schedule, drive into the second SYNTX driveway, and park in a visitor parking spot. The SYNTX complex consists of several large buildings arranged in a corporate campus with a park and duck pond. As I listen to MDC's classic "John Wayne was a NAZI," I watch the three-piece executives walking by. I also watch the blue-collar, security-badged types moving boxes of test tubes from building to building. The SYNTEX corporate environment resembles state socialism—completely controlled.

I walk from my car to the employment
building. Hello, I'm Sarkis Manouchian. I have an interview with David Laidlaw.

The receptionist looks down a list of names and checks mine off. Please fill out an employment application. Mr. Laidlaw will see you shortly. I read the application. On the last page I write the following: "If the applicant is selected for a position, the applicant is required to pass a physical examination and drug screening test. If the applicant refuses to take either test, the applicant will be withdrawn from consideration for the position in question."

Then a tall blond man in his middle thirties, wearing a dark blue wool suit, approaches me.

DL: Hi, I'm David Laidlaw.
SM: Nice to meet you.
DL (smiling and looking at me): Would you like some coffee?
SM (also smiling): No, I'm fundamentally opposed to drug consumption, especially drug consumption on the job.
DL (confused): What? Well, come into my office and have a seat. I'd like to tell you a little bit about our company. Right now we have 11,000 employees at this site. In the next five years, we plan on expanding to 20,000 employees. We've already bought the land and have drawn up the plans. In 1985 we made over $150 million in profit. We have assets of close to one billion.
SM (looking at the SYNTAX management awards on the wall and the cluttered desk next to me): Can you tell me about some of your products?
DL (looking self-assured): Of course I can. In 1985 NAPROSYN was the fifth largest-selling pharmaceutical in the United States, with over two hundred and eighty-seven million dollars in sales. This year we released an anti-ulcer drug called GARDRIN in Mexico. We expect this drug to do quite well. If you join SYNTAX, you'll be joining a very stable corporation with a strong and diverse product line. You will not experience the ups and downs of corporations in the Silicon Valley.
SM (looking at David intently): Why wasn't GARDRIN released in the United States as well as Mexico?
DL: We haven't got clearance from the FDA.
SM: What percentage of SYNTAX's profit do you expect to come from urinalysis in the next five years?
DL (visibly upset and staring at the ground): Excuse me?
SM (looking directly at David): How much of your planned expansion is based on mandatory urinalysis tests?
DL (extremely nervous): I'm sorry I don't have figures on this subject. We do require all our employees to take pre-employment drug tests. All the big companies are moving in this direction. We believe it's in the employees' best interest to submit to drug testing.
SM (glowering): Why?
DL: Well, because there's a big drug problem in this area in particular and the nation in general. This is a very touchy subject. Some workers regard these tests as an invasion of their privacy. However, we believe that something must be done to stop drug abuse.
SM: It seems to me that pre-employment drug testing violates the fourth amendment of the Constitution. I don't see how you can make drug testing a requirement for employment. Furthermore, if SYNTAX were truly worried about drug abuse, it wouldn't market drugs that haven't been fully tested. If SYNTAX were really worried about drug abuse among its workers, it would provide voluntary and free medical programs for them.
DL (coldly): Well, we think our president —President Reagan—is one hundred percent behind drug testing. We don't think the Supreme Court will be rigid on this issue. Besides, urinalysis products are only a small part of our product line. Thank you for your interest in SYNTAX. Let me show you the door.
SM (smirking): Did I get the job?
DL (smoldering): I'll have to discuss your case with management!

—by Sarkis Manouchian
Can I have everyone's attention please? We're in the planetarium today to get acquainted with the autumn constellations.


And if there are any questions about Friday's lecture on the Big Bang and Steady State theories, feel free to raise them as well.

The lithe dancer I spent night with re-appears through swarms of students every week. Walkman tape player earphones glued on. Looks more pale and gaunt than usual. But can't talk to him, haven't talked in years, swimming by alone in the current.

You will need to remember a number of these constellations for your next quiz. For starters, let's take a look at Cygnus the Swan, over here.

I'm healthy, don't want to be branded. If I ask, the nurse's brisk routine would stumble into stutter into "One moment, please," reappearing a few minutes later with address of special testing clinic. She will hand it over to me at maximum distance, like the fencers touch their swords at start of match. What if someone saw me go to testing clinic? Don't want to know.

Professor Rennick, is it true that every galaxy is flying away from every other galaxy at an ever greater velocity?

The first scare was in 1983. Tom. Brief affair had been in 1981. By 1983 we were both in steady relationships. He with a man. I with a woman. Tom spoke of the scare he and his lover had had: They'd both been tired, their lymph node glands had been swollen. A flash passed between Tom's eyes and mine. "But it was nothing," he said. We've crossed paths less and less since then.

Professor Rennick, maybe it just appears from our position in the Milky Way that all the other galaxies are receding from each other. What if they are actually only moving away from us?

I worked as a dishwasher at a restaurant on Castro Street in 1984. When a customer came in who was obviously a victim of the disease, the waitress recommended I put his dishes in a separate dishpan, instead of the sink, "just in case." I'd heard there was only a minor possibility you could get it from saliva, but there had been some exceptional cases which raised questions. The man ate an enormous amount. So by the time I lugged this dishpan full of dishes, hot water and clorox into the alley way, I almost sprained my back. We talked about it a lot at the restaurant. Should we volunteer at Project Shanti? Should the baths be shut down? I began to see leaflets for benefits for the victims. One showed a picture of a healthy, sexy, vibrant young man, stripped to the waist, wearing feathers in his hair, glitter on his face, paint on his chest. After getting fired, I was happy to leave the neighborhood.

The apparent shift of the galaxies away from our own is not the only evidence we have of the Big Bang; there is also evidence of background radiation still in motion, coming evenly in all directions, a sort of distant echo from the Big Bang.

Getting fired was: talking to my friend on the phone (who had helped me get the job originally, when he quit), who told me that the restaurant owner said my coworkers were talking about problems they had working with me. Owner had to fire me after the Christmas rush. After hearing that, I quit a few days before Christmas. So it was good to leave the neighborhood.

I was escaping from it. I did not consider myself as part of the high-risk group. I was comforted by the blank unknown faces of a new neighborhood. Silent closed faces on the bus, crawling through traffic jams to school.

But the real question about the Big Bang is: will it continue to expand forever or will it collapse into itself?

I have two friends on opposite sides of the country with friends who are dying. Now I hear people saying that the incubation period could be 10 or 15 years. Not only will the upward curve of victims continue, but more people will be giving birth to children with the disease, and more will simply be afraid to reproduce. I cannot tell my new friends either. I know they will try to sympathize. But they will visit me in my new apartment less often. It's easier to call by phone. Phone voices will be muted, then recede into static. They will flinch when I hug them. How can I object? Just think of my friend Larry, who disappeared for years in the corridors of mental hospitals and welfare homes, reappearing ragged, and I kissed him on the cheek and not on the lips as I used to, because of flash fear: UNCLEAN.

It depends on the amount of matter in the universe. If there is less than critical mass it will be insufficient to stop the expansion.

Can't talk about it with the woman I live with.

The stars cool and die, matter itself decays and the universe becomes a thin cold haze of elementary particles.

Yes. I anticipate the great reversal, collapse, and the coming cosmic destruction.

—by Jeff Goldthorpe
Having been sick a lot as a child, I developed a great rapport with my doctor. We talked about everything, including sex, and because I was sexually active, I point blank asked my doctor for birth control when I was 14 years old. He gave it to me because he had expressed concern for my future. He was afraid that I might become trapped into teen motherhood.

I became sexually active with my boyfriend just before I turned 14. He was angry because I didn’t bleed a lot the “first time.” He accused me of not being a virgin, which was true. I was raped, very brutally, when I was five years old, and subsequently sexually abused until my teens. I could not tell my boyfriend this. He was insanely jealous and violent, and I already felt that the abuse was somehow my fault. Of course he also came from a violent, abusive home.

Our sexual life became our whole life. We couldn’t stay out of bed together—we did everything we could imagine, as often as possible. We both got burned out at a certain point—it was becoming obvious that “sex is not everything.” We fought a lot. He beat me. I was living with him in his grandmother’s house.

I tried returning to my mother’s house, but the violence there was much more literally life-threatening. I knew he would beat me, but I believed she would kill me. The last time I ever stayed in her house, she broke my bedroom door down with the poker (we had a coal stove), but when she rushed at me, my dog attacked her. He saved my life. When, in her lucid moments, I tried to ask her why she was the way she was, she told me I had it easy, that her father had beat her regularly with a horsewhip. She had scars on her back. She escaped into marriage. I escaped into sex.

Until my boyfriend, whom I trusted blindly and totally, my sexual feelings were confused with pain and abuse. With him, I felt love and warmth—albeit tinged with antagonism, some contempt, and lots of fear. It had just the right tone of familiarity to be bearable and even comfortable. When he began to develop a fixation with knives (my mother’s favorite weapon), and there was a bizarre accident where I was stabbed, I knew I had to leave.

I was lucky. When I ran away, I ran to good people who protected me. Even though I graduated from that life of sexual abuse into prostitution, I was at least not on the streets.

Most people who hear my story natur-
ally assume I must hate and fear all men. Yet men themselves have helped to prevent this. I have known and experienced the worst they can offer, but also the best.

For example, there was Ronnie Wiggins (how I wish he could read! I would love for him to read this). When I was in my early twenties I got a job as a receptionist in a massage parlor. I was trying to get out of the Life and even though Ronnie had pimped a little, he never even suggested that I go back into it. His pimp friends always teased him about that, and about how, when he was pimping, he hadn't bossed his women, or taken all their money. He was a "wimp pimp." He was just a kind man who really felt it when he hurt other people.

One night at work, I was raped. This man had come in several times to talk and I never suspected a thing. He had a long knife with him. My heart felt like he had twisted it into me. He told me he was a "Black Muslim" and that he had twelve Muslim friends outside who were going to come in and "cut me into little pieces."

When I went home to Ronnie, who is also a black man, he had a couple of friends over. I felt suddenly as though perhaps it was all a "Black Muslim" conspiracy —I was confused and frightened, even of Ronnie. He tried to talk to me, and then he began to make love to me. I was shocked. I thought he was getting off on what had happened to me, and it may be true that some element of that was present. But as he made love to me, he took hold of my arms, and looked into my face and repeated over and over—"It's ME, It's ME."

My response to that gesture was to realize there is a distinction between man and rapist, and between black man and black man as rapist.

Sure, I was raped by a brother. But I was also raped by my own brother—of the golden hair and green eyes. There were two striking similarities between them. They both had huge dicks, and they both wanted me to tell them it was "the best I'd ever had." Non-huge penises of the world, relax!

As I reached my mid-twenties, the last stage of moving out of the Life found me briefly on stage at the Sutter Street Theatre—a "classy" joint. The stunts there were for two weeks; pay was $500. I did not know that for the second week of appearance, I was supposed to work up a whole new show, and I couldn't afford a new costume, etc. The employers in these places are typically very "sympathetic" in a manipulative way. Had I explained to them that I didn't have the money to put together another show, I believe they would've offered to advance my pay. Then I would've had to use all or most of it to create a new show—therefore my goal of getting in and out with the whole $500 would have been defeated. Instead I told them I was burned out and would do my second week later on. I got a job at the Palace to try to get up the cash to finance my new show and have time to create one. The Palace Theatre, 55 Turk St., Tenderloin, San Francisco, was not nice. Men in the audience jerked off with wild abandon. The place was filthy and reeked of urine and semen.

The Sutter Street owners found out I was at the Palace, and when I called them, they lambasted me for my disloyalty and told me I was blacklisted from then on. The only work I would be able to get was in joints like the Palace. I was devastated. There was nothing to do but go on.

By this time, I felt I really had no sexuality except as the false seductress, and that role can only go so far in real life.

The projectionist (a handsome, sensitive, loving man with little of the "animal chal-

lengle" in his character) and I developed a friendship which eventually evolved into a love affair. His way was very gentle, though reserved. In this atmosphere, I felt free to stretch myself once again into the arena of my own sexual being. I have in fact known many good men who have helped me a great deal. But mostly, I am aware that my own efforts and determination have propelled me towards a full life.

It has been a very difficult struggle from cold to warm to human. Sometimes I still feel that I am going to die from the inside out. But I do finally believe there is a way out of the vicious cycle of violence, and the vicious cycle of sexual falseness. The feeling that it is "my fault" (typical self-blaming pattern in incest and sexual abuse) also is fading away.

I do not belittle the pain that I and others (so many others—the secret silently kills—but to face it seems like instant death) have endured, but I do believe that the issue of blame must be properly placed. The archetypal concept of evil does not fit. I cannot say my mother was to blame. I cannot say her father was to blame. Nor can I lay the fault at the hands of social workers who promised me "this time..."

Value is placed on things, and value judgments are passed on people. If he's dirty don't touch him. If she's sick don't go near. If it's pretty buy it.

I have learned there is a personal escape from poverty and violence. But I don't know if there is an escape from the vicious cycle of the world system. The knife seems to have been planted too deep—the infection seems to have spread too far. Somebody call the doctor...and if that doctor isn't in, we can always get Dr. Feelgood on the line.

—by Linda Thomas
**electriCity**

i've drunk so much coffee that lightning came in the room
and lit me up

there's one tiny point on my elbow that itches
when its near the power cord

i'm i with electriCity
and Switches

wired in like a heavy metal amp
to this hill of glowing metal ants

and the sound is of teeth grinding
and the sound is of teeth
and the sound is of teeth grinding
and the sound is of teeth

and the sound is of these damn teeth grinding
and the sound is of (....)
and

i've drunk so much coffee that lightning came in the room
and lit me up

*by julia barclay*

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**Science Fiction**

the buses and the telephones
have run out of gas
the sky makes a sound
you wouldn't want to hear

the moon is a white piece
of nothing special
somewhere it shines
on stained formica

POISONS
STOMP LIKE MOVIE
MONSTERS
THRU OUR COFFEE
AND OUR CUPCAKES

my love
step thru a broken window
and loot me a coat

the cables to utopia
have all been snapped
and its going to be
a long winter

*by Owen Hill*

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**UNTITLED**

I THOUGHT I WAS THE BELLE OF THE GODAMN BALL
BUT THE TOWN IS GOING OUT ON ME LIKE A SHOPLIFTING BLONDE

I THOUGHT I WAS A FLESH AND BLOOD ANGEL
BUT THE DREAM HAS MISBEHAVED
AND NOW I'M STARVING IN BARS

A clear conscience calls for a clear liquid
in a city where people leave their hearts
all ex-lovers and ex-patriots
their blood a poison
that tastes like tears

*by rosetta a.*
Sorry I'm late

but
I woke up with my period and found
my box of tampons had turned to dandelions,
gone to seed just like on the TV ads.

I left for work, early, in my new ruby slippers
and an awful wind took me from the bus stop
carried me all the way to K-Mart
into the arms of a scientologist
buying oil in the hardware section.
He helped me
find myself, my shoes.

In the elevator
a supervisor smelled my briefcase
told me
tuna sandwiches have been banned
in the secretarial pool.
(I snacked between the 8th and 11th floors
and had to wash my face).

Honestly, I woke up in time but
my Harley-Davidson is missing a cylinder
I had to move Mozart from the shower
I swear the calendar read 1958
the cat knocked over the moon
I slept in.

by Pam Tranfield

untitled

They want me to cut my long hair and beard
wear a suit and tie
and go in and out of skyscrapers
with a briefcase.
They want me back in the factory
sweating pathetic disillusioned
repudiating my Factory poem.
They want me cleaning pubic hairs off toilets
of capitalist entrepreneurs younger than me.
They want me delivering supermarket circulars
with bums who can’t read or write.
They want me on my knees begging God
for forgiveness for giving blowjobs
devoutly and fervently.
They want me institutionalized
under psychiatric care.
They know what drugs are best for me.
They want me to salute the American flag
with tears in my eyes.
They want me to say 1984
was nothing like the book.
They want me to write factories are so great
we should beg to work in them
for nothing.
They tell me I can still write poetry
and have a full-time factory
or computer job,
That I can write on my time off
as a hobby.
Better I write poetry full-time
and have a job on the side,
Better writing poetry full-time my job
and do no other work at all,
Better not to think of poetry
as a job, as work,
But play, divine play,
a joy like a singing bird
or leaping dolphin.
As Nietzsche said—"Live
as though the day were here."

by Antler

going for a job

I am going for a job interview
that may change my life
as I enter the conference room
a piece of snot falls out of my nose
and just hangs there

my whole future is dangling
my mind is suspended
I don’t know what to do
questions are being asked
why do you want to work here
they’ll find me out now
when would you be available
I am hanging on for dear life
from a giant slippery piece of snot
you’re hired they tell me
you’ll fit in just fine
here we all have snot hanging from our noses

by William Talcott
Wenda knew the fleeting sense of money. Wenda knew how quickly it was made and how quickly it was spent.

Wenda was beautiful and worked in a fancy men's store selling trousers.

Wenda cut cheese at Poured Drinks. She was a feeder. You could tell it the first time you saw her. Here was a feeder.

She worked so many jobs you couldn't keep up with her. You'd walk into a nice place and look around. Maybe Wenda would be there. Behind the bar. In the kitchen. Maybe over at the make-up stand. You never knew. Wenda was everywhere. I saw her over at the Ferrari place selling Ferrari. Next week it was Maserati. She was ubiquitous.

She sold to one clientelethe.. That was the string that pulled it all together, the thread in the melee. He had computer money. He lived down in the valley. Usually he was wearing argyle and some form of the updated classic. Button down shirts with an extra crease in the sleeve. Penny loafer in ostrich. Shetlands that were hand knit in Hong Kong. You couldn't miss them. Go to the place where they were, and there was Wenda, ready to serve.

Wenda knew new money. Everybody said so. Lamborghini money.

On Saturdays she was off and she was down at the Cafe Portola. She was at the bar hanging with the other girls who drank Kirs. They all had make-up on back to their ears and they all tried to dress like Wenda. All forty of them I ever saw tried to look like Wenda. Wenda clones called them. They had french bags with initials, Louie Bags, and tapered pants too short; so it made their legs look too long. You could tell a Wenda from a mile away. They all wanted those french legs.

They were all phonies though. They were all trying to copy the real thing. I never even looked one of them in the eye. I never even bought one a drink.

Wenda was California. From the top of her yellow head to the bottom of her ankle bracelet. It was California through and through. Wenda was from Chicago. That made her because she was a transplant living in San Francisco. She had that transient sensuality. A shark after the soft wear boys, a pursuer of new issues and prospectuses. A Ten D peeker. What they call a Wall Street Watcher.

She had that little Mercedes bought with all her boutique money, and it was as shiny as her skin. You couldn't separate her from the car. It was like another layer of face paint.

But why be disdainful. She was my only lover. She left me so now I call her the Wenda machine, and I look at all the girls and I think Wenda Wenda Wenda. Everybody looks like Wenda.

She sold me expensive trousers and a new car. She sold me Napa Valley. Wenda had everything. I'm thinking what do I need. A cruvinet?

I decide—if I take her down from the ankle diamonds on the bracelet, and strip off the red lacquer from the finger, wipe off the buff on the lips so it won't glow any more, strip it down to the real, layer it off until you can't find any more layers, then maybe I'll find it underneath—What's the real Wenda?

Wednesday my friend Harry says, "We go down to the Portola. We take a Wenda clone, maybe two Wenda clones, and we take them home. Then we see what's underneath, right?" I said "why not. What's it matter since they're all impostors anyway."

We got two. Wenda one and Wenda two. Harry got two and I took one. You couldn't tell them apart though. We started from the top with the hair stripper. Off with the blonde. We scrubbed down to the black. Then the face—all the way down to the pimplies. Here they are, one and two Wenda, on the bed, laid out, scrubbed clean. And what, They still look alike, like all the other Wendas. Taken from their body, dismembered, if you will, on the sheets they're still identical. Harry says, "Now what?"

"It proves to me one thing," I say.

"What's that?" Harry says. He's still got some Wenda all over him. Lipstick on the cheek that he's wiping.
"It proves that you take them apart, piece by piece, meticulous, scrub them until you can see yourself and the skin comes off, and they're still Wenda. You can't get any farther. I'm beginning to think we made a mistake."

Harry scratches his head. He was sure we were going to find something. He was sure there was something in these Wendas that would give off a clue, as to—Why Wenda? "Maybe you got to go out and find the real Wenda, bring her back here and then open her up. After all what separates the real from the fake?"

I have to agree with him. It's like the difference: image and reality, sign and signifier. "Where am I going to find her?" I throw up my hands.

"We'll look," Harry says. What more can he say.

So every day I'm in the city looking. Wilkes, Saks, MacArthur Park. All the holes, water or not. I'm fishing. The real Wenda, and I'm wondering will I recognize her when I see her, now that there are so many fake ones I've been through. It's going to be a test, rigorous eye examination.

But what else do I have to do with myself. Harry says, "Go to work. Develop more machines. The season's coming. The shows in Las Vegas. You've got to have a new machine." I'm thinking how can I think of chips with Wenda on my mind.

All winter I work on the new machine to get it ready for the show and the New York guys. I hate New York guys, but without them, no Wenda. The Wendas would disappear without the New York guys.

"Maybe Wenda is in New York," Harry says.

"Very funny." Harry is the system architect and he's too fat with stock. I say, "Get serious Harry."

Harry is laughing up a storm at the keyboard. He's like the Bukowski of Portola Valley with his schemes and sense of humor. "You're a beatnik," I tell him.

So with the spring approaching I'm in full gear. Up to the city in the Wenda car, wearing the Wenda pants, and the Wenda horn rims. I'm in the Wenda mode. Over to the party on Pacific. I can feel it. This is going to be the night. I'm going to get lucky.

There are a million Wendas; you've got to swim through them, and I'm on an odyssey. I meet two in the bathroom tooting through two dollar bills. This is it. "You seen Wenda?" They both smile. It's that inviting Wenda smile. But I don't buy it. Impostors. "The humor is wearing thin," I tell them.

Over near the bar there's a Wenda pouring drinks. Now that's more like it. A starting out Wenda, not an already-made-it Wenda. A Wenda of the proletariat, a proto Wenda.

"Hi. Let me have your specialty." This works with a Wenda.

Campari on the rocks, she pours. No Wenda here.

There is the pit near the barbecue where three Wendas are sunning themselves. I'm hot I tell myself. One whiff of the perfume though and I know, no Wenda here.

I'm ready to give up and head back to the valley when I see her. Wouldn't one know it. When all the Wendas are spent the real Wenda appears.

She's an upper Wenda. No pants but a Gallagous dress. She's been with the six million dollar option man for sure. She's reeking with fresh money. I'm thinking I see him and I know it's her. Pop his head in my face and bang I know it. The Network king for the day. He used to fix laundry machines before he invented networking. It's the buzzword now. Everybody wants it. Networking. I'm passe.

Where is the fiend?

"Wenda," I say, throwing caution to the wind.

"Billy?"

"Yeah."

"I can't believe it!"

It's Wenda all right, the real one. I'm thinking what now. Harry where are you?

"MUSHHCCOOO."

Wenda machine kiss. Big with the lips. "I've been looking for ages," I say. "Now I've got to show you."

We're already walking to the car. She thinks it'll be a remembered one for our sake in the back of the Wenda machine. Networking is working and not even here. She doesn't know from nothing. Dumb Wenda as usual.

Down south we go, out of the city, to the Skyline and up to the house. We're out of the car and I'm thinking, first in the tub for the wash, then the scraping. She's kissing at my ear.
"Harry get over here," I say. I'm in the john with the john phone. "The real Wenda is here."

I entertain until Harry comes with the tools. We're undressed when he arrives and she's screaming. Typical Wenda move, the guarded life. I had enough of it years ago.

"Take her down Harry. Let's go from the top. Bathtub first."

"Christ," Wenda is saying. "I've never been this humiliated."

Harry is scrubbing. Best scrubbing I've ever seen. No follicle goes unturned.

"NONONON." She is laughing and screaming and crying. Just like a Wenda.

"This it," Harry is saying. He's got the industrial stripper in his hand, I can see it now. We both are looking. We both are awed. The real Wenda; it's coming through. Harry is dancing. "I told you. The real Wenda would reveal.

Wenda has fainted now. Too overwhelmed to witness her own revealing, her own uncovering. Mystery of womankind right here, unveiled in the Wenda room in front of the valley boys. "Chopped out," Harry says. "You can't put it in words. One has to see it. No narrative can tell."

It was exactly what I was thinking: I had to second.

You can't tell a Wenda by its cover. You can't tell one by its impostor. You've got to get the real Wenda and open her up to see. Then it's untranslatable, like Christ in flesh.

We're popping the champagne for the Wenda machine. Picture two guys, self-made guys, sitting around at the top of the Skyline with the secret of womankind. The Wenda secret, the reality principle. Harry says, "Wow O." I don't know what he's talking about. He's overwrought.

But it's profound. I sit back and feel the tears. Like Quixote after the quest. Oter.

I have ended the search and we have dug down to find the real Wenda. First thing I'm thinking—How to profit. Maybe give a call to Biogen and snap up the Wenda patent. Harry's got the gene right in his hand now. Just staring at it. No more fake Wenda. We've got real Wenda. He's handling it like a peach pit, rolling it in his fat little fingers and rubbing at the creases. It's a new industry—birth of the Wenda industry—two guys in a house up above the valley.

"Stop fingering the Wenda gene," I tell him. It makes me nervous. Harry is the horniest guy I know. He can't stop looking.

"Sorry," he says, "but I'm overwhelmed. They're never going to believe this at the club."

"You're not going to tell anyone," I say. "No squash shit bragging."

"O.K. O.K."

I can see the New York guys drooling. It's in my head. The newspaper headline, the interviews. More People press. A return to grace for two has-beens. I'll win her back from Networking. It's all in my head.

Then Wenda wakes up. A temporary lapse. She's disoriented and drunk, and she shrieks when she looks at herself in the mirror. Just lets out the meaniest scream you ever heard. "MY MAKE—UP!" You'd think she was witnessing Hiroshima.

It's so deafening we have to cover our ears. She is running around the room like a new plucked chicken. It is a terrible sight, and Harry has still got the gene in his fingers. I don't want to say it was pretty. It soothed us up for sure; knocked the stuffings and the Roter out of our heads. We were split and scared. Womankind in the real. She was looking at herself, the real Wenda. Too much for her.

"Calm her down," Harry says.

It was understatement like Harry never has. She's over the balcony and falling down to the gravel before we can do a thing. Carcass and all. One look was all it took.

"Cops," Harry says. "They'll believe us."

He hoists the gene.

I'm broken up and crying, leaning on the cedar pool, and letting the tears out for the first time. The real Wenda is gone and I killed her.

"All in the name of truth," Harry says, and pats my back. "Listen pal, it was in the name of science and mankind, in the name of bio-tech." Platonic ideal he even tries. Nothing works though. I'm crying over my Wenda till the cops come. My poor Wenda. And Harry has to do all the explaining.

"Genes! Genes!" he is screaming.

It was hopeless. Cuffed steel. They lead us out. The Wenda murderers. All over the valley that's what they call us. The Wenda killers. Every Wenda hates us now. But we've got the gene and we convinced the judge. He termed it suicide. It was a male verdict. The women wanted murder, not manslaughter. They wanted the full thrashings of the law on us.

Instead I'm fast with the Wenda gene, the exclusive. I'm living with our first manufacture, Wenda-sub one, and it's like beauty. Call it technology. I like to think we've replaced the need for sentiment. Now it's pure manufacture. She's user friendly like never before, my Wenda.

—by James Pollack
"How many cases of AIDS have been reported in Kentucky?"

"Can you hold while I look that up?" I turn to the printout at the front of the AIDS Hotline Encyclopedia. "OK, looking at the Center for Disease Control list here, it shows Kentucky as the 39th highest state at 56 reported cases."

"Really? Well, how about Georgia?" "Georgia is 9th with 148 reported cases." "Can you look up Oregon?" "25th with 101 cases." "Delaware, what's Delaware?.."

The woman asks for at least 5 more states before I finally ask why she wants to know. "Are you writing an article?" "No, uh, I just want to know."

Perhaps she is just idly curious. But I suspect she wants to know where to move to be "safe." But I'll never know for sure. All I can do is give out the information. It's up to the receiver to determine how she wants to use it.

I've been volunteering at the San Francisco AIDS Foundation hotline for a few months now. I do it because it is a good way to keep up on AIDS research, treatment, education and politics. I do it because I think education is the best way to stop the spread of the disease.

Hotline workers go through an intensive 16-hour training that covers the gamut of the epidemic: the biology of the AIDS virus, immunology, safe sex, safe needles, talking comfortably about sex, community resources. At the start of each shift, each hotline worker reads through the "This Week" section to find out what's new in the "Encyclopedia," a looseleaf compendium of articles, memos, brochures arranged by subject. The subjects include things like: oral sex, opportunistic infections, alternative treatments, women and AIDS.

The calls are a steady test of how much I've absorbed. At least once very fifteen minutes, sometimes three or four times in a row, someone calls up wanting to know where to get the AIDS antibody test. Quick, easy, boring. I have the San Francisco number memorized, and I'm a person who barely knows his own phone number. California has set up anonymous testing sites in most regions. Instead of using names, the patient is assigned a number that is used through the whole process of counseling, testing, disclosing results. The test is conclusive and can alleviate fears. It's especially useful in cases like where the caller guiltily obsesses about a one night stand they had three years ago. When the test was first announced, some feared it would be used for work and insurance screening. Some people stupidly and callously use it for selecting lovers. The test is a good thing, but open for abuse.

I like the sex calls best. Not that they're titillating; they're mostly matter of fact, humorless even. People take their sex lives
very seriously. I'm touched by the way people pursue pleasure in a repressive period: the guy in Georgia who likes to go to strip joints, the married woman in Sacramento who has a lover in San Francisco who she understands "lives quite the wild life," the straight guy in Walnut Creek who likes to go home with men "now and then, when I'm in the mood." I talk with them about what they do, and how they can do it with less risk. Condoms, condoms, condoms. It's probably safe to kiss, here's why. Please, go right ahead and use that dildo, as long as you don't share it.

The hotline is getting more and more calls about using drug needles. These callers are not incoherent, crazed freaks. And while frequent bouts of safe sex are probably healthier than frequent bouts of intravenous methadone, like with the sex calls, these people have found something that gives them pleasure and they want to know how to do it safely. We tell the callers to plunge the needle in a bleach and water solution, as little as 1 part bleach to 10 parts water works. Afterwards, draw water up and out at least twice to clean the works out; bleach can be very caustic to veins. I had a caller protest that the bleach also breaks down the needle's rubber stopper, which must be true. The best solution would be to legalize over the counter sale of needles, or even free needle distribution. But the drug moralists would rather see long painful deaths from AIDS than allow the easy obtaining of " paraphenalia."

Some things I hate. I hate when the TV cameras come to film. The reporters are very distracting. I remember talking to a man who thought he had caught AIDS from his girlfriend. He wanted to beat her up—a tough emotional scene. All the while cameras were filming my 'live drama.' I was trying to focus on this caller, but felt oddly self-conscious, like every word was being excruciatingly judged. I couldn't concentrate; the call ended badly. Television may be the ultimate means of mass communication, but mass media is mass voyeurism, using other people's trauma to titillate a population of couch potatoes.

The AIDS Foundation's Media Director is the worst sort of self-important brat. She orders volunteers around in a way that no one else would dare, or perhaps care to. When she's not being a bruiser, she's a human smile button, using all the tricks out of the How to Manipulate People book. The chapter she forgot to read is "How Not To Be Obvious."

The Foundation is a bureaucracy. It may be "politically progressive, gay sympathetic, equal opp. [sic], maybe even self-critical. But it's still a bureaucracy with all the impulses toward self-preservation and self-importance. The slavishness to mass media and the consequent distortion of the Media Director's personality is one expression of this. Another expression is a survey released earlier this year. The survey inflated the AIDS carrier base among the Bay Area heterosexual population. It supported an argument that the Bay Area needed a larger educational campaign. Of course the Foundation would be the contractor for a huge portion of this campaign—institutional preservation overrides the real truth.

Despite these problems, I'm drawn back week after week. I like the busy days best, the days when the calls come in at a manageable pace—not too fast, not too many long gaps. If it's too busy, I leave feeling on edge. At my last shift, I fielded more than 20 calls during a three hour shift. By the end, I felt like an overworked Bell operator, checking myself from being too snappy, not always succeeding.

Slow days can be pleasant, if the other hotline workers are amiable. It's odd though. I guess because the calls set such a strong emotional tone, I develop strong feelings about other workers, even though I see them maybe once for three hours every three weeks and hardly talk to them even then. If I run into a coworker I like on the street, it's instant ease and friendliness. If I run into one I dislike, I skirt around, avoiding them like an old boyfriend from whom I parted awkwardly.

My life was a lot less busy when I started working at the hotline. I should stop. But I'm still answering calls.

—By Mark Leger

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SAFE SEX GUIDELINES
FROM THE SF AIDS FOUNDATION

SAFE—

- Mutual masturbation (male or female)
- Social kissing (dry)
- Body massage, hugging
- Body-to-body rubbing
- Light S & M activities (without bruising or bleeding)
- Using one's own sex toys

POSSIBLY SAFE—

- Anal intercourse with condom
- Fellatio interruptus (sucking—stop before climax)
- Mouth-to-mouth kissing (wet)
- Urine contact (watersports)
- Vaginal intercourse with condom
- Oral-vaginal contact (cunnilingus)

UNSAFE—

- Receptive anal intercourse without condom (being fucked)
- Insertive anal intercourse without condom (fucking)
- Manual-anal intercourse (fisting)
- Fellatio (sucking)
- Oral-anal contact (rimming)
- Vaginal intercourse without condom

MORE INFO: 863-AIDS

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DRESSES FOR GIRLS

- matching tie and handkerchief
- deodorant shoeliners
- a second clip of ammunition

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PROCESSED WORLD 18
An office worker rests in a sleeping device called a "Cerebrex" for quick recovery from fatigue at the Oyasumido-koro Salon that opened in Tokyo last summer. Using it for an hour is equivalent to eight hours' sleep, claims Japanese inventor Dr. Yoshiro Nakamatsu, winner of the 1986 International Invention Grand Prix.

Bank Busters

"Labor relations? We are pleased to announce that in 1985 we were again successful in having no labor relations." This remark did not actually come from an executive of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, but from someone dressed up as one. Last January on the day of the Bank's annual shareholder meeting its women employees on strike in the Bank's Visa section in Toronto, and their supporters, staged their own mock shareholders' meeting. It looked like an annual meeting and they talked like bankers, but the content was definitely different. There were reports from the strike, and unionists posed as bank executives producing the kind of statements they believed the Bank should have been making. "High profits?" reported one, "It's all because of our guiding principle: demand from others that they sacrifice for the general good while we pursue whatever is necessary for our own self-interest."

The mock annual meeting, though light-hearted, was not just a joke. It was part of a well planned and brilliantly run campaign by the women bank workers in a
seven-month strike for union recognition which has linked industrial action with media pressure, consumer and creditor boycotts and legislative lobbying. Across town, at the real annual meeting, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, the second largest bank in Canada, was actually announcing a 28% profit rise over 1984 and salaries for its top 105 officers averaging $112,000 each last year.

Such announcements only hardened the women's resolve to continue the strike against Commerce. They had received no across-the-board salary increase for five years, although favorite employees had received up to 30% more on a merit basis. The average wage in the Visa section is $18,000 a year and some women only earn $12,000. Women workers had unsuccessfully complained to management about increasing sexual harassment from supervisors, and there were other complaints about job security and new technology. It was the Bank’s refusal to listen to these grievances that led 1,000 women to walk out of their office on June 12, 1985. When other women in the section realized a strike had started they quickly joined in, including 60 women from the mail room.

That such a strike should take place at all is quite extraordinary.

Of the country's 150,000 bank employees, 90% of whom are women, only about 1% are unionized. The women at Commerce did not have any union membership when they decided to walk out. However, they soon joined the newly formed Union of Bank Employees. The Union, though small and relatively weak, was set up specifically to organize bank workers.

To fight such a giant as the Commerce the women realized they would need help. They went to the Canadian United Auto Workers (UAW) union and asked for support. They got it. The UAW provided full-time officers to help with the organizing, and the Canadian Labor Congress provided $300 a day strike pay.

While Canadian unions came to their help, the women themselves devised some entirely new strike tactics, which were to astonish more traditional labor organizers. The most effective of these was what the strikers came to call "electronic picketing." Using their knowledge of computer systems, the women set a computerized automatic redialling system to continuously call the bank. These jammed the Bank’s switchboard with up to 50,000 calls a day, each giving a recorded message of the strike demands. Other calls were set to emit an excruciatingly high pitch whistle of the kind fitted to deter “heavy breathers.”

Unions in the meantime were persuaded to withdraw their accounts from the Bank which then saw $15 million worth of its business disappear.

On another occasion the strikers asked someone to open an account. The strikers and supporters then lined up in the Bank at peak business time on a Saturday, for what they called a “bank-a-thon,” each to deposit one cent in the account. As the bank counters choked up and customers milled around the foyer, strikers sang their theme song “Bank Busters” and handed out “Marie Antoinette Cake” to the delayed customers, in recognition of the Bank’s “let them eat cake” attitude and by way of compensation for the long queues. A television camera crew who began to film these events got hauled out of the Bank by security guards. By the time the Bank refused to accept anything more into the account there was a total balance of $18.

The strikers have been adept at using the media and have staged other well-timed and imaginative protests. The mock annual meeting was one such action. Another was when they showered the Bank's central lobby with a confetti storm of thousands of deposit slips while they handed out leaflets with their demands to the customers. In December, customers were serenaded with Christmas carols putting over the women’s case. The women presented the bank managers with bread and roses —bread for the workers’ low wages and roses for their dignity being denied— symbols now commonly used by women workers in North America to express their demands.

Throughout the strike, the bank refused to negotiate with the women workers or accept any kind of independent arbitration. But the tactics of the women and the determination of the Canadian labor movement to keep financial support for the strike going began to tell. The Bank started to make noises about re-opening talks, but still refused mediation. Eventually, as the campaign brought the dispute continually into the news, the Canadian Labor Relations Board stepped in and enforced a settlement. On January 28, after seven months on strike, the crowd of women packed into a church meeting hall in a Toronto suburb. They erupted into emotional screams, whistles and cheers when they heard that they had won a union contract. With hugs and tears they passed around picket signs to be autographed by all their coworkers.

The contract is the start rather than the
Why I Humiliate

I have spent the last three years of my job life as a corporate pariah, i.e., a word processing temp. I have worked for many financial district corporations, promiscuously moving from department to department, company to company. I do it for the money. We temps are usually viewed as the gypsies in medieval Europe: a wild, undisciplined lot with odd customs, ill-suited to stability. In the course of my wanderings I have encountered a ubiquitous configuration of processed people—aggressive yuppies, plastic-smiling neurotics, and spineless bureaucrats. The most redoubtable character in this wornout scenario is the middle manager.

The middle manager has no real basis for power. He or she may loom majestic and terrible, even Stalinistic about non-conformism, but his or her authority rests on the shaky foundation of a "professional" image. The middle manager is thus vulnerable to a certain act that certainly disrupts a humdrum life and may dethrone him or her altogether.

The act in question is humiliation. I have developed and refined several venal strategies that counteract the middle manager's tyranny. This sort of vengeance is a savory pleasure to contemplate. Intrinsically rewarding, it is a good, healthy way to expel pent-up anger and right some wrongs in the corporate hellhole.

My seeming messiah complex developed during the summer I slaved as a temp word processor/secretary for the anal-retentive, tax-accountant director of a starchy corporation. Mr. Wilson was a pale man, with thick horned spectacles, who spoke slowly and deliberately. No detail was too inconsequential for his probing, fastidious mind. No errant paper clip or old status report cluttered his sensible desk. The only human touch in his stark office was a photo of his homely wife and children.

I knew I was in trouble from the start. I had noted that all the secretaries were pretty, young, and female. The accountants were old, gray, and joyless. Striving to appear productive and genuinely concerned with the color-coded filing system, I feigned remorse when confronted with errors, that is, professional lapses. Before long I knew I would be ready for primal scream therapy.

In the meantime there were crossword puzzles. Outraged accountants reported me to Mr. Wilson in due course, and being completely caught up was no excuse. A temp is a costly expense. Mr. Wilson told me, and must never be seen idle. The remedy he advocated was filing, filing, and more filing.

Then he studied me silently for a moment, gathering his thoughts. How long had I worked as a temp? he asked cautiously. Why so long? Wasn't I interested in a permanent job? What did my parents say about this? Did I have problems with interviews? Shaken by my responses, he prescribed assertiveness training.

I was caught off guard. I saw red. I wanted to lash out. I could hardly refrain from taking a swing at this constipated curmudgeon; only my ringing phone prevented it.

In the ensuing weeks Mr. Wilson continued to pick away at my dignity with pointed questions. He freely dispensed unsolicited advice vis-à-vis my professionalism, maturity, and masculinity.

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Reprinted from International Labor Reports, P.O. Box 5036, Berkeley, CA 94705.

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end of the fight. It is a contract imposed by the Labor Relations Board, not the women, although it contains many of their demands. It also only lasts for a year.

The unions feel the imposition of the contract is a real step forward, however. One organizer in the new Union of Bank Employees said, 'I've got 1,500 people sitting right here now in Toronto waiting for the outcome of this before they decide whether to join.' The banks and finance houses also see the decision as a dangerous breakthrough for the unions. Mike Walsh, a bank analyst with First Marathon Securities Ltd., told the Toronto Globe and Mail that he expects many companies to try and improve conditions in order to forestall unionization. But he added, 'I'm not sure a couple more company picnics will do it... The unions have now established a beachhead, and it's not just a beachhead against Commerce, it's against financial service companies in general.

—Anne Simpson
By the assignment's end I had mastered his humiliation. Having purchased an assortment of explicit color magazines depicting unspeakable sex acts—Wildman wonders, sapphic secrets, and bestial boudoirs—I sent them to his suburban home.

The following dedication accompanied them: To Herbert Wilson, the kindest man in San Francisco, love Lulu." Because I had stamped "confidential" all over the envelope, I envisioned his curious wife standing beside him as he opened it. When I coincidentally ran into Mr. Wilson on the street I found him paler and thinner than I remembered him.

Louise Shapiro was another insufferable boss, her head inflated by her title of vice-president. She had the arrogance of Marie Antoinette and the tact of Attila the Hun. During my first week her sneaky eyes were continuously upon me, and she repeatedly asked me if I was busy. Before long I learned that her sycophantic staff ritualistically laughed at her attempts at humor and rushed to do her bidding. Her groveling analysts submitted reports that she marked up with arbitrary and unnecessary changes. As her word processor, I discovered that she had shabby writing skills and a limited grasp of grammar and spelling. Louise Shapiro often used words not found in a standard dictionary, words she made up. Whenever I pointed out discrepancies she'd glare and snap, "They know what we mean." She routinely belittled her black secretary. With imperious disdain she'd toss an unsatisfactory report at her and urge her to type faster.

I resolved to punish Louise Shapiro. I wrote a memo on official stationery to the company's CEO on her behalf. The memo opens with her support and admiration for her perseverance in a stormy financial climate. It steams ahead into "I think you're full of style and savvy. Everything about you excites me. I'd love to meet you for some after-hours interfacing. Baby, you can deposit in my account, but remember, substantial penalty for early withdrawal." I duplicated her signature and mailed it in an interoffice envelope.

Success! When the CEO office contacted her, she burst into a hot, angry tantrum of tears, slamming her office door and not emerging the rest of the day. Her arrogance was subsequently restrained and her rudeness more sparring. No doubt she lived in daily fear of more humiliation. So how could I withhold it? I had a friend call her up at three in the morning, saying that he was answering her ad in an adult magazine for swinging couples.

In another impossible temp assignment, I encountered Poodle Woman, an habitually grouchy vice-president of a financial department. No less than eleven photos of her pet poodle adorned her office walls.

My role had been described as secretarial, but I soon learned that I was to fetch water for her, bring her coffee while in conference, and pay her department's bills—the latter a bookkeeping function for which I hadn't been trained. For many days I managed to "overlook" these supplementary duties. She would not allow any personal phone calls and would blanch if she saw a folded newspaper on my desk. One of her assistants once spotted a pile of envelopes (my own) on my desk. "Oh!" she shrieked. "Don't let her see you with those on your desk!" One would think I had soiled underwear on display.

The final straw was Poodle Woman's summoning me into her office to reiterate office policy concerning phone calls and personal business at work. I surmised that Poodle Woman was not satisfied with my error-free, 90 words-per-minute word processing but demanded submission to her will in all matters. Meanwhile, my attention was diverted by the many photos of her beloved poodle.

How was I to punish this poodlephilia dominatrix? From the rolodex on my desk, I had already found her address and Visa card number. Then I spotted a hair care magazine nearby and, reminded of her poodles, sent away for a large, afro stretch wig to be sent to her place of work and charged to her Visa. Consider the indignity. Picture the discomfort of a middle-aged, conservative, white woman when she received this wig in front of her colleagues.

Humiliation is the temp's ultimate weapon in the corporate world. Its very nature—low, sneaky, and vicious—well reflects many middle managers—and thus allows for some poetic justice in this troubled world. And why take out office-generated hostility on loved ones and friends when you can return it to its source? If you should decide to humiliate, go to it with relish. Punish the bastards. Entertain like-minded friends with tales of your exploits and become known as a folk hero. A good humiliation is the stuff of legends.

by François Oyar
Dear P. Morales et al:

Although I found that Processed World did have its good moments, I'm afraid those moments were too occasional for me to renew my subscription.

The number of memorable items I found in the past year was smaller than I had hoped. In Issue 16 there were the two short pieces, "Liveware" and Silicon Valley Girl," which were notable for their freshness and wit. Issue 15 gave "Road Warriors and Road Worriers," whose subject matter had the virtue of novelty. The Herbert Kohl interview in Issue 14 offered expert knowledge. And every issue had interesting tidbits of news and information.

But oh my! what else there was. There was just too much in the style of "Pressures of the Assembly Line" (Issue 16): the daily grind of an employee who dislikes his job. So much bad poetry, too. And so many platitudes from Marx's kindergarten. The bluster annoyed me. To cap it all off, most of the writing was inferior.

I think Processed World is, at heart, a union magazine, aimed at a small market, industry-specific and California-based. I had hoped to find a magazine which provided more thoughtful and broadminded critiques of the advent of the Information Age, using good research and plausible theorizing. I wish you luck in the enterprise you have chosen.

Yours sincerely,
D.S.—Toronto, Ont.

NO MORE PRIMA DONNAS

Dear Processed World:

Someday your magazine will self-destruct from terminal boredom, or your LSD-nightmare graphics will give your regular readers brain tumors. Pieces by the likes of D.S. Black and Tom Clark are superior and worthy, but as for the rest of it, I can only ask how long can you go on publishing such insufferably banal writing—writing that is as boring as the work written about—writing that is nothing more than runny-shit complaining by irate and frustrated workers? Most of them are probably no more than sniveling fuck-offs to begin with who haven't been laid in months.

It is such an old and tiresome tale; an obsessive theme, I agree, having just spent the last ten years as an office drudge in downtown San Francisco. Your mag does not lack in obsession, but it does lack in one very important quality, for the most part: VISION.

Charles Bukowski's FACTOTUM and POST OFFICE, George Orwell's DOWN AND OUT IN PARIS AND LONDON, and Jim Daniel's book of poems, PLACES/EVERYONE, detail the essential bleak hell of working without the luxury of self-pity. They are basic, lyric evocations of the workaday world minus the "Who is me?" attitude that so many people think is fashionable to sport.

There is a current trend in media to glorify the American worker, a truly obnoxious and vulgar trend. Whether factory redneck or computer yuppie, there is no glory in spiritually barren work for money.

And yet by some weird, ass-backward logic, your journal, through the constant bellyaching and criticism of work, somehow seems to me to end up as nothing more than an unconscious mouthpiece for the Protestant Work Ethic.

I think you are a capitalist plot. What do the people who write and read your magazine really want? It appears that they have already dead-ended, in more ways than one. One must create one's own alternatives. Working, through an almost superhuman effort of the will and imagination, must become juicy grist for the creative mill; it must be integrated into the whole cloth of life, not because it is relevant or necessary but because IT IS a part of life, however horrifying and brutal it often is. But then isn't life full of horrifying and brutal things?

Maybe I just miss your point. Maybe you enjoy being crybabies. Some people just like to complain. It is a form of voiding oneself. Perhaps it is even sexual for some.

My attitude is to go out and put in my time everyday without too much noticeable disintegration and to keep myself sane enough to go home and enjoy a quality life, in my REAL life, at home with my wife, and doing my real work at the desk.

You have to have a thousand personalities to get through this trip.

Life is short, work is long. For most of us, there is no escape from some kind of work. So what? Bruce Springsteen takes it in the ass.

Alternatives; remember them? One choice is suicide. The other is up to you, to survive and create the dream worlds of your choice out of the raw mud of reality. Which is a lot of work.

G. Sutton Breiding—S.F.

JOB SATISFACTION THROUGH FASTER TYPING?!

Dear Processed World,

When I saw the little yellow cover and the girl being rated "non-user friendly," I said, That's My Magazine. I now like the large format and thought the last issue that came to me was good. I liked Florence Burns and her quip about "designer typing."

I do not subscribe to all the bitching that goes on in the magazine. Some of it makes one aware of problems. The VDT problem is blown out of proportion. There are ways of behaving around VDTs that will not result in poorer health. A brief break once an hour is not frowned on by my employer, and I take this break once an hour.

Job satisfaction is what we all want, and I finally concluded today that you find that within yourself. I have a long processor history starting with the MTSTs in 1970. I am now in a processing job that I've had 8 years. I just found out that job satisfaction comes from your trying to be good at it. Do not be deceived by dull surroundings or dull copy. You don't have to be dull. Getting your typing skills (keyboard skills) to improve will start getting you job satisfaction. When a person types 90 or more words a minute, typing lengthy reports can be fun. I don't type that fast but I do aim at getting better and faster. Sometimes I stop and put my hands on splay, that
means typing splay-fingered with each finger acting like a little rod, and this is good when you are spelling a difficult word or simply need a change from the curved finger mode. There's a lot of room for job satisfaction if you believe it can be done and if you work on methods to get really good at it. Do you know how bleak and unproductive wild nature can be? Then you will come gratefully back to civilization and processing.

J.K., a subscriber—S.F.

SUBVERTING CITICORPSE®

Dear P.W.,

I'm a messenger for a theater. A few weeks ago I was making a pickup at Citibank. While there I also picked up a poster distributed to potential and current androids. I decided to correct it a little. [see below]

I've already distributed my altered version to the propaganda table where I found the first one.

P.W. does a lot toward making my 50+ hour work-week bearable. Keep up the good work.

Love, Frieda People, NYC

P.S. The original headline was "The Mirror of a Professional" (Gag!)

ANIMAL EXPERIMENTATION = BARBARISM

Dear Processed World,

I was happy to see the issue of animal rights raised in Processed World #16, and would like to take issue with a point regarding how animal experiments may be regulated in an enlightened society, in the article "When Should Curiosity Kill?" by Tony Lamanna.

I feel that regulating the use of animals in experiments is like regulating the humane conditions of slaves. I, like Bernard Shaw, do not believe that you can settle whether an experiment is justified by demonstrating its usefulness (ends do not justify means). It is not a question of useful or useless experiments, but between barbarous and civilized behavior. Even if vivisection has advanced human knowledge, it has done so at the expense of human character.

C.M.—San Francisco

PRAISE THE LORD AND PASS THE REMOTE CONTROL

Dear P.W.,

Fear is un-American. It is, in fact, downright unpatriotic. When Americans sense a problem the first thing they do is declare war on the beast. We have seen the War on Drugs, the War on Crime, the War on Illiteracy, and the War on Poverty. We categorically condemn those not willing to fight these wars for us. Draft resisters of the 60's were condemned as cowards. A judge not willing to condemn a man to death is in turn condemned for being soft on crime. And Carter was cast out of the White House for not declaring war on Iran. After all, our cultural heroes are not the types to sit in a fallout shelter waiting for negotiations and peace in our time. We have the likes of John Wayne, sixguns blazing; Superman bouncing lethal trajectories off his chest; Mr. T granting monosyllabically into the hearts and minds of the heartless and mindless; and Luke Skywalker? Does anyone need to be told where his story has taken us? Unfortunately, in spite of what many people, including our fearless leader, seem to believe; John Wayne is dead, this is not a Hollywood set, and no one will get up when the film stops running.

As the problems grow more severe and as the feelings of hopelessness and fear increase, ever greater myths and heroes are needed to quell the instinct towards panic. So now we find ourselves with a new media hero. Look out, you folk-heroes of the past. Jesus Christ, Superstar is here to save us all! And when He saves someone, they stay saved.

Americans are, at best, an intellectually lazy group. We know more about Jessy James, General Patton and the Son of Sam than we do about Thomas Jefferson, Ralph Waldo Emerson or Alexander Graham Bell. Why? Because the former make for better heroes. We want everything to be black and white, right
and wrong and it must have a simple, yet happy solution, preferably in 90 minutes, including commercial interruptions. Forget the great areas. Don't tell us who the hell we are supporting in Nicaragua or why, but do tell us when we have conquered the evil forces in Grenada.

So now, in the land of the free and the home of the brave, we cower in front of our television sets, watching for signs of salvation. To eliminate the fear of nuclear annihilation, the whole concept has been made justifiable by making it desirable. Why try to stop it? It's God's will. It's preordained. We can't stop it anyway. It's not death. It's salvation. Surrendering our lives to science seems to have created more problems than it is capable of solving. Surrendering to the fear of the daily news has kept us behind locked doors and wondering what is in our drinking water besides hydrogen and oxygen. Surrendering to God allows us an air-tight excuse to sit on our collective ass and wait for the END.

It is at first difficult to understand the logic used in the rambling monologues of the new electronic evangelists, but with time, a pattern emerges. Everything they say is carefully designed to make those viewers, especially those who are donating hefty sums, feel superior in every way possible. In this way, they are able to further a social agenda structured to make the individual ever more dependent on them for constant behavioral direction. Allowing a crack of any kind into this shaky structure would send the audience scrambling for a new myth and the preachers running for Argentina. All logic is wrapped tightly around a patently absurd premise and an even more absurd promise. Hence, there is constant encouragement to cling to a set of stories and parables of ancient times whose meanings are silly Putty in the hands of those with a hard-on for wealth and power. The following is a partial list of the social agenda they are trying to promote.

1) We must reinstitute prayer in the public schools. This will insure another generation of mindless twits submitting to the wills and bank balances of the teevee preachers. (I have personal doubts as to the success of this technique as I was of the generation who was force-fed prayer in public schools and I have remained a devout agnostic in spite of it.)

2) AIDS came along just in the nick of time. Now, in addition to the biblical ban on homosexuality, stemming no doubt from gross underpopulation of the time, which is hardly a problem we have today, there are alleged health reasons for condemning gay people. What a convenient way to show that God is raining a plague on the people who go against His will. Apparently, God is also rather ticked at Haitians and hemophiliacs.

3) A lot of people are out of work and it's obviously a result of women joining the work force. Women belong in the home being good wives and mothers. What could be more meaningful than ironing? Just ask Phyllis Schlafly, a woman who has made a career of telling women it is wrong to have a career.

4) Abortion must be banned and the death penalty must be enforced. Right. Apparently one has to be born so as to have the opportunity to repent, be saved and give, give, GIVE. On the other hand, if someone should become a killer, they must pay a life for a life. This is assuming, of course, that this killing didn't take place as a result of a God-sanctioned war. You know, the ones where we are fighting the "godless commies." Instead of shipping the Soviets grain, we should be sending them Gideon's surplus bibles. After all, it is for their "own good."

5) Toxic waste, nuclear power, strip mining, and the list goes on ad nauseum. Don't sweat any of it. As James Watt so patiently pointed out, Armageddon is just around the corner so it doesn't matter that we passively allow Big Business to destroy the planet at this point as it will just be cosmic debris next Thursday.

6) Drugs, pornography, prostitution, rock & roll...Hey! We are talking MONEY with a capital $$. Money better spent on a new fur for Tammy Bakker, a new Rolls Royce for Jimmy Swaggart, and Pat Robertson's campaign for the Oval Office. Moral outrage? Don't be ridiculous.

The logic is bizarre, at best. As outraged as I was reading about the vast numbers of people taken in by this crap, I always felt grateful that none of my friends had signed over their souls. A few years ago, this ceased being the case.

Brad was a friend of mine from college who was fairly typical of the late 60's and early 70's. He had hair down to his ass, a sincere interest in recreational drugs, and was consistently to the left of center politically. In his quest for meaning in life, he emerged unschooled from bad acid trips, est, TM, Scientology, and working for the USDA. Unfortunately, he was not so lucky with being "born again." Now every third sentence out of his mouth is punctuated with "Praise the Lord!" He doesn't hear any challenge to his new-found beliefs, however gentle, reasonable, or logical. Instead he claims the only "truth" is in the Bible. And the Bible is "true" because it says it is "true." This makes about as much sense to me as believing everything Nixon said after he announced that he wasn't a crook. So now Brad lives a...
rather isolated life in Lodi, repairing broken windows and going to church meetings. We are no longer in touch with each other as he is not allowed to associate with “the unclean.” I’ll miss him.

I do not want to be taken as a Bible basher. I admit freely that it does contain wisdom worthy of study and contemplation. However I do object to its being used to manipulate and pacify any segment of the population into believing that the only power that they have is the power of prayer. When Marx declared that religion was the opiate of the masses, he had no way of foreseeing the mind numbing effects of television. The two together could well prove to be fatal for us all. As Pogo once said, “We have met the enemy, and he is us.” I, for one, am terrified. But, then again, I’m not very patriotic.

Peace,
Joni Hockert—S.F.

QUESTIONS FOR ANSWERS

Dear PW:

As the head of a less-than-average-lying-alienating and play/work environment who has few illusions about there being many differences between wage slavery at the top or the bottom allow me to pose possible questions for I.H.’s answers [PW 17 p. 45]

1. When was the last time the western world desublimated desires to throw off the ‘same old thing’ in terms of capitalist and socialist answers to daily life? Hint: It happened in France!
2. What’s the average age of American men and women who realize that childhood is a better deal than adulthood?
3. What shows up in the local repair shop an average of once a month?
4. How much money should be paid to the average unemployment insurance recipient with a bad attitude?
5. What is the boss likely drinking at the Christmas party when the staff is completely bored and giving their real evaluations of what their work lives are like?
6. How often do glazed-eyed, schizophrenic subscribers to PW re-read the last issue?
7. Who did the folks who didn’t vote for “No” for President in the last 5 elections really vote for?
8. What’s the most boring, incomprehensible, mainstream publication printed in what’s supposedly English?
9. When Tom Lehrer writes, “If you’re looking for adventure of a new & different kind. And you come across a girl scout who is similarly inclined. Don’t get nervous, don’t get flustered, don’t get scared. Be prepared!” in his song of the same name as the last line, what is he really talking about?

10. What is the last thing LaRouche publications (i.e. “New Solidarity,” “Fusion Magazine,” etc.) need?

I see on the same letters page, one from Bob McGlynn, an old friend. Hi Bob! Are we still fighting that one? Don’t these goddam leftists never learn nuttin’? Fightin’ the same old battles—like Puritanism—is, indeed infatual! love, Fred T. Friedman Hanover, Mass.

PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS REVISITED

Dear PW,

Thank you for your review [of “Pursuit of Happiness” in PW 17]. We appreciate the thought and effort that went into your piece. In most establishment journalism, the pressure of the deadline, combined with limitations of space and the tendency of many reviewers to be glib rather than constructive, lead most critical commentary to be shallow and of little concern to the producing company (aside from its potential financial impact). You are to be commended for bucking this trend by writing a piece which is earnest, insightful, and bound to provoke thought among your readers.

It is interesting that you find parallels between the philosophy of our play and the ideals expressed by the 60s movement. Steve and I are 25, separated by a generation from the Hippies. I think this points up at least two things: that the Hippies’ influence is still being felt and that, in spite of the movement’s failures, we have thus far failed to come up with any better antidote to the social ills that our current hierarchy engenders.

I do confess to at least one concession to traditional musical theatre: the happy ending. We went through several versions of the conclusion during the writing and rehearsal process, and for me it is still one of the less satisfying elements of the play. In one version I had envisioned Grace being completely stuck, desperately unable to move in any direction once she was fired. I consciously wanted at least one of the characters to be left unresolved at the play’s end. It struck me that this would point up the very real lack of options available to anyone disenchanted with the system. In the process of collaboration and rehearsal, this format (among others) did not seem to work.

What emerged instead was Grace’s dream sequence with the Tall, Dark Stranger, a fine piece of writing on Steve’s part, but one with a different thrust. It puts forth the proposition that if everyone—collaborating playwrights, world leaders, bosses and employees, husbands and wives, children and teachers, citizens and aging dictators, and so on—strive for a “spirit of imperfection and compromise,” then the pursuit of happiness—and the attainment of happiness—is a realistic ideal.

But, lest we lose our perspective, I felt the main intent of our piece was to entertain and inform rather than to proselytize. Indeed, we had no real suggestions or solutions to the status quo to put forth, save perhaps that a change in attitude—getting back in touch with whatever it is one really wanted out of life before enlisting in the work force—is the first step in the long journey toward the ideal of self-fulfillment.

Also, I know some people who find a good deal of self-fulfillment in their work. However, this piece is neither about nor for them. Generally, I don’t find such people dramatically interesting, where is the dramatic tension and conflict? I’ve also known people in corporate structures who were desperately unhappy with their situations but weren’t even conscious enough to realize it. This is the audience I most wanted to reach. I feel that the show’s engagement at the Valentia Rose failed to draw them in any significant numbers (for several reasons, which I won’t bother to elaborate here).

This is why I am eager to see AART present the show during luncheon in a location downtown where large numbers of workers may be reached. Out of necessity, the show will be revised and performed in an abbreviated form. I feel this will make a good show stronger, and I appreciate your suggestion to this effect.

Best wishes to all of you at Processed World.

WB Higgs, Artist and Audience Responsive Theatre, SF & DC
Dream Texture
by Bonita Louise