
Justified & Ancient

Thirty years ago, hundreds of Sydney gays, lesbians and friends continued a festive street march in defiance of police instructions. Many were thumped, 53 were arrested for being part of the first Sydney Gay Mardi Gras. This retrospective is a sample of local gay male lit from that time.



Ian MacNeill
Gary Dunne
Dave Sargent
William Yang
Barry Lowe
and more



Poster for Sydney's 'Day of International Gay Solidarity', June 24 1978
 Later this became Mardi Gras, see our timeline (page 25) for more information

Welcome to 1978

We'd been talking about what we could do to acknowledge Mardi Gras' 30th and settled on the idea of a retrospective - a collection of writing from around 1978. Digging through old gay mags and small literary journals from that era is truly an eye-opener - the past is another country; our lives, and our writing, are from a very different place.

'Justified and Ancient' provides a unique snapshot of where we've come from and hopefully a far more revealing (and entertaining) view than yet another dry academic history. The stories are characterised by an innocent optimism mixed with both political imagination and unabashed sensuality. Although it's a line from last century (and perhaps that's close enough for some) the title is totally apt on so many levels (except that we weren't all ecstasy bound for Mu-Mu Land with Tammy until 1993).

As HIV/AIDS rolled across the landscape in the early 80s everything changed. Dave Sargent (a leading Sydney activist and writer) died in 1985, and too many to name have died since. To write now about gay life in the seventies is shadowed by the difficult task of not letting what came next influence how we construct or interpret what was happening then.

The choice of contribution was made by each invited author – we simply asked for something that reflected the times and the person they were in the late seventies. In the end, 'Justified and Ancient' is a mix of reflection and reprint but we hope you find it fun too.

Gary Dunne and Laurin McKinnon



Justified & Ancient

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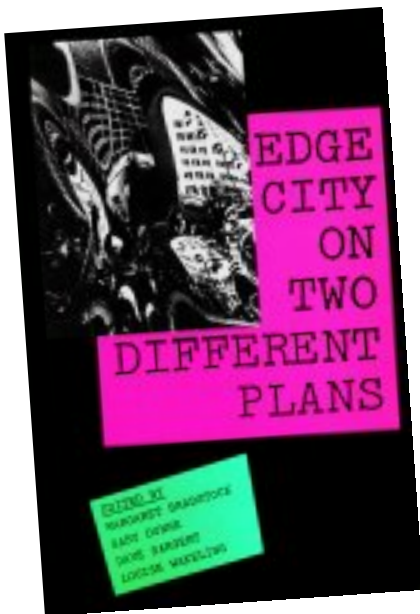
Our thanks to the writers for generously allowing us to reprint their work, and to Les MacDonald for approval to reprint Dave Sargent's pieces. We were unable to track down John Carroll whose original graphics for inVersions are also reproduced in this collection. If anyone knows his whereabouts please let us know. Cover art includes reworked ClickArt ©2005. [jaa08c]

Will Young [William Yang]

Nights on the Town

In the morning I show him
last night's polaroid
but he denies
he was so drunk so homeless
and so fresh from the country.

Screwing my way round this town
for the fifth fucking time, shit
Peter sends me postcards from NYC
about the black fucks and the discos
and nine floors of steambaths
a semitrailer on the sixth
with people rooting in the headlights
I was sick with envy
when I met him again
on the Green Park Beat
he cruises me
(he's a little too practised now)
and he remembers me
asks me straight off
"Have you still got that photo?"
"Do you want it?"
my voice has a hook
and I'm staring too hard
"I'm working at The Shift
you can drop it to me there"
already he is
dissolving into Darlinghurst Road
shadows.



'Nights on the Town' and 'The Days at Bondi' were published in
Edge City on Two Different Plans
Editors: Margaret Bradstock, Gary
Dunne, Dave Sargent, Louise Wakeling
Sydney Gay Writers Collective
ISBN 0 949876 01 1
September 1983

Will Young [William Yang]

The Days at Bondi

I came running
when he asked me to his birthday party
it's been nearly two years since I've seen him
since he got out of jail
and he looks good with his shirt off
(worked out with weights at Long Bay)
but he's gone terribly straight
he won't let me touch him
not the way I want to
not in front of his macho mates
and he's got a girlfriend
and a complete new set of friends
I don't know anyone here
"How'd you get mixed up with these people?" I ask
"It's the circle." his girlfriend replies
matter of factly
as if it explains everything
perhaps it does ...
the days at Bondi
when we had him
all to ourselves
for two summers.

Yet another timeline

This timeline is not meant to be definitive or highly detailed; it may give you some idea of what else was happening at the time. Our references have been: Robert French's 'Gays Between the Broadsheets'; Michael Hurley's 'A Guide to Gay and Lesbian Writing in Australia'; The Gay Pride History Group's 'It was a Riot!'; Australian Gay and Lesbian Archives' periodicals lists; Star Observer's 15th anniversary issue; The Australian, and various private archives. Check any details before relying on them for your uni thesis. The graphics reproduced are from various Australian gay publications from the 1970-83 period. The businesses currently occupying the premises at the addresses mentioned may no longer offer the same range of erotic facilities for punters.

William Yang

Date: Mon, 29 Oct 2007 18:58

To: Gary Dunne

From: William Yang

Subject: Re: Working Title "Justified & Ancient"

Dear Gary

Thanks for your email. Id be happy for you to use Nights on the Town, (just read it, isnt it good?). You didnt mention Days at Bondi, its okay too. Ill look through my box and see if theres anything else. Did you get my birthday invite?

Best wishes

William.

Oh Gary, I just remembered my box of things was destroyed in the fire I had in 1987. But I have looked in my computer and come up with a few pieces that were originally written on photos, but which I think can stand up to the printed word alone.

LES (1979)

We had strong eye contact right from the beginning and I thought I had a good chance. The music was loud so I leant over to shout my opening line. He pointed to his ears and shook his head and I immediately understood that he was deaf. He wrote letters with his finger on the palm of his hand. J. O. E. Joe! It was totally vivid, Ill never forget it. He bought me a drink. We didnt have small talk so things developed really fast. I made the shape of a house; the walls, the hip roof and I pointed to myself. Did he want to come home with me? He agreed. We embraced, a bit awkwardly, just to confirm that our intentions were similar. The ride home in the taxi was silent. No need to talk. It was perfect. Later I found out he was a labourer from a nearby country town. He sometimes came to the city where he had friends. He was a bit shy in bed but I liked him. I took his photo in the morning. He couldnt hear the click so he had no reaction, it was like photographing a stone. After breakfast I put him in a taxi. I worried how he would tell the driver where he wanted to go, but I guess that was something he had solved before.

DO YOU REMEMBER ME? (1983)

Do you remember me?

I slept beside you.

But left in the morning.

M*** (1981)

M had a certain look which over the years of taking photos I have come to recognize. By look I don't mean his physical appearance which anyway was okay. I mean he was one of those who liked the attention of the camera, who given some encouragement would be likely to perform. Sam gave me a pair of underpants for my birthday, he said. Sam was his sometimes boyfriend, an older man. I thought that Sam would try to thwart my plans but instead he encouraged me. Use my bedroom and close the door, said Sam. I did. Later I showed the results to Sam. Is this all you did? said Sam. Hell go much further than this, but you'll have to give him mandies. The getting of mandies proved difficult. Some of my best opportunities are lost through inertia. When I finally got some and rang up M, Sam answered the phone. He was cool. M had left, he'd gone up the coast and he didn't know when he'd be back. Later I heard from another that M had ripped Sam off for quite a lot of money over a drug deal and his name was not to be mentioned.

1961

* *At the Cross, Growing up in King's Cross, Sydney's Soho*, a novel by Jon Rose, Andre Deutsch

1965

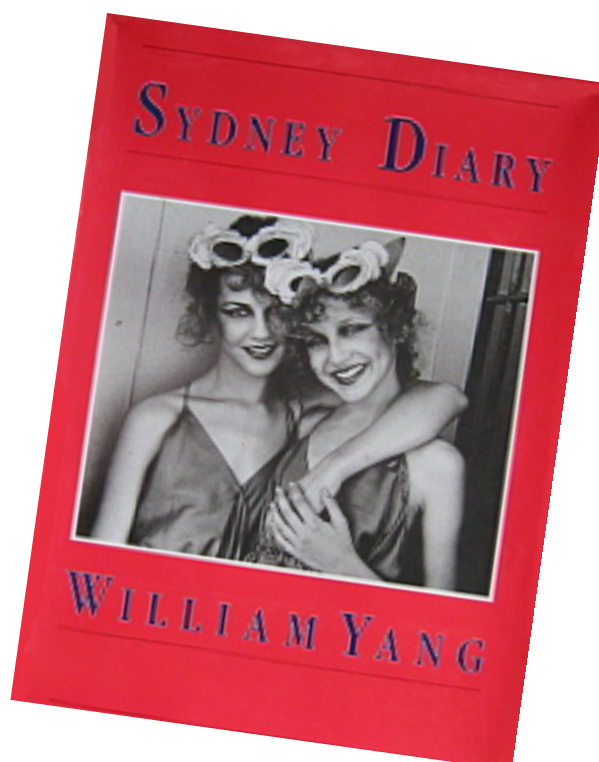
* *No End to the Way*, a novel by Gerald Glaskin (Neville Jackson), first Aust novel to include open homosexuality.

1966

* *The WatchTower*, novel by Elizabeth Harrower, A&R Sydney, a 'wicked' (homosexual) central character

1969

* *The Set*, movie, prod Frank Brittain, Australian first



Sydney Diary 1974-1984
William Yang
James Fraser Pty Ltd
ISBN 0 949493 15 5, 1984

Dave Sargent

Nothing More, Nothing Less

As I lie next to Adam, he lights a cigarette. A momentary flash lightens the darkened room. Taking a long draw he exhales smoke and wisdom in a whirling fashion.

'Less and less of what I have to say, nowadays, has any significance whatsoever. That's not to say, of course, that it ever did.

'I used to think that it did, but now I have many doubts ... I mean . . . profundity is based on the assumption that there is something beneath the surface . . . that there are depths to be plumbed.

'Now, I think everything is on the surface, and what you see is all there is.'

Adam stops to inhale more smoke. This time he exhales without a word. Somehow, it punctuates his statement. Obviously, I am meant to respond.

I sit up. I lean over. I lick his left nipple with my tongue. 'That's to turn you off.'

I lick his right nipple. 'That's to turn you on.'

He may be able to fuck my head with pre-dawn philosophy. But I still know how to undermine him.

Adam laughs gently. He butts the cigarette in the ashtray on the bedside table. Pulling my head close to his breast, he lightly



'Nothing More, Nothing Less' and John Carroll's graphic on page 11 first published in InVersions
Sydney Gay Writers Collective
ISBN 0 949876 00 , 1980

strokes my hair. His hand feels cold, his heart radiates heat. I am a prisoner caught between two extremities.

He is silent and I am relieved. I need to readjust to his presence in my bed. He is probably dreaming of the future. I dream of the past.

Four years ago was the last time I heard from Adam. It was a typical American postcard that reeked of Bi-Centennial fervour; a chauvinistic enmeshment of patriotic and sexual liberation.

On the front two muscular men in bathers passionately embraced. Behind them the stars and stripes unfurled in the breeze on a phallic flag pole.

On the back was scratched one of Adam's usual cryptic messages. It could have served as a caption for the embossed photo: 'It really is the land of the free and home of the brave.'

Earlier this evening I was stirred from my sleep by a light tapping at my bedroom window. There stood Adam staring at me through the condensation on the window pane. It was like having a fantasy fulfilled. A thief in the night, he seemed ready to steal me away.

But I wasn't surprised. Adam is the only person whom I've ever allowed to enter my life through the bedroom window. He established the tradition shortly after we met in the middle of '74.

In those days I was a high school teacher and he was a radio announcer. I always fancied us as a contemporary Narcissis and Goldmund.

Adam was blond and firmly built. I was dark and thin. Adam was a dreamer and a child, while I was a realist and mature. And although our differences were always vast our common ground was always able to bridge the distances.

We literally met in the dark; a steamy overcrowded sauna in Oxford Street. I followed him through the maze of dimly lit corridors. He followed me home through the maze of dimly lit streets in Surry Hills.

Forgetting my key, I crawled into the house through the bedroom window. Impatiently, he followed like Alice chasing the White Rabbit into a well of uncertainty.

1970

* *Campaign Against Moral Persecution, set up by John Ware, Chrisobel Pol* *

Camp Ink, first issue, CAMP newsletter, issue 1, til 1977 (40) * *Michael Dransfield, prolific poet, first book of several, 1970-1980*

1971

* *CAMP NSW Newsletter, first issue, til 1981* *

Homosexual Oppression and Liberation, theory, by Dennis Altman, A&R Sydney

Flo's Palace Disco



*The most interesting drinks in Oxford Street.

Open - 10pm only 80c

More all these drinks from \$1.00

*Remember there is no cover charge at Flo's!

97 Oxford St. Darlinghurst

We fucked and we talked, exchanging fantasies and dreams. I suggested that he stay until morning. Rejecting my offer, he announced that he had to go home to his wife.

These days, if something similar were to happen I'd gladly say goodbye. But that was my time of newfound liberation. Experiencing and experimentation were a confusion of terms.

I stuttered through an invitation for him to come back sometime. Refusing to reply and refusing to leave by the front door he silently scurried out the window. Once outside, he turned and winked and disappeared into the night.

A few nights later as I read in bed, I was startled by a knock on my window. It was Adam, smiling sheepishly. He refused the door, and came in through the window. It became the only way that he ever entered or exited from my home.

His midnight visits became a weekly event. For me, having a once-a-week affair with a married man was a confrontation with polygamy. For him, it was less engaging. He readily admitted that he was a man confused by his sexuality. I was a momentary relief from the anxiety of his double-standard world.

Adam's hand shifts from my head to my cock. I am pulled back to the present.

I am tired of genital games. I want to indulge myself with a closer look at Adam.

Taking his playful hand into mine, I sit up and turn on the bedside lamp. Immediately, Adam shelters his hazel eyes with his other hand. I notice silver streaks in the thick of his hair. I notice he is thinner.

Positioning myself against the headboard, I hover above him. Finally he uncovers his eyes.

'Is that an interrogation lamp?'

'You might say that.'

But it is Adam who begins the interrogation.

'Did I surprise you?'

My answer is double-edged. 'Nothing that you do would surprise me.'

'I know you won't believe me,' the confession begins, 'But since I came back from America last year, I've wanted to contact you a number of times. . .'



His admission sears me. 'You've been back that long?'

He sits up, turns and faces me. 'I just wasn't ready until today.'

'Fair enough,' I lie. Unfortunately, I wear deceit like others wear makeup.

I try to be calm, but inside me the hawk and the dove are at war. The vicious beak devours.

'Why today? Couldn't you get a fuck somewhere else?'

Adam looks away and pretends to be unaffected. He wants to change the subject.

'There is something in my car that I want to show you. I'll be back soon.'

Dressed only in denim pants, Adam disappears.

My eyes wander about the room as my anger subsides. They are drawn to some old diaries lying lifelessly on a book shelf.

I rush to bring back 1975. Instinctively, I turn to December 27. Putting on my glasses I read my entry:

'Adam has just left and I don't know how long it will be before I see him again ... if I ever see him again ... if he ever wants to see me again. I know that I shouldn't have turned on him like that, but I refuse to let any asshole treat me like that.'

'Who the hell does he think he is telling me that he's decided to leave his wife and is going overseas to get himself together ... telling me that he thinks it's best to stop seeing me. It's bloody all right when he wants me to fuck him in the ass, but I think

1972

* *Boiled Sweets*, first issue, newsletter of the Adelaide Gay Activists Alliance, til 1974 * *Canary*, issue 1, CAMP SA Newsletter, til 1973 also *Campsites* (Adelaide CAMP) * Gay Liberation Front formed, later Sydney Gay Lib * *Gay Lib News*, Gay Liberation Front newsletter, Auckland NZ, later *Gay Liberator* * George Duncan, Adelaide Law lecturer murdered by drowning in the Torrens River * *The Americans Baby*, collection, by Frank Moorhouse, A&R Sydney * *March*, first Sydney street demo * *July*, Sex Liberation Week, Sydney march



I'm the one that's being fucked over.

'It's my own fault for not stopping this long ago. I should have told him before this that the only person he was fooling about his sexuality was himself. I should have forced the issue ages ago.'

'When am I going to have the courage to stand up for my convictions? When am I going to take control of my life and tell others that if they're not willing to give equally in exchange, then I'm not prepared to even feign friendship. When am I ...'

Adam wriggles back in through the window. Like a little boy who has just been caught pulling himself off under the blanket, I am crimson with embarrassment.

Adam approaches with a yellow envelope in his hand. He points at the diary. 'You been reading porn while I've been away?'

I am not in the mood for jokes. 'Just an old diary of mine.'

Adam seems surprised.

'I've always kept a diary. Where do you think I get my best ideas for stories?'

An icy lull, he does not want to pursue the topic. He knows he must be a major character pressed between the pages.

He joins me in bed and begins to play with the envelope. I begin to play with his head.

'Are those all the letters that you never bothered to send me?'

'I don't have to justify why I didn't write. I needed to ...'

'Forget that I was here,' I interrupt.

We are heading for a violent confrontation but Adam steers us clear.

'Maybe you're right. But I needed to forget that everyone was here. And being in San Francisco really helped me to do that; it was like being plugged into a high voltage socket.'

'I was very indulgent and the novelty wore off soon, but when it did I had a chance to have a long look at myself.'

'And?' I quiz.

'And ... you'll laugh ... but I became active in the gay movement. I came out.'

'I'm sure that must have been very positive for you.'

Adam nods and smiles. 'It was an incredible feeling to confront the person that I had always pretended to be and bury him

away forever. When I felt strong enough I decided that it was time to come back and explain to my ex-wife. I realised how unfairly I had treated her. And then there was my family ...'

Adam pauses and his expression changes to discontent. 'But I'm not feeling as strong as I did then. I sorted things out with everybody, but it hasn't been easy.

'I'm very tired of always having to prove myself ... having to be more than I want to be.'

How can I resist? 'What do you want to be?'

Adam looks into the envelope and pulls out some photos. He drops them into my lap.

They are all photos of a rundown farm set in an idyllic bushland setting. The property is reminiscent of a dream that he used to paint with words.

'So you've moved beyond words?' I surmise.

'I've been offered a part-time position with a small country radio station and I've bought this farm. 'When will you be shifting?'

'I'm on my way there ... now.'

'What do you mean?'

'Exactly what I said. My car is packed and I'm on my way now.'

I feel like a swinging door about to come off its hinges. I am worn out from people walking in and out of my life.

Adam avoids my stare. He is disconcerting beyond my belief.

He asks, 'Will you come with me?'

'You mean along for the ride?'

'No, I mean to live with me. The dream about the farm was something that I only ever shared with you. You're part of it.'

I need to move away from him. I stand and stare out the window into the nocturnal distance.

'Do you really expect me to provide a happy ending for your fairy tale?'

'I don't understand.'

'I mean ... it's uplifting to be part of your dream. But do you really expect me to let you whisk me away to live happily-ever-after on your farm?'

'Once upon a time you would have.' He tries to be funny.

'Once upon a time I was a romantic, but not any more. And I

1973

* *CAMPUS CAMP*

Newsletter, issue 1, Brisbane 1973, til 75

* *Forum,*

magazine, first issue,

Sydney, til 1981

* *Gay Pride*

Week, Melbourne

* *January,*

Sydney Gay Lib holds Kiss

and Cuddle in front of

Sydney commuters

* *Gay,*

first issue, pornographic

magazine, Sydney, about

180 issues, usually undated

* *Gayzette, formerly*

Stallion, Sydney gay

magazine first issue

* *August, Sydney Gay Lib*

protests its exclusion at

Psychiatry and Liberation

conference

* *September,*

Gay Pride Week

demonstration, 2-300

supporters fought police, 17

arrests



260 Pitt Street, Sydney

Justified & Ancient

www.gay-ebooks.com.au

have dreams just like you do. But they're dreams I wish to fulfill on my own.'

Adam changes tactics and approached me from behind. Enclosing me with his arms he tries to penetrate my heart.

'But how do you know that we wouldn't be happy?'

'We might very well be. But your conception of happiness is 'happily-ever-after' and for me, that is just a writer's ploy ... a grand delusion. And quite frankly, I'm better off dealing with them on paper than I am in real life.'

We stand against each other as the strength of his embrace wanes. The sky is showing signs of early morning and outside the world is becoming clearly visible.

One last wave of love and warmth takes me by surprise. He licks the nape of my neck and simply adds, 'I think I better leave.'

Returning to my bed Adam quietly dresses. I remind him of something that he said earlier.

'Do you remember what you said about things that we see and everything being on the surface?'

'Yes,' he laughs, 'What about it?'

'You're wrong! Everything is not on the surface. There is more than what you see.'

As the photos disappear into the envelope, Adam doesn't respond. He walks to the window, turns and winks.

I desperately want him to leave by the door. But I can't form the words.



Gay Information
Gay Information Service
Sydney 1980-87





Dave Sargent 1952 – 1985

Dave Sargent arrived in Australia in the early seventies as one of a whole airlift of young American teachers. He soon moved from the classroom to editing the Education Department's student magazine, and from there to a number of jobs in publishing before becoming editor of Campaign, then the biggest national gay magazine in Australia.

By 1980 Dave had moved to managing what became The Bookshop Darlinghurst by day, and by night actively contributing to a number of community arts and political publishing projects, including Gay Information and inVersions. He brought to these groups a rugged intellect, an ability to take on big tasks, and his practical knowledge of editing and publishing.

In the early eighties Dave began seriously studying the new French theorists, then totally unknown in Sydney beyond exclusive academic circles. His analysis of their potential impact on gay politics and how HIV was being newly constructed appeared in both Marxist journals and the gay street press. This was all a good decade before the great Queer debate hit town.

Dave then began writing film criticism for the Sydney Morning Herald, Filmnews and Cinema Papers. He became administrator of the Sydney Film-makers Co-op, and was involved in planning the AFI's Gay Film Festival when he became ill as a consequence of HIV. Dave died in January, 1985.

Now, nearly thirty years later, my memories of he and I trying to seriously 'workshop' several of the stories reprinted in this retrospective haven't faded. I easily recall his broad New York accent, his oily Italian cooking (BYO Mylanta), and our final laughing admission that we made better best mates and gossips than mutual editors. Gary Dunne

1974

** April, American Psychiatric Association votes to cease classifying homosexuality as a mental disorder * Gay Liberation Press, issue 1, sexual politics journal, Sydney, til 1975 (8), later the GLP - A Journal of Sexual Politics, and Working Papers * Homosexuality: A film for Discussion, a film by Barbara Creed, 16mm B&W 45 mins * July, Private members bill in New Zealand parliament to legalise homosexuality * October, West Australian Royal Commission recommends consenting adults in private should not be criminal * March, Penny Short loses her Teacher Scholarship following the publication of a lesbian poem in a student newspaper*



Dave Sargent

Caught in a Drift

Darlinghurst doors are open wide in a swelling suburban sea. Weathered sirens sprawl in rose-misted lounge rooms. Bennett and I ignore their lure as we sail through narrow-lane corridors. Entangled in each others arms, en-route to a party, we are contemporary argo/nots caught in a drift.

An exotic blend of balmy summer evening laced with neighbourhood aromas rips through the lungs with an intense ferocity. A tail wind blows straight to the head. Reeling in the aftermath of recurring gusts, I'm invigorated.

It's been a while since we've had an evening together and Bennett's characteristic calm makes it difficult to sense his mood. Yet his hand in mine emits a warm current. During times like this the vampire in me wants to encircle him, penetrate his jugular vein with a potion of intimate disclosures that will flow directly to his heart. But I resist, and silently we float along.

A ravaged looking young man comes our way. Mellowed by mandies he is stumbling, in search of a trick. His evening wear is seductive and camouflages him in the dark. A delicate pierced nipple protrudes through a slit in his charcoal t-shirt. A tattooed figure peeps out through another.

The voyeur in me is aroused.

I think he'll cruise on by but Bennett surprises me and reaches out. We plough to a halt and Chris is introduced. He unsteadily



'Caught in a Drift' and John Carroll's graphic on page 19 first published in InVersions2
Sydney Gay Writers Collective
ISSN 0725-072X 1981

offers a hand, and I clumsily accept, disarmed by the strength of his grip. It contradicts his frail appearance. Bennett, too, seems disarmed, although the reason is beyond me. There is an awkward lull until Bennett explains, "We're off to a party."

"Straight?" Chris asks.

"Mixed, I think."

"No," Chris grins broadly, "I mean you."

Bennett laughs nervously and nods, "At the moment ..."

"Soon change that," Chris slurs as he fumbles in a pocket and hands Bennett two mandies. "They'll put you both in a party mood."

I'm doubtful about that, but Bennett accepts eagerly. He offers Chris some money and is refused. "Plenty more where those came from. They're one thing I'm never short of."

Bennett hands me a pill and quickly downs the other. I consider dropping it into my pocket instead of my mouth, but soon follow suit. Bennett and Chris continue a strained exchange, excluding me from the conversation. Yet I'm not disturbed. It gives me a chance to gaze and listen, a chance to sense that there is something between them. Its distinct nature eludes me.

We are taken off guard by a heavy-set man who seems to appear out of nowhere. He's familiar to Chris and we get the hint that there is money to be made. Bennett indicates that we'd better leave and gives Chris a light kiss that barely brushes his lips. Not feeling quite so familiar, I offer another handshake. Chris reciprocates, this time much weaker.

Taking Bennett in tow I push off. He suggests that we wash down the mandies with a drink at a corner local. It sounds good to me, and silently, again, we head for a pub. Once inside we order two beers and amidst an array of unfamiliar faces we veer towards a corner table. A wave of relaxation ripples through my body as I down a mouthful of beer. Bennett also seems to be loosening up.

"Chris and I fuck occasionally," he discloses.

His admission doesn't startle me, but I'm curious about his particular interest in Chris; especially the way that it compares with his interest in me. Because in our relationship sex doesn't seem to be a significant binding agent: it holds us together in the same way that I'd expect a bit of sticky tape to work - not very effectively.

"You mean it's only sex that brings you together?"

1975

** All that false instruction, lesbian novel by Elizabeth Riley, A&R Sydney **
*Campaign, monthly magazine, launched in September, Rod Stringer, til 2000 (290) * First National Homosexual Conference, Melbourne, 700 attend, organised by Homosexual Caucus of University Groups * Flowers, performance by Lindsay Kemp, on national tour, banned in Queensland * Gay Times, first issue, Adelaide * Johnno, a novel by David Malouf, Penguin Melbourne * May, SA House passes private members bill * November, Prof Leonie Kramer objects to Dennis Altman addressing med students at UNSW * September, no longer deemed to be criminals in SA*



Bennett misinterprets my emphasis. “Isn’t sex enough?”

“Yes ... it is ... but what I meant ... is fucking the only thing that attracts you to Chris?”

Bennett averts my stare, then meets my eyes head on. “I can answer a simple yes to that question, but the reasons why I like fucking with him are unclear.”

I can’t help laughing. Not at what he says, but at how he says it. He likes to complicate everything. Does it give him a chance to protect himself behind a citadel of words when his emotional responses rage out of control ?

Unnerved by my reaction, Bennett gulps his drink and escapes to the bar for more. He apparently doesn’t want to continue the conversation, and even though I’d like him to explain himself I decide to let the issue rest until some more opportune time - when he won’t be able to run away. Besides, tonight I just want to enjoy his company.

He returns, smiling, and jokingly describes how difficult it was weaving through the crowd in his drugged state. I’m soon given a chance to find out what it’s like when I realise that I have to piss. Teasingly, he wishes me luck as I set sail through the room. Feeling like a mandied fool, I self-consciously try to avoid bumping into people, and eventually reach the door marked MEN.

“You can’t even have a piss without being genderised, ”I deliberately bemuse an unsuspecting passer-by. Before she can respond I disappear behind the boldly labeled door in a fit of laughter. Steadying myself against the urinal, I could just as well be masturbating for the heady enjoyment that I’m experiencing. The euphoria isn’t interrupted by the entrance of an exceptionally attractive man who positions himself next to me. Standing close, he pulls out his cock, and looking at me coyly he begins to play with himself. His actions are unexpected and the seriousness of this certain come on is enough to trigger convulsions. Embarrassed and angered by my reaction, the man moves away. He pulls up his zipper and darts out the door while I wait a moment to collect my wits. Trying to repress bursts of laughter I exit to find Annie sitting with Bennett. As I approach she shakes her head and smirks.

“You’re more off your head than Ben is!”

It’s enough to set me off again. Hurriedly, I sit down not wanting to draw attention to myself. However, I fail by knocking over a drink as I bend to give Annie a kiss. Bennett



1976

** August, 'A Very Natural Thing' banned in Queensland * CAMP News Bulletin, Sydney, til 1978 * CAMP Newsletter, Perth, til 1979 * January, Royal Commission on Human Relationships * May, Homosexuality Solidarity weekend * 2nd National Homosexual conference, Sydney * July, Homosexual laws to be eased in the ACT * June, Doctor Bob Brown, Tasmanian conservationist comes out * September, Monday Conference ABCTV * The Caroline Chisel Show, play by Jenny Pausacker, first performed by Adelaide Women's Theatre group*

reacts by exploding into laughter, which sets off a chain reaction with Annie and me. Feeling very paranoid we decide to depart, and it's not until we're on the footpath that we regain our composure.

The atmospheric change from inside the pub is exhilarating. Annie tells us that she's also going to the party but not until later. I'm a bit disappointed because I'm ready for a party now.

"Come to Jane's with me," she suggests, "and we'll blow a number." My earlier caution about altering my mood synthetically has given way to reckless hedonism. Bennett is the one who now seems cautious, but he soon yields with little resistance.

Jane's house is not very far and when we arrive she is effusively and genuinely warm. Motioning for us to sit on large cushions strewn around the lounge room she forgoes usual small talk. "All right, who's going to make us cups of tea while I roll a couple of joints?"

Raising my hand, she grabs it and drags me into the kitchen while Annie and Bennett put on a record.

"It's terrific to see you." Jane puts down marijuana and rolling papers in front of her on the hardwood table.

"We really don't see enough of each other." I forage through cupboards and drawers for necessary items.

She nods. "Bennett occupying most of your time?"

"Very little actually."

"Not going well?"

"When we're together it's fine. It's just organising the time to be together. He always makes it seem like it's an over-whelming effort."



“Where there’s a will, there’s a way...” Jane delivers with a certain amount of irony.

“Maybe that’s just it, I’m not sure how strong the will is with either of us.”

“Haven’t you talked it over?”

“Talking around it is more like it. And quite honestly I’m not sure if I want to analyse the situation so that difficulties can be resolved. This time, I feel like I want to act and not reason why. You know, be totally nonsensical ...”

Almost on cue Jane holds up a monstrous joint. “Well, after we smoke this you won’t be able to make sense of anything!”

Her promise delights me. She begins to roll another joint as the kettle starts to whistle, and shortly afterward we interrupt Annie and Bennett, who seem caught up in an intense exchange. Is it such intensity that attracts me to Bennett, or is it his ability to impose himself through his wise choice of words and expressions?

“Enough of meaningful discussions for this evening,” Jane commands. Putting on an exaggerated American accent she drawls, “Let’s suck on this weed and become totally meaningless. All in favour say ... yeah.”

We all respond in unison, although I know it will be an impossibility for each of us. None of us is the sort who can be completely frivolous. This common trait is probably the consecrated element that unites us.

Jane sticks the joint in Annie’s mouth and lights up. Annie takes a long draw and settles back into a cushion as she passes the joint to Bennett. The ritual continues until we’ve finished the joint. Annie immediately lights the other joint, and passing it around we carry on a most disjointed stoned rave; hopping from topic to topic like children trying to avoid cracks in the footpath. Suddenly, a very ashen-faced Bennett excuses himself and totters out of the room. He assures us that he’s all right, but we know differently. After a while I go to see if he’s feeling well.

I knock on the toilet door and he undoes the latch to let me in. A faint smile doesn’t disguise his discomfort. “I’m sorry ... the dope has made me feel quite strange.”

Wrapping my arms around him I try to comfort him. Momentarily he allows himself to nestle into the warmth of my neck and then jerks backward. I’m not sure if it’s due to a sick feeling or an inability to depend on me for care. “I need to lie

down for a short time,” he states abruptly, and leads us back to the lounge room where Annie is cuddled into Jane.

“Strong stuff,” she says.

“Yeah,” Bennett agrees, “too strong for me. May I lie down for awhile?”

“Of course,” Jane says as she stands.

“Are you going to be OK to go to the party?”

Bennett looks at me apologetically. “I don’t think so.”

“I’ll stay with you, then.”

He shakes his head. “I think it’s better for me to be alone. I’ll just wait until I come down a bit and then go home. I’ll ring you tomorrow.”

A rapid-firing line of thoughts parachutes from my brain. They drop directly into my stomach causing a flurry of wild emotional responses. I pretend to understand but my disappointment must surely show. Bennett gives me a despondent embrace and Jane takes him to the bedroom. Annie motions for me to sit next to her.

“I’m not a very good listener,” she begins, “but if you ...”

I need little prodding. “I know the drugs have probably accentuated this, and that my response is probably selfish ... but I was looking forward to this party, especially being with Bennett.”

“It’s a shame he’s not feeling well, but there’s nothing you can do about it.”

“I know, but somehow I can’t help feeling that even if this hadn’t happened we wouldn’t have ended up spending the night together.”

“I don’t think that’s the case ... but even so, would that make any difference about your feelings for each other? You’ve always baffled me the way you polarise your relationships and measure their strength in fucks. Those who you fuck with are “lovers” and those who you don’t fuck with are “friends” ... You place so many labels onto people or try to fit them into categories ... I’m sure you must limit the ways you could possibly relate to others ... Can’t you just accept that Ben can be many things to you ... Why does it always have to be one thing or the other and never anything in between? ...”

“Oh Shit.” Jane makes a grand entrance. “Is that a rave or is that a rave?”

1977

** January, Headline ‘Police go gay to lure homosexuals’ 68 arrests at Black Rock, (Melb Age) * January, Several protests against arrests * Airscream, gay novel by John Bruce, Collins NZ * CAMP News Brisbane, issue 1, til 1978 (8) * September, Queensland govt bans street marches * Peter Allen released 'Taught by Experts' album included tracks 'I Go To Rio' and 'The More I See you' * April, Teacher Greg Weir refused job by Qld government * Drag Show, Currency Press Sydney, collection of photos, plays etc, Spears, Kenna, Livermore * August, 3rd National Gay Conference Adelaide * Gay Changes, first issue, magazine of the Adelaide Homosexual Alliance, til 1979 * May, Australian Democrats formed * Homosexual News Service, Sydney, 1 issue*



Annie looks at me and we both erupt with roars of laughter. Despite the embarrassment, it would be nice to continue, but my mood shifts abruptly. Now, I really am ready for a party.

We leave the house arm-in-arm and steer wildly through the streets. It's a bit cooler, but the change is refreshing. We are unashamedly boisterous and try to enthuse passers-by with the same excitement by virtually harassing them. I'm taken off guard when one of them turns out to be Chris.

He shyly nods, causing me to respond similarly, and I introduce him to Annie and Jane. He asks about Bennett, and after I explain he seems unaffected and registers no concern. Instead, he knocks me off balance by giving me a seductive wink. Is it for real? I want to find out, but Jane and Annie are growing impatient.

"Why don't the two of you go on ahead and I'll catch up with you later?" They're happy about the arrangement and each give me a kiss while making mischievous remarks before they leave.

As they disappear down the road I'm left facing Chris. There is an uncomfortable silence and meekly I ask how the night's been. Chris shrugs his shoulders and cocks his head to the side, looking at me as if he wants to make contact but doesn't know how. I take the initiative and boldly step forward. Placing my hands on his shoulder I lightly kiss him. He doesn't resist. Rather, he pulls me closer, embraces me, and while we kiss he slips his hand inside my shirt and seems to caress my heart with his touch.

His apparent sensuality is encouraging, yet I'm uncertain where I want this encounter to lead. He takes it beyond my control. "Come back to my place."

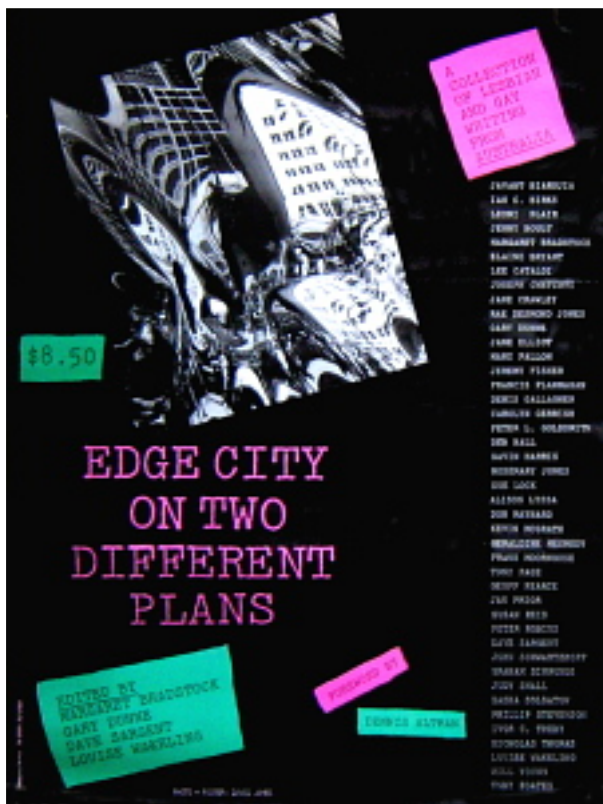
Without anticipating possible consequences I agree with a nod. Chris responds by caressing the side of my face with the back of his hand, and then slipping his arm into mine he leads the way. We swerve and sway, both very high on drugs and expectations.

"When I saw you earlier this evening weren't you on the way to a party?"

I shrug my shoulders, unable to answer.



EDGE CITY on two different plans



During his time as editor of Campaign in the late seventies, Dave Sargent organised meetings which became the Sydney Gay Writers Collective. Core members were himself, Louise Wakeling, Margaret Bradstock and myself. In 1979 we expanded from writing workshops to publishing a small magazine of g&l poetry and prose, inVersions. After several editions, Dave suggested we go for broke and edit the first Oz g&l anthology. Mainstream publishers were initially

very interested, but eventually all said no. Persuaded by Dave, we decided to produce, publish and distribute the collection ourselves, half aware of the significant chunks of our personal savings and time this would involve.

Edge City took three years to complete. Our first typesetter became impossible to work with citing issues about “deviant content”. Costs blew out. Editors fought. Content changed. Finally, we made it to the printer. We tried to get the Qld police to rule (negatively) on the book in advance (so we could capitalise on the publicity) but they wouldn't bite. We then sent a ms to the Australia Council so at least we could claim we weren't funded by them. They invited us to North Sydney for coffee which resulted in a cheque for \$2,000 to pay contributors (a mixed blessing – we could have done with a cheque to pay the printer).

We launched Edge City in late 1983. It was widely (and reasonably fairly) reviewed, both here and overseas, with sales beyond our expectations. These achievements however became unimportant as Dave and other close friends grew ill against a backdrop of Aids hysteria and homophobia in the popular media. Dave died in January 1985. Edge City remains a testament to his political and artistic determination, and his unique chutzpah. Gary Dunne

1978

* *Adelaide Homosexual Alliance Newsletter, issue 1 til 1980* * *An Imaginary Life, novel by David Malouf, Chatto&Windus London UK* * *Ganymede, magazine, Sydney, four issues, Ed George Daniel, featured Rob Tillet, David Hood, Sasha Soldatow* * *The Cassidy Album, play trilogy by Peter Kenna; A Hard God performed at Adelaide Arts Festival* * *The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin, play by Steven J Spears, part of Drag Show 1977, Currency Press Sydney* * *Water Under the Bridge, novel by Sumner Locke Elliott, made for tv 1979* * *October, Release of Young Gay and Proud, Melbourne Teachers, later banned by Vic govt* * *Gay Images, first issue, Newsletter of Perth Gay Liberation til 1981* * *GAYTAS Newsletter, first issue, gay teachers and students, Sydney, til 1984 (32)* * *Hecate's daughters, anthology by Carole Ferrier, inc Pam Brown* * *October, WA votes for law reform*

Barry Lowe



Early covers from Campaign magazine
September 1975 - 2000
Barry Lowe was editor 1981-87

Night of the Moggy

Kevin was on the door again: seated in the booth at the top of the stairs as I fumbled for my money.

He smiled and reached behind for the towel and lap lap. He pushed the key to the locker across the counter and took the money. "Not many here yet but it's still early."

My first impulse was to keep him talking. I liked him, his young good looks, his frizzy afro-style hair. But it wasn't really anything physical; it was simply the fact that he was so bloody friendly.

"You've had a haircut," I ventured.

"No, it's just I haven't had a chance to shave yet."

Had it been anyone I liked less I would have had every reason to laugh but now I just felt foolish and, in attempting to cover up, I bumbled and blustered more. Kevin didn't seem to mind.

I signed my name, Doris Day tonight, with a barely legible scrawl that would never be recognised as mine above Shirley Temple, Betty Grable and Edward Everett Horton. There were a few other indistinguishable scribbles but at least half those guilty signatories would have left by now. I consoled myself with the fact there would be others to replace them eventually.

They would leave their parents, their wives, their lovers, their loneliness in the suburbs and travel to where I was, all to sign, with trembling fingers and itching crotch, the semen and

frustration smeared sign-in sheet with a nom de sex in case of inquisitive eyes or a police bust. Theirs would be an ignoble glory: participation in a Romanesque tragi-comedy. And I would be one of them. We would traipse around the dimly lit maze displaying ourselves, or what we earnestly believed was the best of us, vulnerable for others to reject or accept, to sate ourselves or remain unsatisfied until Kevin closed us out about 4am.

I never stayed that long. My body needed, or wanted, sex so I merely fed it and left. And just as I did not always care what I ate, as long as it was immediately satisfying, so it was with sex.

Sometimes at the steam baths I would be lucky and take the edge off my appetite with a blond delicacy that left me satisfied but more often than not it was a matter of gorging as much experience as possible in the shortest space of time. This inevitably led to fatigue and sexual dyspepsia.

Tonight Kevin was watching television. Not the feed from the security cameras that gave a bird's eye view of the fumbblings in the corridors, but the Sunday night movie.

Apart from the cruising corridors there was a maze of cubicles with lockable wooden doors if you liked your privacy or flimsy black curtains if you didn't mind an audience or a group adventure. There was also a little shipwreck of lockers. I found mine in the semi-light and began to undress. The men already there looked up, some almost immediately returning to their tasks. Others, more appraising, like a butcher in an abattoir presented with a new shipment. The measure of your worth could be tabulated by the number of men who watched you while you stripped and packed your clothes into the tiny metal locker where all outside pretence was securely locked when the key was turned. If you were still being watched after having stood naked before wrapping the flimsy lap lap around you then you were assured of some success at least.

The older habitués undressed very quickly in an effort to cover their flagging virility and flaccid bellies. They need not have bothered – no one watched them. Sagging chins, sagging tits and sagging balls, they considered themselves lucky if they got themselves touched up. Occasionally, they would strike gold in the form of a young man who actually preferred a mature lover. Mostly they spent the night in the blackened orgy room or the sauna masturbating over the ever-changing sea of groupings or else in anticipation that the combination of darkness and frustration would work in their favour.

24 June 1978

Reformed Gay Solidarity Group aims: stop harassment of gay men and lesbians, repeal (NSW) anti homosexual laws and the Summary Offences Act, stop workplace discrimination and protect gay and lesbian rights.

24 June 1978

The plan:

'Come Out Fighting'
10am rally at Sydney Town Hall;
2pm at Paddington Town Hall, speakers Dennis Altman, Lance Gowland, Brian McGahen, Leslie Podesta;
10pm Meet at Taylor Square, march down Oxford street to Hyde Park. Wear fancy dress, Margaret Roadnight and Robin Archer to perform.

I closed the locker door against the babble of Bette Davis spitting her lines from the green-black screen. Those between bouts of sexual frenzy, or the just plain fussy, were seated on the chairs and couches watching the old movie, undoubtedly remembering their own black and white pasts. Those who thought of it sucked in their stomachs; the remainder didn't bother any more. Passing an appraising but cursory glance over the talent I decided not to sit it out. I would explore.

Just off the television room spotted with mothy potted ferns and preposterously named the Lounge Area because it had a rusting hot water urn and congealed cardboard cups, I passed down the corridor the black walls lighted by dim red globes, jerry built so they had all the twists and turns of a mirror maze – a sexual amusement park. The first turn led to a small elevated room three-quarters surrounded by mirrors and floored with vinyl-covered padding. It was a giant reflective bed – rarely used except by those interested in critiquing their own performance.

Someone moved. Behind a shuttered door two bodies thrashed in silhouette. I smiled. Sometimes I would lie on the cold divan in an unlocked cubicle waiting for a proposition, listening to the sounds around me. Sometimes I found it erotic and stimulating; sometimes I had to stop myself from laughing. All around, in different makeshift rooms and cubicles, people were screwing in pairs, in threes, in fours, in any number. Some of them were silent, some of them gasped. Others groaned as their bodies smacked together.

That was how it had been with Gino. I tried to think of other days, other people, but the ability eluded me. Mingled with the sweat and stained sheets of disappointment there had been a lot of happiness. There had been a crossing of paths, a mingling for nine or ten months, and a remainder of memories. The future without him was unknown and terrible. I had cheated that terror for almost a year and now it was back again.

A figure brushed past me and I felt a cold wet hand on my back. The figure walked on, glancing over its shoulder and hinting at what it had in mind. The groans and noises of sexual desire no longer sounded amusing – they were sad sounds, tied inextricably to an action that had meant so much to me, but not quite enough. At that moment I hated Gino. I wanted him here. Held down. I wanted to hurt him.

I opened the door to the sauna and startled bodies jumped apart. The warmth sucked me into the darkness and I stood with my back to the door until my eyes could pick out fleeting

features and blurred details. I heard the sounds again and wistfully hoped that I would soon be enveloped into that noise. To be young and rejected here was an agonising experience.

I touched a group and it acknowledged my existence for a whole and then I was alone again, like the time, in a burst of despair, I had stood bent forward and allowed my body to be fucked by seven of them. My head swirling with steamy dizziness, they had lined up behind me and, one by one, they had yanked my stomach backwards impaling me mechanically not caring who they were getting into. Attractiveness in that case was a bonus, not a prerequisite. They left me leaning against the wall while they went to shower, the raw material of their rutting dribbling down the backs of my legs.

By now my eyes had become accustomed to the gloom enough so I could make my way to the scorching wooden bench to sit down. I was already beginning to sweat. Hands began to explore my body, edging their way round my genitals, caressing my chest and legs, a few exploring my face. In a few moments the hands would move upwards to my hair. In the dark the amount of hair was the only tactile means of establishing youth. It was very fallible.

Standing, I untied my lap lap and let it fall to the floor. When I sat down again the bench burned into my cheeks and the locker key hanging on a string round my neck stung my chest. I closed my eyes and leaned back. It would happen soon.

The hands were kneading my crotch. I knew what was to follow. It reminded me of a stray cat I used to see on my way back home late at night – lying there on heat for every stray to fuck. One night I had paused in the shadows to watch. The she-cat lay in the centre of the street waiting as slowly the toms, all shapes and sizes, crept from under parked cars and out of bushes to stalk and circle. Then one pounced and the wail began. One after the other the remaining cats would mount her until it was the turn of the old, the feeble and the sick.

My head was spinning. I was dizzy from the steam and the rough thrusting of the body behind me. I'd forgotten how long I had been there. I, too, had probably stayed on to entertain the old and the ugly, who would use me selfishly, ungratefully, just as I was using them. Sweat poured from my body and above the sound of my breath escaping in grunts I could hear other people fucking.

The din of sexual chatter. Like the chatter of false teeth. It brought to mind the old chap who would sit in the steam room

24 June 1978 The Parade:

10.30pm. Lance Gowland drives the truck, crowd chants 'Out of the Bars and into the Streets', and sings 'Glad to be Gay' and 'Ode to a Gym Teacher'. Police urge truck to keep moving. At Hyde Park, Gowland starts reading telegrams, police advise him to stop, then pull him out of truck. Scuffles break out, police confiscate truck and PA. Crowd moves towards Kings Cross down William street. Police block off side streets and channel marchers into Darlinghurst Road, eventually protesters reach Alamain Fountain. As crowd returns back down Darlinghurst Road, paddy wagons release police who start arrests and putting protesters into the wagons. The 30 men and 23 women arrested are taken to Darlinghurst Police Station and charged under the Summary Offences Act. Crowd chants 'Let them Go' outside. Police isolate and bash Peter Murphy. At 4am women are taken to Central Police Station where they're charged and released. Outside police station money is gathered for bail. On Monday hundreds of protesters gather at Liverpool St Court of Petty Sessions as those arrested are bought in front of magistrate. Seven more arrested outside court.

after and take out his false teeth before placing them on the bench beside him. Eventually the steam pressure would force them to spring open and close like cracking skulls, the old man with geriatric gums, waiting, waiting like an ageing Venus fly trap. I thought of the other old man who sat in the local public toilet waiting for men to push open the door to his cubicle. Sitting there for hours on end. I had gone and waited my turn with all the rest. I'd pushed open that door not just once, not even twice, and I'd stood there among the guilty whispers dumping my frustration like all those before me. And enjoying it.

Gino had called me a slut when I'd confided my past sexual indiscretions to him. Not that I had labelled them as such. He did that. He was big on labels. And dirty talk. It began playfully enough with him calling me a common slut and fucking me hard. He kept it up until the day he brought home three of his drunken mates and they'd taken turns. Gino had whispered as he fucked me savagely that he'd always wanted to watch me gang raped. It was what I deserved. It helped him to believe that I had asked for it. That I was the slut of his imagination. He'd left me soon after with just the clap as a parting gift.

I pushed my way out of the steam room and into an unoccupied cubicle before collapsing onto the vinyl divan too tired even to react to the wetness I felt beneath me. The place was full of Ginos tonight. The hum of sex went on endlessly around me unaware that I was silently smiling.





1972 was the year in which I discovered I liked writing. In high school, with my best friend Terry, I had started up a number of magazines one of which, The Macabre, was shut down by the headmaster after I wrote a Martin Sharp Oz magazine-inspired piece about a lump of horse shit told in the first person. And each issue was lovingly hand coloured.

In the 1960s when I attended school Vocational Guidance teachers steered you in immensely practical directions.

I don't know what they would have done had I said I wanted to be a writer. Perhaps packed me off to a journalism course. Instead I headed off to become a primary school teacher. I was thrown out at the beginning of the second year for being gay with the promise that I would be readmitted if I got therapy and became better adjusted (i.e. kept my mouth shut about it). At the time it was the end of my life. My working class parents, whose dreams of a better life were concomitant on my becoming a teacher, were shattered and there was no way they could repay the bursary. Fortunately, that was waived.

I did go into writing of a sort after a stint as a psychiatric nurse, a quilt packer, and a few other less edifying positions when I became office boy to a company that published sporting magazines. Yep, you read correctly. The rise was steady from there although fiction became a thing of the past.

In 1972 I went to NIDA to do the Technical Production course but left after the first year because (a) I couldn't stand the doctrinaire attitudes, and (2) I realised I was totally incompetent technically. What I did gain from the course, however, was the knowledge that I wanted to write – plays and stories. The Night of the Moggy was one of the earliest from this period and one of my first 'yarns' since high school. I didn't send it to anyone not because it was gay but because I simply didn't know where I could send it. Since then it has occupied a space in my box of overlooked works and snippets begun but never completed, so its youthful imperfections and exuberances remain as they were 35 years ago.

Barry Lowe

24 June 1978 Aftermath:

*July 1, afternoon, 300 demonstrate Stanley Palmer Cultural Place * July 1, 250 march in Melbourne over Sydney arrests * July 4, Gay Solidarity Group protest outside James Fairfax (SMH) over publishing of arrested's names * July 15, morning, 2000 retrace 26 June route, police mobilise hundreds, 11 women 3 men arrested * July, Quentin Crisp on tour, attempt to restrict him in Qld * August 26, 4th National Homosexual Conference, in Sydney, plenary supports annual Stonewall Day Street parade. 400 leave conference to protest at Right to Life anti-abortion rally, police block them at Taylor Square, 74 arrests. * August 28, Right to Life protest cancelled on police advice*



Ian MacNeill

Reconnaissance Flight

'Reconnaissance Flight' first published in Campaign #45 July 1979

1979 poster for 'Burlesco' at Garibaldi's in Darlinghurst



I used to be a Marlene Dietrich queen.

I'd say for most of my life.

It'd scare people when it'd slip.

That happened a few times. Particularly in the late sixties/early seventies.

They'd let me go on for a moment then shut me up.

I thought they were right, I'd eaten and drunk too much and was completely out of my head.

I'd feel differently. Like my father for a moment.

How amusing.

But when we all got scared I'd tighten the strings and simply become good ole Tallulah on a bender instead.

We adored that.

Have you ever tried to be spontaneous?

* * *

By '74 we knew we couldn't shriek anymore.

'Some dreadful queen'; 'This dreadful queen came up to me and ...'; we started talking like that.

George died then.

* * *

I'm deliberately impulsive these days: smelling flowers, walking barefoot, kissing trees. But there are some impulses you can't indulge at the moment.

You can't drop to your knees and pray in the streets.

'Out Father ... hallowed by Thy name ... Thy kingdom come ... Thine will be done ...'

It's such a relief: that escape from self. Sometimes the tears come. Sometimes the praying after tears.

Truly, it's like rain after drought.

* * *

I guess it all started to break up in about '74. It didn't take long; when it went, it went. So characteristic.

Of course I can see it now in terms of a wider context: women's lib, dope, gay lib. Being yourself was supposed to be less of a strain. We were supposed to be proud and free.

So I broke out of Marlene Dietrich.

As I said, the revolution was over quickly, the new regime installed.

No doubt about Marlene, she knew when to take a back seat.

She's still around, thank God. All those years of being an iron butterfly won't be wasted.

We started to dress differently, eat differently. The suits, the shirts with the sleek, sharp collars and the French silk ties were only brought out for the theatre or work sometimes. Everyone went a bit macrobiotic, put on a bit of weight. The ironed edges, the jagged bones softened.

So I let myself go a bit, though Marlene kept an eye on me. Actually, now I was eating I was able to give up cigarettes and all that booze. Remember how much we used to drink? The gin, vodka, pernod ...?

Of course it was macabre, the macabre I can cope with, it was just that it was so grotesque ...

* * *

Not that when we were all relaxing back in the early seventies we didn't need help: lots of librium, stacks of stelazine, and the rest, depending.

Of course mandrax was the end. All that turned very nasty.

I can't stand it! If another mandied fool bumps into me ... They

1979

** January, charges dropped against 72 arrested, names published again. **

*February, Don Dunstan resigns SA parliament **

*July, 500 march in Sydney gay demonstration **

*As Time Goes By, play by Noel Grieg and Drew Griffiths, GMP London, Performed by Sydney Gay Theatre Co [third act rewritten for local audiences to include 1978 Mardi Gras events] **

*Witches and faggots, Dykes and pooftas, film by Digby Duncan, 45 mins, Sydney * Chore!, play by Jenny Pausacker, first performance Theatre 62*

*Adelaide * December, Festival of Sydney refuses gay float entry in parade **



Justified & Ancient

www.gay-ebooks.com.au

will dance and wander about, setting fire to themselves.

*

*

*

We didn't have sex, I guess we should have but I still had this hang-up from an earlier epoch: you don't fuck friends.

Then you did fuck friends.

But George and I didn't.

We felt obliged to be free.

Looking back on it I think George wanted to but I was too embarrassed or something.

I feel so ashamed. In those days we were trying to love our brothers but I couldn't quite make it. Funny, now it's easier for me. I always seem to be a few years late with the fashions of the psyche.

I do love my brother queens. Just because they're queens. I bleed for them. I mightn't exactly like a lot of them but I feel I understand their faults. How can they be otherwise? I excuse them but I hate them for their fears.

George sometimes used to look at me longingly, with tenderness. At least that's the way I seem to remember it and I do remember certain beautiful things about his body.

I was embarrassed. I thought the physical would let me down. I was still trapped in this butch/bitch thing. I guess I was scared.

God It makes me sick! fucking butch. It's so false. Construction workers and truck drivers. 'Construction workers' – what's wrong with good old navvies or brickies – labourers if you must? Incurable clap from the vile Philippines; mind rot from tasteless California.

Oh well, I mustn't get excited about it. But it was sad to see brotherly love swept over by who's got the meat. And truly, those satin jogging shorts and singlets ... who do they think they're kidding as they pant the well-worn beats of Sydney?

Such a waste of lovely energy.

Well now we know what happened to all those queens you used to now. Gone macho.

Do you remember that summer or so when we thought it was alright to be soft? The kohl, the scarves around the waist or slung across the hips, tied around the head. George would've loved it. I was too uptight to get into that one, still confused about screaming queens ... As I said, always a bit late with the fashions of the psyche. I've only just gone pretty now. I suppose

I'll be trying on Adidas and booking my passage to Bay Town next. I wonder what everyone else will be doing?

George incinerated himself. God, how mad.

Ray'd already done the disappearing act into London (that's where they used to go, and it was for the culture, not the par-boiled). His reply came from Paris. It was beautiful. I was so glad to have something in words.

At the wake – what is the word ... 'funeral breakfast'? There were only a few there: his mother and father, aunts, uncles and things; Melinda and I laughed. We sat in that strained, gaping silence and howled with laughter. We laughed till their mother leaned across and patted Melinda's hand. It was dreadful.

I don't remember the rest.

I bumped into her, she's got married.

They were very close.

* * *

I mostly miss the conversations and the laughing. Maybe what you miss on the merry-go-rounds and swings you gain in other kinds of closeness. We really understood one another, could count on that, even though we both got impatient with one another sometimes.

We decorated that place together, went really individual in our own rooms but the rest was a work of perfect harmony. It was perfect, quite perfect. People used to comment on the serenity of it. Outside the traffic was hell and the walk up the stairs was not beautiful but inside everything was warm or cool and subtle and fascinating. That print was borrowed from a library, in the end he told then he'd dropped it over the side of the ferry coming home. That strange, pink glass bird came from the early days at the Antique Markets. The music: everything from Bach to Callas.

One of my happiest moments was driving down to the beach with him on this beautiful morning, listening to a Paganini violin concerto.

One Christmas morning we got up and listened to a new recording of the Beethoven violin concerto and drank champagne.

I don't think I've felt so close to anyone since. I wonder if I'll ever have another friend like that.

I don't remember the fights, though there were some – oh, I

1979

*Gay Community News, national monthly, established by National Homosexual Conference, til 1982 * July, Gay Solidarity Group organise a Gay Pride Week, 2000 march in Mardi Gras down Oxford St. * Invitation to a Marxist Lesbian Party, poetry by Lee Cataldi, Wild&Woolley Sydney * Klick!, monthly magazine, Melbourne, til 1983 * The Everlasting Secret Family, a novel by Frank Moorhouse, A&R Sydney, made into a movie 1988 * Sydney Star, first issue, free bar giveaway, later Sydney Star Observer, Editor Michael Glynn*



complained about the ironing-board being left out and that awful schoolfriend of his – and I was told off for being a martyr. I guess he put up with a lot; I had a lot of guilt then.

Then there was the boyfriend excitement, the getting ready to go out. Do you remember how he'd spend a whole afternoon getting ready? Once he came into my room and said, 'Well ...?' 'Fabulous, fabulous.' 'Good because now I can get undressed and spend the night at home.' We screamed with laughter and went out of course but he'd made his point about the excitement of getting ready. I haven't felt excited like that in ages.

He got involved a few times. I really admired the way he handled relationships. George was a very up-front person.

Relationships seem to be on the way out now, people are refusing to dream about Mr. Right – Mr. America, yes – Mr. Right, no.

I think you're supposed to have sex here and there and a circle of supportive friends everywhere.

I'm trying to be thankful for my lot. At a pinch I can find someone to listen to my more obvious confusions or to go to the theatre with. My dinner party list is endless of course. I sometimes think I know everyone in this town.

Hitting thirty has its compensations, actually its reliefs – I'm getting a few things together. Though every now and again I'm definitely not a well man. The tabs don't help anymore, you outgrow them. Once upon a time all I'd have to do was go on librium for a month or so. That doesn't work for me now.

I get desperate.

That's when I start to prowl. That's when I look for the biggest, the glossiest, the youngest, the smartest, the richest.

Ordinarily I'm content with the most beautiful.

Amazing how often I've found it and in what shapes and ages it comes.

I can't stand the steams anymore – all that false intimacy.

* * *

Since George immolated himself - he set fire to himself. Listen, it's mad but if I tell you how it happened you'd understand.

He was mandied and he must have knocked the gin-bottle over and he tried to light a cigarette. So he set himself afire.

I wasn't home at the time. I came in later.

Marlene saved me.

I called the ambulance and the fire-brigade. At the hospital I told his parents. The police came around.

No-one has ever been as clear and hard as I was.

It began at one o'clock one morning and it went on for ever.

The other day I went to the crematorium to find his niche. I couldn't and that bitch in the office wanted an exact date of death – I ask you ... So I went and sat in the sun amongst the little plaques and the roses and started to reminisce.

I'm beginning to understand now.



1980

** Alone, lesbian novel, by Beverley Farmer, Sisters, Melbourne * Country and Eastern, poetry by Pam Brown, Never Never Books * Gay Information Sydney, issue 1, gay studies, til 1986 (17/18) * InVersions, prose/poetry, Sydney Gay Writers Collective, inVersions 2 1981 * June, 1500 march from Town Hall Square to Paddington Town Hall * Hot venues: Peak, Pits, Tropicana and Patches, all succumb to flames. * May, Max Pearce 'an active gay liberationist', is chosen by ALP for Sydney Council elections * October, Uproar at Mardi Gras Task Group over moving parade to summer. * October SBS TV starts broadcasting * The Choir, play by Errol Bray, performed by Shopfront Theatre Carlton (Sydney); also The Fittest.*

Dave P Sargent published this story in Campaign, a gay magazine which went through many phases and on and on and on and had many editors with whom one had to treat. It was a newsprint format when this was published (July 1979 Issue 45) but later became a colour glossy magazine more or less in the style of today.

Dave Sargent was an

enterprising American whose funeral I wrote about in my book Libbing. He was the first person we all knew who died of It. People nudged each other about 'Reconnaissance Flight' but it was years before someone confronted me with the idea that I had stolen Jasper's death for it. Jasper was a beautiful and very clever and very very stylish member of Sylvia and the Synthetics. I didn't know him and though I knew he had died I did not know how. What they don't tell you about Early Gay is how in the grip of Thanatos it was. This story was an attempt to shrug it off. Everything I wrote was. We were doing quite well then Aids came, then we did magnificently.

Ian MacNeill



Gary Dunne

The Prince Philip Blues

Nick moved in following an evening that by all standards of romance should have been memorable. The film on TV, flagon of wine and thee routine. Actually, The Bed-sitting Room, following a Monty Python replay on Seven.

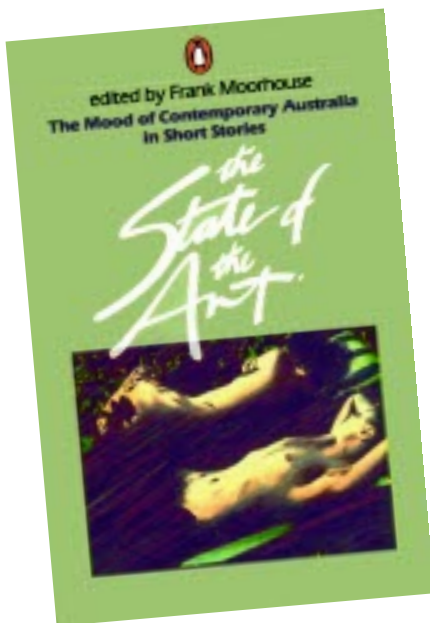
And a new cure for premature ejaculation. Racy oral sex during commercials and as the three minute point of no return arrives, the film begins again. Glasses back on and return to mild petting. Very Pavlovian. Probably explains the ABC's low ratings.

Anyway, following him mentioning being cut off the dole and currently minus an abode, I said, 'You want to stay here?' And he said, 'Thanks. Maybe just till the cheque comes.' Such is probably the nature of modern romance.

Before he moved in I would have said that we were more like good friends who screw than lovers, the difference being greater than just class and semantics. On the second day he returned home with a wreath, original card removed.

"Gee honey, I brung you deese here flowers, aww shucks." With corny grin and appropriate gestures. Living together changes things.

It was nearly summer so the leaking roof was no problem, but with two of us, the attic was smaller than ever. Nick didn't own much. Beyond a determined skinny body with freckled features, it all fitted into one carpet bag. I borrowed a double bed mattress to put on the floor and we threw out the squeaky single



'The Prince Philip Blues' was first published in *inVersions* #1, 1980, reprinted in 'The State of the Art' Editor Frank Moorhouse Penguin Australia, 1983

bed. He shop-lifted some satin sheets and a quilt. The nights became more comfortable. Using a found bankcard, he bought some curtains and the bits and pieces necessary to fix the roof. I asked him if he was basically a criminal type and he ran his fingers through his spiky hair, saying that he only did things like this when he was unemployed. He had never talked about working anywhere so I gave up. It really didn't matter.

We were poor. There was just my fortnightly cheque to see us through. After experience with Wayne's patronising handouts, I was careful. Once the rent and food were paid for, the rest went into the tobacco tin.

"There's the money. It's got to last till the next cheque." The first definition. Understood.

Once or twice I had to crack it. Tight clothes and a trip up to the park. An hour or so with some-one's cheating husband and back home slightly richer. Nick didn't ask any questions but then I had said no more about the bankcard.

If all else failed, we'd go out busking. Nick could sing and played mandolin fairly well. I'd accompany on guitar and gravel my way through the chorus. Practicing a more bland expression is quite an art. We made enough most times for tobacco, papers and a drink on the way home. The largest amounts dropped into the mandolin case when it was directly in front of Nick. My clothes being one size too big for him, plus the waif-like blue eyes, created a ragamuffin effect. It didn't suit his personality but it seemed to attract cash.

At home, despite the lack of space, the room had a comfortable, busy feel to it. I went on writing and reading in much the same manner as before. He had his own activities, music, reading or sketching. Neither expected to be entertained by the other. The only time we really talked a lot was in bed, TV on, under the bankcard quilt, ashtray in the valley between. And we screwed from time to time, but by unstated consent, it didn't intrude on our friendship. Minimal athletics followed by a cuddle, kiss, cigarette and hazy conversation. I didn't make the first moves, they were up to him. Because of the economic situation. A desire to keep the balance. It must have worked ; he was certain enough to joke about the times he had had to fuck to keep a roof over his head.

But there were still his Prince Philip Blues days. Times when he liked to be left alone, a curled up, blanketed ball in the corner. I'd offer to talk, then go visiting if he didn't want to.

"It's what comes from living off a relatively rich queen," he said.

1981

** February, Mardi Gras postponed due to rain * January, Gay pornshop raided by police * Man charged with kissing another on a Sydney club dance floor * Blood of the Lamb, play by Bruce Mason, Currency Sydney * Desire, a film directed by Alan Ingram, script Mark Stow Smith, Aust, 30 mins * Hot venues: The Ox, and a future Mardi Gras party venue, smoked. Arrest over Patches firebomb. * February, Tricks, a play by Larry Galbraith, Fata Morgana Productions, Wayside Chapel, Sydney * The man they called a monster, biography by Paul Wilson, Cassell Australia * March, 6000 people watch 20 floats for rescheduled parade, party held in Hyde park * Gay Rights Lobby hold law reform rallies; 600 in April, 200 in November, 800 in December * Stonewall 81 holds a week of activities including a 500 people Saturday morning march*





Photo: Xitian 1980 Gary Dunne

“It’ll pass.”

In part, it was the seemingly endless wait for his cheques to start coming through again. We lived as if they never would. Nick didn't consider the dole to be very respectable. I didn't see it that way. Years of sharing houses with Sarah and watching her battles with the 'S.S.' over her 'wages' had left their mark on me.

The first cheque finally arrived. We found it sitting on the table downstairs one Friday evening and went straight out to buy a bottle of scotch to celebrate. Upstairs, we had drunk about half of it when one of the three pigs banged on her ceiling. Too much noise. We headed back out, planning to catch a bus anywhere.

On the jetty at Watson's Bay. Just the two of us. Looking under the railing at city lights and distant shores. Legs dangling over the edge. Conversing, as people do on cold still nights, in mouth mist and cigarette smoke. Very drunk. Flicking cigarette butts out to sea. Red tips turning over and over.

“Wanna build a sandcastle?”

I chased him down the jetty.

The sand was too cold and damp so we drank the rest of the scotch instead. Nick dumped the empty bottle in the bin then threw the bankcard in after it.

That's that. Sooner or later someone would check the list or have a computer handy. Mustn't be greedy.”

“No more dinners in restaurants?”

“You could consider paying for them.”

“True.”

On the other side, the Gap. Waves pounding in far below. A mist coming in from the sea. Despite a well-tuned sense of the dramatic (forties movie addict), I didn't want to ask him then

and there. I waited until we were on the bus going home (sixties movie style).

“What are you planning to do now that the cheque is here?”

“It hadn't occurred to me. What do you mean?” Blank face.

“You said once that you would stay till it arrived.”

“Yeah, well...”

The cynical butch mode as an Australian conversation style can be limiting when it comes to expressing feelings. We agreed that we both wanted to go on living together but it took a long time to battle through the complexities of an unstated relationship. We probably missed the point. The effect of double the income.

But that was the only way it could be done. Discussing economics in emotional terms. And emotions, like ready cash, a distant luxury.



The Oz-lit scene in the late 70s was characterised by a multitude of small mags devoted to both poetry and prose. Generally left-leaning, and often with feminist friendly editors (who often lived with their friendly lesbian partners), it was possible to get openly gay short prose pieces into these mags if they were ‘literary’ enough. The style of the day was short, sharp and shiny. The aim was to achieve the effect with the minimum number of words. Mistresses of that high art then (and now) were poets such as Pam Brown and Dot Porter. ‘Prince Philip Blues’ was such a piece. First published in inVersions in 1980, it became my first story to be reprinted overseas, before finally appearing in Frank Moorhouse’s best selling Penguin anthology of contemporary Australian short stories, ‘The State of the Art’, in 1983.



1982

** January, demise of Gay Theatre Company after the final productions of James Mellen's Hormones and Barry Lowe's Writer's Cramp * A Country Practice, TV channel 7, two episodes that include homosexual characters * Ego Positioning, play by Barry Lowe, Pandemonium Productions, Beresford Hotel Sydney * Caps still too hot * Safety in numbers, play by Phil Scott and Luke Hardy, Q Theatre, Penrith * Mardi Gras parade attracts 31 floats and a crowd of 15 000 * Flaws in the Glass, autobiography by Patrick White, Jonathan Cape * Foolish things, a 11 minute film by Peter Wells NZ * March, 600 rally at State Parliament * September First Sleaze Ball turns away 500 * Australia Council grant to Peter Tully and assistant * Stupid as a painter, painting by Juan Davila seized by NSW vice squad, later returned*



Gary Dunne

So Earnest, They're Boring

A Seventies Romance

A large room with blue neon lights, no furniture and a bare wooden floor. Scattered about the edges, like wall-flowers at a deb ball, about twenty entrants in a Marlon Brando look-alike competition. Mostly clad in leather jackets and tight jeans, a conspicuous lack of helmets. On one wall, a solitary poster, Marlon himself, similarly clad, astride a motor bike. More cool and bored than aggressive-looking, each copy was leaning or slouched against the wall. In one of a number of variations on a basic butch pose.

The three of us stood at the makeshift bar next to the entrance at the top of the stairs, hoping the doorman would let us in, despite our daggy attire. My friend Mike was doing the talking. It's something he's an expert at.

"Some choice," David whispered. "They haven't got any desserts at all."

There was a menu chalked up on a blackboard behind the small bar. 'Orange Juice. Amyl. Crisco'.

"I don't think they serve pavlova here," I whispered back.

We watched Mike do his stuff. He's good. He collects people, an unintentional hobby. They can't help liking him. He's reasonable looking, but that's not it. Maybe it's the combination of flirting and genuine interest, as if that person was the most fascinating human he'd met all day.



'So Earnest, They're Boring' and John Carroll's graphic on page 41 first published in inVersions #2, 1981, story reprinted in 'If Blood Should Stain the Lino' Gary Dunne inVersions ISBN 09498876 02 X October 1983



Every time he and I went out, we'd always end up with some sort of entourage. So far tonight we'd only collected David, a weekend tourist from Bathurst, who wanted to see everything Sin City had on offer. But the night was still young.

The doorman was showing signs of being ready to give in. Mike asked for orange juices and kept him talking.

"Sure, it's simply that we get lots of tourists here who want to see what goes on. Lou Reed types, scumming it up for one night, then going back to Melbourne with wild tales to shock the local high teacup queens." Three drinks were poured.

"We're cool." Mike performed an inclusive smile.

David downed his juice, straightened up and faced him. A bush version of cool, hands in pockets and real slow grin.

The doorman eyed him up and down and winked. "Like another one? They're free for spunkies." The money for both our admission and the drinks was deftly swept into the till.

David casually slipped an arm around me. "One's enough." And squeezed my shoulder. Both of us close to giggling. Mike stated dryly that he wouldn't mind a top up.

As the barman grudgingly poured it, two more clones clomped up the stairs and fronted the bar. While the doorman was busy with them, Mike downed his drink and mustered us quickly past the Marlon Brando chorus line and up the next flight of stairs.

"You didn't pay for that drink," I told him.

1983

** Catch 22, a free monthly magazine for gay women and men, Adelaide * Week long Mardi Gras Festival. Parade has 44 floats, crowd est 30 000, party 6 000 * April, Hep B vaccine available * April, Club 80 raided and closed * Federal Dept of Health confirm first case of AIDS in Australia * Edge City on Two Different Plans, anthology launched in September * July, Stonewall march attracts only 300 **



“And you didn’t have the nerve to ask,” he replied.

“Come on then. Let’s be brave.” David headed into the first room. Pitch black. Noises. Whispers and groans. I stood next to him and lit a cigarette. Lines on his face shadowed by matchlight. The doorman had a point: David was spunky. He had an innocent healthy glow, the kind you quickly lose living in Sydney.

Then I noticed the fresco against the opposite wall. Erotic confusion. Legs, arms, bodies, all intertwined. Moving. On the floor, dust and clothing. Two faces looked over. And in a split second, the match went out. Darkness.

“Our sheep go a bit like that on cold nights, but they don’t get so personal,” David whispered, flicking on his lighter.

As he approached, face in gaslight, several bodies detached themselves and began to head towards him. The bodies got closer. The lighter went out. A hand brushed me. Someone grabbed my arm. I couldn’t loosen their grip.

“It’s me,” David hissed.

I hurried towards the stairwell, David vice-like, holding on.

Mike was standing under the one light on the whole top floor, deep in conversation with a tall bearded man. After introductions, they continued a heavy discussion about the increasing impact of foreign influences on Australian aesthetics and culture. It was all somewhat beyond me.

David was nudging my chest. It was time to go exploring again.

“Don’t use your lighter this time,” I suggested as we ventured back down the corridor.

“I wasn’t going to. You know, I think it’s my leather jacket.”

“You’re probably the only legit bike rider in this place.”

“Maybe not. There were a few bikes outside... But true.” He took my arm. “You first. I’ll follow. And let’s not get separated.”

“You seemed a lot braver back on the landing.”

“I just wanted to get away from that big guy. I don’t like him. Kept staring at me like the doorman did. How come he and Mike are friends?”

“Mike seems to know about half of Sydney.”

“Oh.” Upward inflection.

“Not intimately.”

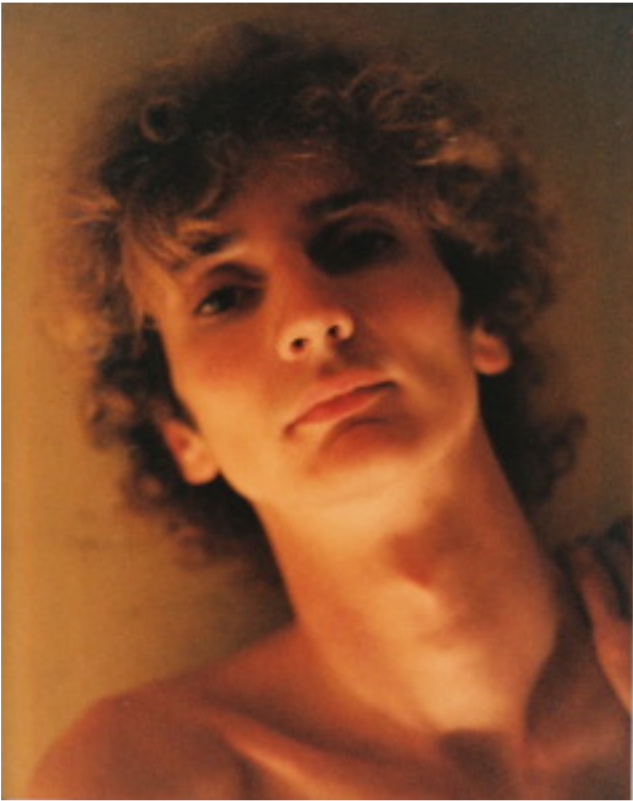


Photo: Jerry 1979 Gary Dunne

“Oh.” Downward inflection.

We wandered through several rooms, all pitch dark and smelling of amyl, past couples, groups and aimless singles. Beyond the odd close-up questioning look, no one disturbed us.

In half-light, at the end of the corridor a young guy was lying on the floor, moaning quietly.

“You OK mate?” I squatted and took his hand.

“Fine. Real fine. Thanks.” Slurred voice. “You dudes wanna three-way?”

“No,” said David. “But thanks.” Polite.

“You on ludes kid? Mandied, they call it here.” The voice behind me was obviously American.

I looked around to see cowboy boots, tight 501s, big silver buckle and tight white tee-shirt beneath a chiselled face and marine style crew cut.

“Yeah. Mandies. You wanna screw me?”

Silence. The young American gave me a long dirty look. He obviously planned on staying.

“You sure you’re OK?” I stood up slowly. I wanted to be sure. Of him. And of my own reaction. A confusion of concern, restraint and uneasy desire. All filed for later consideration.

“Piss off. I like Yanks.”

1983

Elbow Grease, play by Barry Lowe, Hullabaloo Theatre, Balmain Town Hall Hotel * *Firing Squad*, performance by Reg Livermore, Her Majesty's Melbourne * *Green Park Observer*, issue 1, newspaper, Sydney, 4 issues, editor Richard Turner, Michael Glynn * *If Blood Should Stain the Lino*, fiction by Gary Dunne, in *Versions Sydney* launched in November * *The Cobra*, a play by Justin Fleming, Sydney Theatre Co * *The Finishing School*, play by Barry Lowe, Hullabaloo Balmain Town Hall Hotel; also *Writer's Cramp*, perf at Fruitful Theatre, Perth Theatre Group

David and I escaped into the last room. It was better lit than any other on the top floor with two holes in a galvanised iron roof that sloped to meet the floor on one side. A dusty moonlit attic. And we were alone.

“Hey Simon. Look.” He beckoned me over and popped his head out of one hole. I joined him, popping my head out of the other. Gulping fresh air. Sydney, a maze of coloured light around the oily darkness of the harbour. All reassuringly familiar.

“I never realised that the Centerpoint Tower was so high. Is it the tallest building in town?”

The warm sea breeze was ruffling his hair.

“Sure is. There’s a revolving restaurant up top, if you fancy a really good view.”

“This is good enough.” He nodded at the winking buoys and the last ferry from Manly.

“I love this city,” I admitted quietly.

He smiled then looked at me in the strangest way. “I never knew you cared.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, it’s real romantic, here with the harbour views and all, but wouldn’t your place be more comfortable?”

I wasn’t sure exactly what he was talking about, but the drift was pretty clear. It was just rather sudden and unexpected.

“Well, yes. OK. Sure. Nice of you to...”

His head abruptly popped down, leaving me alone with the moonlight. Next I heard him bluntly tell someone to bugger off. His head popped up again, this time sporting a sheepish grin.

“Sorry. I thought it was you. Then he swapped from hand to mouth.” An echo of erotic uncertainty. “But it was nice.”



'So Earnest They're Boring' began life as rough notes from a night out in the mid-seventies with Peter Blazey, researching a potential feature for Forum magazine. The piece was never written. Beyond the problems of writing it in such a way that it wouldn't get the magazine into the Queensland courts yet again charged with being obscene, the reality was that a mainstream article on illegal gay backroom bars in Sydney could spark a backlash including police raids and closures. By 1980 I thought I could get away with using my research notes to create a location for an erotic comedy of errors. Like many other stories I wrote around that time, its first outing was to Melbourne to collect its Meanjin rejection slip. One of their readers was notorious for his brief witty put-downs. His view that my characters were 'so earnest they're boring' provided a much better title for the story when it first appeared in inVersions magazine in 1981. Years later Gary Wotherspoon quoted the whole opening section of the story in his landmark Sydney gay history, 'City of the Plain'. Those meticulous research notes had finally paid off.

Gary Dunne



'It was a frosty morning pre-march with people stamping, drinking coffee, playing with balloons and preparing march banners. Sporting a protruding toothbrush and his overnight gear in a shopping bag he had shoplifted in Balmain was raffish, impoverished writer Gary Dunne who said he was going on the march prepared for anything. He looked at the rugged-up marchers and said: "With all these rich queens here, I'll score either a root or a job." He hasn't reported since.'

Peter Blazey, covering the Stonewall '81 March in his Out & Out column, Campaign, August 1981.

Justified and Ancient

'They're Justified, and they're Ancient/ And they drive an ice cream van/ They're Justified and they're Ancient/ With still no master plan/ The last train left an hour ago/ They were singing "All aboard"/ All bound for Mu Mu Land/ Then someone starting screaming/ "Turn up the Strobe"/ (Bring the Beat Back).'

According to arcane occult writers, and more modern illuminati, Mu Mu Land or Lemuria was a continent that existed in ancient times in either the Pacific or the Indian Ocean. Mu Mu Land sank beneath the waves as a result of cataclysmic change.

The song 'Justified & Ancient', by Bill Drummond and Jimmy Cauty, performed by The KLF and Tammy Wynette, was released in 1991. The video clip (pic below) was fabulously excessive.

Miss Tammy Wynette was quoted in The Independent as saying, "Mu Mu Land looks a lot more interesting than Tennessee... but I wouldn't want to live there."



Justified & Ancient

www.gay-ebooks.com.au