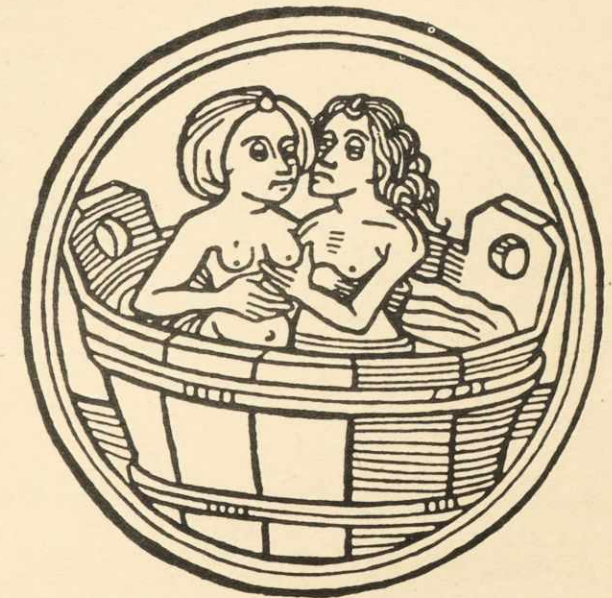


THE ^{portable} GAY & LESBIAN READER



this woman i'm dancing with

this woman i'm dancing with, you wouldn't know her. she used to live here but she moved. she pulses grace and strength and the best of lust. we have known this way of dancing, this modified jive, for years now. my body plays on her unrolling arm, one hand knows exactly where another hand will be.

she's just here for a visit.

when we met, i was a baby dyke and she was this BIG, STRONG, OUT WOMAN. it pissed me off when she got maternalistic, but i was IN LOVE. (i was actually in a long-distance relationship with a guy in toronto, but then i fell in love.)

the music pulls us together and apart.

she and her partner live on the west coast now. we see each other every couple of years, and the changes make us joyful.

i love dancing with her. this dance is a ritual, my ritual for the ache one feels for one's first lover, the one that makes you wonder what if the bittersweet and unforgettable.

Andrea Currie

Without Acceptance 1

Persecution from within or without? My hurt knows no borders, no distinction between self-suppression, Other oppression.

Without Acceptance 2

Being gay was not the worst thing that ever happened to me. Not accepting it was.

The dirty vicar

Hidden beneath the robes of the priest is a sacrament divine: veiled from view for the chosen few is a chalice filled with wine. And who will drink of this bitter cup? Will I with my confessor sup? A eucharist blessed by his soft caress and I in his loving cup.

by Michael Dunning Henschel

We have a theory, Michelle and I, that somehow all of our actions are dictated by another. A script writer. And not a very good one. The problems start when our regular script writers take a vacation.

Or worse, they go on strike. We end up with young hacks. Our worlds get very mixed up for a time and then the regulars finally return, only to spend months getting everything straightened out. Anyway, I think there must have been a strike about a year ago. It might have been a vacation but Michelle and I don't have the same author and things went screwy for both of us at the same time.

DARREN

All this happened after years of my regular routine: middle class, gay, scared, pretentious, plain, and wanting to be an intellectual and a playwright with some success. Michelle was stuck in her routine too. She was beautiful, something you want to put on a stage, and she could act. She had an actor's vanity. We had met in the early years of high school. We would work together on plays. Eventually, we even took some of my work to a provincial festival. I was impressed and too full of myself to be approached. She was excellent in the role that I wrote expressly for her. The world was moving slowly and steadily. Nothing too strenuous ever happened.

That's what they wanted us to think. So that we could externalize. Not look at what we were doing ourselves, to ourselves. It was the end of summer. Not long before school. I would be going off to university now. Michelle stayed back in high school. Teachers found it easier to give extra credit for writing than for acting. I'm still not sure why. Acting seems more important out here. I had just gotten back to the city, after working all summer.

It was an election year. so we took up the banner: *Art farts of the world, unite: you have nothing to lose but your silver bangles?* We were serious; still are quite. We would fold mail-outs all afternoon; canvass from five to nine-thirty; find the coffee, and write until two or three in the morning. I would go home and we would start all over again around noon the next day. Except weekends when we would go downtown. Get drunk. Watch guys. Get frustrated. Middle class.

Canvassing, unlike folding, goes well with writing. Folding gives you paper-cuts. Canvassing gives you characters to play with. Housewives who really do wear curlers, and fuzzy pink bathrobes.

Children answer the door naked. Women with stronger beards than I have. The not so normal. The downright crazy. You never meet these people when you don't have to be nice to them. They save it up, you know; let it all out when the canvassers come to the door. No wonder the Witnesses always look in such good shape; they're scared to death about what might peek around that door.

I should have known that a strike was coming when we met a very interesting old man. He looked as if he had not bathed since he had arrived at his political views, circa 1935.

"But we're social democrats?"

Michelle protested.

"Yes," the old man croaked, "I used to

about faggots and queers.

But it was a party. I'm afraid my writer likes to editorialize. A victory party. Two hundred socialists in the ballroom of a nineteenth-century hotel, never noticing the dichotomy, stamped-never for the cash bar. Victory: I got a drink before they ran out of everything. Michelle went scanning for men. I watched her and laughed. She came up empty. She got herself a drink. We watched the room.

Look at that. Tall, about six three; short dark hair; excellent shape, beautiful dark green eyes.

"What are you staring at?" She answered her own question. We have the same taste in men. He was sitting all

alone at a table not far from us. He pulled out a cigarette. "You've got good eyes. Give me a smoke." I did; pulled out my lighter. She waved it off. Went directly over and asked him for a light. He's well dressed; white oxford shirt, navy trousers; black penny loafers, and green rimmed glasses to match his eyes. If I strain I can see — very conservative but catchy, not many men our age can pull that look off and still look like they're having fun. He looks like Rob Lowe.

Michelle got her light; sat down and started talking to him. I was jealous. I had no reason to be. I hadn't done anything. I'm such a coward. Later I found that she had engaged in most of the conversation. "Whose campaign did you work on? Really, she taught me English in high school. Yes, she is quite a lady. Two hundred votes and the Tories had a PR firm working for them."

Things seemed to be going well for her. He was warming up to her. I said hello to some people I know. Making contacts — never know when they might be needed. When I ran out of meet-and-greet spirit, I joined them.

They were talking about Newfoundland. He was quite easy to talk to. He was from St. John's; had come to Halifax to go to university, Mount Saint Vincent, accounting. He asked and I told him Dalhousie, chemistry. He's even more attractive now that he's talking. I get pulled away. I don't think that my writer really wants me to intrude. He had been letting us do our own improvisation. I went to the bathroom.

"Where's Jonathan?" Darren asked. She told him and moved back into the conversation. I bumped into some friends of mine. "Coming down to the Sea Pig?" I told them Michelle and I

would join them later. I moved around the room again, picking up the people I missed the first time. Eventually making my way back to Darren and Michelle. They thought a change of scenery would be good. We got ourselves together.

As we were leaving, Michelle took me aside: "Stop making a pass at him.

"Why?"

"So you were."

"No, never. He's not my type." So I can lie.

"Bull! I saw him first."

"No you didn't."

"Well, I talked to him first."

"So, I'm a coward."

"Just stop it."

"But I wasn't doing anything." She's jealous?

"He kept asking where you were."

"When?"

"When you went to the bathroom." It was left at that. Darren was coming back into hearing range. He's gay? No. They don't write things this nicely. I am definitely not RCMP material; I never get my man.

We started down the street. I was walking between the two of them. I find myself staring at him. Michelle notices. I stop. It's a beautiful late summer night. There's just enough breeze to keep things fresh.

"So, where do you go downtown?" she asks him.

"Scoundrel's, the Sea Horse, 2112 Gottingen."

I've heard that address before. That's Rumours. That's the only gay bar in Nova Scotia. I look over at Michelle,

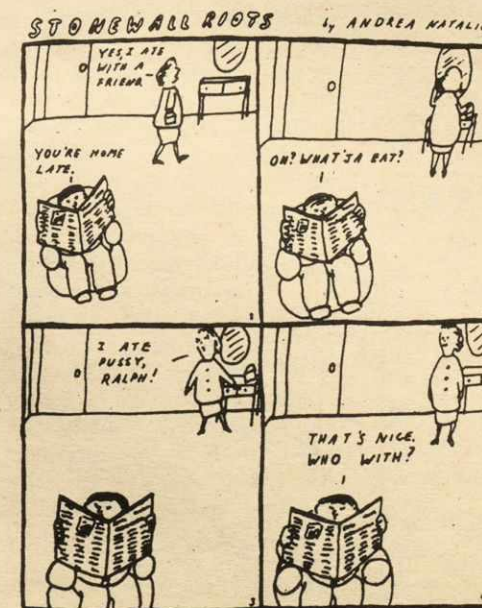
POUR AVOIR LA TRANQUILITE

Penser d'abord d'une place
une place silencieuse
une place de satisfaction
où il y a de l'air calme
plein de sons naturels
Ne pas se décourager
prendre du temps
effacer toutes les mauvaises idées
imaginer n'importe quoi
peut être la mer
ou les montagnes
oui, le bel océan
avec tous ses mystères formidables
Ensuite, se relaxer
mais
ne pas perdre cette idée
essayer d'être là vraiment
penser fort
regarder le ciel et l'eau
quel beau bleu
écouter l'eau frapper
sur les roches énormes
observer l'herbe longue
comme ça danse dans le vent
entendre les mouettes en haut

Comme l'air est clair
sans les nuages
remarquar une petite tache noire
loin dans la distance
un grand bateau
seul
enrouver par l'eau
quelle solitude

Si vous ne pouvez pas
sentir vraiment
le bel entourage
vous n'avez pas la chance
alors vous rêvez
simplement
mais
si maintenant
vous êtes content
c'est bon
vous allez attraper
la bonne tranquillité
et heureusement
ce n'était pas
un rêve.

T.Y.B.



AS USUAL, ELLEN'S HUSBAND WASN'T REALLY LISTENING TO HER.