

as nigger

demnation as open-mouthed astonishment: "You could lose your job!"

Now, of course, there's the Vietnamese war. It gets some opposition from a few teachers. Some support it, but a vast number of professors, who know perfectly well what's happening, are copping out again. And in the high schools you can forget it. Stillness reigns.

Teachers are chickenshit

I'm not sure why teachers are so chickenshit. It could be that academic training itself forces a split between thought and action. It might also be that the tenured security of a teaching job attracts timid persons who are unsure of themselves and need weapons and other external trappings of authority.

At any rate, teachers are short on balls. And, as Judy Einstein has eloquently pointed out, the classroom offers an artificial and protected environment in which they can exercise their will to power.

Your neighbors may drive a better car; gas station attendants may intimidate you, your wife may dominate you; the legislature may shit on you; but in the classroom, by God, students do what you say or else. The grade is a hell of a weapon. It may not rest on your hip, potent and rigid like a cop's gun, but in the long run it's more powerful. At your personal whim—anytime you choose—you can keep 35 students up for nights and have the "pleasure" of seeing them walk into the classroom pasty-faced and red-eyed carrying a sheaf of typewritten pages, with a title page, MLA footnotes and margins set at 15 and 91.

The general timidity which causes teachers to make niggers of their students usually includes a more specific fear—fear of the students themselves. After all, students are different, just like black people. You stand exposed in front of them, knowing that their interests, their values and their language are different from yours. To make matters worse, you may suspect that you yourself are not the most engaging person. What then can protect you from their ridicule and scorn? Respect for authority. That's what. It's the policeman's gun again. The white bwana's pith helmet. So you flaunt that authority. You wither whisperers with a murderous glance. You crush objectors with erudition and heavy iron. And, worst of all, you make your own attainments seem not accessible but awesomely remote. You conceal your massive ignorance—and parade a splendor learning.

Sexual hangups contribute

Finally, there's the darkest reason of all for the master-slave approach to education. The less trained and the less socialized a person is, the more he constitutes a sexual threat and the more he will be subjugated by institutions such as penitentiaries and schools. Many of us are aware by now of the sexual neurosis which makes white man so fearful of integrated schools and neighborhoods, and which makes castration of Negroes a deeply entrenched Southern folkway. We should recognize a similar pattern in education. There is a kind of castration that goes on in schools. It begins, before school years, with parents' first encroachments on their children's free unashamed sexuality and continues right up to the day when they hand you your doctoral diploma with a bleeding, shriveled pair of testicles stapled to the parchment. It's not that sexuality has no place in the classroom. You'll find it there but only in certain perverted and vitiated forms.

How does sex show up in school? First of all, there's the sadomasochistic relation-

ship between teachers and students. That's plenty sexual, although the price of enjoying it is to be unaware of what's happening.

In walks the student in the Ivy League equivalent of a motorcycle jacket. In walks the teacher—a kind of intellectual rough trade—and flogs his students with grades, tests, sarcasm and snotty superiority until their very brains are bleeding.

In Swinburne's England, the whipped school boy frequently grew up to be a flagellant. With us their perversion is intellectual but it's no less perverse.

Sex also shows up in the classroom as academic subject matter—sanitized and abstracted, thoroughly divorced from feeling. You get "sex education" now in both school and college classes: everyone determined not to be embarrassed, to be very up-to-date. These are the classes for which sex, as Feiffer puts it, "can be a beautiful thing if properly administered." And then, of course, there's still another depressing manifestation of sex in the classroom: the "off-color" teacher, who keeps his class awake with sniggering sexual allusions, obscene titters and academic innuendo. The sexuality he purveys, it must be admitted, is at least better than none at all.

Students are spayed

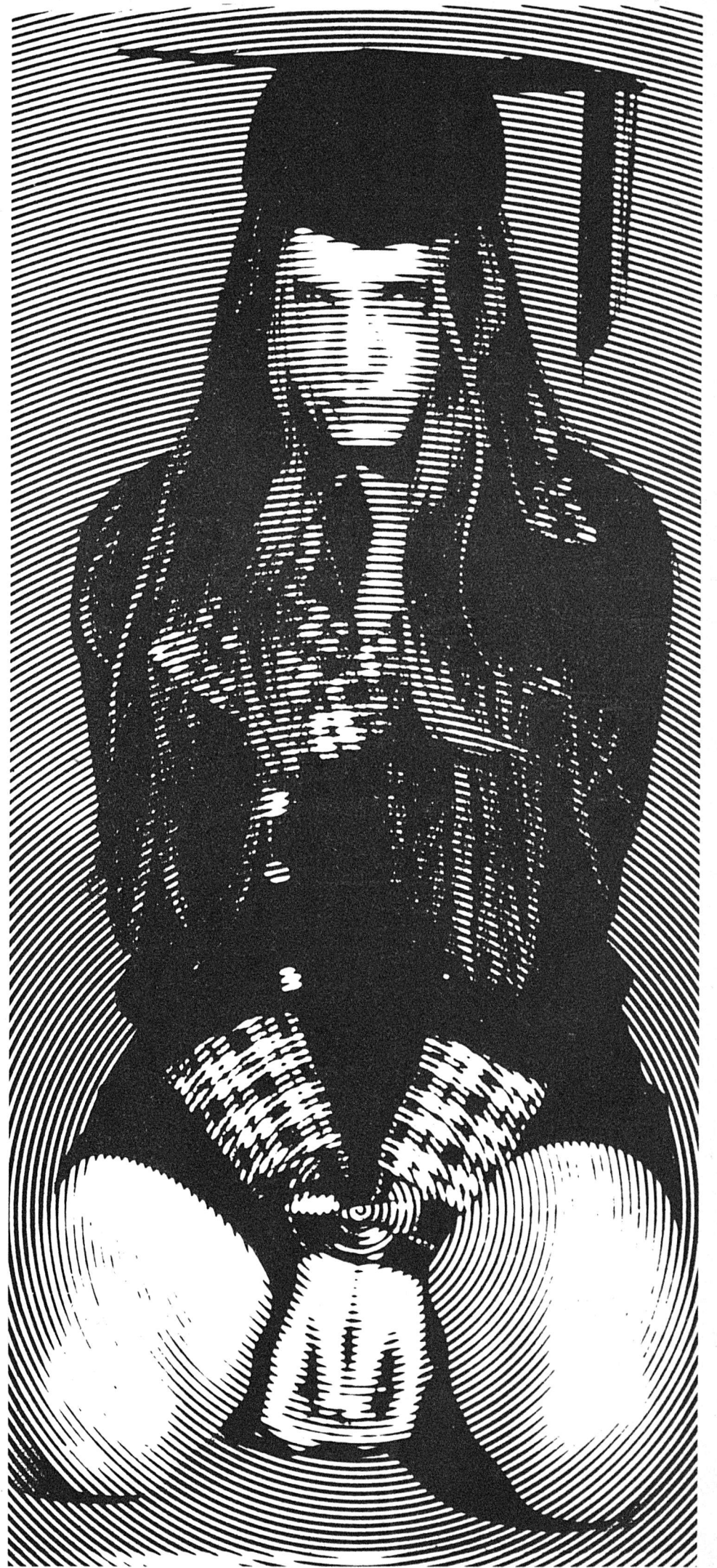
What's missing, from kindergarten to graduate school, is honest recognition of what's happening—turned-on awareness of what's underneath the petti-pants, the chinos and the flannels. It's not that sex needs to be pushed in school; sex is pushed enough. But we should let it be, where it is and like it is. I don't insist that ladies in junior high school lovingly caress their students' cocks (someday, maybe); however, it is reasonable to ask that the ladies don't, by example and stricture, teach their students to pretend that they aren't there. As things stand now, students are physically castrated or spayed—and for the very same reason that black men are castrated in Georgia; because they're a threat.

So you can add sexual repression to the list of causes, along with vanity, fear and will to power, that turn the teacher into Mr. Charlie. You might also want to keep in mind that he was a nigger once himself and has never really gotten over it. And there are more causes, some of which are better described in sociological than in psychological terms. Work them out, it's not hard. But in the meantime what we've got on our hands is a whole lot of niggers. And what makes this particularly grim is that the student has less chance than the black man of getting out of his bag. Because the student doesn't even know he's in it. That, more or less, is what's happening in higher education. And the results are staggering.

For one thing damn little education takes place in the schools. How could it? You can't educate slaves; you can only train them. Or, to use an uglier and more timely word, you can only program them.

I like to folk dance. Like other novices, I've gone to the Intersection or to the Museum and laid out good money in order to learn how to dance. No grades, no prerequisites, no separate dining rooms; they just turn you on to dancing. That's education. Now look at what happens in college. A friend of mine, Milt, recently finished a folk dance class. For his final he had to learn things like this: "The Irish are known for their wit and imagination, qualities reflected in their dances, which include the jig, the reel and the hornpipe." And then the teacher graded him A, B, C, D, or F, while he danced in front of her. That's not education. That's not even training. That's an abomination on the face of the earth. It's especially ironic because Milt took that dance class trying to get out of the academic rut. He took crafts for the same reason. Great, right? Get your hands in some clay? Make

... on how to be slaves



something? Then the teacher announced that a 20-page term paper would be required—with footnotes.

At my school we even grade people on how they read poetry. That's like grading people on how they bork. But we do it. In fact, God help me, I do it. I'm the Simon Legree of the poetry plantation. "Tote that iamb! Lift that spondee!" Even to discuss a good poem in that environment is potentially dangerous because the very classroom is contaminated.

As hard as I may try to turn students on to poetry, I know that the desks, the tests, the IBM cards, their own attitudes toward school, and my own residue of UCLA method are turning them off.

Another result of student slavery is just as dangerous—students don't get emancipated when they graduate. As a matter of fact, we don't let them graduate until they've demonstrated their willingness—

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