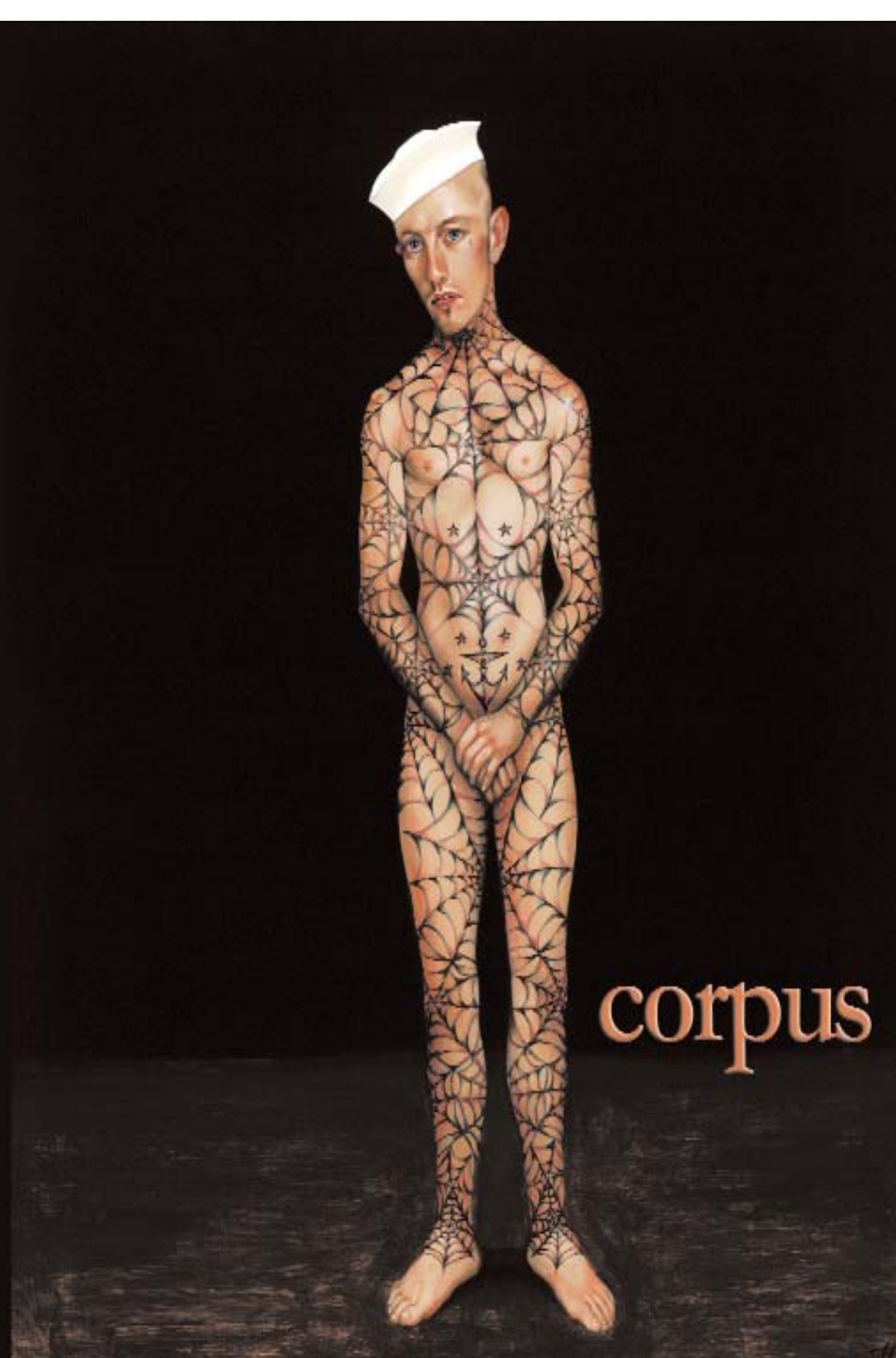


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corpus

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## corpus

An HIV Prevention Publication

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"Th' Floodgates" originally appeared in James Belasco's book, *The Brothers of New Essex*, published by Cleis Press Inc. in 2000.

Artwork by Timothy Cummings appears courtesy of The Catherine Clark Gallery.

"I Buy Sea Monkeys" originally appeared in Justin Chin's book, *Harmless Medicine*, published by Manic D Press in 2001.

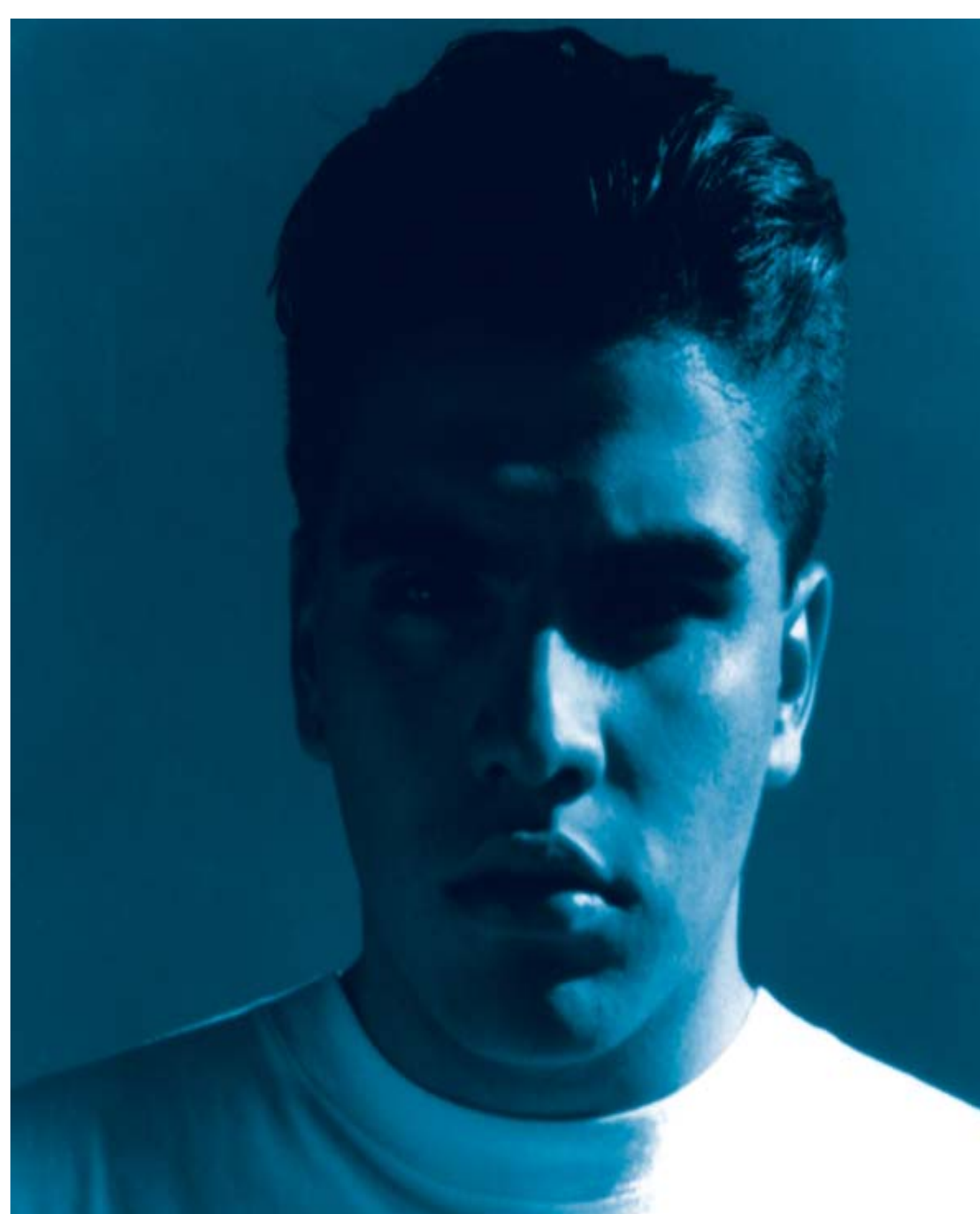
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Back cover art: Kehinde Wiley, "Infinite Mobility (Midway)" (Detail, altered), 2002, acrylic on canvas, 36" x 36"

Inside back cover photograph appears courtesy of Carlos Peñate.







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**Joel Barraquiel Tan** was born in 1968 in Manila. He is the author of *MONSTER* (poems) and editor of the Lambda Literary Award Nominated *Queer Pilipino, Asian, and Pacific Islander (P.A.P.I.) Porn*. Joel's essays, poems, and fiction have been published in several academic and popular venues and his play "The Cure: A Tragicomedy about the AIDS Care Industry," written with Ginu Kamani, is slated for its world premiere in SF for Spring 2003. Joel is a co-founder of Los Angeles' Asian Pacific AIDS Intervention Team and currently works for the Orange County AIDS Services Foundation.

**Kehinde Wiley** received his MFA from Yale, and his BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute. He has exhibited in San Francisco, Oakland, Ottawa, New York and New Haven. His work has received numerous awards such as the Yale University Art Gallery Award, the City of Los Angeles Metro Art Grant, The NAACP, the Akwa Ibom State Association of Nigeria travel grant and SECA honorary membership from the SF Museum of Modern Art.

## Contributors

**Omar Baños** writes poetry and short stories (*cuentos*) in Spanish. His writings explore love, sex, homoeroticism and experiences of the civil war in El Salvador. Omar was born in El Salvador and has lived in Los Angeles since 1990. He graduated from Occidental College in 1998 with a B.A. in Spanish/Latin American Literature. He is a member of the writing group Equipo y Vos, a gay Central American writing collective based in Los Angeles. Currently, Omar is the Editor of *IMPACTO!*, the Spanish language publication of AIDS Project Los Angeles.

**Belasco's** work has been featured in *Best Gay Erotica*, *GBM*, *Whazzup!* and *Meatmen*. His chapbooks include *Lust For Sale*, *Confessions*, *Enter Lewd* and *Nassssty*. Belasco's work has been compiled in *The Brothers of New Essex: Afro Erotic Adventures by Belasco*, a 176 page large format trade publication with a full color cover. The Publisher is Cleis Press of San Francisco and their website can be found at [www.cleispress.com](http://www.cleispress.com). Their phone ordering number is 1-800-780-2279.

**Pedro Bustos Aguilar** is a writer living with HIV in San Francisco. Born in Morelia, Michoacan, Mexico, he came to the US to attend the University of Texas at Austin's graduate program in Comparative Literature. He holds a double B.A. in English and French, from the State University of Veracruz in Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico. He has published critical articles and short stories and is currently working on narrative dealing with homophobic violence in Mexico, of which these extracts are a part.

**Justin Chin** is a writer & performance artist. His work has been presented at PS 122 and Dixon Place, in New York; Josie's Cabaret & Juice Joint, the LAB, Center for the Arts, Artist Television Access, Luna Sea & Southern Exposure, in San Francisco; East/West Players in Los Angeles; the Cleveland Performance Art Festival, Hampshire College and Loyola University. His poetry, prose & journalism have been published in *Men on Men 5* (Plume), *Eros in Boystown* (Crown), *Premonitions: The Kaya Anthology of New Asian North American Poetry*, *The James White Review* & *The Progressive*, among others. His book *Mongrel* was published by St. Martin's Press, and his books, *Bite Hard*, and *Harmless Medicine* were published by Manic D Press.

**Jaime Cortez** is an artist, writer and cultural worker based in San Francisco. His writing has appeared in numerous anthologies including *Best Gay Erotica 2001*, *2sex and Besame Mucho*. He was the editor of *Virgins, Guerrillas & Locas*, an anthology of writing by queer latino authors. Jaime co-founded the comedy trio "Latin Hustle," which performed throughout northern California. Jaime's visual art has been exhibited at numerous venues including the Oakland Museum of California, Huntington Beach Center for the Arts, Southern Exposure and Intersection for the Arts. Jaime is currently serving as the Program Manager at Galería De La Raza. He can be reached at [senorcortezca@hotmail.com](mailto:senorcortezca@hotmail.com).

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Puedes considerar tener prácticas de poco riesgo o sin riesgo: Besar, ver videos, sexo por teléfono, jalársela, penetración con el dedo, utilizar juguetes sexuales y/o mamar el pene (sexo oral). Las diferentes actividades sexuales representan diferentes niveles de riesgo. Algunos hombres prefieren no tener ningún tipo de riesgo. Otros deciden que algunas actividades con un poco de riesgo son aceptables. Depende de cada uno de nosotros el reconocer que nivel de riesgo estamos preparados a tomar.

Coger sin condón es una de las maneras más fáciles de transmitir el VIH. A los hombres que les gusta y disfrutan la práctica del sexo anal deberían de usar condones.

Recuerda:

1. Utiliza condones de látex que no hayan expirado; revista la fecha de expiración.
2. Utiliza mucho lubricante a base de agua con los condones de látex.
3. Nunca utilices lubricantes a base de aceite con condones de látex: Vaselina™, aceites, ni cremas de loción para las manos.
4. Ponte un condón antes de tocar el ano con tu pene.
5. Revisa el condón constantemente para asegurarte que no se ha roto o zafado. Agrega más lubricante.

Las investigaciones todavía no han especificado la facilidad de ser reinfectado con una nueva cepa del virus. Por lo tanto, coger sin condón puede ser una actividad de alto riesgo también para hombres que viven con el VIH. Si quieres coger sin condón, por lo menos trata de hacerlo con hombres que tienen tu mismo estatus de VIH. Esto quiere decir que necesitas saber el estatus del VIH de tu pareja sexual y el tuyo. Si no has hablado sobre el tema con tu pareja es mejor que sigan usando condones. Utiliza los condones si no estás completamente seguro del estatus del VIH de tu pareja sexual o del tuyo. Si tú o tu pareja sexual no saben su estatus del VIH, háganse la prueba. Es gratis, confidencial y más fácil que nunca.

## Riesgos

Para más información sobre cómo reducir tus riesgos de infección por ETS y el VIH e información sobre programas de prevención de VIH visítanos en [www.apla.org](http://www.apla.org). También puedes llamar al 1-800-342-AIDS o visitar la página [www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/facts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/facts.htm).

## Risks

You might want to consider lower-risk and no-risk sex like kissing, watching videos, phone sex, jerking off, finger fucking, using sex toys and/or sucking dick (oral sex). Different sexual activities involve different levels of risk. Some guys prefer the security of no-risk activities. Others decide that low-risk activities are acceptable. It is up to each of us to consider the various degrees of risk we are prepared to take.

Fucking without a condom is by far the easiest way to transmit HIV. Guys who enjoy and want to participate in anal sex should use a condom.

Remember to:

1. Use a latex condom that has not expired so check the date.
2. Use a lot of water-based lube with a latex condom.
3. Never use oil-based lube like Vaseline™, oils, or hand lotion with a latex condom.
4. Put a condom on before touching someone's asshole with your dick.
5. Check periodically to make sure that the condom has not torn or slipped off. Add more lube.

Research is not yet clear about how easy it is for HIV positive guys to become re-infected with new strains of the virus. So fucking without condoms, even between two HIV positive guys, may still be a high-risk activity. If you want to fuck without condoms, at least try to do so with guys who have the same HIV status as you do. This mean you have to know your partner's HIV status as well as your own. If you have not discussed this with your partner, stick to using condoms. If you are not absolutely sure about your partner's HIV status or your own, use a condom. If you and your partner don't know your HIV status, get tested. It's free, confidential and easier than ever.

For more tips on how to lower your risk of STD and HIV infection, and information about HIV prevention programs hit us up at [www.apla.org](http://www.apla.org). You can also call 1-800-342-AIDS or visit [www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/facts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/facts.htm).

These days, finding gayness in the HIV/AIDS industry is like looking for Waldo. Gay has become backdrop to vague social categories like MSM (men who have sex with men), same gender loving, and men on the DL. This is odd given that the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States continues to concentrate itself among gay men. An estimated 365,000 to 535,000 gay men and other homosexually oriented men are living with HIV (representing 70% of HIV-infected men). We made up more than half (53%) of all newly reported HIV infections through June 2001 and accounted for 59% of male AIDS cases in the year 2000. Gay men accounted for 46%, 52%, 65%, 71% and 79% of AIDS cases among African American, Latino, Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and white men respectively.<sup>1 2</sup>

As we debate the validity of new social categories, gay men see less and less salience in HIV prevention campaigns as those campaigns become watered-down and fail to address the subjective experiences of gay men in visible and affirming ways.<sup>3</sup> Unabated syphilis outbreaks among gay men in large urban areas are evidence of this trend. Syphilis outbreaks portend new HIV infections among *gay* men and reveal the failure to mount tailored prevention campaigns based on proven theories of persuasion.<sup>4</sup> Outdated, simplistic, and overly generic prevention messages may be behind what is often referred to as "HIV prevention fatigue" or "HIV/AIDS burnout."<sup>5 6</sup> We as gay men are

## Foreword

George Ayala, Director of Education  
AIDS Project Los Angeles

En estos días, encontrar el homosexualismo en la industria del VIH/SIDA es como buscar una aguja en un pajar. El homosexualismo se ha convertido en el telón de fondo de las irremediamente vagas categorías sociales, como HSH (hombres que tienen sexo con hombres), amor entre el mismo sexo, y hombres DL. Esto es raro dado que la epidemia del VIH/SIDA en los Estados Unidos sigue concentrada entre los hombres gay. Se estima que entre 365,000 y 535,000 hombres gay y otros hombres cuya orientación sexual es homosexual viven con el VIH (representan un total del 70% de los hombres

infectados con el VIH). Nosotros constituimos más de la mitad (53%) de todos los nuevos casos de infección por el VIH reportados hasta junio de 2001 y representamos el 59% de los casos de SIDA de hombres en el año 2000. Los hombres gay representan el 46%, 52%, 65%, 71% y el 79% de los casos de SIDA entre Afro-Americanos, Latinos, Indígenas (Americanos Nativos), Asiáticos / Islas del pacífico y Blancos respectivamente.<sup>1 2</sup>

Mientras que debatimos la validez de las nuevas categorías sociales, los hombres gay ven más distantes las campañas de prevención de VIH ya que las mismas se suavizan y fallan al no puntualizar en las experiencias subjetivas de los hombres gay en maneras visibles y afirmativas.<sup>3</sup> Los brotes de sífilis que no han disminuido entre los hombres gay que viven en grandes zonas urbanas son evidencia de esta corriente. Los brotes de sífilis auguran nuevas infecciones por el VIH entre hombres gay y revelan el fracaso de montar apropiadas campañas de prevención basadas en teorías de persuasión que ya

tired of the same old STD and HIV prevention campaigns that tell us what to do or scare us into conforming to safe sex guidelines that have little to do with the realities of our lives.

We have largely failed to understand the probability of exposure to HIV in the context of internalized homophobia, substance use, violence, sexual assault and other social forces that are constantly at play in the sexual exchanges between men. Studies of gay men continue to reveal associations between loneliness, depression, anger, low self-esteem and “risk behavior.”<sup>7 8</sup> These interrelated factors may have a common basis in the stigmatization sex between men continues to have and the considerable social discrimination gay men continue to experience.<sup>9 10</sup>

We have also been conspicuously silent about gay sexuality. This silence in the AIDS industry has retarded our conversations about HIV and AIDS by excluding examinations of pleasure and desire.<sup>11 12</sup> Yes, there is a good epidemiological accounting of same sex behavior among men – we continuously ask gay men to report how often condoms were not used during anal sex with how many sex partners of which gender in what positions in a given window of time, as if this would teach us how to reduce the risk of HIV infection. Our obsessive fuck counting, however, yields only an impoverished understanding of what gay men think and feel when we have sex. In the end, we learn little about pleasure and desire, the place each occupies in our lives, and the meaning that we bring to each.

Robert F. Reid Pharr, in “Black Gay Man: Essays”

han sido probadas.<sup>4</sup> Los mensajes de prevención desfasados, simplistas y extremadamente genéricos pueden ser lo que está detrás de lo que a menudo se refiere como ‘fatiga en la prevención del VIH’ o ‘agotamiento en VIH/SIDA’.<sup>5 6</sup> Nosotros, como hombres gay, estamos cansados de las mismas y viejas campañas de prevención de VIH/SIDA que nos dicen qué hacer o nos infunden miedo para que nos sometamos a guías de sexo seguro que no tienen nada que ver con las realidades de nuestras vidas.

Hemos fracasado al entender la probabilidad de exposición al VIH dentro del contexto de homofobia internalizada, el uso de drogas, la violencia, el asalto sexual y otras fuerzas sociales que constantemente están presentes en los intercambios sexuales entre los hombres. Los estudios de hombres gay continúan revelando la asociación que existe entre la soledad, la depresión, la rabia, la baja auto-estima y los “comportamientos de riesgo”.<sup>7 8</sup> Estos factores interrelacionados pueden tener una base común en la estigmatización que sigue teniendo el sexo entre hombres y la considerable discriminación social que los hombres gay siguen experimentando.<sup>9 10</sup>

Nosotros hemos sido conspicuamente silenciosos sobre la sexualidad homosexual. Este silencio en la industria del SIDA ha retrasado nuestras conversaciones sobre el VIH y SIDA al excluir la reexaminación del placer y el deseo.<sup>11 12</sup> Sí existe, sin embargo, un buen recuento epidemiológico del comportamiento sexual entre hombres — continuamente pedimos a los hombres gay que reporten la frecuencia de cuántas veces no se utilizó el condón durante el sexo anal, con la cantidad de las

## Tu Semen

Omar Baños

Tú y yo en la plenitud que nos desnuda;  
En esa forma tuya que me envuelve;  
En el deseo mío que te encierra  
En mi mano, en mi boca, en mi alma.

Empezamos el acto y descubrimos  
Que yo igual que tú, soy más que un cuerpo  
Inerte que pretende comer tu  
Carne. Soy alma fuerte que te vive.

Todo este espacio, esta pasión terca,  
Nos amarran las manos, nos dibujan  
El polen del deseo inadvertido,  
Y nos dejan jugar con nuestra esencia.

Tú y yo más allá de nuestra forma,  
Conjugamos la esencia que nos vive  
Debajo de mi ombligo y el tuyo:

Tu semen conjugado con el mío  
Se perdían perfumados sobre el fuego,  
Debajo del silencio prematuro,  
Detrás de caricias y gemidos,  
En esta plenitud desesperada.

Mi semen conjugado con el tuyo,  
En esta forma mía que te atrapa,  
Se hicieron cataratas de amapolas,  
Se hicieron fugaces pretensiones  
De promesas de amor, de pena y muerte.





challenges us for being willing to let stand the most “tired and hackneyed notions” of what gayness and gay sex actually mean. He writes:

“If there is one thing that marks us as queer, a category that is somehow different, if not altogether distinct, from the heterosexual, then it is undoubtedly our relationships to the body, particularly the expansive ways we utilize and combine vaginas, penises, breasts, buttocks, hands, arms, feet, stomachs, mouths and tongues in our expressions of not only intimacy, love, and lust but also and importantly shame, contempt, despair, and hate...we often are forced to become relatively self-aware about what we are doing when we fuck, suck, go down, go in, get on, go under.” (Reid-Pharr, 2001, pp. 85-86)

One of the great ironies of the AIDS era (or perhaps logical outcome) is the inordinate attention given to understanding the biology of HIV in the body without regard to the bodies hosting the virus. We in this industry have devoted so little theorizing to how we as gay men “inhabit our bodies” in relationship to sex, identity, culture, social interaction and HIV. It is in this spirit that we introduce *Corpus*. APLA is launching *Corpus* as part of a series of new publications designed to stimulate public debate and to encourage a renewed sense of possibility within the AIDS industry. *Corpus* is a collection of writings and artwork devoted to gay sex, not as

parejas sexuales de determinado sexo, en determinadas posiciones, dentro de un determinado tiempo, como si esto nos enseñara cómo reducir el riesgo de infección por el VIH. Nuestra obsesión con contar el número de cogidas, sin embargo, solamente arroja un empobrecido entendimiento de lo que pensamos y sentimos los hombres gay cuando tenemos sexo. Después de todo, aprendemos muy poco sobre el placer y el deseo, los espacios que ocupan en nuestras vidas y el significado que le damos a cada uno de ellos.

Rober F. Reid Pharr, en “Black Gay Man: Essays”, nos reta por dejar intactas las “nociones más viejas y gastadas” de lo que en realidad significa homosexualismo y el sexo homosexual. El escribe:

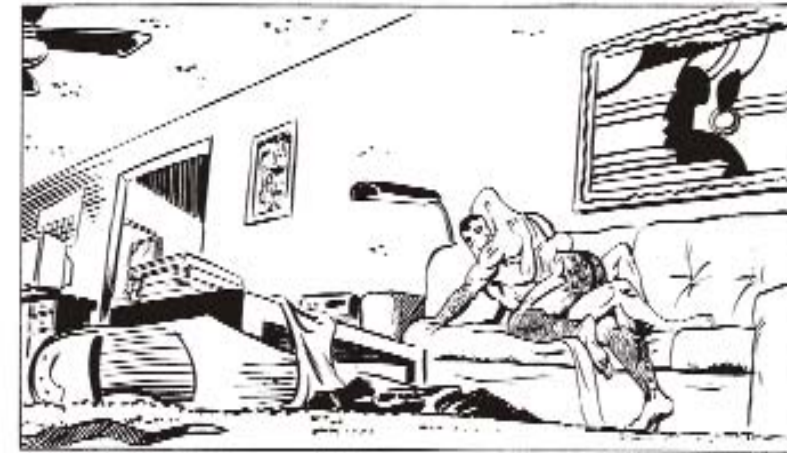
“Si hay una cosa que nos marca como maricones, una categoría que de alguna manera es diferente, si es que no es completamente distinta a la heterosexual, entonces sin duda es nuestra relación con el cuerpo, en particular, las maneras expansivas en las que utilizamos y combinamos las vaginas, los penes, los pechos, las nalgas, las manos, los brazos, los pies, los estómagos, las bocas y las lenguas en nuestra expresión, no sólo en la intimidad, el amor y el deseo, sino que también en la vergüenza, el desprecio (desdén), la desesperación y el odio... muchas veces estamos obligados de estar muy conscientes de lo que hacemos cuando cogemos (tenemos sexo), mamamos, cuando lo hacemos por dentro, por fuera, por arriba y por abajo.” (Reid-Pharr,



a problem to be solved or behavior to be quantified, but as a platform from which to launch more sophisticated and nuanced explorations of desire, pleasure, culture, HIV and the challenges of living with multiplicity. Under the astute and loving editorial leadership of Jaime Cortez, we have invited poets, cultural workers, artists and scholars whose irreverent use of storytelling, humor, poetry, images, and criticism poignantly teach us about the experiences of gay men, with all of their glorious complexity, contradictions, messiness, and potential to upset the status quo. The contributors of *Corpus* explore sex, pleasure, desire, and belonging in relationship to HIV/AIDS which is always present whether or not explicitly mentioned. There are lessons to uncover within *Corpus* – lessons that could inform our HIV prevention efforts in ways that respect the bodies and lived experiences of gay men.

2001, pp. 85-86)

Una de las grandes ironías de la era del SIDA (o uno de los resultados más lógicos) es la excesiva atención que se presta al entendimiento de la biología del VIH en el cuerpo, sin considerar los cuerpos que el virus habita. Nosotros, en esta industria, hemos dedicado poca teoría sobre cómo nosotros, como hombres gay, ‘habitamos nuestros cuerpos’, en relación al sexo, la identidad, la cultura, las interacciones sociales y el VIH. Es con este espíritu que presentamos e introducimos *Corpus*. APLA presenta *Corpus* como parte de una serie de nuevas publicaciones diseñadas para estimular el debate público y fomentar un sentido renovado de las posibilidades dentro de la industria del SIDA. *Corpus* es una colección de escritos y arte dedicada al sexo homosexual, no como un problema para resolver o comportamiento para ser cuantificado, sino como un terreno fértil en el cual se pueden forjar exploraciones más sofisticadas y matizadas sobre el deseo, el placer, la cultura, el VIH y los retos que conlleva vivir con multiplicidad. Bajo el astuto y estimado liderazgo editorial de Jaime Cortez, hemos invitado a poetas, trabajadores de cultura, artistas e intelectuales cuyo uso irreverente de los cuentos, el humor, la poesía, las imágenes y la aguda crítica, nos enseñan sobre las experiencias de los hombres gay, con toda su compleja gloria, contradicciones, relajó y el potencial de irritar el estatus quo. Los colaboradores de *Corpus* exploran el sexo, el placer, el deseo y pertenencia en relación al VIH/SIDA, el cual está siempre presente, sea o no explícitamente mencionado. Estas son las lecciones a descubrir en *Corpus* –lecciones que pueden informar nuestros esfuerzos de prevención en maneras que respetan los cuerpos y las experiencias vividas por los



<sup>1</sup> Centers of Disease Control and Prevention. *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report* 2000;12(No.2):Table 6. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/stats/hasr1301/table6.htm>. Accessed January 31, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Centers of Disease Control and Prevention. *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report* 2001;13(No.1):Tables 19-21. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/stats/hasr1301.htm>. Accessed January 31, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Aral, S. Elimination and reintroduction of sexually transmitted disease: lessons to be learned? *American Journal of Public Health*. 1999; 89: 995-997.

<sup>4</sup> Devos-Comby, L. & Salovey, P. Applying persuasion strategies to alter HIV-relevant thoughts and behavior. *Review of General Psychology*. 2002, Vol.6, No.3, 287-304.

<sup>5</sup> Odets W. AIDS education and harm reduction approaches for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *AIDS Public Policy Journal*. 1994; 9:1-15.

<sup>6</sup> Gallagher, J. Risky business. *Advocate*. March 17, 1998:46-48.





<sup>7</sup> Gold, R.S., Skinner, M.J. Situational factors and thought processes associated with unprotected intercourse in young gay men. *AIDS*. 1992, 6:1021-1030.

<sup>8</sup> Boulton, M. McLean, J., Fitzpatrick, R., Hart, G. Gay men's accounts of unsafe sex. *AIDS Care*. 1995, 7:619-630.

<sup>9</sup> Meyer, I.H. Minority stress and mental health in gay men. *Journal of Health Social Behavior*. 1995;36:35-56.

<sup>10</sup> Diaz, R., Ayala, G. & Bein, E. The impact of homophobia, poverty and racism on the mental health of gay an bisexual Latino men: Findings from 3 US cities. *American Journal of Public Health*. June 2001, Vol.91, No.6.

<sup>11</sup> Reid-Pharr, R. F. 2001. *Black Gay Man: Essays*. New York University Press.

<sup>12</sup> Plummer, K. 1994. *Telling Sexual Stories: Power, Change, and Social Worlds*. Routledge: London and New York.

hombres gay.

<sup>1</sup> Centros de Control y Prevención de Enfermedades. *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report* 2000;12(No.2):Tabla 6. Disponible en <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/stats/hasr1301/table6.htm>. Visitada en enero 31, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Centros de Control y Prevención de Enfermedades. *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report* 2001;13(No.1):Tablas 19-21. Disponibles en <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/stats/hasr1301.htm>. Visitada en enero 31, 2002

<sup>3</sup> Aral, S. Eliminación y reintroducción de las enfermedades transmitidas sexualmente: lecciones a aprender. *Journal of Public Health*. 1999; 89: 995-997.

<sup>4</sup> Devos-Comby, L. & Salovey, P. Applying persuasion strategies to alter HIV-relevant thoughts and behavior. *Review of General Psychology*. 2002, Vol.6, No.3, 287-304.

<sup>5</sup> Odets W. AIDS education and harm reduction approaches for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *AIDS Public Policy Journal*. 1994; 9:1-15.

<sup>6</sup> Gallagher, J. Risky business. *Advocate*. March 17, 1998:46-48.

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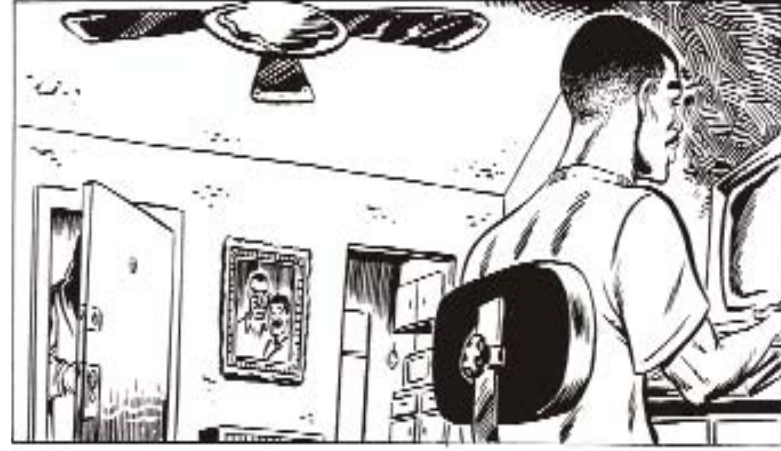
<sup>9</sup> Meyer, I.H. Minority stress and mental health in gay men. *Journal of Health Social Behavior*. 1995;36:35-56.

<sup>10</sup> Diaz, R., Ayala, G. & Bein, E. The impact of homophobia, poverty and racism on the mental health of gay an bisexual Latino men: Findings from 3 US cities. *American Journal of Public Health*. June 2001, Vol.91, No.6.

<sup>11</sup> Reid-Pharr, R. F. 2001. *Black Gay Man: Essays*. New York University Press.

<sup>12</sup> Plummer, K. 1994. *Telling Sexual Stories: Power, Change, and Social Worlds*. Routledge: London and New York.









# Introduction

Jaime Cortez, Editor

Greetings.

Welcome to decade three of AIDS.

If you're tired, you should be. Twenty years is a long time to be careful and fearful. It's a long time to fight for meds, treatment and education. It's a long time to crave skin-to-skin communion. It is a long time to partake in gallows humor. It is nowhere near enough time to gather the wisdom necessary to understand how we are going to live, love and lust in the midst of massive infection, an ever-shifting viral landscape, and the seesawing of a society that can't decide if AIDS should be treated like a disease or a political problem.

Nevertheless, some of us are still here, queer and getting used to it.

We're pretty good at surviving, but AIDS is flat out brilliant at it. I'd like to believe that *Corpus* represents us sashaying (on point) into the vault of AIDS, stealing the playbook and learning the lessons of fast track evolution, memory, contradiction and complexity.

In the past twenty years, epidemiologists, doctors and scientists have contributed immeasurably to our understanding of HIV/AIDS and have shaped the discourse around it. While their contributions have been remarkable, they are incomplete. In *Corpus*, we address the knowledge gap that can only be filled by artists, with their peculiar field research that is irreproducible but constantly duplicated, unverifiable but full of truth.

I like this part of the HIV response spectrum. I like it because I want to learn of new strains of faggotry. I like it because I want to see queer male life strategies transmitted and reproduced with virulence. I want pathology reports, Miss Thing. I want to know we're present even when undetectable.

I want us to survive in the millions.

I thank AIDS Project Los Angeles for allowing me to work on this publication and for providing the resources necessary to make it so beautiful. I thank the writers and artists for their words, images and ideas that give me nourishment and even hope. I hope it's contagious.

“Pokey, mami.”

“Pokey, Poker, whatever. He had a hairdo from you. It was this weird yellow bob with a bow in it.”

“Hah! Remember when you got me that giant Barbie doll head beauty salon thing?” She smiles.

“That wasn’t yours, Raymundo, That was your sisters. Course she never played with it.”

“Well I sure did. Oooh, I worked that white girl OVER!” They laugh. “I had her stylin’ French twists with ribbons and daisies. I’d go to the *pulga* and buy her those roach clip earrings with dangly feathers, like the biker chicks wear at the carnival. I’d do her eyes up with *much* eyeliner. Remember what we called her?” “Cholapatra!!!”

“Queen of the Inland Empire! Ooh, Ms. Barbie got no rest at Raymundo’s house of Beauty!”

Raymundo thought often of his childhood Sunday school teacher Sister Catherine. A student once asked, “Have you always been a nun?” The class went silent for the response. The nuns always seemed to operate on mysterious planes, parallel to but separate from the mundane world of shopping, television and shitting. It hadn’t occurred to the children that nuns were ever anything else. None of them had ever seen a baby nun, of course, but like the proverbial baby pigeons that no one has ever seen, they assumed baby nuns existed somewhere, immaculately conceived and beatifically rolling play-doh nativity scenes at nun pre-schools.

Sister Bernadette smiled and told them of her vocation and the word was magic to him.

*Vocation.*

The way it wrapped up destiny, passion and work.

*Vocation.*

Within the lilac confines of Betty’s Beauty Box, he fulfilled his vocation.

In 2001, Rafael Diaz and George Ayala completed a survey of 912 Latino gay men.

- 64 % reported being verbally harassed in childhood for being gay or effeminate
- 70 % felt that their homosexuality hurt or embarrassed their family
- 64 % had to pretend to be straight in order to be accepted
- 29 % said that they had to move away from their family because of their homosexuality

**Not so  
fun facts**



“Stop it, K! I’m serious.”

“You are a gifted Spanish liar, Raymundo. Never change.”

“I’m serious, your outfit is very chic.”

“I’ve had this one forever. Have I told you about the fateful Saturday I found this number?”

“Yes and if you repeat that story one more time, you’re walking out with a mohawk. Now sit yourself down and let me do my magic.”

Special K had about seven hairs left. Two of them were on a mole. Her head was a sobering head to Raymundo. Each strand on her head seemed lonely, wondering where everyone went. Each strand held on tightly, but they were so fine and silver, and the world was so rough. Wind and brushes and nights against the pillow. It wouldn’t be long . . . Nevertheless, she insisted on a vintage bouffant circa the Ladybird Johnson administration. The construction of this cut was exceedingly tricky. It was an airy cathedral of a cut based on an architecture of aquanet and prayer. He blew and teased and teased some more, and slowly it rose. He shifted what he could to the front and spread it as far as it would go in the back; a cotton candy crisscross that looked miraculously full. And finally, he finished.

“It’s done.”

“Let’s see Ray.”

“I can’t stand it it’s so good.”

“Let’s see already!”

“Oh you wicked, wicked sorceress. The paparazzi will shit little green apples when they see this one.”

He turned her chair to the mirror.

“If you ever leave this town, Mundo - I’m following you.”

About one thing Raymundo was exceedingly clear.

“I’m an artist,” he’d tell his mother across the dinner table, “I’m the only artist at Betty’s Beauty Box.

Betty and Yolanda work hard at their jobs, but truth be told, they are not major talents. Don’t get me wrong, I l-o-v-e love those girls, but hair is just a job to them. Me, I got hair in the blood.”

“I remember *mijo*, in your coloring books, you would make all these wild hairdo’s for the girl characters, and even the Gumby’s horse Poker had a hairdo.”



# The Undetectable Strain: Notes on Being Negative

Joel Barraquiel Tan

My shrink's analysis of my Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-3) results indicated that I have unusually high anxiety about major disasters: earthquakes, tidal waves, nuclear winters. Other than this odd spike in my charts, he reassured me that I had a strong, healthy core. I'd always been suspicious of standardized tests—especially psychological ones—but upon hearing the news, I felt a momentary sense of relief followed by a niggling irritation.

“Healthy core?”

“Right,” he said reassuringly, crossing one khakied leg over the other.

“Check again. There's no indication of insanity?”

I felt the same way after I first tested negative. It was 1992 and I'd been working in HIV for four years before I got tested. I was certain that I was positive. Rocco, a positive guy I was dating, finally convinced me to test, citing social responsibility and medical advancements as incentives. I'd put off testing as long as I could, hoping that a cure would be found, but the death toll was climbing and a cure was nowhere in sight. Rocco, who was also an AIDS clinician, offered to give me my results. Before I had my blood drawn, a kindly pretest counselor went over my risk assessment form.

*Needle drugs within the last 6 months?* No

*Unprotected anal sex in the last 6 months?* No

*Unprotected oral sex in the last 6 months?* No

*Are you a hemophiliac?* No

“Sir, according to this, you seem to be at low-risk for HIV,” the counselor announced.

“Really? Then why are most of my friends positive?”

“It's not the crowd you're with that determines risk but what you do or *don't*,” she explained, handing me my test results and a small plastic baggie with green and red condoms.

Intellectually, I knew this to be true. I was an HIV health educator. Nevertheless I was convinced that I was positive.

Two weeks following my blood draw, I began preparations for my demise. I imagined breaking the news to my family and friends. I went over the tender speeches in my mind, the tears, the hugs, the

“Yeah, that cut looks like it fell on her head from another planet, but what the hell? I styled it up the yin yang and she's happy. That's all we can do, sister. Hey, whattya say we sweep in here before the one o'clocks get here?” They each grabbed a broom and began sweeping around their chairs, gathering a multicolored mound of clippings. As Raymundo pushed the clippings into the dustpan, Yolanda spoke. “You know Raymundo, you're really good at hair.”

“I try my best.”

“No I mean it. You're really good. You ever think of getting a chair someplace bigger, like San Francisco?”

“Nope. Don't like big cities, all those people, all those crazy drivers. All those people do up there is look for parking and anyways, there's probably a million hair burners up there. It's like the elephant graveyard in the old Tarzan movies, the hair burners go there from all over the country.”

“Yeah, but you're good Raymundo. You'll build up clients quick.”

“I've got lots of clients here in town. Business is good, Yoli. Besides, it's beautiful out here. The fields, the ocean, the weather. I'm a country boy.”

“Well then how about a bigger town, like Salinas? That's country too.”

“Girl, it's taken this town twenty five years to get used to me, but they finally have. I'm the town fruit. Not the best job in town, but it's mine and I paid big time for it. Half the guys in town have harassed or beat me when they weren't trying to get into my pants but I outlasted them all. I'm still here, and making their girlfriends look foxy. That's home Yolanda. I'm not going nowhere.”

Next was Mrs. Katarina Kusanovich. Special K, as he called her, pulled up every Friday at 1 p.m. in her adorable Nash Rambler. Elegant and vain, she favored gloves for her outings and wore adorable couture that she magically ferreted out of thrift stores and garage sales. That day she sported a houndstooth Chanel number from the mid-sixties. The hemline was unfashionably high and rather inappropriate for a woman her age, but it went perfectly with her Rambler, and made her feel girlish.

“Special K! How are you.”

“I'm a mess, Mundo. Save me.”

“How can you say that? You're the most put-together woman this side of Jackie O.”

“Right after they shot Kennedy, maybe.”



From their armpits, they pull out their favorite rock and pound and pound until the shell cracks open and they nibble out the meat.” When they’re done, they groom their snouts and savor the rocking of the ocean.

His days were always back-to-back cuts, so he worked Mariaelena quickly. He pinned her up and worked through her head, section by section, gossiping lightly to sweeten the tip.

“ . . . soooo, how’s it going at Thrifty’s?”

“ . . . I swear your grandma is tooo much, *chica*, !” His hands and words were deft and light and soon her secrets slipped.

“ . . . he always said, ‘absolutely no kids,’ and I swear mom will die right there on the kitchen floor if I tell her, so I’m all *freakiada*.”

He worked the finish obsessively, coming back again and again to the tips, blowing out the fullness, balancing the symmetry and feathering the bangs to capacity. Finally, the scissors stopped and he pulled off the drape with a magician’s flourish.

“Close your eyes, *amorcito*.” He brushed the clippings from her face.

“Mirror mirror, on the wall, who’s the Farrah of them all?” She giggled.

“Mariaelena, you are such a *Diva*.” He swiveled her chair towards the mirror.

“Ta daaah! Whaddya think?” Her eyes watered over. His abdominals clenched.

“Iss beautiful.”

He was a junkie for this moment.

She left him a tip of three quarters wrapped in two sweaty dollars she’d been holding in her hand. This represented the better part of an hour of scooping ice cream at Thrifty.

“Thanks *corazón*. See you later.”

“Definitely. Thanks so much. I love it, love it, love it.” She eyed herself in the salon window as she walked to her car.

“Another happy customer,” commented Yolanda, with a roll of her eyes.

## La cepa indetectable: Notas sobre estar negativo

Joel Barraquiel Tan

Mis reductibles resultados del análisis de mi Inventario de Minesota de Personalidad Multifacético (MMPI-3) indicaron que yo tengo una inusual ansiedad sobre grandes desastres: terremotos, marejadas, inviernos nucleares. A parte de esta rara espiga en mi tabla médica, él me aseguró que yo tenía una salud muy fuerte. Siempre he tenido sospechas de las pruebas estandarizadas – especialmente las sicológicas—pero al escuchar las noticia, tuve un breve sentimiento de alivio, seguido por una mezquina irritación.

- ¿Una salud muy fuerte?

- Exacto, me lo dijo afirmándolo, cruzando una pierna sobre la otra.

- Revisa otra vez. ¿No hay indicaciones de locura?

Me sentí de la misma manera cuando mi resultado fue negativo por primera vez. Fue en 1992 que me hice la primera prueba; yo ya había estado trabajando cuatro años en VIH. Yo estaba seguro que era positivo. Rocco, un chico positivo con quien yo salía, finalmente me convenció de que me hiciera la prueba, diciéndome que era una responsabilidad social, al mismo tiempo que mencionaba los avances médicos como incentivos. Yo había atrasado hacerme la prueba todo lo que pude, esperando que se encontrara una cura; pero el número de muertes iba en aumento y la cura no se veía por ninguna parte. Rocco, que también era un especialista en SIDA, ofreció darme mis resultados. Antes de que me sacaran la sangre, un amable consejero de pre consejería revisó mi formulario de cuantificación de riesgo.

¿Drogas intravenosas en los últimos 6 meses? No

¿Penetración anal sin condón en los últimos 6 meses? No

¿Sexo oral sin condón en los últimos 6 meses? No

¿Eres hemofílico? No

-Señor, de acuerdo a esto, usted parece tener un mínimo riesgo de infección por el VIH, dijo el consejero.

-¿De verdad? ¿Entonces por qué la mayoría de mis amigos son positivos?

-No se trata del grupo de personas con quien te juntas, sino que se trata de lo que haces o no haces, me explicó, a la vez que me daba los resultados y una pequeña bolsa plástica con condones verdes y rojos.

cries of, “Oh no, oh no, not you, not handsome, intelligent, sensitive, talented Joel!” Billy, a close friend who’d tested positive a few months before, joined me in my death preparations.

Billy exhaled a puff of Marlboro Lights as she announced, “Ay Ms. Girl, please no suits. I want something flowing, feminine, beautiful...like me. How about my fly silk violet vest without a shirt!”

“Eesh, with your bony arms? Why not your white billowy rayon shirt?”

“Perfect!” Billy stubbed out his cigarette under his feet and stalked a slow circle around me. “For you, something...slimming! Like that black sweater to hide all that *panza!*” She poked at my stomach and I swiped at her. Despite the fact that she was losing her sight, Billy dodged like a rabbit. “Alright, Ms. Billy. Truce. For real. You’ll look beautiful in white.”

“Just make sure they’re playing Luther when they roll my casket down the aisle. And before we die, we have to see Sevilla, Ms. Girl.”

“And Alexandria.”

“Don’t forget the vodka gimlets.”

“And the gimlets.”

“When do you get your results back, Ms. Girl? Sheesh, hurry up and join the fucking club already!”

Rocco ran his finger along the laminated edge of the results folder. “Ready?”

I nodded. He turned to my results and my breathing quickened. My body temperature dropped, I fought to control my chattering teeth.

Intelectualmente, yo sabía que esto es cierto. Yo era un educador de salud y del VIH. Sin embargo, yo estaba convencido de que estaba positivo.

Dos semanas después de que me sacaran la sangre, empecé las preparaciones para mi fallecimiento. Me imaginé el momento en que informaba a mis familiares y amistades. En mi mente construí tiernos discursos, las lágrimas, los abrazos, los llantos de Oh no, oh no, no tú, tan hermoso, inteligente, sensitivo, talentoso, Joel. Billy, uno de mis más cercanos amigos que dio positivo a la prueba hace unos meses, me acompañaba en la preparación de mi muerte.

Billy fumaba un Marlboro Light al mismo tiempo que me decía, ‘Ay nena, no te preocupes. Quiero algo suave, femenino, hermosa... como yo. ¿Que tal mi chaleco de seda azul sin camisa?’

-Eesh, ¿con tus brazos huesudos? ¿Por qué no mejor tu camisa de crayones ondulada?  
-¡Perfecto! Billy apagó el cigarrillo debajo de su pie y cuidadosamente hizo un círculo al rededor de mi. Para tí, algo que te hace ver flaco, ¡como ese suéter negro que esconde tu panza! Ella me pinchó la panza y le dio un manotazo. A pesar de que ella estaba perdiendo la vista, Billy se escurrió como un conejo.

-Muy bien, señorita Billy. Tiempo. En serio. Te verás preciosa en blanco.

-Sólo asegúrate que estén tocando a Luther cuando lleven mi ataúd por los pasillos. Y nena, antes de morir, tenemos que ver

## Raymundo the Fag

Jaime Cortez

Raymundo the Fag’s tragic superpower was to look a woman in the face and know the perfect hairdo for her. His gift of divination was a burden, however, because no one ever listened.

The moment Mariaelena entered Betty’s Beauty Box, he began scanning her. She was cute and quite plump, the kind of girl that berry pickers from Michoacan would chat up in the Watsonville Plaza.

“Hola señorita. . . “

“Ay gordita, que guapa estás . . .”

The fullness was most pronounced in her face, which was almost perfectly round. Her hair was in great shape, beautifully glossy throughout. Raymundo was excited about working on her until he saw her with a book marked copy of People Magazine. Magazines were invariably bad news.

“Raymundo, can you do me a cut like this one in the pitcher?”

“You wanna Farrah Fawcett cut?”

“Yeah. One feathered like that.”

“Sure *mija*, I can do that for you, but before we start, can I make a suggestion?” She didn’t take the advice, and he began shampooing her.

Mariaelena was a marvel. Her hair was thick and alive with waves. The scalp was dense with hairs, a tight black forest. He remembered a fourth grade field trip to the harbor. The docent pointed out a raft of otters bobbing on the surface of a kelp forest. “With a million hairs per square inch, they are the hairiest creatures in the world, and they live right here on our coast.” Raymundo was impressed that these superlative creatures would make their home on this humble farm town coast, for clearly they were God’s favorites. “They groom all through the day, releasing the oils that will keep them waterproof and warm. When they’re hungry, they flip over and dive for snacks.” Raymundo imagined them; whiskered torpedoes plucking craggy oysters and feisty crabs from the sandy floor. “Once they’ve got a snack, they rise to the surface and float on their backs with their oyster on their chest like a baby.



Muchos hombres gay y bisexuales son sobrevivientes de abuso sexual, coerción o violaciones sufridas en la infancia. Un alarmante número de hombres han tenido sexo sin condón como resultado de estas experiencias. La coerción es cuando alguien te amenaza para que hagas algo en contra tu voluntad. La coerción puede ser poco evidente y emocional o también puede ser evidente y física. Puede ser difícil lidiar con la coerción, el abuso sexual y la violación, pero muchos hombres encuentran ayuda y apoyo. Existen recursos para ti o para alguien que conozcas. Para referencias gratis y confidenciales las 24 horas al día, los 7 días a la semana, puedes llamar a:

La Línea Nacional de Asalto Sexual

1-800-656-HOPE

[www.rainn.org/](http://www.rainn.org/)

### Recursos

Many gay and bisexual men are the survivors of childhood sexual abuse, coercion or rape.

An alarming percentage of men have had unprotected sex as a result of these experiences.

Coercion is when somebody threatens you into doing something against your will. Coercion can be subtle and emotional, or it can also be forceful and physical. Coercion, sexual abuse and rape can be difficult to deal with but many men find help and support. There are resources for you or someone you know. For a free and confidential referral, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, contact:

The National Sexual Assault Hotline

1-800-656-HOPE

[www.rainn.org/](http://www.rainn.org/)

### Resources

“Non-reactive.” I sank deep into the chair. I thought I caught a look of surprise then a flash of anger on Rocco’s face before his thick lips broke into a beaming smile. “Congratulations, baby. You’re negative!” He embraced me tightly. The rush of relief never came. “This can’t be,” I thought. As Rocco held me, my mind drifted off to a parallel reality. “HIV positive.”

I sank deep into the chair, crushed. Rocco rattled off the customary speech on “what to do after you test positive” until he noticed how devastated I was. He set the results folder down and scooped me into his arms. Rocco kissed me on the cheek and whispered in my ear, “Think of the freedom. Who wants to die old and ugly when you can go out like a beautiful flash? We can go out and run up our charge cards! Rent a convertible and go on a road trip across America to hunt down Jesse Helms and his ilk! And the sex! You never have to worry about getting infected again. And when we die, we’ll be a beautiful memory, a sexy story, a lovely patch in a quilt!”



Sevilla.

-Y Alejandría.

-Que no se te olvide el vodka gimlets.

-Y los barrenas.

-¿Cuando recibes los resultados nena?

¡Sheesh, ya apúrate para que seas parte del club!

Rocco pasó su dedo sobre el filo de la hoja laminada del folder. ¿Listo?

Cabeceé. El vio mis resultados y mi respiración se apresuró. Mi temperatura corporal bajó, y luché para controlar el rechinar de mis dientes.

No reactivo. Me hundí en la silla. Pensé que vi una mirada de sorpresa y luego un destello de rabia en la cara de Rocco antes de que sus gruesos labios lucieran una bella sonrisa. ‘Felicidades nene. ¡Estas negativo!’ Me abrazó fuertemente. Sentí una ola de alivio. Esto no puede ser, pensé. Mientras Rocco me abrazaba, mi mente estaba en otra realidad paralela. VIH positivo.

Me hundí en la silla, aplastado. Rocco recitó el discurso de siempre de lo que hay que hacer cuando uno sale positivo al VIH hasta que se dio cuenta lo devastado que estaba. Puso el folder del resultado sobre el escritorio y me acogió entre sus brazos. Rocco me besó en la mejilla y susurró en mi oído, ‘Piensa en la libertad. ¿Quién quiere morir viejo y feo cuando puedes desaparecer como un bello destello? ¿Podemos salir y extralimitarnos con las tarjetas de crédito! Podemos alquilar un carro convertible y viajar por todo los Estados Unidos para cazar a Jesse



A week later, after canceling and rescheduling a number of dates, Rocco stopped returning my calls altogether. The sting of Rocco's rejection was made worse by a growing dread that I'd contracted an undetectable strain of the virus. At the time, new strains were being discovered and I was convinced that I'd contracted the most sinister one of all.

Nine months later, Billy lost half his body weight and all of his eyesight. A month after that, he went deaf and grew too weak to walk. Soon after, he died. We never saw Sevilla but we had our share of gimlets. I made sure he was buried in a white billowy rayon shirt and his casket was wheeled out to Luther's rendition of the Carpenters classic, "Superstar." A week after Billy died, my friend Wilson succumbed to pneumocistis. Six months after Wilson, Cory took a lethal dose of sleeping pills rather than endure the slow torture of a brain lesion. Six months after Wilson, I was wiping shit off of my best friend James' legs in the middle of the night, begging him not to die. "Not yet. Not yet." James died the next day. I was twenty-six years old and I had already buried four of my closest friends. Each death was a universe imploding—possibilities, dreams and gifts obliterated.

Helms y su clase. ¡Y el sexo! Ya no tendrás que preocuparte de infectarte otra vez. Y cuando muramos, seremos un hermoso recuerdo, una historia sexy, un hermoso parche en una manta.

A la semana siguiente, después de haber cancelado y hecho una serie de citas, Rocco dejó de regresar mis llamadas. La picadura que dejó el rechazo de Rocco empeoró con la creciente incertidumbre que yo creía que había contraído una cepa de virus indetectable. En ese momento se estaban descubriendo nuevas cepas y yo estaba convencido que yo había contraído la más siniestra de todas.

Nueve meses después, Billy perdió mitad de su peso y la visión. Un mes después, ensordeció y se debilitó tanto que ya no pudo caminar. Al poco tiempo murió. Nunca vimos Sevilla, pero sí bebimos nuestros tragos de vodka. Me aseguré que fuera enterrado en su camisa ondulado de crayones y que cuando llevaran el ataúd por los pasillos tocaran a Luther, la súper estrella de los clásicos de los Carpenters. Una semana después de que Billy murió, mi amigo Wilson sucumbió a una pneumocistis. Seis meses después de lo de Wilson, Cory tomó una dosis letal de píldoras para dormir en lugar de soportar la lenta tortura de una lesión cerebral. Seis meses después de lo de Wilson, yo estaba limpiando la mierda de las piernas de mi mejor amigo James a media noche, suplicándole que no muriera. 'Todavía no. Todavía no'. James murió al siguiente día. Yo tenía 26 años de edad y ya había enterrado a cuatro de mis amigos más cercanos. Cada muerte era un

llegaba al orgasmo. Se vino y le ordenó que se la limpiara, que se la lavara con jabón. Se lo llevó al cuarto de junto, medio oscuro, y lo echó encima de una de las camas. Le dijo que se las iba a dar a todos sus cuates, que le iba a mandar uno por uno. Varios vinieron. Uno no pudo. El último fue el Alacrán. Después de coger le preguntó si estaba bien. Le dijo que sí. El Alacrán le preguntó si se quería ir a su casa, le ofreció llevarlo, lo sacó de la casa, se fue caminando con él. En el parque de los Berros le preguntó si quería que se quedara con él esa noche. Le dijo que sí. El Alacrán le agarró la mano, lo abrazó, se besaron. Cuando cogieron en el cuarto, en su propia cama, se vino pronto y ya no le supo igual lo demás.





la avenida, enfrente de su casa. El chavo le seguía haciendo señales que se acercara. Sintió más miedo, pero siguió, iba llegando a la ventanilla, y vio al conductor doblarse hacia adelante para ver, y el chavo se le quedó viendo más, y de pronto se bajó del carro, no cerró la puerta, se le aventó encima, y le dio un trancazo en la cara, bajo el ojo. El se sacó como pudo, hacia atrás, pero aun así sintió que le ardía ese lado de la cara cuando decía “no... por qué...” y se volteaba para correr, volver a atravesar el camellón, y tratar de llegar al portón de su departamento. Oyó el ruido del carro al arrancar como triunfante, y alcanzó a ver las figuras de los dos en el carro que le hacían gestos y señales degradantes, burlándose, socarroneándose de ser tan machos, antes de por fin poder abrir el candado y cerrar el portón con aprehensión.

The text of the history of how the migrant body of AIDS is changing us as it destroys us is yet to be written. It will not come from the keyboards of the intellectuals of the age of cyberspace; it will come from the bodies and trajectories of the millions of disenfranchised migrants whose porous bodies are no less permeable than the borders they continue to cross. And it will be written in contradictory form, in a language beyond grammar and with a different syntax.

### *Tercer apañon*

Notó que ya no se le separaba cuando sus piernas se tocaban en el cachondeo del baile. Ya era de madrugada casi y todos estaban bailando, unas parejitas en el sillón gozando, y notó también que no sólo él se le acercaba para insinuarle el cuerpo a su cuerpo, sino que también los otros, que según esto eran porros de Leyes. Bailando y sudando se veían todos bien, pensó con una puñalada de calentura. Se le acercó más y tallándose en él le preguntó si quería ir al baño. Se lo llevo, acariciándole las nalgas, derecho, cerró la puerta y se bajó los pantalones. Sacó un cuchillo. Dando ordenes lo atragantó con su miembro y lo hizo hincarse enfrente de él, le sacó lágrimas con la fuerza con que le empujaba más y más adentro de la garganta la cabeza; lo volteo y se la metió con fuerza, diciéndole pinche puto mientras

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I've recently become a case manager at AIDS Services Foundation in Orange County. I drive to work two hours before my shift to avoid 405 freeway traffic. I arrive in the dark when the building's empty. Perhaps it's my overactive imagination, my early morning mind fog, but I feel the presence of ghosts, past clients pacing the halls, crowding the front lobby, mingling in the empty offices, rifling through charts. When the office is still, I can hear the slight buzz of their conversations, whiny complaints, juicy gossip and desperate pleas. Walking down the darkened hall toward my office, the fingers of ghosts -



universo de implosión—posibilidades, sueños y regalos borrados.

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Recientemente me hice asesor de casos en AIDS Services Foundation en el condado de Orange. Manejo al trabajo dos horas antes de mi hora de jornada para evadir el tráfico del autopista 405. Llego en la oscuridad, cuando el edificio está vacío. Tal vez es mi propia imaginación, la nubosidad de mi mente en la mañana, pero yo siento la presencia de fantasmas, de antiguos clientes que pasean en los pasillos, que se amontonan en la recepción, que cotorrean en las oficinas vacías, viendo los cuadros médicos. Cuando la oficina está callada, yo puedo escuchar el leve murmullo de sus conversaciones, sus quejas, el chisme, y las desesperadas súplicas. Al caminar en el oscuro pasillo de mi oficina, los dedos de los fantasmas – tenues brisas de aire frío – se agarran de mis brazos y mis piernas y me aprietan el cuello. Ignoro sus travesuras y les instruyó que hagan una cola ordenada afuera de mi oficina.

El primer fantasma espera pacientemente en la puerta. Le pregunto, ¿Te puedo ayudar?

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Este verano pude visitar el Fuck Machine Studio.

Todo varía en tamaño y fuerza, las maquinas de coger puntean, tuercen, golpean y le dan vuelta a cualquier hoyo sin importar el género. Mi

slight rushes of cold air - grab at my arms and legs and tighten around my throat. I ignore their antics and instruct them to form an orderly queue outside my door.

The first ghost patiently waits at the door. I ask, "May I help you?"

\*\*

This summer, I got to visit the Fuck Machine Studio.

Varying in size and horsepower, fuck machines pummel, twist, stroke, twirl any hole of any gender. My friend Ricardo - a film school dropout - has made a career in directing machine porn and invited me for a studio tour. The studio was divided between offices and the various sets designed to look like a prison, a torture dungeon, a Victorian bedroom, a gym, and the captain's deck of a spaceship. Posed about the studios, the mechanical stars of the films: the Terminator, the Crystal Palace, the Drilldo, the Horsey and the Double Plunger.

"Hop on!" Ricardo patted the plastic flank of "the Drilldo."

"No!" I shrieked like a nun in a prison riot.

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amigo Ricardo – que nunca terminó sus estudios de cinematografía – ha hecho una carrera dirigiendo pornografía de maquinas y me invitó a dar un paseo en su estudio. El estudio estaba dividido en oficinas y diferentes estudios de grabación diseñados con fachadas de prisión, un lugar de tortura, una recamara victoriana, un gimnasio, y la plataforma de comando de una nave espacial. En el estudio posaban las estrellas mecánicas de las películas: El Exterminador, el Palacio de Cristal, el Taladro, El Caballo, el Doble Zambullido.

-¡Súbete! Ricardo dio un manotazo al costado del taladro de plástico.

-¡No! Me encogí como una monjita en una escaramuza de prisión.

Mientras veíamos la habitación de sonido, pensé en cómo estas máquinas pudieron haber salvado vidas si hubiesen sido promocionadas como alternativas de sexo seguro. Me imaginé los baños de hombres en toda la nación equipados con máquinas de coger, puyando a hombres sudorosos que gruñen con música disco interminable de Pull Up to the Bumper. Cerca de ellos estarían sus entrenadores, instruyéndolos en las técnicas mientras que una larga cola de hombres sedientos espera su turno debajo del rótulo que dice:

HOMBRE = PELIGROSO :  
MAQUINA = BUENA

dólares, como 300. Casi milagrosamente abrieron la puerta del carro de atrás y lo dejaron salir, y con amables sonrisas le dijeron que tuviera más cuidado cuando anduviera caminando por el centro de la ciudad. Se fueron de prisa, perdiéndose inmediatamente en la multitud de carros, gente y edificios, triunfantes, seguros, impunes, felices. Se quedó temblando, sudando, viendo a Sergio, que ya sabía que no había ningún escaparate roto pero que sólo le preguntó, "¿No te hicieron nada?" y siguió con la historia del escaparate para no entrar en cosas vergonzosas. Ese día, después de todo, todos habían tenido suerte.

The migrant body of AIDS incorporates the sophisticated languages of technology and the medical, but it cannot embrace their ideological optimism. Assaulted by disease and disability, it is a body that bears marks, marks of violence, of disfunctionality, of malfunctionality. It also carries the violence of infection, of rejection.

### Segundo apañon

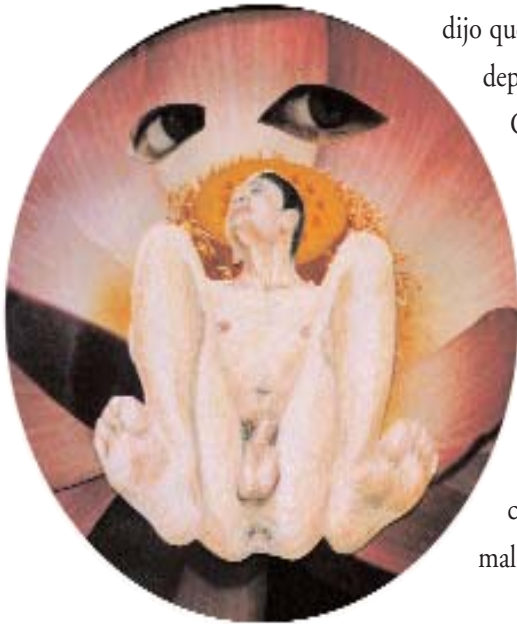
Cuando volteo hacia donde estaba el carro vio que se le quedaban viendo los dos, el que manejaba estaba medio fuera del carro ya y el otro le estaba haciendo señales de que se acercara. Se detuvo. Sintió el miedo acercarse a él, pero una fuerza caliente lo rechazo. Empezó a caminar rumbo al carro, cruzando el pasto del camellon. Pensó en esa otra vez en que iba caminando y un chavo se le quedo viendo desde la acera de enfrente; también él le hizo señales y se atravesó la calle casi con ansia, hasta que llegó cerca y el tipo vio que el pelo que se movía era de hombre, y soltando una maldición se largo corriendo. Ya iba llegando al árbol de jacaranda que se cargaba de flores y perfumaba toda





otra vez la preocupación, el miedo, junto con la sed lo hacían caminar rápidamente y tratar de perderse entre la gente y los puestos del mercado de Garibaldi, rumbo al metro y a algún lugar en donde comprar un refresco. Saliendo del mercado, caminando por el eje central, está ese puesto de jugos y tortas, con la señora del hijo guapo; entró y pidió un jugo de naranja, para reponerse de horas de sudor y gozo. Se lo tomó al hilo y aliviado, pensó seguirlo al metro. Al pagar, alguien le puso la mano en el hombro y, con fuerza disimulada, lo empujó hacia un carro estacionado afuera y le dijo que el taxista insistía en que se le debía dinero. El trató de explicar que él no había tomado ningún taxi, pero cuando las palabras estaban saliendo entre titubeos nerviosos, ya el guarura lo había empujado adentro del carro, al asiento de atrás, y la puerta se había cerrado. Ahí empezaron los insultos, junto con el ruido del carro al salir al caos del tráfico. Que lo habían visto adentro, en los baños, que no podía negar lo que había hecho ahí adentro, que tenían testigos que habían visto todo, que lo iban a llevar a la estación, y de ahí... que se abriera la camisa y los pantalones. Siguieron burlándose y amenazando. Lo manosearon. Le quitaron su medalla y sus pulseritas de oro, le quitaron la cartera y sacaron los pesos que traía. Vieron su tarjeta de la agencia de viajes, de Morelia; él les suplicó que lo dejaran, que no era de ahí. Le enseñaron un garrote que traían abajo del asiento, y le dijeron que podían darle una calentadita si no cooperaba. Que el dinero de la

cartera era muy poco. Que qué quería, la calentadita o darles más. El dijo que ya no traía más dinero, que tenía un poco en el departamento de su amigo, donde estaba quedándose, en la Condesa. Lo llevaron directamente al departamento de la calle Tampico, y le enseñaron otra vez el garrote para que tuviera mucho cuidado. Tocaron el timbre y salió Sergio, un poco sorprendido y un poco asustado pues la cosa parecía seria; le dijeron que había accidentalmente roto el vidrio de un escaparate en el centro de la ciudad, y tenía que pagarlo; Sergio lo vio pálido y asustado, le preguntó a través de la ventana del carro si estaba bien; él le dijo donde estaba el dinero en su maleta, y que se los diera. Sergio regreso nervioso con los



As we were touring the sound stage, I thought about how these machines might have saved lives had they been promoted as a safe sex alternative. I imagined bathhouses across the nation equipped with fuck machines poking grunting, sweaty men to an endless disco loop of “Pull Up to the Bumper.” Standing over them would be their trainers, coaching them on technique while a long queue of eager beavers awaited their turn under a sign that read: MAN=RISKY: MACHINE=GOOD.

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My activism began at nineteen. I remember telling Mama that I was dropping out of college to fight the war against AIDS.

“Da what?”

“The war against ignorance and suffering, Mama.”

“What do you know anyteeng about war, stupid boy? Better you pinish coll-age!”

My first AIDS job was as a Homecare Worker for a shady nursing service that assigned me to my first client with no training. My first client, Darnell, was a former Mr. Gay Universe who was in the final stages of the disease. I cleaned, cooked and drove him to 5P21, the County AIDS ward, five days a week. I collected Darnell’s food bank deliveries and cared for his ten-year-old son until Ron, Darnell’s spouse, came home.

After three months with Darnell I experienced my first anxiety attack. I was driving down

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Empecé mi activismo a los 19 años. Recuerdo que le dije a mi mamá que iba a dejar la universidad para luchar la guerra contra el SIDA.

-¿El qué?

-Mamá, la guerra en contra de la ignorancia y el sufrimiento.

-¿Qué sabes tú de guerra muchacho tonto?

¡Es mejor que termines tus estudios!

Mi primer trabajo de SIDA fue como trabajador en cuidado domiciliario. Era para un cuestionable servicios de enfermeras que me dieron mi primer cliente sin ningún entrenamiento. Mi primer cliente fue Darnell; fue Mr. Universo Gay y estaba en su etapa final de la enfermedad. Yo le limpiaba, le cocinaba, y lo manejaba a 5P21, la guarnición de SIDA del Condado. Yo recogía la comida del banco de comida, y cuidaba a su hijo de 10 años hasta que Ron llegaba a casa, la pareja de Darnell.

Tuve mi primer ataque de ansiedad a los tres



Highland during rush hour when I was seized with visions of Darnell writhing on a hospital bed, pointing a bony accusatory finger at me. He kicked at me with ashy stick legs covered with open wounds. Drops of blood spattered my face. His hospital gown rode up over his thin thighs, exposing the sharp angles of his hipbone and a thick crusty scab where his penis should have been. He threw his neck back, eyes bulging out of their sockets and his mouth opened in a silent scream. His breath smelled of wet leaves, shit and earth and covered my face like a moist towel. I pulled over until the visions dissipated.

The next day, I called the nursing service and gave my notice. I did not have the courage to attend his funeral, but I continued working in HIV. Having learned from my experience with Darnell, I avoided working directly with HIV positive clients and focused on prevention education and advocacy.

\*\*

I recently switched to a new medical group and during my intake interview my doctor sang out the requisite questions about my sex life.

Married? *Partnered.*

Sexually active? *Yes.*

Man or Wo—? *Man, he's a man.*

Monogamous? *Yes.*

Condoms? *No.*

Really? *Really.*

Are you sure he's monogamous? *Yes.*

Are you monogamous? *Yes.*

meses de estar con Darnell. Iba manejando sobre la Highland durante la hora pico cuando me invadió una visión de Darnell retorciéndose en una camilla de hospital y apuntándome con un esquelético dedo acusador. Me pateó con sus delgadas y cenicientas piernas cubiertas con heridas. Gotas de sangre cayeron en mi cara. Su camisón de hospital se enrollaba sobre sus muslos, mostrando un ángulo agudo de los huesos de la cadera y una costra gruesa donde tenía que estar su pene. El tiró su cuello hacia atrás, con sus ojos pulsando fuera de los orificios y con su boca abierta con un silencioso grito. Su aliento, que olía a hojas mojadas, a mierda y tierra, cubrió mi cara como una toalla húmeda. Dejé de conducir hasta que la visión desapareció.

Al siguiente día llamé a los servicios de enfermería y renuncié. No tuve el valor de asistir al funeral, pero continué trabajando en el VIH. Al haber aprendido con la experiencia de Darnell, evadí trabajar directamente con personas que viven con el VIH y me concentré en la prevención y abogacía.

\*\*

Recientemente me cambie a un nuevo grupo de cuidado médico y durante la entrevista inicial mi médico me hizo todas las preguntas inevitables sobre mi vida sexual.

-¿Casado? Con pareja.

-¿Sexualmente activo? Sí.

-¿Hombre o mu—? Hombre, él es un hombre.

-¿Monógamo? Sí.

-¿Condomes? No.

## Sexilio

Pedro Bustos Aguilar

AIDS travels extensively and crosses borders daily, and as another migrant body, enters the fabric of social order as a resistance. The discourses it generates are sophisticated, multiplying, rationalizing; the bodies it ravages expose an undocumented, illegal, unreasonable migrant, irreducible to the bio-chemical or the medical.

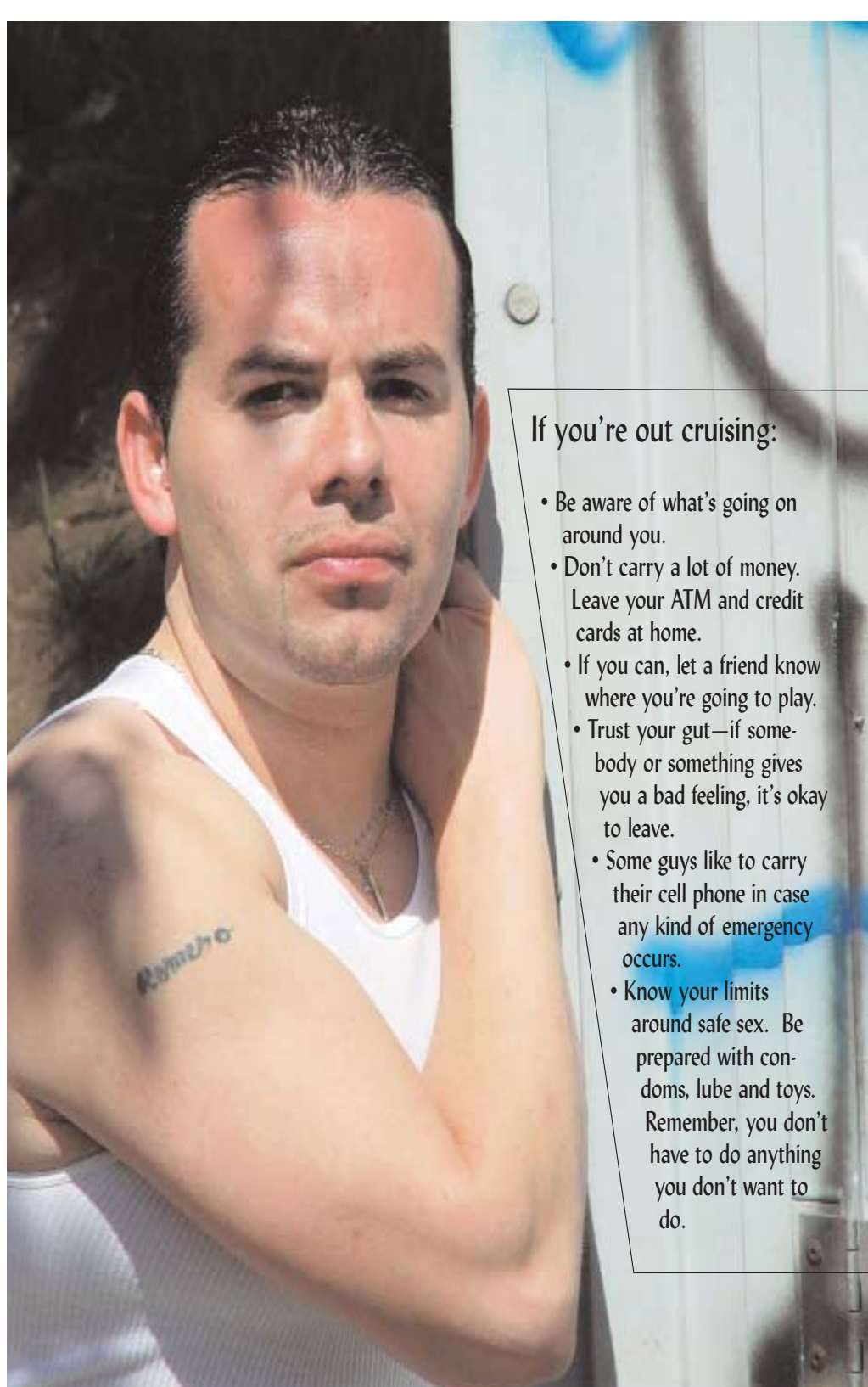


Art: Jaime Cortez

### *Primer apañon*

Ese día, en el verano seco de la ciudad de México, hacía calor y el humo de los ríos de automóviles se metía por la nariz y raspaba ahí adentro. El alivio de la húmeda oscuridad de los baños empezaba con un olor especial, casi desagradable, de viejo, de agrio. Al salir, la suave luz de la tarde destilada por el manto de humo que cubre a la ciudad no lo encandiló a pesar de la penumbra en que se había pasado la mañana entera, respirando fuerte, exclamando, suspirando cuando el sexo de los hombres anónimos de los baños le llenaba los sentidos, la mente, las entrañas, la boca, ahí dentro de los legendarios Ecuador de la calle de Allende. Legendarios, de boca en boca se creo la fama de sus coctelitos de los jueves por la tarde, sus orgías entre nubes de vapor de los sábados, standing room only, y cuidado, porque ha habido razzias, porque de repente agarran a las manitas a la salida y hay hasta cárceles especiales a donde las llevan a golpearlas y extorsionarlas, y ni siquiera se sabe si son o no policías, o judiciales, o lo que sea. A la llegada, siempre estaba ese temor lejano, como ajeno, como parte de la emoción de estar yendo a lo prohibido, sucio, a su lado oculto, pero rápido se disipaba una vez adentro, con las primeras caricias, la primera lengua húmeda que se resbalaba...a la salida aparecía, con la luz de la calle y el ruido del tránsito,





### If you're out cruising:

- Be aware of what's going on around you.
- Don't carry a lot of money. Leave your ATM and credit cards at home.
- If you can, let a friend know where you're going to play.
- Trust your gut—if somebody or something gives you a bad feeling, it's okay to leave.
- Some guys like to carry their cell phone in case any kind of emergency occurs.
- Know your limits around safe sex. Be prepared with condoms, lube and toys. Remember, you don't have to do anything you don't want to do.

Are you really, really sure he's monogamous?  
Yes.  
How can you be so sure?

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I was thirty-three the first time I swallowed semen. After a blissful period of courtship and romance, Royal and I agreed to monogamy and unprotected sex. We took several STD tests and both came up negative. Shortly after, we planned a romantic San Francisco weekend. Perched high on the 16<sup>th</sup> floor of the Parc 55, our mini suite had a panoramic view of the Bay, the bridge, and the city's high-rises. Chocolates, flowers, wine.

Royal's legs were dangling off the hotel's deluxe king-sized bed and I was kneeling in front of him awaiting communion. "Now," he grunted between breaths. On cue, I tightened my mouth around his erection. Salt. Thick. Salt. Spurt. Salt. Royal shuddered, propped himself up on his elbows and asked, "Well?"

I opened my eyes slowly and said, "Did you know that Jesus was crucified at thirty-three?"

\*\*

Sometimes I believe that AIDS is my own private tragedy. Whenever I hear about AIDS in the media, about the thousands of attendees at the International Conference, gala celebrity fundraisers, or the new AIDS movie, or any evidence that AIDS is a worldwide phenomenon, an institution, I think, "Oh, that must be some *other* AIDS, because *my* AIDS is too painful to be public."

-¿En serio? En serio.  
-¿Estás seguro que él es monógamo? Sí.  
-¿Tú eres monógamo? Sí.  
-¿Estás completamente seguro que él es monógamo? Sí.  
-¿Cómo puedes estar tan seguro?, ella preguntó.

\*\*

Yo tenía 33 años la primera vez que tragué semen. Después de una buena temporada de cortejo y romance, Royal y yo acordamos de ser monógamos y tener sexo sin condón. Ambos nos hicimos una serie de exámenes de ETS y ambos salimos negativos. Poco tiempo después planificamos un viaje romántico a San Francisco durante un fin de semana. Estamos elevados en el piso 16 de Parc 55, en nuestra mini habitación que tenía una vista panorámica de la bahía, el puente, y los rascacielos de la ciudad. Chocolates, flores y vino.

Las piernas de Royal colgaban de la gigantézca cama de lujo y yo estaba hincado enfrente de él, esperando la comunión. "Ahora," gruñó entre su aliento. Con su señal apreté mi boca alrededor de su erección. Sal. Grueso. Sal. Chorro de arrebató. Sal. Royal se estremeció, se acomodó sobre sus codos y me dijo, "¿Bueno?"

Abrí mis ojos lentamente y dije, "¿Sabías que a Jesús lo crucificaron cuanto tenía treinta y tres años?"

\*\*

Presently, AIDS is a \$2 billion industry comprised of private non-profits, pharmaceuticals, government agencies, and medical establishments. The grassroots political activism, ACT UP, and direct action of the '80s and early '90s have transmuted into steady local, state, and federal funding streams, community planning groups, AIDS lobby days, quilts and those ghastly red ribbons! As a diehard crank from the street action days, I am both disgusted and awestruck by the transformation.

\*\*

I've worked in AIDS since 1989 and when I came on board there was still hope for a cure. Using condoms, initially, was a short-term strategy meant to tide gay men over for the duration of the viral war. The party line was "condoms are safe and fun." While no one argued safety, it was the bit about "fun" that didn't fly.

At the 1994 National Gay Men of Color Conference, a colleague introduced the phrase,

A veces creo que el SIDA es mi propia e íntima tragedia. Cuando escucho sobre el SIDA en los medios de comunicación, sobre los miles de personas que asistieron a la conferencia internacional, los eventos festivos para recaudar fondos, o la nueva película sobre el SIDA, o sobre cualquier evidencia de que el SIDA es un fenómeno mundial, una institución, pienso, Ah, ese tiene que ser otro SIDA, porque mi SIDA es demasiado doloroso para ser tan público.

Actualmente el SIDA es una industria de 2 billones de dólares, compuesta por agencias privadas no lucrativas, farmacéuticas, agencias del gobierno, y establecimientos médicos. El activismo de base política, ACT-UP, y la acción directa de los años ochenta y al principio de los noventa se ha transmutado a fuentes fijas de fondos locales, estatales y federales, a grupos locales de planificación, días de lobby de SIDA, mantas conmemoratorias, y ¡esas espantosas cintas rojas!

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He trabajado en el campo del SIDA desde 1989 y cuando empecé todavía existía la esperanza de que habría una cura. Usar condones, inicialmente, era una estrategia a corto plazo que intentaba que los hombres gay aguantaran el tiempo necesario que iba a durar la guerra viral. La onda de moda era que los condones eran seguros y divertidos. Mientras que nadie argumentaba en contra de lo seguro, lo que nadie se tragaba era la parte que decía que eran divertidos.

En la Conferencia de Hombres Gay de Color en

### Frame #17

I haven't met many angels. One though, came into my life, with broken wings, lustrous black hair that framed his face, and flawless brown skin. He said he was Cuban, born in Florida, and raised in Guam. (I have always been, and will continue to be attracted to island men - I feel a connection in our land knowledge of the finite and water wisdom of endless possibilities.) With a father in the military, his family moved often. With a younger brother who never left him alone, he spent most times outside the house.

We met by the tree decorated with used Christmas tree air fresheners, and talked to each other beyond the too-quick groping that resulted in a too-quick climax. We saw each other in and out of the park for the next year, and managed to slow down enough to become comfortable with each other's island brands, until his family once again had to move. Every week for six months thereafter, I received a hand-made postcard. I still have them, these angels with clipped wings clutching stomachs as if in pain, or falling from cliffs. Then one day, the postcards stopped coming and poems I sent were returned unopened. I stopped frequenting the parks soon after. There were too many reminders of his presence - the olive branch by the reservoir was still halfway broken, our blue contribution still hung on the Christmas tree, and the skunk odor, which had become aphrodisiac, lingered.

According to Martin, I had broken the prime directive to, "Never fall in love with trade." He had just finished reading *City of Night* and (mis)quoted incessantly from it. But why not? In my 16-year old mind, that was one of the reasons to go to bars and parks, to look for someone to fall for; a man who could be attentive and strong, creative and intelligent, sexy, worldly and easily delighted by simplicity.

I like to imagine that he's marooned somewhere on some island, unable to make contact. In my mind, I see him still as a young man, unchanged by the passing of time. His name still fits, still feels right curled



Two years earlier, I had come out to myself and to some of my friends. 1977 was not a particularly easy time for me. I was adjusting to life in the United States, while at the same time dealing with my awakening (homo)sexuality.

True to my bookworm reputation, I read all the books relating to homosexuality at the Cahuenga branch library, including 1960's psychological treatises on "aberrant" sexual behaviors. John Rechy's memoir(s)/novels, from *City of Night* to *Rushes*, also figured prominently in my early inquiries. What really kept me going back to the library, at least until I finally started having sex was the Sunshine Press literature, which published interviews with prominent gay authors and anthologies including *Orgasms of Light*, a collection of poetry, short fiction and graphics. All of these books (even the psychology texts) taught me all I needed to know about man-to-man sex, and also informed my love of research and literature.

I returned to the park by myself the following weekend.

### Frame #16

*Los Angeles sings to me. I hear cacophonous symphonies in the way freeways divide neighborhoods. I am enraptured by palm trees fighting their way up to the sky; to chaparral brambling down hillsides. The city, a dry riverbed of concrete and struggling vegetation, courses through me. It's an arid shield against hopelessness; a beacon for a realized future. I revel in this new energy that has come to define the city - the tongues and hues that bring back that biblical tower, with no god to damn us. Los Angeles grabs me by the waist, by the throat, spins me around, while I dance to its versatile rhythms. I dip the fog, which isn't quite fog that covers the basin and dampens the energy of the solar-powered people. I move to the beat of high-rises and Skid Row. But most of all, I two-step to the pulse of the earth that grows daily beneath me. I feel its measured up-thrust, the gentle, almost imperceptible movement, like a new blade of grass pushing its way through fertile soil. These mountains girding the vast expanse will one day be the tallest in the world, and snow falling on the Andes, blizzards blanketing Everest, will feel like tropical rain in comparison to the tempest. But sometimes, Los Angeles swallows me and I wallow in the depth of tears the city sheds for countless unrealized dreams. No, not of becoming A Somebody, but dreams that come with the promise of the name.*

"the power of penetration" to contest the efficacy of the cognitive approach to HIV prevention. "Latino and Black men are dying in droves but they're still fucking without rubbers!" It was true. Intellectually, we knew what was good for us but our contradictory feelings of adopting behavior that seemed sexually counter-intuitive were not addressed.

HIV had turned anal sex into a wild frontier. The virus had transformed the penis from a bliss-inducing tool to an implement of disease. The anus, once a receptacle of pleasure, had become the portal to one's death. The guiding principle of early prevention efforts was fear: fuck with a rubber or die. At the time, a positive test result was a death sentence. There were calls to quarantine HIV-infected people, and AZT, the only medicine available, seemed to kill faster than cure. Religious right-wingers sang the praises of abstinence-only education and gloated - the viral chicken had come home to roost.

Prior to Royal, I'd had safe sex religiously, hoping to stay negative and eventually discover the fun in condoms. I became increasingly suspicious, associating desire with demise, seeing lovers as grim reapers. The stress of taking the test didn't seem worth the few moments of pleasure. *When did the rubber break? Did pre-cum seep into that tiny cut in my gums?* I gave up anal and oral sex for most of my twenties, terrified of testing positive.

My sex life was reduced to porn and unrequited desire. The fear of HIV had relegated my sexual expression to the realm of fantasy. I had a thing

1994, un colega introdujo la frase, 'el poder de la penetración', para argumentar a favor de la eficacia del trabajo cognitivo para hacer prevención en VIH. ¡Los latinos y los negros se están muriendo a montones, pero siguen cogiendo sin hule! Era cierto. Intellectualmente, nosotros sabíamos lo que era bueno para nosotros, pero no se le prestaba atención a nuestros contradictorios sentimientos de adoptar comportamientos que parecían sexualmente contra intuitivos.

El VIH hizo que el sexo anal se convirtiera en una frontera salvaje. El virus había transformado al pene de una herramienta que da alegría a un implemento de desastre. El ano que alguna vez fue receptor de placer, se había convertido en el portal de nuestra propia muerte. El principio fundamental de los esfuerzo de prevención de entonces era el miedo: coge con un condón o muérete. En ese entonces, un resultado positivo era una sentencia de muerte. Hubieron peticiones para que las personas con VIH se pusieran en cuarentena, y el AZT, el único medicamento disponible, parecía matar en lugar de curar. Los ultra conservadores religiosos de derecha cantaban y alaban la educación de abstinencia solamente y perversamente alaban que el pollo viral había llegado a la casa a cantar.

Antes de conocer a Royal, yo tenía sexo con condón religiosamente, esperanzado de que me iba a mantener negativo y con el tiempo descubriría lo divertido de los condones. Mis sospechas fueron creciendo, al asociar mi deseo con la muerte, al mirar a amantes como si fueran



for pre-AIDS seventies porn because those hot guys with the sideburns and the big hair got to fuck and suck the way I couldn't. The last safe space was in my own head. Until Royal.

\*\*

I've always been preoccupied with death. I'm Filipino, and fatalism is part of my cultural programming. Filipinos are also a faithful people and I imagine that my AIDS work is evidence of such faith. I've always imagined that I would die at a young age. Premonitions of dying young are integral to the theatrics of a tragic existence. Most of my friends died young, but before AIDS took them out, they lived hard and fast. They didn't plan for their futures: career, life partner, graduate degrees, finances, property ... Instead, they partied hard, fell in love too fast, drank a lot, snorted and smoked everything imaginable. I identified so much with the disease that I too embraced each moment as if it were my last.

\*\*

Barebacker.

I'm a barebacker?

Am I a barebacker if I'm in a committed monogamous relationship? Our rings are white gold bands adorned with a simple stripe of onyx. Royal and I have chosen our rings as protection against the virus. Not using condoms does not define our intimacy, but rather, our hard-earned intimacy affords us a choice of sexual practices. Trust is one factor that comprises our decision to

la Parca. El estrés que me causaba la prueba parecía que no valía la pena por unos pocos momentos de placer. ¿Cuándo se rompió el condón? ¿El pre semen entró en la minúscula cortadura en mis ansias? Dejé de tener sexo anal y sexo oral entre mis 20 y 30 años de edad porque tenía terror de salir positivo.

Mi vida sexual se redujo a la pornografía y a un deseo no correspondido. El miedo al VIH había relegado mi expresión sexual al reino de la imaginación. Me encantaban las películas pornos de los años setentas, antes del SIDA, porque esos hombres, con sus patillas y su pelo largo, cogieron y mamaron de esos modos que yo no podía hacerlo. El último lugar seguro era mi propia cabeza; hasta que llegó Royal.

\*\*

Yo siempre he tenido una preocupación por la muerte. Soy filipino y el fatalismo es parte de mi programación cultural. Los filipinos son unas personas fieles y mi trabajo con el VIH es muestra de esa fe. Siempre me he imaginado que moriré joven. Las premoniciones de morir joven son parte integral del teatrillo de una existencia trágica. La mayoría de mis amigos murieron jóvenes, pero antes de que se los llevara el SIDA, vivieron y parrandearon sin límites. Ellos no planificaron para su futuro: una carrera, parejas para el resto de sus vidas, diplomas universitarios, finanzas y propiedades. Al contrario, ellos parrandearon duro, se enamoraban rápidamente, bebían mucho, inhalaban y fumaban hasta lo inimaginable. Yo me identifiqué demasiado con la enfermedad hasta el punto que yo mismo

remember waking up in the middle of the night and sneaking out of the house to walk to Sunset. In the beginning, I was too shy and had taken to heart the childhood warning about getting into a stranger's car.

#### Frame #14

Some truths are embedded within prisms, within layers. Within.

#### Frame #15

An internet search of all public sex venues in LA, excluding colleges, gyms, clubs, bookstores, street cruising, rest areas, stand-alone public bathrooms, hotels, office buildings, malls, libraries, and sports arenas (in short, bush sex), reveals nearly 100 places. Back when I was coming up, I knew of 5 parks. Two were in West Hollywood - this was before incorporation, when no one lived in West Hollywood, but in "Beverly Hills adjacent." Two were in Hollywood. Of course, there was Griffith Park, immortalized in countless publications and oral histories, and mythologized in public lore. Here is where I learned, practiced, and perfected what a friend calls my "spidey sense" - an unerring ability to sniff out public sex arenas.

I found out about Griffith Park sex by accident. In the summer of 1979, I attended a cello clinic at Immaculate Heart College. During a break, my friend Alejandra and I took a walk to Ferndell. She noticed him first - the man openly staring at my ass. This was also the moment when I realized that my ass had magic powers (as Cisco, my second boyfriend would later say, my ass could turn a bottom boy into a top).



of the cashiers, who would sneak us in once in a while. We'd sit at opposite ends of the theatre, to jack off or get sucked off by men.

Today, when I watch porn, with their virtually didactic position on condom sex and strict adherence to shaved bodies, I wonder whatever happened to the hairy, one-named porn stars of the 70's – those men who made movies before bodily fluids became anathema.

### Frame #12

Yes, I was barebacking before the term was even coined. (Although barebacking might not be the proper term, since in the age of AIDS, it is seen by some as an immoral act, to others an act of resistance and expression of freedom, and still to others a mere lapse of judgment. But one can also argue that buttfucking is also burdened by these notions. The obvious difference is that barebacking is framed in industrial society's ironic love of experiencing "the natural.")

The transition from skin-to-skin sex to sex with latex was quite momentous. As gay boys and men with the "sexual revolution" still fresh in our minds, we had to re-conceptualize the condom, from a prophylactic/contraceptive (obviously used by straight people) to a necessary lifesaver. Before 1982, condoms were not even largely marketed as effective protection against STD's. Additionally for me and for a lot of young people, the difficulty was in my/our embarrassment at having to buy condoms and negotiating condom use with partners.

### Frame #13

At the corner of Santa Monica and Sunset, just up the street from where the original A Different Light bookstore would open, men lined up after the bars closed, while cars circled the block. I

forego condoms. But the ultimate rewards are the sensual pleasure of condomless sex and the release from my paralyzing fear of infection.

I do not support the Gay moralists who believe that gay men should "grow up" by settling down and behaving like the Good Gay Citizens of Stepford. Prior to meeting Royal, I attempted alternative relationship models, including group unions and friendship-based relationships with bisexual women for procreation. I'm surprised that I've happily settled into a "traditional" relationship—rings and all. But ultimately, monogamous married life agrees with me. I strongly believe that there is a sanctuary for everyone outside of the traditional dyad including those who prefer anonymous sex, multiple partners, and single life but this is *my* safe harbor for now. All around me I've seen friends employ multiple tactics including: focusing on oral pleasure, sex toys, fisting and formalizing a trusted fuck buddy arrangement.

\*\*

*Needle drugs within the last 6 months?* No  
*Unprotected anal sex in the last 6 months?* Yes  
*Unprotected oral sex in the last 6 months?* Yes  
*Are you a hemophiliac?* No

\*\*

Over time, my fear of dying from my undetectable HIV has slowly diminished. After all, there are protease cocktails. However, I've prepared Royal, emotionally and practically, for my death by aneurysm. I thought it only fair to let him know since I'll likely die between his legs at the peak of pleasure.

acogí cada momento como si fuese el último.

\*\*

No uso condones.

Si no uso condón, ¿soy como un machete sin vaina? ¿Soy como un machete sin vaina si estoy en una relación monógama? Nuestros anillos son de oro blanco adornados con ónice. Royal y yo hemos escogido nuestros anillos como protección en contra del virus. El hecho de no usar condones no define nuestra intimidad, sino al contrario, nuestra intimidad—que la hemos ganado a pulso—nos da opciones de prácticas sexuales. La confianza es uno de los factores que compromete nuestra decisión de no utilizar condones. Y la recompensa más grata es el placer de tener sexo sin condón y el escape del estado paralítico creado por la infección.

Yo no apoyo a los moralistas gay que creen que los hombres gay deben de crecer a través de sentar cabeza y comportarse como los Buenos Ciudadanos Gay de Stepford. Antes de conocer a Royal, intenté diferentes modelos alternativos de relaciones, incluyendo uniones de grupos y relaciones de procreación basadas en la amistad con mujeres bisexuales. Estoy sorprendido de que yo esté feliz al haber sentado cabeza en una relación tradicional – anillos y todo. Pero después de todo, la vida monógama de casado me sienta bien. Firmemente creo que existe un santuario para cada persona afuera de lo tradicional, incluyendo a los que prefieren el sexo anónimo, parejas múltiples, y la vida de soltero que es *mi* puerto seguro por ahora. A mi alrededor he visto



1. Play Stevie Wonder's "As" when they're wheeling my casket out. No Cher, Celine Dion or Pet Shop Boys.
2. Cremate me; it's cheaper. Do NOT invite your friends, Treat and Jed, to the reception. They drink too much and they're always cruising for a three-way.
3. I want my corpse in a traditional barong. Pick the one with the geometric patterns not the ornate lacy one that looks like cheap lingerie.
4. Send my unpublished work to big-time publishers. DO NOT go with a no-name biographer!
5. Fall in love again but not too soon or I'll Blair Witch your ass! When you find the right guy, hold on to him. Keep our rings in a safe place.

muchos de mis amigos implementar diferentes tácticas: concentrarse en el placer oral, juguetes sexuales, fisting, y formalizar una relación de confianza con un sexo-amigo.

\*\*

*¿Drogas inyectables en los últimos 6 meses?*

No

*¿Penetración anal sin condón en los últimos 6 meses?*

Sí

*¿Sexo oral sin condón en los últimos 6 meses?*

Sí

*¿Eres hemofílico?*

No

Con el tiempo el miedo de morir por mi VIH indetectable ha disminuido. Después de todo hay cócteles de proteasa. A pesar de todo, he preparado a Royal, en la práctica y emocionalmente, para mi muerte por neurisma. Pensé que es justo informarlo de esto ya que probablemente moriré entre sus pierna, en la exuberancia del placer.

1. Tocar a Stevie Wonder cuando lleven mi féretro. Que no toquen a Cher, Celine Dion ni a Pet Shop Boys.
2. Cremación. Es mas barato. No invites a tus amigos, a Treat y Jed a la recepción. Beben mucho y siempre estan buscando con quien ligar para hacer un trío.
3. Quiero que mi cuerpo esté con un barong. Escoge el que tiene patrones geométricos, no los que tienen encajes y parecen baratos.
4. Envía mi trabajo que no ha sido publicado

I attended King Jr. High, which stood between Frog Pond, a bathhouse, and the Silver Dollar Saloon. Outside the gates of the school, I once found a stack of gay porn hidden behind a bush. Every night for several weeks afterwards, I would return to look for more. Though I never found any more, these early-evening treks turned into an exploration of my neighborhood. Occasionally, I hid in shrubs or trees outside someone's house, and would simply watch as the inhabitant(s) lived through their routines.

I created a mental map of where the gay men lived, and where the single, straight men lived (alone or in packs). I also took notice of the young men who lived with just their mothers. I'm not really sure why. Perhaps, as a momma's boy myself, I identified with them, these tough-acting adolescents whose hearts reached out only to, and whose hearts could only be reached by, their mothers. They made my own heart ache.

#### Frame #10

At 14, I lost my virginity to someone old enough to be my father in the backyard of The Frog Pond. I had just finished a 3-mile run and was walking to cool down. He approached, greeted me, then said, "Do you want to get sucked?" I think I mumbled my reply. Inside the gate, he knelt in front of me and took my penis in his mouth. I had dreamt about this moment, fantasized about it (although the man/boy in my fantasies was never older than 18). And though I was familiar with the pleasures of jacking off, I did not expect this feeling of rawness, the feeling that all of my nerve endings had somehow become concentrated on my dick head. The nerves were radiating across my stomach, around the top of my head, to the tips of my digits. As I shot my load into his throat, my breath seemed to get stuck in my own throat, and for a few seconds, I forgot how to breathe. I ultimately leaned against the fence, barely able to move, while the man stroked my legs and buried his nose between my balls, inhaling and exhaling deeply. After a few minutes, I thanked him, pulled up my shorts, and ran home feeling guilty and dirty, high and liberated at the same time.

#### Frame #11

Up the street from King, the Vista Theater showed double billings of the latest gay porn movies with intriguing titles like, *One Thousand and One Inches* and *Packed Jockstraps*. Martin made friends with one



universal ID's, pot and cocaine.

I have not seen Martin since the day after my high school graduation party. By then, he was living in Austin, TX, working construction with his uncle. He had come back to LA to celebrate with me. After he went back, our letters, postcards, and phone calls to each other slowly dwindled. Almost two years after he initially left for Texas, our communication stopped altogether. We did not have a falling out. It's just that time and distance evaporate intimacy.

### Frame #8

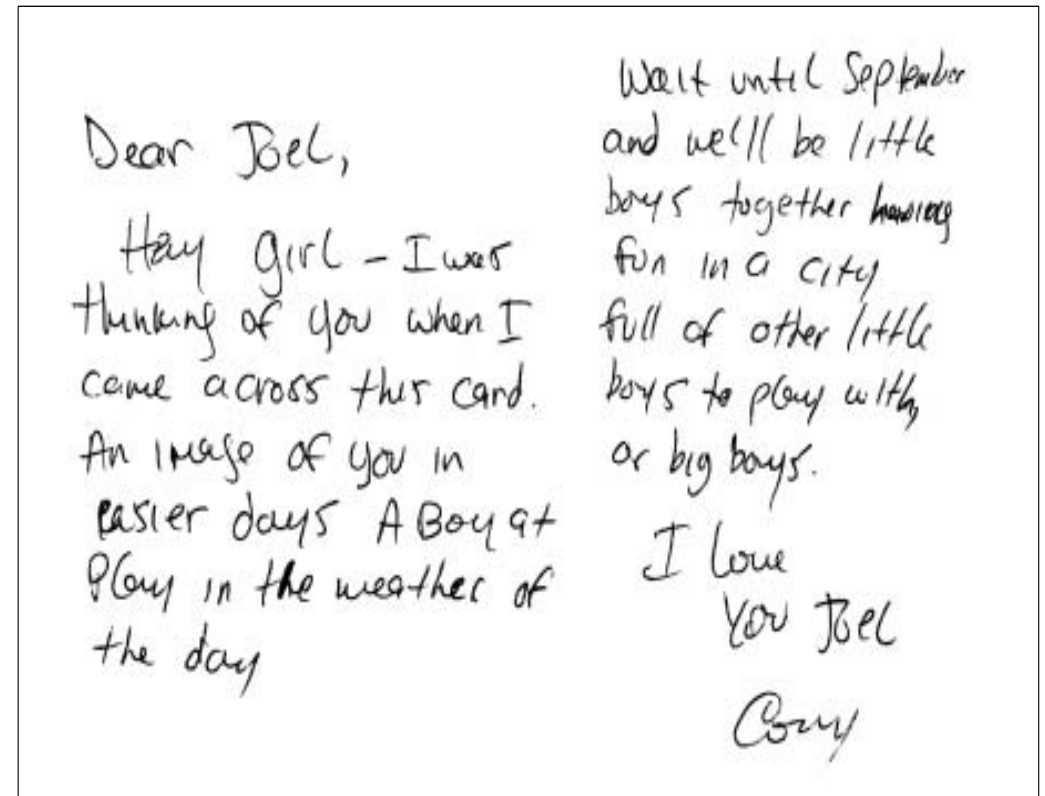
I grew up in Silverlake, first in an apartment on Hyperion Avenue south of Sunset, then in a house on Benton Way, north of Sunset. Across from our apartment lived two gay men whose blinds always seemed to be open. Next to them lived a young married couple with their newborn son. The husband used to sit in front of the TV after dinner, most times in nothing but his wifebeater and underwear. Sometimes, as he lounged on the recliner, one of his hands would play absently with the wiry hairs on his belly, while his other hand would slip in between the waistband of his shorts to cup, fondle, or make adjustments in his crotch. I spent countless hours in my room with the lights off, lying on my bed with a blanket wrapped around me (in case one of my brothers or sister walked in). I would watch both of these apartments and masturbate to glimpses of furry crotches, and if I was lucky, fully nude men lounging.



### Frame #9

I don't think my dick was ever soft between Junior High and High School.

- a una editorial reconocida. No dejes que la biografía la haga un desconocido.
5. Enamórate. No tan pronto porque si no, ¡te haré brujería! Cuando encuentres al hombre perfecto, no lo dejes ir. Mantén nuestros anillos en un lugar seguro.



## Got to Have Faith?

Gerard B. Fergerson

“I got a right,  
I got a right,  
I got a right,  
Lord, I got a right to the tree of life.”  
- Negro spiritual

“Am I to live off rubber dildos  
Fantasies  
And love from God?”  
- “How Do I Get to Heaven from Here?”  
Roy Gonsalves, *Perversion*

for Derrick.

As the grandson of a southern Pentecostal minister, I grew up keenly attuned to the ways in which some Black churches link homosexuality with sin and social degradation in our communities. The arrival of AIDS in the early 1980s provided additional fodder for ministers like my grandfather and others who preached about faith and salvation. Not even the government’s intervention could deter the wrath of Providence, as revealed through the disproportionate impact of HIV and AIDS on gay men and women “living in sin.” Then, as now, some of my fellow Black gay male friends and I asked ourselves, to paraphrase the character who dresses down an evangelical minister in James Baldwin’s novel *Just Above My Head*, why do so many think that they are on the main line to God and the rest of us are on an extension?

Almost twenty two years after “the gay cancer” was first discussed at the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it appears that government and Providence have carved out a more activist and ameliorative role for the Church in the AIDS epidemic. In January of 2001, President Bush signed Executive Order 13199 establishing a White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.<sup>1</sup> This Office has been charged with a broad mandate to facilitate partnerships between faith communities and various health and social policy and programmatic initiatives. Prevention and treatment programs at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and other federal agencies are and will be influenced by the implementation of the Order. Indeed, the CDC’s website boasts that “a

## Frame #7

Martin and I sit together on a bench overlooking the Observatory. He tells me of the first time he ever came to Griffith Park. A drunken white man had blocked his path, and without warning, threw his arms around Martin to give him a bear hug. Startled, Martin pushed him and asked what he was doing. The

man then demanded that Martin turn around. Martin reached into his pants pocket, pulls out his switchblade, and aimed it at the man’s neck. “You better take off, or I’m a cut you.”

He was my first park friend, my mentor and bodyguard, this young man with a lumbering, awkward body. We met in August of ’79, before he was to start 10<sup>th</sup> grade at Lincoln High. I was a year younger. He was running down a dirt path, freaked out by the rattlesnake he had just seen, and ran into



Photos: Patrick “Pato” Hebert

me. I must have been knocked back six feet. He remained standing.

Although he initially assumed I was a Satan, and I assumed he was 18<sup>th</sup> Street, we had an easy truce and became fast friends. We set up times to meet at the bench, and later on, after learning how to drive, cruised together through the park and streets of LA in borrowed cars. We also started going to the bars and clubs together when I was in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, our entree into the LA club scene facilitated by the

tell you the length of time I've ever spent with anyone. Neither can I describe the features of men I've been with, but I can tell you all the names I've been given. And, although I can't claim Wilt Chamberlain numbers in 23 years of having sex, I can't count how many men I've been with. Most of them have been nameless. Sometimes, I didn't even see their faces.

#### Frame #4

The first time cruising through, I was so scared of being seen by someone I knew that I sped from Ferndell to the Observatory, zoomed through the Hollywood sign vista, coasted down to Crystal Springs, and ended up out of breath at the Riverside Tennis Courts in a matter of minutes.

The next time, I was no less afraid. Again, I quickly pedaled through, but this time surreptitiously glancing at cars parked down the entire length of the road, some with doors slightly ajar to show men jacking off or men getting sucked off. After a few weeks, I actually slowed down, and took the time to watch from the safety of the road as young men in tight corduroy Op shorts and blue Vans tennis shoes, and older men in jeans with crotches sanded to highlight substantial bulges, disappeared into a grotto of trees. Some men rushed, while others casually strolled in, all occasionally looking back. I kept returning almost every weekend, never daring to go further than a few yards from the mouth of the cave of trees, always trying to convince myself to move in just a little bit closer. On the 10<sup>th</sup> visit, I nervously followed a shirtless young man with shoulder length black hair into the bushes.

#### Frame #5

He pushes his sunburnt torso against mine. His lips and tongue reach out for my neck, graze there for a minute, then slowly move up to my ear. He thrusts his hard dick against my thigh; his hands roam against my back as if searching for answers to hidden meanings. He asks me how old I am and I lie, "16." I don't know why. He tells me he just turned 18. His lips slide back down to my neck, jump to my left nipple, and glide down to my belly button. All the while, his hands explore my backside. When he finally takes my dick in his mouth, I shoot.

#### Frame #6

Afterwards, he asks me, "What are you anyway? You're too dark to be Chinese or Mexican, but your hair's not thick so you can't be black."

rich and expanding history of partnership with faith-based organizations exists at the CDC."

As various states and localities invite faith communities - including selected gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender faith community members - to be participants at the AIDS policy and program table, we public health and social justice activists must be vigilant in our resistance to policies and public health strategies that promote homophobic, classist, sexist, and racist messages. Discrimination among Black ministers and faith community members - past and present - demonstrates that in the realm of AIDS, social stigma and marginalization are as detrimental as HIV and other biological determinants.<sup>2</sup>

Despite their long delay in responding compassionately to the prevalence and impact of HIV and AIDS among Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community members, more faith community members are now stepping up to the task.<sup>3</sup> Undoubtedly, increases in federal and some local funding, as well as earmarks under the omnipresent "faith and community based partners welcome" header on virtually every public Request for Proposals document, are having an impact on nascent Black faith-based AIDS collaboratives.

It is the moral management of disease that I worry about most in the current policy environment. Designed and framed by homophobic cultural conservatives, federal policies and programs have failed to stem the increased incidence of HIV/AIDS. In keeping with conservative priorities, sex and pleasure have been virtually erased in this comprehensive public health strategy.<sup>4</sup> Entrenched cultural conservatism is contributing to the removal of more sex-centered strategies at the CDC and all the way down to local public health departments. The fear of losing funding is often impacting the programming decisions made at community-based public health programs.

As faith-based initiatives gain authority in Black urban centers and secure funding for HIV/AIDS programming, we must ensure that Black LGBT AIDS service providers who have been caring compassionately and effectively for our community are not intentionally pitted against each other in a war for public and private resources. For organizations that disproportionately operate on public monies, the increasingly restrictive criteria for the use of prevention funds (i.e. "abstinence only") can have a disastrous impact. Additionally, Black gays and lesbians continue to be denied access to informal and formal processes where critical leadership and policy frameworks are established and legitimized.

Given the racialized and gendered negation of the unique needs of Black LGBT communities in the HIV and AIDS epidemic by many white gays and lesbians, we must develop, promote and preserve existing, non faith-based Black LGBT community capacity as we foster new and progressive



organizations. Otherwise, we risk giving up gains made by organizations that have worked diligently to protect the health, cultural and political interests of Black LGBTs during this enduring public health crisis.

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<sup>1</sup> The White House, Executive Order 13199, *Establishment of White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives*, January 29, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> I well recognize the range of responses among (black) clergy and faith-based organizations, but that is not my point. It is also important to point out that homophobic, classist, racist, sexist messages are adopted and incorporated into AIDS ministries. Statement by Faith-Based Organizations facilitated by the World Council of Churches for the UN Special General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, Increased Partnership between Faith-Based Organizations, Governments and Inter-Governmental Organisations, June 25-27, 2001; Battle J., Cohen, C., Warren, D., Fergerson, G., and Audam, S. (2002). *Say It Loud: I'm Black and I'm Proud: Black Pride Survey 2000*. New York: The Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force; Kai Wright, "Emergency Call: How AIDS is Hurting Black Communities," *Village Voice*, June 20, 2000, p.21; Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "Eyes Shut, Black America Is Being Ravaged by AIDS," *The New York Times*, June 29, 1998, p.A1.

<sup>3</sup> For some measure of this activity, see ProjectCourage HIV/AIDS Faith Links: Denominational Resources (<http://www.geocities.com/HotSprings/9733/denomination.html>) and Balm in Gilead (<http://www.balmingilead.org/programs>).

<sup>4</sup> Lou Chibarro, Jr., "AIDS Leaders Meet Top Bush Officials: Domestic Policy Chief, HHS Secretary, AIDS czar attend unannounced sessions," *The Washington Blade*, November 15, 2002, p1.

## Reels

Laurence Angelo Padua

### Frame #1

*Once in the middle of the night, under a full moon's watch, I took my father's car and drove to the far end of the park. I slowly took off all my clothes and hung them on a tree. I lay down on the grass under an evergreen with low branches, waved away anyone who ventured too close, and watched the moon move across the sky. I was a horny adolescent trying to find lyricism in public sex. I grabbed for the moon and without touching myself, I came.*

### Frame #2

The last time I was here on top of this hill, I was a 27-year old trying not to stare too hard at the teenager nervously jogging through. I was in LA for a visit and had not returned to my haunts for several years. I was interested in checking things out. Although the terrain remained the same, the views had changed. In certain sections, like the Bird Sanctuary, where there used to be a sea of pale bodies with specks of color, brown and black boys and men had taken over. Most of them were proudly displaying their wares to each other. The road connecting the southern end of the Park (the observatory side) to the northern end (Travel Town) was closed. "Due to Fire Danger," the signs warned. Motor vehicles were not allowed to drive up this road, making this the section of the park least frequented by families and therefore, the busiest cruising area. This road is where I watched a young man spread his legs against the back window of his car and fuck himself with a dildo. Perhaps the most telling sign of the changing times was in the litter. Mixed in with the ground cover of fallen leaves and broken branches from eucalyptus and conifers were spent condoms, their wrappers, and those tiny lube containers created by someone who saw the need and fulfilled it.

### Frame #3

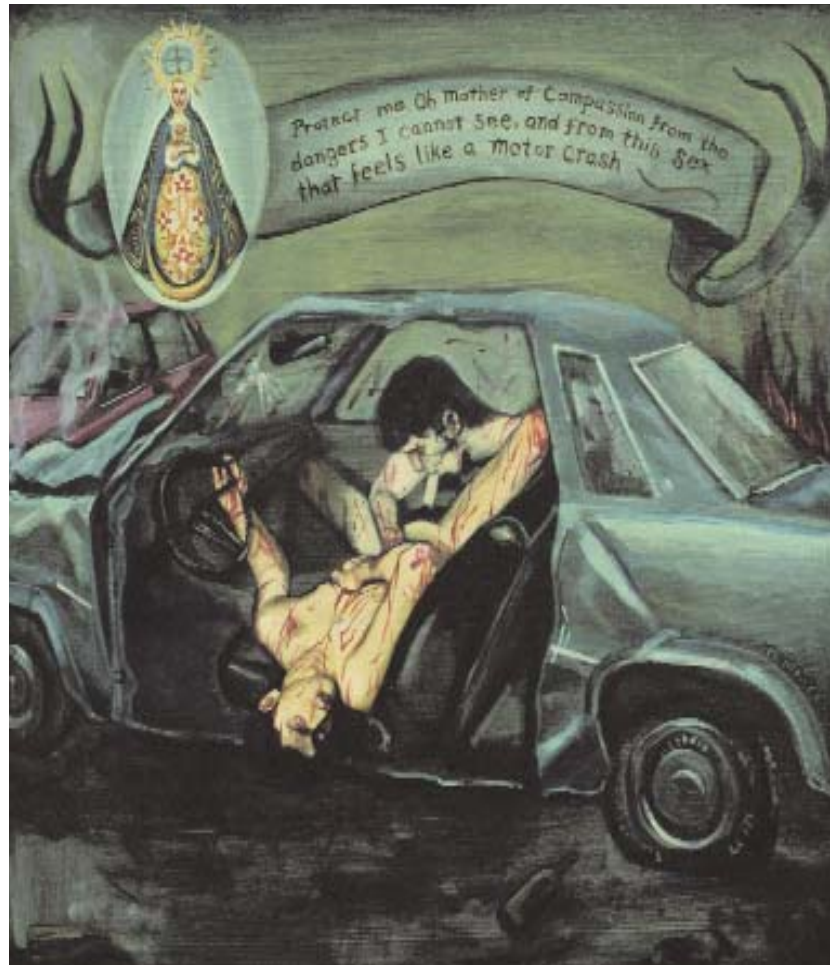
I hold a prism between you and these pages. I rely on memory to reconstruct these stories, but my memory is tricky and random. I can't, for example, tell you the dates of my relationships, but I can

C: Really? That's amazing because it is very pervasive. Considering how personal your paintings are, what does it mean to depend on your work for a living?

T: I've been living as an artist since I was a teen. I was a kid going and setting up at craft and art fairs. It's the only thing I know because very early on, I saw that I couldn't do anything else, didn't want anything else. So I said to myself, "all right, this is it. It's art or nothing for me." That's how it's always been for me."

C: That's as good a closer as anything. Thank you Tim.

T: Thank you.



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Sex Crash, 1995, Acrylic on wood, 16" x 16"

# Passing/Posing: The Paintings of Kehinde Wiley

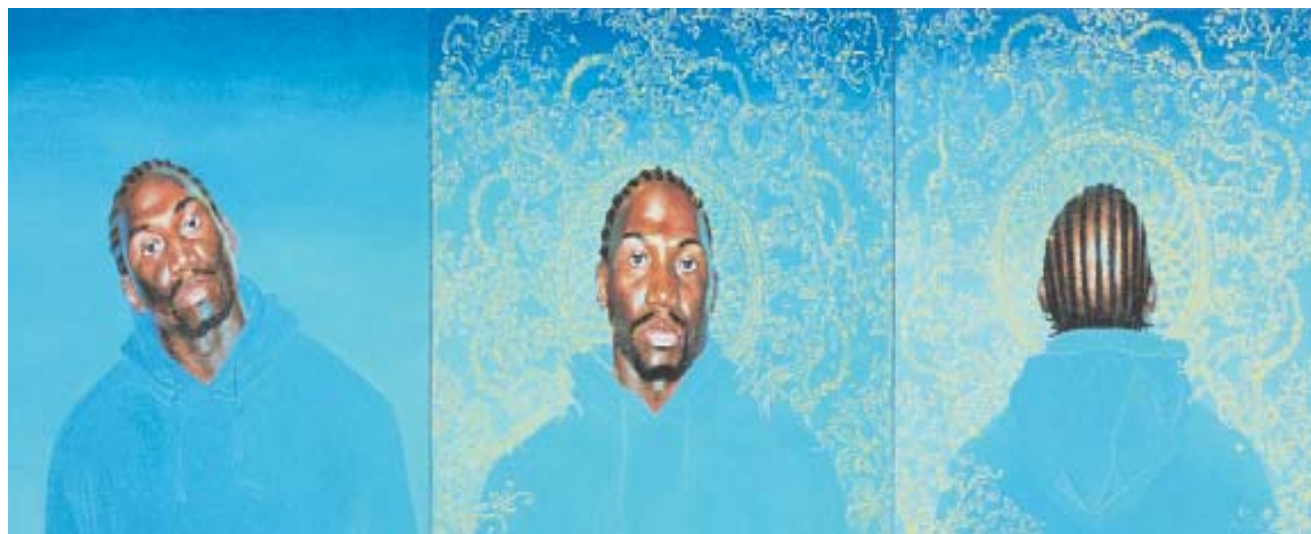


There is a healing at work here. Black skin, so scourged and despised in our history, is caressed by Wiley's brush. The paints are a salve of yellows, reds, terra cottas and of course, blues. His attention to skin brings to mind photographer Roy DeCarava, who worked out a photographic developing system to capture black hues when standard developing techniques didn't do them justice.

There is a transfiguration at work here. The young men are as everyday as can be, and yet they are framed in glory, with lacy haloes glowing behind their heads. In their sweatshirts, they are like the hooded saints of old, but whose saints are they? The instruments of saintly torture are nowhere to be seen. No arrows, nails or lashes, and yet haloes swirl golden behind them. I look more closely.

The nimbus resolves. Aah. It is sperm, hundreds and hundreds of golden sperm synchronizing their tadpole dance and falling obediently into order behind the boys' dark heads. But wait. Sperm is the death bringer, no? Sperm is the bringer of yet more babies, no? When did it become holy again?

Virgin Blue, 2002. Oil on canvas, 30" x 90"



T: Maybe it's an awkward beauty in the work. A beauty that is not standard. Not a typical kind of gay magazine beauty which is very masculine, beefcake. People are glad to see something awkward. Something that is not the status quo. Maybe a bit thinner or -

C: It's hard to get thinner than the gay status quo.

T: Ha ha ha! Maybe so. I mean in the gay magazines, there is a lot of muscle. Not much androgyny and frailty. It's more aggressive.

C: You mean more masculine?

T: More masculine and in-your-face. My approach is not immediately aggressive. Maybe not that obvious.

C: There's this very subtle and beautiful thing you do around androgyny. The male hips and thighs have this roundness and fullness. Like you said, it is this imperfection. The figures will have standard boy bodies and suddenly they'll have these big round hips and thighs. They're not huge, it's subtle. If you weren't a student of the male body, you might not even notice it.

T: I never really thought about it, and then a friend mentioned it to me. I was surprised, because it's totally subconscious.



Spot Portrait, 2001, acrylic on board, 10" x 8"



- C: What is the queer part of your art?
- T: Androgyny. The fragility. And the spiritual intimacy. The thing that I like best in art is to approach something and see this immediate intimacy in it. You're not being fooled or anything. At this time, it is nice to go to an exhibit and feel intimacy. There's a lot of things in our culture that have become very commercial and pop, which also inspires me, but I also find that the feeling is that the joke is on you. I'm not playing a joke on anyone. I crave mutual exchange and experience. I want to create a relation to beauty. I think people definitely want passion. Do you want some more wine?
- C: Yeah. Do you feel that you have an artistic duty in the world?
- T: I go back to intimacy. It's important that there are people in the world experiencing some relationship with beauty. I've been doing my art my whole life. I kinda just like to be with the paint and see what comes out of it. I never really sit and think of anything political.
- C: Do you see yourself as an apolitical artist?
- T: Yeah, yeah I do.
- C: I find that really interesting given that out in the world, your art is seen as very politicized. Do you ever feel a tension between your private intention and the public reaction?
- T: Mmm. No. I don't. I can see how people see my work as political, but I just want to express what I want to put down. From an early age I'd find that my art was not put up in exhibitions or put in the back room. These weren't even graphic images, just gay. I'd think "this work is as good as the rest of the art, why should it be put in here in this corner or cut out all together?"
- C: You mentioned how the queer content impacts the reception. How does the obvious queerness of the work impact the way in which the paintings find homes for themselves?

Conspicuous Fraud Series (Untitled #2), 2000. Oil on canvas. 36" x 48"



Passing/Posing (Untitled Study), 2002, Oil on canvas, 18" x 24"



“My childhood was beautiful and devastating.”

C: So the spots may or may not be visible?

T: They may or may not be visible. I hope I got that point across. It's not a real - who knows what those spots could be. Disease and stuff. But it could be psychological shadowing.

C: You return again and again to young bodies. Infant bodies, child bodies, youthful bodies. What is the magic of such bodies?

T: It's almost like trying to understand why I like classical painters. A lot of my favorite images from classical paintings are these innocent, younger figures. Balthus, Otto Dix. I like the beauty of it. It is also a time period of my own life I am really fascinated by. My childhood was beautiful and devastating.

C: You mention innocence, and yet the children often have a brooding, melancholy expression. They're children, but they're wise children. They've seen stuff. It's an interesting tension.

T: It's this idea of fragile innocence. I never found childhood to be easy or free of trauma. And in the world today my view remains the same, there's this light-hearted beauty that inspires me every day and there's ongoing threats of disease, war, terrorism. I love painting a pretty picture, but always the darkness is seeping in. It kind of makes it all the more beautiful.



Spot Portrait, 2001, acrylic on board, 10" x 8"

T: Hopefully. Yeah.

C: What do you mean “hopefully?”

T: Yeah, if it is graphically sexual and intimate. Yeah, sure. Hopefully.

C: In your work, I see shades of Goya, Caravaggio, Cranach. What did those old masters do that so moves you in the 21st century?

T: I don't know. I think about that a lot. It's this love of it. This meditation on it.

C: Of painting?

T: Of painting, and this expression of spirit. That lushness. I'm still trying to figure it out. I feel drawn by this sensual way of expressing something.

C: In the *Spot Portrait* series, you depict a series of faces in what appear to be various stages of consumption by black spots. The faces are beautifully modeled, but the spots are totally flat, almost hovering in front of the faces. Can those characters see the spots on their own faces?

T: Yeah, absolutely.

C: So they are meant to be physical manifestations?

T: Yeah. I love that series because there are so many ways of looking at it. And maybe it is not something that they would actually see in the mirror, depending on their psychological disposition.



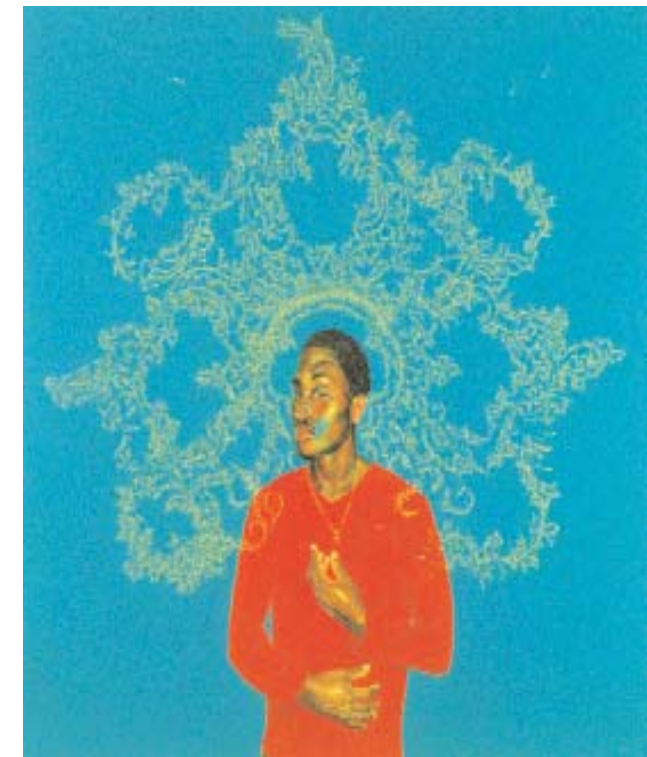
Spot Portrait, 2001, acrylic on board, 10" x 8"

There is presence at work here. Ever get that feeling you're being watched? You are. These young men will not allow you a free peek. They're looking right back at you, measuring and reading. Even when their backs are to you. Especially when their backs are turned to you. Are you in power for coming to see them or are they in power for attracting you?

There is a mystery at work here. I can't tell if he's some kind of straight guy passing for a macho or a queen passing for a butch fag or a queer passing for straight or what. Are all these men stuck between passing & posing? Are we? Only one person can answer those questions, and he's not telling.

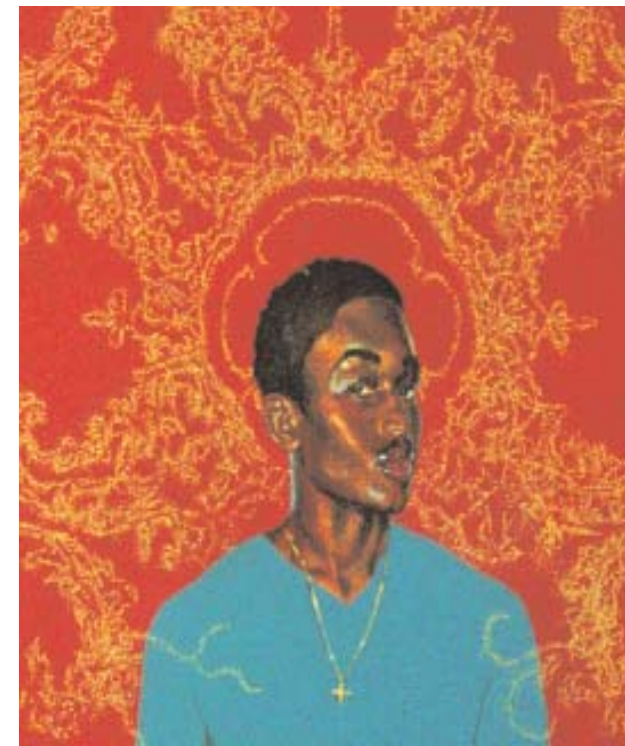
He may not even be sure himself.

Kehinde Wiley is represented by  
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76 Grand Street  
New York, New York, 10013  
(212) 343-7300



Passing/Posing (ditych), 2002, Oil on canvas, 60" x 60"

Passing/Posing (ditych), 2002, Oil on canvas, 60" x 60"





## I Buy Sea Monkeys

Justin Chin

In the pages of DC comics,  
The New Teen Titans save the world

from the world, and stay evil  
forces in their dark places;

a page tucked in between their noble  
tasks: the promise of bringing life

to life. The drawing shows a family.  
American 1950s compact and nuclear:

Crayola flesh-colored parents and children.  
The females have eyelashes, ribboned bows, pearls.

The males have bow ties; Dad has a pipe.  
Sea monkeys. What miracle of science

could fathom this? Monkeys who live  
in the briny depths, who learn to

do acrobatic tricks, and set up house.  
How I yearned for a box of miracles,

my own laboratory to bring life  
to these amazing pets. My parents

were too sensible for such comic book  
chicanery. And the local toy store

would not honor the coupons.  
I was too young to understand

which depicted these two boys having oral sex in a car that had just crashed, with a Virgin Mary hovering in the air above them and a text that read something like “Holy Mother, please protect me from this sex that feels like a motor crash.” It really moved me in the way it referenced the Mexican *retablo* (folk paintings on tin with accompanying prayers to the Virgin, Jesus or saints) while addressing homo desire. You were raised around dark New Mexican Catholicism, how has that impacted your aesthetics?

T: Growing up in Albuquerque, my mother exposed me to a lot, knowing I was interested in art. I soon found New Mexico art very limiting, it was very cowboy, western art, it had a very touristy appeal. Then I realized “wow, the church is there and it’s full of this history.” Retablos and altars were these artistic endeavors that were part of the culture there. It was all around me. It was very sensual, violent and I was inspired by that.

C: Do your paintings sexually arouse you?

Spot Portrait, 2001, acrylic on board, 10" x 8"



Spot Portrait, 2001, acrylic on board, 10" x 8"



X-Ray Self-Portrait, 1998, Mixed-media on wood, 12" x 8"

## Shadow Self: An Interview with Painter Timothy Cummings

Corpus: Tell me about a pivotal visual moment in your childhood.

Timothy: I remember the first time my mom took me to a museum in Albuquerque. It was a pop art show. There was a whole wall of big Marilyn Monroe pictures in bright colors. I kinda didn't know who Andy Warhol was, but I knew who Marilyn Monroe was. I was excited about that.

C: Was it the repetition, the colors?

T: I was hot for Marilyn as a young queen.

C: In the early to mid 90s, there was a thriving alternaQueer subculture in San Francisco. It was funky, freaky, edgy, gender-fluid, South of Market, artsy, pro-queer and anti-gay. It spawned zines, clubs, a distinct aesthetic. Were you involved in that world?

T: Yeah, I was definitely a part of it. I came into it. I came from New Mexico (1993) and I remember getting off the

bus and that same night meeting all kinds of people. Boys who looked like girls and girls who looked like boys. It was so free. I just knew I was in the right place. I stepped into a gay culture I'd never experienced in New Mexico. People were involved in making art, film and music. We'd do art shows.

C: All of that artistic production was happening in the midst of massive HIV infection and death.

T: Yeah. Coming to San Francisco was a whole other world. AIDS was more in your face. Getting on the bus, you'd see these emaciated men who were close, close to the edge. Talking to people in bars, they'd tell me their situations, tell me how close to death they felt they were. AIDS became very immediate.

C: The first time I saw your painting was in a zine in the mid-nineties. It was the painting "Car Crash"

the concept of a money order.  
I was sea monkeyless

for twenty years. Adulthood  
confers certain privileges.

Mr. Frankenstein with charge card.  
I finally got my kit.

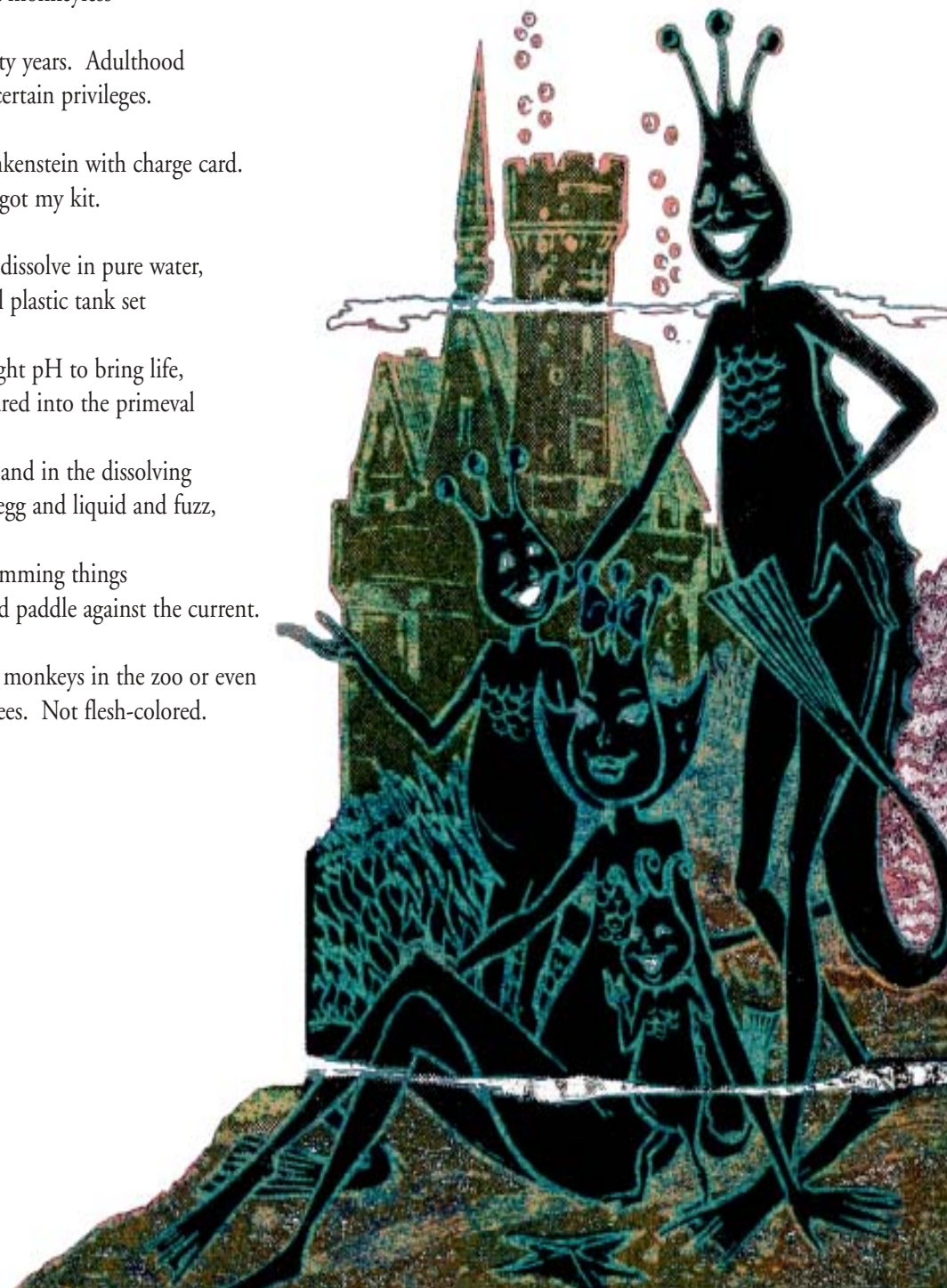
Crystals dissolve in pure water,  
the small plastic tank set

to the right pH to bring life,  
eggs poured into the primeval

quench, and in the dissolving  
swirl of egg and liquid and fuzz,

little swimming things  
swim and paddle against the current.

Not like monkeys in the zoo or even  
in the trees. Not flesh-colored.



No snazzy Abercrombie & Fitch tie,  
nor Benetton sweaters. How

at the Seattle Aquarium, a small child,  
at that wondering age I was

when I wanted those aquatic monkeys,  
asks his mother, what are the sea horses

eating? They look like sea monkeys,  
she says, and his kiddie eyes that scanned

some other comic book too intently  
as I did, start to tear up.

Dream Pet = Fish Food.  
Magic sputters into another gutter.

We grow up and figure out the truth,  
we realize how hard it is

to maintain and take care  
of life, even the ones

that deceive you, especially  
the ones we cherish:

I get lazy, preoccupied, go on trips,  
holidays, blank days, and return,

the tank is deep-sea green,  
saturated, oxygen starved,

little tatters shed and floating  
like flakes of a million dead things

in the ocean. In the convex magnifying  
bubble of the tank (so you can see the life

you brought), all is exoskeletons,  
all is dead, all minute souls given up.

All but one little monkey,  
swimming with all his might, all

his filaments paddling in the murky green,  
shimmering like the last good cell

of the last good body.  
He will live another six weeks,

longer than all his family and species,  
then he too will shed his skin one last time,

wonder where everyone has gone  
and go there too.

