

THE MAGAZINE FOR AND ABOUT MEN

XG

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politics

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Fishing and religion

The unkindest cut

The lowdown on circumcision

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Sporting identities

Smells like team spirit

Gay patriarchy

One man speaks out

the sex
issue



The unkindest cut

Circumcision is a violation of a boy's right to an intact body, and without medical or moral justification, says John Shanahan.

MALE CIRCUMCISION, the removal of the foreskin from the penis, is one of the oldest surgical procedures known.

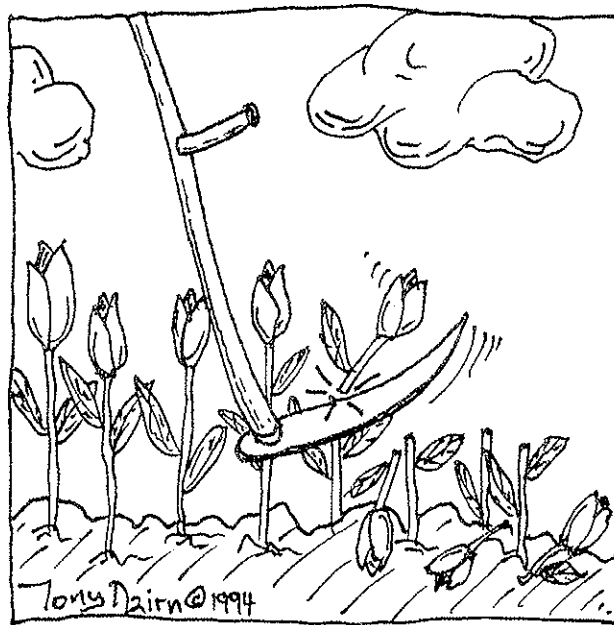
During normal circumcision, approximately 33 percent of the super tactile genital tissue is forcibly excised. As the foreskin is firmly attached to the underlying glans in 96 percent of newborn boys, it is impossible to retract the foreskin without causing pain and discomfort to the infant. When circumcision is performed in the first few years of life, the foreskin has to be literally torn from the glans—much like the way the skin on your arm would be separated from the underlying tissue. Circumcision performed without an anaesthetic is extremely painful and distressing.

Many new surgical techniques for performing circumcision have been developed in the twentieth century, including Clamps and Bells. Today the most commonly used instrument for circumcision is the Plastibell. This device is reported to be responsible for most post-circumcision complications. With the Bell firmly attached to the penis for up to 10 days, the baby or child suffers undeniable pain. Dr Fred Leditschke, Associate Professor of Paediatric Surgery at the University of Queensland, states that "the application of a bell is equivalent to putting an elastrator on a lamb's scrotum in order to sterilise it and the [cutting off of blood flow] it produces is certainly not pain free." Regardless of what method is employed for circumcision, there is always some degree of pain and trauma for the patient.

Since Adam was a boy

THE earliest record of circumcision dates back to ancient Egypt in 2800 BC. The first written documentation of circumcision appears in the Old Testament. Both Jews and Moslems continue to circumcise in accordance with Abraham's covenant with God. The circumcision which Abraham performed on himself and his sons was the removal of just the tip of the foreskin. The Apostle Paul abolished circumcision as a

On a strict interpretation of assault, routine circumcision of a male infant could be regarded as a criminal act.



means of salvation. Most of the major religions in Australia do not promote routine circumcision or consider it to be a mandated religious practice.

In a number of Western countries, such as the United States and Australia, the practice of male circumcision for non-religious reasons became prevalent by the beginning of the twentieth century. Within the miasma of myth and ignorance when the causes of most diseases were unknown, a theory emerged that masturbation caused many and varied ills. It seemed logical to some physicians to perform genital surgery on both sexes to stop masturbation. In 1891 Dr Remondino advocated circumcision to prevent or cure alcoholism, epilepsy, asthma, hernia, gout, rheumatism, headaches and curvature of the spine. So obsessed were the medical profession and some clergy about the "evils

of masturbation" during the late 1800s that boys and girls were subjected to many methods for the treatment of what became known as "masturbation insanity".

In addition to circumcision, boys were forced to wear inverted spiked penile rings to deter erections and in some extreme cases were castrated. Girls were forced to undergo clitoridectomy, wear chastity belts or have caustic mercury paste applied to their genitals, resulting in severe blistering. Boys also did not escape this method for treating masturbation. Astonishing as it may seem, these ideas on the benefits of circumcision and clitoridectomy were still included in prestige medical journals of the 1930s and 1940s.

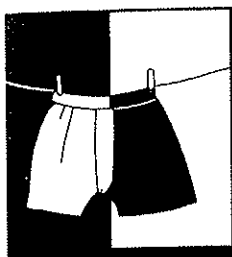
During the First World War, circumcision was promoted for hygiene reasons and for prevention of venereal diseases. In the 1930s it was considered that circumcision prevented cancer of the penis. In the 1950s it was claimed that cervical cancer occurred in women because their sexual partners were not circumcised. By the 1960s the majority of Australian and virtually all United States and Canadian infants were circumcised. By contrast, in Britain, where non-religious circumcision first

became popularised in the late 1800s, the circumcision rate had declined markedly due to the removal of the insurance cover for the surgery by the British Health Department.

Myths versus risks

TODAY, there is no justification for routine removal of the foreskin. As Wallerstein argues in *Circumcision: An American health fallacy*, all the past benefits of the surgery have been disproved and passed into the realm of medical history.

However, some medicos eager to see the surgery continue have introduced new myths to justify the procedure. Dr Terry Russell, General Practitioner in Brisbane and obviously a keen circumciser, uses the myth that routine infant circumcision will act as a preventative against the AIDS virus and other sexually (concludes on page 8) ▶



Boxer Shorts

ing bias

men are being sacked, demoted, promotion or refused employment simply because they are in a two-year inquiry by the NSW Discrimination Board has found. Men who are not pregnant, but labeled by employers as likely to have children are being denied jobs—some through forms and interviews include questions about contraception and plans for children.

from the Sydney Morning Herald, 12 Dec 1993.

lie

talking Barbie and GI Joe dolls with voice boxes swapped by the Toy Industry Organisation before Christmas. Children unwrapped their toys to find Barbie growling "Eat my liver, Vengeance is mine", while GI Joe replied, "Let's plan a dream world and 'Will we ever have enough money?' A BLO spokesperson said they tried to ridicule sex stereotypes with the dolls encouraged by all the media if they supported the campaign. We do!

from the Canberra Times, 4 Jan 1994.

s gotta do

gridiron footballer has been offered a weeks pay of US\$125,000 for a game to attend the birth of his child. The incident has caused a furore and even the vice-president of the NFL has made comments supporting the player. The team's coach said "my wife is pregnant, he was having a baby and I'm a doctor. I've got to go and play a game." This is like World War II when the guys were going to war and they would come up, but they had

from the Daily Telegraph Mirror, 23 Oct 1993.

ish in the sea

Australia has 66,622 more women than men. Victorian women making up 30% of that number according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics population estimate. Queensland, WA, NT, and the ACT all have more women than men.

from the Sun Herald, 29 January 1994.

▶ (from page 7) transmitted diseases in a recent article in *The Medical Observer*. One only has to look at the situation in the United States where there is an epidemic of STDs, including AIDS, and the vast majority of sexually active men are circumcised to disprove this claim. It is not the foreskin that causes these diseases and circumcision will not prevent them.

Dr Thomas Wiswell of the United States army uses the myth that urinary tract infections can be prevented in male babies during the first year of life by practicing routine infant circumcision. In 1989, the American Academy of Paediatrics task force considered the studies of Wiswell and found them to be methodologically flawed, unscientific, retrospective and possibly influenced by selection bias. Subsequent studies on urinary tract infections by Dr Altschul et al refute the Wiswell claims. These infections, which incidentally occur more often in females than males, can be successfully treated using antibiotics, which is evidenced in countries where circumcision is rare.

Circumcision is major surgery with inherent risks, including death. Recently in Queensland a baby boy died as a result of circumcision complications. Rosemary Romberg notes 28 known risks associated with circumcision in *Circumcision: The painful dilemma*. Among these complications are haemorrhage, ulcerated urethral opening, retention of the Plastibell ring, urethral punctures and full or partial amputation of the penis. Wallerstein claims there could be up to 225 deaths per year in the United States from circumcision complications. Circumcision records in hospitals are very often incomplete or non-existent. I've often wondered how many babies are listed as dying from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome when the real cause of death is circumcision.

Circumcision leaves both physical and mental scars. Many men live with psychological trauma as a result of their circumcision. Some men are now seeking restoration techniques to recover their foreskins.

An emblem of brutality

THE foreskin serves the purpose of protecting the glans and contains sensitive nerve endings for erotogenic function. Recent studies show that following circumcision the glans develops up to 12 times its normal layer of dermal skin. This results in a severe loss of penile sensitivity, which has been documented over the decades in many medical and religious texts as a justification for circumcision. Another question I've often asked is whether circumcision hastens the onset of impotence in later life. A man who was circumcised at the age of 26 says: "On

a scale of 10 the intact penis experiences pleasure that is at least 11 or 12. The circumcised penis is lucky to get to three."

The vast majority of male circumcisions being performed today are non-therapeutic. Reasons given for the procedure include "it looks nicer" and "so he will look like his father and brothers". I consider these arguments in favour of the surgery to be totally illogical. Non-therapeutic genital surgery upon unconsenting minors of either sex clearly violates the basic rights of children to maintain an intact body. Adults can always agree to non-medical surgical procedures for themselves as they are able to give their personal consent.

Circumcision is now recognised as an important human rights and legal issue. In December 1993, the Queensland Law Reform Commission tabled a research paper on the subject. Among the many profound statements made by the Commission were the following:

"The circumcision procedure is invasive, irreversible and major. It involves the removal of an otherwise healthy organ part. It has serious attendant risks."

"On a strict interpretation of the assault provisions of the Queensland Criminal Code, routine circumcision of a male infant could be regarded as a criminal act. Further, consent by parents to the procedure being performed may be invalid in light of the common law's restrictions on the ability of parents to consent to the non-therapeutic treatment of children."

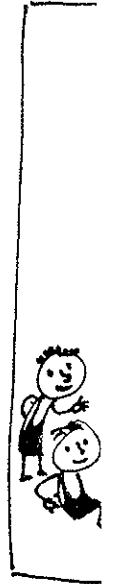
One would think this provision of the Criminal Code would also extend to other States and Territories in Australia. There have been suggestions in media circles recently that anyone who had a surgery performed on them as a minor for non-therapeutic reasons, can legally sue for damages, provided they proceed with litigation action from their 18th birthday until they reach the age of 24.

Finally, let me convey to you the feelings about the continuation of non-therapeutic male circumcision of some of our leading medical professionals:

Dr Christopher Green, Paediatrician at Camperdown Children's Hospital in Sydney: "If I was to cut off any other part of a baby for no good cause and without an anaesthetic, I'd be struck off the medical register and the parents would most likely lose custody of the child."

Professor Carl Wood, Obstetrician and gynaecologist at Monash Medical Centre in Melbourne: "Circumcision, when performed for non-medical reasons, is an emblem of brutality in society." ●

Anyone wishing to seek professional medical advice about circumcision may send a SSAE to NOCIRC of Australia, PO Box 248, Menni NSW 2234.



WHEN I was at a party. A friend said, "I'm out that way around for a while. We'd have a party. A friend of the girl were either phone call. So we started, booked a room for dinner. We were in a room. Maybe still you were properly, yourself!"

I was thinking about friendship—I put it in the hands of men who our lives are stereotypical and explicit. An author still remembers the word for it so many men if they. Chris was there for other me circulation.

Let's talk about sex ... of
erotophobia ... safe sex ...
the big O ... yes, no, ma
e ... touch me slowly ... v
rigin ... hot & sweaty ... k
n it in your pants ... you'
go blind ... red hot lust ...
o-backed beast ... saying
... my main squeeze ... th

Feature

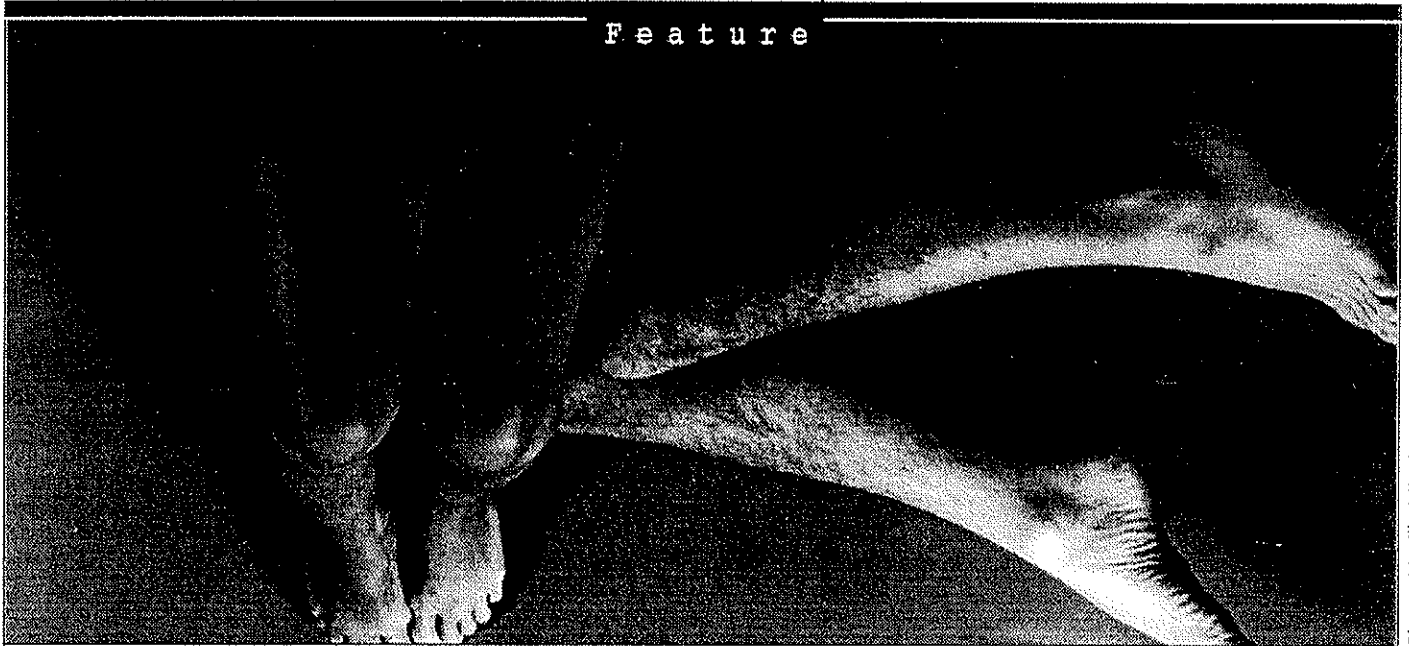


Photo: Neville Minch

SEX

FOR a magazine with the sub-title "men, sex, politics", XY hasn't published much in three years on sex and sexuality. That's no longer true.

We hope you enjoy this special topic, sex.

The topic is a mammoth one, as the editorial group discovered when we discussed what we'd like to cover. We're delighted to offer you articles on men and sex, from intensely personal and passionate experiences through to the social meanings of and context for sex.

Journey of desire

David Dendy boldly goes where few men have gone before: across the gulf between desire and politics, to seek new forms of monogamy, masturbation and sexual preference.

“WHAT makes male supremacy so insidious, so pervasive, such a seemingly permanent component of all our precious lives, is the fact that erection can be conditioned to it.” (John Stoltenberg)

I've always spent a lot of my time thinking

about sex and creaking floorboards, showers, mangoes and condoms. Lately I've also been thinking about my sexuality and how my desires have been constructed. My sexuality has been crafted within a society that has as its cornerstones the oppression of women, class oppression, race oppression and children's oppression. I certainly wasn't born

with an exclusive desire for white, middle-class, educated, young and slender (but busty) women.

Growing up as a man in this culture I repeatedly received the message that dominating women was sexy. I learnt from the women in the movies, or those in the magazines, their legs spread for me in porn. I learnt to objectify women's bodies and to find that sexy. The message of sexy domination is devastating for the lives of women, and it also affects the sex lives of men. It became difficult for me to simply enjoy sex without imagining my partner and I as a photographic (pornographic)

image.

Within the pleasures and pains of our sexualities lie social and political meanings. Lesbian feminists have explored such meanings for many years. Denise Thompson describes their journey: "For many of us, the feminist realisation that our lives were structured by male domination, that we were kept from each other and divided against ourselves, that heterosexuality was centrally involved in that, was so overwhelming that it even transformed desire."

Political will and sexual desire are not mutually exclusive. As we men explore these issues, will we also find that in order to truly challenge sexism and heterosexism we will need to revolutionise our desire? Such a journey has begun in my own life, and I've stumbled upon three issues: masturbation, sexual preference and monogamy.

Our bodies, ourselves

"NEITHER the plague, nor war, nor small pox... have resulted more disastrously for humanity than the habit of masturbation... It is the destroying element of civilised society." (*New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal*, 1855)

Last year during discussions about sex in our men's group, I was astonished to hear of the guilt still associated with masturbation. Astonished because for someone like myself, who has taken great pleasure playing with his penis, who has explored every method in the *Hite report on male sexuality* and invented many more of his own, to hear of other men's guilt came as a huge surprise.

In this culture men have been taught that to be attracted to men's bodies is an absolute sin, punishable by death, imprisonment, bashing or all three. Michael Flood recently outlined the effects of such homophobia on all men and the links between homophobia and sexism (*XY*, Winter 1993).

We are taught to be repulsed by men's bodies and to be attracted only to the Other, namely women. Thus we are encouraged to be repulsed by *our own* bodies. This is heterosexism, and it makes sense to me that this may be, at least in part, the source of

the taboo of masturbation. If this is the case then masturbation may be the key place on which to work in order to dismantle heterosexism and sexism. (I like this idea. It sounds like fun!)

*She's
my partner,
not my
possession.*

When I hear of how other men masturbate—furtively, quickly, harshly, with too little compassion or tenderness towards their bodies, in an end-rush to orgasm with guilt as the repercussion—it smells to me of homophobia: of fear of loving our own likeness.

It also sounds like objectification: we treat our own bodies as objects to use sexually rather than trying to nurture ourselves through our bodies and sexualities. What would happen if we learnt to eroticise our own bodies? What would happen if we found our own bodies sexy, not as objects but as the homes of our souls? If we eroticised self-love, would it challenge objectification, homophobia and indeed heterosexuality?

Turn to the mirror,
lips slightly parted and
kiss your image.
Feel the strength of your arms,
the smoothness of skin.
Hold yourself,
see yourself,
slow down,
a *minimum* time limit.
Feel your scalp,
nose, tongue and lips.
Imagine...
kissing yourself,
sucking yourself,
fucking yourself perhaps.
Imagine loving yourself,
tenderly, compassionately,
wonderfully,
hopefully,
suddenly,
you'll realise that you are.

I write this because at a time of crisis in my life such an act made all the difference. Cherishing myself led to hours of astonishing pleasure and at the same time enabled

me to take the first steps towards loving others again. Surprisingly, it also challenged my very sexual identity.

Off the straight and narrow

"INSISTENCE on having a sexual orientation in sex is about defending the status quo, maintaining sex differences and the sexual hierarchy; whereas resistance to sexual-orientation regimentation is more about where we need to be going." (John Stoltenberg)

At school during my teenage years, I was attracted to some of my male friends but I followed nothing through for fear of ostracism. For some reason, after about year 11 I became a fully-fledged, dinky-di straight man. The thought of touching another man had become repulsive: I had been taught well. Years later, as I started to explore my own body, this began to change.

*A
sexuality that
I can reconcile with
my political
will.*

As I felt the muscles under my skin, the manliness became sexy. As I longed to suck my own penis, the thought of another man's penis became a turn-on. And perhaps most importantly, as I explored the vulnerability of penetration, the thought of being loved by a man, merged with his body, became erotic for the first time.

The fantasies came alive, and my heterosexism and my heterosexuality began to fade. I am still yet to love a man physically. I still think I'd freeze up at a crucial moment, but being with a man is now a sexy thought as it never was a number of years ago.

I cannot speak for anyone other than me. I am not saying that such experiences are available to everyone. But I considered myself a dinky-di hetero. I was repulsed by the idea of touching another man. That has changed. My sexuality is far more fluid than I was led to believe. And it was through eroticising my own body that I began to challenge homophobia and heterosexuality itself.

Faith, hope and property

"LOVERS who are free to go when they are restless always come back; lovers who are free to change remain interesting. The bitter animosity (concludes on page 16) ♦

▶ (from page 15) and obscenity of divorce is unknown where individuals have not been Siamese twins. A lover who comes to your bed of his own accord is more likely to sleep with his arms around you all night than a lover who has nowhere else to sleep." (Germaine Greer)

Becoming curious about my own body has also meant I've become increasingly sexually curious. Not only do I wonder about touching and loving men, but I also find myself attracted to women other than my cherished long-term partner. Such curiosity (and Germaine Greer) has led me to question that sacred institution, monogamy.

From a feminist perspective, monogamy historically has served to enslave women as sexual property. From a psychological perspective, monogamy isolates and encourages overly dependent relationships, within which the most horrific violence and abuse are often hidden.

On an interpersonal level, monogamy seems to be held together through jealousy, possessiveness and fear rather than any noble values. Indeed, monogamy seems to be a simple extension of the romantic myth of having one person satisfy all your

emotional needs.

I challenge monogamy most importantly because it doesn't feel right. It feels limiting and constraining of my sexuality. It feels oppressive of me to pressure my partner to put limits on her relationships. She's my partner, not my possession. She ought to be free to spend her time with whoever and however she wishes.

Subsequently I have told my partner that I no longer expect her "faithfulness", but only the respect and honesty (and safe sex) with which she has always treated me up until now.

I considered myself a dinky-di hetero.

This is a journey that both scares and excites me. I too am attached to the idea of possessing my loved "one", and to the idea that I ought to be the only one. I too am wracked with jealousy but I don't want to be that way for the rest of my life.

This is not an attempt to return to the sixties and a sexual permissiveness based on traditional masculine sexual values of objectification and promiscuity. This is

simply one part of a journey undertaken to redefine my sexuality so that both my desire and that of my partner(s) can be respected and expressed in non-oppressive ways.

This is a journey that both scares and excites me.

Who knows where this journey will lead? This article has only touched on three areas, and there are untold others. Will we have the courage to question the dichotomy of friends and lovers?

Will some decide that they ought to be one and the same? Will we have the insight to question the current worship of the orgasm above all other forms of sexual expression? Will we have the strength to challenge the traditional masculine equation, "penis = penetration = power = pleasure"? And will we be able to help resist the current push that is encouraging women to move their desire towards a compulsive, orgasm-focused, competitive sexuality? This, by simply exchanging the clitoris for the penis, is attempting to open new markets for the commodity that is now sex.

The Journey

OUR sexualities are political, even down to who we screw and how we do it. We need to admit this and work towards sexualities that are congruent with our political will. We need to talk about sexuality, write about it, cry about it, laugh about it, kiss about it and fuck about it.

Feminism means more than just equal pay or even ending violence, crucial as these issues are. To my mind it also includes revolutionising our desire.

I am plotting a course. At this stage it seems to be heading towards a non-possessive sexuality, one that is fluid and unconstrained by ideas of sexual preference or orientation. It is a sexuality that I can reconcile with my political will for a non-oppressive world. It is the journey itself that is important. For each of us the journey will be different and undoubtedly difficult.

It is not that my mind is pushing or forcing my desire. Both are interacting and moving, and they are becoming connected again despite the lessons I learnt all those years ago.

Such a journey is certainly a challenge. But, as Kate Millet recognised, it's one to enjoy: "What's a revolution for if it isn't fun?" ●



Green Left Weekly

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Good thing it's not sex

The ways men pass on information about sex are sometimes subtle. Let's listen in on a typical exchange between a boy and his loving father. Fly-on-the-wall Gerry Orkin reports from the front-line of sex role conditioning.

"DADDY, what are girls for?" Father stiffens a little—the time has come.

He starts slowly, trying to get his thoughts in order, "Well, son, to begin with girls are provided as an example to men of what we must never be like. They provide a kind of measure for us—we are supposed to be the opposite of girls in all ways. If girls are soft and caring we must be hard and uncaring. If girls cooperate and support each other we must be competitive. Some things belong only to girls and we must never be seen to have them. These things are called feelings."

Father gets into his stride. "Another thing—you must make fun of girls. Put-downs, we adults call it. You can use your imagination, but you must make sure that they feel less important than you and that they fear you. You are even allowed to hurt them if it makes you feel better."

"Why, daddy?" The son, of course, didn't understand.

"Never mind why, son. The important thing is to follow the other boys in doing these things. If you don't you might be thought of as a girl. Then the other boys will call you names and they will hurt you."

The boy shivered. He already knew about that. "What else are girls for?" He knew there had to be more to it.

"When you get a bit older" continued Father "you are supposed to lay girls as well as put them down. That will be when you start having sex." The boy was confused. The only laying he had ever seen was when that nice Mr Smith had come to his house and put the cork tiles down in the kitchen. He didn't want to appear stupid so he pressed on, "And just what is sex, daddy?"

Father drew a sharp breath. His skill as a parent and father were being tested to the full. "Well, sex is lots of things. Keep in mind all the things I just told you about girls while I explain." The boy sensed this was going to take a while. He got comfortable in his father's lap.

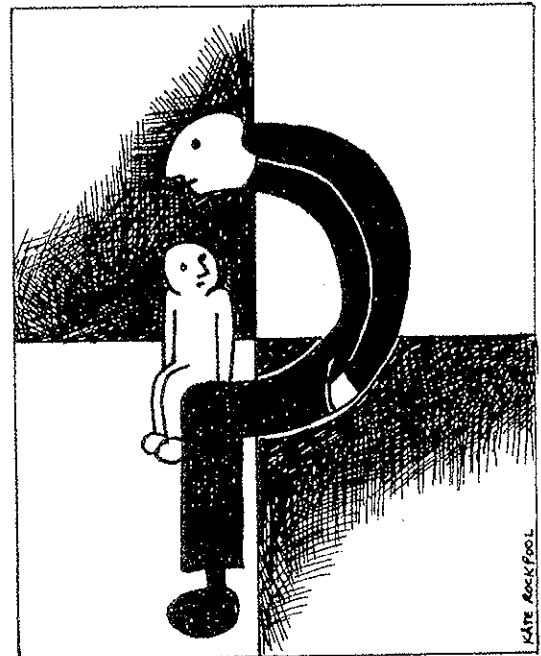
"To begin with sex is supposed to be—here comes a couple of big words—strictly heterosexual. That means you must do it only with women. The biggest bad thing you can do in your life is to have sex with another boy. You'll get beaten and called names if you so much as hold another boy's hand."

"That doesn't seem fair, daddy," said the boy.

"Fair doesn't come into it, son. The fact is that proper sex only happens between men and women."

The boy was getting restless—he had so much to ask. The father continued. "The next important thing you

Girls are provided as an example to men of what we must never be like.



need to know about sex is that you must be compulsively interested in it. That means you must be ready and willing at all times to have it, and always be looking out for opportunities to do it."

"Even if you don't like someone?" asked the boy.

"Sure—even if you don't like her, know her or even care about her," said the father. "Another way of explaining it is that it's impersonal."

"Bill next door does impersonals of Paul Keating!" laughed the boy. A wave of affection flowed over the father. "No" he smiled "Bill does impersonations. Impersonal means detached, cold and disconnected. It's the way men are supposed to feel about the person they are having sex with."

"That doesn't sound very nice" said the boy. "It makes sex

sound like a punishment. I thought sex was supposed to feel nice."

"Oh it does feel nice" said the father. "Some of the nice feelings come from knowing that you have power over the person you are having sex with and some of the nice feelings come from your body. It's even been know to feel nice to get really cuddly and close to someone, but that's not what sex is, and it hardly ever happens. It's not important that you have nice feelings about who you are actually with though. You are even allowed to manipulate and coerce girls into having sex just so you can feel good."

The boy didn't understand all the big words but he got the drift. "Does that mean I'm allowed to tell lies and force women to have sex with me?" (concludes on page 18) ♦

♣ (from page 17) "Well it's best if you don't actually force them but yes, you can use what we call reasonable persuasion to get someone to have sex with you. You are even praised by your friends for doing it and we know how important the approval of your friends is."

The boy couldn't really tell the difference between "reasonable persuasion" and forcing someone to do something, but, being young, he didn't trust his own thinking very much. He said nothing for a few moments while he tried to absorb all the new information.

When he eventually spoke again, it was to change the subject. "Dad, what do you actually *do* when you have sex—and what's a penis for?"

Father was pleased. "Oh, you know the proper word!" He decided to raise the intellectual level of the discussion a bit. "It's like this—we men have what we call a phallocentric sexuality. This means we have a single goal in sex—intercourse leading to orgasm. Sex for men is mostly penis-based, so your penis is the only thing you have to worry about pleasing when you have sex."

"Falla what?" the boy asked, growing wide-eyed. "Phallocentric" repeated the father. The son was amazed. "Gee, that's a big word!"

"Yes it is a big word" father said, "and size is very important." Before he could say more the boy cut in—"What do you do with this, um, fallacents-trick thing—and what's intercourse?"

Father decided to keep it simple this time but in his nervousness it came out in a rush. "Well, intercourse is when you are with a woman and you get excited and your penis gets all big and hard and then you push it up inside the woman's

vagina—you know that funny thing between woman's legs—and you move it in and out and then you feel this feeling inside your body and then this stuff comes out and then you pull out."

The boy listened closely but seemed to miss the point of the activity he father was describing. He was interested to hear more about women, however.

"What is it like for the woman we have sex with, dad?" The father didn't understand the question at first but caught on after a bit of thought. He muttered something about sex being what we do *to* women, not what we do *with* them, but the boy didn't catch that bit.

"Well, sometimes the woman will writhe around on the bed and pant and thrash about, sometimes she'll just lie there and have a sort of frightened look on her face and sometimes she'll seem not to want to be doing it. It's probably not useful generalising about what its like for women."

Father had a kind of dark look on his

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*The
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another boy.*

Gender facts

By Michael Flood

A REPORT on patterns of gender in Australia was recently released by the ABS, titled *Women in Australia*. What are some of the findings?

Earnings

WHILE the gap between male and female earnings has decreased since 1974, women's earnings in 1989-90 were, on average, only 61 percent of men's.

At all levels of educational attainment, men earn more than women. Women with a degree or higher qualification earn 73 percent as much as men with the same level of qualification.

Decision-making positions

MEN make up 86 percent of elected government representatives at the local, State and Federal levels. In Federal Parliament, men make up 75 percent of the Senate and 93 percent of the House of Representatives.

Eighty-seven percent of the Senior Executive Service of the Australian Public Service are men. There are no women at all on the management boards of Australia's top ten companies.

Labour force

ELEVEN percent of men work part-time, compared to 43 percent of women. The main reasons women give for working part-time are that they prefer it to full-time work, or that their children are too young to be cared for by someone else or they prefer to look after them themselves. The main reason men work part-time is to accommodate study.

Source: *Women in Australia*, ABS, 1993.

face so the boy didn't push this line of inquiry any further.

The older man didn't seem interested anymore anyway, and said it was time to get ready for bed.

As he lay in the darkness, listening to the sound of the television from the lounge room, the boy pondered his father's words. He thought

of his best friend Wendy. They did everything together—skinny-dipped in the river and walked hand-in-hand through the woods. He remembered lying with her cuddling as wild storms passed overhead, the water splashing down on them from the cubby-house roof. They had touched, and the memories were of closeness and harmony, of smells and fluttering hearts.

He decided that it had been much better than having sex, and that he'd better not ever tell anyone about it. ●

Loving and touching

Tossing back the sheets,
Joey Tabone shares a bit of sweat and sweetness.

Eyes
silence
touch
finger tips
nipples
chesty bonds
prickle of chest hair
neck
oh the neck
veins protrude and leave sensual remorse
steady groan
lengthy pause
magnetic neck line and sweet taste of tongue
lines to follow
the shoulder blade

the rise over the deltoid
beneath the armpit
a sinking to the ripple of the
worked stomach

a quick chatter of teeth
as I leave the mark of my being
there...

masturbatory pleasure to add to the visual excitement.

I kiss him deeply and caress the roof of his mouth feeling the ripples. We lie still taking hold of the intimacy we have. I know this is the last still moment. I wrap my legs around his, they intertwine. His breath is warm and I feel the blood filling the veins in my neck, yearning to be sucked, yearning for his tongue, the wetness of his lips. His hands reach my inner thigh and are lost into the tangle of our legs now forced apart.

He comes down on me. His tongue moves along the side of my neck and to my throat which is wet from dribbling spit. A quick release down on me again, this time with his mouth firmly placed around my cock. He raises my buttocks and I feel the breath from his nose along the shaft of my cock and I imagine the darkness of my hair-covered groin and feel the warm saliva leaving his mouth. We move in quick motion leading my cock deeper into the space of his mouth. He retrieves breathing heavily and meets my lips which have dried. Our cocks are again pressed hard up against each other.

We kiss and I taste me. I work my legs up around his buttocks and push my groin harder into his. He raises slightly, elevating our embrace while we kiss. My hands grab the tops of his shoulders and his hands tightly close around the base of my back. We kiss for a time, clenching our intimacy.

We then soften our grasp. There is slow movement and I move my hand onto his cock while taking my own with the other. Our cocks meet with my handled embrace. His shoulders swing back and my face loses sight of his. We have our own depths of intensity as we cum and lie there with the warmth on our stomachs and the coldness of the room instantly felt.

We smile and kiss before getting up laughingly to inspect the mess. ●

SUDDENLY AWOKEN I sink beneath his grasp, swallowed in his embrace with our cocks tightly gelled, a release only of our upper bodies and the muscles that guide our inner thoughts. There is no precision or process, just intimacy that leads to satisfaction. I take my lover and look for the possession of his strength. I tongue his shaft and urge him to lie still as I take his now wet head and probe the inner opening which provides him the pleasure I have yet to experience. He tenses up as I slowly round his tip with my tongue and work the glans at a pace which cause little spasms at the base of his cock. I leave and again find his mouth as I tense my chest and our cocks are forced together.

The wet of my mouth warm upon his cock adds to the warmth and friction of our cocks together again. There is a quick movement, I slide and he is behind me. My face lies side on and I can hear my own breathing. His hands glide and massage in motion. A shiver enters me.

He glides the tips of his nails down my back and across onto my inner thigh. My cock lies hard against my own groin now. The bed is cold and the rubbing is intense as he lies against me and places his cock into the crevice of my buttocks. I feel his chest and gymed tidiness pressing hard against my back and his hands have worked closely and intimately to find my erect nipples. His embrace now engulfs me, and I feel him lost within me. We lie still for only a moment and I find strength and take him by surprise.

Our love making is fun. I turn and face him and with a quick movement have him lying on his back. I straddle him bringing his cock pressed hard within the upper part of my thighs. I feel his warmth and hardness at the base of my cock. I move quickly whilst rubbing intensely and providing myself a little

*I look
for the
possession of
his strength.*

Sex with men?

Kate Rockpool gives her reasons.



Photo: Jorma Schubert

WHY do I like sex with men? Because soft penises are really fun to play with. I like talking and making up in-jokes with a floppy dick clasped in my hand or nestled against my cheek.

I am especially proud of my ability to wrestle with men, and really give them some resistance. When we're in bed after making love, there is added safety and scope for humour as we wrestle.

I love sensing his surge of excitement when I do some unexpected, un-girlish manoeuvre, like gently slipping a finger into his bum.

Teasing kisses, neck-stroking or trailing a fingernail down the spine I enjoy doing, and having done, with both men and women. Neither gender has a monopoly on undulating oceans of bliss, or on inexorable thrusts of violent passion.

I love it that men get so much joy from their prostate glands. I surprise myself with how arousing I find it to be enveloped by a man, using my fingers or a dildo. There is nothing like the contrast of hairy buttocks against my smooth stomach and hips as I press into him.

Even the best strap-on dildo can't go soft and snuggle into the contours of the body as we relax after sex. (Other penis

Penises can be hidden more easily when mum comes round unexpectedly.

plusses: You never have to remember to bring the penis with you when you go on holiday. Penises can be hidden more easily when mum comes round unexpectedly.)

I do like being fucked. There's a particular victorious high from actually feeling the pulse as a man climaxes inside me... at least there is with the orgasm-centredness of my current sexuality.

I feel very privileged to be around men

who are treading the difficult path of opening up their emotions. I guess because of the ways men and women have been hurt differently, a little genuine closeness can go a long way with men. I love just being around as a man realises I'm determined to be a mate as well as a girlfriend.

If I'm seen as "sleeping with the enemy", especially as a woman who has sex with women too, that's a shame. I'm sure life would be a lot simpler if the enemies were so identifiable, but instead we have a world where everyone is confused about sex, and the enemies are rather concepts like guilt, secrecy and self-limitation.

In a future world, maybe we won't all be so obsessed with sex. Given where we are right now, let's celebrate the sex we do have. Men are good, and they are good fun to have sex with. I delight in the differences between my body and a man's, such as sinews where I have smoothness, the graze of a bristly chin between my shoulder blades or a hand that can span both my nipples at once.

There's a particular look most men get in their eyes when offered breasts to play with. It's an Oh-you-shouldn't-have-How-did-you-know?-It's-just-what-I-wanted sort of look. I remember at a youth hostel in Denmark, debating with some American guys whether we should go and see the sex museum. It cost \$10 and I said, "That's a lot of money to go and look at tits, especially when you've got a pair of your own." I'll never forget the look of sheer envy on one guy's face. I suppose that, given the construction of the female body within patriarchy, there is a kind of warped power that comes with being the object of desire. It's limited, and constraining of our individuality, but men often go satisfyingly gooey over our bodies.

Having sex with men challenges me to get close to men. I get to have my assumptions confronted and find out what life is like from the "other side". I love exploring our differences, affirming our similarities and rejoicing in the day-to-day discovery of yet another striving, smuggling, beautiful human being. ●

Heterosex

Yum, says Michael Flood.

IF THERE is one act that's essential in sex for me, it is kissing. I love those light, teasing kisses: I just brush her lips with the tip of my tongue and my lips, and when she reaches up to kiss, pull away, to then touch again, doing this until I (or she) can stand it no more and we press our lips together. And full-mouthed, wet kisses, sometimes slow, sometimes fast and frantic.

I find kissing intensely erotic. Like all sex, kissing can be languid and slow, playful and silly, or passionate and hot. I love women's smooth and soft cheeks and chins. I'll often shave before going to bed to remove my abrasive stubble.

Women's bodies are amazing. I find the feel of a woman's breast cupped in my hand extraordinarily arousing and moving. I adore kissing women's nipples, gently brushing, licking and sucking.

One of my favourite things is to kneel over my partner, lying on her back, and kiss her neck and shoulders, her breasts, her tummy. I find tummies delicious, and sometimes like to rest my head there.

And perhaps wander further down, kissing her thighs and pubic bone, gently licking and kissing her vagina. (I don't like the word *vagina* very much. Some women say *fanny* or *cunt*. I'll use what my partner uses, or just say, "Can I lick you?" or "Can I go down here?" I avoid that clinical word *cunnilingus* altogether.) This is utterly delicious, and another favourite. I love the wet fleshiness and the taste, the incredible sexualness of it, and the sheer variety of pleasurable possibilities.

I adore the feel of my lover's body and mine wrapped around each other. Legs intertwined, arms around each other, our heads together as we gaze and kiss and talk. I love lying in a "spoons" position: we lie facing the same way, with my chest against my lover's back, my thighs resting against the backs of hers, and my arm around her, sometimes holding hands. I love waking up in the morning with a partner, sleepily

whispering "Good morning."

I love the feeling of intercourse, my penis enclosed by a woman's vagina. (The problem of language exists here too. *Penis-vagina sex* is too clinical, *fucking* is ambiguous and can sound harsh, and *enclosure* is obscure and not necessarily descriptive. I'll use *penis-vagina sex* or *intercourse* if I'm chatting in a cafe, but if I'm in bed with someone, I might say, "Can I be inside you?")

I like the way in which we can lie together during intercourse, our bodies touching from our toes right up to our chests, kissing and stroking each other. I also really like

being on my back, my lover lying or kneeling on me: she has more control over what happens, and I can stroke and play with her body.

I find it difficult to write about sex in this explicit way. What will my ex-partners think: will they feel strange about my descriptions of sex with them? Or will they simply appreciate my enjoyment of that sex? And will others think I'm somehow sleazy, for writing about something that many men do but few talk about?

I must confess, I write this with a heavy heart at present. I've just ended a relationship, and I miss the physical and emotional intimacy it embodied. Much of

my blissful appreciation of these sexual intimacies is about having a relationship. The cuddling, the sex and the everyday intimacies are important because they demonstrate the connection between that woman and myself.

But I also like sex for sex's sake. Remember that Wham song?: "Sex is beautiful, sex is good, not everybody does it, but everybody should." Well, not everybody. But sex is yummy. ●

Kate (opposite) and Michael (below) have never had sex together, although sex is their favourite topic of conversation.

"Hang on, what about that time when we almost kissed?"

"Oh yeah."

The sheer variety of pleasurable possibilities.



Photo: Colleen Petch

A celibate marriage

Does sex make for a healthy relationship?
Nick Sellars consults the tree of life.

MY PARTNER and I planted a lemon tree on the morning of our wedding.

We'd picked one out a few days before which looked strong and dependable. Its branches were capable and would hold its harvest of fruit well. Its leaves were glossy and healthy; they would eagerly take the sun's warmth and turn it into new growth, and eventually bear fruit. You could tell by looking it would survive the frosts well. The ground had been prepared for months: manured, watered, weed-free. We planted it with love and care, sharing the work and our joy. We wanted it to be a symbol for the rest of our lives—this tree must have everything it needs to live.

Our marriage is well thought out too. Not exhaustively planned—you can't control everything—but we have set up good support for ourselves. We each receive energy from many sources: our friends, our family and those with whom we share counselling. We designed our marriage service to be meaningful and memorable for all those present. Our friends knew us well enough not to make any sexual innuendo about our honeymoon.

We believe that there is nothing inherent in marriage that leads to disaster. We want an anti-sexist marriage. We

wanted a public pledge to let people know how committed we are to each other and to our goal of a world without sexism. We also wanted them to help feed us, water us and love us. They would have lemons for the rest of their lives.

As in most marriages, we made a vow to be monogamous. It is probably the biggest challenge we have faced so far. If we really are serious about this (and we are) then all the easy escape routes have to be blocked. You make a commitment knowing it will be difficult and in full knowledge that you will have to choose and re-choose to do what you're doing. The rules of our marriage aren't concrete, but our commitment is.

I think monogamy on its own would be relatively easy to handle (not that I don't get tempted), except that we have recently agreed to be celibate as well. We decided this together, although I think it was my suggestion. For me it was because I know that sex pushes away bad feelings about myself. I could get only so far healing the hurts of my male conditioning while still avidly practicing one of the key tenets of masculinity—sex whenever I desire it. For my wife there were many attractions. She knew she was helping me sort out my thoughts around the role of sex. But it also gave her the oppor-

tunity to be in charge of yet another thing women just aren't usually allowed to be in charge of. In charge at work, in charge in the relationship, in charge in the bedroom. The agreement was that for one year she would decide when we had sex; a complete reversal of the normal power dynamic. She eagerly pounced on the opportunity.

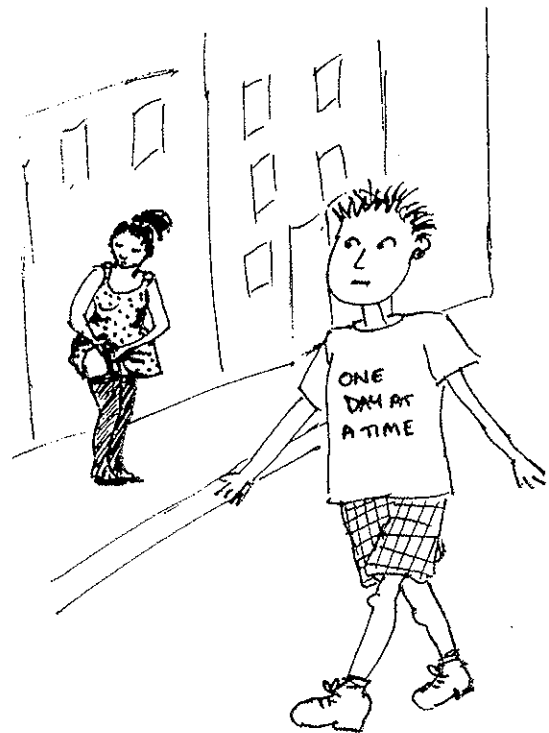
Giving up sex immediately brought home to me the many ways in which our sexual behaviour is conditioned. At different times I felt angry, at other times like I would burst with frustration: "How could we make such a stupid pact?" and "Don't you love me anymore?" were common thoughts. It was like just one little fuck and the world would be fine again.

Eventually, those feelings would pass and I could resume my life—until next time the feelings came back, weaker, but still there.

Initially, giving up sex made me crave it even more. Everything around reminded me of sex (more than usual, I mean). I'd beg. It was so embarrassing.

It's how I imagine giving up cigarettes would be. Non-smokers can't stand, or understand, an obsession for self-destruction. They don't want anything to do with you. You seek out other smokers and talk about how you could just never give it up. It's the only time you can feel good or in control. When you start to give up you notice all the people

*I'd beg,
but it's
so
embarrassing.*



Graphic: kate Rockpool

*The rules
of our
marriage*

*aren't concrete,
but our
commitment
is.*

who smoke, you get drawn to the cigarette advertisements, everyone talks about smoking. The pressure is immense. A distant part of you remembers the joy of filling your young lungs with clean oxygen after running in the playground. Fumes waft past from the table next to you. Should I just cut down instead?

But we had an agreement made in the sober light of day, informed by progressive ideas and ideals. My wife was thriving on the experiment and had begun making many other powerful decisions in her life. This was about more than just not having sex—it was a revolution at home. ("At least it's only for a year", I rallied in moments of pure lust.)

As it turns out, our lemon tree dropped all its leaves but two. The rose bush and the strawberries thrived nearby. But the tree still had two leaves. It hadn't given up. All I really wanted was our lemon tree to be alright. The snails dined on the strawberries.

Actually, I've spent most of my life celibate, but this is the first time I've chosen it. That's the difference: choice. I know that in general men have deep hurts and confusion about sex and if I'm going to get counselling on it then I may as well not be doing something that stuffs the feelings down inside me and makes me go numb. My wife supports me when I feel desperately lonely or bad about myself. She's there all the time. Her love never went away when we made the decision not to have sex. My feelings of being

unloved and alone are just that—feelings. If she's here, by my side, completely loving of me... that doesn't sound very alone does it?

We had sex a little while ago. It was my wife's suggestion. Even though I jumped at the suggestion, the sex was much less desperate than it ever had been, a difference I can only appreciate in retrospect. She had a better sense of being in charge, and I had a sense that this was not something cosmic or dreamy, but just a very demonstrative show of how she loves me all the time. I can see her love more clearly all the time. My thoughts and actions are not distracted by sexual feelings like they used to be and I can see many more important things to do than dream compulsively about sex. We've decided to be celibate again for a while because we've seen how good our relationship can be. It seems a small price to pay. I'm less desperate, angry and irritable; she's left her domestic destiny and is off to University.

People look at me in disbelief when I tell them of my celibate marriage. I think we are challenging one of the core components of sexism. "I can't imagine why anyone would want to give up sex", they say, quivering at the very idea. I think that if we weren't so wound up about sex it would not be such a big issue. If it happened that we all somehow escaped being immersed in male junk, who

do you think would really care if we missed out on a year of sex? You wouldn't really have lost anything that matters terribly much. You may gain the undying respect of your partner. Unlike the lemon tree, we don't need a sexual routine to cross-pollinate and bear fruit every year.

I feel lucky I've got a partner who can help me end what I see as an addiction. She never blames me or chides me for not growing fast enough. She is happy to wait a long time for her labours to bear fruit. She

holds out love and care which is independent of sex, not intrinsically wrapped in it. I think it fair to say she really likes sex, and her abstinence is an indicator of her love for me and her support of my healing. Bearing fruit for me, and it's still only a spark in my imagination, will be life without sexist thought or action.

I walked past that tree a few days ago. I had forgotten about its existence for quite a few months. It has a few of its leaves back and I think, with my wife to water it for a little while longer, it can take good care of itself. Pretty soon there'll be lemons all round. ●

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You show me yours

Why do we need a sexual identity? Is there a heterosexual community? How do we encourage safe sex if we don't validate straight men's sexuality? Writer and activist Gary Dowsett has some ideas. He is interviewed by Michael Flood.

WHEN I ARRIVE at Gary Dowsett's office for the interview, the first thing he shows me is *Gentlemen Quarterly* magazine. It's full of glossy men's fashion, and Dowsett points out the gay-inspired, sensual photos he has found.

Gary Dowsett is the author of a series of fascinating papers on masculinity and sexuality. His latest one rejoices in the title of "I'll show you mine, if you show me yours: Gay men, masculinity research, men's studies, and sex." He co-edited the book *Rethinking sex*, and he is very involved in the study of the social aspects of AIDS at Macquarie University in Sydney.

Once Dowsett and I have flicked through *Gentlemen Quarterly*, I start by asking him what developments in sexual relations he sees as positive.

"I'll come from the perspective of gay men for the moment, because this is where I think something quite interesting is going on. I think that a remarkable innovation in gay sexual culture is occurring.

"As one result of HIV/AIDS, gay men have been mammothly re-enlisted at a grassroots level in the examination of their sexuality, which perhaps, had gone into abeyance during the late 70s and early 80s. AIDS has forced attention back on sexual practices and sexual relations again.

"The second important event is that the possibility of HIV transmission has meant that sexual practices themselves have had to be examined. And what we've found in gay men's uptake of safe sex is a remarkable elasticity and flexibility in sexual practice.

"In classical "perversion" theory, homosexuality was the great perversion, and it was by definition a fixation, a fetish. Certain practices within homosexuality, like anal intercourse, were also regarded as fixations. In AIDS we suddenly find, in response to a public health threat,

Why must sex be meaningful?



"Gay men have an identity as gay because it is a place from which to cluster and face that which it is not. It is both a calling card and a rallying point," says Gary Dowsett.

that gay men transform these practices. They displace the importance of anal intercourse, elevating other practices such as oral sex. They confine it more to regular relationships, and/or they rapidly introduce condoms, where there was never any need for such protections in the past."

Dowsett describes what he terms a *dispersal of desire*: "In gay men's eroticism at the moment the whole body is much, much more involved in the erotic than the genitals: in gay men's fashion, in gay men's writing, in pornography.

"There's still of course a pre-occupation with genital sex. It would be stupid if there wasn't: what the hell would we be doing? There are penises and anuses and mouths present. But there is this dispersal of attention, and a multiplicity of desires are being enacted and ima-

gined.

"Now, I don't want to draw a revolutionary moment here: a lot of boring, ordinary sex goes on in the world, even among gay men. But I do see this quite remarkable renovation occurring."

The starting point for Gary Dowsett's involvement in gender and sexual politics was in his high school days in the mid-1960s. The discussions of feminism, civil liberties, black politics in the United States, student activism and peace issues "had a kind of resonance with me, as a young, homosexual and homosexually active man trying to find a resolution of my sexuality, which very soon became 'gay'.

"By the time I finished university in the early 70s, women's issues and issues of sexuality were firmly on my agenda. I was immediately involved in counter-sexist strategies in schools, in Queensland and South Australia. And by the mid-70s I was

*I actually think
there's quite a lot
of wonderful
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sex going on*

*out there
some-
where.*

heavily involved in gay liberation in Adelaide, and attended the first national homosexual conference where, right from the start, gender and sexuality issues were always bound up together, with lesbians making quite strong demands on gay men to rethink our situation and our position with reference to women's sexuality and women's rights.

"My whole adult life in fact has been constantly tied up with the debates about gender and sexuality that have preoccupied my whole generation. I've spend more than half my life now being involved in gender and sexuality politics. Equally, I come from a fairly petit bourgeois, upper working-class background, and I've been always interested in issues of class in some formulation or other. These things have been important for the work that I've always done, be it as an activist, a teacher, academic, researcher or whatever."

I bonk, therefore I am

I ASK Dowsett what other shifts he sees in sexual politics.

"Sexual identity politics is hotting up, and I'm a bit concerned about some of that. I see, for example, an insistency on *hetero*-identity politics emerging, in a way which is likely to fly in the face of the energy emerging in sexuality theory, which is about deconstructing identity."

There is a tension in gay/lesbian politics and theory between a desire to question and deconstruct sexual identity, and a desire to assert identity in the face of oppression. As Dowsett states, "The politics of 'gay' is that the world is still an unsafe place for gay people: people are still being bashed and killed. So there is still a need to create safe places and cultures for gay men and lesbians."

"I see 'heterosexual' being slapped together in some form at the moment, particularly in AIDS. People use this ridiculous phrase, the 'heterosexual community'. Firstly, what happens if you take a gender analysis of the power relations

between men and women? Come on, *community*, what is this thing? Secondly, where is the whole analysis of heterosexuality which was developed through that critique of the nuclear family? How does that align itself with some notion of a unified and contented heterosexuality?

"We don't even believe anymore in gay politics that there is a singular form of homosexuality: we've talked about 'homosexualities' for nearly a decade, but you don't hear anyone talking about 'heterosexualities'. A false object is being constructed and made concrete, one which is very dangerous for gay people.

"I'm not disputing that heterosexual behaviour is the practice of the majority. But then, a lot of people swim, but do we have a swimmers' community? This is part of the problem of a binary: if you set up homosexuality over here and you say it looks like this, then in some senses you're forced to define its Other in the same terms. Like chalk and cheese, homosexuality and heterosexuality ought not to be compared in the same terms, particularly when one is trying to contest the terms in which the other has configured it. Homosexuality has been saying for 20 years, 'We aren't what you think we are. We never have been. Why do you think we are the way we are? Why are you even making us a "we"?' And then I look over here and I see a new 'we' being made in heterosexuality and I think, 'Why do you want to go down that track? Why institutionalise, put boundaries around, in a process we've experienced as really screwed?'

"There's something about the project that seems to me to undermine the 20 years of sexual politics that's been about trying to renovate all sexuality, all gender relations. It runs the risk of shutting out heterosexuality's own confusions and potentials, and locking it into some kind of rigidity. I don't see why heterosexuals should be subjected to that, quite frankly. It's not going

to be in the interests of heterosexually active people, in the long term, to have heterosexuality constructed in that form."

So, I ask, is it more liberatory to hold onto the notion of sexual identities as fluid and elastic?

"I've got my suspicions about the term *identity*, you see. I increasingly think, 'What the fuck is an identity?'

Who's got one, what does it do, and why do you have one and how do you use it?' My hunch is that is it something which functions, or doesn't function: where the concept of an identity functions in some way for someone in order for them to deal with their social world, then it has a place. Gay men have an identity as gay because it is a place from which to cluster and face that which it is not, particularly that which is wanting to beat you with a stick. It is both a calling card and a rallying point. In the face of master discourses that argue that what you are or what you think you are (or you are doing) is sick or wrong, gay identity provides a vantage point for critique.

"I don't know why heterosexuals need an identity, except, as I always say, when a homosexual walks into the room. In order to have heterosexual relations between women and men, you don't have to say to yourself, 'Ah, there's a woman over there. I am heterosexual. I will go over there and ask her for a date.' Whereas gay men have to say, 'Is that another gay man? If so, then I can go over.'

"I'm not saying, 'Naughty heterosexuals, you shouldn't have an identity.' I am actually saying, 'What is going on here? Why do you need this?'"

Straight praise

WHERE does all this leave men's exploration of masculine identity?

"It's been pointed out before by feminists, 'Isn't it interesting that feminists ask "What is woman?"', (concludes on page 26) ▶

◆ (from page 25) and men interested in gender categories ask "What is masculine?" Men don't play with the category *man*. I don't know if that's right, but I do think that men's fascination with what constitutes the masculine, and our lack of attention to what constitutes male, is a really interesting thing.

"I have a couple of concerns about the 'men's project'. A lot of the energy for the interrogation of the masculine comes, partly, from a feminist politics which finds no room for anything positive to say about the masculine. I think this is a hellishly bad starting point for the renovation of personal practice.

"A clear example of the dilemma this produces for political practice is the issue of safe sex again. How do you construct an education campaign to encourage young heterosexually active men to use condoms, if you can't somehow say something positive about their sexuality and their sexual interests?

"Now, people keep saying male heterosexuality has not been problematised. Untrue. Untrue. Male heterosexuality has been problematised, but only as negative: rape, child abuse, insensitivity in sex, bad fucks, all that stuff. There've been very few real attempts to identify and praise that which is good about male heterosexuality, or about heterosexual men.

"We know that the successes of the safe sex campaigns in the gay community have depended on being pro-sex and pro-gay. The same is going to occur with safe sex stuff for heterosexually active young people. And I've yet to see any attempt to validate masculine heterosexual behaviour, interests, images, symbols, languages, forms, desires, fetishes and priorities. It might be quite easy to say from certain perspectives, 'Well, that's because it only ever happens badly for the women.' I don't think that's true. I actually think there's quite a lot of wonderful heterosexual sex going on out there somewhere. So somewhere in all that good heterosexual sex we have to find those components which are praiseworthy of men, and use them. Because if we just say, 'You're bad fucks and you're lousy guys,' then they're not going to start using condoms, right?

"A second example is around the issue

*If we just say,
"You're bad fucks and
you're lousy guys,"
then they're not
going to start
using
condoms,
right?*

of sexual technique and emotionalism. I think this idea that men are emotionally shut down is complete bullshit. First of all, which men are we talking about? All men, or just heterosexual men? Young men, old men? Would you call an Italian man screaming in the street after a car accident unemotional? Do you call men who lose their children unemotional? I think this is a nasty shorthand mistruth which has been swallowed uncritically for too long.

"The classic idea about sexual technique is that all men want to do in bed is keep it up, get to the end and have an orgasm. Well, yeah, that might be true for some, and I don't see why men shouldn't want to have an orgasm. Why not? They have as much right to have an orgasm as anybody else. The renovations of sexuality from the sixties onwards, which I think have done quite a service—in saying, come on, this is about two people and not just about you, and this is about women having pleasure, it's not about rolling over and falling asleep—have in fact led to a real concern on the part of men for pleasuring their partners.

Tabloid headline

"WHY must sex be meaningful? Why must sex be derivative of, or symbolic of, some other kind of relation between the two people involved? I don't see any reason why it should be. And I think to say something in response like 'Oh, that's very masculinist' doesn't actually answer the question that I'm seriously asking here.

If patriarchy is

about the inscription of oppressive relations between people, it may in fact be just as much a product of patriarchy that women want relationships to be meaningful and that sex must have emotional overtones, as it is for men to want the opposite. In other words, who says that emotionally involved sex is the essential sexual moment? Until we're prepared to take that kind of question on, I don't see why we should swallow this notion that it is men who have got it wrong. I don't think anyone has got it right, quite frankly. I think that everyone is struggling.

"We've relied too heavily on these kinds of headlines: "All men are unemotional," "All men are sexist pigs." It's the tabloid press version of sexual theory. All those easy slogans not only do not represent what is going on out there in sexual politics in people's lives, but of course they alienate people, who look at them and think, "This is nonsense." You can't construct a good politics out of that stuff." ●

The second part of this interview, in the Winter edition of XY, will explore the divide between straight and gay men in the men's movement.

QUEEROGRAHY

A touring exhibition curated by Michele Barker and Andy Davey, of works addressing the concerns of sexual representation within the homosexual community. Artists include: Andy Davey, C Moore Hardy, Rod McRae, Gerard O'Connor, Kaye Schumack, Lisa Zanderigo, and Lachlan Warner.

18 March - 16 April 1994.



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Diverse desires

Lust is a many splendoured thing.
Best not to box it in with rigid definitions, says Roger Garland.

STUBBORNLY, with determination, I resisted. I knew and experienced emotional and sexual desire from an early age as complex, broad-ranging and variable. It was and is still not a simple attraction to one sex or another. It was and is not fixed to one pattern of attraction, lust or pleasure.

I grew up in Sydney in the 1960s and 1970s. The dominant message about sexuality from Australian society at large, from friends, from media, from the small-minded and cramped existence of conformity, was to be straight. Heterosexuality: boy with girl, girl with boy, dates, sex and coupledom.

I was lucky: my parents had broader views. I came from a family where social dissent and difference were the norm. My parents not only spoke and thought about the great social issues of the period but also acted and lived these out. These roots gave me the confidence and the courage to be different from the carefully constructed heterosexual norm.



Graphic: Kate Rockpool

And the options? The alternative role models? Well you could be gay. Boy with boy, more boys, couples, triples—the limits were those of the imagination. Revel in lust. Take pleasure when and where it suited. Commit yourself to sexual and emotional relationships with those of your

own sex. Throw off the straight jackets of the heterosexual world and take control of your homosexual identity. Choose. Be gay. Identify with this “new” thrust of masculine culture.

The script is remarkably the same, the pressures strangely familiar. Be black or white. Choose. Fit neatly into one box

and stay in it. Fix yourself to gender and sex. Do not change.

But I like men and women: emotionally, physically, sexually, wholly. Not all the time, and not in the same way. Differently. Variably. Sometimes together, sometimes apart.

(concludes on page 28) ♦

◆ (from page 27) Sometimes more one than the other. I celebrate sexuality in multiple difference, variations, possibilities and moments.

This does not mean I'm a tart, and nor does it mean that I fear commitment. It means that I recognise and act on complex emotions and desires.

In essence I experience desire across gender and sexual practice. I eroticise and am sexually aroused sometimes by men and sometimes by women. I engage in and desire sexual activity with men and women. There are periods where one sex appeals more than another. There are precious moments of genderless desire with a partner or during quiet periods of masturbation when a kaleidoscope of colour, mood, shape and sensation washes over the sexual experience.

Emotionally I experience more longing and connectedness with men. The intensity of emotion is reflected in a sense of stronger bonding and identification than with women. Intellectually I am attracted to people regardless of gender. There are times of no desire when asexuality suits me fine.

My sexual desire is lust and longing. It is love and emotion. It is pleasure and fantasy. Fulfilment comes as a roving pleasure of the body engaging physicality with emotion and intellect.

This tree of desire is firmly anchored in earthy roots and can be climbed to lofty heights. My male body responds to the range of physical acts many

men are familiar with—the touch of skin, embrace of pressure, muscle tension, nice things done to dick and balls and perhaps a whiff of pain. Emotionally and intellectually a sense of connectedness with my partner during sex heightens the experience and can indeed be the experience. Who does what and how, their gender, the emotional presence, even a spiritual consciousness—how am I engaged? In the end I don't know how the connections of pleasure are made: they just are.

Liking men and woman sexually is a transgression of Australian social norms, both those of straight as well as gay and lesbian cultures. Like many bisexuals I have run into the usual absurdities of others bent on defining and boxing people into sexual identities.

When it comes to bisexuality the views of others tend to fit into one of three models of sexuality. For want of better names I'll call each in turn the *Conflict*, *Flexible* and *Who gives a stuff* models.

Adherents to the *Conflict* model wet themselves silly over the supposed inability of bisexuals to adopt a single, fixed sexual orientation. Here, the proponents demand, we are either gay or straight. If you think you are a bit of both then you are in conflict with your real self and won't admit to being really gay anyway.

Flexible modellers broadly acknowledge sexuality as a many-faceted thing that is not fixed in time, gender or expe-

rience. Such sensitive, broad-minded souls are quite content to live and let live and happily see sexuality as a spectrum of experience and attraction.

Who gives a stuffers basically bonk anything that moves. Practitioners think any discussion on sexuality is a waste of time and gets in the way of living.

In my apolitical moments I drift into *Who gives a stuff* mode. Just let me be! I can pretend labels don't count. I can fantasise that the world is a free and easy place in which to do your own thing. But I know the world isn't like that. There is intolerance. There is bi- and homophobia. There are bigots and bashers and bastards. Those who transgress

are persecuted, and bisexuality is hidden in a twilight world. Bisexuality is not freely discussed or allowed to freely exist in the mainstream world.

But frigid attitudes towards sexual diversity have thawed. Popular culture has flirted with diverse desires in recent years in film, music and theatre. Inspired by this, but wary too that gains can become losses, I can continue to dream, to hope and to fight. In my ideal future world I would want us all, whatever label we use—bisexual, lesbian, gay, straight or none at all, not to trap ourselves within definitions and build walls of intolerance.

Let us all strive to move identity beyond sexuality. ●

There are precious moments of genderless desire.

Suggested further reading on sex

Henry Abelove, Michele Barale and David Halperin (eds) *The lesbian and gay studies reader*.

Franklin Abbott *Men and intimacy: personal accounts exploring the dilemmas of modern male sexuality*.

Shere Hite *The Hite report on male sexuality*.

G. Horowitz "Male sexuality: toward a theory of liberation", in Kaufman, Michael (ed) *Beyond patriarchy: essays by men on pleasure, power and change*.

Andy Metcalf and Martin Humphries (ed) *The sexuality of men*.

Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson (eds) *Desire: the politics of sexuality*.

John Stoltenberg *Refusing to be a man: essays on sex and justice*.

Carole Vance (ed) *Pleasure and danger: exploring female sexuality*, (especially the pieces by Carole Vance and Gayle Rubin).

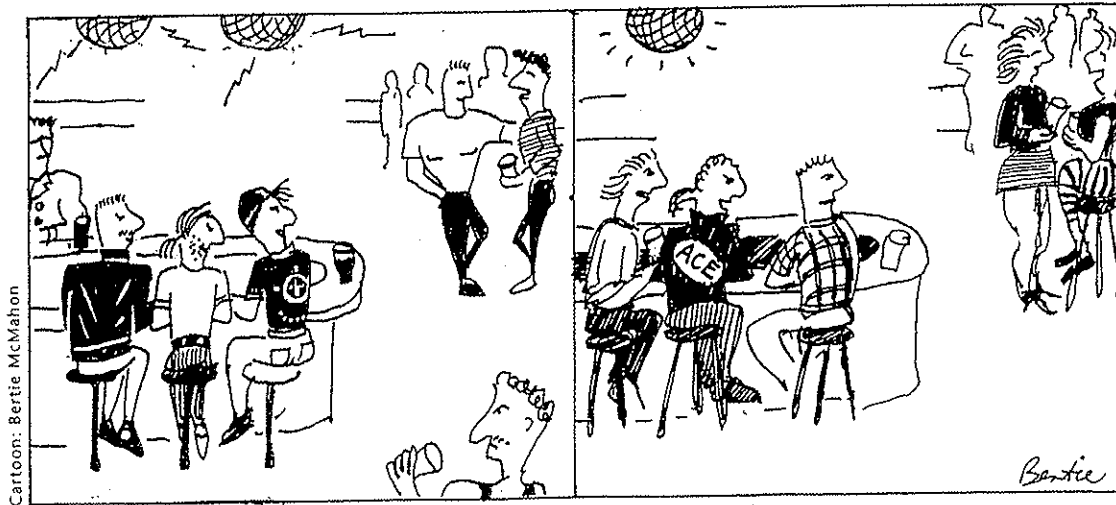
Jeffrey Weeks *Sexuality and its discontents: meanings, myths and modern sexualities*.

Jeffrey Weeks *Sexuality*.

B. Zilbergeld *The new male sexuality*.

Gay patriarchy

Gay men didn't escape male conditioning writes John David. It's high time we began to go further than just dreaming of a male-positive gay life.



A Gay Bar

A Straight Bar

The men in the "Gay Bar" may be treated as "equals" but there is no view of intimacy and genuine respect for that person.

THE MALE touch football association shifted their grand final celebrations from their usual watering hole. They moved because the management put up a poster for an upcoming community celebration. Their grievance simply that the poster listed women before men, a crime in the circles these men move in. But this time it didn't happen in a working class tiled pub, nor in a yuppie bar. It happened in the Midnight Shift, a Sydney gay bar.

The men based their protest on the annual Sleaze Ball being advertised as a *lesbian and gay* costume ball. Until now, almost every recent homosexual event had been promoted as gay and lesbian, in-that-order. It had been a serious issue even a few years back to get the word 'lesbian' included in the title of Sydney's Mardi Gras, even though dykes had been performing, marching, supporting and organising equally throughout the event's history.

While some perceived the recent Sleaze poster as a point of lesbian and gay solidarity, others were polarised into feminist and misogynist stances.

The furore had finally allowed a deep infection to fester to the surface, at last visible and disgusting. Many of us who had looked to the gay community for support, nourishment and understanding were completely confused about how gay men, ourselves victims of horrible oppression through homophobia, could be so sexist.

At last the message that dykes had long been telling us was plain to see: patriarchy is insidious and in side us. Our gay culture is immersed in it. The bar scene is overwhelmingly male; women are not wanted; sexual desire is based on objectification; and men are competed for in a predatory way. The so called "Gay and Lesbian" organisations are in need of structured affirmative action in order to counter male control. The gay and lesbian community's newspapers and magazines are 80% male concerned, and the ads which use nauseating sexual objectification are from male businesses. The beats, like the bars, are about male ownership and competition based around sexual objectification.

How could gay men, who understand what oppression feels like, treat other men

dismissively and be so controlling in terms of organisations and meeting places?

Men first

THE ANSWER is that gay men are *men* with the same conditioned patriarchal upbringing in the same coercive structures. As boys, the apprentice men, we are taught:

- to expect to be the rulers of the world;
- to view all people as objects and services (sex, work, leisure, nurturing);
- that men are competitors and there is no sympathy or celebration if you lose;
- that men cannot talk about their feelings or be intimate without sex;
- that there are immovable hierarchies of power and influence based on looks, money, class, education, employment.

Very young homosexual boys get the same conditioning as all boys. We avoid, just as straight boys do, the name calling and bashing "in case we're gay". Our general society, family, peers and educators see us only as boys, and to avoid the punishment of not being "normal" (read, patriarchal) we have to react as boys. Our dismissiveness and

disdain of women and girls becomes installed successfully.

But for us it is a matter of life and death to keep our homosexuality hidden. At puberty our objectification gets turned on to any sexual image and is not specific to images of girls. This is because patriarchal culture does not objectify men's bodies in the same way women's bodies are objectified. Yet the only model of closeness and intimacy we have is one of lust laced with patriarchy. It prevents us from simply loving. In such a world there can be no place for, nor any toleration of, women.

As gay teenagers, our hidden sexuality has to follow this pattern as well: on an open, social level we compete with men, take opportunities from each other, and fight each other. On a sexual level we have to conceal our desires. We have already been taught it is good to desire and objectify—it's just that we objectify men. For teenage boys coming into a sexual maturity where objectification is fact our only opportunities tend to be non-disclosed perving at teen idols, football stars, the man in the Sheridan sheets ad, and going

to the beats and the bars. Although there is a strong feeling of not totally belonging, we fulfil the conditioning enough to escape punishment and our sexual desire for men continues. A confusing time for most of us.

Now older, as homosexual men, we have a personal history of being systematically targeted and oppressed. We have struggled for acceptance among our own people and many of us have given up hope of being accepted in the wider world. In order to survive we have had to react cleverly and ingeniously. In most cases the survival tactic has been less conscious—we just settled for the place that felt least uncomfortable.

Acting oppressor

SOME GAY MEN take on the form of the oppressor: we act "straight", build up our muscles, act tough and intimidate. Others exaggerate their "effeminate" behaviour and play for the gay sub-culture a role similar to that of women in wider society, but still from the safety of being male. You will find the highly organised, workaholic, "out" social organisers organising the gay support groups. Still others embrace a "victim-status": locked in a pattern of "how bad the world has been to us". None of these identities allow gay men the space to look at our own contribution, unintentional as it may be, to patriarchal values.

Most of these roles are unsustainable in themselves. Play them out in the wider homophobic world and you are likely to get killed, or at least feel that the death blow is just around the next street corner. However, by forming sub-groups and seeking out environments which allow our disclosure, we put ourselves in positive situations where our behaviour can be affirmed and acknowledged. This is a great thing and has much to offer us. For many gay men this has meant the move to suburbs with high gay populations where we can feel safe, be out, belong and be sure to find other men in our "scene". The down side is that our

behaviour is rarely questioned. It is like the relief of acceptance-at-last overrides any intention of fully healing from our brutal male conditioning. We know what oppression looks like. Who would want to go back?

So, we end up with a very scared sub-community, comprised mostly of men. Scared that it might all collapse. Feeling deep inside how unsustainable it is. Pockets, sometimes suburbs, of people who share a similar oppression. We cling to the wider context of male conditioning. The (gay male) bars, the (gay male) media, (gay male) workplaces, (gay male) services and (gay male) recreational areas feed the system and become points of reference for the web that is patriarchy.

Gay liberation itself is immersed in traditional masculinity. Community events such as Mardi Gras with its "good looking boys" on the floats, and muscle bound blokes on the front pages of gay magazines (they know what sells!) signify a movement that is male and about wanting power—the patriarchal way.

Living dreams

FOR GAY MEN, it has been a great relief for us to find somewhere where we don't have to fear homophobia and its violent effects. No one should ever blame us for wanting that. But recent lessons have shown us that we are not even completely secure in our own suburbs. It is difficult for me to criticise the glimpse of heaven on earth for which I have been longing. Yet to move closer to living our violence-free dream, we must look inwards and dismantle the distasteful, competitive and hierarchical parts of our collective masculinities, and choose to embrace women as a necessary and desirable part of our culture.

Our workplaces must be challenged so there is equal

representation, and access to services and recreation for women must be ensured. Other serious issues such as rape and domestic violence, as well as the problems of alcoholism and drug abuse need to be treated openly within our community. Our people are damaged and dying.

In our gay relationships we have to reach for intimacy, not sexual objectification. Our friendships need to be given a special status—not all our relationships need be sexual to be fulfilling or important.

As individuals it is desperately hard keeping up appearances. It is hard to feel supported when you have had to resort to drugs or escapist fantasy to numb out the pain. It is desperately hurtful

to see our brothers acting

as competitors, objects,

conquests, conquerors,

predators, unfeeling,

hopeful emancipators,

victims, or

cynical enjoyers of

the system. The

coercion, the

rewards and punishments

which have forced us into

those roles should be

decried. Our criticism

of patriarchy must be

heard above our fearful and

tired voices crying for survival

in a world in which we are

actually quite safe. We will have

to fight for this. Our unwitting

compliance in male dominance

must be questioned and worked

through on an individual

basis.

Poofter power

MANY POOFTERS have criticised, rebelled, sought other alternatives or dismissed the "scene". The nature of the homophobic patriarchy has made many men critical of oppressive systems generally. Many men have felt that there is something fundamentally wrong, and have begun to vote with their feet. Many who have had their sexism challenged by dykes and other poofers have responded positively (and mostly with relief). At the same time, many poofers are rejected as they avoid and dismiss the

"scene". They are lost to a community which should treasure them.

Men critical of traditional masculinity and the equally restrictive gay "scene" have formed or joined movements and organisations that challenge directly. Groups such as SMART, Slim Men Are Real Treats, and FUCQH (pronounced "fuck you"), Fat Ugly Cheap Queens from Hell, challenge objectification of gay men with manifestos that "inject slim, slender and seductive into the gay lexicon", as an example. The Queer Movement, a coalitionist response to gay male oppression, directly criticises the under-representation of dykes in community organisations and events. We should also count our many good allies among straight men and women. There is support.

Most of all

I AM looking forward to a time when our liberation is focused on creating for ourselves the opportunities to express the effects of our conditioning, to work it through and support others. Our fear needs to be expelled, released emotionally, at last gone forever. Working in this way amongst ourselves we can evict our particular gay oppression: the cumulative effect of a sexuality denied, the violence, the discrimination. Working with straight men will remind us how every boy is threatened with anti-gay violence and taunting. Each of us, gay and straight, has feared the gay witch hunts of the schoolyard.

I want a world where homosexual men can come out free from the patriarchy in both the homosexual and heterosexual worlds. Let's face up to our sexism, forget about blaming each other, and get on with enhancing our lives. All of a sudden there would be no difference between a het world and a homo world. Yeah!! ●

John David is a beautiful gay man from Wollongong who has refused to give up on his dreams. He sends his love to Nick, John, Bertie, Cameron and Michael for help with this article.