

The Books were a Front for the Porn

Ronald G. Lee

[COMMENT: This is an extraordinary article of rare honesty and courage from a man who has (or is struggling to) come out of homosexuality. Pray for this man. His witness is the kind of thing needed to begin the turning of the tide -- by men and women who are willing to force to the table the real issue -- homosexual behavior. E. Fox]

NEW OXFORD REVIEW -- [FEATURE ARTICLE](#)

THE BOOKS WERE A FRONT FOR THE PORN The Truth About the Homosexual Rights Movement

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By Ronald G. Lee

Ed. Note: This article contains an honest description of the homosexual "lifestyle." If you don't want to read such accounts, DO NOT READ THIS ARTICLE. If you do read it, don't send us a letter of complaint. You've been forewarned.

There was a "gay" bookstore called Lobo's in Austin, Texas, when I was living there as a grad student. The layout was interesting. Looking inside from the street all you saw were books. It looked like any other bookstore. There was a section devoted to classic "gay" fiction by writers such as Oscar Wilde, Gertrude Stein, and W. H. Auden. There were biographies of prominent "gay" icons, some of whom, like Walt Whitman, would probably have accepted the homosexual label, but many of whom, like Whitman's idol, President Lincoln, had been commandeered for the cause on the basis of evidence no stronger than a bad marriage or an intense same-sex friendship. There were impassioned modern "gay" memoirs, and historical accounts of the origins and development of the "gay rights" movement. It all looked so innocuous and disarmingly bourgeois. But if you went inside to browse, before long you noticed another section, behind the books, a section not visible from the street. The pornography section. Hundreds and hundreds of pornographic videos, all involving men, but otherwise catering to every conceivable sexual taste or fantasy. And you would notice something else too. There were no customers in the front. All the customers were in the back, rooting through the videos. As far as I know, I am the only person who ever actually purchased a book at Lobo's. The books were, in every sense of the word, a front for the porn.

So why waste thousands of dollars on books that no one was going to buy? It was clear from the large "on sale" section that only a pitifully small number of books were ever purchased at their original price. The owners of Lobo's were apparently wasting a lot of money on gay novels and works of gay history, when all the real money was in pornography. But the money spent on books wasn't wasted. It was used to purchase a commodity that is more precious than gold to the gay rights establishment. Respectability. Respectability and the appearance of normalcy. Without that investment, we would not now be engaged in a serious debate about the legalization of same-sex "marriage." By the time I lived in Austin, I had been thinking of myself as a gay man for almost 20 years. Based on the experience acquired during those years, I recognized in Lobo's a metaphor for the strategy used to sell gay rights to the American people, and for the sordid reality that strategy concealed.

This is how I "deconstruct" Lobo's. There are two kinds of people who are going to be looking in through the window: those who are tempted to engage in homosexual acts, and those who aren't. To those who aren't, the shelves of books transmit the message that gay people are no different from anyone else, that homosexuality is not wrong, just different. Since most of them will never know more

about homosexuality than what they learned looking in the window, that impression is of the greatest political and cultural importance, because on that basis they will react without alarm, or even with active support, to the progress of gay rights. There are millions of well-meaning Americans who support gay rights because they believe that what they see looking in at Lobo's is what is really there. It does not occur to them that they are seeing a carefully stage-managed effort to manipulate them, to distract them from a truth they would never condone.

For those who are tempted to engage in homosexual acts, the view from the street is also consoling. It makes life as a homosexual look safe and unthreatening. Normal, in other words. Sooner or later, many of these people will stop looking in through the window and go inside. Unlike the first sort of window-shopper, they won't be distracted by the books for long. They will soon discover the existence of the porn section. And no matter how distasteful they might find the idea at first (if indeed they do find it distasteful), they will also notice that the porn section is where all the customers are. And they will feel sort of silly standing alone among the books. Eventually, they will find their way back to the porn, with the rest of the customers. And like them, they will start rooting through the videos. And, gentle reader, that is where most of them will spend the rest of their lives, until God or AIDS, drugs or alcohol, suicide or a lonely old age, intervenes.

Ralph McInerney once offered a brilliant definition of the gay rights movement: self-deception as a group effort. Nevertheless, deception of the general public is also vital to the success of the cause. And nowhere are the forms of deception more egregious, or more startlingly successful, than in the campaign to persuade Christians that, to paraphrase the title of a recent book, *Jesus Was Queer*, and churches should open their doors to same-sex lovers. The gay Christian movement relies on a stratagem that is as daring as it is dishonest. I know, because I was taken in by it for a long time. Like the owners of Lobo's, success depends on camouflaging the truth, which is hidden in plain view the whole time. It is no wonder *The Wizard of Oz* is so resonant among homosexuals. "Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain" could be the motto and the mantra of the whole movement.

No single book was as influential in my own coming out as the now ex-Father John McNeill's 1976 "classic" *The Church and the Homosexual*. That book is to Dignity what "The Communist Manifesto" was to Soviet Russia. Most of the book is devoted to offering alternative interpretations of the biblical passages condemning homosexuality, and to putting the anti-homosexual writings of the Church Fathers and scholastics into historical context in a way that renders them irrelevant and even offensive to modern readers. The first impression of a naïve and sexually conflicted young reader such as myself was that McNeill had offered a plausible alternative to traditional teaching. It made me feel justified in deciding to come out of the closet. Were his arguments persuasive? Frankly, I didn't care, and I don't believe most of McNeill's readers do either. They were couched in the language of scholarship, and they sounded plausible. That was all that mattered.

McNeill, like most of the members of his camp, treated the debate over homosexuality as first and foremost a debate about the proper interpretation of texts, texts such as the Sodom story in the Bible and the relevant articles of the *Summa*. The implication was that once those were reinterpreted, or rendered irrelevant, the gay rights apologists had prevailed, and the door was open for practicing homosexuals to hold their heads up high in church. And there is a certain sense in which that has proved to be true. To the extent that the debate has focused on interpreting texts, the gay apologists have won for themselves a remarkable degree of legitimacy. But that is because, as anyone familiar with the history of Protestantism should be aware, the interpretation of texts is an interminable process. The efforts of people such as McNeill don't need to be persuasive. They only need to be useful.

This is how it works. McNeill reinterprets the story of Sodom, claiming that it does not condemn homosexuality, but gang rape. Orthodox theologians respond, in a commendable but naïve attempt to rebut him, naïve because these theologians presume that McNeill believes his own arguments, and is writing as a scholar, not as a propagandist. McNeill ignores the arguments of his critics, dismissing their objections as based on homophobia, and repeats his original position. The orthodox respond again as if they were really dealing with a theologian. And back and forth for a few more rounds. Until finally McNeill or someone like him stands up and announces, "You know, this is getting us nowhere. We have our exegesis and our theology. You have yours. Why can't we just agree to disagree?" That sounds so reasonable, so ecumenical. And if the orthodox buy into it, they have lost, because the gay rights apologists have earned a place at the table from which they will never be dislodged. Getting at the truth

about Sodom and Gomorrah, or correctly parsing the sexual ethics of St. Thomas, was never really the issue. Winning admittance to Holy Communion was the issue.

Even as a naïve young man, one aspect of *The Church and the Homosexual* struck me as odd. Given that McNeill was suggesting a radical revision of the traditional Catholic sexual ethic, there was almost nothing in it about sexual ethics. The Catholic sexual ethic is quite specific about the ends of human sexuality, and about the forms of behavior that are consistent with those ends. McNeill's criticism of the traditional ethic occupied most of his book, but he left the reader with only the vaguest idea about what he proposed to put in its place. For that matter, there was almost nothing in it about the real lives of real homosexuals. Homosexuality was treated throughout the book as a kind of intellectual abstraction. But I was desperate to get some idea of what was waiting for me on the other side of the closet door. And with no one but Fr. McNeill for a guide, I was reduced to reading between the lines. There was a single passage that I interpreted as a clue. It was almost an aside, really. At one point, he commented that monogamous same-sex unions were consistent with the Church's teaching, or at least consistent with the spirit of the renewed and renovated post-Vatican II Church. With nothing else to go on, I interpreted this in a prescriptive sense. I interpreted McNeill to be arguing that homogenital acts were *only* moral when performed in the context of a monogamous relationship. And furthermore, I leapt to what seemed like the reasonable conclusion that the author was aware of such relationships, and that I had a reasonable expectation of finding such a relationship myself. Otherwise, for whose benefit was he writing? I was not so naïve (although I was pretty naïve) as not to be aware of the existence of promiscuous homosexual men. But McNeill's aside, which, I repeat, contained virtually his only stab at offering a gay sexual ethic, led me to believe that in addition to the promiscuous, there existed a contingent of gay men who were committed to living in monogamy. Otherwise, Fr. McNeill was implicitly defending promiscuity. And the very idea of a priest defending promiscuity was inconceivable to me. (Yes, that naïve.)

Several years ago, McNeill published an autobiography. In it, he makes no bones about his experiences as a sexually active Catholic priest -- a promiscuous, sexually active, homosexual Catholic priest. He writes in an almost nostalgic fashion about his time spent hunting for sex in bars. Although he eventually did find a stable partner (while he was still a priest), he never apologizes for his years of promiscuity, or even so much as alludes to the disparity between his own life and the passage in *The Church and the Homosexual* that meant so much to me. It is possible that he doesn't even remember suggesting that homosexuals were supposed to remain celibate until finding monogamous relationships. It is obvious that he never meant that passage to be taken seriously, except by those who would never do more than look in the window -- in others words, gullible, well-meaning, non-homosexual Catholics, preferably those in positions of authority. Or, equally naïve and gullible young men such as me who were looking for a reason to act on their sexual desires, preferably one that did not do too much violence to their consciences, at least not at first. The latter, the writer presumed, would eventually find their way back to the porn section, where their complicity in the scam would render them indistinguishable from the rest of the regular customers. Clearly, there was a reason that in the earlier book he wrote so little about the real lives of real homosexuals, such as himself.

I don't see how the contradiction between *The Church and the Homosexual* and the autobiography could be accidental. Why would McNeill pretend to believe that homosexuals should restrict themselves to sex within the context of monogamous relationships when his life demonstrates that he did not? I can think of only one reason. Because he knew that if he told the truth, his cause would be dead in the water. Although to this day McNeill, like all gay Christian propagandists, avoids the subject of sexual ethics as if it were some sort of plague, his life makes his real beliefs clear. He believes in unrestricted sexual freedom. He believes that men and women should have the right to couple, with whomever they want, whenever they want, however they want, and as often as they want. He would probably add some sort of meaningless bromide about no one getting hurt and both parties being treated with respect, but anyone familiar with the snake pit of modern sexual culture (both heterosexual and homosexual) will know how seriously to take that. And he knew perfectly well that if he were honest about his real aims, there would be no Dignity, there would be no gay Christian movement, at least not one with a snowball's chance in Hell of succeeding. That would be like getting rid of the books and letting the casual window-shoppers see the porn. And we can't have that now, can we? In other words, the ex-Fr. McNeill is a bad priest and a con man. And given the often lethal consequences of engaging in homosexual sex, a con man with blood on his hands.

Let me be clear. I believe that McNeill's real beliefs, as deduced from his actual behavior, and distinguished from the arguments he puts forward for the benefit of the naive and gullible, represent the real aims and objectives of the homosexual rights movement. They are the porn that the books are meant to conceal. In other words, if you support what is now described in euphemistic terms as "the blessing of same-sex unions," in practice you are supporting the abolition of the entire Christian sexual ethic, and its substitution with an unrestricted, laissez faire, free sexual market. The reason that the homosexual rights movement has managed to pick up such a large contingent of heterosexual fellow-travelers is simple: Because once that taboo is abrogated, no taboos are left. I once heard a heterosexual Episcopalian put it this way: If I don't want the church poking its nose into my bedroom, how can I condone it when it limits the sexual freedom of homosexuals? That might sound outrageous, but if you still believe that the debate is over the religious status of monogamous same-sex relationships, please be prepared to point out *one* church somewhere in the U.S. that has opened its doors to active homosexuals without also opening them to every other form of sexual coupling imaginable. I am too old to be taken in by "Father" McNeill and his abstractions anymore. Show me.

A few years ago, I subscribed to the Dignity Yahoo group on the Internet. There were at that time several hundred subscribers. At one point, a confused and troubled young man posted a question to the group: Did any of the subscribers attach any value to monogamy? I immediately wrote back that I did. A couple of days later the young man wrote back to me. He had received dozens of responses, some of them quite hostile and demeaning, and all but one -- mine -- telling him to go out and get laid because that was what being gay was all about. (This was a gay "Catholic" group.) He did not know what to make of it because none of the propaganda to which he was exposed before coming out prepared him for what was really on the other side of the closet door. I had no idea what to tell him, because at the time I was still caught up in the lie myself. Now, the solution seems obvious. What I should have written back to him was, "You have been lied to. Ask God for forgiveness and get back to Kansas as fast as you can. Auntie Em is waiting."

In light of all the legitimate concern about Internet pornography, it might seem ironic to assert that the Internet helped rescue me from homosexuality. For twenty years, I thought there was something wrong with me. Dozens of well-meaning people assured me that there was a whole, different world of homosexual men out there, a world that for some reason I could never find, a world of God-fearing, straight-acting, monogamy-believing, and fidelity-practicing homosexuals. They assured me that they themselves knew personally (for a *fact* and for *real*) that such men existed. They themselves knew such men (or at least had heard tell of them from those who did). And I believed it, although as the years passed it got harder and harder. Then I got a personal computer and a subscription to AOL. "O.K.," I reasoned, "morally conservative homosexuals are obviously shy and skittish and fearful of sudden movements. They don't like bars and bathhouses. Neither do I. They don't attend Dignity meetings or Metropolitan Community Church services because the gay 'churches' are really bathhouses masquerading as houses of worship. But there is no reason a morally conservative homosexual cannot subscribe to AOL and submit a profile. If I can do it, anyone can do it." So I did it. I wrote a profile describing myself as a conservative Catholic (*comme ci, comme ça*) who loved classical music and theater and good books and scintillating conversation about all of the above. I said I wanted very much to meet other like-minded homosexuals for the purposes of friendship and romance. I tried to be as clear as I knew how. I was not interested in one night stands. And within minutes of placing the profile, I got my first response. It consisted of three words: "How many inches?" My experience of looking for love on AOL went downhill rapidly from there.

When I first came out in the 1980s, it was common for gay rights apologists to blame the promiscuity among gay men on "internalized homophobia." Gay men, like African Americans, internalized and acted out the lies about themselves learned from mainstream American culture. Furthermore, homosexuals were forced to look for love in dimly lit bars, bathhouses, and public parks for fear of harassment at the hands of a homophobic mainstream. The solution to this problem, we were told, was permitting homosexuals to come out into the open, without fear of retribution. A variant of this argument is still put forward by activists such as Andrew Sullivan, in order to legitimate same-sex marriage. And it seemed reasonable enough twenty years ago. But thirty-five years have passed since the infamous Stonewall riots of 1969 in New York, the Lexington and Concord of the gay liberation movement. During that time, homosexuals have carved out for themselves public spaces in every major American city, and many of the minor ones as well. They have had the chance to create whatever they wanted in those spaces, and what have they created? New spaces for locating sexual partners.

There is another reason, apart from the propaganda value, that bookstores like Lobo's peddle porn as well as poetry. Because without the porn, they would soon go out of business. And, in fact, most gay bookstores have gone out of business, despite the porn. Following an initial burst of enthusiasm in the 1970s and 80s, gay publishing went into steep decline, and shows no signs of coming out of it. Once the novelty wore off, gay men soon bored of reading about men having sex with one another, preferring to devote their time and disposable income to pursuing the real thing. Gay and lesbian community centers struggle to keep their doors open. Gay churches survive as places where worshippers can go to sleep it off and cleanse their soiled consciences after a Saturday night spent cruising for sex at the bars. And there is no danger of ever hearing a word from the pulpit suggesting that bar-hopping is inconsistent with believing in the Bible. When I lived in the United Kingdom, I was struck by the extent to which gay culture in London replicated gay culture in the U.S. The same was true in Paris, Amsterdam, and Berlin. Homosexuality is one of America's most successful cultural exports. And the focus on gay social spaces in Europe is identical to their focus in America: sex. Cyberspace is now the latest conquest of that amazing modern Magellan: the male homosexual in pursuit of new sexual conquests.

But at this point, how is it possible to blame the promiscuity among homosexual men on homophobia, internalized or otherwise? On the basis of evidence no stronger than wishful thinking, Andrew Sullivan wants us to believe that legalizing same-sex "marriage" will domesticate gay men, that all that energy now devoted to building bars and bathhouses will be dedicated to erecting picket fences and two-car garages. What Sullivan refuses to face is that male homosexuals are not promiscuous because of "internalized homophobia," or laws banning same-sex "marriage." Homosexuals are promiscuous because when given the choice, homosexuals overwhelmingly choose to be promiscuous. And wrecking the fundamental social building block of our civilization, the family, is not going to change that.

I once read a disarmingly honest essay in which Sullivan as much as admitted his real reason for promoting the cause of same-sex "marriage." He faced up to the sometimes sordid nature of his sexual life, which is more than most gay activists are prepared to do, and he regretted it. He wished he had led a different sort of life, and he apparently believes that if marriage were a legal option, he might have been able to do so. I have a lot more respect for Andrew Sullivan than I do for most gay activists. I believe that he would seriously like to reconcile his sexual desires with the demands of his conscience. But with all due respect, are the rest of us prepared to sacrifice the institution of the family in the unsubstantiated hope that doing so will make it easier for Sullivan to keep his trousers zipped?

But isn't it theoretically possible that homosexuals could restrict themselves to something resembling the traditional Catholic sexual ethic, except for the part about procreation -- in other words, monogamous lifelong relationships? Of course it is theoretically possible. It was also theoretically possible in 1968 that the use of contraceptives could be restricted to married couples, that the revolting downward slide into moral anarchy we have lived through could have been avoided. It is theoretically possible, but it is practically impossible. It is impossible because the whole notion of stable sexual orientation on which the gay rights movement is founded has no basis in fact.

René Girard, the French literary critic and sociologist of religion, argues that all human civilization is founded on desire. All civilizations have surrounded the objects of desire (including sexual desire) with an elaborate and unbreachable wall of taboos and restrictions. Until now. What we are seeing in the modern West is not the long overdue legitimization of hitherto despised but honorable forms of human love. What we are witnessing is the reduction of civilization to its lowest common denominator: unbridled and unrestricted desire. To assert that we have opened a Pandora's Box would be a stunning understatement. Fasten your seatbelts, ladies and gentlemen, it looks to be a bumpy millennium.

When I was growing up, we were all presumed to be heterosexual. Then homosexuality was introduced as an alternative. That did not at first seem like a major revision because, apart from procreation, homosexuality, at least in theory, left the rest of the traditional sexual ethic in tact. Two people of the same gender could (in theory) fall in love and live a life of monogamous commitment. Then bisexuality was introduced, and the real implications of the sexual revolution became clear. Monogamy was out the window. Moral norms were out the window. Do-it-yourself sexuality became the norm. Anyone who wants to know what that looks like can do no better than go online. The Internet offers front row seats to the circus of a disintegrating civilization.

Take Yahoo, for example. Yahoo makes it possible for people sharing a common interest to create groups for the purpose of making contacts and sharing information. If that conjures up images of genealogists and stamp collectors, think again. There are now thousands of Yahoo groups catering to every kind of sexual perversion imaginable. Many of them would defy the imagination of the Marquis de Sade himself. People who until a few years ago could do nothing but fantasize now entertain serious hopes of acting out their fantasies. I met a man online whose fondest wish was to be spanked with a leather wallet. It had to be leather. And it had to be a wallet. And he needed to be spanked with it. Old-fashioned genital friction was optional. This man wanted a Gucci label tattooed across his backside. He could imagine no loftier pinnacle of passion. And he insisted that this desire was as fundamental to his sexual nature as the desire to go to bed with a man was for me. Furthermore, he had formed a Yahoo group that had more than three hundred members, all of whom shared the same passion. There is no object in the universe, no human or animal body part, that cannot be eroticized. So, is the desire to be spanked with a leather wallet a "sexual orientation"? If not, how is it different?

There was a time when I would have snorted, "Of course it is different. You can't share a life with a leather wallet. You can't love a leather wallet. What you are talking about is a fetish, not a sexual orientation. The two are completely different." But the truth is that all the gay men I encountered had a fetish for naked male skin, with all the objectification and depersonalization that implies, that I now consider the distinction sophistical. Leather is skin too, after all. The only real difference between the fellow on the Internet and the average gay man is that he preferred his skin Italian, bovine, and tanned.

Over the years, I have attended various gay and gay-friendly church services. All of them shared one characteristic in common: a tacit agreement never to say a word from the pulpit -- or from any other location for that matter -- suggesting that there ought to be any restrictions on human sexual behavior. If anyone reading this is familiar with Dignity or Integrity or the Metropolitan Community churches or, for that matter, mainline Protestantism and most of post-Vatican II Catholicism, let me ask you one question: When was the last time you heard a sermon on sexual ethics? Have you ever heard a sermon on sexual ethics? I take it for granted that the answer is negative. Do our priests and pastors honestly believe that Christians in America are not in need of sermons on sexual ethics?

Here is the terrifying fact: If we as a nation and as a Church allow ourselves to be taken in by the scam of monogamous same-sex couples, we will be welcoming to our Communion rails (presuming that we still have Communion rails) not just the statistically insignificant number of same-sex couples who have lived together for more than a few years (most of whom purchased stability by jettisoning monogamy); we will also be legitimizing every kind of sexual taste, from old-fashioned masturbation and adultery to the most outlandish forms of sexual fetishism. We will, in other words, be giving our blessing to the suicide of Western civilization.

But what about all those images of loving same-sex couples dying to get hitched with which the media are awash these days? That used to confuse me too. It seems that *The New York Times* has no trouble finding successful same-sex partners to photograph and interview. But despite my best efforts, I was never able to meet the sorts of couples who show up regularly on *Oprah*. The media are biased and have no interest in telling the truth about homosexuality.

I met Wyatt (not his real name) online. For five years he was in a disastrous same-sex relationship. His partner was unfaithful, and an alcoholic with drug problems. The relationship was something that would give Strindberg nightmares. When Vermont legalized same-sex "marriage," Wyatt saw it as one last chance to make their relationship work. He and his partner would fly to Vermont to get "married." This came to the attention of the local newspaper in his area, which did a story with photos of the wedding reception. In it, Wyatt and his partner were depicted as a loving couple who finally had a chance to celebrate their commitment publicly. Nothing was said about the drugs or the alcoholism or the infidelity. But the marriage was a failure and ended in flames a few months later. And the newspaper did not do a follow-up. In other words, the leading daily of one of America's largest cities printed a misleading story about a bad relationship, a story that probably persuaded more than one young man that someday he could be just as happy as Wyatt and his "partner." And that is the sad part.

But one very seldom reads about people like my friend Harry. Harry (not his real name) was a balding, middle-aged man with a potbelly. He was married, and had a couple of grown daughters. And he was unhappy. Harry persuaded himself that he was unhappy because he was gay. He divorced his wife, who

is now married to someone else, his daughters are not speaking to him, and he is discovering that pudgy, bald, middle-aged men are not all that popular in gay bars. Somehow, Oprah forgot to mention that. Now Harry is taking anti-depressants in order to keep from killing himself.

Then there was another acquaintance, who also happened to have the same name as the previous guy. Harry (not his real name) was about 30 (but could easily pass for 20), and from a Mormon background, with all the naïveté that suggests. Unlike the first Harry, he had no difficulty getting dates. Or relationships for that matter. The problem was that the relationships never lasted more than a couple of weeks. Harry was also rapidly developing a serious drinking problem. (So much for the Mormon words of wisdom.) If you happened to be at the bar around two in the morning, you could probably have Harry for the night if you were interested. He was so drunk he wouldn't remember you the next day, and all he really wanted at that point was for someone to hold him.

Gay culture is a paradox. Most homosexuals tend to be liberal Democrats, or in the U.K., supporters of the Labour Party. They gravitate toward those Parties on the grounds that their policies are more compassionate and sensitive to the needs of the downtrodden and oppressed. But there is nothing compassionate about a gay bar. It represents a laissez faire free sexual market of the most Darwinian sort. There is no place in it for those who are not prepared to compete, and the rules of the game are ruthless and unforgiving. I remember once being in a gay pub in central London. Most of the men there were buff and toned and in their 20s or early 30s. An older gentleman walked in, who looked to be in his 70s. It was as if the Angel of Death himself had made an entrance. In that crowded bar, a space opened up around him that no one wanted to enter. His shadow transmitted contagion. It was obvious that his presence made the other customers nervous. He stood quietly at the bar and ordered a drink. He spoke to no one and no one spoke to him. When he eventually finished his drink and left, the sigh of relief from all those buff, toned pub crawlers was almost audible. Now all of them could go back to pretending that gay men were all young and beautiful forever. Gentle reader, do you know what a "bug chaser" is? A bug chaser is a young gay man who wants to contract HIV so that he will never grow old. And that is the world that Harry left his wife, and the other Harry his Church, to find happiness in.

I have known a lot of people like the two Harrys. But I have met precious few who bore more than a superficial resemblance to the idealized images we see in Oscar-winning movies such as *Philadelphia*, or in the magazine section of *The New York Times*. What I find suspicious is that the media ignore the existence of people like the two Harrys. The unhappiness so common among homosexuals is swept under the carpet, while fanciful and unrealistic "role models" are offered up for public consumption. There is at the very least grounds for a serious debate about the proposition that "gay is good," but no such debate is taking place, because most of the mainstream media have already made up their (and our) minds.

But it is hard to hide the porn forever. When I was living in London, I had a wonderful friend named Maggie. Maggie (not her real name) was a liberal. Her big heart bled for the oppressed. Like most liberals, she was proud of her open-mindedness and wore it like a badge of honor. Maggie lived in a house as big as her heart and all of her children were grown up and had moved out. She had a couple of rooms to rent. It just so happened that both the young men who became her tenants were gay. Maggie's first reaction was enthusiastic. She had never known many gay people, and thought the experience of renting to two homosexuals would confirm her in her open-mindedness. She believed it would be a learning experience. It was, but not the sort she had in mind. One day Maggie told me her troubles and confessed her doubts. She talked about what it was like to stumble each morning down to the breakfast table, finding two strangers seated there, the two strangers her tenants brought home the night before. It was seldom the same two strangers two mornings running. One of her tenants was in a long-distance relationship but, in the absence of his partner, felt at liberty to seek consolation elsewhere. She talked about what it was like to have to deal on a daily basis with the emotional turmoil of her tenants' tumultuous lives. She told me what it was like to open the door one afternoon and find a policeman standing there, a policeman who was looking for one of her tenants, who was accused of trying to sell drugs to school children. That same tenant was also involved in prostitution. Maggie didn't know what to make of it all. She desperately wanted to remain open-minded, to keep believing that gay men were no worse than anyone else, just different. But she couldn't reconcile her experience with that "tolerant" assumption. The truth was that when the two finally moved out, an event to which she was looking forward with some enthusiasm, and it was time to place a new ad for rooms to let, she wanted to include the following proviso: Fags need not apply. I didn't know what to tell Maggie because I was just as

confused as she was. I wanted to hold on to my illusions too, in spite of all the evidence.

I am convinced that many, if not most, people who are familiar with the lives of homosexuals know the truth, but refuse to face it. My best friend got involved in the gay rights movement as a graduate student. He and a lesbian colleague sometimes counseled young men who were struggling with their sexuality. Once, the two of them met a young man who was seriously overweight and suffered from terrible acne. The young man waxed eloquent about the happiness he expected to find when he came out of the closet. He was going to find a partner, and the two of them would live happily ever after. The whole time my friend was thinking that if someone looking like this fat, pustulent young man ever walked into a bar, he would be folded, spindled, and mutilated before even taking a seat. Afterwards, the lesbian turned to him and said, "You know, sometimes it is better to stay in the closet." My friend told me that for him this represented a decisive moment. This lesbian claimed to love and admire gay men. She never stopped praising their kindness and compassion and creativity. But with that one comment she in effect told my friend that she really knew what gay life was all about. It was about meat, and unless you were a good cut, don't bother coming to the supermarket.

On another occasion, I was complaining to a lesbian about my disillusionment. She made a remarkable admission to me. She had a teenage son, who so far had not displayed signs of sexual interest in either gender. She knew as a lesbian she should not care which road he took. But she confessed to me that she did care. Based on the lives of the gay men she knew, she found herself secretly praying that her son would turn out to be straight. As a mother, she did not want to see her son living that life.

A popular definition of insanity is to keep doing the same thing, while expecting a different result. That was me, the whole time I was laboring to become a happy homosexual. I was a lunatic. Several times I turned for advice to gay men who seemed better adjusted to their lot in life than I was. First, I wanted confirmation that my perceptions were accurate, that life as a male homosexual really was as awful as it seemed to be. And then I wanted to know what I was supposed to do about it. When was it going to get better? What could I do to make it better? I got two sorts of reactions to these questions, both of which left me feeling hurt and confused. The first sort of reaction was denial, often bitter denial, of what I was suggesting. I was told that there was something wrong with me, that most gay men were having a wonderful time, that I was generalizing on the basis of my own experience (whose experience was I supposed to generalize from?), and that I should shut up and stop bothering others with my "internalized homophobia."

I began seeing a counselor when I was a graduate student. Matt (not his real name) was a happily married man with college-age children. All he knew about homosexuality he learned from the other members of his profession, who assured him that homosexuality was not a mental illness and that there were no good reasons that homosexuals could not lead happy, productive lives. When I first unloaded my tale of woe, Matt told me I had never really come out of the closet. (I still have no idea what he meant, but suspect it is like the "once saved, always saved" Baptist who responds to the lapsed by telling him that he was never really saved in the first place.) I needed to go back, he told me, try again, and continue to look for the positive experiences he was sure were available for me, on the basis of no other evidence than the rulings of the American Psychiatric Association. He had almost no personal experience of homosexuals, but his peers assured him that the book section at Lobo's offered a true picture of homosexual life. I knew Matt was clueless, but I still wanted to believe he was right.

Matt and I developed a therapeutic relationship. During the year we spent together, he learned far more from me than I did from him. I tried to take his advice. I was sharing a house that year with another grad student who was in the process of coming out and experiencing his own disillusionment. Because I had been his only gay friend, and had encouraged him to come out, his bitterness came to be directed at me, and our relationship suffered for it. Meanwhile, I developed a close friendship with a member of the faculty who was openly gay. When I first informed Matt, he was ecstatic. He thought I was finally come out properly. The faculty member was just the sort of friend I needed. But the faculty member, as it turned out, despite his immaculate professional facade, was a deeply disturbed man who put all of his friends through emotional hell, which I of course shared with a shocked and silenced Matt. (I tried to date but, as usual, experienced the same pattern that characterized all my homosexual relationships. The friendship lasted as long as the sexual heat. Once that cooled, my partner's interest in me as a person dissipated with it.) It was not a good year. At the end of it, I remember Matt staring at me, with glazed eyes and a shell-shocked look on his face, and admitting, "You know, being gay is a lot harder

than I realized."

Not everyone I spoke to over the years rejected what I had to say out of hand. I once corresponded with an English ex-Dominican. I was ecstatic to learn that he was gay, and was eventually kicked out of his order for refusing to remain in the closet. He included an e-mail address in one of his books, and I wrote him, wanting to know if his experience of life as a homosexual was significantly different from mine. I presumed it must be, since he had written a couple of books, passionately defending the right of homosexuals to a place in the Church. His response to me was one of the last nails in the coffin of my life as a gay man. To my astonishment, he admitted that his experiences were not unlike mine. All he could suggest was that I keep trying, and eventually everything would work out. In other words, this brilliant man, whose books had meant so much to me, had nothing to suggest except that I keep doing the same thing, while expecting a different result. There was only one reasonable conclusion. I would be nuts if I took his advice. It took me twenty years, but I finally reached the conclusion that I did not want to be insane.

So where am I now? I am attending a militantly orthodox parish in Houston that is one of God's most spectacular gifts to me. My best friend Mark (not his real name) is, like me, a refugee from the homosexual insane asylum. He is also a devout believer, though a Presbyterian (no one is perfect). From Mark I have learned that two men can love each other profoundly while remaining clothed the entire time.

We are told that the Church opposes same-sex love. Not true. The Church opposes homogenital sex, which in my experience is not about love, but about obsession, addiction, and compensation for a compromised masculinity.

I am not proud of the life I have lived. In fact, I am profoundly ashamed of it. But if reading this prevents one naïve, gullible man from making the same mistakes, then perhaps with the assistance of Our Lady of Guadalupe; of St. Joseph, her chaste spouse; of my patron saint, Edmund Campion; of St. Josemaría Escrivá; of the blessed Carmelite martyrs of Compiègne; and, last but not least, of my special supernatural guide and mentor, the Venerable John Henry Newman, I can at least hope for a reprieve from some of the many centuries in Purgatory I have coming to me.

So, what do we as a Church and a culture need to do? *Tear down the respectable façade and expose the pornography beneath.* Start pressuring homosexuals to tell the truth about their lives. Stop debating the correct interpretation of Genesis 19. Leave the men of Sodom and Gomorrah buried in the brimstone where they belong. Sodom is hidden in plain view from us, here and now, today. Once, when preparing a lecture on Cardinal Newman, I summarized his classic *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* in this fashion: Truth ripens, error rots. The homosexual rights movement is rotten to the core. It has no future. There is no life in it. Sooner or later, those who are caught up in it are going to wake up from the dream of unbridled desire or else die. It is just a matter of time. The question is: how long? How many children are going to be sacrificed to this Moloch?

Until several months ago, there was a Lobo's in Houston too. Not accidentally, I'm sure, its layout was identical to the one in Austin. It was just a few blocks from the gas station where I take my car for service. Recently, I was taking a walk through the neighborhood while my tires were being rotated. And I noticed something. There was a padlock on the door at Lobo's. A sign on the door read, "The previous tenant was evicted for nonpayment of rent." The books and the porn, the façade and what it conceals, are gone now. Praise God.

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