

The men who come to This Club are looking for more than just sex. Sure, men *come* — but only at the expense of the real draw: the protracted wandering, the caressing of the zone in your psyche that gets turned on (and ashamed) when you're close to what you think you crave.

Call the evening a debasement — a spiritual descent even. Whatever it is, it isn't lonely. The slide downward is communal, lubricated by the sweat produced when a hundred men go hunting for Mr. Right. There's a masculine power — a spirit? an archetype? — on the loose here that many of us have yet to experience outside This Club. (If it's a spirit, why does it wear so much leather?) A Latino friend once remarked that he saw the image of a Santería deity dancing in a pool of bodily fluids. I can't say I've ever spotted Yahweh here, but I've glimpsed another force, at least as ancient, in this unseemly oasis.

While frowned on by many in the gay and lesbian community, the leather subculture wields a mysterious power for some — especially for younger gays and lesbians, who exploit it as an avenue

for safer sex.

In his book

Jung,

Jungians and Homosexuality, Robert Hopcke sees in the donning of the flexible armor of leather a conscious attempt to develop the fullness of one's own masculine nature in a society that "robs [gays] of their masculine self through social values and stereotypes which deny that they are men at all." While many lambaste S&M play-acting for aping the pathology of patriarchal society, Hopcke goes so far as to see it as a path toward spirituality, representing a hunger for the tribalism and collective archetypes of which American culture deprives all people, let alone gays. Surely, other social initiations — NFL games, corporate takeovers, marriages and even male-to-male friendships — could do the trick of integrating restriction with independence, physicality with spirituality. But too often, says Hopcke, these rites of passage end up violently because the male-female wholeness that homosexuality represents gets muted — with heterosexuals casting a negative shadow on those men who feel divineline "healing" in their love of men. Warns poet James Broughton in his "Shaman Psalm": "Man must love man/or war is forever/Outnumber the hawks/Outdistance the angels/Love one another/or die."

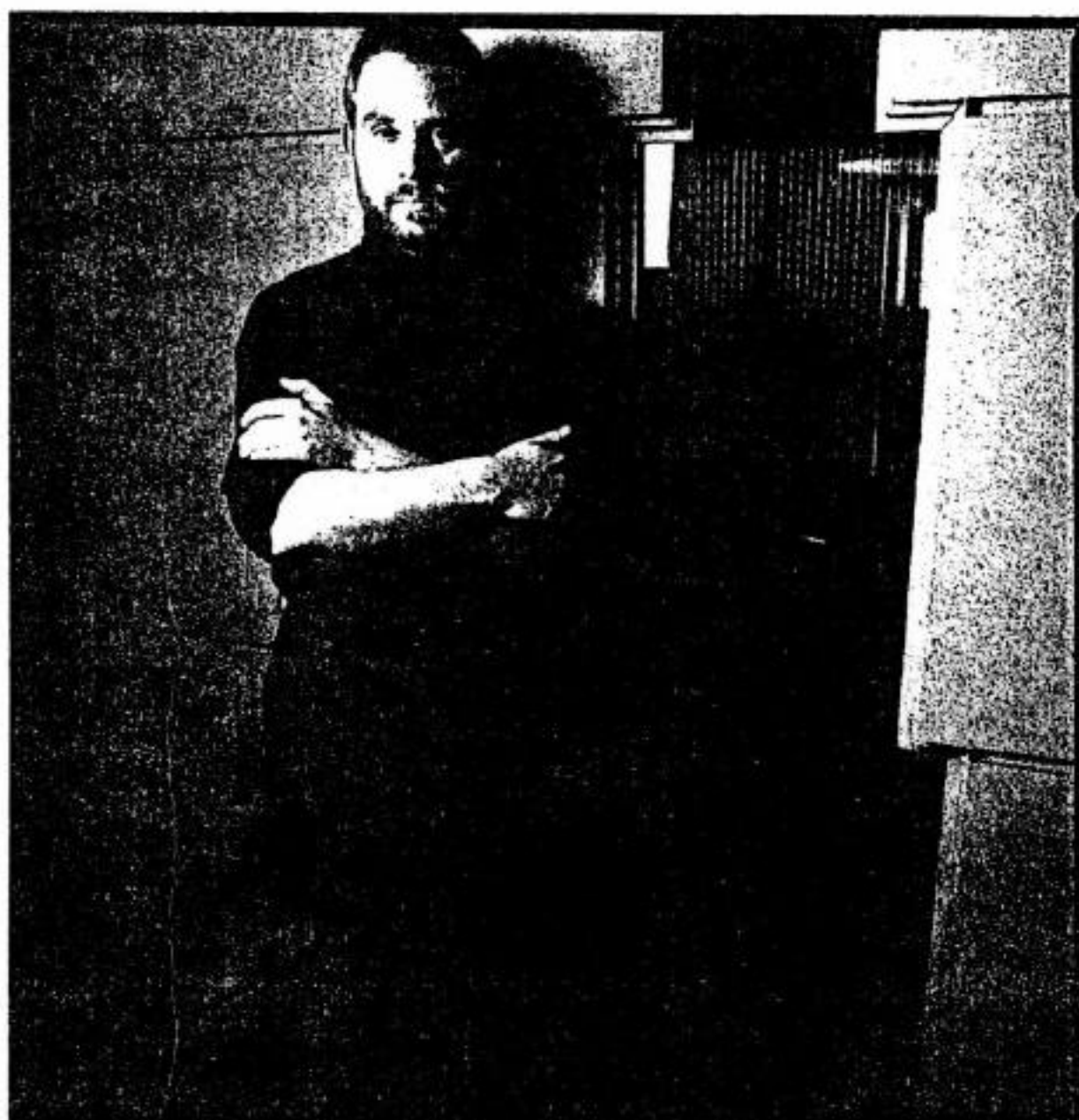
Akin to the anthropological interest in leather is our attempt to research the tribal figure of the *berdache* in Native American culture (virtually ignored by heterosexual researchers). The word *berdache*, initially a derogatory term coined by early French explorers, stands for the anatomical man who dressed in female clothing and gained prestige by his spiritual and artistic

me

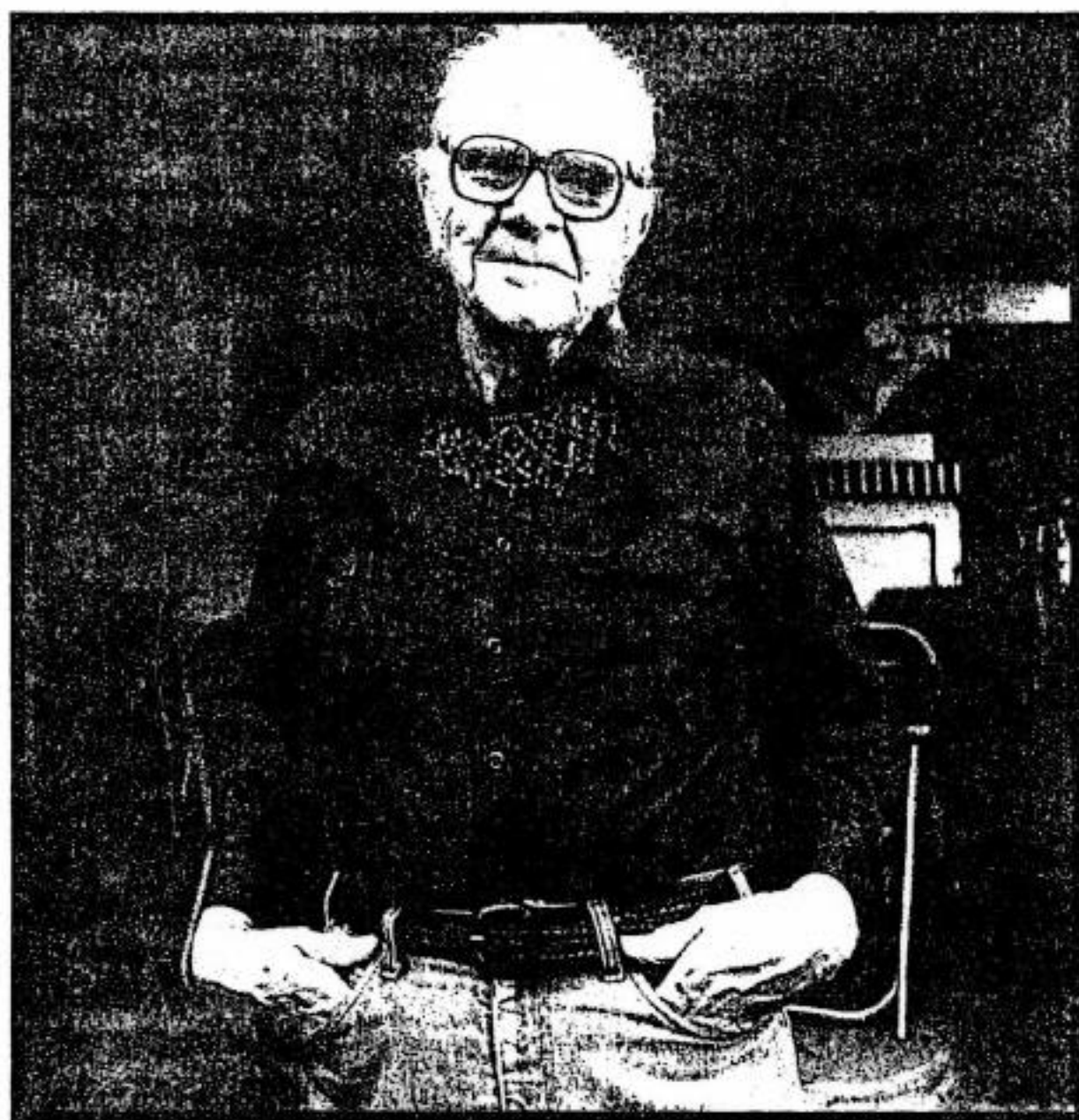
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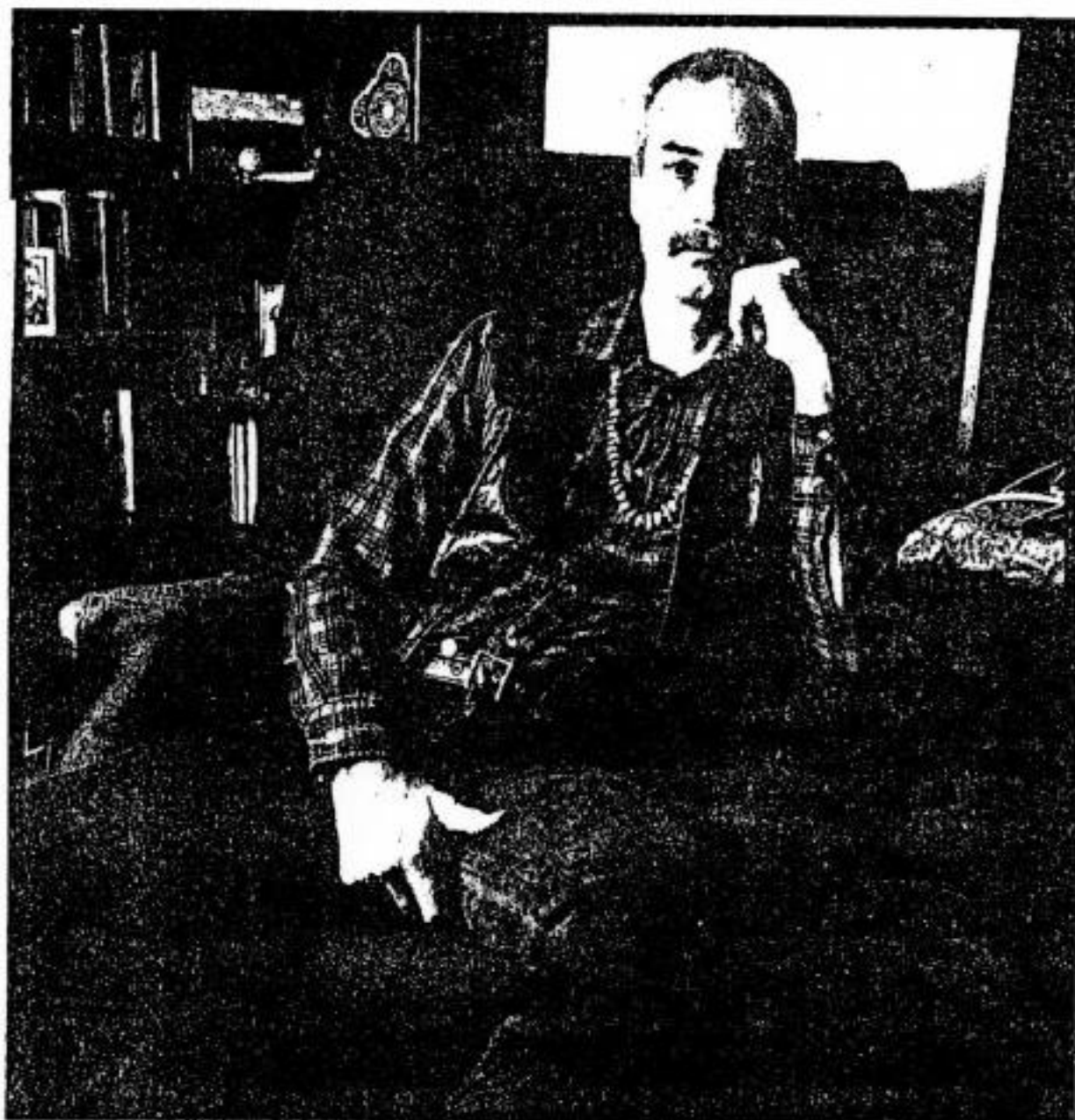
shadow



by Doug Sadownick



(ABOVE) MARK THOMPSON, EDITOR OF THE INFLUENTIAL *GAY SPIRIT*; (BELOW) HARRY HAY, FOUNDER OF THE MATTACHINE SOCIETY; (OPPOSITE PAGE) PSYCHOLOGIST MITCH WALKER, CHAMPION OF A "GAY PSYCHE"



contributions to the tribe. (They were practically deified by the Navajos, who called them *nadle*, or shaman.) In *Another Mother Tongue: Gay Words, Gay Worlds*, Judy Grahn writes that "there is much to indicate that the spiritual heart of the ancient Indian Way was Gay leadership including both sexes." She adds that Native American men with *berdache* wives were seen as extremely fortunate; likewise, the women who lived with the "manly-hearted women" were recognized among the Cherokees to have great influence in tribal matters.

As Walter Williams clarifies in his book *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture*, Native American societies don't share European assumptions of two genders and two sets of sex roles. (Centuries of European-style homophobia have eroded tribal tolerance, although Williams has met a number of living *berdaches*). The *berdache*, in fact, forms a "third sex" wherein spiritual transformation goes hand in hand with his vocation — to mediate between male and female ways of seeing. Laguna Indian writer Paula Gunn Allen reports that "among American Indians, spirit-related persons are perceived as more closely linked than blood-related persons." For Native Americans, humans live in a charged universe where spirits have as much to say about destiny as do humans. If the spirits tell a person in adolescence, through dreams or visions, to put on clothes of the opposite sex, to do craft work and practice medicine, he or she had better do it. "Not to follow the guidance given would mean a serious breach of the cultural values and a danger to one's self," adds Grahn.

Anthropological analyses of Native American gays and the contemporary leather subculture serve as proof to certain theorists that an entity called "gay spirit" has moved through people over thousands of years. Whether you buy that notion or not, what their work offers is a gay cultural heritage most gays and straights are blind to (even though it can be excavated in the work of Walt Whitman, Diaghilev, Sylvia Beach, Langston Hughes, Merce Cunningham, Oscar Wilde, Beethoven, Sappho, Plato, Virgil Thompson and Gertrude Stein, to name a few). But the catastrophe of AIDS is shifting gay culture fast on the side of open "culturists," as the success of militant, confrontative groups like ACT UP and the phenomenon of "outing" make clear. Comments therapist and community activist Don Kilhefner: "For a long time gays have been trying to minimize our differences from heteros as an act of survival. But now, for the first time in history, gay people are being urged to begin maximizing our differences from

straights as an act of love, to ourselves and to them."

He's hardly calling for separatism. "Gay people's place is in the world," adds Kilhefner. He suggests, however, that gays must first discover who they really are and then find creative ways to transfer to the world the new tribal knowledge that comes with dealing with AIDS.

I'm not quite sure what that means — tribal. Surely, attempts to locate spiritual silver linings in the extinction of a vilified people belittle political reality. But what's undeniable is that communitywide death makes for profound musings. So far ACT UP has offered one of the few non-reactive models: fight back as outrageously and pro-actively as possible. But is that it? Have gays yet to understand what it means to live — and die — as gays?

I ask these questions now because more than a few

psychologists and veteran community leaders, most of them from Los Angeles, are currently attempting to answer them in books and national forums. These Californians have roots in the origins of the American gay movement — which, contrary to popular opinion, began not with the Stonewall Rebellion in New York in the late '60s but in Los Angeles in the late '40s. Today, writers like psychologist Mitch Walker (author of *Men Loving Men*), Mark Thompson (senior editor of *The Advocate*, the L.A.-based national gay newsmagazine), Don Kilhefner (founder of L.A.'s Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center), California filmmaker/poet James Broughton, lesbian poet and publisher Judy Grahn, and author-psychologist Christine Downing are putting a mythological spin on gay life. Thompson and Walker, along with Luke Johnson and Chris Kilbourne, members of a gay spirit club called Treetops, say there is a "sacred spirit" that constitutes the essence and potential of being gay. "Gay spirit, and the fights it will cause, will be the central gay politics of the '90s," says Walker.

What's so controversial about gay spirit? For one thing, the notion flies in the face of the academic gay intelligentsia, which is still embroiled in the debate between essentialists, who argue that gayness has existed throughout history as a fundamental variation on "human nature," and the constructivists, who claim that gayness is a recent gender construction with no parallels to homosexuality as practiced in ancient Greece. Writers like Downing, Walker, Hopcke, Thompson and Kilhefner suggest a transcending of the nature-vs.-culture debate, arguing that while contemporary gay identity is indeed a unique social construct, the archetypes that shape homosexuality can be identified in ancient myths, in the spiritual practices of other cultures and in the dreams of modern gays — albeit in unfamiliar ways. At bottom, these Californians argue — as did founding gay fathers Christopher Isherwood, Harry Hay and Gerald Heard in the L.A. of the '50s — that gayness is a system of beliefs and not just an orientation in the pelvis. Hay spent years exploring parallels between gays and Native American *berdaches*, those men of a "third sex" who equated homosexuality with their spiritual reality.

Now theorists like Mitch Walker are again arguing that gays constitute a "third sex." And this time they're prepared for the backlash. A war is raging between gay assimilationists (e.g., politicians, entertainment-industry figures and the self-appointed board members of many gay organizations), who buy into heterosexual institutions, versus what we might call "gay culturists," who are demanding a new set of values based on what being gay has to offer society. Argues Mark Thompson (who, aside from his work at *The Advocate*, is the author of a source book on gay spirituality titled *Gay Spirit*), "The price of integration thus far has been a mediocre, conditional type of acceptance into society, coupled with a lack of insight about the particular — sometimes even magical — perspective I believe gay men inherently have. We have yet to realize that our emerging presence may have significance far

As ACT UP's policies make clear, gays who renounce gay culture are as destructive as straights who denounce gay culture. The idea of gay unity has given way to a more effective idea: A gay legacy.

What the spiritualists offer is a way into this mythology via history.

beyond simple social and legal reform." Adds Don Kilhefner, whose gay-community work in L.A. includes founding its first residential alcoholism and drug-treatment program, "I always come away from dealings with gay assimilationists feeling spiritually raped." Only when gays have claimed their historical inheritance, say the culturists, can a full partnership in progressive politics with straights take place.

What separates this new spirituality from gays going to their Jewish and Hindu temples or Christian and crystal churches is that the "religion" of gay psyche is rooted specifically in gayness and the latent divinity said to reside there; it needn't borrow from institutions with a history of persecuting gays. Kilhefner calls gay spirit the "glimmer of consciousness and recognition that most gays sense" and that draws many to the clergy and the arts. For Chris Kilbourne, the concomitant evolution of gayness and feminism represents Mother Nature's attempt to stem global destruction. These thinkers argue that while the gay psyche offers insight to gays and culture at large, gay people will never tap that wellspring until they examine the blood-and-guts damage to their unconscious, arising from the shame associated with being gay. Or as Kilhefner likes to put it, "None of us has come out yet."

Some say that because gay people lack the social initiations without which no man or woman can claim personal power or social inclusion, their growth has been stunted. Writer Robert Hopcke, in a discussion of the leather subculture as tribal ritual, relates most people's modern neuroses to the fact that we have lost touch with collective legacies and the gods who still inhabit us. Mitch Walker even holds that the AIDS epidemic is accelerating this meeting with the gods, that it's "a pulling down into the underworld" to unleash the latent power of the gay psyche, and that no amount of Louise Hay affirmations can camouflage a wound that is crying out to be opened if it's to be healed. Says Thompson, "Regardless of our successes, many of us are damaged goods. It's necessary now to have a vital, authentic connection with the unconscious world — with the psyche itself." In fact, he says, it's unavoidable. Dealing with AIDS means undergoing a transformation in perception whereby one moves between despair and hope, masculinity and femininity, courage and fear, before emerging whole.

Herein lies the controversy, and the horror. To be really gay — or at least to unleash gay spirit — one may have to experience nothing short of death itself.

For Chris Kilbourne, a member of Treetops, which meets monthly to "validate the inner world of gay psyche and gay spirit," a symbolic death comes early for gays, in the shedding of a skin that takes place when one comes out of the closet. (Hence the gay community's fascination with Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, which, if read as a coming-out story, offers redemption through a journey to the underworld, where one dies several times.) But according to Mitch Walker, coming out is only a partial initiation; there has to be a next step. Adds Kilhefner, "Something on an inner level has failed. Our community looks at what institutions we've created, what titles we hold, rather than who we've become as human beings." The task at hand, he says, "is nothing less than reinventing ourselves as gay people."

DON KILHEFNER, EARLY MEMBER OF L.A.'S GAY LIBERATION FRONT, FOUNDER OF GAY AND LESBIAN COMMUNITY SERVICES CENTER

For Treetops member Luke Johnson, an original member with Kilhefner and Morris Kight of L.A.'s early Gay Liberation Front, this "reinvention" involves not so much a rejection of the old as a rejection of the superficial.

How much of the crowd at Rage disco, he asks, really knows their history?

As Judy Grahn argues in her book *Another Mother Tongue*, gay culture is ancient, but its "inner mysteries" have been driven underground.

Harry Hay says that to begin to exhume a gay culture, one would start by reclaiming a history covered up by gays themselves. Born in England in 1912, Hay was raised by American parents in Los Angeles. A respected Marxist teacher, Native American-rights activist, musicologist, family man and actor (he and actor Will Geer were an item in the '30s), Hay conceived of the idea of the Mattachine Society in 1948 in L.A. and was joined by soon-to-be-famous fashion designer Rudi Gernreich in 1950.

The Mattachine Society proved the first successful attempt to organize homosexuals politically in America. Hay adapted the name from *Les sociétés joyeuses*, a 12th-century group of itinerant French dancers who dressed in mask as women and did not marry. The name of the society suggested that gay culture, however suppressed, has existed throughout human history.

Hay publicly asked provocative questions at a time when no safe identity for homosexuals ex-

isted: "Who are we?" "Where do we come from?" "Why are we here?" The organizing took place at the height of McCarthyism, and Hay worried that one wrong move might jeopardize the movement for years to come. As Hay explains it, "We were speaking of the dream of marvelous brotherhood . . . but we were still being rather amorphous and indefinite." The Mattachine Society was essentially a series of what would later be called "consciousness-raising groups," which sometimes could last for 12 hours at a time. "We were talking about the right of self-respect and to appreciate that we are a strong, not a weak, people," he recalls, "that a sissy means a stubborn person who's put up with an awful lot. A lot of people were saying, 'My God, I never thought of that.'"

To protect the Mattachine Society, Hay conceived of an official front: to foster public dialogue of concerned citizens, based on the 1948 Kinsey Report, which shocked Americans (and gays) by reporting that as many as 20 million homosexuals existed in this country. Unofficially, gays were identified covertly and separated into subgroups of 10, to ensure that no individual knew the identities of more than 10 others should there be a police raid. Finally, in 1951, the Mattachine Society hosted a public dance. (Hay recalls four street toughs standing



in the doorway, weeping at the sight of 60 men waltzing together.)

Then, in 1952, an L.A. member was arrested on charges of soliciting an officer. The man denied the lewd-vagrancy charge, and the Society came to his defense. When the case was dismissed, closet doors opened and the Mattachine Society developed a network of many as 5,000 gays in California.

But few of the new members shared the framers' radical vision. As Hay explains it, "Up until then, we were all forward-looking leftists. Then, with our political victory, we began to attract those middle-class types who argued not only that we were the same as everyone else except in bed, but that gay people had nothing in common except their sexual inclinations." This assimilationist tack was heretical to Hay's sense of "gay spirit." ("Fairies levitate, you know," he quips.)

The cold war between spiritualists and assimilationists would plague gay organizing for years to come. Hay was exiled from (and red-baited within) his own society when he challenged the Mattachine Society's emphasis on "being seen as respectable rather than self-respecting." Membership dipped to 500, ending the golden era of the Mattachine Society. "There wasn't a call anymore," recalls Hay.

Years later, in the late '70s, Hay, who had lived among Native Americans in the Southwest, had considerably deepened his spiritual explorations. By 1979, along with L.A. activist Don Kilhefner and San Francisco writer Mitch Walker, Hay completed plans for the first Spiritual Conference for Radical Fairies, to take place in a remote place in the Arizona desert. By then a strong movement of gay rural men exploring alternatives to city life and mainstream acceptance had sprung up, along with magazines and gay rural communities. (By then, too, academic Arthur Evans had also valorized the mythic meaning of the word "fairy.") At the first national gathering, 200 men from the United States and Canada attended to expand on this early gay-spirit work. (According to Thompson, who has attended many such rituals since the first in 1979, fairy gatherings are marked by blissful rites, running around naked, circles in which

The "shadow" is a useful tool for gays; it stands for unconscious "muck" — what we or our culture don't like about ourselves — that isn't integrated into our daily lives.

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individual fairies discover their wisdom, mud rituals, singing, drumming and intimate ecstasy. They are epitomized by Hay's idea of subject-subject consciousness, where people treat nature and each other with equality as opposed to subject/object opportunistic thinking.)

At the first Radical Fairie gathering, Hay gave an important speech: "The hetero man is incapable of conceiving the possibility of a window on the world other than his own, is equally incapable of perceiving that gay people might not fit into either of his man/woman categories, that we might turn out to be classified as something else. If we, as people, will but grasp this, flesh it out and exercise this affirmatively, we will discover the lovely gay-conscious 'not man' shining underneath our disguises. We must begin gathering in circles to manifest the new dimensions of subject-subject relationships and to validate the contributions our consciousness is capable of developing within the world vision."

Unfortunately, fairies may have to do more than levitate. According to psychologist Mitch Walker, Radical Fairies are little different from mainstream gays when it comes to neglecting their "dark natures." A Radical Fairie co-founder, Walker resigned from its board, along with Kilhefner and Thompson. Walker and Kilhefner then went on to found Treeroots, a non-profit educational corporation dedicated to gay spirit work and which includes Treetops. Walker, who has been counseling HIV-infected people at the Edelman Health Center since 1984 and recently started up a private practice in Jungian analysis, lives in a small apartment in Hollywood.

surrounded by books and images of male hunks, Hindu gods and Native American spirits.

Appropriately enough, then, the "unconscious" is the subject of our conversation. Walker uses the terms "unconscious" and "psyche" somewhat interchangeably, challenging, as Jungians will, my Judeo-Christian (or New Age) conception of a higher power existing outside me. He equates the divine with the unconscious, and because I am gay, with the gay unconscious. "You're not alone in there, honey," he tells me.

I feel edgy, recalling a speech I heard him give at the Treetops Gay Spirit Club, where he staked out the terms of gay spirit with quasi-religious gusto. Walker believes that gays have the spirit of the "gay divine" working within them—reduced to a whisper, yet yearning to assist straights in their efforts at progressive change. "As gay men," he told the membership, "in response to an intensifying summons, come more and more to recognize and relate with the reality of the spirit-world inside our own psyches, it is inevitable that the sweet Lord of Homosexual Libido, Eros Phanes, Lightbringer, will take us to the supreme treasures of human existence and to the global manifestation of a power for healing and wholeness that's always been the special provenance of those who follow the sacred spirit of gay love."

Walker now tells me how psychological work of this nature makes you confront the vastness of the psyche, of which the "I" is a small and clumsy part. As he explains it, such analysis is nothing new; the ancients practiced it regularly. The only way to purge demons from the soul was to see how they had constellated in an individual's upbringing. To Walker's mind, Jung reformulated secret shamanic teachings. He even sees Jungian psychology as the post-Christian, post-patriarchal theology of the future. "And the wonderful thing about it," he says wryly, "is that you don't have to join an institution. You just do the inner work."

This preliminary source list includes books (available at A Different Light bookstores) and meetings that explore gay spirit.

- **Treetops**, a club exploring issues surrounding the gay psyche, meets on the third Sunday of each month at the Trinity Episcopal Church (Melrose Ave. and Berendo St.) from 3-6 p.m. Kilbourne and Walker offer 10-week gay spirit workshops. A national conference is also being planned by Treetops for this winter. For information call Chris Kilbourne and Mitch Walker, (213) 654-1329.
- To contact Don Kilhefner call (213) 874-8297.
- No proper study of gay spirituality and its history can begin without **GAY SPIRIT**, Ed., Mark Thompson, St. Martin's Press, 1987.
- Three key books on the Native American berdache: **LIVING THE SPIRIT: A GAY AMERICAN INDIAN ANTHOLOGY**, compiling ed., Will Roscoe, St. Martin's Press, 1988. (Roscoe's book on the Zuni Who'wha berdache comes out this year.) **THE SPIRIT AND THE FLESH: SEXUAL DIVERSITY IN AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURE**, Walter Williams, Beacon Press, 1986.
- **THE TROUBLE WITH HARRY HAY**, an exhaustive biography on Harry Hay, will be published this fall, the 30-year anniversary of the Mattachine Society. Stuart Timmons, Alyson Press, 1990.
- **JUNG, JUNGIANISM AND HOMOSEXUALITY**: this contribution to Jungian thought on homosexuality includes discussion of pop myths, leather and Native Americans. Robert Hopeke, Shambhala Publications, 1989.
- **MYTHS AND MYSTERIES OF SAME-SEX LOVE**: a lesbian's academic/personal view on ancient mythology; differences between Freud and Jung. Christine Downing, Continuum Publishing Co., 1989.
- **ANOTHER MOTHER TONGUE: GAY WORDS**, **GAY WORLDS**: reclaim's an ancient gay and lesbian legacy. Judy Grahn, Beacon Press, 1984.
- **INNER WORK**: a practical guide for using dreams and active imagination to "relate to psyche." Robert Johnson, Harper & Row, 1986.
- **WITCHCRAFT AND THE GAY COUNTERCULTURE**, Arthur Evans, Fag Rag Books, 1978.

In his work with gays from dissimilar backgrounds over the last 18 years, Walker has identified gay archetypes that straight (or closeted) Jungians have ignored. Jungians credit him with having defined "the Double" — a homosexual motif said to exist in everyone — in archetypal terms. Walker doesn't just come up with these archetypes; his gay clients see them in their dreams. (Apparently, when you start paying attention to dreams by writing them down consistently, they start paying attention to you, offering patterns, suggestions, even going so far as to alter reality.) According to Hopeke, Walker has helped to analyze homophobia by seeing it as the non-recognition of the Double; straight men consign this cherished Soul-mate to the unconscious, where it acts out in shadowy ways.

The term "shadow" again betrays how some of these gay theoreticians borrow from Jung. "I hate the terminology," says Luke Johnson, "but for people interested in dream stuff and the vastness of the psyche, it's the best we can do." For Thompson, the "shadow" is a useful tool for gays; it stands for unconscious "muck" — what we or our culture don't like about ourselves — that isn't integrated into our daily lives. Thus, it pops up, like a nightmare or an unwelcome guest, in the form of violence, dysfunction or self-destructiveness.

Poet Robert Bly calls the shadow "the long bag we drag behind us" and suggests that each culture fills the bag differently. As Thompson puts it, Jungians see humans as polysexual, but in Western society such fluidity gets junked in a hefty bag (along with the feminine archetypes that exist in all men). In America, heteros fill their sacks with their own latent homosexuality, thus projecting a hateful shadow onto gays that's actually a reflection of their own nature.

For Thompson, gays have so internalized the idea that they are bad heteros that some exploratory work with the shadow can only be liberating. "This is hard to grasp for those who value watching *Rambo* over wrestling with the gods," he says, "but because of AIDS, every gay and lesbian is experiencing the wound." For Thompson, who is HIV-positive, the real virus is "the nut of undoing that's been planted in the soul of every gay and lesbian, a function of social control." How to relate to it without dropping dead? For Thompson, myths offer road maps toward inner knowledge and "a sense of something greater than us — the continuum of gay culture."

He and Walker have just completed a book that draws AIDS parallels from the world's oldest recorded myth, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, written more than 4,000 years ago in Mesopotamia. A corrupt king, Gilgamesh falls in love with his double, Enkidu, who subsequently dies. Gilgamesh descends into the underworld to find Enkidu. He fails but, following this loss, emerges whole. Explains Thompson, "A man out of touch with his better nature becomes initiated into a more



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GAY SPIRIT

complete life through the love of another man. But he must journey into the darkest recesses of his soul to find the equivalent of everlasting life: self-knowledge."

Indeed, Kilhefner sees it as a political responsibility for gays to understand, inhabit and demystify such shadows. Walker goes a bit further: AIDS is forcing gays to make good on their latent powers by shoving the shadow in their faces. "You can look at AIDS as the shadow come to gays in living color, as an expression of the fact that gays have begun to marshal their forces — and that's threatening to the oligarchy. Some people have suggested AIDS as a conspiracy theory, but I don't think you have to account for it on those terms. Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud have done a wonderful thing for us moderns in expounding the idea of an unconscious that can act out in all kinds of crazy ways."

Gay people have suffered so much idiocy at the hands of self-appointed AIDS gurus that any non-political explanation of the epidemic tends to grate. How could a metaphysics of AIDS possibly benefit those fighting it? Part of me sees this gay Jungian emphasis on "the hero journey," this quasi-mystical fascination with death, as a step backward from the gay-historical analyses that have exploded over the last decade. (Walker the Jungian sees gayness not as a construction but as a self-starting "natural" phenomenon. Forget the oedipal complex: the child, born gay, is attracted to the father and borrows strategies from the mother to woo him. The inevitable rejection by the father is what causes the rupture, not the boy's attachment to Mama.)

Indeed, I sometimes see these gay-as-shaman theories as stand-ins for old-fashioned religion, a crutch that people revert to when they feel besieged or close to death. My grandparents, having escaped the Russian pogroms at the turn of the century, experienced such feelings in their pious adherence to Jewish law despite their sufferings (or because of them). Throughout the centuries, Jews have attempted to understand why they were persecuted in Babylonia, Egypt, Germany, Persia. The only answer they came up with was the destructions of the temple as a manifestation of God's desire to present them with an opportunity to undergo punishment and cleansing. The Jungian take on AIDS as an archer *ja* may be simply another version of the "punished Chosen People" scenario. Doesn't all the metaphorizing cloud the issues surrounding AIDS, which affects more than gay people, and is a disease of poverty and race. Isn't AIDS, after all, just a virus?

In fact, most AIDS activists have little use for the notion of a "gay shadow." "It's senseless for us to spend energy on anything that isn't about trying to end this epidemic," says author and ACT UP/N.Y. member Larry Kramer, advancing an argument that philosopher Hannah Arendt applied to the massacre of the Jews in Nazi Germany. "Gays have been persecuted because we haven't fought back enough. Society hates nothing worse than a victim. There is no higher calling than the political." For gay theoretician Douglas Crimp, AIDS exists only through "constructions"; it shouldn't be theorized apart from the practices that conceptualize it, represent it and respond to it. "It would serve us better," he says, "to concentrate on this simple fact — we don't need to transcend the epidemic, we need to end it." Hay and many other fairies reject Jungian psychology and what they perceive as its institutionalized homophobia. And some gay people of color criticize an all-male, mostly white group for speaking so universally for "the gay spirit."

For his part, Walker sees the last century and a half of gay liberation as a reclaiming of an ancient spiritual and cultural tradition that was almost completely eliminated by zealous Christians. His theory of gay destiny and the way AIDS fits into it is bolstered by his experience as a therapist: now, more than ever, gays want to explore their shadows. "No one wants to enter the jaws of hell," says Walker. "Anyone in his right mind would run in the opposite direction." But gay men, he submits, intuit a "calling" to relate to the archetype of the soul that, like their first feelings of homosexual love, won't stay in the closet. Walker calls this process "coming out inside."

Last week I attended the memorial service for friend and Cast Theater producer Ted Schmitt. Ted was openly gay. But the organizers of his memorial chose to leave mention of the word "gay" out of an otherwise moving service. I felt robbed and, as Kilhefner says, "spiritually raped." And I wasn't alone.

The gay cultural stakes in the artistic, literary, activist (and now spiritual) arenas are mounting. As ACT UP's policies make clear, gays who renounce gay culture are as destructive as straights who denounce gay culture. The idea of gay unity has given way to a more effective idea: a gay legacy. What the spiritualists offer is a way into this mythology via history. Whether AIDS is seen as a divine monster or as an arbitrary virus is up to each individual to decide. But the impatience the spiritualists feel toward the dead end of gay politics can be inspiring.

"We need to fortify the community. Unfortunately, one of the most insidious concepts used to develop a subculture has been that of pride," comments Thompson. "Pride may help to define the outer world, but it inhibits access to the inner, more compassionate one." While a Native American-style contemporary reunion between the so-called three sexes may not be in the cards in the near future, a new gay man, more aware of his dark and light sides, may not be such a political liability. **LA**