

DC'S

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2008

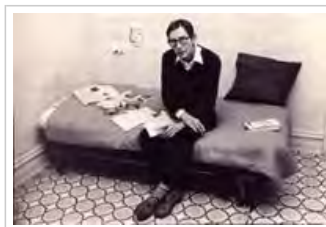
Billy Miller, Christian Siekmeier, and Bernard Welt present ... 'Straight to Hell -- In Cock We Trust'



One man's meat

Bernard Welt

Some twenty years ago, Boyd McDonald began publishing out of his apartment a journal of men's true, prodigiously explicit accounts of homosexual sex, entitled *Straight to Hell* - a.k.a. *The Manhattan Review of*



Unnatural Acts, a.k.a. *The New York Review of Cocksucking*, and later - amid an alphabet soup of mainstream publications like *GQ*, *W* and *HG* - archly and elegantly styled *S.T.H.* Eventually McDonald, who dies in 1993 at the age of 68, edited the anonymous autobiographical letters to *S.T.H.* into more than a dozen books with titles such as *Meat*, *Filth*, *Flesh*, and *Raunch*. All were best-sellers in gay bookstores, somewhat to the embarrassment of the gay literati.

The essential democracy of the project is inspiring: Every man

THE NEWS AND EXTRAS AREA

Upcoming performances:

January 20, 21, 2009: *Le Parvis*
Scene Nationale Tarbes Pyrenees,
Jerk

January 22-24: Nantes, France,
le Lieu Unique, **Dedans Dehors**
David

February, 2009: Brest, France,
Festival Antipodes, **World**
Premiere: Eternelle Idole,
Director: Gisele Vienne, Music:
Stephen O'Malley, Text: Dennis
Cooper

March 14: Dieppe, France,
Festival VISU DSN, **Jerk**

April 3, 4, 2009: Milan, Italy,
Festival Danae, **Jerk**

April 7, 8, 9, 10, 14 & 15,
2009: Paris, *Theater de la*
Bastille, **Jerk**

NEW: April 17, 2009: Malmo,
Sweden, *Uppsala*, **Jerk**

NEW: April 21, 22, 23:
Stockholm, Sweden, *Dansen Hus*,
Jerk

NEW: April 25, 26, 2009:
Trondheim, Norway, *Teaterhuset*
Avant Garden, **Jerk**

NEW: April 28, 29, 30: Bergen,
Norway, *BIT Theatergarasjen*, **Jerk**

May 16, 17, 2009: Murcia, Spain,
Centro Parraga (dates & times
tba), **Jerk (in Spanish)**

May 22, 2009: Hamburg,
Germany, *Kampnagel*,
Kindertotenlieder

NEW: May 23 - 24: Barcelona,
Spain, *Teatre Lluire*, **Jerk**

NEW: May 28 - 29: Grenoble,
France, *La Ruee vers l'Art*, **Jerk**

NEW: June: Amsterdam, *Holland*
Festival 2009 (venue and dates
tba), **Kindertotenlieder**

June 3, 4, 2009: *Scene national*
de Foix, **Jerk**

June 6, 7, 2009: Murcia, Spain,
Centro Parraga, **Kindertotenlieder**

June 26, 27, 2009: Gijon, Spain,
Laboral Escena - Ciudad de la

becomes his own Henry Miller, every sexualist his own Jean-Jacques Rousseau. It is conventional to claim that smut makes weary reading, but the autobiographical accounts in *S.T.H.* are sprightly, involving, full of intense interest and detail, and offered without the tiresome self-justification of most writings at the margins of society. In contrast to most contemporary fiction, the memoirs in these collections are precise in their aims and entirely without affection in their style. McDonald developed a distinctive manner of titling his contributors' stories to parody the news items, so trenchantly that the editor's statement is made even before the autor begins to speak: "Baptist Boys Do It, As It Were, In Church"; "Typical 'Straight' Admits Weakness for Friend's Tongue"; "Youth Leaves Damp Underpants for Host to Sniff"; "The Love That Dare Not Speak Its Name: Armpit-Sniffing."

These reminiscences are news that stays news. McDonald insisted that what he printed was not pornography, which for him meant the trite, self-conscious fantasies generated by guilt and timidity that were increasingly available in the 1970s and '80s through an increasingly commercial salacious press. He published *The Truth*, in a manner of a crusading journalist - a photographer without a camera - with the serious intention of assembling documentation of homosexual sex in its "classical" age, 1940-1980. The result is a kind of oral (as well as anal and genital) history, taking the reader into terrain at once strange and familiar: the unacknowledged corners of life where repression is not lifted, but exploded to bits. In contrast to pornographic fantasy, the meaning of every scene, scent and sensation in McDonald placed before his eager public is simply that, however american life has been represented in the official organs backed by business, state, and religion, such things actually do happen.

In effect, McDonald was not only a documentarian, but one of the great satirists of the age, if a satirist primarily by proxy. The needs and products of the body horrified Swift and disgusted Orwell; even to William Burroughs, they are a dark rather than joyful secret. But McDonald saw them as literally the essence of life, betrayed by the hipocrisy and pretensions of a society in which men are trained to seek power and reject love. The emblem of his stance is an illustration he once used in *S.T.H.*: a male nude with a with the caption, "I am not just a human being, I am a piece of meat." Through the sheer abundance of true stories, McDonald presents a picture of homosexual sex as a nearly universal male experience, in pointed contrast to the contemporary ideology of homosexuality as special identity. In the world of the *S.T.H.* book, every barracks shower is an orgy room; every Boy Scout jamboree is a festival of sexual initiation; every conservative politician and clergyman pays male hustlers for sex. Everything men do to bond or compete in sports, war and politics is a sublimation of, if not a substitute for, homosexual desire.

Just as the cutting-off point of the classical period at the start of the age of AIDS is no accident, neither is the writers' intention of getting the reader hot and bothered - providing, like phone sex and porn flicks, an alternative to the risks of in-person sex. This may help to explain what separates the *S.T.H.* books from the common run of heterosexual pornographic fantasy: not so much the obvious difference in subject matter and object of desire as the relation they establish between writer and reader. The relentless popular discussions of hetero porn lately focus on an imaginary relation, one between the consumer and the person - the woman - portrayed as a sexual object. The actual relation of the real partners in the pornographic communication - the sender and the receiver, the producer and the consumer - is generally

Cultura (dates & times tba), **Jerk** (in Spanish)
NEW: July, 2009: London, England, (venue & dates tba), **Jerk January 2010:** Vancouver, Canada, (dates & venue tba), **Jerk January 2010:** New York City, *Under the Radar Festival*, **Jerk**
May 2010: San Francisco, venue & dates tba, **Jerk**
more tba

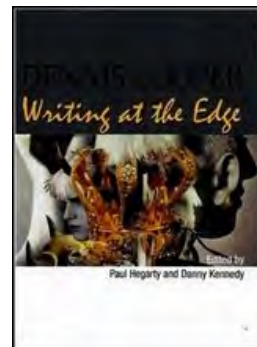
Upcoming releases:

May 2009: *Ugly Man* (short fiction; Harper Perennial)
Late 2009: *Title TK* (non-fiction; Harper Perennial)

'WRITERS DAY': EXTENDED ENGAGEMENT

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ignored. It is for this reason that verbal and pictorial porn can be treated as functionally equivalent by advocates of censorship (as well as by free-speech advocates), when what really transpires in the two cases is so manifestly different. What we see in the war against pornography is an effort to slap the naughty consumer's hand (the one that he has free) and make him drop the manufactured fantasy before it warps his mind and stunts his growth. But the whole point of pornographic communication is that masturbation no longer becomes a solitary vice; the consumer of pornography is, in reality, never truly alone with his fantasies and his fist.

Hetero porn is produced almost exclusively for men, and almost as exclusively *by* men. It is rarely, in actuality, a matter of women getting men hot, but of men getting men hot - by telling dirty stories about women, or presenting dirty pictures of women. Thus, the prudes are partly right to say that porn is essentially adolescent; its system of production and consumption is one great circle jerk. What they fail to recognize, however, is that this homosexual circle endures in adulthood not as a kind of arrested development, but as a perfectly ordinary factor in heterosexual response - an evidence by the way that male mammals of any species are aroused by each other's arousal, or by the bewildering emphasis on the "money shot" in pornographic films produced for the straight male consumer. (I have only recently learned that there are phone-sex lines on which straight men can swap heterosexual stories while they jack off; to a gay man, this seems not only titillating but truly *queer*.) The very real homosexual component in heterosexual relations is impossible to separate out, and the fantasy relation to a sexual object in verbal pornographic communication among men conceals an actual homosexual relation, mediated by the printed word. But that relation may never, ever be acknowledged.

It is at least possible that the notorious aggression towards women in heterosexual porn, far from being an entirely contextless display of men's violent fantasies about women, results from the repressed homosexual situation of heterosexual porn. It may be a matter of self-presentation in the homosexual circle, reflecting how both the producer and consumer want to be perceived by other men - especially in the intimate and vulnerable conditions of the pornographic communication. (This is not to say that this styled of pornography doesn't inspire men to degrade women and commit rape; I don't see how anyone, however committed to the freedom of expression, can deny that it does.) The emphasis on domination in heterosexual pornography is a whining attempt to find love - but the love of other men, the real partners in the sexualized relation of pornography, and not that of the imaginary subject of fantasy. In the first-person account of the *S.T.H.* books, the homosexuality of the writer-reader relation is openly acknowledged as the whole point of communication.

McDonald said that his mission was to replace pornography with *smut* - by which he meant to talk about sex that is truthful, idiosyncratic, and honest even about its own reason for being. Contemporary crusades against pornography focus single-mindedly on the eradication of certain kinds of representation that are deemed dangerous influences on attitudes and behaviors. They may well be; but to argue for repression is to neglect that in any struggle over ideas, falsehoods and fantasies do not yield to a determined silence, but to truth. For that reason, what we need is not a moratorium on any one kind of imagery or speech. What we need is more smut. (March 1994)

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RELEVANT PLACES

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[Dennis Cooper Merchandise](#)
[Dennis Cooper Official Website](#)
[Distimuium's 'The Guide Thing'](#)
[Gisele Vienne](#)
[Grove Press](#)
[Little House on the Bowery](#)
[Marius Mangseth's and Sveinung Mikkelsen's 'Krybbedad,' a short film based on DC's 'Horror Hospital Unplugged'](#)
[Peter Rehberg / Pita](#)
[POL](#)
[Rallo: the DC Blog Collective](#)
[Short Swedish TV documentary about 'I Apologize'](#)
[Stephen O'Malley](#)
[The Distinguished Locals Shoppe](#)
[The Filthy](#)
[USERLANDS: Dave Hebb's short film 'Metaphase'](#)
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BLOG ARCHIVE

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Xmas recognition #3:
Joyeux Noël de votre
ami Denn...

p.s. Hey. Like I said, I'm
taking tomorrow off t...

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Welt, Bernard: One man's meat. In: Welt, Bernard: *Mythomania. Fantasies, Fables and Sheer Lies in Contemporary American Popular Culture*. Art Issues Press, 1996. pp. 58-62.



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