

Dear *Bird*flock;

I am writing you as a Gay person, a revolutionary anarchist, and an ardent admirer of *The Great Speckled Bird*. In all three capacities I was dismayed and perplexed to find in your December 6th issue an article by Atlanta's foremost "drag queen," Diamond Lil, on a trip she took to California.

I have nothing against drag queens, Diamond Lil, trips to California, or drag queens writing about trips to California, but I'm at a loss to understand why the *Bird* staff considered this material appropriate to any of its editorial purposes. There are plenty of Gay magazines (like *David*, published in Florida) that are panting for exactly this sort of campy, sexist, cryptolite, Sunday-Brunch-Drag-Show-at-the-Snottiest-Gay-Bar patter. Why did the *Bird* feel obliged to publish it?

I have noticed that fewer and fewer substantive articles on the Gay movement have been appearing in the *Bird* in the past few months, and this makes the publication of Diamond Lil's piece all the more disconcerting, by shifting the emphasis from progressive aspects of Gay Liberation to stereotypical representations of the old unliberated "faggot" (no other word for it). Does the absence of articles reflect the death of the Gay Liberation movement, at least in Atlanta? Diamond Lil's piece throws considerable light on the reasons for the failure of the GLF [Gay Liberation Front] to change consciousness, the way the women's liberation movement has done.

Traditionally, Gay people have been considered, and have considered themselves, "advanced" and "free" because they are not tied down by society's sexual standards and because their self-expression does not conform to the definitions of "masculine" and "feminine" behavior generally agreed upon and followed in western civilization. Yet the alternative modes of conduct that most Gay people have chosen have not represented genuine liberation from meaningless restrictions, but pathetic and exaggerated copying of the worst features of "straight" society.

The groping and tricking that so excite Diamond Lil in Los Angeles' Griffith Park are not the activities of free and happy adventurers, but the desperate contrivances of emotionally starved people whose counterparts can be found in the living-rooms of every fashionable suburb and condominium. And the freedom not to be conventionally masculine that Lil celebrates turns into the most abject mimicry of conventional femininity—smirking, simpering, wrist-flapping, back-biting. This is not counter-culture, but American culture with a vengeance. One would hope that if GLF means anything, it means the liberating of Gay people to find and be themselves, not to try and be Joan Crawford or Bette Davis.

The *Bird* prides itself, and justifiably, on its alertness to evidences of sexism practiced by men against women, but this sensitivity makes even more puzzling its willingness to publish so blatant an example of sexism as Diamond Lil's article. Is this because the treating of men as objects by other men is a less dehumanizing form of behavior than the objectifying of women? Or is it simple that the practices of Gay people are so quaint and entertaining that the sensitivities by which the *Bird* judges human behavior ordinarily can be suspended in this area?

Gay men and women cannot expect the problem of Gay sexism to be taken seriously by their freinds until they begin to take it seriously themselves. I have been to GLF picnics and outings which, with slight variations, could have been gatherings of the Elks or Kiwanis out for a romp. Every passing male was subjected to leers and objectifying remarks, and much of the conversation consisted of competitive enumeration of recent "tricks." What kind of "liberation" is this?

I may be accused of lacking a sense of humor, of not taking Diamond Lil's article in the spirit of good dirty fun in which it was written. I plead guilty to not finding funny tired old drag show routines and ancient faggot puns (like "piece" and "peace"). Many people still regard Bob Hope and *I Love Lucy* as the height of comic invention, but I don't notice the *Bird* giving space to these other relics of the Eisenhower Era. Open wide your wings, dear *Bird*, to welcome transvestites, outcasts of every type, all truly liberated folk, but please kick drag queens and other fossils from a dying culture out of your nest.

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Atlanta