

Drummer Reads The Books

Naked Lunch, Brown-Bag Style...

END PRODUCT: THE FIRST TABOO
by Dan Sabbath and Mandel Hall,
Preface by Abby Rockefeller. URIZEN BOOKS,
N.Y., 1977. 287 pp.

Written March 17, 1978, and published in *Drummer* 22, May 1978, this feature-article book review which I wrote had to be published under the name of my longtime pal and housemate, David Hurles, because publisher John Embry was freaking that I had too many bylines in *Drummer*. In this issue of *Drummer* 22, for instance, I wrote eleven pieces ranging from features and reviews to the drama of “Corporal in Charge of Taking Care of Captain O’Malley.” Whatever. I used the publication of *End Product* as a hook to address the growing popularity of scatology in gay sex culture.

In 1973, when Sam Steward (Phil Andros) asked me in his library-like living room in his cottage in Berkeley, what was the “latest” among what he thought the wildly libertine gays in San Francisco, I said, “Scatology.” And he said, “That’s the end of everything.” So what was the wisdom? Shit or go blind? Eat shit and die? What is this shit? Check out my *Drummer* 20, January 1978 introduction for my piece on “Crimes of Nature” for a profile of art and scatology in gay culture. In New York, at 6th and Houston, there was the famous flower shop, Gifts of Nature, run by scatologist Jack McNenny who provided Robert Mapplethorpe with exquisite blooms for his crystalline flower photographs, which had cachet, critic Edward Lucie-Smith has said, because while the flower photograph was hanging in the dining room, the fisting photograph was hanging in the bedroom. Lucie-Smith is correct. What most people can see of the surface of gay culture is interesting mostly because of what everyone senses is spinning unspoken beneath the

surface.

When, in fact, Mark Hemry and I created the first 'zine of the '80s, *Man2Man Quarterly*, we were very successful, but one thing was problematical to our taste: the sea change in gay culture that led more and more to the most hidden and subversive sex of the Titanic 70's, shit. Because Man2Man was created to be even more reflective of the readers than *Drummer*, we encouraged readers to send in personal classified ads of any length, but we hadn't bargained for such an outpouring of scatology.

Because personal classifieds are the only true and honest gay literature revealing the actual hearts and minds of what gay men want, Man2Man in its two-year run became one of the most sociologically accurate mirrors every held up for gay men to reflect their ids. I do not believe in censorship, so we published our readers' desires. The response was overwhelming. Man2Man subscriptions and sales shot off the charts.

The visible tip of an iceberg is 10%; what lies beneath the surface of the water is the other huge 90%. Under the self-parodying disco tip of the iceberg of sex in the Titanic 70s, some unspoken bulk was actually driving the decade. Steroids, for instance, though rarely spoken about, were the most popular drug in the 70s; scatology, though only whispered about, was, because of its obvious connection to the wildly popular fisting-on-drugs, the ultimate secret fraternity where shit and the needle separated the men from the boys. (For the introduction of the needle and intravenous drugs to gay culture, see my *Drummer* article in this book on artist Chuck Arnett; the article was also featured in Mark Thompson's anthology, *Leatherfolk*.)

Here are a couple of relevant ads from Man2Man which ceased publication in 1982, not because of the ads, but because computers had not yet been introduced and the physical labor of assembling an increasingly popular magazine was too much. Remember, also 1982 was also the year that both the VCR and the personal video camera came into first use. We sometimes forget how technologically primitive were the years between Stonewall and HIV, and this reflects on how gay culture published and produced

itself. There was no computer for me to compose my work for *Drummer*. Every word I wrote I typed on a non-electric portable Smith-Corona typewriter I received as a Christmas gift my senior year in high school, 1956. After that came the type-setting and the art direction and layout—all done by hand with scissors and paste.

Also, please note, that *Drummer* rarely published scatology ads because of censorship from printers, distributors, and bookstores, and what scat ads *Drummer* published were abbreviated because *Drummer* charged by the word, and Man2Man allowed any length as long as it was interesting. Man2Man was more subversive and uncensored, because we found some kind of honesty and some kind of human truth in the personals ads revelations, each like its own little confessional. These ads are from *Man2Man Quarterly* #4, December 1980/January 1981. Pretend you are an archeologist finding ancient and secret hieroglyphics. Read them non-judgmentally with the kindness of memory, and recognize the engaging sense of fun and celebration that characterized gay culture before HIV.

“TURD WRESTLING. WM, 6-foot, 165 pounds of moustached sickness. MUTUALIST TURD MAN seeks high-minded lowlife player who understands scat rap, fantasy J/O, as well as long, slow, sensual buildup verbally to visual drop of solid turds for mutual play. Smell the shit thick in our moustaches. With shit foreplay, let’s do some heavy shit-mining/fistfucking, as well as good old dick-in-butt fucking on my bunk with the mansmell of our shit churning between our hardon-to-hardon TURD WRASSLE! Also like CIGARS. For a good time South of Market, write Nuke, XXX73, San Francisco”

“HAIRY TOILET SEX BUDDY for hot action, fantasy, photos, letters. I’M TOP/MUTUAL with HEAVY FILTH TALK DURING ACTION. Am 5-8, 43, 160, moustache, hairy pits, and hairy manhole. I DIG GETTING TOGETHER WITH A MAN WHO GETS INTO ASSHOLE WORSHIP, PISS, FARTS, MANSMELLS, AND SWEATY TOILET ACTION. Have rimseat, will travel. Especially for deep shithole sucking, parties with healthy, goodlooking guys into fresh asshole shit, and LOTS OF

DIRTY VERBAL FUN! ROD, Box XXX, Durham NC 27702.”

“BUTT-DUMPING MUSCULAR TOP. Butt-dumping W?M, 32, 5-9, 160, TOP MAN. Upfront: I like to spread my muscular butt and have it sucked for hours, and then fuck your ass, and your mouth, using your shit as lube. Will fill up my butt with fresh food and fruit and let it s-l-o-w-l-y feed a HUNGRY MAN. My muscular, stocky body into long intimate weekends. Will experiment with the right dude. Dig receiving letters, photos, and stained JOCKS and UNDERSHORTS. Pittsburgh. 00107.”

Jack McNenny’s personal ad in *Man2Man* #8, December 1981, is about as frank as it gets, and reveals why Jack, with his hammock in his apartment above his 6th and Houston flower shop. Gifts of Nature, was so popular in Manhattan. “MANHATTAN MANIMAL: TOP MAN SWINGS MUTUAL. My shit stinks real fuckin’ good. Dig daily dumping, sweaty action, dirty longjohns, jocks, snot, piss, pits, feet, farts. Total toilet action, celebrating the long hard gifts of a natural man to a natural man, with rimseats, bedpans, slings, enemas, rubber sheets, and photos. If you’re into hot and filthy action, let’s get it on in the Village. NYC. Call Jack: 212-243-XXXX.”

For all these reasons, I strove to address these issues in this review of End Product in a totally non-judgmental way. I tried whimsy to levitate the material, and then linked the physical act to existential considerations. The *Drummer* readership in the 70s was very open to new topics—such as this first scat article ever in the mainstream gay press—as well as to an intellectual, even satirical, op-ed approach. I always trusted back then that *Drummer* readers were intelligent. My premise was I couldn’t turn on their dicks if I turned off their minds. I have always tried to write stuff that starts in the reader’s head and works its way down.

Actually, in principle and in point of fact, no one should ever blame the behavior of the 70s for HIV. I’m just going to flat out say it as a witness who was there in the 70’s as a journalist and analyst, that nothing in 70’s behavior caused HIV. The virus was a wild card probably played by political terrorists who tossed the card into the game—but that’s a whole anti-gay theory that need not

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be addressed here. Even if the 70's hadn't rocked with free love, HIV would still have been injected into gay culture which at the same time it was fucking was gaining all the power that comes with emerging identity in politics (resisting right-wing fundamentalist Republicans and shaping the views of middle and left-wing Democrats) and economics (discretionary income and the buying of real estate gentrifying worn neighborhoods).

One need only parallel other "controlled medical experiments" such as radiation on American soldiers, flu virus over San Francisco, mind-altering drugs on prisoners in penitentiaries, and Legionnaire's Disease, to say nothing about Agent Orange and Gulf War Syndrome. Biological warfare has a long and secret practice. While HIV may not have at first been aimed at gays, it's target in my own personal theory was economically and racially driven to depopulate the as-yet most unexploited continent in the world, Africa. After African nationalists drove out European colonists in the 1950s with uprisings such as the Mau Mau, the only way for western powers to reenter the African continent without resistance was to kill off the resistant population. HIV jumped from Africans to the white population, because of the many gay men who find mixed-race sex a joy. There is truth behind all urban legends including the urban legend of the gay flight attendant who had sex in Nigeria and brought AIDS back across the Atlantic to the Mine Shaft, the Slot, and the Everard baths.

Excuse moi, but I am tired of the intellectual fallacy, borne out in 80's politically-correct fundamentalist cant, that 70s behavior inherently *caused* anything medical. Again, *excuse moi*, but I majored in philosophy, so I make mention of "post hoc ergo propter hoc." That Latin phrase basically means "do not conclude that just because one thing follows another that it was caused by the thing it follows."

Okay. Slap me. Stop. I needed that. In the years since End Product was published in 1978, there has been only one more book of note to address this taboo topic, and even it cloaks itself in a nearly hallucinatory title: *A Sociological History of Excretory Experience: Defecatory Manners and Toiletry Technologies* (Mellen

Studies in Sociology, V. 30, hard cover, June 2001. Following this review of *End Product* is, for me, in my parallel world of *Virtual Drummer*, a feature review I wrote of several Sludgemaster videos created in Texas. Sludgemaster in the 1990's had a gravitational pull based on scatology both direct and indirect through metaphors such as mud and grease. Actually, Sludgemaster anticipates the human need to witness the forbidden and the extreme in the same way that television reality shows in the first decade of the 21st century feast upon living primitive the way that gay man Richard Hatch did in *Survivor*. The Sludgemaster feature was published in

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SOMETIMES IT'S BEST JUST TO DIVE RIGHT INTO a shitty job. Shit used to be something that we dropped behind us as we scooped out the maze of life. No more. In *End Product: The First Taboo*, shit assumes a life of its own, rising from your American-Standard porcelain bowl to become money, power, sex, sin—plus twelve vitamins, fourteen minerals (including silver), chlorine, and eight natural soaps. Shit, we are told, as it wends its way through the intestines taking its own sweet time, might well be considered an organ of the body. It nurtures us and the friendly flora which protect our health. And it doesn't taste so bad either. Trouble is, we don't know shit about it, and have even less respect for it.

BROWN-BAG LUNCH

End Product sets out to remedy all that, and except for a bit of overkill, succeeds in the end. Did you hear about the family in Des Plaines? In 1974, police, responding to a reported break-in, discovered something that would not attract your average thief. The floors of the family townhouse were covered with over 100

cubic yards of garbage and human excrement. That's a lot of shit. It took ten workers from the Department of Public Works using gas masks, to dig things out. Can you imagine watching Johnny Carson in a bedroom surrounded by ankle-to-knee-high shit? And each morning the mommy went off to her job as an R.N., the daddy to the supermarket, and the three kids to school. (I sure would have hated to sit next to one of them.) The plain fact is, their own shit didn't smell so bad to them.

After reading a few more such stories and very strange facts, I flashed that perhaps this was all a put-on, sort of a "Carlos Casteneda dreams a crap," or a young writer thinking that this was how Mark Twain really got his start. But no, right in the proper place for such things were seventeen pages of notes, citations, and references. So intellectually fortified, I trudged on looking for the dirty parts.

SHIT OR GO BLIND

I learned that every time we have to strain to succeed, we risk a heart-attack, mental shock mimicking epilepsy or delirium tremens, possible coronary thrombosis or cerebral hemorrhage, or rupture of the spleen. We risk all this because we eat lousy, and don't have the sense to squat (like Boy Scouts) and let our body take care of things more naturally. And then, after we shit, we all walk around crazy if our asshole didn't wipe clean enough this time.

But what, I pondered, about disease, plague, famine, and spiritual death, from (gasp!) eating shit. If the first taboo is shit, and the last taboo is cannibalism, what fearsome territory lay between. I washed my hands and continued. Some where in here must be the answers: how to convince the unwilling to eat your shit (*aww, just a taste*); or, what way to prepare yourself to volunteer for heavy-duty action; how to know when you've rimmed enough ripe buttocks and you're ready for the real thing. I searched for directions on how to stifle the gag impulse, and think beatific thoughts as you convert the offering into the flesh. So many questions seemed unanswered.

EAT SHIT

Reading on, I soon found that it is a fairly common practice for animals to eat shit. Remember when your dog used to do it? In fact, we eat shit all the time, unknowingly of course, but plenty of it is present in our food, particularly if you are a gourmet and given to eating little creatures whole. I learned that *shit* did not appear in the dictionary until 1961; that the Library of Congress, with 16,000,000 volumes, lists only one with shit in the title, and it's missing. (No doubt many more are full of shit). The Motion Picture Code doesn't even mention defecation. You can go to a movie and watch folks fuck, but in film, people do not shit. I could now tell you that the oldest surviving creations of man are fossilized shit; or that some babies shit before they breathe, most do before they eat, and many people do after they have died (passing over the fact that you *always* do when being executed or dying a violent death). The biography of our lives is sandwiched in shit.

YOU ARE WHAT YOU DUMP

So, back to basics. What is this stuff we call shit? Well, *shit is you*. Shit is not simply unused food. A little of it is fibre that you did not digest (and it's true that we meat-eaters shit much less than people whose diet is mainly grains, fruit, and vegetable matter). Most shit, however, consists of dead cells and dead bacteria: the stuff of life, now dead. When you kiss your shit goodbye, you say farewell to your own past. Shit in your intestines is inhabited by a hundred trillion little creatures of over three dozen varieties. We could not live without them. They are part of us.

COPROPHAGES I HAVE KNOWN

One informant told me, "How well I remember the first time someone wanted to eat my shit, or (he didn't care, really) have me eat his. It was in the 60's, and people barely admitted rimming yet. He was a hippie (which then had mystique) and we just had super-

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sex. How well I remember his balls, the biggest I'd ever seen, like two extra-large eggs in a velvet sac. And then he told me what he really wanted. Struck dumb, I ever so slowly edged away, trying to find a way to retreat in time, so as to erase that terrible suggestion. (We did have grass, but far less popper then!) Recovering myself, (and declining), I had to ask *why* he would suggest such a thing. I could not understand. But he was patient with this young fool (I was 22) as he imparted his secret knowledge to me. 'To eat shit of another person,' he told me, 'is a spiritual thing. It is as close as you can get to another human being. It is a way of becoming part of them.' It is, I later realized, the very heaviest compliment."

EAT SHIT AND DIE?

Well, is it safe to eat shit? *End Product* never quite tackles that. We are told that it is safe to eat your own, since you're certainly not going to get someone else's polio from your own shit. And further, that aside from high cholesterol content, fresh shit is unlikely to ever cause anything other than a bit of dysentery. (It is shit lying exposed that becomes a breeding ground for typhoid, cholera, and worse. Those little devils know a good thing when they smell it.) The book abounds in historical nonsense, but fails to suggest that eating an apple after getting into scat, not only keeps the doctor away but also freshens the breath.

PISS ET CETERA

Most disappointing of all, I was expecting a book about end *products*. I guess the title should have been a warning. The book was about shit. Period. But what about the body's other products, lovingly named *Egesta* by many? What about spit, lugers both white and green, or snot, piss in its endless variety, bouquets of sweat, bitter ear wax, the miracle of mucus from the eyes which not only turns to sand but also cures warts. What about puke, or pus, or our very breath, fulsome with the products of our continuing life? Our bodies keep producing, producing, producing. And there's

someone out there hungry, hungry, hungry. Personally, whenever I see a hot stud spit on the sidewalk, I get a thirstful desire to suddenly become a street cleaner.

SHIT: A DENIAL OF DEATH

Man's main task in life becomes the denial of what his asshole represents: that, in fact, he is nothing *but* body so far as nature is concerned. Nature's values are bodily values, human values are mental values, and though they take the loftiest flights, they are built upon excrement, impossible without it, always brought back to it. The fact is, we fear our shit because it represents decay and death. Eat shit and challenge death; it might even be the spiritual adventure that I was told of so long ago.

WHAT IS THIS SHIT?

The book, as a whole, is a lot like chili. A tingle at the top, a great rumble in mid-passage, and pleasurable relief at the end. The authors are not credited with any other work, and the publisher is bush league. It could well have been self-published or bear the invisible imprimatur of the C.I.A. The preface by Abby Rockefeller, whose patrician obligation is to educate and to inform, rages on about the linguistic weight of the word *shit*. She might better have seized the opportunity to plug her Clivis Multrum, a household waste and shit composting unit not requiring water. It's been reported that her great-grandfather would have paid an awful lot for a good BM in his later years.

A BOOK FOR THE JOHN

Even during the California drought of the last two years, it was tacitly agreed by society that you didn't need to flush after pissing, but for godsake *don't* leave the bowl full of turds. But I've dabbled and smeared long enough. Just remember, we may be temporarily able to get shit out of our body, but we can never get it out of our

consciousness. Sabbath and Hall know that. Now we do too. Now if Abby Rockefeller could just drop a load!

(Written by Jack Fritscher, and published over David Hurles' signature, with his permission.)

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