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Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"For years I resisted the blandishments, the siren song of the Freudian school of literary analysis. Marie Bonaparte and her disciple, Leslie Fiedler, left me cold with their broad, enticing hints of impotency and miscegenated homosexuality. Whenever I was accused by some staid Jamesian of treating his milk-soppy, fingertipkissing, neuter Henry with cavalier Freudianism, I invariably took umbrage at the libel. My central position, as I saw it, was that if there is latent homosexuality in us all, awaiting only the proper moment of failure and frustration to signal its emergence, then let latent homosexuality lie. I, for one, didn't want to know about this disgraceful aspect of my idlibidoego. Anyway, the only homosexual personalities I've ever met were anything but latent: you could spot them a mile away. Their patter is as subtle as that of a Peking Red Guard cadre, and their "approach" is quite as obvious as that of one male dog to another."

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Come Back To The Huddle, Unitas, Honey!

BY HAROLD DE PUY

I quite realize that in the days that I am writing, it will be quite impossible for a reader . . . not to jump over a Freudian moon, but I belong to a simpler and a less polluted generation. I have always gloried in my conception of friendship, and I will insist to my dying day that it has nothing of sex in it.

—THE RECTOR OF JUSTIN

For years I resisted the blandishments, the siren song of the Freudian school of literary analysis. Marie Bonaparte and her disciple, Leslie Fiedler, left me cold with their broad, enticing hints of impotency and miscegenated homosexuality.¹ Whenever I was accused by some staid Jamesian of treating his milk-soppy, fingertip-kissing, neuter Henry with cavalier Freudianism, I invariably took umbrage at the libel. My central position, as I saw it, was that if there is latent homosexuality in us all, awaiting only the proper moment of failure and frustration to signal its emergence, then let latent homosexuality² lie. I, for one, didn't want to know about this disgraceful aspect of my idlibidoego.³ Anyway, the only homosexual personalities I've ever met⁴ were anything but latent: you could spot them a mile away. Their patter is

¹I've forgotten how they've disposed of necrophilia. Perhaps they figured that corpse-diddling was just a bit too un-latent for so accurate a science as Freudian analysis.

²Cf. "sleeping dogs."

³If the Freudians can coin terms, what's the harm in an amateur's trifling with the poor, bedraggled, latently-homosexual English(?) language?

⁴Surprisingly few—which bodes little good for either the "latent" crowd or the misguided "miscegenates."

as subtle as that of a Peking Red Guard cadre, and their "approach" is quite as obvious as that of one male dog to another.⁵

In any event, I was in enough hot water myself, being from the phallus-under-every-bush⁶ school. I didn't have a single moth-eaten disciple—which is way under par these days: everyone in sight has hordes of disciples. My only admirer was a muddle-headed character, who sidled up to me one day after a rousing 'reading-in' session in the novel course, leered suggestively, and said, "You'n me are 'in' on the real secrets, huh, Mr. D.?" Still I resented his leer less than I did the look of pious hurt and resentment on the face of the student who complained one day that literature was no longer for the mystical few, as it apparently had been during the reign of my predecessor. Mysticism—sheesh! Of course, no one minds when first-rate mystics are tenth-rate poets; after all, who can complain if you're great at your vocation but not so hot at your hobby? Much the same can be said of good poets who are bad mystics. But when you tell this to

⁵Rather a shameless lot, male dogs; especially during Dog Days.

⁶Imagine the anguish and shame of the bush without one. Shudder!

Blakeans? they descend on you from every maggoty, 'mystical' cubbyhole in Christendom: who could've guessed there'd be so many! And when the Blakeans get riled, the Joyceans get upset, too, because they figure it's their turn to get iconoclasted next. And if there's anyone who needs a good bashing now and again, it's a Joycean. I'm not too popular with either Blakeans or Joyceans, because I know more about either writer than any of them. Those who hate me best, though, are ignorant Shakespeareans and Jameseans. Melvilleans don't know I exist, for which small favor I daily praise heaven — Melvilleans, in general, are the most ignorant and complacent dotards in . . . I almost said existence.

But I *have* gone afield, haven't I? Let's see—where was I? Oh, yeah; I finally converted to Freudianism one dull, dark and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens.⁸ That is, I was sitting one Sunday, transfixed in my rocker, utterly mesmerized by the unblinking eye of the t.v. screen, watching the Baltimore Colts trading civilities with the Green Bay Packers.⁹ I had always

⁷Blakeans are those who, finding no sex in William's poetry, decide that any writer so clean has to be a mystic. They're mistaken, of course; mystics are clean but not bloodless.

⁸If you don't recognize the plagiarism, you should be ashamed of yourself, you ignoramus.

⁹Incidentally, if you want to know why the Packers are so damned rude to their opponents, go spend a winter in Green Bay sometime. You've gotta be mean to keep warm.

regarded pro football as an innocent, invigorating, albeit somewhat bloody sport that even nuns and little kids¹⁰ could enjoy—educational, even. For a while, I watched the activity with mild interest,¹¹ averting my gaze only now and then from some more-than-ordinarily-brutal display¹² of high spirits and uneven temperament. I even began to laugh at the jokes that the announcer-analysts were telling.¹³ Then it came to me in a flash. What was going on down on that field in full view of every citizen, black and white, of these United States,¹⁴ was an indecent exhibition! I don't mean an exhibition of organized sadism and assorted acceptable modes of inflicting cruelty. Hell, no! I mean, these seemingly clean-living quarterbacks, halfbacks, fullbacks, cornerbacks, and just plain throwbacks were displaying their latent homosexuality — both the straight variety, and the miscegenated, for there was a pretty even distribution of white and negro 'players.' Shades of Huck and Jim!

As soon as I saw through the

¹⁰Speaking of kids, I read "The Tyger" to my kids once. They not only thought it was a lousy poem, but they suggested I speak to Blake about his spelling. But what do kids know?

¹¹I had bets on both teams that day, and I won them both.

¹²Did you ever watch Jim Taylor gouging out a lineman's eyes? Beautiful technique. . .

¹³Later I was told these were not jokes—they were a straight-faced assessment of each team's strategy.

¹⁴Give or take a few protestors, who were even then picketing the L.B.J. Ranch over Viet Nam, instead of protesting the bombing of Baltimore's secondary by Bart Starr at the instance of Vince Lombardi.

thin veil of respectability to the basic orgiastic character of the exhibition, I leaped to the phone and put in a long-distance call to Leslie. However, Professor Fiedler had recently been purchased from Montana U., in the Missoula league, by Buffalo U., in the bush league, and there was not enough left in the household budget for a call to Buffalo.¹⁵ So I snatched down my well-thumbed Bonaparte and during half-time, instead of drinking in the cacophony of 110 massed high school bands, I made hasty notes. Alas, it was all there, the naked infamy of it. I now knew the wicked purpose of the huddle, for instance. Not only were they showing their behinds half-teasingly, half-insultingly to the patrons of the orgy, but one of their number was craftily singling out a new victim to be defiled, a sacrifice to their latently homosexual idlibidoe-gos. I noted that they always chose the handsomest, smoothest-shaven, most masculine opponent for their assaults. They not only fondled the victim and pinched him saucily, but they inevitably made him fall to the ground, where they could have their will of him with impunity, the pile of bodies masking the true nature of their abominations. The hoarse chuckles of the assaulters drowned out the nervous giggles of the assaulted. The diabolical part of it was that everyone rose from the disgusting exhibition looking either coolly unconcerned, angelically innocent, or

¹⁵I learned later that Mr. Fiedler was at Bison Stadium at the time, gloating over the massacre of the Jets by the Buffalo mastadons.

(in some obviously overacted cases) angry and perturbed.

I was furious with myself, of course, for not having seen through their charade right from the beginning. Were Sigmund alive, he would have taken one look at the knickers the so-called players were wearing, and he'd have whipped up a book in no time about their adolescent attire and all it implied. His disciples, taking their hint from The Master, would have noted other revealing characteristics: the skin-tightness of their clothes; the over-padding in certain places to enhance their masculinity; the makeup some (especially the rascally quarterbacks) affected under the eyes to make the eyes more prominent and effective for flirting; the fancy headgear; the bandages many wore to elicit pity and attract attention; the sharpened cleats to add a sadistic touch—the mere threat of them would send delicious shivers down the spines of their playmates. Some of Freud's more sharp-witted disciples would point out, too, a clever ruse employed to help throw the suspicious off the track, should anyone indeed suspect; that is, many of the players had wives and children—this cover of respectability would hardly fool a Freudian!

Getting back to myself, it became clear now that the ogling quarterback, normally much smaller and more delicate than the others, was dangled as bait by his knowing co-conspirators. Some, like Fran Tarkenton, danced¹⁶ shame-

¹⁶"Scrambling," huh! We know better, don't we, fellas? (Wink! Wink!)

lessly for long seconds in the open field, looking helpless and frightened, in order to entice the more desirable of the opposing players into positions of vulnerability, where they were brutally mauled by other inflamed players. Some victims showed a marked degree of annoyance at this shabby treatment, but probably only because they had been singled-out by some ill-favored wall-flower rather than the man of their choice. I noted also how often one player patted another on the fanny, with obvious relish on the part of both; further, my suspicions were borne out when opposing players scrupled not to indulge in this overly-affectionate gesture on occasion. Blocking and tackling were, of course, crudely disguised erotic procedures. The tackling, especially, caught my eye: as often as possible the tackler hugged his victim tightly in both his arms, reluctant to release him, and likely as not falling with him to the inviting turf till surfeited. Nor did they fool me for a second with all their naughty talk of red dogging, flare patterns, tight ends, and what-not. I haven't deciphered their hidden meanings as yet, but I'm certain they're there; just give me time. In this lascivious Freudian world, no one says what he means: I've done enough literary analysis to know that!

And what of the onlookers at this bestial Saturnalia¹⁷—were they revolted and saddened at the dis-

¹⁷I don't know the singular form from the plural, and I doubt if the stupid Romans did. All I know is that Saturn got his, but good.

play of shameful decadence? Sadly must it be told, they were not. Rather were they incited, themselves, to frenzy, accompanied as the activity was by suggestive band music and other aphrodisiac inducements to moral laxity. For no Roman emperor, no matter how debauched, had so licentious an exhibition been arranged. The crowd cheered on their favorites, vociferously voicing their voyeuristic approval (oh! most dubious of delights) at each fresh outrage.

Oh, I could go on—what a tale I could unfold, that would elevate the hackles of every decent, red-corpused American! I tell all this reluctantly, knowing beforehand that many will misinterpret my motives in itemizing the crude, indelicate features of this hebdomadal¹⁸ carnival of pseudo-masculinity.¹⁹ But I cannot continue. If I am to retain my sanity, I must hurry to my psychoanalyst and unburden my tale of conjectures and suspicions. It may be some time before I am emboldened to make my notes public and bring down scorn and opprobrium on the heads of those moleskin-clad rapscale lions. Meanwhile, back to the huddle, all you honies—who knows what new adventure awaits you on the next exciting foray into the line!²⁰

¹⁸And even oftener.

¹⁹If you don't believe me, see these guys sometime when they don't have their padding on. Why you can't tell them from any ordinary pro wrestler. And speaking of wrestling... well!

²⁰I didn't really have a footnote to insert here, but twenty is a much neater number than nineteen any day, believe me.

SPRING FEVER



HONEY?

*At the hour when we are
Trembling with tenderness
Lips that would kiss
Form prayers to broken stone.*

—THE HOLLOW MEN