Children Of The Brain: 
the Life, Theory, & Activism of Harry Hay, 1953-1964

Ben Miller

Senior Honors Thesis
Granted Honors with Distinction

New York University
Department of History
May 1, 2014

Adviser: Dr. Linda Gordon

Many thanks to the New York University College of Arts and Science Dean's Undergraduate Research Fund and the New York University Student Senators Council for generous grant support; and friends, family, and professors (including my adviser, my reader Dr. Martha Hodes, the thesis program supervisor Dr. George Solt, and Dr. K. Keeyne Baar) for their advice and assistance.
Table of Contents

Introduction - 3

Chapter One: My Terrible Years - 9

Chapter Two: The Sexual Being Is Not An Island - 29

Chapter Three: The Promise of a New Life - 50

Conclusions - 81

Appendix: Photographs - 84

Bibliography - 91
“The balance of the time I spent in combing the annals of History attempting to find answers to the Great Questions posed by FIRST Mattachine to my attention and concern: WHO ARE WE? WHAT ARE WE FOR? HOW DO WE RELATE TO OUR PARENT SOCIETY RESPONSIBLY AND AS A GROUP?”
- Harry Hay, 1975

Introduction

It wasn’t until the 1980s that scholars (many working independently, outside the academy) began to exhume and explore the vital history of American homosexual and homophile movements before the Stonewall rebellion. All serious considerations of that history feature as a central player Harry Hay: activist, troublemaker, theorist, founder of the Mattachine Society and therefore one of the founders of what are now thought of as the American LGBT political movements.

The standard story of Hay’s life – told in his biography, The Trouble with Harry Hay, written by his friend Stuart Timmons in 1990 and updated in 2012, as well as other histories which engage with his life and work in the context of a larger story, is thus: after an early life spent as a communist activist, Hay founded the Mattachine Society in Los Angeles in 1948, was kicked out in 1953, testified before HUAC in 1955, and spent the next ten years in a dead-end relationship doing nothing of particular interest until he met his life partner John Burnside in 1965, at which point he resumed his activism and helped found several organizations including the Radical Faeries. During the decade 1955-1965, according to this account, Hay did some research and wrote some papers, but they were mostly impenetrable, circuitous, and made few contributions to his later work or to larger conversations about homophile rights and movements.

The problem with this story is not that it is wholly untrue, but that it is incomplete – it ignores the importance of his relationships, research, and activity throughout the late

---

1 Letter from Harry Hay to Jonathan Ned Katz, February 20, 1975. Box 1, Folder 69. Harry Hay Papers, 2 A note on the terms: consistent with the majority of documents from this era, I use the term 'homophile' to describe 1950s and 1960s activists and individuals. When I use the term 'homosexual,' I mean it as an adjective to describe institutions and practices involving same-sex love and desire, including contemporary “gay”
1950s and early 1960s. I hope to shed new light on this “lost decade,” by fleshing out, improving, and even rewriting the standard story presented above; in so doing, I demonstrate that this decade is crucial to understanding both Hay’s later work and the larger story of the American LGBT movements. I add a heretofore-unacknowledged romantic relationship to the record, and further explore another; adding crucial new detail to the understanding of Hay’s life.

This thesis takes the form of an intellectual biography, interrogating a part of Hay's life that until now has been largely overlooked by scholars – the reconstruction of his emotional, intellectual, and political selves after all three were deeply rocked by his experience testifying in front of HUAC. I argue that between 1953 and 1955, Hay fell into a deep political, emotional, and theoretical paralysis, as demonstrated by his withdrawal from homophile activism, unstable and codependent relationship with hat designer Jørn Kamgren, and often difficult-to-decipher and circular research notes. This paralysis was caused by trauma from having been pursued by McCarthyism: Hay was forced to reckon with whom he would protect, and decided that he was a homophile activist first, even though evidence reveals his worries about the cowardice of that decision even years later. I argue that this paralysis was unlocked by developments in his research and theory. Existing scholarship does not communicate the basic tenets, ideological grounding, or the restrictive nature of the path Hay proposed as the normatively good way for homophiles to live. After broadening his thinking to include a historicized conception of the history of male homosexuality, mocking those who didn’t share his views that homosexuals were fundamentally different from heterosexuals and that the history of homosexuality was made up of a set of different historically and culturally specific institutions, Hay settled on one as the best for all homosexuals to follow. His chosen path, that of the “berdache,” was deeply

---

3 Strictly speaking, given that it’s 11 years, it’s more of a baker's decade.
influenced by Engels’ vision of primitive communism in ways that existing scholarship has not acknowledged.

Additionally, I argue that the key idea behind the Radical Faeries (that being "subjective relationships," existing to produce art, spiritual healing, and social activism), which existing scholarship dates to the early 1970s, was in fact developed as early as 1962. Without the vision of the socially productive berdache as a contributor to primitive communism, Hay could not have arrived at the model of intersubjective relationships that proved so essential to the Radical Faeries.⁴ Orientalist and even primitivist conceptions of those Pueblos and their residents expressed in heretofore-unacknowledged love letters with the Tewa Native American man Richard Tapia, while hindering Hay's earnest but often clueless and racist attempts to help reconstitute Native societies, provided Hay an idealized opportunity to see his ideas about primitive communism enacted, gave him a vision of primitive consciousness that he transformed into his own vision of homophile consciousness, and in so doing completed the unlocking of his activism. The resumption of activity that occurred when Hay met John Burnside would simply not have been possible without these developments. Given his lifelong influence from and interest in Native societies, revealing his romantic involvement with a Native American man adds to the understanding of his life and work.

Existing scholarship on homophile movements and the history of sexuality and socialism during the period I discuss mostly talks about Hay in the context of the 'standard' story set out on the first page; the most useful of these works include Hannah Dee's The Red in the Rainbow, Sherry Wolf's Sexuality and Socialism, John D'Emilio's classic Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970 (which is called upon to provide crucial contextual information throughout my work). Jonathan Ned Katz’s Gay American History: A Documentary History includes some direct content from

---

⁴ The idea of ‘subjective relationships’ is unique enough that it deserves definition here: Hay believed that the unique consciousness of homophiles enabled them to see one another and the world with more depth and honesty. This term and its implications are further explored in the third chapter.
Hay and other contextual information. For thinking on the berdache in modern consideration, I turned to Walter Williams' *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture*, which acknowledges Hay's importance to this field of research (Hay and Williams were friends). Analysis of Hay’s theory is limited, but includes Will Roscoe’s speech-turned-article “The Radicalism of Harry Hay,” published last winter in the *Gay and Lesbian Review*, and artist Gabriel M. Saloman’s consideration of “The Subjective Object, or Harry Hay in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” published in 2012 in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Protest*.

Finally, the most direct secondary literature covering this period is the aforementioned biography of Hay, *The Trouble with Harry Hay*, by Stuart Timmons. The book is remarkable in many ways: meticulously detailed, with gabby, sparkling prose. Its coverage of Hay’s life, however, is marred by omissions. In an approximately 300-page book, the events between the Mattachine Convention and Hay’s relationship with John Burnside – my lost baker’s decade – are dispensed with in twenty terse pages. Timmons covers Hay’s HUAC testimony, tells us he was in a dead-end relationship and tantalizingly gives a two-page glimpse at Hay’s research, informing his reader of the scope of Hay’s investigative project without conveying a clear sense of its path, development, conclusions, or scope. His conclusions about Hay’s research end up directly contradicting Hay’s own writing. Notably, he misses, as do other scholars, the influence of Engels and the notion of historical specificity. Additionally, Timmons minimizes Hay’s relationship with Jim Kepner and leaves out his romance with Richard Tapia, causing him to misunderstand the date and origin of the idea of the subjective relationship.

Some of these problems may arise from Timmons’ limited sourcing. A friend of Hay’s, Timmons relied extensively on interviews with Hay, making the biography more a reflection of Hay’s view of his own life than a document based on a survey of primary

---

Another work too problematic to mention in the main text is C. Todd White’s *Pre-Gay L.A.* Trained as an anthropologist, White considers his book to be a combination of ethnography and social history. He achieves neither, and makes several glaring factual errors in what ends up amounting to a sloppy hit job on Dorr Legg.
documents. It appears based on his source notes that Timmons only used documents that Hay directly gave him, and the biography was written before Hay sent his papers to the San Francisco Public Library to be catalogued.

The primary sources for this thesis are dominated by two archives of Hay’s personal papers. Some letters and a few manuscripts came from the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives in Los Angeles, California; unpublished writings and additional letters (including all the material on Richard Tapia) came from the Gay and Lesbian Center of the San Francisco Public Library. A new organization system and finding aid for the San Francisco archive is still being completed; while the last accessions were made publicly available in the months before my research took place, a few of them are still being placed in their new order. Many of these documents, therefore, were organized together and catalogued completely for the first time. Additionally, this thesis references two transcripts of oral histories by Hay, neither of which appear to have been explored by other scholars. One, from 1983, focuses on his HUAC testimony and is part of the collections of Columbia University. The other, from 1981-1982, taken by Mitchell Tuchman for the UCLA Oral History Research Center over a period of several months, covers his entire life in 256 pages that transcribe over 18 hours of videotape. The Tuchman interview, entitled “We Are A Separate People,” has a complex origin story that brings to light the way that Hay attempted to control his image. As Hay reviewed the transcripts of the tapes, he made innumerable changes to them, often adding multiple paragraphs and/or editing his terms. A few years later, the interviewer began preparing the transcripts into chronological order by year, with historical context noted; this document, a rough outline for a biography, is entitled Radical Faerie Consciousness or RFC (the full transcripts are in the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives in Los Angeles).⁶ Hay got wind of this, reviewed the manuscript, and flew into a rage at his perceptions of its inaccuracy; by this time Hay was at work with Timmons on his authorized biography. He withdrew permission from Tuchman for any

⁶ Radical Faerie Consciousness. Box 2, Folder 34. Harry Hay Papers, Los Angeles.
publication of his words. Tuchman claimed censorship, arguing in letters that Hay’s refusal to allow him to publish would reveal that “in his dotage Harry Hay relinquished the independence of mind that distinguished him in his prime – and that, coincidentally, will do little to inspire trust in Stuart’s [Timmons] volume.” Tuchman’s appeals proved of no use.

While I do not pass judgment on what agreements may or may not have transpired between these men, the incident does demonstrate that Hay actively managed his image, and goes some way towards explaining why the period I explore has been overlooked in a literature largely written by individuals friendly (or not) with their subjects. This period shows us a Hay in a great deal of personal pain, a Hay rapidly evolving and revising his ideas, rather than one confident in his vision, a Hay on the sidelines of the homophile movement (at least publicly) rather than at the forefront of an organization or set of organizations. At the same time, however, that very quality of flux and evolution is what makes a close and detailed intellectual biography of Hay during this time so essential.


8 Additional evidence for his management is that he did not preserve Jim Kepner and Richard Tapia’s responses to his own letters, hence the one-way explorations of their relationships. Given the ability to return to Los Angeles, it would be interesting to see if Kepner saved carbons of his own replies in his personal papers.
My Terrible Years: 
The End Of Mattachine & The Trauma of HUAC

Between 1953 and 1955, Harry Hay's life fell apart. Hay would later refer to this time as “my terrible years.” Worried that Hay's communist past would affect the organization; new members of the Mattachine Society staged a coup that removed the original leadership and took the organization in an assimilationist and apologetic direction. Simultaneously, Hay's lover Rudi Gernreich left him for professional opportunities in New York. He met Jørn Kamgren, a hat designer superficially like Rudi, whose traditional ideas about relationships chafed Hay. Worried he would never find anyone else, Hay moved in with Kamgren and lent the entire inheritance he hoped to leave his children to Kamgren's business: that of designing and marketing hats.

In early 1955, Hay’s worst fears came true: he was called in front of HUAC. Hung out to dry professionally, kicked out of Mattachine, and abandoned by his straight communist friends, Hay found himself pulled between allegiance to homophiles and communists, and in that process of reckoning decided to protect his homophile friends. He wouldn't name any names, but records of his trial preparations show he was prepared to admit he had been a communist. Prepared answers, full of bluster, were replaced by meeker replies in front of the committee. Later documents, including angry letters written decades later to friends who he felt had wronged him, defensively re-framed retellings of his own testimony that do not match recorded transcripts, and a deeply symbolic short story, demonstrate his own uncertainty about his testimony, and a feeling he had somehow been a coward and betrayed others even though his testimony led to no further investigations or arrests.

The combined trauma of HUAC’s investigation, the abandonment of his homophile and communist colleagues, his own feelings of inadequacy, and his kneecapped financial and work situations led to a paralysis of emotion, research, and politics. Hay largely withdrew

---

from homophile activism, attending only a few meetings per year and instead focusing on supporting Jørn's hat business.

**Harry Hay's Life From 1912-1953**

In the spring of 1953, the Mattachine Society and its original seven founders – Hay and Gernreich, plus Bob Hull, Chuck Rowland, Dale Jennings, Konrad Witt, and Jim Gruber – seemed to have every reason to celebrate. A year earlier, they had successfully defended Jennings in court against charges of lewd conduct, the first such acquittal even when the defendant was admittedly ‘a homosexual’. This success generated tremendous interest in the organization, which grew rapidly. New discussion groups began popping up all over Southern California. One letter even arrived from Tasmania, telling the founders that “The name Mattachine spreads hope along the wind.”

Harry Hay was born in 1912, the week the Titanic went down, to an American family in London. After an encounter at 14 with a sailor named Matt, he realized that he was gay and that it was something he felt should be celebrated rather than hidden. An honors student at Stanford, Hay proudly identified on the Stanford campus as a “temperamental” – contemporary slang for homosexual – and moved back to Los Angeles after dropping out. Hay became radicalized – and first encountered Native American cultures – by working as a field hand on his family’s farms in California and Nevada.

“How did he know,” a work with which Hay and his intimate friend Will Roscoe chose to open the collected book of Hay’s writings, describes his earliest memories of being taken at 14 to a ghost dance in a Native American community in 1925, near his uncle’s home in Smith Valley, Nevada. In Hay’s reminiscences of 1983, he remembers being first introduced to leftist politics through folk songs sung by the Native American farmhands.

---

employed by his uncle. Writing in the present tense to convey the immediacy and importance of this memory, Hay described vividly the men and women’s “shuffling dance,” the “impenetrable brush,” the stew pits and fire. Welcomed into the community because of the positive impression he had made on members of the community who worked on his uncle’s farm, Hay was invited to meet the “sacred man” of the tribe. While blind, he immediately sensed Hay’s presence and felt his face as he spoke. Hay remembered the man running his hands over Hay’s face, and “listening” to Hay even though nothing was said. The man concluded his experience with the words, “You will be a friend.” Later in life, Hay discovered that the man with whom he had been speaking was Jack Wilson, or Wovoka—the founder of the Ghost Dance religion, “a beautiful example of the kind of religion of the oppressed that a people who are about ready to go under may use as their last resort.”

The location of this remembrance at the beginning of Hay’s book cements the importance of this experience and the Native American connection and ideological grounding in his future work: “as a matter of fact, I was a friend all my life.”

In Los Angeles, by 1933, he encountered the Communist Party and was brought in by its appeals to artists during the Popular Front period of the 1930s. After undergoing psychotherapy, marrying Anita Platky, and adopting two daughters during the war years, Hay dreamed up the Mattachine Society in 1948, after he had left his family and firmly embraced his identity (at least privately) as Gay.

Throughout the next two years, Hay attempted to organize, but found little response within the community. Later, Hay remembered the time as “going round and round Robin Hood’s Barn, unable to get Gays without prominent sponsors and unable to get prominent

---

13 Ibid, 25.
16 Ibid, 31.
17 Columbia Reminiscences, 5-6.
sponsors without a Gay group already in operation."¹⁹ The stall pattern lasted until he met Rudi Gernreich at his daughter’s dance class on July 8, 1950, a day Hay recalled as “the most wonderful day in the world up until that time. An extra-ordinarily beautiful very-special someone had finally said YES to my Dream.”²⁰

The importance of the central piece of work Hay accomplished when founding Mattachine and writing its founding documents is difficult to overstate: it is generally agreed upon by scholars that Hay was the first to conceive of homophiles as a minority: a group that had a shared identity rather than being defined by behaviors that could be individually pathologized.²¹ Hay used Popular Front communism’s conception of the meaning of a cultural minority: in Hay’s adaptation of the model, minorities, to qualify, had to share a history, psychological outlook, and distinctive modes of communication. From those characteristics, Hay argued that homophiles deserved recognition as a group – recognition that needed to be met with social contributions that the minority could provide to the larger collective. From here originated Hay’s idea that homophiles had, in addition to rightful demands for recognition and respect, a responsibility to provide something of social value. The definition of that something and the knowledge of the self required to arrive at the definition were the topics towards which Hay oriented every discussion group meeting he could. Simultaneously, as the unofficial theoretician of the Communist Party’s music organization, People’s Songs, (including Pete Seeger), Hay developed and taught a popular class at the California Labor School on folk music as political resistance.

Hay’s theory at this time included a reading of a particular Native American institution, the “berdache”²² – “male individuals [in many Native American tribes] who take

---

²⁰ Ibid.
²¹ For more on the importance of this discovery, see in my bibliography the work of D’Emilio, Katz, Roscoe, and Timmons, among others.
²² While the term “two-spirit” is considered more affirmative, less derogatory, and more appropriate in a contemporary context, this paper will use ‘berdache’ so as to maintain continuity between quoted historical documents and the flow of the text.
on a social role that is more or less feminine.” This is rooted in concepts of gender in Native American society which are much more fluid and social in nature than Western gender roles. Berdaches, born male, find in their journeys of personal spiritual discovery that they are more suited spiritually and psychologically for life as a woman rather than as a man. Given that these concepts of gender are inherently social in many Native American contexts (in fact, many tribes think nothing of raising an unwanted son as a daughter, or vice versa), the berdaches find themselves caring for extended family, serving as social leaders and community healers, and teaching the young members of the tribe. These qualities are recognized not only as neutral but positive factors in an individual’s development. Native American historian Walter L. Williams cited a Navajo woman mentioning that her son and the man he lives with “were lovers, but it was good, because they helped their family a lot and were valuable members of the community.” Imagine the appeal of this structure to Hay, searching as he was for a place for his “permanent cohesive socially-useful Minority participating with simple dignity and integrity within the parent community.”

Dignity and integrity were not typical features of the relationship between homophiles and the larger society during the early 1950s. Case studies Hay saved demonstrate the incredibly persecutory legal environment he and his contemporaries faced. In one, an undercover police officer in a car aggressively pursued a subject, entered his home, demanded to stay the night; when the subject acquiesced he was arrested. In the second, a vice officer blackmailed an individual, and made off with a large collection of valuable art before arresting the subject anyway. In the third, a party was broken up after neighbors called the police and several dozen people were arrested. The outrageous nature of these arrests fueled anger within the gay community in Los Angeles. Anonymous appeals

24 Ibid, 45.
25 Ibid, 55.
26 Ibid, 84.
28 Ibid.
raised a great deal of cash, enough to pay for a lawyer, whom they educated all the way through to a victory in trial that June. Jennings admitted his homosexuality but argued that entrapment was unconstitutional. The arresting officer was caught lying on the stand, and the judge dismissed the charges after the jury deadlocked. By July of that year, even though an unsympathetic media refused to report on the trial, Mattachine was ready to declare “VICTORY!”

Mattachine’s success in defending Jennings put Hay in an ebullient spirit. Additionally, it generated tremendous interest in the organization, which grew rapidly. New discussion groups began popping up all over Southern California. At those groups, Hay began for the first time bringing his theories about the berdache public. In addition, Hay began articulating more openly his fundamental notion that homophiles were fundamentally, deeply, inexorably different from heterosexuals – he couldn’t articulate how yet, but his speeches and notes reveal a growing certainty about queer uniqueness, what Hay tended to refer to at this time as “anti-assimilation.”

*Goodbye to Rudi, Goodbye to Mattachine*

Not everyone was thrilled about this anti-assimilationism, though – and a sudden burst of rather negative publicity put pressure on Mattachine’s already-developing internal fissures. New members were especially concerned by a *Los Angeles Mirror* column that unearthed the lefty past of many of Mattachine’s lawyers and wondered if the organization was merely a “homintern.” Other members wondered the same. Not content to passively receive, Party-style, a theoretical and political “line” from above (as Hay had originally envisioned), they demanded control over the organization’s direction. One questionnaire recipient volunteered his time to serve the organization but not if it was “preoccupied with

---

29 Ibid.  
31 Letter from Romayne Cox to Paul Coates. Box 1, Folder 8. Mattachine Society Project Collection.
some old leftist nonsense.” New members thought the organization should shed its secrecy and become public, embracing assimilation and sameness.

One of these new members, Richard Gwartney, even created and circulated a reorganization study which would have written an anti-communist plank into the organization’s governing documents, discounted the importance of the discussion groups, and generally trod on Hay and the other founders’ conception of what the organization should be. “[Homosexuals] cannot be weighted even minutely with any other causes,” wrote Gwartney, casting Hay’s anti-assimilationism into a pile of “hoary old myths” including the idea that homosexuals were by nature psychopathic.\(^32\) Note Gwartney’s notion (indicative of the opinions of many conservative-leaning homophiles) that the activism of homophiles had nothing to do with any other movements and that homophiles should not ally with any other movements. “Without exception,” Gwartney wrote, “all felt it necessary to keep membership open...there [must] be no Red influence permitted and all steps to prevent infiltration of any nature taken.”\(^33\)

Two conventions in the spring of 1953 set the course for the new organization in Gwartney’s direction. Harry declined to acquiesce, referring to the new members as “a bunch of distinguished individualists going nowhere.”\(^34\) The original seven members met to decide what they wanted to do. It was clear that they and the new guard would split – but who would keep the name? It had special importance, and so Hay convinced them to let the new members have it. “The name has to go on because it does mean hope to so many people in different parts of the world...maybe if the new group takes the name they will at least stick to some of our original goals and some of our original desires because pressures from around the world may persuade them.”\(^35\) Asked about how that felt, when the interviewer

---

\(^32\) Mattachine Society Reorganization Study. Box 1, Folder 18. Mattachine Society Project Collection.
\(^33\) Ibid.
\(^34\) Letter from Harry Hay to Chuck Rowland. Box 1, Folder 8. Mattachine Society Project Collection.
\(^35\) “We Are a Separate People.” 179.
commented on the seeming rationality of that decision, Hay replied simply, “It broke my heart. What do you think?”

More heartbreak was imminent: Hay’s relationship with Rudi was coming to an end. As the relationship ended, Hay developed his earliest ideas about what forms the homophile relationship could take – something which ten years later would preoccupy him and which forms a major segment of my analysis in later chapters. In the document (apparently notes for or from a late Mattachine discussion), entitled “Marriage by continuous consent,” Hay theorized that “the affirmation of love presumes the obligation of interdependent existence...It may be that the patterns of independent growth are neglected through an inability to solve them in terms of the marriage relation.” Interestingly, throughout Hay seems comfortable speaking in terms of “homophile marriage” as a roughly equivalent relationship to straight marriages (this view was to evolve significantly).

It is interesting to compare Hay’s ideas about relationships with the reality of his life – thinking about independence and interdependence as these problems enacted themselves. The major sticking point between Hay and Rudi involved the amount of time Hay (and by extension, Mattachine and Gay organizing) could hope to occupy in Rudi’s life. His career as a designer was beginning to take off, and he was going to New York more and more. The success was apparently going to his head: Hay remembered him saying, in response to Hay’s promise to send orchids when he opened his Paris shop, “Don’t bother to enclose a card. I won’t remember the name.”

Hay wrote out many of his complaints about Gernreich in dialectic form, one indication of the degree to which his ideology governed his patterns of thinking, determining how he wrestled with even the most personal problems. Their relationship ended on these terms later that year, crumbling under the pressures of Mattachine’s end, which drove Gernreich away from activism until he donated his entire

36 Ibid.
37 Hay always referred to his lovers using their first names, and given the degree to which I quote his letters about them, for the purposes of clarity I also refer to them using their first names.
estate to found the LGBT project at the American Civil Liberties Union upon his death in 1986.40

Amidst the end of Mattachine, there was a bright light of hope. As the organization’s focus shifted, a number of the Mattachine Society’s members founded a magazine called ONE, at first edited by Dale Jennings.41 Early issues featured Mattachine in articles Marketing at discussion groups meant that they found subscribers, about 2,000 monthly. Letters to the editor revealed that the magazine was being forwarded nationwide. By 1955, the magazine was energetically keeping alive what John D’Emilio calls the “militant” wing of the homophile movement.42

Love & Its Obligations: Jørn, Anita, & Hay’s Children

Jørn Boethius – young, blond, and ambitious – moved to the United States from Denmark in 1952, changed his last name to Kamgren, and decided to pursue his dream of becoming a hat designer. Although Jørn knew only “four or five hundred words” of English, after they met in spring of that year Hay was quickly entranced by this “young man...half my age, who is really a very attractive, very pretty young man, proportioned, shall we say, in all kind of interesting ways.”43 In many ways, Jørn resembled Rudi – a younger, attractive fashion designer. Quickly, the two fell in love and began living together. Despite Hay’s later bitterness about this eleven-year “marriage” (his term), it is important to recognize that they were, at the beginning, infatuated with one another – hiking at California missions, enjoying simple pleasures Hay could use to distract himself from pressing financial obligations to his children and the ending of Mattachine. Throughout their relationship, Jørn kept the habit of sending Hay elaborate valentine’s day cards, which Hay saved. The elaborate and often-sappy expressions of love on the cards – and the fact that Hay saved them until the end of

40 Hay protected Rudi’s identity until that time. Early editions of many works on Mattachine’s founding by Katz, D’Emilio, and others refer to Gernreich variously as R, G, and X. In fact, one of Timmons’ primary contributions was publicly naming Rudi for the first time.
42 Ibid, 87.
his life – belie the narrative (given for example in D’Emilio, and to some extent in Timmons’ work) that the relationship was one of mere mutual convenience. Rather, it is clear from these tender photographs, cards, and other expressions of love that there was deep connection, feeling, and understanding between the two men.44

Since the late 1940s, Hay had been employed essentially as an entry-level production engineer for an industrial aircraft company, Leahy Aircraft. Advancement was possible but not particularly likely, especially given that he had never completed his undergraduate education. He was paid quite little, and the terms of his divorce from Anita specified alimony and child support payments amounting to half his income. In a letter to Anita protesting the terms and attempting to change them, he clarified (with calculations enclosed) that the monthly payments of $145.84 he owed her would simply not be possible to make if he received any cut in wages – never mind if he were to become unemployed.45 Anita was unable to be particularly sympathetic; in her response, she clarified that she faced the same economic realities, and was unable to afford any more of a financial burden herself.46

Despite these obligations, Hay pressed ahead and financially involved himself very deeply with Jørn’s hat-making business. Hay felt that by including Jørn in his life, by he had “taken on a responsibility...and had to see it through.”47 Hay began by lending Jørn’s business (Jørn, Hatmaker) the entirety of the nest egg he hoped to leave his children. This money was quickly spent, and Hay continually devoted his energies to the business in the hopes that it would be earned back. A letter to a public relations agent includes sections of a draft contract for PR services for Jørn’s business; Hay wanted to “concretely elaborate” the details of the services they were to provide, making Phillips the “agent” to “open up markets

43 “We Are a Separate People.” 180.
44 See the appendix for photographs of them and reproductions of some of Jørn’s cards.
45 Letter from Harry Hay to Anita Platcky, February 5, 1954. Box “Family Correspondence,” Folder “Anita”. Harry Hay Papers, San Francisco. The archivists on Hay’s papers at the San Francisco Public Library are still deciding whether to integrate Hay’s family into his alphabetical correspondence or maintain them separately. For this reason, the boxes and folders are not yet numbered.
46 Letter from Anita Platcky to Harry Hay, February 12, 1954. Box “Family Correspondence,” Folder “Anita.”
47 “We Are a Separate People.” 189.
through securing engagements to display and/or produce for film, radio, and/or television...participate in fashion shows arranged by civic, commercial, or social organizations for whatever purposes of their own...participate in Society and Charity Bazaars.” At the letter’s close, reference to invites to be sent and upcoming shows demonstrate that the public relations work had already begun even before the contract was finalized. The letter, written less than a year after the two had met, demonstrates the speed with which Hay involved himself in Jørn’s concerns.

As time passed, his financial and emotional investment only increased. In a letter to Johnny Darrow, an old friend of Hay’s from his communist days in the 1930s who had gone into advertising, Hay offered to trade “a ‘leg-up’” in the business (reduced-cost advertising) for access to Jørn’s “European Fashion Journals” and discount hats for the agency’s photo shoots for other products. He would spend several nights per week writing, mailing, corresponding, and helping Jørn conduct elaborate fashion shows they would conduct at ladies’ clubs throughout Los Angeles. They would bring “a portable business with screens,” and pick out women to try on their hats. By the later 1950s, these productions had become more elaborate, taking place at the Miramar Hotel and other major establishments. Despite these efforts and successes, the business never became profitable. Additionally, during this period the men were constantly moving, living first in the Jewish district, then in Jørn’s hat studio on La Cienega, then on Westwood Boulevard.

The period of connubial bliss with Jørn was real, and important, but it didn’t last long – as the years pressed on, Hay found himself beginning to chafe. The two men had fundamentally different views of what their homosexuality meant. As Hay remembered,

as long as you set up housekeeping, as long as you were the exact imitation of the hetero-majority in whose midst you lived, and you kept your house and you conformed to exactly the sort of Reform Protestant attitudes of the lower middle class...you were nice and respectable and restrained, just as your hetero counterparts

50 “We Are a Separate People.” 188.
were, and didn’t rock the boat in any way whatsoever, you were permitted to exist. In other words, you were tolerated. You were patronized. This is the way that living was in Copenhagen and Oslo and in Stockholm. And this is the way my friend, Jørn, wanted our household to be. Well, I’m not one of those.\textsuperscript{51}

According to Hay, Jørn had “a very strong sense of class,” hilarious given how many times Hay refers to his class status in his descriptions. Jørn was also, according to Hay, influenced by a European cultural idea in which “the assistant to the assistant to the assistant postmaster’s wife is Mrs. Assistant to the Assistant to the Assistant Postmaster, all done in Danish or in German and hung onto your name...this is his attitude too. When we would go to meetings, for example, he’d be furious because he’s not being deferred to as “Mrs. Founder-of-the-Movement.”\textsuperscript{52} Resisting Jørn’s push to reconstruct their lives in a replica of the Danish petit-bourgeoisie, Hay began to “develop a gay analysis that was as developed as a Marxist analysis...to ask [him]self, ‘Is this a gay culture, or is it indeed only a homosexual variation of the heterosexual majority pattern which is there?’...in effect, I was really suffering from a culture gap which could never be crossed.”\textsuperscript{53} The “other kind of consciousness and analysis” to which Hay came in his late 1950s research were “sparked” to some extent by this discontent with Jørn.\textsuperscript{54}

\textit{Called to Testify}

When HUAC came to Los Angeles to demand a second round of testimony in 1955, Harry Hay found himself one of those called to testify. Terrified that his employers would discover his homosexuality and ruin him financially – this fear was especially acute given his obligations to Anita and to their children – Hay engaged Frank Pestana, a lawyer who was not one usually used by the left (more on that later), and was understanding enough for Hay to discuss “certain special items concerning which the 1st and 14th Amendments may have to

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid, 180.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid, 184.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
be invoked instead of the 5th – i.e., his involvement with the Mattachine Society and the homophile movement.

Hay didn’t know just how weak the evidence against him was – how clueless the powers-that-be were about his homophile involvement. The FBI had been on Hay’s trail since 1943 and the beginning of his communist involvements in New York City, when J. Edgar Hoover signed a letter placing him in consideration for “Custodial Detention” and noting (incorrectly) his pseudonyms as being “Karen Hunter” 55 and “Mac’H Eann.” 56 In 1954, the organization ordered his immigration status to be reviewed for security purposes. 57 Despite ample evidence (yearly phone verification reports state that “the same unidentified male,” (this must have been Jørn), not Hay, answered the telephone during the day), the Bureau seems to have completely missed his homosexuality. Oddly enough, in August 1955, just as Hay was preparing to testify before HUAC, they removed him from active security review (only to place him back on in 1956 after the transcripts of his testimony reached the appropriate bureaucrats). 58 While Hay was worried he had been connected to the Mattachine Society, based on later reminiscences in which he discusses watching others testify, it seems he was turned in for his 1940s communist activity by old friends gone informant.

It is important to acknowledge just how threatened Hay’s economic and social survival were by the prospect of exposure by the HUAC committee. When the committee called him, his photograph appeared in the Los Angeles Herald Examiner and Daily News. 59 His savings were tied up in loans to Jørn, money equivalent half his income was due to Anita monthly whether or not he lost his job. Before the committee came calling, Hay had, he would later remember, "a number of applications for some projects that were coming up in

55 In fact, his preferred pseudonym was Eann MacDonald, under which he wrote the original prospectus for the Mattachine Society and some other documents throughout the 1950s.
56 FBI Files. Box 1, Folder 19. Harry Hay Papers, San Francisco.
58 In 1999, when Hay requested these records as per the Freedom of Information Act, the letter of response back to him referred to him as “Harry May.” This effectively sums up the level of competence of the FBI’s investigations of his activities.
'55 and early '56, which would have made it possible for me to move ahead." HUAC killed that. This meant that he was stuck "at the low end of my classifications as far as jobs were concerned...it was probably more important for me to keep coming up with money at the end of the month." His inability to move up the wage scale had lifelong negative financial effects.

**Abandonment**

The experience of HUAC, Hay would later remember, forced him to find out “who my friends really were and who they weren’t.” Like all those called in front of HUAC, Hay experienced the dislocating, even crippling, sense of horror at the scale of his former friends' betrayal. Before he was called to testify, Hay was forced to sit through two days of testimony about him and his former communist colleagues from “stool pigeons” who had been members of his folk music classes. One woman whose betrayal he found particularly poisonous was Ethel, a grandmotherly babysitter who, as it turned out, had been informing to the FBI for decades. She “would come to the house to take care of the kids and she’d bring hard-boiled eggs or cookies she’d made...and she was taking down the names of everybody who was present. Her husband was outside copying down the license plates. If she helped clean...she was photographing your files.”

It was not only the betrayal of informants that led him to remember his testimony as “one of the great painful experiences” of his life, so painful that the usually garrulous Hay often refused to answer questions about it. In addition, Hay found himself unable to take refuge with either the homophiles for whom he’d departed from communist orthodoxy, or the communists who were worried that his involvement with homophile organizations was going to poison them by association. Remember that McCarthyism represented not only a

---

59 “We Are a Separate People.” 192.
60 Columbia Reminiscences, 37.
61 “We Are a Separate People.” 193.
62 Columbia Reminiscences, 22.
'red' but a 'lavender' scare, accused homosexuals were being publicly shamed and purged from government employment in tremendous numbers throughout the early 1950s.

In 1951, as the time he spent on Mattachine grew and it became clear that he would divorce his wife, Hay had recommended to the Party that he be expelled for security reasons. They complied, although Hay kept many of his Party friends and continued to travel in Party social circles. When he received his HUAC subpoena, therefore, he went “to see...friends who were the lawyers who would be handling this...the other forty-nine are already beginning to form their own sort of supportive groups: they’re going to be having parties, raising funds for each others’ court costs, and so on.” Hay was familiar with these practices – he’d even drawn upon them when building support for the defense of Dale Jennings. Now, though, he was greeted with “coldness and a certain contempt.” When he tried to join in communal defenses, he was told that he couldn’t – “because, after all, as they pointed out, the progressive movement [was] not going to condone queers...they were not my friends at all, they cut me out entirely.” The experience of being cut out so firmly from the communists’ defense affected Hay’s preparations for his testimony. Notes reveal that despite his obvious hatred for “stool pigeons,” Hay seemed perfectly willing to testify regarding his communism - he wasn’t going to name names, but was less worried, given that he had left the party four years before. His “comrades who were gay” were his primary concern – not the new, public, conservative Mattachine leaders, but the original seven members and their allies, many of whom had also been involved in communist organizing.

Even those comrades were to deliver a final blow. The night before he was called to testify, Hay went to visit Chuck Rowland, then one of his closest friends from Mattachine,, looking, as he wrote in a 1962 letter, “to talk a little while and be with an old friend and comrade-at-arms...I left at 1:00AM...you were still being a peak of adulation for some Kook

---

61 “We Are a Separate People.” 195.
64 Ibid.
65 “We Are a Separate People.” 193.
In a 1977 letter, Hay outlined in stark terms his experience of abandonment and loneliness that night:

The six weeks of terror I went through, totally alone, in attempting to prepare for that ordeal you can ready (sic) for yourself in the TROUBLE section of Gay Amer. Hist. [Jonathan Ned Katz’s book]. The night before I was to appear, I came down to renew brotherhood with you and to receive comfort: you knew I was coming – I had called several days before to make the date and that day again to confirm. I arrived at Coronado Terrace around 7 pm (it was still daylight): you were very busy conferring with a younhish (sic) Money-bags who had just arrived from Texas – you’d get to me later. Money-bags left around 9:00pm but just then a guy named Ed arrived…so you and Ed talked and fantasized and spun grandiloquent plans. Several times when I made to draw into your talk, you informed me brusquely that your topic was confidential…you didn’t even stop your chattering to say Goodnight when I left – or that you were sorry you weren’t able to get to me. YOU WERE SO FUCKING IMPORTANTLY BUSY! I HEARD MOST OF YOUR CONVERSATION THAT NIGHT. IT WAS TRIVIAL SHIT! YOU WERE WORKING OFF ON ME HATES AND RESENTMENTS THAT I HAD NEVER GUESSED HAD RANKLED BETWEEN US! (And I needed your love and your sympathy that night as I had never needed anything in my life before.)

Hay’s insistence on re-litigating that evening more than twenty years later demonstrates its continuous importance in his mind, the depth of his anger and betrayal.

Hay had spent the week before that night cramming with his note cards, working with his lawyer from 5:30AM to 7:30, when he went to work. With his lawyer, he prepared amply, turning over pages of “Items for the Guidance of Counsel” that listed all his Mattachine involvements. The two developed a confrontational, silence-based legal strategy, possibly influenced by “Courage is Contagious” and “The Congressional Inquisition” pamphlets Hay kept with his notes and documents from this legal fight. Hay used notecards to memorize answers to likely questions, ranging from the tame – “The nature of recollections is not within the purview of this committee” – to the roaringly confrontational: “My people have been here since 1609. Their blood and sinew made this Constitution...I HAVE THE GREAT HONOR OF DEFENDING THE

---

CONSTITUTION AGAINST YOUR PLUNDER & TRESPASS BY INVOKING THE 1st AND 5TH AMENDMENTS.” 68

Primarily, though he was willing to admit that he had once been involved in the Party and left it in 1951, his tactic was neither to defend communism nor to defend homosexuality, but to argue that both were outside the committee’s purview. All of Hay’s prepared answers, no matter how blustering, reduced to the same general principle he outlined in later reminiscences: “I have no information to give you…because had I let them into my personal way of thinking about anything, ‘How do you feel about the American Flag? Do you love it or don’t you?’ If I said I loved it, I would have waived – I would not have been able to keep them from any other way that I think.”69 To further shield himself from the committee, he prepared a look for the testimony, relying on his experience as an actor to put himself into a role, wearing unusual-for-him heavy tortoise glasses and formal clothes as he sat waiting to be questioned by HUAC counsel Frank Tavenner.

The Hearing & its Contested Recollections

According to transcripts, while he willingly answered questions about his professional and academic history, as soon as the line of questioning went to teaching, music, and the Communist Party, all his answers were the same: “I must decline to answer that question on the first and fifth amendments.”70 When asked to corroborate the testimony of one of the former communists who had betrayed him, Hay said, according to the transcript, “Mr. Chairman, you are asking me to give an opinion, I believe, in this case. I wish to state that I have neither opinions nor recollections to give to stoolpigeons and their buddies on this committee.” The only question, according to the transcript, that Hay

69 Columbia Reminiscences, 25.
answered full-on was “Are you now a member of the Communist Party,” to which Hay replied, “No.”

His own memory of the events, as told to Jonathan Ned Katz and chronicled in *Gay American History*, shuffles these statements, and adds tremendous color and vigor – he makes himself a crotchety hero. In his memory, after Tavenner asked “are you now” rather than “are you now or have you ever been” a member of the Communist Party, he realized his mistake and became so mad that he stood up. A “big, pompous, florid man, rather fat,” as Hay remembered him, Tavenner overturned the table with his belly, causing the stenographer’s rolls to spill onto the floor and disrupting the session. That, according to Hay, is when he let out the line about “stool pigeons and their buddies,” not earlier. General confusion prevailed, and luckily, Hay lied, the stenographer hadn’t caught the “stool pigeons” remark so he couldn’t be cited for subversive activities or for contempt of Congress.

*Fear, Perceived Cowardice, & Paralysis*

Untangling the conflicts between Hay’s memory of events and the official transcripts is not particularly difficult – Hay’s story is implausible, and his final touch (that the ‘stool pigeon’ remark stayed off the transcript) is disproven by its appearance there. More interesting, however, is the question of why – what might his motivations have been for repeatedly misrepresenting his testimony, especially given that his reminiscences for Columbia University and for Mitchell Tuchman follow the pattern he set out for Katz?

Hay’s misrepresentation is understandable when taken in the context of his feelings of total abandonment by the leftist and gay movements, his shame in having left his children and having been willing to admit that he was a communist (even though he didn’t have to at the hearing due to their error), and his persistent feelings of shame and responsibility.

---

71 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
towards his children and even towards the movements that had forsaken him. His friends had left him out to dry, but years of theoretical marination meant that communism was and would remain the primary way Hay understood the world. Remembering his testimony the way he did allowed him to be the hero of this story, to rewrite the narrative away from shame and betrayal. For this reason, his misremembrance helps to illuminate his psychological state at the time. Further variances in his memory add to this point: in later reminiscences, Hay discussed the communists with varying levels of warmth and respect – in some of his accounts, his involvement with them was deep, in others, he said, his involvement was only a means to a homophile-activist end: “maybe if I got involved with the left and fought for the problems of the left now, that maybe in 10 or 15 years when I had a clear vision, a clear mind of where I wanted to go and how I wanted to express myself...maybe they would help me if I had helped them.” While the depth of his continual devotion to the project of economic justice and his lifelong reliance on and activism towards leftist goals belies this oversimplified account (as my next chapter will reveal); again, these inaccuracies point to internal conflict.

Hay’s emotional state regarding his children and the dangers to which homophile activism and HUAC had exposed them is evidenced by a draft of a short story he never published called “The Other Trail,” dated to 1955 (the year he testified). The story, featuring a girl originally named for his elder daughter Hannah but re-named Mady halfway through the writing, is a first-person narrative of hiking through the California mountains, getting lost in them, and having to pick a dangerous path down a pass with no trail. In the story’s climactic paragraph, Hay has to carry her down a steep cliff, they barely makes it to safety before the rock collapses under both of them. The precariousness of the ground underneath them, the vivid descriptions of his fear for her safety, and the repeated instances in which the narrator berates himself for bringing his daughter into such a dangerous situation mirror

74 Columbia Reminiscences, 2.
his situation with HUAC, movingly, at the end of the story, the narrator bursts into regretful tears.75

Even the letters to Chuck Rowland cited above in describing Rowland’s abandonment provide ample evidence of these events’ monumental importance and traumatic nature in Hay’s mind and identity: Hay called Rowland furiously in the days right after the testimony, and continued to mention the betrayal in their correspondence in letters from the mid-1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, all the way until Rowland’s death. Hay remembered being so nervous as he signed out of his hearing that he was unable to hold a pen, having to “manage, finally, to get my signature...with two hands. Okay. Psychologically how did I handle it? Now you know.”76 Hay remembered that Jørn was rattled by the experience; worried that any further notoriety on Hay’s part would affect his attempts to get Hollywood clients, Jørn demanded that Hay reduce his involvement with ONE to only one or two meetings per year.

An unmoving pen proved to be an apt metaphor for Hay during this period – the trauma of having been called before HUAC, his experience of loss and abandonment by his communist and his homophile friends, his worry that any further financial hardship would leave his children utterly destitute, and Jørn’s insistence that he not involve himself too deeply with any homophile activism led to a personal, political, and theoretical paralysis. Stopped from making any progress externally, and worried that if he left Jørn he would lose the little he had left, Hay began focusing on the internal, the theoretical, later remembering that after HUAC, he turned towards a “tremendous amount of activity inside me, and a whole different experience than I had ever gone through before.”77

75 “The Other Trail.” Box 1, Folder 52. Harry Hay Papers, Los Angeles.
76 Columbia Reminiscences, 30.
77 “We Are a Separate People.” 187.
II

The Sexual Being Is Not An Island:
Harry Hay’s Historical Research & Theory

As the previous chapter concluded, the frozen pen was an apt metaphor for Hay in the mid-1950s. It wasn’t that his research and writing had stopped; rather, they lost focus and clarity as he began spinning around in circles in an attempt to fill out his earlier ideas about the berdache and learn more about homophiles in history.

Eventually, however, Hay began to unlock his paralysis; while on vacation in 1956, he happened to meet a Native American man named Enki, who began taking him to visit pueblos and other archaeological sites in the Southwest. Simultaneously, Hay’s readings of histories and anthropology led him to acknowledge and chronicle different historically specific institutions of male homosexuality; even making fun of other activists who had simpler, more monolithic views.

The development of this idea unlocked Hay’s research and writing practice. Once Hay had presented this variety of models, he consistently returned to the importance of a single one: the berdache, specifically a variety of it, he thought, whose functions had been used for the good of peasant communities. Arguing that societies only accepted behaviors that served social functions, Hay thought same-sex love and desire needed a social function to be tolerated, and presented berdache as a model for the expression of that function, denigrating other types of institutions (including pederastic Greek institutions) for being too focused on pleasure or serving ruling classes, and having therefore led to social opprobrium. For Hay, this seeming radicalism in fact presented the only functional argument against social homophobia and oppression, contradicting conservative homophiles who thought that replicating heterosexual behaviors was the only way to gain social acceptance.

Hay’s late-50s and early-60s research is currently misunderstood by scholars – Stuart Timmons’ biography argues that Hay presented "a history of gay people" even as Hay specifically denigrated what he called "universalists" and argued that different historically
and culturally specific institutions needed to be analyzed in their own contexts. Other scholars lack essential contextual information. Furthermore, no existing scholarship credits or interrogates Hay’s unstated but fairly clear reliance on and additions to Engels’ ideas about primitive communism and matriarchy in *Origins of the Family: Private Property and the State*. To Engels’ argument that before documented history, there had existed a period of primitive communism and that matriarchy was an essential ingredient thereof, Hay added the berdache, arguing that homophiles, as the descendants of the berdache, had a unique ability and responsibility to unlock the world’s social and political stagnation; in doing so, they would both heal themselves and their community. Additionally, scholars have not adequately acknowledged the extent to which Hay’s ideas are out of both radical and conservative mainstreams of LGBTQ theory past and present.

*Methods & Sources*

Hay’s notes are structured by subject, not by date – he would research a variety of topics simultaneously, typically writing or typing on half-sheet onionskins or stationary notepads he brought home from work. After his nine-hour workdays, Jørn allowed him three nights per week to pursue his research (the other weeknights the men spent together working on the hat business). When he felt reasonably satisfied he had come to a conclusion worth noting, he would typically write or type that conclusion in short essay format. There are a couple dozen of these short essays on various topics. Then, when he had a (rare) opportunity and was allowed by Jørn to present this work to small groups at ONE, he would assemble some short essays into a longer speech. Wherever possible, I have cited these ONE speeches rather than Hay’s notes or short essays, as the speeches represent the most conclusive and thorough statements of his ideas.

Ruth Benedict, a pioneering cultural anthropologist, provided Hay’s path into cultural anthropology. In her magnum opus, *Patterns of Culture*, written in 1934, Benedict

---

78 Questions of why and how homophiles might be able to do this were addressed by Hay in his theories of
presented three cultures (the Zuni, Dobu, and Kwakiutl) in comparative analysis. In an opening section of the book, she argues that “the only way in which we can know the significance of a given selected detail of behavior is against the background of the motives and emotions and values that are institutionalized in that culture.”

Every culture, according to Benedict, has a system of beliefs that gives coherence to the structure of society and links individuals to the culture in which they participate. Each person and each cultural trait must then be analyzed in the context of that overarching system of beliefs. Benedict’s work had far-reaching impact for Hay, especially given her frank discussion of what she refers to as “homosexuality” among the berdache in Native American societies. He adopted much of her research and found her work tremendously useful.

In addition to Benedict, Hay read a great deal of original literature from pagan societies (he was well-read in the major classic Greek, Roman, Islamic, and Medieval literature) and in addition whatever Marxist interpretations of ancient society he could get his hands on. While many of Hay’s books were destroyed in a late-1980s fire, the ones which survive contain annotations demonstrating his omnivorous use of sources to discover anything that might be worth knowing about homophiles throughout history, from Aristotle’s *Politics* (annotated for notes on Celtic and Grecian pederasty and “homophilic evidences” in the story of the tyrant Periander) to trashy pulp novels. Particularly interesting presences in Hay’s library include C. S. Lewis’ *The Allegory of Love*, Guthrie’s *The Greeks and their Gods*, *Sex and Character* by Otto Weininger, and *Studies in Ancient Greek Society* by George Thompson (a marxist study inscribed to him as a present from Jørn).

He was aided by the presence of significant amounts of new literature being written, including the first generation of English-language anthropology that was not explicitly racist and imperialistic in intent; even though some of the assumptions made in books referenced in his notes such as Allen Edwardses’ *The Jewel In The Lotus; a Historical Survey of the Sexual*...
Culture of the East, including references to “orientals,” “the omniscient Persian,” and “Woman: Passive Creature,” orientalize and hypersexualize their subjects, and are therefore problematic to the contemporary ear.\textsuperscript{81}

Hay’s paralysis manifested itself in writing, which is often nearly impenetrable, and makes all of his ideas difficult to discuss because of his insistence on specific terms (many of which he created in the absence of terms he thought were accurate). To that eccentric vocabulary, he added a style that included long sentences filled with passages underlined and in capital letters. Consider, for example, in an essay about homosexual institutions amongst the Hittites, Hay’s sentence: “In TODAY’S world, where the cultural conditioning, attendant upon the COMMODITY-producing Community, has transformed the dominant sex-drive into its own category of exclusive and competitively expensive commodities, a comparative evaluation of love and sex-gratification as not necessarily interlocatories (sic) is difficult to project.”\textsuperscript{82} Contemporary reports indicate that during his time, his colleagues and friends at ONE often didn’t understand his ideas. Even though his speeches were powerful and convincing, Konrad Stevens is quoted as saying that Hay’s ideas “seemed incomprehensible.”\textsuperscript{83} Despite the difficulty of his writing, examining his ideas from this time with care contributes to a new understanding of Hay’s influences and his very particular notion of the history, social potential, and social responsibility of homophiles.

Social History & Historical Specificity

Taken most broadly, Hay’s research process falls into the larger category of social history, an attempt to reclaim the history of institutions and practices not discussed by what he dismissively referred to as “the chronicling classes.”\textsuperscript{84} In an early short essay,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{82} Notes on the Hittite. Box 19. Harry Hay Papers, San Francisco. Hay’s Berdache Notes, split across boxes 19 and 20 of the collection, are not yet divided into folders.
\textsuperscript{84} The Homophile in Search of an Historical Context and Cultural Continuity. Box 6, Folder 1. Harry Hay Papers, San Francisco.
\end{flushright}
entitled “Some Historical Perspectives Towards New Investigations Of The Homosexual Minority And Society,” Hay, writing under the pseudonym “Eann MacDonald,” issued what amounts to a statement of purpose for his research (and indeed for any social history):

Political changes and dislocations within families, tribes, nations, and empires, affected and motivated bulks of populations, (as is to be seen in the artifacts and products of their cultural inter-relations), and not merely the dreams and destinies of those illuminated 5% who claimed the notice of the “educated” clerical Chroniclers. It is within this bulk, this 95% of mankind, where we must begin to sort out the peregrinations and progresses of the Homosexual Minority as a social force.85

Later, Hay would put it even more succinctly: “It will not be the Shakespeares who vindicate us, but the overwhelming evidence of nameless and selfless contributions over the millennia at the grassroots level, belying the prejudice at its traditional source, rewriting histories by the omissions of its recording opponents, claiming for its own that which is due.”86

From the notion that it was the patterns of practices of different groups that needed to be understood came Hay’s attempts to analyze those patterns; from that meta-analysis came his understanding of the different ways that cultures had shaped the expression of what he saw as an essentially shared homophile pattern of history, psychological outlook, and distinctive modes of communication (the qualifications for social minority he had used when founding Mattachine). Using anachronistic but far clearer language, I use the term “historical and cultural specificity” to refer to his idea that culture shaped the way homosexual desire expressed itself institutionally; Hay came to understand these institutions as having different sexual and social characteristics both from heterosexuality and from one another.

In arriving at his conclusions about historical and cultural specificity, Hay denounced then-current research – this denunciation demonstrates the ways in which he felt that an understanding of homophilia’s historical roots might combat prejudice:

“do the scholars seriously believe they will find tell-tale similarities…in the childhood influences of Pindar, Richard I, Omar Khayyam, and Ralph Roister-Doster? Do they have confidence that the boy-girls observed by Monsieur de La Salle in his explorations of New France, or the King and his leman of the mediaeval folk tradition, or David and Jonathan, represent phenomena of moral crisis in historical breakdowns in their respective societies? Come, come! My lords and ladies! The psychological patterns of such habitual un-niceties as “fellatio,” “irrumation,” “buggery,” and the like, didn’t spring fully coordinated from the disillusions of shapely lads simulated by a stockmarket crash in ancient Rome, or a housing crisis in Druidic Londinium…the spiritual comprehensions, the emotional appreciations of sensory motivations and fulfillments, evolved out of the gross-motor muscular and neurological patterns of Homophilic and Homosexual practices in the same slow complex of socially transmitted experience as have any other socially established patterns of physical behavior.”

In other words, institutions had evolved out of patterns of behavior, rooted in essentially similar “muscular and neurological patterns.” The common understanding of homophilia as a sexual deviancy spawned from psychiatric deficiency did not conform to historical evidence. Social homophobia had led scholars to silence on these institutions, but one could, Hay thought, read a history of homophilia back into scholarship, launching “a candid and objective re-exhumation of History” that would liberate homophiles to continue their contribution to “constructive human development,” which had always been “in direct proportion of the opportunities afforded (or the surreptitious political expropriations of) its singular capacities.” Understanding these historical roots would additionally give benefits to homophiles even outside the question of legitimacy, allowing them a degree of self-knowledge: to “comprehend under what community covenants and self-disciplines their

88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
Minority has been able to participate in social progress.\footnote{Ibid.} This vision was inherently, even definitionally, focussed on queer uniqueness and political radicalism, and Hay couldn't resist a dig at the “we're really no different from anybody else claque,” warning them, alliteravely, to “be fortified to play [with] the brahma bull in the belle of the ball’s boudoir!\footnote{Ibid.}

Hay was careful to note that he was not suggesting an easy universality, not suggesting that berdache and contemporary homophilia represented the same institutions. Instead, he said repeatedly, his ideas were “very different” from universalist arguments – his hope was to point to “where to look, in the evolution of specific social configurations for group employments of Homophilia as a functional and utile institution.”\footnote{Ibid.} Instead, Hay argued, one needed first to escape the idea that “human nature, moulded in the image and likeness of God, is an eternal verity.”\footnote{Ibid.} One needed to accept that humans were “ever in a state of becoming,” a state in which “cause and effect are intepenetrative.”\footnote{Ibid.} Later, Hay would make fun of the “glaringly irresponsible” error of “the willful myth that in the Golden Age of past epochs acknowledged Homosexuals...enjoyed the widest range of personal freedoms.”\footnote{Ibid.}

Less concerned with the personal freedom to act on individual sexual impulses than with the good of the larger social order, Hay insisted that homophiles had a responsibility to use their sexuality for the improvement of society. It was off of these two possible paths that Hay based his categories of historical homosexual institutions. While his categories were in a state of constant flux, it is possible to divide his ideas about them essentially into two: catamite, and berdache. Catamite, a term that originated from the Latin epithet \textit{catamitus}, for Ganymede, implied only a sexual role in its word-origins, “an antithetical personal opportunism” belonging “to the accoutrements of the chronicling class.”\footnote{Notes on Catamite. Box 19. Harry Hay Papers, San Francisco.} By

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{90} Ibid.
\bibitem{91} Ibid.
\bibitem{92} Ibid.
\bibitem{93} The End of a Dream: History Can’t Be Looked At With 20th Century Prejudices. Box 1, Folder 9. Harry Hay Papers, Los Angeles.
\bibitem{94} Ibid.
\bibitem{95} Ibid.
\bibitem{96} Notes on Catamite. Box 19. Harry Hay Papers, San Francisco.
\end{thebibliography}
contrast, Hay argued, “berdache,” a word that originated from “slave,” contained implicit class-political conflict within itself – “it seems to underlie and historically precede” the ruling classes, even as rulers came to exploit the berdache for their own purposes (he called this “state” berdache, as opposed to the folk berdache who served the people). In other words, catamites had homosexual sex to pursue individual pleasure, while berdache sex had a politically radical component. This is different from the idea that any queer sex is de facto politically radical, an argument made most strongly in the 1980s and 1990s by critical theorists.

Hay interpreted catamite institutions as having a fundamentally different evolution and origin story than berdache ones. In one of the short handwritten essays that punctuate his research files, Hay speculated about “the Magicks of Fellatio,” remarking that “the magical supernatural powers attributed to Sperm and to Spittle are almost species-universal,” and that the status of fellation as a “socially condemned manifestation of homophilia” was “of recent origin.” Instead, he thought, it had been for most of prehistory considered a way of transmitting vigor from young to old and of bringing young boys into manhood (he referred here to then-new research on the native populations of Papua New Guinea, and speculative readings of certain Crow Native American rituals). In notes on the potential Hittite origins of homosexual sex and its related institutions, Hay considered Greek myths about the Titans and Hittite myths, theorizing that the repeated motifs of the biting of genitals and the spitting out of children in Hittite and Greek-Titan origin stories were depictions of or at least references to fellatio. From the receptive/passive sexual role of the younger partner, and the notion that these sexual relationships were not accompanied by long-term romantic partnership, he thought, ruling classes had developed pederastic institutions that served purely hedonistic and aesthetic functions.

97 Origins in the Persian barda, meaning captive, prisoner of war, or slave.
In his view, catamite institutions and practices focused on sex and aesthetics for their own sake; devoid of politics, they were fundamentally a ruling-class diversion that had little to do with social utility. In catamite institutions, he wrote, love became rather than “a means to a socially-contributive end” instead “the cult of the beloved as the highest aim, thus an end in itself.” Rather than thinking of the pleasures of sex as part of a relationship that formed another part of an institution with a particular set of practices and importance, these relationships isolated homosexual sex to part-time status while elevating the sex to be the primary, even the only, homosexual function. Hay believed that sex for its own sake—the pursuit of the “cult” of the beloved and aesthetic pleasure—not only contained no social benefits but actually contributed to the history of intolerance against homophiles. This perceived lack of social consciousness is why Hay resisted looking to the Greeks or Romans for inspiration for contemporary activism and identity, even as many of his colleagues did.

Berdache, on the other hand, had a clearly defined set of social functions—and, Hay thought, a long history of radically egalitarian politics. Hay referred to the berdache’s roles in artistic, creative, and spiritual production and leadership as “a cultural institution of social necessity...the cultural integer of Homophilia.” In her analysis of the Zuni, Benedict had named “the institution of the Berdache,” defining them as “men-women” and arguing that in Zuni and Dakota culture berdache were socially and economically equal, even superior, to their compatriots: “the berdache’s work was sought in preference to any other’s...the social attitude towards him is ambivalent.”

Hay updated and filled out her definition to mean “that household unit of one or two persons who have, by self or community-declaration, expressed their homophilic inclinations and in return for the community’s disposition to socially place them, have undertaken specified social disciplines and obligations selflessly devoted to the community’s

103 Benedict, Patterns of Culture. 234.
With that broader definition, Hay was able to expand his historical view of where the berdache had expressed itself: for example, medieval village fools fit this pattern, as did court jesters. Indeed, Hay argued, it was outside, even in opposition to, the idea of ‘civilization’ that the berdache had been active:

The Berdache Minority has not as yet achieved a re-adaptation commensurate to the significant potentials and realizations contributed under Barbarism and its over-extended millennia of transition...the Berdache Minority of Europe and America have been deliberately isolated in order that their roots of utility might vanish, and their contiguous heritage of socially-valuable initiative be wholly pulverized and forgotten, through the simple experiences of histories re-written to eulogize the double-standarded Babbitt of Business as the Utopian man of History’s age-old dream.

Berdache institutions were, Hay thought, fundamentally opposed to industrial capitalist systems, which had to either appropriate or oppress them.

Crucial to Hay’s analysis was the observation that berdache partnered with one another. This, to Hay, pointed to the idea that they were not fundamentally men attracted to men, or women attracted to women, but others attracted to others. This idea is far more radical, to some extent deconstructing ideas of binary gender by proposing a space for the berdache outside that system. Working off of observations by archaeologist George Devereux, who had spent time observing and interviewing the Mojave, Hay argued that berdache partnership led him to “a suspicion of an appreciation of SIMILARS preferring to gravitate towards one another, - in contrast to the usual Hetero-Homo dialectic stereo-

105 Interestingly, Benedict specifically notes that social “scorn” was aimed at the Berdache’s partner, and refers to the Berdache as “him” rather than as the household unit. Hay – from Pueblo observation and other scholarship – disagreed significantly, and his focus on the institution and household unit is backed up by more recent anthropological studies including Walter Williams’ (cited in my bibliography) and work by Sue Ellen Jacobs and Will Roscoe. All three were friends of Hay’s, and regularly asked him for advice and information throughout the 1980s and 1990s.
107 Most contemporary scholarship agrees with this analysis and the term ‘berdache’ has been replaced with the term ‘two-spirit,’ which, according to many trans* activist accounts, sits on the trans* spectrum of non-binary gender identities.
Existing scholars, he thought, did not understand this—nor did most homophiles live this way. In contrast to Hay, Dorr Legg, the founder of the ONE journal and another writer and activist active during this period, thought of the berdache as representing an “inversion” in which males and females switched sexual roles; strikingly different, more conservative, and as later scholarship has shown, less true than Hay’s interpretation.

“In summary,” Hay concluded, “our humble acceptance of 20th century revolutions in scientific scholastic disciplines and restraints is our one guarantee to comprehending WHO we actually were, and how our functions were actually perceived and evaluated in the evolution of human society.”

“It is time,” he wrote, to discard the idea that berdache had lived in some sort of paradise, to understand that their acceptance had originated from their performance of specific necessary social and cultural functions, and to...dream of a far away time when not only his inheritors but all men should be blessed with the indivisible privilege of a free will which should be answerable to only a just and private authority, and which would be theirs simply as a right of birth. Certainly we can know that their selfless devotion to rituals, to crafts, to wisdom, and to pedagogy set the example that we today be inspired to conceive of ourselves, THE HOMOPHILE MINORITY, as having accumulated at last the right to be comprehended as worthy of first-class world citizenship. Even in dimmest outline, the gift of such a heritage is a superlative one. It is time we started proving worthy of its promise by telling of its long and loving vigil in contemporary scientific terms.

As noted above, and despite this potential, Hay thought contemporary homophiles lived much more like the catamite than the berdache. Many of his early notes on what he called “Berdache Marriage” contain musings on fidelity and the ‘cruize-compulsion’ that serve as interesting prefaces to his later thinking about relationships, fidelity, and sex. It is clear from notes he wrote through 1960 and some of his reminiscences about his ‘marriage’

---

109 This is important relative to the extent to which American homosexual practices before the 1950s often emphasized “fairies” attracted to “trade,” in which the receptive partner was feminized and the relationship between the two was seen as unequal. For more analysis of these practices and identities, see George Chauncey’s Gay New York and David Halperin’s How to be Gay.
110 See again Williams, in my bibliography.
to Jørn that they were not sexually exclusive. It is additionally clear from those notes that Hay hated the gay ‘cruise’ culture, finding himself old and unattractive and the bar-crowds to be uninspiring and unappealing: old men like himself, married men trying to be discreet, Hollywood types pursuing the closeted casting-couch, men “milling aimlessly as dust-numbed cattle in a railroad stock-yard.”\textsuperscript{113} Hay found many contemporary homophile relationships to be unsatisfying – founded on sexual compatibility and physical attraction, they tended, Hay thought, “to adhere to standard sexual practices...which seem most suited to the social illusion of ourselves.”\textsuperscript{114} The hatred (even self-hatred) coded in those statements corresponds with the analysis of Hay's political and social paralysis in my first chapter, and also with his dissatisfaction with his own relationship with Jørn.

\textit{Visiting Pueblos}

While Hay was expanding his readings and research on the berdache as a historical model, he was desperate to do primary anthropological research – to find, identify, and interview any living berdache he could find. Despite their grim financial situation, Hay and Kamgren did some traveling, in their AMC Ramlber (the nameplate was misspelled when they bought the car, and they kept it that way for sentimental reasons).\textsuperscript{115} They started driving to visit New Mexican pueblos as early as 1956. An August 1960 postcard labeled “Colorful Indian at Pueblo” reads, “I can't imagine why we picked this card for you instead of one showing the many spectacular ruins in the area.”\textsuperscript{116} The postcard choice, however, demonstrates Hay’s true purpose in traveling – he wasn't there to look at vistas or bask in the sun (although those features made it easier to bring Jørn along). Rather, he was traveling to meet with and observe the \textit{people} of these pueblos, to examine American Indian cultures.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{113} Cruise Logs. Box 6, Folder 21. Harry Hay Papers, San Francisco.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{116} Postcard from Harry Hay and Jørn Kamgren to Jim Kepner, postmarked August 6, 1960. Box 1, Folder 70. Harry Hay Papers, Los Angeles.
and spiritualities to compare their social and gender roles with the pagan/pre-Christian European social orderings Hay was most familiar with.

He met a Native American man named Enki, who worked as a gardener, on his first trips to New Mexico, staying with his friends Rody and Ruth Capron; the two got to talking, and Enki invited him to go into the pueblo with him the next day. Hay and Kamgren piled Enki, his daughter and three grandchildren into their car and went to the village to eat lunch with the family.\textsuperscript{117}

The two became fast friends, and until 1963 Hay would meet up with Enki when in New Mexico to be taken to pueblo ruins. Enki’s father, Hay explained, “and grandfathers, had numbered among the ‘learned’ Traditionalists hired by anthropologists as guides, to explore and explain earlier excavations in the 1880s, 1900s, 1915, 1925. And Enki – obviously one of the really bright youngsters, had tagged along beginning about 1912.”\textsuperscript{118} For that reason, Enki was the perfect guide. He knew which roads were safe, even ones marked as unsafe and impassable. Hay would later remember his help:

The approaches to many of these places, in 1956-63, had warning signs saying “please do not venture beyond this point”: Enki would always streighten (sic) up the sign, dust it off if it needed it, then scratch a match on it to light one of his always going-out hand-made cigarettes and say “me poor dumb Indian – no read English” (which, of course, was a crock of – er – rocks since he otherwise read highway signs meticulously). Then he would proceed to guide me through or up each given canyon, and crevice, or almost obliterated trail, to see old kivas, or (and how he’d accomplish this I’ve never known) lean down digging into sand and rocks to receive ancient paint sticks, or pick up pottery shards in scattered and broken urn fields.\textsuperscript{119}

Hay’s writing about the pueblos, even in informal letters, captures the way they won his heart. In a 1960 letter to a "Mr. Vetter," presumably an anthropologist, Hay describes one of these trips: “going alone...trying to drive over several false tracks which wound endlessly and perilously up into the dry and crumbly mountains. When we finally found the right

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
track, our patient but overtaxed little low-slung Studebaker had had it.”120 They were eventually able to “chug around the valley looking for the excavated pueblo of Te-Ewi,” and importantly, collect several pieces of data: charred embers to carbon-date (should the letter’s recipient, assumedly an anthropologist or scientist of some kind with that ability, want to pursue this track), pottery shards atypical for that region, the remnants of a Khiva (a Pueblo religious structure).121

A remarkable letter to a researcher named Omer Stewart, from the University of Colorado’s Institute of Behavioral Science demonstrates some of Hay’s concerns in fitting his Pueblo observations back into his research and theory. Hay described his process of developing “a slight acquaintance with some half-dozen pueblos of the Rio Grande watershed.”122 One thing he learned, he wrote, “is that if you ask questions which appear to spring from a knowledge you already have...they will talk without too much reserve, if, however, you attempt to question by stabbing around in the dark you will meet with evasions or you will draw an entire blank.” For that reason, Hay wanted Stewart to provide him with the word roots in Tewa, the language of the area, for the contemporary terms for “homosexuality,” “homophile,” and “berdache.” Referring to W. A. Hammond’s landmark report on Pueblo homosexuality, Hay asked Stewart if there were any data or rumors on what ritual Hammond “actually was witnessing” when he had written his report, rather than “what he thought he was looking at, or what he was being told.”123 Hay thought he had an answer to that question (preparations for a feast of fools-style ritual) but didn’t venture the answer in the face of “professional anthropology.”124 From his rapturous descriptions of the pueblos’ roads and people (some of which will be examined critically in the next chapter for the presence of orientalism), one could understand their power — they seemed to him a place for a new start.

---

121 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
Hay & Engels: The Berdache & Primitive Communism

In one of his many sets of notes on the berdache, Hay wrote that “the West is in an anarcho-capitalistic social and ethical stagnation,” and that Homophiles, as descendants of the berdache institutions, had the responsibility of finding the way out.125 As he wrote, “Precisely because the berdache who, under the most rigorous of social restrictions discovered LORE as a supreme message of abstractive objective maturity, – so now they have the exemplary opportunity of re-establishing that abstract as a demonstrable historical guide to ever greater concrete objectives.”126 Lore, myth, and ritual could inspire contemporary action.

Here, his lifelong commitment to the communist project shines through – even after he had been personally and politically abandoned by his party, which even before HUAC had, in Hay’s words, regarded his homosexuality as an “irritant.”127 Hay saw homophile activism as necessary not only to liberate homophiles but to unlock a larger socio-political project.

In looking to fill out his notions of what the berdache had contributed to Western as well as Native societies, Hay embarked on a project of converging seasonal observations from various texts to examine the extent to which folk rituals mirrored modern Western holidays in date across cultures, finding that many of them matched up once the differences in calendar across space and time were accounted for. Folk calendars tended to be lunar or astrological, and all of Europe wasn’t centered on the Julian (rather than the Gregorian) solar calendar until the 20th century. Hay wrote to astronomers, gathered data, and charted the ways in which Western holidays represented offshoots of equinoctial and astrological rituals which shared their calendar dates at their times of origin.128 Armed with these dates,
and ideas about the radical nature of goddess worship from the eccentric poet and novelist Robert Graves, Hay argued that goddess worship represented a natural state of communal order that had been replaced by patriarchal religious expropriations of pagan festivals.

In all Hay’s discussions of Graves and restatements of the leftist nature of what he would have called primitive societies, he continually restated the principles of of what must have been a text familiar to him: Engels’ *Origin of the Family: Private Property and the State*. While a review of Hay’s notes found no references to this text, nor do any historians considering his theory mention it as an influence, its canonical nature, some of Hay’s notions and terms, and Hay’s years of steeping in communist theory make it likely that he was influenced by it.

In that text, Engels laid out a vision of a primitive, matrilineal communism. In pre-“Civilized” society, Engels wrote, “descent is...traceable on the *maternal* side, and thus the *female* line alone is recognized.”¹²⁹ Family structures were more flexible to adapt to different individual desires and varieties of social needs. Groups collaboratively owned “the tools they made and used,” and the household “was communistic, comprising several, and often many, families.”¹³⁰ Only with the transition from communal ownership of herds to individual ownership of them did notions of private property and male autocracy come to challenge matrilineal communism. This counter-revolution, Engels argued, led to the decline of primitive communism, the robbing of the ‘maternal right’ to social power, and the rise of class society. The book ends by confidently predicting that future society “will be a revival, in a higher form, of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes.”¹³¹

If Engels’ argument was that primitive communism represented human society’s past and future – and that matriarchal/matrilineal/goddess-worship practices were central to its practice, maintenance, and renewal – Hay’s contribution was to add the berdache as a key figure in its practice, maintenance, and renewal, and to argue that homophiles should

¹³⁰ Ibid, 131.
emulate the berdache as part of that tradition. There are no obvious reasons why Hay didn’t present his work as an extension of Engels’ argument; one might adduce a reluctance to refer to canonical communist texts given the psychological traumas from his persecution for communist activity and his abandonment by communists.

His omission of the words themselves aside, however, Hay’s discussions of Berdache institutions further support my claim that his work is influenced by that of Engels. For example, Hay insisted that the berdache institutions would not have survived or been created unless they served specific community functions. In addition to thinking of the economic contributions given by the “development, social application, and cultural employment” of the berdache materially, Hay thought of their spiritual, educational, and community-building functions in that way. “The Heroic Folk of the world NEVER EVOLVED NOR TOLERATED ANY NEW PHENOMENA UNLESS IT SERVED THEM,” he wrote, praising the ability of the berdache to devote time to their communities, using the economic term “value.” Social value had redemptive quality for the berdache (it led to public acceptance) and also bound up berdache institutional practices – including sex and relationships – in the larger social and political structure of the community. “Private conduct and intimate behavior” were seen as “self-liberating means to socially contributive ends,” a wholly different view “from that of the anarcho-syndicalist postulate that the private conduct of the individual is of no-one’s concern but his own.”

One of the rituals Hay found most important to analyze was the Feast of Fools, or Carnival, or Saturnalia in Roman times. The festival, which occurred all over Europe, was a winter solstice ritual in which a brief social revolution occurred. Power and dignity were given to the poor. A given village would choose from among its young a mock religious figure (pope, bishop, cardinal) to reign as Lord of Misrule, consecrated with ceremonies intended to mock the feudal rulers of given areas. Hay believed that a village’s berdache or

---

132 Ibid. 147.
village-fool served as the leader of this Feast and as Lord of Misrule, that specific folk music and dance rituals were integral to and had evolved from the traditional Feast of Fools dance, and therefore saw it as deeply important and radical, arguing that his First Mattachine society had “taken inspiration from the courageous Fools Societies who...”spoke the truth” to liberate the folk from the Thrall of Midaevalism (sic).”\textsuperscript{134} Hay believed that this Feast (also referred to as ‘Yule’) was the origin of most Christmas music and dance worth saving; for example, his favorite Christmas carol, “Tomorrow shall be my dancing day,” whose Christian lyrics he thought had been added later but whose non-Christian lyrics (the chorus, and therefore the most famous lyrics) refer to “my true love,” “my dance,” and “the legend of my play” – all concepts which fit his idea of the Feast of Fools as a politically-radical dance-ritual. In notes on modern carnivals, he used his calendar analysis and his analysis of folk rituals to argue that they, along with the contemporary Christmas, presents many of the elements of the Feast of Fools – including what we might now call drag as a form of mocking political, religious, social, and gender conventions.\textsuperscript{135}

The argument made by the more conservative factions who had taken over the Mattachine Society was that they presented a more realistic and achievable model for change; Hay’s theory, influenced by his belief in the scientific nature of Marxist analysis, took direct aim at that idea and instead argued that only through radical social and political stances could homophiles gain legal equality and social recognition. “In presenting premisial material in provocation of a flood of re-investigation that will affirm, for the first time, the integral value of Homosexual social contribution to the context of History,” he wrote, “we must require one all-pervading comprehension from the reader and constituent;

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{135} The durability of this idea is entertainingly expressed in drag queen and television personality RuPaul’s repeated reference to Hay’s ideas, for example, this quote from a 2013 interview: “That’s what drag is. In fact, throughout the ages, the shaman, the witch doctor, the court jester, is the drag. It represents the duality of the material world and the fact that this is all illusion, it’s not to be taken seriously...so it’s political. It’s political on the most fundamental level.”
namely, THE UNQUALIFIED REJECTION THAT THE SEXUAL BEING IS AN ISLAND. Seek not to send for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for Thee!"\textsuperscript{136}

*Current Analysis: An Incomplete Story*

Hay’s biographer and friend Stuart Timmons summarizes Hay’s research as a process of becoming “convinced that social roles for gay people had existed throughout history.”\textsuperscript{137} I have shown that Hay was engaged in a more complicated process of associating same-sex desires with historically positive social institutions that included it, and using those institutions as inspiration for contemporary activism. The term “gay people” is anachronistic for both Hay’s period and the time periods about which he researched and theorized. It implies social roles very different from the culturally specific ones Hay discussed. Timmons makes no mention of the presence of Engels’ ideas in Hay’s writing, and concludes his section on these notes with the baffling statement that “his deep concern with ‘the contribution of gay consciousness’ to humankind did not turn up in his writings for many years.”\textsuperscript{138} I have shown that Hay was engaged in that concern in written speeches to ONE throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Hay’s friend and historian of consciousness Will Roscoe does better than Timmons – at least relating Hay’s theory to methods of production and understanding Hay’s argument about differing institutions – but still he omits any mention of Engels, and mischaracterizes Hay’s categories. “Already by 1960,” Roscoe writes, “Hay’s research had convinced him that “we” had a place in history that transcended modernity….these roles were based on craft and religious specialization…integral to the social relations of production, the central subject of Marxism.”\textsuperscript{139} While these conclusions are accurate – and his relation of Hay’s theory to Marxism promising – he fails to make the connection between Hay’s thinking about berdache, matriarchy, and primitive communism; and Engels’ canonical text. Working only

\textsuperscript{136} The Homophile in Search of an Historical Context and Cultural Continuity. Box 6, Folder 1. Harry Hay Papers, San Francisco.
\textsuperscript{137} Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay*, 218.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid, 223.
with Hay’s published writings, artist Gabriel Mindel-Saloman produced an excellent analysis of Hay’s ideas, however, he does not make the Engels connection, and his lack of access to Hay’s archives means that he dates them to the 1970s rather than to the late 1950s. Additionally, histories of the relationship between LGBTQ activism and leftist politics (Hannah Dee’s *The Red In The Rainbow* and Sherry Wolf’s *Sexuality and Socialism*), while discussing Hay’s communism when presenting the Mattachine Society, do not discuss the way his theory is based on and challenges Engels.

In addition to the unexplored connections with Engels, scholars have traditionally been content to place Hay into the context of other “radical” and “non-mainstream” queer movements, without acknowledging the ways in which his ideas form a sharp contrast with the more common ‘radical’ gay view that sexual pleasure and desire was good and valuable for its own sake. While his ideas are, of course, in obvious contrast with the 1950s and 1960s conservative homophile urge to suppress sexuality and argue that sexuality in homophiles was no different than sexuality in heterosexuals; they strike the contemporary ear as restrictive, and seem to contain shame about gay sexuality. In that sense, these ideas sit both in time and in content uncomfortably between the old left and the new – as I will argue in my next chapter, even the Radical Faeries, which are typically described as a post-Hippie movement of the New Left, still argued that sexual pleasure was good only in the context of political change.

**Jørn: The Beginning of the End**

Despite this intellectual renewal, life with Jørn was starting to drag on Hay. In a letter to Rudi Gernreich, he lamented how closed-off his life had become; my statement that Jørn “allowed” him three nights per week to work is corroborated by his description there:

---

Jørn is to all intents and purposes a manic depressive; almost vulgar in his buoyancy one minute, he is violently depressed the next...I may go nowhere without him except to work and back. If I’m five minutes late, the rest of the evening is unpleasant. Even my mail is opened, and if the missive is other than commercial, I am duly chastized. My phone calls at the office or home are subjected to the same examination. My personal papers have been carefully sorted, and most of the Mattachine stuff, Anita’s picture, all your letters and pictures, have been thrown out without my previous knowledge or consent. (The reason given here, as for all the stringencies, is that this is always the second wife’s prerogative.)...worst is his hate of dancing, which he won’t learn, and of my dancing with anyone other than himself.\textsuperscript{141}

What the life with Jørn offered him was, as he described it in a letter to another mutual friend, “uninhibited sex, a pleasant lodging well-dusted and even the possible future of a comfortable mutual income” should the hat business work out, which Hay still hoped for even as the years brought no significant profits.”\textsuperscript{142} As he approached 50, isolated from his friends and former lovers, working and writing at home but for the vacations to New Mexico, Hay never gave up the hope that he would someday recover his funds from Jørn’s business and have something to leave to his children.


\textsuperscript{141} Timmons, \textit{The Trouble with Harry Hay}, 215.

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid, 214.
Of Hay's many disappointments with Jørn, perhaps the greatest was that he was not interested in activism. For Hay, the personal was political; he had no qualms about describing his activism in terms of his relationships. For Mattachine, there had been Rudi – when the relationship had ended, so too had the organization. Jørn had, from Hay's perspective, proven himself incapable of and uninterested in serious activist work – and reminded him often that he was old and unlikely to find a new mate.

According to existing scholarly accounts, Hay's political reawakening manifested itself in the early 1970s, with the Radical Faeries – a decentralized group focused on shared experiences, rituals, and happenings, centered around the idea that same-sex relationships occurred on "subject-Subject" or "subjective" terms, in which individuals considered one another as subjects to be respected and honored rather than objects to be dominated and conquered. From the mutual consideration of subjectivity, same-sex-loving people were uniquely able to relate to one another and to the world around them in radically gentle and empathetic ways.

While Hay's biographer Stuart Timmons characterizes this idea as being new in 1972, I argue that its essential components were present in writings as early as 1962, in which Hay, in until-now unexamined romantic letters written to Richard Tapia and Jim Kepner, characterized homophile relationships as producing "children of the brain" – works of activism, culture, and art that could arise only from a relationship in which all individuals involved chose to relate to one another on equal, respectful, (one might say subjective) grounds. The idea of "children of the brain" was inspired by relationships he had researched between the berdache in pre-Christian and other Native American societies. From those came the idea that the relationship that produced "children of the brain" could be reproduced alongside its cultural context – by rebuilding the New Mexican Pueblos. Hay's romantic relationship with Richard Tapia, a member of the Tewa tribe and a leader of the
Pojoaque Pueblo, full of romanticized and orientalized views of Native Americans, led Hay to envision a ‘natural’ primitive Native consciousness that he thought could be extended into a Homophile consciousness. This consciousness meant that homophiles could relate to one another and to the world in radically empathetic and subjective ways (hence the ‘subjective relationship’), and was the reason why the berdache (having had it) were uniquely able to contribute to primitive communism.

These ideas were central to the ideas behind the Radical Faeries and to unlocking Hay’s political paralysis. Hay’s berdache theory didn’t go from theory to practice until his relationship with Tapia. Visiting pueblos, falling in love, and coming up with elaborate plans to revitalize the Pojoaque pueblo convinced Hay that the future of homophile activism lay in creating physically and emotionally safe and separate communities, communities that resembled the sharing ethos of primitive communism and that were founded on the notion of a transformative consciousness. These forms of activism took additional formal influence from the other developing movements of the New Left.

Meeting Jim Kepner

In 1957, Hay met fellow activist Jim Kepner. Not one of the original seven Mattachine activists or a founder of ONE, Jim moved to Los Angeles early in the 1950s and quickly integrated himself into the city’s gay life, becoming a regular writer for ONE’s journal (under the pseudonyms Lyn Pedersen, Dal McIntire and Frank Golovitz) and attending activist organization meetings. It is unclear when or where exactly Hay and Jim met, but they quickly struck up a deep friendship.

In many cases, Hay found himself criticizing or adding to Jim (or ‘Lyn’s) thinking. In a letter from July 21, 1958, he referred to Lyn’s latest article as a “sockeroo,” complimenting him on neatly separating Mattachine and ONE’s histories and senses of purpose. He did, however, have one correction: “the old society, in all its literature and at

---

143 Hay and Kepner would often playfully use Kepner’s pseudonym “Lyn” in their letters to one another. 144 Letter from Harry Hay to Jim Kepner, July 21, 1958. Box 1, Folder 70. Harry Hay Papers, Los Angeles.
all its discussion groups...advanced precisely those concepts which Mr. Pedersen now attributes solely to the efforts of ONE.” In other words, *his* Mattachine society had been responsible for the earliest rumblings of ideological change amongst homophiles, not ONE and certainly not the New Mattachine. Hay did, however, allow for the fact that ONE, “founded six months earlier [than the 1953 Mattachine Conventions]...was conceived and formulated firmly in the mainstream of the older and more socially organic principles.”

ONE, which had been originally founded as a journal, had opened its mission up to include classes once the original Mattachine turned away from education and theory and towards the search for rights within existing structures. It had been five years since he had worked on Mattachine – the letter finds him reminiscing (perhaps wistfully) about how he could have maintained control of the Foundation but decided not to for the good of the larger group. The Mattachine Idea, though, he thought of as being very much alive – “first, last, and always, that of a permanent cohesive socially-useful Minority participating with simple dignity and integrity within the parent community.”

This reflection and reminiscence was to continue. In a letter from the last day of August 1960, Hay attempted to set down his thoughts about the original Mattachine idea and how it could still be relevant even after his ouster from the organization. The context was a scuffle between the comparatively more radical New York branch and the San Francisco group which was still led by red-baiter Hal Call, who had been one of Richard Gwartney’s allies in the takeover of Mattachine in 1953. Hay wasn’t optimistic: “the basic tenets and policies of the whole society are so regressive and tory-ish, that there is woefully little meeting ground.” Still, he pressed on. The original idea for Mattachine’s structure, he insisted, used the “terms of a fraternal craft-guild” in search of a “collective dictatorship...not much different from the American Revolution’s committees of

---

145 Ibid.
146 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
correspondence.” 149 Underneath his grand language is a simple and important acknowledgement: the original Mattachine's guarantees of anonymity gained it a following in Los Angeles that its later versions were never to have.

Any attempt to reunify the fractured gay community became a topic of heated discussion between the two men. That November, Hay wrote Jim a letter detailing a proposal for what he called “Mattachine III” – a letter in which the influence of his Berdache/primitive communist theory is clear. The letter opens with some griping about Jørn - Hay explains that he’s writing and not discussing in person because if he did, “Jørn [would] complain to me in the car as he did in the car coming back from San Diego that you and I, both liking to hear ourselves talk, are leaving him out.”150 During this period, Jørn was proving increasingly difficult to handle. Noting that Jørn read all his mail and would be jealous of their correspondence (leading to “endless recriminations and other bottomless horrors”), he asked Jim to call him late at night, “since the pleasure of looking forward to hearing your voice a little oftener, even on the phone, is a stimulus to what otherwise are pretty dreary days.” 151

Continuing on, he laid out the idea that African-American civil rights organizations – structured as smaller independent organizations which came together through national conferences – presented a good model for homophiles to follow in constructing their organizations, proposing “the forming of a series of loosely affiliated local and/or regional sectarian groups of men, groups of women, and/or groups of men and women... under what might be called THE HOMOPHILE CONFERENCE FOR CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION.”152 The aim of the group would, ambitiously, be to add “natural sexual inclinations” as a protected class in the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the United States

149 Ibid.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
Constitution, a remarkable goal when the Equal Rights Amendment had not passed either house of Congress.

As steps toward that goal, the Conference would assemble data and research into “combat kits” that they would distribute in regional areas, compiling lists of friendly lawyers and taking entrapment, security, and discrimination cases to the Supreme Court. Organizations that were members could organize and act on their own prerogatives, as long as they subscribed to a basic statement of values. He mentioned the existing Mattachine, the Daughters of Bilitis, the Monastery of St. George, and ONE as ideal founding members, and thought that a large conference could join with the ACLU to “give both ear and tongue to local or regional cases of discrimination” and concentrate and increase fundraising, always a difficult proposition for a gay group in these times. He had ambitious goals too for publicity and communications:

It should arrange, through its sponsoring council, the use of facilities such as the KPFK FM network, possibly disk-jockey contacts for informing the community on court decisions such as that of the Maryland Case, and of achievements in the field generally. It should, for instance, put forward as a first step in clarifying semantics the permanent retirement and abolishment of the terms Homosexual and Homosexuality in favor of Homophile and Homophilia.  

While the makeups of smaller organizations point to a loosening of Hay’s rigid ideas about organizational structure, Hay still believed that “the executive structure of the Conference should be similar to that of the First Mattachine and the Foundation: if it seems advisable, even corporate. The executive or steering committee should be a closely hand-picked group operating on the principle of UNANIMITY...to guard against precipitate or ill-advised compulsion. The Public Face of the Conference should consist of a NAME-heavy advisory council, who sponsors and supports the Conference’s theses and general tenets, and a Board of Directors.”  

This, of course, is remarkably similar to Hay’s original leadership prospectus for the First Mattachine. One of the fascinating developments through this set of letters and Hay’s unpublished writings in this period is watching his ideal of a gay

---

153 Ibid.
organization (influenced, as was mentioned earlier, by the model of the African-American civil rights movement) shift from the original Mattachine model to one more closely resembling the Radical Faeries. In the introduction to his history on the New Left, Van Gosse notes the “radical democracy” of many of the New Left movements and cites the many ways that they influenced one another – both trends, towards more democracy and decentralization, and towards influence from other rights movements, are seen here. Also important is that these letters and the proposals within them do not yet mention or seem particularly influenced by Hay’s contemporary ideas about primitive communism and the role of the Berdache.

ONE Throughout The Late 1950s and Early 1960s

Since the early days of the Mattachine Society, Hay had been concerned with participation and experience as components of activist practice. Throughout the 1950s, Hay consistently advocated for a greater public role for ONE – especially in fundraising. ONE gained much of its character from Dorr Legg. A patrician, midwestern man with independent means, Legg was able to produce and rep the magazine full-time. D’Emilio describes its outlook as "iconoclastic," arguing that it adopted a stance of "combative pride" in homophilia and held firmly that homophiles were "the only real authorities" on their own lives. While he never threw himself into ONE with the messianic fervor he had applied to Mattachine, Hay met with its editors regularly and found its existence to be a vital lifeline. In his constant pushes for more public activity, Hay was rebuffed by Dorr, who “eschewed” the task of organizing in favor of simply publishing and considering ideas. Hay would later remember that this was a rough period for the organization, its original headquarters in downtown Los Angeles, next to the Angel's Flight funicular, "looked like it

154 Ibid.
156 D’Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, 86.
157 Ibid, 89.
was in the process of being torn down...it was an old rat-warren building, something like ten stories high, and by the time you got to the ninth floor, you had the feeling that it swayed a little.\footnote{158}

One of Hay's primary models for an activist organization was a subscription service that would allow individuals in communities to forward the names of those who might be potentially interested in ONE to the organization, suggesting that the organization might be able to potentially capture 10\% of the Kinsey-estimated 2,000,000 “of our minority” into a magazine subscription they would find “both pleasurable and rewarding.”\footnote{159} The funds raised by the subscriptions might fund “more ambitious projects,” such as reprints of the better stories, or even a national confederation of homophile activists, although even Hay, ever the dreamer, realized that such an organization would be years off.

Again and again, citing as direct inspiration his own dim finances, he argued that large numbers of small individual contributions could be made to add up. ONE had considerable deficits, and never was able to sell enough magazines to pay its bills (even though the writers, editors, and activists of ONE made things happen entirely in their spare time). In a 1958 letter to ONE (which, like most of his former letters, was written as though it were from him and Jørn, though only he had written it), Hay complained that “most of us are no great shakes when it comes to the income bracket...we’re mostly behind every pay day.”\footnote{160} Even so, Hay wrote, it was possible to address the deficit and even to raise more besides. Neighborhood women in similar situations had “a local club to start a nursery school for members who have to work days. Their family incomes are about the same as ours, and yet – do you know those dames raised FIVE THOUSAND BUCKS giving raffles and suppers and just collecting door-to-door?”\footnote{161} If women could do this – with diluted media power – why couldn’t America's homophiles, given that they only had ONE? Why, he wrote, “don’t
volunteers circle the gay bars and gay beaches with a coin box,” why didn’t members go door
to door or appeal to members in other cities via media appeal? There are obvious answers
to these questions, namely, the limited appeal an openly homophile organization would have
had to many men at the time given the social and legal environment, and the impossibility
of a homophile organization getting any kind of national media coverage whatsoever.

If that didn’t work, Hay thought, the organization could get some money based on what
he intriguingly referred to as “the blow-job of the hard-sell.” He suggested that they
withhold issues for a couple of weeks past mailing time, then include a note in each mailing
complaining that “the printer couldn’t be persuaded to deliver against an I.O.U.,” and
threatening to shut the journal down if money couldn’t be raised. Hay argued entertainingly
against “softening” the pitch by adding a direct appeal, instead, he argued, the reader
“should be left slapt intha puss by a last unemotional understatement, which will eat as his
conscience like fox-tails in a dog’s ear, - calculated to leave him no out but to immediately
drop a little folding money...so as not to irritate God’s nerves with the clink of coins.”
He enclosed $5 with the letter, despite his own continued grim financial situation. These ideas
form an additional nod to the New Left’s developing ideals of participation and
democratization as a necessary component of activism.

Meeting Richard Tapia

In the summer of 1961, Hay and Jørn took one of their typical summer New Mexico
excursions, this time exploring pueblos north of Santa Fe – not Taos, the well-known and
well-preserved retreat, but some of the other, smaller villages, many of which had gone
dormant. In one of those villages, Pojoaque, they met, and eventually propositioned,
Richard Tapia. He was 29, the same age as Jørn, and still living at home with his family.

---

162 In this letter, Hay appears to be referring to the Echo Park Cooperative Nursery School, run by a group of
area communists, including his ex-wife Anita; his daughters had attended in the early 1950s.
164 Ibid.
165 The 1940 Census lists Richard as being eight years old, and living in Pojoaque. We can be reasonably sure
this is the right individual given that his mother has the correct name (though it is spelled Crusita rather than
Crucita here, likely the result of poor Spanish on the part of the census worker). Placing Richard's birth in 1932
is unclear from the documentary record how exactly they had met – perhaps the Tapias knew Hay’s old guide Enki? Hay never mentioned him in any reminiscences, Timmons gives him a minor and inaccurate biographical mention, but Richard is demonstrated in the documentary record to have been one of Hay’s deepest passions, even though the relationship was mostly epistolary.

While Hay had fallen for Richard moments after meeting him, it was likely Jørn who propositioned him, given some oblique references in the documentary record. Richard was troubled by the suggestion of a sexual encounter and abruptly broke off contact. In the months that followed, Hay and Tapia carried on a mostly one-way epistolary relationship, in which Hay expressed how his time in Pojoaque - and with Tapia - had awakened in him a new consciousness about what he desired out of his own relationships, what new normative ideas about the relationship might mean for homophiles, how Richard’s native consciousness might influence gay consciousness, and how this connected to his theory that the berdache were necessary to and somewhat responsible for primitive communism.

Mirroring his research practice, Hay wrote pages of notes, letter drafts and fragments on scraps of paper and half sheet onionskins, then assembling those notes into final drafts of letters to send. It is useful, therefore, to think of three different types of sources on of which to base an analysis of Hay’s correspondence with Richard: the letters he and Jørn sent, the letters only he sent, and his own private drafts, fragments, notes, and musings on Richard and the relationship. But Richard did not respond – for weeks – and all three types of communication grew more desperate. Along with the desperation, however, Hay presented in his letters to Richard thinking about relationships, identity, and considerations of his own life.

In their first letter to Richard (written from Jørn and Hay and signed by both of them in both of their hands), they thanked him for “all [his] goodness and hospitality, - for the way

__________________

corresponds to Hay’s memory that he was about the same age as Jørn (born 1931). See U.S. Bureau of the Census. United States Census, 1940. Prepared by the Bureau of the Census. Washington, DC, 1940.
[he] shared the very best of [his] home, and [his] family, and [his] heart. “It is,” they wrote, “our intention to build a strong and life-time-lasting best friendship, through correspondence, and short visits at long intervals.” Clearly this indicates their view that this relationship had depth and importance. Additionally, they were aware of some schisms with Richard regarding sex: “we now realize that some of the tensions which showed up in the last two days were caused by the fact that Jørn and I [in this segment of the letter, it switches into Hay’s first person singular] felt that we had to refrain...from our customary and marital sex-play for fear it might upset you.” Unable to restrain himself, Hay concluded by asking several questions about how to say certain words (including “love” and “gay”) in Tewa.

In a fragment of a personal note, Hay remembered Richard being “afraid to give in to [Jørn’s] several suggestions that we all sleep together...out of shyness? reserve? distaste?” Compare these sentiments to Timmons’ description of their relationship. He discusses Richard in a later chapter, referring to him only as “an old friend of Harry’s who had come out...and gone in the closet again. He was now governor of Pojoaque.” Tapia is not mentioned in a romantic context whatsoever in Timmons’ biography.

In a later personal note, used as one of several drafts for a love letter sent in the fall of 1961, Hay gave the uncensored version of the story:

That glow with its indescribably radiant tenderness misdirected at me three times: once, just for a flash, when on that Thursday night I gave my word that one day we would marry each other and build the rest of our lives together; and, that afternoon on the mountain – in the meadow above the Falls, and once, the next day when at goodbye you gripped my shoulder and said “God go with you wherever you may be” - and I was too full of tears and grief to say anything at all. Richard, I cannot see the road ahead at all yet – I cannot guess how the road is to lead back to you. But this much I can say: I may have broken laws, I may have smashed other people’s best

167 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
170 Timmons, The Trouble with Harry Hay, 237.
plans and dreams, I have disappointed many, I haven’t amounted to much, I don’t seem to have helped Jørn the way he needs to be helped, but never yet have I ever broken my word!\textsuperscript{171}

Several things are crucial here – the depth of their connection, the apparent agreement the two men had made to stay together, and Hay’s deep shame about his poverty – note that Hay conceived of Richard’s affection for him as “misdirected.”

The first of his private letters demonstrates the intensity of his feeling: “i’ve thought of you,” he wrote, “almost every minute since the saturday morning we last drove out of your front yard. I show you all the mountains, and beautiful lonely places, I have known and loved, – every night in my sleep, - just to see you smile.”\textsuperscript{172} These notes also make reference to Jørn’s attraction to Richard, and Jørn and Richard’s attractiveness to Hay (“the two of you together - each making the other more radiant and brimming with delight - were the two most beautiful men I’ve ever seen...to behold you two was a joy such as I have not ever felt before.”).\textsuperscript{173} Once again, Hay’s deep and deepening isolation, loneliness, and self-loathing fill these letters: note, for example, Hay’s fears that he was not attractive enough for either of the two men, and that he could aspire to be little more than the beneficiary of their sexual passion (“I know that it was the laughing impulsive blonde boy of your own age whom you really loved...I will bring him back to you”).\textsuperscript{174} Hay also detailed in these notes his own romantic and emotional needs, writing that “my need is that my love be a man, quite capable of standing on his own two feet, who chooses that we should unite together for the rest of our lives to work for better conditions for the society in which we live...if there are to be three of us, each must be capable of standing alone and of choosing to stand three together, inseparable and equal-sharing. I gave my word that I would wait until he [meaning Tapia] can stand alone and make that choice.”\textsuperscript{175}

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{175} Notes about Richard Tapia. Box 13, Folder 14. Harry Hay Papers, San Francisco.
This cascade of letters and calls went un-responded to, for Richard had disappeared, worrying Hay a great deal (Jørn less so). While Richard had answered the first of Hay and Jørn’s letters, on September 19 of 1961, he disappeared the next day from Pojoaque. His family contacted Hay and Jørn, wondering if he had gone to live with them, it later turned out that Tapia had disappeared in a Dodge with $18.00, and had previous problems with alcohol (“Richard - sober and Richard - drunk undoubtedly are two quite different persons”). As it turned out, Richard had gotten into trouble in Pojoaque (Hay used the phrase “cutting up little rugs,” the meaning of which is unclear) and fled to Albuquerque, where he had been living with his sister. Hay got some help from Bob Hull, one of the original Mattachine Five, now living in Santa Fe – Hull helped him look for Richard, and would offer his home to Hay and Jørn when they visited the area. Ultimately, though, Hay had to rely on a detective agency to find Richard, a striking display of almost paternal concern and care.

Now that Richard was found, Hay prioritized the resumption of contact. Richard still didn’t respond to letters through the winter and early spring of 1961-1962. In a letter written to Richard’s mother Crucita (with whom Hay would remain friends – a regular correspondence between them existed in 1964 and 1965), Hay worried that “our being with him” - careful code for Jørn’s sexual advances, which he blamed for Tapia’s disappearance - “had torn his...way of life and his pattern of thinking all to shreds.” In the letter to Crucita, Hay makes reference to a different letter – one sent to Richard immediately after he was found in October 1961, one which he destroyed or lost as it is missing from the documentary record. In it, Hay and Kamgren had apparently tried to “shock” Richard into returning home to his family and responsibilities. “Of all the ways open to us,” Hay wrote, “we sure picked the WRONGEST one there was. And the responsibility is all mine, - because I made the mistake of letting myself get backed into a corner to the place where I

177 Ibid.
had to write the letter the way Jørn wanted it said...I would give half the years of my life to be able to turn the clock back and stop that letter from ever having been sent.”

Hay followed up the letter he had so abhorred with “a very private note” that he did keep – one in which he contradicts whatever had apparently been said in the previous letter, and one in which he apologizes for his inability to leave Jørn and take more decisive action. In it, he apologizes for its contents – which seem to have amounted to a chilly rejection of Richard’s advances, spurred by Jørn’s jealousy. “so now,” Hay wrote, “I fail you again...even as I failed my children as a Father, and I love them very deeply, so now I’ve failed you whom I love, in a very different way, but just as deeply. Let this be a secret debt binding me to you until I die...that I know that in two times of your great need I failed you, and you know that I know it.”

Hay offered up a variety of plans, ways to potentially trick Jørn into allowing them to meet again and continuing their affair based on the original dream of a three-way partnership: but Richard was not to call or write Hay directly based on those plans, rather everything had to be communicated obliquely. “If,” Hay wrote, “you did slip [and call or write me at home], he’d leave tomorrow. If he left me now, everything I hoped one day to be able to give my children would be swept away in one blow....I’d be hopelessly in debt with no possibility of ever paying it off. Do this for me please.”

This refers to Hay’s low-paying job, and deep financial involvement in Jørn’s hat company. Given the amount of money Hay had invested in Jørn’s business as discussed in my first chapter, Hay simply couldn’t afford to leave without being paid back if he hoped to leave any sort of inheritance for his children. Hay’s involvement with the children was always fraught with both financial tensions with Anita (as previously discussed) and his own guilt about his activism’s impact on their childhoods (as discussed when examining his short story “The Other Trail” in my first chapter). The inheritance was the one thing that he could guarantee them – and Jørn leaving would mean it was gone forever.

179 Ibid.
Hay’s Orientalism & the Pojoaque Pueblo Project

Throughout Hay’s correspondence with Richard, he continued to return to one fundamental theme – as a Native American, Richard had unique cultural and social qualities that made him able to stand between two worlds – “the pueblo world of his mother-tongue and of his childhood and of his tradition, and the white man’s world of cities.” Richard needed to be convinced, in Hay’s words, to reject “the door of the white man’s cities with glittering promises of high-paying jobs which hides the hunger to destroy utterly the Pueblo man AND his traditions” – his moving to California would destroy the things about him Hay found attractive. Richard had, Hay thought, an “undivided” nature – he was, Hay wrote, “all of a piece, without a break or crack between the components of his being, like a peasant innocent.” This quality of being, thought Hay, was a central reality of village life, and was reinforced and constantly made anew by the language to form a sort of Native consciousness:

when Tewa people speak of themselves and the world of nature and creatures of which they are a part...their language requires that they think in this manner also. A tree, for him, is not roots, plus trunk, plus branches; the parts are all alive with a single principle...a living being that takes its life from a mysterious entity diffused equally in all its members and which the scholars call the soul. The universe appears to him to be a vast net of correspondences agreeing among themselves in an organic fashion.

In opposition, the language and social conditions of the “20th century white man” (of which Hay saw himself as a troubled version and Jørn as the apex) was a mess of contradictions, a “battleground with many fights going on at the same time all the time. The mind fights with the heart, the soul with the body...the promises made out of love today with the problems of everyday life that will make those promises impossible tomorrow.”

---

181 Ibid.
183 Ibid.
184 Ibid.
185 Ibid.
186 Ibid.
187 Ibid.
188 Ibid.
These classifications are both racially essentialist and orientalist – Hay fetishized Tapia’s Native identity and constructed him as a ‘noble savage,’ an uncorrupted, unified, ‘uncivilized’ Primitive Man. While the classic Saidian model of Orientalism argues that the idea of essential and systematic differences between the developed and rational colonizer and the primitive and uncivilized colonized were used to justify the systematic occupation of these cultures, Hay’s essentialist reading of these differences meant that he constructed Richard, and by extension his people and community, as an ideal potential representation of the kind of human consciousness necessary to create Engels’ primitive communism. All of his engagement with Native cultures and religions, and his amateur anthropology and theory, is problematic in the way it positions these cultures as potentially living examples of primitive communism and similar in all respects to a “pre-Christian” or “pre-Civilized” Europe. Indeed, some of this orientalism arises from Engels’ work itself – including Engels’ reference to the “noble grandeur” of the “gentle” primitive civilization. Even in his appreciation of classical music (much of which was written for lords and emperors), he would cite his favored works as being “folk-influenced” or native-influenced, and less-favored ones as lacking the voice and the sound of the people. In a discussion in his reminiscences comparing French renaissance composers Guillaume Dufay and Josquin Des Prez, Hay favored Des Prez, saying that he “represents a revolution that is beginning to happen, where material is coming up from the groundswell, from the peasantry…the Dufay is aristocratic material, which has just dissipated...as dry as dust.”

At the same time, constructing these societies and their ‘consciousness’ as he did unlocked his activism. The idea that Pueblos had been until very recently the sites of a ‘pure’ primitive communism, and were ready and waiting to be rebuilt, provided Hay an ideal opportunity to see his ideas about primitive communism enacted. From Pueblo consciousness, Hay was later able to theorize a homophile consciousness. Given that much of this rhetoric about primitive societies (accompanied, it must be acknowledged, by

---
activism and assistance to Native American movements throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s continued through the Radical Faeries, it is important to acknowledge and understand the ways in which orientalism allowed Hay to reconstruct his activism. The orientalist vision of the pueblo – and Hay’s Marxist view that human nature was mutable and arose from social conditions – meant Hay envisioned that a return to this kind of life was possible, and the homophiles would take their place in this new society as the berdache spiritual and cultural leaders.

His larger plans were to revitalize the Pueblo through a comprehensive 20-year plan entitled the “Pojoaque Pueblo Project.” Starting as a small shop (the Wild Indian Tea Company) selling Richard’s family’s tea sweetened with local honey, Hay envisioned the business (a 33-33-33 partnership between himself, Richard, and Jørn) expanding to include a restaurant, a “Cafe featuring Pueblo Cookery,” a motel, a store, and a business selling the dry tea to restaurants and stores throughout the Southwest. Hay thought that the enterprise could be funded with a Kennedy administration grant for “Aid to Depressed Rural Areas,” and that once it was profitable, the Pojoaque Pueblo itself could be included as a partner in the program. Not only, therefore, would the business provide “processing, packaging and distribution, and research work” opportunities for Pueblo people, it would also provide a steady stream of profits that would allow the Pueblo to be revitalized. Once again, the basic notion here is orientalist and problematic: to survive, Native Americans would perform their identities for a White audience.

Hay envisioned a revitalization beginning with an annual homecoming day, showing off what the Pueblo had done with its new income, including providing polio shots, free clinics, etc, and have dances and feasts. The Pueblo would also construct a small museum, to give a “LIVING” exhibit presenting Pueblo life as a current and contemporary set of social functions rather than “the usual White variety of DEAD exhibits of more-or-less-

188 “We Are A Separate People,” 172.
190 Ibid.
In fact, Hay thought that much of this museum should be closed to whites entirely, for example, a section on the “dance fraternities” which Hay thought had special same-sex sex-related functions and where “the children of a new generation might be instructed as to the wonderful and pleasurable functions and services which they also gave to community life.” This process of “cultural re-education of the Pueblo people” would then lead to storytelling demonstrations, classes and lessons in written Tewa, the preparation of a comprehensive history of the Tewa nation in the Tewa language: “...it would seem to us,” wrote Hay in a letter to another researcher, that Pojoaque, precisely because of its lack of limiting and/or debilitating traditional continuities, might be the collective best suited to begin the practice of reading and writing the written Tewa.

All of this would be complete, Hay thought, by 1980. Hay found this proposal deeply inspiring and invigorating:

The “Pojoaque Pueblo Project” has inspired in me a new kind of action. If mutual love is to be found good for us, it will prove itself by inspiring both to retain group service and leadership where we both belong, and if it is as deep as we think it is, together you and that (something) will pull us back together on the hill at Pojoaque. For him, at the moment, our week at Pojoaque was just a vacation, perhaps he will see otherwise in time: for me it was the promise of a new life, and I do not intend to let that promise go. 

Goodbye to Richard, Goodbye to Jørn

Although Hay’s “promise” was not to be lived out through Richard, the awakening of his activism would last beyond the end of that relationship. Jørn’s lack of interest, and renewed jealousy, continued to be the major problem – the men fought again that summer, and Hay’s dreams of moving to and revitalizing the Pueblo were smashed. In September of 1962, Hay wrote Richard a long goodbye letter, demonstrating the depths of his depression and anger with Jørn. With Richard, he wrote, he “felt a new contentment and a new peace I
had never known before.” He insisted that his weaknesses, his actions of indecisiveness and rudeness revealed by “the unflattering light of day to day realities” were due to financial commitments to Jørn, not to racism: “this dirty thing which Whites, the world over, constantly practice in sneaky ways against non-whites - I am not guilty of.” Rather, it was entirely Jørn – who kept him cooped up and away from the things he loved, his visits to the Pueblos and experiences with Richard.

Now I know nobody, and I just sit and sit and sit – because the groups who used to include me got tired of his blowing hot – blowing with with them too — so know he can’t stand them because he can’t understand why they won’t respect him...so now I am not allowed to even phone them anymore. Every spring he blows hot about learning to swim: Summer has come and gone but he didn’t get around to it – and because he doesn’t like to sit on the beach alone I’ve had to give up my love of swimming and body surfing which I learned when I was seven. Every Summer he blows hot about learning to dance...because he doesn’t like my ex-wife (who is really a very wonderful person) – we haven’t even been out to see my children in their new house yet.

With that letter, the dream of romance between the two men ended – although later letters, from 1964 and 1965, show that Hay and his partner John Burnside remained friends with Richard and even ended up living in Pojoaque for a time. What this letter also ended rather firmly, at least in spirit, was the relationship between Hay and Jørn. He wrote to Jim Kepner, at that time still just a friend, referencing “a change I am going to have to make in the next few months. I couldn’t talk about it on a visit because I’m the only one who knows it as yet. And it would be too difficult on the phone. I think you know how you are the only one I have through whom I can clear my thinking – except God of course – and you know how I feel about him!” This change can only refer to Hay’s decision to end his relationship with Jørn as soon as he was able to be repaid. Jørn continued to live with him through the next two years, but the two men began actively seeing others. They made a plan

---

196 Ibid.
197 Ibid.
by which Jørn would repay Hay over several years, notes from Jørn to Hay throughout the late 1960s confirm that Jørn re-sent at least some of the money that he was owed, and that their split was at least relatively amicable. While Timmons states that the relationship ended in late 1962 over unrelated fighting, I have shown that it was Jørn’s treatment of Richard Tapia that finally pushed Hay to end their codependent relationship.

**Ideas Converge: “Children of the Brain” & Mutual Subjectivity**

In letters to Jim, Hay began intellectualizing his experience with Richard and Jørn, developing the deep wells of hurt and rage into theory about what types of relationships could and should exist between men. Richard had shown him that the types of roles he saw as good for homophiles could be enacted in contemporary relationships, and that it was possible to reconstitute an Engelsian primitive communism. Now, he turned to the question of the details of the nature of contemporary homophile relationships – was the secret to how and why this process would work located there? “Dear Jiminy Cricket,” Hay wrote, “I hope the material stirs you up sufficiently to want to kick it around.”

Based on his assumptions about berdaches and primitive communism, this series of letters attempts to discover the socially organic principle by which homosexual relationships have and have had socially productive functions. “The fact remains,” Hay wrote, “that in the hetero marriage relationship, sexual procreation was, is, and will remain, the PRIMARY function...in abstraction - the mating compulsion...reduces itself to two basic patterns, in each of which the ‘socially productive’ function, as measured against specie continuations, is to be appreciated as the PRIMARY.”

First, Hay examined the Western heterosexual Christian monogamous model, arguing that “social compatibility” between the two people in a couple represented an “a priori consideration in determining assurances of marital permanence...given this basis, the personal adjustments necessary to the equally compatible

---

200 Ibid.
fulfillment of the PRIMARY functional responsibility of the pattern, ARE EXPECTED TO BE LEARNED...AS A CONSEQUENCE OF A ‘SUITABLE’ MATING WITHIN ITS PROPER SOCIAL COMPATIBILITY.”201 In other words, Hay considered that the sexual habits of heterosexual married couples – long-term monogamy – represented a series of learned behaviors, to which individuals molded themselves in order to continue to reproduce not just the human species but a set of human social institutions and practices.

“Against this design,” Hay continued,

the Minority (or Homo) pattern is to be...seen as the inverse or perhaps the converse of the predominant model. Since, in the latter relation, the sexual pairing cannot be reproductive, it must follow that...the sexual compulsion cannot be, and was never seen as having intended to be the socially primary motivation: logic then must have relegated that compulsion to secondary considerations. Verifying our premiss (sic) that the PRIMARY behavioral compulsion to mating is that socially productive function which accrues the maximal yield to the end of specie continuations...it should not be surprising that ethology and anthropology in species universalis provide evidence that the Homophile compulsion to mate was socially devoted to the requirement to conceive, deliver, and responsibly rear “Children of the Brain” in converse to the heterophilic responsibility for reproductive “offspring of the body.” In effect, the Homophile maximal productive capacity must be seen as reproductive of the internal life of the society, in converse to the Heterophile capacity to reproduce the components of the external life of the society. The PRIMARY function of the Homophilic compulsion to couple was, and is, an INTELLECTUAL MATING!202

In other words, straight people married based on sexual attraction to raise children. Gay people mated based on spiritual and intellectual attraction, to create and raise ideas – Hay’s awkwardly-phrased “Children of the Brain.” This model of relationship would enable homophiles to use their sexual pleasure for social good – just as Hay thought berdaches had.

Therefore, Hay argued, there was no particular reason why a homophile couple needed to be a couple:

The ‘devoted’ unit...conceivably might be a trio, a quartette, or even a baker’s dozen. However...what History and pre-history indicates may have been the precedent to earlier successful patterns of Homophile contribution, perhaps we think more easily at first in terms of the socially prevailing ‘single pair’. (Though in a trio, with the 3rd

201 Ibid.
202 Ibid.
Sexual compatibility — as described in a page-long adjunct to the main letter — was important, and sexual fantasy took a front-row seat in Hay’s conception of the normatively good as regarding the structuring of homophile relationships. In this letter, he describes a vision of explosive sexual energy as consistent throughout history, taking similar forms (usually as a festival or other demarcated time in which sexual expression was taken unseriously). “The sexual fantasy today is precisely the culture memory of ORGIA; and the phantasmagorial releases of ORGIA (in which anything could go) were actively with us up until the several denominations of Lutheranism ascended as State religions.” In other words, the acceptance of sexual fantasy — even if only during certain periods of the calendar or under religious guise — was a natural cultural state, and what he thought of as the Protestant/Puritan antipathy towards sex was unnatural. “Even in the Northern countries, with dough-faced protestantism in full command, some yearly outburst of license until recent time was the pattern: during the “last-night” activities of All-fools [the Feast of Fools] or Midsummer’s Night, when the guesser tradition was devised...who could know who was doing what with whom? This solution of the sexual fantasy problem neatly solved one of Hay’s crucial theoretical problems, namely, “the impasse between the ideal of the beloved faithful comrade and the compulsion to sexual promiscuity.” Ecstatic ritual — with sexual components — could bridge this divide. All of this sex, however, served a social function — occurring during rituals designed to enforce matriarchal primitive communist structures.

He wasn’t nearly done. “Spiritual compatibility,” he continued, “must be seen as a greater dimension entirely. For unless a pair are spiritually equipped to complement one another and, simultaneously, to spur one another on to ever greater levels of application and

---

203 Ibid.
206 Ibid.
contribution, their intellectual compatibility characteristically degenerates in little more
than brilliant conversation.” Hay saw conversation as merely a way to discuss ideas, for
him, ideas had little value unless put into practice. Sex, in this conception, or what Hay
referred to as “the sharing and resolution of each other’s fantasy,” deepened spiritual
compatibility, developing “out of a companionate mutuality of sharing each other’s joy and
delight in ‘beauty’ as it pertains in particular to Homophile values of beholding and/or of
participation.” In straight relationships, spiritual and intellectual compatibility served the
primary sexual union; while in gay relationships, sexual compatibility served the primary
intellectual and spiritual one. What form might productive spiritual union take? Activism
and social change, for example – of the sort imagined in the “promise of a new life” lent by
the Pojoaque Pueblo Project.

In the remainder of the letter, he speculated on what exactly it was about the nature
of the berdache that made them special. Yes, their relationships had been socially
productive and they had been essential to the maintenance of primitive communism - but
how, exactly? His answer adapted the ideas about the wholeness of primitive consciousness
he had expressed to Richard: the homophile in a socially productive relationship, “seeing his
relationships as such...as roles or constructs, is thus able, much more than they of the
dominant group are, to seek the real person behind the role-play and to try to establish a
relationship with that real self of the other.” As communities evolved, individual berdache
existed but in “a solitary or isolate state.” He theorized that Berdaches seeking each other
“ghosted the twilight regions,” and that the process of seeking one another and of
categorizing their relationships had led to “the paralleling break-thru into INTELLECTUALITY.”
The necessity of considering mutual subjectivity, the fact that the Berdache had to define their own relationships, and the performative nature of them (“the role-play” meant that they considered one another and indeed the world with radical

207 Ibid.
208 Ibid.
209 “What are Homophiles Good For?” Box 6, Folder 22. Harry Hay Papers, San Francisco.
subjectivity, seeing through the show and establishing relationships with one another and with all else on earth on deeper spiritual levels.

Timmons acknowledges the existence of this idea, but states as its origin an essay written by Hay in 1972 that formed the basis for the Radical Faeries. In that essay, Hay argued that “the egalitarian bond of love and sex” between two similar homophiles engaged in a relationship based upon the search for the real behind the role-play (he called this the “subject-SUBJECT” or “subjective” relationship) formed the basis for radically subjective understandings of the world. While Timmons presents this as new in 1972, I have shown that these same ideas were present in Hay’s thought in the early 1960s, and that they are the culmination of a train of normative ideas about how homophiles should live that began with Hay’s ideas about historically and culturally specific institutions, were enriched by his understanding of the Berdache as an essential ingredient in Engels’ primitive communism, and were unlocked by his experiences in the Pueblos and relationship with Richard Tapia.

Oh, Glorious Day: Love With Jim & Performative Activism

In addition to his theoretical breakthroughs about relationships and consciousness, Hay’s relationship with Jim Kepner produced a remarkable volume of ideas about how to apply that theory to new activism. All of these ideas centered on the relationship between the two men: that December, love bloomed forth. “Carissimo - l’Arrow of Morning - Tesoro - “Don’t look now, but I’m afraid the sky just fell in...as a culmination of your letter and the two visits this week!” Hay was in love. “That I love you very deeply was, and is to be even now, no secret either to me or to you. I’ve loved you since the days of your ONE Editorship when we would talk of ships and sailing wax and tie up the phone lines for 45 minutes a crack...you see, right from the first I saw in you the mind and the spirit with whom I’d always wanted to be able to walk anywhere, and resolve any exigency, shoulder to

---

210 Ibid.
shoulder.” Once again, Hay was looking for a partner for political needs as much as for personal ones – the intellectual mating and spiritual compatibility would be fueled by a “socratic dialectic...the essence is not to conclude but to resolve. And if a given pair stand pledged in a mutuality of courage, and in a mutuality of vision which to all intents is a ‘call’ to find ways and means for a larger orbit than their own, they will find approaches to resolution. This I feel with all my heart!” With Kepner, Hay thought, he could perhaps enact the relationship of subjectivity and activism he had envisioned.

Hay saw activism as a “call,” an experience that took on spiritual, religious, romantic, and sexual overtones. In a letter from later that December, addressed to “Dearest Man,” Hay wrote, “your dialectical dichotomies strike deep and responsive chords in the pits of my own experience. But the one to which I believe I vibrate the most strongly is the “call” to objective research unfettered by the commitment to conciliate the findings to a priority of fore-ordained conclusions.”

Even in his swept-away love-lorn state, though, Hay was never far from ideological critique. Jim was considering taking a job in teaching or research that would require him to re-closet himself and end his work with ONE. Hay would have none of it. “I have an excellent albeit painful perception of the gradual dissolution and decay of perhaps hundreds of devoted and articulate “progressives” who, for one compelling reason or another, withdrew from active prosecution of their convictions in order to “establish themselves with more socially acceptable credentials from which base, they fondly temporized, they would in future be able to contribute truly substantial benefits....this, I am afraid, is an age-old pipe dream which project sectarianly from one’s own rationalizations of the subjective realities of the all-embracing Id.”

Rather, the only true path towards sustainable rights, progress, and equality would be to, in Hay’s words, “GRIT YOUR

---

212 Ibid.
213 Ibid.
215 Ibid.
TEETH AND SET YOUR FINGERNAILS DEEPLY AND GRIMLY INTO THE GUTS OF YOUR OBJECTIVE.” Here is shown the restrictive side of Hay’s ideology.

From there, their talk turned from jobs to sex. Jim was experiencing frigidity, Hay thought that he could help by turning back to his research and dialectic experience. “Your chronic frigidity...suggests that you have seldom enjoyed sexual intimacies on levels other than competitive ones.” In any case, Hay assured him, his inability to respond sexually wouldn’t turn him off. “It is you, the whole man, whom I love: and so, because of this, all possible aspects of you are equally desireable at several levels simultaneously.”

Next, there was a song – written out with figured bass on sheet music staves. Dedicated “to J. K. with love” (presumably to escape the eyes of Jørn, who shared Jim’s initials), the song is a fairly standard piece of ’60s balladry: “Were I to dream of love I would, I would/Devise the dreamiest I could, I could/But with you I never have to try/you’re everything that I/could dream of in a million years!” Hay thought that the sale of the song to a publisher could begin to finance activist projects. As their love grew, so too did the size and scope of their plans, although the plan finally centered on beginning a gay magazine which would add another voice alongside ONE to the discussion. Hay wrote Jim abuzz with ideas for names – along with several French and Greek inspired names, and some frankly sexual ones that would have probably gotten them shut down by the censors (THE CRUIZETTE, to name one), Hay included “Tensions,” and “Nefas,” which were his two favorites. In any case, whatever name they chose, Hay had a kick-off strategy in mind: “a, make a mailing advertising the Book Service, through ONE’s facilities; b. using the response list as a basis, issue a sample copy of TENSIONS, GAIETE, et ux, as a come-on basis for subscription...when sample of the RAG has been so released, then make use of Matt Review and Ladder mailing facilities for sending out the sample copy BUT WITHOUT THE

---

216 Ibid.
217 Ibid.
218 Letter from Harry Hay to Jim Kepner, January 14, 1963, Box 1, Folder 70. Harry Hay Papers, Los Angeles.
BOOK SERVICE SLIP-IN. It is worth noting that Hay had few qualms about using any means necessary, even questionably ethical ones such as misrepresenting the nature of his organization to existing ones so as to use their facilities. The same day, after lunch, Hay wrote again with a new name-idea: “PURSUIT.”

All, however, depended on their love relationship – full of ideological as well as personal tension. “At this point,” wrote Hay in early February, “I feel the need to restate a few previous postulates...bring in love is socially intransitive and thus incurs, to the last analysis, only such obligations as pleasing the beloved in order to satisfy the pangs and hungers of the self. To love, on the other hand, is socially transitive and incurs a full predicate objective.” In other words, Hay found his near-constant criticisms of Jim necessary to prove their true love (since pleasing him would only be serving himself. “I like what D. H. Lawrence says of love versus sex in the section of PLUMED SERPENT where Kate first dances with the “Men of Quetzalcoatl.” It seems similar to the phrase you once used about to eagles each independently but voluntarily circling and soaring together as an inseparable pair endlessly in the depths of the blue space above and beyond the sky.”

Hay’s ideals of love could prove exhausting – “this endless searing together of free and independent spirits” but would eventually lead, at least according to him, to “the most profound encompassment of ecstasy in depth, or of communions of spirit, mutually conjurable.” As for Mattachine III’s work, it needed to be put off due to practical concerns. However, “THIS DOES NOT MEAN,” Hay insisted, “THAT WE SHOULDN’T, when we are in a position to establish a social relationship together, BEGIN TO LAY GROUND WORK.” Yet again, the state of the personal relationship and the political activism were inextricably bound up in one another.

---

220 Ibid.
222 Ibid.
223 Ibid.
224 Ibid.
225 Ibid.
By the 18th of February, their relationship was definitively sexual - sex with (Jim’s then-partner) Scott was referred to as non-monogamous, implying that Hay was Jim’s primary emotional if not physical partner.  

In the same letter, Hay recounted stories from his past and praised Jim’s poetry, admitting that he couldn’t provide any of his own. “I am not able yet to think of you in terms of love poems. What you offer me, presently and potentially, is too vast for me as yet to abstract, or to snare any of its incalculable faces into skeins of single images. I want to go with you to all the lovely places I have ever seen so that I may appreciate them truly through your assessment of them.”

Sex continued to preoccupy them – given that Hay expounded on his theories of sex and his lived experience of it almost simultaneously, we can put the one in context with the other. “I can’t help but feel,” wrote Hay, “that - between us - each analyzing and objectivizing the relationships he has experienced, and the blunders of serious patterns...we have many dimensions to contribute to the orientation toward which we both feel so strong a call.”

In Jim, however, Hay found a solution to his “six months...[of] soul-searching discovery, during which I was summoning up the necessary courage and self-discipline to face the disaster to my own investment and future prospects which separation would entail.” Regardless of Jim’s ability to respond sexually, Hay assured him, he would find “many aspects of erotic interchange” with which to feed their spiritual and intellectual compatibility: “Do you think, in the long run, that the most gorgeous erection you conjure up in fantasy could hold a candle to the overpowering desire which your massive and pulsating erection of intellect calls forth in me? THESE ARE MY EXPECTATIONS! And why? Because I have seen them.” Nevertheless, Hay continued to assure him that this celibate state need not be permanent. Jørn, for example, had been unable to achieve

---

226 Ibid.
227 Ibid.
229 Ibid.
230 Ibid.
erection for four months after he began living with Hay. All of these problems could be solved.

More poetry followed — a poem in which Hay “turn[ed] incandescent at your touch,” and a letter in which he allowed himself a bit more poetic license than usual. “Oh, Jimmy, Jimmy,” he wrote, “This is such a Golden Day...on the wings of this jubilation, my carry-over from last night...every new moment when I’m with you it is a new and further adventure of the spirit and the mind. And I think this will ever be our experience. It is this ever self-renewing jubilation, in finding ourselves meeting and being in rapport on the same plane, that I was attempting to communicate when I mentioned that you have become to me the whole fullness of living...let you never been in panic, or afraid of anything, so long as we are together.”

Throughout 1963, as their relationship deepened, Hay developed a set of activist ideas that increasingly focused on public defiance of propriety and gender norms and the development of a separate, even separatist, set of spaces for homophiles, based upon the consciousness ideas and on the evolving models of the New Left. “IN ALL THIS,” Hay wrote of these ideas, “WE WILL NOT SEEK TO BE RESPECTED AS HIGH-CLASS GENTLEMEN BUT AS VIGOROUS INCORRUPTIBLE FIGHTERS IN THE BELOVED “FRONTIER” TRADITION...TO PRESS ACCEPTABLE HETERO SOCIO-SEXUAL PRIVILEGES RIGHT TO THE THIN REACHES OF THE LAW.”

Hay based the protest methods on the “dance fraternities” about which he had waxed reverentially in the pueblos. Variously called the Homophile Community Cultural Association and the Civil Defiance Program (Hay played also with the acronyms HBFCR, PURE, CAMP, and SWISH), the idea, proposed to ONE, was essentially to develop some all-male square- and swing-dance teams that could enter into competitions and perform short, sting- or flashmob-like performance protests at public events. The team would wear

---

red and blue bandanas – blue for the “boys” and red for the “girls,” although they would all be male and switch bandannas several times during each routine. Hay also foresaw a role for singing teams who could join the dancers to revive the “Ballad-opera folk tradition” in concert with folk singers. Hay thought that with the consultation of lawyers, these performances could begin to take place in public parks, zoos, beaches, and other areas. “We will,” Hay wrote, “have to take it fairly easy at first,” but eventually he thought that they could conclude these performances with public displays of affection – presumably kissing. This would cost – donors would need to be found to support any potential lawsuits. Hay’s proposal for fundraising: “you believe in rights we agitate for but you don’t want to put yourself on the firing line? Okay, put your money there so WE can draw the fire instead.”

Van Gosse notes that definitional to the New Left was the notion of “moral witness” – nonviolent confrontation through public protests in which protestors “put their bodies on the line” for their goals. Hay’s influence from other types of rights protest movements (most notably, the African-American movement that was particularly active in the early 1960s) is clearly visible.

The ultimate goal would be to gain, through these edgy performances, the cultural as well as legal right to a set of safe and separate spaces for homophile life: in addition to amending the 14th amendment of the constitution to include nondiscrimination against “non-harmful inclinations of sexual deviance between mutually consenting adults,” as had been his goal, Hay wanted “our own bars, clubhouses, an restaurants, whose patrons are not subject to surveillance and question…the right to assemble, as do other minorities, at beaches, mountains, public parks…the right to have nudist camps if we want them, to make our own movies, TV shows, to be heard in the public debate.”

Other ideas activist organizations included a remarkable and worked-out proposal to create a “Men’s House” for older homophiles. This document demonstrates Hay’s preoccupations with aging as he moved into his fifth decade. The house would be for men

---

eligible for social security, willing to carry out some housework. The men would contribute $45 per month to cover board, lodging, and laundry; and in addition, work at researching homophile history, maintain an archive, and produce a magazine (much like ONE). The establishment would provide a gym, pool, resident therapist and doctor, a small theatre for concerts, rooms for TV, a library, and some craft shops and other areas where the men might work. This idea, filed with documents from 1960 and 1961, though undated, demonstrates the beginning of Hay’s ideas about homophile uniqueness taking on an additional strain of separatism. Hay was here proposing the creation of a homophile communal utopia, a place away from the world where men could fall into the socially-productive patterns suggested by homophile consciousness. Here was a role for the older homophile – left out of the youth-focused sex culture of the bar scene; instead, men could be socially productive, useful, happy, and cared for by one another. This utopian vision, seen against larger patterns of social opprobrium and smaller patterns of rejection and isolation in Hay’s life, had tremendous, almost overwhelming power. On the back of the notepaper on which he sketched out the idea, Hay did some quick calculations, estimating that he could break even if research was able to lend some returns and he could get some money from a “moneybags” for an endowment.  

Hay’s relationship with Kepner demonstrated the final unlocking of his activism. Note the sheer volume of new ideas popping up in late 1962 and early 1963 compared with the relative paucity since HUAC. Free from Jørn, having arrived at his fullest idea of what the homophile could contribute to society through his consciousness and how he could therefore free himself, Hay found himself inhabiting a new life, if not the specific new life that his time in the Pueblo had promised. Writing Kepner in an ecstatic mood, Hay placed the last ten years of his life in the context of the music he so loved:

---

Rudi Gernreich, the guy through whose devotion Mattachine got started, was “Younger than Springtime” from SOUTH PACIFIC; Jorn was “O Maedchen mein Maedchen” from Lehar’s FREDERICKA; the Tewa Indian guy from Pojoaque Pueblo in New Mexico [this can only be Richard] was the “Berceuse” from Gounod’s Opera “Joslyn.” But you [Jim]...oh – when I found your measure, I knew in yet one more revealing and brilliant way and jubilant way that goal for which my life until now had been preparation....you are the endlessly soaring and ever transcendent principal melody of the third movement of the Shostakovich Vth Symphony..."\(^{236}\)

Conclusions

Hay’s relationship with Jim Kepner was not to last. Their sexual incompatibility proved to be too great, although they remained lifelong friends. A few months into 1964, after Hay and Jørn had stopped living together, Hay met John Burnside at ONE. Burnside left his wife, and the two men began a lifelong romance. An inventor, Burnside had several kaleidoscope patents; Hay quit his job and the two men were able to live off of their California Kaleidoscopes company for the rest of their lives.

ONE split in 1965, the result of a fight between Don Slater and Dorr Legg. Hay and Burnside were caught in the middle of this fight. Around that time, the two moved to New Mexico, settling in Albuquerque and then in Pojoaque. In 1972, Hay co-founded the Radical Faeries with Burnside and several other men. Based on the idea of the mutually-understanding relationships Hay had developed with Tapia and Kepner, the organization still exists. In the 1980s, Hay moved back to Los Angeles.

Having shown that Hay’s paralysis originated from HUAC, and having shown that his ideas and life influenced one another, and having shown that his ideas developed in the period 1953-1964 are important to understanding his life, activism, and the larger history of pre-Stonewall homophile activism, and having redated his notion of gay consciousness and subjective relationships to the early 1960s and given the Radical Faeries an ideological origin story, I now hope to at least name some further points that will hopefully be explored in addition to the history I have been able to present. While the scope and timeframe of this project prevented these topics from being included fully in these pages, they are all interesting and important problems that deserve to be addressed.

In 2002, in How to do the History of Homosexuality, David Halperin argued that his "new" model demonstrated "a process of historical overlay and accretion," that despite similarities of outlook and subjectivity, "there is no such thing as a single or unitary history of male homosexuality. Instead, there are histories of...different but simultaneous categories or traditions of discourse pertaining to what we now define as homosexuality." Breaking
down the monolithic concept of male homosexuality would, he argued, \textit{"denaturalize heterosexuality,"} promoting \textit{"a heterogeneity of queer identities past and present."} This idea is relatively accepted currently by scholars and even in mainstream queer culture. Hay's theory, as presented and in additional interrogations of practices outside the scope of this project, adds to this discussion, and may present one of the earliest explications of this idea in American thought. Additionally, Hay's concept of the berdache as neither men-loving men nor women-loving women but other-loving others presents a challenge to binary gender that deserves to be added to the history of American thinking about gender. While I have been able to show the ways in which Hay was influenced by other movements of the New Left, important work remains to be done in integrating his influence on other 1950s and 1960s leftist movements.

At the heart of this project sits Hay's influence by and implicit critique of Engels and his concept of matriarchal primitive Communism. The intersection of sexuality and American Left movements is a fascinating topic, and while Hay, as an activist prominent in both movements, features in scholarly considerations, his particular theoretical niche deserves to be better documented and placed into context with others' work. Additionally, Hay's orientalist considerations of Native Americans (and the problematic assumptions that lingered well into the work of the Radical Faeries) should be further explored, including the context of Hay and Burnside's later work alongside Native Americans and alongside other theory on queerness and modernity – Halperin again echoes Hay when concluding that “queer politics takes aim at the very heart of our modernity.”

Finally, the presence of so much new material about Hay, a figure whose name is known by most scholars of this field and at least some of whose contributions are well-documented and understood, underscores the vast number of thinkers, writers, and individuals whose lives and work are not currently chronicled. For instance, despite his lifelong involvement with homophile and gay movements, there is no serious scholarship

\begin{footnote}
\end{footnote}
about the life and work of Jim Kepner. The work and life of Dorr Legg surely deserve a full study, as do many of the other men and women who were writing, researching, and theorizing before Stonewall. Even better, the time is overdue for a comprehensive study that would examine all of these independent thinkers together, advancing an argument about the diversity and multiplicity of early homophile ideas and underscoring their challenges to our current understanding of LGBT rights.

After a life spent raising hell, Harry Hay passed away in 2002 at the age of 90. John Burnside followed in September 2008, at the age of 91. Hannah Hay married and gave birth to Hay’s grandson Damon Muldavin in 1968. She fell out with Harry: after several years of fighting and demanding more financial assistance, she ended contact. Their relationship was repaired enough by 1986 that she was interviewed by Stuart Timmons for Hay’s biography. According to public records searches, Damon lives in Los Angeles, Hannah remarried and now lives as Hannah Barlow in Canoga Park, California, and Jørn Kamgren is alive and living in Los Angeles. None of those three responded to my letters. Anita Platky died in 1983. Jim Kepner continued to write and collect, eventually massing enormous archives of information on American gay life. In the early 1990s, he merged his collection with the library of ONE and formed the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, still open as a center of scholarship and preservation, and now affiliated with the UCLA libraries. He died in 1997. Kate Hay married Dennis Berman in 1976, and moved to Sherman Oaks, California. She was enormously warm, kind, and helpful in helping me secure access to archives and other research materials. Richard Tapia became the governor of Pojoaque and lived there his entire life. Kate and Richard died on the same day: January 15, 2014. This thesis is dedicated to their memory.

Appendix: Photographs
(all photos: Box 33, Harry Hay Papers, GLC-44, San Francisco Public Library)

1954: Domestic backyard bliss, with Jørn and cats. Note the sign for Jørn’s shop visible above right.
1955: Hannah (l) and Kate (r) Hay
1955: In tie and glasses to testify before HUAC.
1957: Harry (l) and Jørn (r), the two men pose in front of a mission in Carmel, California.
1950s: Valentine's Cards
1960: At the Mission in Carmel
Hay's passport photo, 1963
Bibliography

Primary Sources


Harry Hay Papers, Coll2011-003, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.

Harry Hay Papers, GLC 44. San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library. San Francisco, California.


“We Are a Separate People” - Interview of Harry Hay by Mitchell Tuchman, 1981-82. Oral History Research Center. University of California, Los Angeles, CA.

Secondary Sources


