

The age of rejection

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Der Kreis : eine Monatsschrift = Le Cercle : revue mensuelle**

Band (Jahr): **28 (1960)**

Heft 6

PDF erstellt am: **06.08.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-570001>

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«Just tell me it was for kicks you did what Joey's telling people.»

«God bless the blundering Joeys in this world. I don't give a damn what anyone but you believes. No, partner, it wasn't for kicks.»

He swore, and exploded, «My best buddy a lousy dirty queer.»

«*Dirty?*»

«Yeah, *dirty!*» His bright eyes were steel.

He kicked my wastebasket with venom. It caved in just like my heart felt. Leon passed out of sight.

Soon Chuck came in and put his arm around my shoulder and we leaned on each other.

As I said before, I wouldn't give Leon the time of day if he asked. Now Chuck had taken the car to the service station.

Then Leon was leaning in the doorway, flicking ash off his cigarette. Finally he spoke. «You just can't involve yourself like I have in someone's life and then walk out. I keep thinking about our good times together. How I made you in one day smoke, drink and shoot . . . and how I put lineament on your bruised shoulder from the rifle's kick.»

«You knew I was different then,» I accused. «It's degrading, Leon, when you have to seek out someone because you're going crazy with loneliness. That's why Chuck and I are together . . .»

Leon swallowed. «I know, I apologize, I—»

«Did you think I don't want all the things you have, too? I need Chuck in my life to make things have meaning. We don't sit around now remembering times of happiness to keep warm by. We're living our happiness just as Joyce and the baby symbolize yours.»

«I know, partner. You tried to show me with the *The Theban Warriors* how good it can be.» Suddenly he was looking at me that special way and we were moving toward each other, comrades again, our fingers briefly linking in shy confusion. Moving away he said, «Joyce asked me to ask both of you to dinner.»

«Thanks. We—we'll come. Gosh, I'm starved. It's that time of day, isn't it?»

«About the wastebasket—»

«Aw heck, I was looking for something to kick right then, too, but you got to it first,» I grinned.

The Age of Rejection

One of my friends, who resided for several years in the Near East, recently came up with this comment, «Over in Europe one finds a different psyche. In the Near East, for instance, it is possible to find a lover who will be devoted to one. Here in America it is much more difficult, but that is mainly because homosexuality is far more neurotic in our country than it is in other countries.»

While our readers are chewing this bit of cud either with acceptance or resistance of it, another friend's interpretation should likewise be considered. He claims the reason there is so much unhappiness and frustration in the American gay world is because ours is primarily an age of rejection rather than one of open-hearted acceptance of experience.

It is with some regret we feel obligated to pass on these cynical though perhaps accurate remarks, but we do so in case they may be of some assistance, and may have some validity.

No doubt it will first of all be claimed that the high quota of psychiatrists per capita in American society proves that our present national psychology is neurotic—whether it be in a homosexual or a heterosexual way. If a great many people were not profoundly disturbed about themselves, there would not be so many other people deriving a trim livelihood from listening to them moan low about their disturbances. We can therefore assume that American society is definitely fraught. With what? With people who, like the late lamented Helen Morgan, are chanting nightly, «Why Was I Born? Why Am I Living?» Some of these souls have decided the only way out for them is to wallow in psychic masochism. They are akin to the figure in the Thurber cartoon, who is growling, «I'm drinking myself to death and you can't stop me.» Filled with guilt and self-reproach, they no longer seek happiness and fulfillment; they seek rather an alcoholic daze or, if sober, wear an emotional hair-shirt. They tend to consider that anyone who is not in their plight, anyone who is not «insecure» and tormented by the Furies, is an unsophisticated Babbitt.

If homosexuality is more neurotic in America than abroad, as our amateur ethnologist friend maintains, it can be claimed with some justification that all behaviour in America is more neurotic than abroad. The richest country in the world is the fullest of sad hearts.

From this state of restless masochism would appear to proceed the impulse to reject rather than to receive experience. Without having precise Trendex polls to guide one, a suspicion exists that the percentage of amatory success in New York today is about ten to one; that is, for every ten persons whom a homosexual might approach with a gleaming stare, nine of them will reject him to one who will accept him.

These odds refer to the fortunes of the average gay boy of average appearance—not to the «great beauty» or the «real doll». These two rare specimens are hardly on the roulette table at all. They are generally being well cared for by someone who can do material things for them, and are thus not to be rated as in plebeian circulation.

The average gay boy can be described as the individual who is neither devastatingly attractive nor generally repulsive. It is with his percentage of success and failure that we compassionately concern ourselves in this article.

His percentage is partly conditioned by his age, but only partly. It is possible for a man over forty (Horrors!) to make out better in a given week than a boy of twenty, disgusting though this news may be to the «While We're Young» set. This success may proceed from a shrewd technique or a brazen bluntness rather than from the charms of external appearance.

There are those who will accept no bedmate but a young bedmate, but there are also youths (perhaps with father complexes) or perhaps with an acquisitive eye on the main chance, who seem to prefer The Older Man. Therefore age, as such, is not *necessarily* the inevitable cause for rejection. There are even mature men who are tired of empty-headed youth and seeking something more mature as a mate, a person who may have less in the way of physical allure but more in the upper story.

Charm is so variable and so changeable a word to various persons we hesitate about the wisdom of using it. A truly charming person is not invariably successful as a cruiser. Perhaps his charm cannot flower in the hostile and competitive atmosphere of many gay bars; it may need another kind of setting. But even if it *can* assert itself there, he may not win the day because

of it. Charming men get rejected, just as ugly men, plain men, stout men, bald men, thin men, lame men and even muscle men do.

Why is this?

What accounts for the rejection of the likeable?

We have previously tried to explain how the wrong attire or the wrong behaviour may bring failure; we did not perhaps indicate that this can occur to a person of considerable charm. All the more bewildering then becomes the attempt to account for the enormous number of rejections taking place every night in our gay bars.

The reasons for rejection do not always depend on the personality of the person who gets rejected. The rejection can just as well take place because of something that is happening in the emotional life of the person who does the rejecting. He may, for example, be recovering from a divorce, or be in a state of sexual torpor, or be going through a transition from monogamy back to promiscuity, with some resentment that this has befallen, or he may be nourishing some unrequited love which is searing his bosom and be unwilling to accept any substitute whatever. If he is drinking to forget this love, no one who comes in view, not even the ghost of Jimmy Dean, could dispel the image of the longed-for one.

One must be charitable to these beknighted souls who, imprisoned in this sorry condition, are brusque or apathetic to advances. They can't help themselves; they actually do not know what time it is. Do not invariably, dear Brutus, assume the fault lies in you; it may lie in the untimely stares of the person you covet in vain.

But one may not be inclined to be quite so charitable to those who are not mourning anyone and who yet remain aloof to friendly overtures. They are likely to be perfectionists. They may even be anti-social. They may not see any percentage in being decently pleasant to anyone just for humanity's sake. This trait can be seen in them during their working hours as well as their cruising hours. They are the people who have no smiles to spare on customers, no agreeable words to help pass the day with their co-workers. They live within small, selfish cells, to which only a few are admitted; and it will generally be found they do not have a great deal to offer to those who are admitted.

But a man need not be of this type to reject far more lovers than he accepts. He may reject candidates for his embrace for any of the following reasons:

1. They are too young, and therefore probably untrained. («I don't run no finishing school»).
2. They are too old («How can that ancient character imagine anyone would want to go to bed with him?»)
3. Their skin is not white («My dear, no matter how desperate I might be, I'd never descend to a Negro or a Jap or a Puerto Rican. I have *some* pride.»)
4. They have a physical defect («Now really, how can a man with a clubfoot, or a cane or a birthmark or a pot belly or a shred of an ear from a war wound or a cleft palate or What Have You expect anyone to get the hots for him?»)
5. They're too Nelly. («One thing I can't *abide* is a Screaming Mimi.»)
6. They're too butch («Oh, I don't think trade is so grand. They expect you to do everything and they won't do anything you want in return. They don't care whether you get satisfied, and there's always the danger they may roll you or beat you up. You're really safer with another girl.»)

7. They won't pay for it («I'm certainly not going to be laid unless there's something in it for me.»)

But enough . . . seven deadly reasons may already have begun to blast the hopes of our more tender readers. We will give no more cruel causes for rejectionitis.

A word on the manner of rejection. With the very inconsiderate it consists of a flat refusal even to reply to a casual, friendly remark. This can be noted in queens of all ages, but is more frequent in the very young. They have not yet suffered sufficiently to have learned compassion. However, those who behave in this manner often turn out to be quite selfish in the sack and one should thus remember that a boy can be more beautiful than desirable.

Do not grieve too much, dear heart, over the queen who gives you the cold cucumber cut. You may not be missing as much as you think.

With the better-behaved, kinder-natured boy, the brush-off will consist of a delayed departure from your company. A conversation may be accepted for a certain time, but then some escape to the john will be tactfully managed, or a straying to the cigarette machine or the jukebox. Do not pursue this matter or you will foolishly lay yourself open to the Cut Direct. Give up and start another gambit.

Some individuals have a deluded notion that they get rejected because they do not appear cultivated or smart or glamorous or something of that sort. This is an error. Ordinarily a queen does not go home from a gay bar with another queen because he knows or imagines that this person is famous or socially chic or even well-to-do. The coalition is much more apt to be affected *solely* on the grounds of physical personality, and a boy who could go home to a duplex and senses it, will instead go home to a furnished room.

Rejections are based on other matters beside personality — on time («It's early and I think I can something better later on, and if I can't, well, never mind, there's always tomorrow night») on place («I rarely find just my dish in the first bar, so when I finish this beer, I'm moving on») on money («He's not bad, I wouldn't push him out of bed, but I just can't spend any more money on the town tonight, and he hasn't offered to buy me a drink or managed to come to the point, so the hell with him») or on vanity («He seems like a nice guy but he's not up to my standard and I don't want my friends to see me walking out with him») on pride («He's come to the point too quickly; really, I have to insist on the courtesy to me of a slower, less brazen build-up. I'm not just a whore») on self-respect («Somehow he's too free and easy to suit my finicky notions. I don't feel I'm getting someone who is *special* in his choices.»)

In summary, poor, tortured readers, the reasons for rejection are so intricate we know no way how to counsel you to avoid each and every one of them. Alas, we can offer no reliable promise of greater success to our frustrated readers, who, perfectly dressed for the place and moving in it with expert obedience to our dicta, still feel they are jinxed. We can only say: «Forget the bars. Try the baths. There, at any rate, you won't find people who are in two minds as to what they want that night. If they didn't want the gorgeous relief of an embrace, they wouldn't be there.»

by Hadrian.

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BRIEFE VON AUSSENSTEHENDEN

können wir nur dann beantworten, wenn genügend Rückporto für das In- und Ausland beiliegt, besonders auch dann, wenn sogar Luftpostbeförderung gewünscht wird. Es treffen immer wieder Briefe bei uns ein mit den unmöglichsten Fragen, manchmal auch mit sinnlosen, die zeigen, wie manche von uns in einem Wolkenkuckucksheim, nur nicht in der Wirklichkeit leben. Mit ein wenig mehr Ueberlegung könnte sich mancher einen überflüssigen Brief und uns überflüssige Arbeit ersparen.

Man versucht auch immer wieder, sich in die Inserat-Korrespondenz einzuschmuggeln, ohne Abonnent zu sein. Auch diese Versuche bleiben wirkungslos, müssen es für alle Zukunft bleiben, um unseren Abonnenten die Sicherheit zu geben, vertrauenswürdigen Kameraden gegenüberzustehen. Es ist nicht Kleinlichkeit, wenn wir unberechtigte Offerten zurückgehen lassen oder einfach vernichten. Wir wissen von unbekanntem Schreibern nicht, ob es sich um seriöse oder dubiose Menschen oder gar um Spitzel handelt, die nachher mit einmal gewonnenen Adressen Schindluder treiben wollen. Zuviel Vorsicht ist immer besser als zu wenig. Zuviel Vertrauen hat schon manche Existenz vernichtet. Wir bitten um Weitersagen!

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