

In your face

The most shocking thing about Gerald Hannon—award-winning journalist, great teacher, gay prostitute and unashamed advocate of man-boy sex—is how he flourished in the centre of a hurricane of moral censure. An isolated little boy from Northern Ontario learns to flaunt it *By Sandra Martin*

"Come with me," Gerald Hannon whispers in story after story in *The Body Politic*, *The Globe and Mail* and even *Toronto Life*. As a writer, he caresses us with words and seduces us with images. He has shown us the randy side of artist Michael Snow, the prickly parts of art critic John Bentley Mays and the creative soul of playwright Tomson Highway.

He takes us places most of us have never been—to orgy rooms, bathhouses and gay bars. He's let us creep up to the bedside of dancer Rene Highway, "dying to the smell of sweet grass burning in his room at Casey House, to the sounds and sweet smoke of the pipe ceremony, to the hands that drummed gently on his skin, speaking to him through the prison of his body." He's walked us around his hometown, rummaged through his own sex-drenched psyche and taken us to the late-night gropings and couplings in the park after a "glistening afternoon" at Gay Pride Day. "It's dark, but you'll get used to it," he promises. "And you'll love it."

Sometimes, though, we come back from these escapades sated but soured, for Hannon has no respect for boundaries, in writing or in life. He's told us that sex is like lunch, compared children's hockey to kiddie sex rings and argued that sex between children and adults, or patients and doctors, is not necessarily harmful or unethical.

"I love to watch," he has written. And to listen. Twenty years ago, in *The Body Politic*, he invited us to snuggle down with him in a tent in the Ontario countryside and overhear "the murmuring, the giggling, the occasional explosive snort" of a twelve-year-old boy having sex with an adult male. For most people, the article is so offensive, so deeply shocking, that it can't be buried, no matter how many magazine awards Hannon wins or how many years go by. It's like a skeleton that periodically escapes from Hannon's closet to scandalize the city.

Only last winter, it rattled its bones again when *Toronto Star* journalist Judy Steed went gunning for Hannon on behalf of the innocent adults who take his course in freelance writing at Ryerson. Steed is the antithesis of Hannon—earnest, zealous, seemingly humourless. Yet she's just as outrageous in her determination to "protect" children as he is in his commitment to "liberate" them. Their clash fomented a howling media controversy that Hannon further inflamed when he revealed that he turns tricks to supplement his income.

"Free speech!" shouted his supporters, even while they condemned his repugnant views. "Pervert!" and "Pedophile!"

yelled his opponents. Most of us, though, simply stood around and gawked, like shocked spectators at a street fight.

Steed scuttled off to the sidelines, leaving Heather Bird to wage war in the pages of *The Toronto Sun*. Caught in the media glare, Hannon looked more like a cleric than a hooker, but then how many fifty-one-year-old gay prostitutes do you know? Middle-aged, mild-mannered and defensive, he gazed quizzically at the cameras through owl-shaped glasses. In reply to direct questions, he was glib, witty and unable to present a cogent rationalization to support his twenty-year-old article on pedophilia. Is he a social critic attacking archaic social taboos in the tradition of Oscar Wilde, as he claims? Or a psychopath advocating harm to children, as Steed insists? Or a lubricious jokester whose tricks have blown up in his face?

Come with me, and I'll show you where he lives.

TWO DAYS AFTER Christmas, I ring the bell of Gerald Hannon's high-rise condo on the edge of the gay ghetto in downtown Toronto. He opens the door, looking like a combination of Peter Gzowski and Sylvester the Cat, rumped and slightly preposterous. The phone is ringing. A customer? I speculate, wondering whether the headline in the *Sun*—RYERSON PROF: I'M A HOOKER—has been good for business. But no.

"That's my tormentor," he explains, adding that along with death threats, he's been getting crank calls from a weirdo with a falsetto. "He calls me Daddy and asks me to suck his peepee," Hannon says. The calls have come as often as forty times a day since the end of November. I answer one of the rings and hear a strangled voice whine, "Daddy why won't you talk to me?" The voice is surreal and tortured, vibrating with untold horrors. It reminds me of the mother's voice in Tony Perkins' head in that final scene in *Psycho*.

Other than that, visiting Gerald Hannon's apartment is nothing out of the ordinary. There are no ropes or wrist clamps hanging from the walls, not even any beaded curtains or red lightbulbs, although a postcard on the fridge could be an illustration from a gay sex manual and there is a sculpted penis lying casually on an end table.

Mostly the place is decorated with depictions of Gerald. There is a large portrait of a younger Gerald on the living room wall, his eyes averted, an enigmatic smile almost hidden by his moustache, and several photographs of him from Marathon, the pulp mill town 400 kilometres north of Sault Ste. Marie, where

"I'm sure more harm was done to me by being raised a Catholic than ever would have been done if someone had physically had their way with me, particularly if I had wanted it." That's a big if

he lived from the age of two until he escaped to St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto sixteen years later.

Marathon was once Peninsula, a main supply base during the construction of the CPR in the 1880s. By the Second World War, it was a little railway stop where maybe twenty families lived. A sign at the edge of town said END OF THE ROAD. Then, in 1945, a sulphite pulp mill with a daily capacity of 300 tons was built, and the population ballooned to 2,500; Peninsula became Marathon. Everything was new—the houses, the people, the social structure.

It was the classic company town, rigidly organized and incestuous. "Everybody knew what you had for breakfast," Gerald's former neighbour tells me. He's now a lawyer in Toronto and he doesn't want his name used, so I will call him James. "If you kissed a girl good night," says James, "bingo, it was around town the next day."

Like most men in Marathon, Gerald's father, Fred, worked at the pulp mill. He was from the Maritimes, but desperation had driven him to leave his wife and infant son with her family in Bathurst, New Brunswick, and take a job as a menial labourer in Marathon. Gerald and his mother arrived in 1946, when he was two. "I think he hated it," Gerald says of his father. "That place was utterly hellish. It was hot, it stank, it was dark. It was foul in every possible way, and that men drank on the job and stayed drunk was no surprise to me."

Fred Hannon was a brutal drunk; he beat up Gerald's mother and often used his fists on Gerald and his brother John, who was two years younger. One time Fred was beating Gerald to make him stop crying, but Gerald had reached "that childhood hysterical level of crying where I literally couldn't stop. I remember the horror of that. He kept beating me to make me stop crying and my mother kept screaming to make him stop, and finally he gave up—he was tired." Only once does Gerald remember fighting back. "He was punching me in the face repeatedly and without even thinking about it, I reached out and (ironically) picked up a beer bottle and brought it down on his head." Fred fell reeling to the floor with blood gushing down his face.

There's still talk that as a boy Gerald fucked cats and strung their carcasses from the clothesline, but I've found no evidence to support that rumour. Gerald did run a rabbit trapline when he was a teenager and brought home the catch to his mother's stew pot. And his father once killed a cat by swinging it by the tail and bashing its brains out against a wall. But fucking cats? No, I don't think so.

Rumours about cats and other weird rituals grow like mould in closeted communities, particularly if there is somebody strange to attach them to. And Gerald was certainly odd. He was smart, he didn't play sports, his brother ended up in reform school, and his parents kept to themselves. When the other kids were out playing hockey or going to the movies on Saturday afternoon, he would stay inside listening to the broadcast from the Metropolitan Opera on the radio. James doesn't remember Gerald having any real friends: "If you wanted to make a joke about somebody who just sat around and was reclusive and not involved in stuff, then you'd mention his name. Otherwise, Gerald was not a person who figured in anybody's life at all."

There was a lot of cruelty and violence in Gerald's life, but very little affection or kindness. "I have the sense that I was played tricks on as a kid because I was slow and dozy—not

slow intellectually, but kind of dreamy and dozy," he says. Sometime in late public school or early high school, Gerald realized that if reform school was the escape route for a rough boy like his brother John, the way out for a smart, good boy like himself was a scholarship to university. He graduated as an Ontario Scholar ("back when it meant something") and entered St. Michael's College in 1962.

But Gerald, the brightest boy to come out of Marathon, "was a fish out of water" at the university. "I knew how to lay a trapline for rabbits, but I had no conversation. I used my fingers to push food onto my fork," he remembered thirty years later in an article for the *Globe*. He was "completely dazzled and hopeless and not independent enough to figure out how to study." He took almost nothing but sciences and math in his first year, and he failed every course but religious knowledge—probably the only benefit he derived from his ritualized servitude as an altar boy. He was so mortified by his dismal marks that he hitchhiked back to Marathon at the end of the academic year to delay his return as long as possible. He spent the summer working in the satanic mill and returned to university in the fall. This time he took arts, with a major in philosophy, and did well.

By now, Gerald had "begun to hear about homosexuality and to make a connection between the concept and me." It was terrifying. Sometimes he would be walking across Queen's Park from classes at St. Mike's to University College and he would stop under the oak and maple trees and say out loud, "I am a homosexual," and then walk on "because I couldn't continue to think about it."

He succumbed to "homo-torment" by falling in love with his roommate, Frank, an American from New Jersey who was a redneck supporter of the Vietnam War, a lout and a gay-basher. Frank and his friends had a favourite sport. They would pee into plastic bags and then wander out late at night to St. Joseph Street, posing as pickups for guys cruising around St. Michael's College. They would linger on the sidewalk until they attracted someone's fancy. When the car slowed and the door opened, they would fling the bag of urine into the car and drench the seat and the guy. "I always refused to participate," Gerald says, "even though it made me suspect in their eyes."

Philip Marchand, book critic for *The Toronto Star*, was also a student at St. Mike's in the 1960s. He was a year or so behind Gerry, as Gerald was known in those days, and enrolled in different courses, but they both waited on tables in the faculty dining room of Brennan Hall. "We used to put on these little white waiter's jackets," Philip says, "and serve the priests dinner for about a buck an hour."

The most striking thing about Gerry, as far as Marchand was concerned, was the thoroughly unpleasant company he kept. His friends were "macho types" who called him "Pooch," because he loved Puccini and had a doglike expression. "They almost sadistically mistreated him," Marchand says—and the worst of the bunch was Gerry's beloved Frank. Typically, Frank and his pals would play practical jokes like stealing Gerry's coat in winter, but once they made up a letterhead from a nudist colony called the Solar Society and sent Gerald promotional letters and a survey asking about his sexual prowess and preferences. They even persuaded a young woman to interview Gerald while they hid in the closet. The ruse went on for several days, maybe a couple of weeks, with Gerry confiding the details to Philip in between serving soup to the priests.

Even this ghastly trick didn't turn Gerald against the odious Frank. They continued to be "friends" all through university.

Every summer, Gerry went back to Marathon to work in the mill to earn the next year's living expenses. But he also joined the Catholic equivalent of CUSO and spent four or five weeks each vacation as a volunteer in a remote mountain village in Mexico, teaching basic literacy in a place that had no facilities—no desks or blackboards, not even a latrine. It was an astonishing and difficult experience, and one he considers pivotal in making him independent. Because he was a good boy, he had learned Spanish, unlike the other three volunteers. "Everybody depended on me," he says, "and I became resourceful and directive in ways that I could never have imagined." Philip noticed that when Gerald came back from Mexico, he "seemed like a different person. It brought out the best in him."

In 1966 Gerald graduated with a general BA and found a job at Zurich insurance company. There he also found a girlfriend of sorts and finally relinquished his virginity. "I didn't want to, but she was so persistent," he says. "She made me stay over at her house." He didn't touch her all night long, but in the morning, he said to himself, "I've got to do this," and he did. "I rather enjoyed it. It was partly the novelty of my first real sexual experience and it felt normal—it was with a girl." It wasn't until two years later that Gerald had sex with a man—journalist Ed Jackson, who is still one of his closest friends. They met at an adult education centre in the west end, where they were both applying for jobs as ESL teachers. Russia had invaded Czechoslovakia, and suddenly there were lots of refugees in Toronto needing to learn English. Jobs were easy to come by, camaraderie was in the air and, aside from the language barrier, it was hard to tell the students from the teachers.

"I saw this dopey-looking guy sitting there in the waiting room. He had longish hair that hung down in his eyes and big glasses that he would push back up on his nose," Jackson tells me, sitting over coffee in a Second Cup on Yonge Street. Now in his early fifties, he has a chalk-white brush cut and lives the gay activist life in the suburbs where the rent is cheap—a lovely guy who exudes empathy like aftershave. Ed soon found that Gerald's dopey look was completely at odds with his quickness of wit.

In 1970 Gerald and Ed went to Europe together. "He had a girlfriend who had moved to England and he was still seeing her and having sex," says Ed, "but by that time, I think he had realized that he really was gay." When they returned to Toronto in 1971, Gerald was openly gay. "I think he blossomed once he came out," Ed says.

GERALD'S FLOWERING was matched by gay pride, which was bursting forth in Toronto. American gay radical Jearld Moldenhauer showed up at the University of Toronto in January 1969, working as a research assistant. He put an ad in *The Varsity* seeking others who wanted to form a gay group, and soon the U of T Homophile Association was launched. At its peak, there were about a hundred members. One of them, George Hislop, formed the Community Homophile Association of Toronto (CHAT) in November 1970. In turn, CHAT member Paul Macdonald helped found Toronto Gay Action.

Then Moldenhauer opened Glad Day Books, which for a long time was considered the best gay bookstore in the world. In the early fall of 1971, Moldenhauer stood up at a Toronto Gay Action meeting and announced that some people were

thinking of starting a gay newspaper. A group of gay activists—gay journalists had yet to be invented—including Moldenhauer and Paul Macdonald and others such as Herb Spiers, Tony Metie, Peter Zorzi, Hugh Brewster and John Forbes founded *The Body Politic* (TBP). Of the first issue, Forbes later wrote: "It was terribly slapdash—somebody would write an article and then we'd get a good typist who'd do it on a Selectric with the various type balls. Then we'd all get together and do pasteup and have a wonderful time."

Gerry and Ed were back in Toronto in time for the second issue. Both became members of the collective, chasing news stories, doing layout, taking photographs, peddling copies in the street. "No one, in fact, knew anything about journalism," Gerald wrote in a tenth-anniversary memoir in *The Body Politic*. With charming candour he repeated one of his own early clangers in a story on a transsexual seminar: "Coffee followed, and those present availed themselves of the opportunity to question the transsexuals on various aspects of their condition." According to Gerald, "it was a paragraph of such condensed smarminess that...Jearld Moldenhauer used to read it aloud in a high-pitched, strangled voice, like a dowager going down for the third time."

Those early days at TBP were often marked with acrimony and name-calling, for while everybody agreed that the magazine should promote the cause of gay liberation and disseminate its principles, there was no consensus on what those principles were. By far the most contentious issue was sex between boys and men. For certain, some gays were pedophiles, but most were not. Gay organizations like CHAT were determined to promote the normalcy of gay life; most gays didn't want their newly minted pride tarnished by yoking homosexuality and pedophilia.

Gerald wasn't buying that argument. He was all for rushing the sexual barricades, if only to annihilate his real enemy—patriarchal institutions like the family and organized religion. "Close the schools, burn the churches—get the kids," he proclaimed at a CHAT meeting around this time. And he wrote an article for the July/August 1972 issue of TBP called OF MEN...AND LITTLE BOYS. He damned "the familial power structure" and argued that "all gay men should face the fact that at some point in their lives they may be captivated by some particularly luminous young man, and they should be prepared to embrace that experience joyfully, confident that the experience is potentially an enriching one for both parties and a step towards a sex-positive culture." The article was nothing more than freebasing opinion. There were no statistics, no experts, no interviews—with adults or children. Worse, its publication occurred in the buildup to the first-ever celebration of Gay Pride Week in Toronto. "Gerald does not," as Ed Jackson told me, "think of consequences."

The piece caused a ruckus at *The Body Politic* and in the gay community. The national press went on a rampage. An editorial in *The Globe and Mail* inquired whether police action would be taken against the newspaper or author. The *Star*, under the head NO OPEN SEASON ON CHILDREN, suggested that the attorney general should consider laying counselling charges against



Gerry was an oddball kid in a town without pity

Steed thought

having Hannon in the classroom was like hiring Ernst Zundel to teach the Holocaust. She refused to debate Hannon in public or in print: "Why should I expose myself to something unpleasant?"

the paper. The *Sun* went further still: criminal charges should be considered and federal funding for CHAT should be withdrawn. People were so afraid of a raid at the CHAT centre on Cecil Street that they trashed every issue of *The Body Politic*.

OF MEN...AND LITTLE BOYS marked the public launch of Gerald the Outrageous, a persona he has honed over the years. Pooch, with his whipped look and abject expression, was gone. In his place was a libertine who flaunted his sexuality, railed against what most people considered normal and acted out in a manner that seemed to many not only abnormal but threatening. Gerald can't completely account for the change in himself, but he admits the contrast was noticeable.

"Being gay," he tells me, "has given me an insight into a kind of sex and an approach to sex that I think is worth talking about." But when I ask him what that approach is, he is curiously gauche. After a few pauses, stumbles and false starts, he finally says, "It is more like a game; it's less serious. I sometimes think I want to make sex more dangerous and less important than it is in people's lives. I love the risk, both to personal esteem and the risk of failure and rejection, even the kind of physical danger that can come from [cruising the] parks."

Coming out was like arriving in a new country for Gerald, after the treacherous journey begun in Marathon. At *The Body Politic*, intelligence and wit were prized and so were his skills as a writer; working there became both a way of life and an apprenticeship in journalism. It wasn't so much that Gerald chose to become a gay activist and sought out TBP as a megaphone, but that he stumbled into journalism and found he was good at it. When the pieces he wrote attracted not only attention but notoriety, he became yet more defiant and outspoken.

"There's a particular dynamic about Gerry in the way he wants to attract people's outrage—he does court it," Philip Marchand says. He then mentions a book published in the 1950s by a famous psychoanalyst, Edmund Bergler. (The book is *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life?* Marchand remembers seeing it on a shelf at Glad Day back in the 1970s under the subject heading "hate literature.") Bergler, a strict Freudian, wrote that homosexuals deliberately go out and push or do something to get a reaction, usually with heavily negative implications. These days Bergler is very much out of fashion. Still, Marchand thinks Gerry fits this pattern of "popping up to be slapped down" in his hooking, his cruising and his public flouting of middle-class morality.

"Clearly there is some part of me that likes being provocative or I wouldn't do it," Gerald says, "something a bit childish that gets a kick out of what happens when I'm provocative. But it is not just childish because I think my ideas are worth considering. They actually do have merit."

YOUTH SEXUALITY became a recurring theme for Gerald. Like many of his ideas, this one was formed in reaction to his own remarkably chaste childhood and adolescence. Gerald was twenty-two before he had sex with a woman and twenty-four before he made it with a man. "I was a really ignorant, unsexualized child," he tells me, as we sit at his dining table, overlooking a parkette where a solitary dog is peeing against a lone tree. We're drinking coffee and nibbling from a plate of Christmas cookies a friend had given him the night before. "I've always envied men of my acquaintance who either seduced, or were seduced by, older brothers or friends of older brothers, in

ways they like to remember well," Gerald says. "They got into life more quickly than I did."

Helping gay and lesbian kids get out of the closet and into life was the rationale behind a three-part series campaigning for the abolition of the age of consent laws he wrote for TBP in 1977. At the time, straights could legally have sex at eighteen, but gays couldn't until twenty-one. Many in the gay community wanted the laws equalized, some wanted the age limit lowered to fourteen, and radicals like the *Body Politic* collective wanted them abolished altogether. Not surprisingly, abolition was a hard sell, even within the gay community.

In his first article, Hannon profiled several gay and lesbian teenagers, all of whom were breaking the law by having sex with their partners. His second hammered away at the family and the "archaic" notions that children are innocent and sex is harmful. Childhood, Gerald argued, was an artificial concept separating infants from adults, and the sooner children began exploring "broadly based human relationships," the better.

His third article was the notorious MEN LOVING BOYS LOVING MEN, which appeared on November 21, 1977. Gerald introduced us to three adult men who were enjoying consensual relationships with prepubescent boys. One of them, Simon, a thirty-three-year-old elementary-school teacher, was having an affair with David, a twelve-year-old student in his class. Another, Peter, was forty-eight, rich, cool, with a big car and a deep tan. Although he was particularly drawn to boys between twelve and fourteen, he admitted he had had oral sex with a sharp-toothed child of seven. The final pedophile was Barry, a gnomish character given to fart jokes, lewd stories and wrestling matches. He took Gerald on a camping trip to meet his twelve-year-old lover, Billy.

Adolescents wanting to have sex with each other was one thing, but Gerald was advocating prepubertal boys servicing the sexual and romantic needs of grown men. MEN LOVING BOYS LOVING MEN completely ignored the physical, economic, social, intellectual and emotional power imbalances between adults and children. Much had changed since Gerald had first advocated pedophilia in OF MEN...AND LITTLE BOYS five years earlier, but not attitudes toward adult-child sex. If anything, they had hardened as gay culture became more visible.

What also couldn't be ignored in Toronto that year was the murder of twelve-year-old shoe-shine boy Emanuel Jaques in an apartment above a body-rub parlour on Yonge Street. Although Jaques was a fixture on the street and some in the gay community hinted that he was a hustler, he was portrayed in the media as an innocent immigrant boy who had been kidnapped, raped and murdered by sexual predators. The implication was that all children were at risk, a fear that Gerald's article further inflamed.

Late in the afternoon on the day before New Year's Eve, a knot of police officers descended on the *Body Politic* offices with a search warrant. Gerald was at home and he remembers calling a "wretched and helpless" Ed Jackson hour after hour, and getting the same message: "They're still here. They're taking everything, everything." A week later, Jackson, Hannon and Ken Popert were arrested for unlawfully using the mails for the purpose of transmitting indecent, immoral or scurrilous matter—specifically, Issue 39 of *The Body Politic*.

Their trial began on January 2, 1979. It lasted until Valentine's Day, when Provincial Court Judge Sydney Harris acquit-

ted the three and commented that "such coverage helps the community to understand—not to condone or approve or endorse—but to understand, to realize what some people can do in the throes of sexual maladjustment." The Crown appealed, leading to yet another trial and another acquittal in June 1982. Later, Gerald confessed in the pages of *The Body Politic* that during the trial, he and his lover had discussed "what I would say or how I would wave to him if I was found guilty...and led away to jail. I blush at that. Does every gay man see himself as Oscar Wilde?"

IRONICALLY, IT WAS the obscenity trials that brought Gerald to the attention of the mainstream media—not as a subject but as a writer. Magazine editor Lynn Cunningham, now a part-time instructor at Ryerson, invited Gerald to write for *Toronto Life* in 1988. She had testified for the defence at the second obscenity trial in her capacity as the president of the Canadian Periodical Publishers' Association (now the Canadian Magazine Publishers Association). At the time, she only knew Gerald by reputation and as a fellow board member who represented *The Body Politic* at the CPPA. She thought he was a terrific writer who had a novel take on whatever he was writing. Gerald wrote three pieces for Cunningham: *GAY AFTER AIDS* in 1988, a profile of John Bentley Mays in 1989 that won a silver National Magazine Award, and a brilliant portrait of Tomson and Rene Highway that won gold in 1992.

"Of the twelve children born to Pelagie and Joe Highway, only five are living now," Hannon wrote in *TOMSON AND THE TRICKSTER*, my favourite of all his articles:

Rene was the youngest. Only 35 when he died, he was possibly the most beautiful—the coiled dancer in him under the control of something voluptuous and indolent. Tomson too has

grace, but it is more sinuous and wary—he invites you close enough to hear his impossibly gentle voice, then stops you still. The great dishevelled mane of jet-black hair confirms the cat in him, repels even as it invites a closer look. He can seat himself with something of the cat's fastidious disdain.

Besides the sumptuous descriptive writing, Hannon introduces us to Nanabush, a First Nations mythological and cultural hero. Nanabush is both a benefactor and a prankster, a seer and a manipulator, a shape-shifter and an impersonator.

Just out of the corner of your eye. You catch him there. You catch her. It. Maybe just it. A too-knowing bird, a flash maybe, a rippling of feathers, a brilliance in the shimmering air and you turn and suddenly you're not so sure. Something changes. Was that just a silly laugh? A loud juicy fart? A big pair of tits bouncing by? Meet the Trickster. Meet Nanabush. Sit back and watch Weesageechak begin to dance. Desperate for a familiar cultural reference? Imagine Aristotle—with a whoopee cushion. Or better yet, Jesus Christ—on a skateboard. Because if the Highway brothers have their way, the Trickster—Nanabush in Ojibwa, Weesageechak in Cree—will be seen and felt and revered (sort of) in the land he fled when the white man came, a land she might even begin to redeem from the dolorous pieties of Christianity.

Call it cultural appropriation, if you will, but Gerald's identification with Highway is so strong the piece could well be called *ME TRICKSTER, YOU TRICKSTER*. Hannon's tricks are verbal, not metaphysical, but his power is extraordinary. As a writer, he is both dazzling and elusive, oozing with the verve and talent that editors lust after.

"I didn't exactly take him on as a project," Cunningham says, "but as I would with any other writer I thought was worthy of wider exposure, I not only tried to get him to write stuff

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Gerald was twenty-two before he had sex with a woman and twenty-four before he made it with a man: "I was a really ignorant, unsexualized child"

for the magazine, I promoted him to other editors." One of them was her husband, Don Obe, who recommended Hannon for a job teaching in the evening program at Ryerson. Another was Sarah Murdoch, now editor of the Focus section of *The Globe and Mail*. "Reprehensible though you might find his views," she says, "he's interesting and he takes a position and he's utterly fearless." Murdoch assigned four or five pieces to Hannon, including THE KIDDIE-PORN RING THAT WASN'T, which ran afoul of the Ontario Press Council in 1995.

Both Murdoch and Cunningham knew Gerald was a prostitute. When *The Body Politic* folded in 1987, Gerald's income, which had never been high but at least had been steady, disappeared. He had no savings and he didn't want to go on unemployment. A friend, Danny Cockerline, told him there was easy money in being a hooker. The idea was intriguing but terrifying. Gerald didn't have the right look to work the streets, so he and an equally impecunious friend put an ad in *Now*. They were both too scared to work alone, so they offered themselves as a twosome.

"Somebody called and booked and actually turned up at the door," Gerald remembers. At the sound of the knock, Gerald's friend locked himself in the bathroom, so Gerald was on his own. Having sex with strangers for money turned out to be easy and lucrative. Gerald found that "it was always an adventure, even when the guys were unattractive." His friend, however, quickly tired of the game. Gerald's new ad read: "I work my fingers to your bone."

Gerald discovered that the clients were even more scared than he was. "I realized that they felt themselves in danger. They were going to a strange place and they didn't know whether I was a lout who would slit their throat or steal their wallet or take their watch." Even more naked than their fear was their desire, a physical longing that he could satisfy. Turning tricks, for Gerald, is the closest to altruism a paying job can get. "I am in awe before the extent, the power, the range of human need," he wrote in a memoir about hooking that *Saturday Night* was set to publish until Ken Whyte became editor and killed the story:

I feel on some nights when I am doing an outcall and sweeping across the city on my bicycle, that I am tracking the current of human need, a current visible only to me and to other whores, a current that will draw me...to the seventeen-year-old high school student who hasn't figured out any other way of meeting people, or to the Italian grandfather who's finally getting what he wants, or to the man who does nothing but tickle my feet and tape record my laughter.

Giving people what they want while defying conventions and flouting sexual taboos is only part of the anomaly that makes Gerald what he is. He says his life is about pushing things in a way that "makes you slightly horrified that you've gone too far but thrilled at the same time." Seeking exhilaration combined with reckless indiscretion—that's how Gerald handles being a writer, prostitute and teacher.

At the height of the furor last December about whether he should be allowed to teach at Ryerson, Gerald gave an interview to the student newspaper about his life as a hooker. Among other salacious details, he described a client who had paid fifty dollars to be shat upon and another who "jerked off" while Gerald talked dirty through a mouthful of twenty-dollar bills. Gerald can argue all he likes about "being in awe before the extent, the power, the range of human need," but what kind

of person is so desperate to please, so needy, that he will use another human being as a toilet and delight in describing it to a student reporter at his own institution?

JUDY STEED SAYS she didn't think twice about MEN LOVING BOYS LOVING MEN when it was published in *The Body Politic*, nearly twenty years ago. "It didn't occur to me what it was really about," she says in an interview at *The Toronto Star* where she is a feature writer. Although she didn't read the article, she knows she "would have been vaguely sympathetic. It was the cool thing to defend him—John Sewell defended him—and I would have wanted to be in with the cool people."

What happened to change her mind?

The Royal Commission hearings into allegations of physical and sexual abuse of children in the care of the Christian Brothers at the Mount Cashel orphanage in St. John's, Newfoundland, which opened in September 1989, caused what Steed calls "a seismic shift in national consciousness." When grown men wept and sobbed on national television as they recounted the brutal and sadistic abuse they had endured as children, they "crashed through our collective denial."

In 1991, she started writing feature articles about child abuse in *The Toronto Star*, including horrific tales involving ritual abuse, recovered memories and child pornography. Then, that summer, Donald Swainson, a professor of Canadian history at Queen's University in Kingston, called her at the newsroom. He said he was the father of two boys who had been abused by John Gallienne, the choirmaster of St. George's Cathedral, and he invited her to travel to Kingston to meet with the parents of some of the other victims. That meeting led to her book, *Our Little Secret: Confronting Child Sexual Abuse in Canada*, which was published by Random House in 1994.

Her awareness of sexual abuse had grown exponentially. And she may have developed much more than a professional interest in the subject. She has come to know victims and their families and to become involved in the lives of the people she was writing about. It was Steed who drove Andrew Swainson to police headquarters in Kingston to lay sexual abuse charges against John Gallienne, and Steed who stayed with him in the interview room until he made his official statement. Over the years, she has certainly been known to take the side of other alleged victims. When *Star* reporter Harold Levy was falsely accused of sexual abuse based on recovered memories, Judy showed up at his arraignment—not as a show of support of her colleague. Defense lawyer Paul Copeland, who was there as a character witness for Levy, says Judy made a remark against Levy that so outraged him he wrote a letter to *Frank* about her.

There are persistent stories that Judy's now-dead father was an alcoholic and that she has recovered memories of him abusing her as a child. She categorically denies these accounts, even though they come from former close friends and colleagues, and suggested that they were being spread by Gerald Hannon. When I told her Hannon was not my source, she countered by saying, "There are rumours like that about everyone. I've heard rumours about you, Sandra."

Steed did complain about her family in the journal *Canadian Woman Studies* in 1988. She described her encounters with a welfare mother of four who had been "sexually abused by her grandfather, abused by her mother and sent through a series of foster homes. She finally ran away at fifteen, lived as a street kid, survived as a prostitute." Despite their obvious socio-economic

conomic differences, Steed wrote that they had "something in common: we both came from dysfunctional families, though my so-called respectable, middle-class background provided me with an economic security and a formal education that she had never known."

What Steed did tell me was that she was born in England in 1943. She came to Canada as a child of six and settled with her family in Ottawa. "If there is one historic event in my lifetime that has shaped my view of the world," she volunteers, "it has been Winston Churchill, the Second World War, the Holocaust and the Nazis. And the major lesson of history that I took out of all that and combined with my United Church upbringing was that I never wanted to be a Nazi colluder." That's what she thought about at her first meeting with the Swainsons and the other parents in Kingston. To her, Gallienne was the Nazi, and the Swainsons and their friends were part of "this huge culture" that had "colluded" with him to destroy their own children.

All of this was in the forefront of her mind when Philip Marchand, her colleague at the paper, suggested that in the course of doing research for *Our Little Secret*, she might want to get in touch with Gerald Hannon for another viewpoint on pedophilia. She finally read *MEN LOVING BOYS LOVING MEN* and she flipped. "Oh my God," she said to herself. "This is really bad stuff."

There isn't much of a leap for Judy from Gallienne the child molester to Hannon the proselytizer for pedophilia. Her condemnation is panoramic. "To have no empathy for children and to write about a little seven-year-old boy who has sharp teeth and who does blow jobs and loves doing blow jobs and to take that at face value with no empathy or insight into where that little boy comes from and what happened to him..." she says to me, her voice trailing off in repugnance. When she gets going

like this, there is a rabid intensity in her unblinking stare and grim pencil-thin mouth. I can imagine her in an earlier age preaching temperance from a soapbox. Portraying children as seducers and willing participants in sexual activities with adults is so abhorrent to Judy that even reading about it is a form of violation. "I knew where those little children came from," she says. The pedophiles in *MEN LOVING BOYS LOVING MEN* reminded her of a group of psychopaths at Penetang she had interviewed years before—men who were "very charming and intelligent" but who were also "manipulative sex offenders and serial killers." As for Hannon, she felt he had only told one side of the story—the perpetrator's.

So she called Hannon, anticipating that he would apologize for the inadequacies and sloppiness of his piece. After all, the article had been written before Mount Cashel and people "didn't know much about child abuse in 1977." Instead, to her amazement, he defended the story. "This blew me away. And that's why I say either he's a psychopath or he's incompetent or he's advocating a psychopathic mind-set."

Despite her strong feelings, Judy described her encounter with Hannon in straightforward reportage in *Our Little Secret*. Gerald responded in July 1994 with a review/essay in *Xtra!*, the gay and lesbian biweekly. Hannon's piece, *SEALED WITH SECRETS AND DISGUST*, is the closest he has ever come to a *Mein Kampf* of his position as a proponent of man-boy love.

He acknowledges that society condemns sexual activity between adults and children and that "adults who break that rule are viewed with a particular repugnance." Nevertheless, adults do have sex with children, Hannon says, and if Steed's book is any guide, they do it a lot. In writing her book, he charges, she has "let pity and outrage run away with her senses." He, on the other hand, is all for reasoned debate about what

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Pooch, with his whipped look and abject expression, was gone. In his place was Gerald the Outrageous, a libertine who flaunted his sexuality and railed against what most people considered normal

constitutes ethical sexual behaviour between adults and children. Fine, but the closest he comes is to say we must "find some way to balance a child's needs, an adult's needs and the fact that it makes good educational sense to push a child's limits, much as we do in sports or academics, by requiring of them things they might at first feel incapable of doing."

This is patently absurd. You can't give equal weight to children and adults on a scale of sexual needs. Moreover, it makes extremely bad educational sense to push a child's limits at inappropriate developmental stages—you can't successfully teach children long division until they know their times tables.

Besides, Hannon simply doesn't have enough childhood experience to support his contention that adult/child sex is like coaching kids' hockey. When other kids were out playing hockey in Marathon, he was inside listening to the opera. When a boy at school told him about this new thing he had discovered—masturbation—he thought he was playing another trick on him. The child-adult physical experience that Gerald did have in quantity—being beaten up by his drunken father—is never used in these overweening comparisons. Why not? Because Gerald knows how awful it was to grow up in an atmosphere of physical and psychological torment. And what he doesn't know, he can't imagine. "I'm sure more harm was done to me by being raised a Catholic," he says to me, "than ever would have been done if somebody had physically had their way with me when I was younger, particularly if I had wanted it." That's a big if.

I've talked to dozens of people and I haven't found anybody who agrees with Gerald's ideas on pedophilia—and that includes Gerald.

"Are you saying we should pick up five-year-olds?" I ask him.

"No, I'm not. Absolutely, I'm not, although I'm sure some people think that's what I'm saying."

"Do you do it with five-year-olds?"

"No, of course not," he replies. "I never have. I'm not interested."

And that ultimately seems to be the divide that separates Gerald from most people—at least, the people I know. Gerald refrains from sex with children not because he thinks it is morally or ethically taboo, but because it doesn't turn him on.

Nevertheless, even Gerald now admits that *MEN LOVING BOYS LOVING MEN* was one-sided and naive. He says he could have done more speaking to young people and been less cavalier about Simon the teacher. "Now that I'm a teacher myself, I realize the problems." That's one of the reasons Gerald insists he wouldn't have sex with his Ryerson students. "It's hard enough to mark them," he says, "knowing the ones who supported me and the ones who were silent in this recent episode."

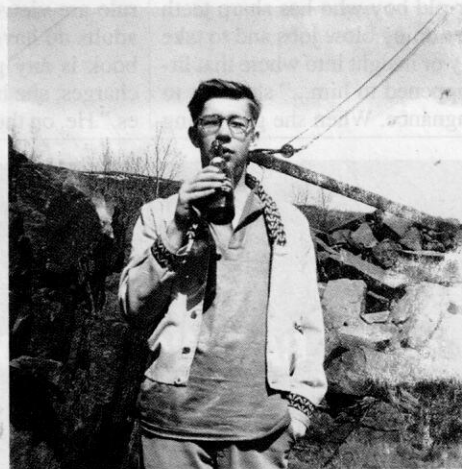
Judy takes everything Gerald says at face value and assumes the rest of us do, too. When she discovered that Gerald was teaching part-time at Ryerson, she assumed he must be teaching his "reprehensible views" along with how to structure a lead and write a query letter, if not explicitly, then by a kind of moral osmosis. She went into advocates' overdrive and

phoned John Miller, chair of the journalism school at Ryerson, to ask whether it was true that Hannon was on staff. "It just surprised me," she says, "that they would have somebody like that teaching at Ryerson." Having him in the classroom, she told Miller, was like hiring Ernst Zundel to teach the Holocaust. Miller was shocked by her call, not least because no students had ever complained about Gerald Hannon's teaching style or methods. He did discuss Steed's intervention with another faculty member, but "I knew that she had written a book and taken a strong advocacy position on the other side, so I just passed it off as a personal feud."

But two days later, at a "Women in Media" conference in a downtown hotel, Judy was on a panel. "I was saying how it's important as an adult to take on issues and to feel you are entitled to your opinion. Everyone doesn't have to agree with you, and I gave the example of [calling about] Hannon." John Miller was in the audience. He sat shaking his head, and when the call for questions came, he was the first to the microphone. "You could have seen my jaw drop," says Judy. In her view, nobody would have paid attention to her remarks if Miller had not "jumped up" to defend Hannon. That was what turned it

into a story for Heather Bird and the *Sun*.

In the ensuing fracas, Judy refused to debate Gerald in public or in print. "Why should I expose myself to something unpleasant?" she asks me rhetorically. When I ask her for her views on the age of consent, she has none. "I honestly haven't thought about that a lot," she says, "because in my response to Hannon that had nothing to do with it." These are extraordinary admissions from a journalist who is an expert in the field. Her posture makes her seem like a bully who is more intent on



An easy mark for practical jokers

smearing Hannon's career as a teacher and freelance writer than on exposing his beliefs to public awareness and censure.

Judy insists that Gerald is advocating harm through his writing and his teaching, but the only documented wounds in this affair have been inflicted on him—by her zealotry and his own appalling lack of discretion and judgment. The chances of Gerald's contract being renewed at Ryerson were always slightly less than zero, and even his longtime editor Sarah Murdoch tells me, "In the future, I'd probably not use him for sex-trade features."

Gerald is paying a heavy price for styling himself as a literary provocateur. Even he knows that he won't ever escape his public label as that "pedophile" who wrote the article about men having sex with boys. And although he says he's not ashamed, he does regret that "the one piece that I'll be remembered for was written when I was an untrained and only moderately good journalist." Sometimes, the bag of tricks blows up in the trickster's face.