

resonant, Jane, who took his last name and produced respected writing of her own. Some may have spotted Bowles playing himself in the last few minutes of Bernardo Bertolucci's film of Bowles's novel, *The Sheltering Sky*.

But as Jennifer Baichwal's 73-minute documentary, *Let It Come Down: The Life Of Paul Bowles*, shows over and over again, there's something too small about these snippets of info.

Start with the fact that he's still alive. Bowles is not only handsome and articulate in old age, but perfectly at ease chatting about his life. And what a life!

Bowles admits to a literary discretion around sex, but, he says, "on the other hand, I have never lied."

His home was a magnet for the entire literary, gay, and Beat(nik) set of the 1950s, including William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg, both present here at their last Manhattan reunion in 1996. At times this documentary seems like an endless parade of talking gay heads, notable among them the Honourable David Herbert, murmuring Mandarin-like against a *Toile de Jouy* wingchair—a colonial caricature in local dress.

Jane Bowles, in what may be the best portrait of her yet, is revealed as a complex, talented, tortured and loveable artist, quite the equal of Paul. Her long affair with an uneducated girl from the marketplace is illuminated with the often uncharitable remarks of contemporaries, and capped with an interview with the formidable, now-ancient, Cherifa herself, who denies the persistent rumour that she poisoned Jane.

Without these discerning glimpses into the Bowles's marriage, the documentary would have remained a standard PBS-style bio, semi-reverent and ultimately shallow. It's anything but.

What's public, what's private?

Book explores how lines between public and private sex spaces are constantly shifting

by Gordon Brent Ingram

Back at Oak Bay Junior, in 1970s Victoria, one of the favourite sports of too many of my male peers was harassing the young man who would soon rename himself Joe Average.

And no wonder. We adolescents were told nothing about our bodies. The "Family Life" class was taught in a way designed to make all sex seem so disgusting that it had to be kept in private. And there was not one mention of public sex, let alone public sex between two or more males. A quarter of a century later, the world of sex education still provides an impoverished set of erotic and emotional options and there has been no marked increase in research on sex between men outside of the bedroom.

And today's public sex researchers often experience more obstacles due to cramped notions of human subjects and narrow definitions of objectivity. In this New

World sexual (dis)order, the major achievement of *Public Sex Gay Space* is that it made it to print: it is the first scholarly book on public sex, published by a university press, in two decades.

Most of the researchers in *Public Sex Gay Space* obtained information through engaging in various kinds of sex in public themselves. But rarely have these public places been defined clearly. "Public" has often been more to do with where local police do not consider intimate acts to be immune from repression. From Washington, DC to Hanoi, these ethnographers looked at illegal places of homoerotic expression.

But this anthology is mostly about the means to negotiate sex in out-of-place locales in North America and Britain. Few of these 12 articles say much about the spaces themselves. Editor William Leap's comparison of sex in a gym and a bookstore with a backroom are one of the few parts of the book when space is described and analyzed. With so much ground to cover, the measured discussions barely scratch the surface of "male-centered" sex not considered in private. As any good piece of scholarship, *Public Sex Gay Space* asks more questions than one book could ever answer. The one argument throughout the essays is that the lines between private and public are con-

stantly shifting and being contested in conflicting ways by sex participants, police, the medical profession, politicians, governments, and landowners.

Few of the articles, except for Ross Higgins' superb discussion of Montreal before decriminalization, actually link supposedly out-of-place sex with what is sometimes called the 'queering' of spaces and the building of community. Almost contradicting the book's title, most of the spaces of public sex discussed are not particularly "gay." Many married men who use those locales do not identify with their homoerotic sexuality. None of the contributors discuss, directly, the tremendous impacts of the anti-entrapment movements from the 1950s to the early '80s. Only one article, a superb discussion of watching and exhibitionism by eminent ethnographer Stephen Murray, mentions the high risks of arrest and the tolls from being registered as sex offenders.

And it is just a matter of time before this new information works its way into courses on sex and reminds people that there are many more ways to express affection and to have a good time with old and new acquaintances and friends.

Gordon Brent Ingram's "vancouver(as queer)scape: The construction of public space by sexual minorities in Pacific Canada" is going to press in the coming year.

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William I Leap (editor)
Columbia University Press

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A brilliant article was thrown in haphazardly about a group sex case tried in Holland. In 1827 Adam Cornelissen argued successfully, and perhaps for the first time in modern history, that private acts were none of the state's business and information on acts obtained through spying on otherwise private sex should not be considered in court.

Ten to 20 carefully researched books are needed on different aspects of sexuality that pushes the many envelopes of propriety: communal, group, and anonymous across the realms of private, not-so-public and public. *Public Sex Gay Space* was intended to be too many things. However, it is a start to a renewal of research, without hysteria and less overshadowed by AIDS, that is crucial to better understanding the wealth of erotic expression around us.

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