

art

Horror
Turned Art

by Wickie Stamps

During Harvard University's Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Awareness Days (BGLAD) I viewed a photograph entitled *Shari in Drag*. Taken by photographer Marcus Alonzo, the work was one in a series entitled *Other Women: Portraits of Lesbian and Bisexual Women*. Wearing a dick and dressed in male clothes, Shari had her legs spread wide and held a rifle in her left hand.

I had decided that, although readers would be unable to catch the exhibit, because of the brevity of its display, I wanted them to see this particular photo. It struck me as a strong example of how one dyke turned her personal horror into queer art because *Shari in Drag* is not just a dyke in drag, but a dyke who chose to portray herself as the uncle who incested her as a child.

Because her subject embraced the persona of her victimizer, Shari has placed herself in the midst of a highly creative queer art form. This is the same art form that leads us to claim words that used to be used against us, such as queer, dyke and faggot. This is the same genre that predominates in what is called the queercore or homocore movements, which emerged out of the punk scene. In this scene, queers, through their art, dress and body manipulation, embrace such social pariahs as nerds, whores and ninety-pound weaklings. It is a creative legacy that reclaims the most vulnerable aspects of our identities from those who seek out these same weaknesses and try to attack us with them.

In *Shari in Drag* the subject of the photograph claims an identity — that of an abuser — as her own. She takes back the power of her uncle. In it she parodies him, and turns his victimization on its head.

If I were Shari's uncle I'd be nervous. Through this photograph she dares to take his power; she dares to go public with his private rituals; she dares to mimic him; she, with a pump-action rifle in her hand, dares him to try to fuck with her NOW.

Apparently, the photo did make someone nervous. Last week the photograph was stolen from the Harvard exhibit and vandalized. The taking of power from the hands of the victimized, whether the reclamation be in the form of words or images, is never well-received by those who initially held their power. After all, the repossession of power usually leaves the former oppressors impotent. Fortunately for us, it was only Shari's image, not Shari, that was brutalized this time. And, fortunately for us, there were other copies of the photograph. ★

Shari in Drag by Marcus Alonzo.

